

Drowning in the Floating World Online Resources

Researching the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and Fukushima powerplant disaster, as well as Japanese mythology and culture at large, brought me to some really rich and incredible resources. Here, I've tried to catalogue some of the resources that inspired this book: videos, images, articles, movies, databases and more. While many of these are listed inside the physical book, this digital resource allows readers to more easily navigate between sources. I encourage you to explore these resources for yourself, or to use them in a classroom as a supplemental resource to the text. I'd love to hear how you end up using these resources! [Send me an email on my website and let me know!](#)

Teaching and Writing Prompt Ideas:

Ekphrasis and Research: Instructors, consider assigning readings for discussion in relation to the poems, or using these sources as prompts for writing exercises or reflections. Consider having student search for their own images relating to the disaster or the term “haikyo” (*warning: for both of these searches there can be graphic or disturbing images. Free-search recommended for older students. Consider compiling a selection of specific images/sources if adapting for younger students*) and writing an ekphrasis in response to a source that particularly resonates with them. Use this as an opportunity to discuss topics such as research methodology, inspiration, ekphrasis and responding to events and other people’s work. If focusing on ekphrasis and imagery, consider supplementing with [Ted Kooser’s Abandoned Farmhouse](#), which does a great job of picking specific details in a scene that show us a glimpse of the life of who lived here prior.

Poetic Form: This collection implements a range of forms: from ghazals, monostichs, haiku, villanelles, triolets, prose poems and invented forms like “Tsunami Debris Found Poem.” Consider selecting a form to focus on, discussing the form’s parameters, reading an example poem from the collection and having your students practice the form on their own. Consider questions including: why might one use this form? How would this poem be different in a different form? What topics or feelings might best suit this form?

Personification: This collection also plays with personification. Dolls, a town hall, ghosts, the ocean, and the powerplant itself all have voices. This was largely inspired by Patricia Smith’s collection *Blood Dazzler*, which also responds to disaster (Hurricane Katrina) with a range of voices. The poem “Katrina” is the personification of Hurricane Katrina. “Superdome” is a personification of the superdome. Patricia Smith wants all of New Orleans to contribute to this story, and allows herself to imagine: if these objects could talk, what would they say about this disaster? [Hear Patricia Smith read her poem “What Betsy Has to Say” from the collection here.](#) Try writing a personification poem for yourself, and consider what perspective might lend the most interesting or insightful information on a situation.

Japanese Poets: Consider using this collection as a launching point to discuss Japanese poetic forms (such as the haiku, haibun or tanka) as well as Japanese poets (such as Shuntaro Tanikawa, Basho, Issa, Kato Shuson, Ryūichi Tamura, or others!).

Poem-Specific Resources:

Onagawa

Inspired by the footage *2011 Japan Tsunami: Onagawa [stabilized with Deshaker]* (Youtube)
(Content Warning: This is live footage of the tsunami. Viewer discretion advised)

Mizuko

Mizuko (水子), literally "water child", is a Japanese term for a stillborn baby (Wikipedia)

For further reading, visit *NPR's* article "Adopting A Buddhist Ritual To Mourn Miscarriage, Abortion" (2015).

Town Hall

"One idea, put forth by a group of researchers, calls for preserving some of the buildings ruined by the recent tsunami to serve as permanent reminders of the waves' destructive power, much as the skeletal Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima warns against nuclear war.

"We need a modern version of the tsunami stones," said Masayuki Oishi, a geologist at the Iwate Prefectural Museum in Morioka."

(from *The New York Times's* article "Tsunami Warnings, Written in Stone" (2011))

For more information on tsunami stones, visit *Smithsonian Magazine's* article "These Century-Old Stone 'Tsunami Stones' Dot Japan's Coastline" (2015).

Rumiko

Inspired by Richard Lloyd Parry's article in *London Review of Books* "Ghosts of the Tsunami."

Tsunami Girl

The term "fox's wedding" can mean a range of things, depending on regional traditions. It is typically used to reference rain on a sunny day, but its connotation as an ill omen gesturing toward a looming death or a funeral ritual is lore specific to the Tokushima region. For more information, visit: <https://japanesemythology.wordpress.com/tag/kitsune-no-yomeiri/>

Corpse Washing

Inspired by the [2008 film *Departures* \(おくりびと\)](#).

NASA Satellite Triolet

Inspired by NASA Earth Observatory images, captured on March 14th 2011, that show the severe flooding of the Kitakami River, three days after the earthquake. [To see these images, visit NASA's earth observatory online.](#)

Coming Home after a Tsunami

Shuntaro Tanikawa is a legendary poet in Japan who also translates the Peanuts comics into Japanese. I highly encourage readers unfamiliar with his work to take a look. [There are many fantastic translations of his work in English.](#) His magical realism sensibilities with a good sense of humor and accessibility leave incredible, fantastical images lingering even after reading.

Poem for the Sneakers Washing Onshore

Inspired by KHQ's article [“We're Expecting 100 Sneakers With Bones In Them”](#) (2012).

Villanelle from an Okawa School Mother

Inspired by *Telegraph's* article [“Mother excavates tsunami-hit school to find daughter's body”](#).

Ningyo Kuyo (Doll Funeral Ceremony)



[Tokyo Times](#)

人形供養 (ningyo kuyo) is a ritual to dispose of unwanted dolls. Because superstition dictates that dolls have spirits, they must be brought to a local jinjya (temple) for a priest to give the doll last rites.

For some more info (and some eerie photos!) check out [this post with Tokyo Times](#).

Animal Man



[Bored Panda](#)

For more information on Naoto Matsumura, check out the *Washington Post* article “Caring for Fukushima’s abandoned animals” (2016).

Radium Girls



[Bored Panda](#)

For further reading, visit Kate Moore’s *The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America’s Shining Women* (2017).

Inspired by Bored Panda’s images in the post “[Never-Before-Seen Images Reveal How The Fukushima Exclusion Zone Was Swallowed By Nature](#)”

Fukushima Syndrome:

“This fall, an illness dubbed the “Fukushima syndrome” was reported to be killing cattle near the Fukushima prefecture.” (from [Cleanenergy.org’s](#) blog post “[Japan Continues Struggle with Aftermath from the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster](#)” (2012))

Operation Fantasia

For more information on this bizarre World War II battle strategy, visit: <https://www.futilitycloset.com/2014/08/12/operation-fantasia/>

原爆 – Atom



[Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum](#)

Inspired by the 2016 film *In This Corner of the World* (この世界の片隅に).

原爆 (genbaku) refers to the atomic bomb. The Genbaku dome is part of the Hiroshima peace memorial, remains in its state of ruin from the atomic bomb drop in 1945.

This poem was also inspired by my visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in 2011. To see some of the exhibits, feel free to visit the exhibits on their website: <http://hpmmuseum.jp>.

Looking at an Abandoned Russian Themepark in Niigata, Japan



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I encourage readers to explore the images urban explorers have taken of the abandoned Niigata Russian Village. [Tokyo Times](#), [Michael John Grist](#) and [Abandoned Kansai](#) have some incredible images as well as additional background on the unusual park.

廃虚の俳句 / modern ruins haiku



[Tokyo Times](#)

Haikyo (廃虚) in Japanese means “obsolete hill,” and is used in reference to ruins, particularly contemporary ruins. It also is in reference to urban exploration, the act of visiting contemporary ruins. Due to the 80s economic boom and subsequent crash in the 90s/early 2000s, as well as Japan’s complex property ownership laws, *haikyo* are a particularly common phenomena in Japan.

evaporated people

For further reading, check out Léna Mauger’s *The Vanished: The "Evaporated People" of Japan in Stories and Photographs* (2016) and [New York Post’s](#) article “[The Chilling Stories Behind Japan’s ‘Evaporating People’](#)” (2016).

Tsunami Debris Found Poem

Inspired by the *International Pacific Research Center's* Marine and Tsunami Debris Sightings chart, which can be viewed online at their site: <http://iprc.soest.hawaii.edu>. For more information about the tsunami debris, visit BBC's article *Japan's tsunami debris: Five remarkable stories* (2016).

Additional References / Resources

[花は咲く](#) (NHK World's "Flowers Will Bloom," a song in memory of 3/11)

Svetlana Alexievich's *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* (1997)

David Lochbaum's *Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster* (2014)

David McNeill's *Strong in the Rain: Surviving Japan's Earthquake, Tsunami, and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster* (2012)

April Naoko Heck's poetry collection *A Nuclear Family* (2014)

Lee Ann Roripaugh's poetry collection *Tsunami vs the Fukushima 50* (2019)

Kathleen Burkinshaw's kidlit novel *The Last Cherry Blossom* (2016)

[This American Life's](#) episode "Really Long Distance"

The United Nation's Disarmament educational resources:
<https://www.un.org/disarmament/education/teachers-students.html>

Physicians for Social Responsibility's resource page:
https://www.psr.org/resources/?_sft_resource_category=nuclear-power

On the state of Fukushima today:

[The Diplomat's](#) article "The Truth About Radiation in Fukushima" (2019)

[Quartz's](#) article "The UN says Japan may be violating human rights by returning families to Fukushima" (2018)

