



Meet the Kite Maker: Greg Kono—Intermediate Level Extending the Student Reading by Writing & Discussing

1. Discuss Greg’s cultural and artistic position as a Japanese American. How does Greg’s use of materials from his cultural heritage support him in distinguishing his work from that of other kite makers in the USA? Use a map of the USA to look at the position of Washington State along the Pacific Rim. Discuss how Washington’s location provides cultural connectedness to Pacific Rim cultures.

To link Greg’s experience to that of Japanese immigrants to the USA, use articles at www.historylink.org, “the first and largest encyclopedia of community history created expressly for the Internet.” The articles “Japanese Americans in Seattle and King County” (essay 231) and “Japanese Immigration to the Puget Sound Region” (essay 300) provide historical context. The site also includes articles on individual Japanese artists and architects: Kichio Allen Arai, Paul Horiuchi, George Tsutakawa, Minoru Yamasaki. How do their experiences compare with Greg’s? Ask students to write a paragraph speculating about how the experiences of an artist of Japanese heritage moving to Washington State fifty years from now may compare with those of Greg.

2. Explore students’ familiarity with anime, a source of inspiration for Greg’s work. Read a definition of anime from the anime encyclopedia at <http://www.abcb.com/ency/a/anime.htm>. The author, Bryan Pfaffenberger, recommends *My Neighbor Totoro* as “a heartbreakingly beautiful tribute to the fast-disappearing Japanese countryside—and to the redemptive power of a family’s love.” For more background about anime, read the article by Stephen Merkel-Hess (August 2005) from the National Clearinghouse for U.S.-Japan Studies, at <http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/biblio/manga-anime.htm>.

3. Discuss the difference between naturalistic and stylized treatments of a subject, as reflected in Greg’s fish kites. Ask students to sketch a naturalistic and stylized version of a subject.



Photos by Greg Kono