



## The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn (The Samurai Mysteries)

By Dorothy Hoobler, Thomas Hoobler

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While attempting to solve the mystery of a stolen jewel, Seikei, a merchant's son who longs to be a samurai, joins a group of kabuki actors in eighteenth-century Japan.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **From School Library Journal**

Grade 6-8A Sherlock Holmes-style mystery set in 18th-century Japan. Fourteen-year-old Seikei, son of a tea merchant, longs to be a samurai, although he knows that this is an inherited honor he can never hope to attain. While on a business trip, Seikei and his stern father take shelter at the Tokaido Inn where a cruel and oafish samurai, Lord Hakuseki, is also staying. A precious jewel is stolen from the lord, and a young girl whom Seikei has just met is accused of the theft. He risks his life by speaking out to defend her and Judge Ooka, called in to solve the crime, is taken with the boy's bravery and enlists his help to solve the mystery. This sets Seikei onto a dangerous path where he goes backstage at Kabuki theaters, meets an enigmatic actor, and more than once must act in the honorable way of a samurai. He remains resourceful and courageous, although he often fears he may be on the wrong path. Judge Ooka maintains a steady presence, urging Seikei to observe, be logical, and reason out the motives for the crime. The plot builds towards an exciting, dramatic climax. All of the action is placed solidly in the context of the Tokugawa period of a Japan ruled by an emperor and a shogun, and pervaded by the need to defend one's honor above all else. An unusual and satisfying mystery that will be enjoyed by a wide audience. Bruce Anne Shook, Mendenhall Middle School, Greensboro, NC

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#### **From Booklist**

In eighteenth-century Japan, 14-year-old Seikei is a merchant's son with secret dreams of becoming a samurai. Although his status in society restricts him from doing anything more than following in his father's footsteps, Seikei has both the resolve and temperament of a wise, brave warrior. On a stopover at the Tokaido Inn, Seikei witnesses a legendary ghost stealing a jewel belonging to a samurai. His bravery in saving a falsely accused guest earns Seikei the respect of Judge Ooka, who hires Seikei to help him investigate the crime and solve the mystery. With a sharply authentic voice and an adeptly plotted story that progresses from the haunting ghost legend to the dark, volatile world of a traveling kabuki show, this mystery builds with stirring intrigue and plays out to a most satisfying conclusion. Rich with atmosphere and details that teach much of the Japanese culture, this is a fine selection for any YA collection. *Roger Leslie*

#### **From Kirkus Reviews**

The Hooblers (The Cuban American Family Album, 1996, etc.) employ suspense, action, superstition, and mystery to entrance readers with this tale of 18th-century Japan and a boy's search for honor. Seikei, 14, is embarrassed to have been born into the merchant class and dreams of becoming a samurai. While on a business trip with his father, he witnesses the theft of a valuable ruby from a haughty samurai. Drawn into the case by Judge Ooka, a real historical figure, Seikei plunges into the chase. He finds himself in the company of Tomomi, a brilliant Kabuki actor and master of acrobatics and swordsmanship. Seikei begins to admire him, even though he knows that Tomomi is the thief and a Kirishitan, a member of a banned religious sect. But Tomomi plans much more than theft. He intends to expose and dishonor the man who destroyed his family; Seikei unwittingly becomes part of his plot, and gets the chance to fulfill his dream. The climactic scene of a play that exposes the real villain echoes the plot of Hamlet, and may work as an introduction to Shakespeare's play. Full of adventure, offering a vivid portrait of Shogun-era Japan, this is a remarkable novel. (Fiction. 12-14) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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