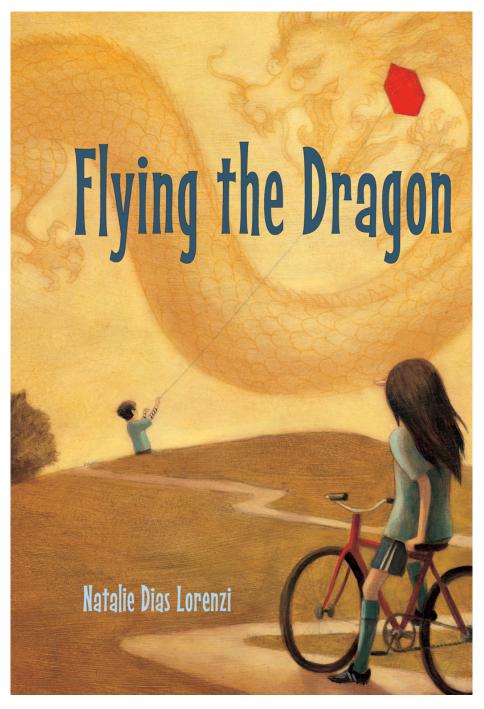
A Teacher's Guide to

Flying the Dragon

By Natalie Dias Lorenzi



Text ©Natalie Dias Lorenzi; Cover art ©Kelly Murphy
Published by Charlesbridge
ISBN 13: 978-1-58089-434-0 (hard cover) 978-1-58089-435-7 (paperback); available in e-book format 231 pages

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Natalie Dias Lorenzi is a traveler, writer, wife, mother, librarian, and teacher, specializing in English as a second language. She has taught in Japan and Italy, and now teaches in Virginia near Washington, DC.

Flying the Dragon is her first novel. Learn more at www.nataliediaslorenzi.com.

PRAISE AND HONORS FOR FLYING THE DRAGON

"A quiet, beautifully moving portrayal of a multicultural family."

~Kirkus, starred review *

"An empathetic and quietly affecting fish-out-of-water story." ~Publishers Weekly

"With its broad appeal for both boys and girls, this title is a solid choice for middle grade audiences." ~School Library Journal

- Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List 2013-2014
- 2014-2015 Missouri Association of School Librarians Readers Awards Preliminary List
- 2014 Sakura Medal Nominee
- IndieBound Kids' Summer Next List 2012
- New York Public Library's 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing 2012
- Georgia Children's Book Award (alternate)
- Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) Choices 2013
- Bank Street College of Education's Best Children's Books of the Year List 2013
- International Reading Association Children's and Young Adult Book 2013
 Awards (Intermediate Fiction Honor Book)

STORY SUMMARY

Skye and Hiroshi are cousins, but they've never met. How could they, when Skye's father hasn't spoken to his Japanese family since before she was born? But now their grandfather is sick, and the family is coming to the United States for his treatment. Skye and Hiroshi are stuck with each other.

Now Skye doesn't know who she is anymore; at school she's suddenly too Japanese, but at home she's not Japanese enough. And as Hiroshi struggles to improve his English, he has to contend with Skye butting in on his rokkaku kite-flying time with Grandfather—time that seems to be running out.

Natalie Dias Lorenzi has crafted an affecting first novel about family and forgiveness, and the ties that connect us like string to a kite.

TEACHER'S GUIDE CONTENTS

1. Pre-Reading Activities

Activities and discussion-starters to activate students' prior knowledge and build background knowledge.

2. Discussion Starters

Chapter guides may be used to encourage whole class discussions, lead teacher-guided reading groups, or to provide structure for students working either in cooperative small groups or independently. **The guide is not intended to be assigned to students in its entirety.**

Each chapter guide includes:

- ▶ **Discussion Questions** inspired by Bloom's Taxonomy
- ▶ **Predictions** that students can make based on their analysis of the characters' traits in the story.

3. Culminating Activities

Following the chapter guides, you'll find suggested culminating projects that address the eight multiple intelligences identified by Dr. Howard Gardner:

| √ Bodily-Kinesthetic | $\sqrt{\text{Interpersonal}}$ |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| $\sqrt{	ext{Intrapersonal}}$ | $\sqrt{\text{Logical-Mathematical}}$ |
| √ Musical | $\sqrt{\text{Naturalistic}}$ |
| √ Verbal-Linguistic | √ Visual-Spatial |

Consider having students choose a culminating activity that best matches their learning styles.

4. Teacher Resources

Websites with educational activities, and information on Japan and rokkaku kitefighting

5. Author interview with NATALIE DIAS LORENZI

PRE-READING

1. Look at the book cover (front and back) and predict what's happening in this scene:



- 2. Read the story summary. Take another look at the cover and revise your earlier prediction. Who are the people in this scene? What might they be thinking?
- 3. Have you ever flown a kite or seen a kite battle? Visit the link below for footage of the *rokkaku* kite battle in Washington, DC:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-TTed8IceY&feature=player_detailpage

4. Think of a time when you felt like you didn't belong. Write or tell about why you felt this way. How did things turn out in the end?

CHAPTERS 1-5

Discussion Starters

- 1. Why don't Skye and her father speak to each other in Japanese anymore?
- 2. Tell or write about a time when an adult relative embarrassed you in front of other people. How did you both react?
- 3. Retell the pizzeria scene from Skye's dad's point of view. How does it differ from Skye's version?
- 4. Hiroshi is especially excited about this year's *rokkaku* kite battle, because he's finally old enough to enter on his own. Tell or write about a time when you were finally old enough to do something that you'd always wanted to do. What were your fears beforehand? How did it turn out?
- 5. *Personification* is when objects in stories act like people. How are the kites personified in chapter two? If the kites could speak, what are some of the things they might say?
- 6. Skye might have to give up her spot on the all-star soccer team. Which activity would you be most upset about having to give up? What arguments would you give to convince someone that you should not have to give up this activity?
- 7. How does Skye's dad react when she asks him why he was "acting all Japanese at the pizzeria?" Why does he react this way?
- 8. Are Skye's parents being unfair about making her take Japanese classes? Why or why not?

Predict: What will happen when Skye and Hiroshi meet? Will they get along? Explain your thinking.

CHAPTERS 6-10

Discussion Starters

- 1. What differences does Hiroshi notice between Japan and the U.S.? If you have visited or lived in another country, what are some differences that you noticed?
- 2. During the ride from the airport, we learn that Hiroshi thinks Google is a Japanese company. Why wouldn't he know that it's an American company?

Find some images of products made by Nestlé, Hello Kitty, El Paso, and Volkswagon. Ask your classmates which products are American. (Answer: Only El Paso is American, which is owned by General Mills). If your classmates guess incorrectly, why don't they know which companies are American?

- 3. Hiroshi's and Skye's first conversation at dinner isn't easy for either one of them. Who has the hardest time? Explain your thinking.
- 4. What are some differences that Hiroshi notices between his schools in Japan and Virginia? What do you think you would like best about going to a Japanese school? What would you have a hard time adjusting to? What do you think will be the most difficult thing for Hiroshi to adjust to in his American school?
- 5. When Hiroshi draws the picture of Grandfather and himself on the hill in Japan, compare what he wants to say to Mr. Jacobs with what he actually does say. What do you think Mr. Jacobs now understands about Hiroshi?
- 6. How does Skye feel about helping Hiroshi in class? Why? Write or tell about a time when you reluctantly helped someone.
- 7. Why is Hiroshi confused about U.S. coins? Look at the images of Japanese coins on the following page. Can you identify how much each is worth?
- 8. Do you think Skye should sit with Hiroshi at lunch? What would you do?

Predict: Will Skye help Hiroshi fit in at school? If so, how? If not, why not?



The coin on the bottom left is worth 5 Yen, and the coin on the bottom right is worth 1 Yen. The numerals on each coin are their values in Japanese Yen.

To see how much these coins are worth in U.S. currency, visit https://www.google.com/finance/converter.

CHAPTERS 11-15

Discussion Starters

- 1. Why does Hiroshi wear a white mask to school?
- 2. Does Skye try hard enough to tell Hiroshi about the mask? What would you do or say if a new kid in your class came to school wearing a mask like Hiroshi's?
- 3. In chapter 12, when Skye apologizes to Hiroshi about the mask incident, he thinks: *Her words were empty—except for the word stupid. That word weighed a ton.*

What does he mean? What other words or phrases do you think "weigh a ton?"

- 4. When Skye is in Japanese class, she begins to get a glimpse of what Hiroshi must be going through at school. Compare Hiroshi's and Skye's experiences. Whose situation do you think is worse?
- 5. Which words do you think are important for new English speakers to learn? Make a list of your top five and use them in sentences that would help put the words in context for a new English-speaker. If you speak another language, which words were/are confusing for you in English? What advice would you give to Hiroshi as he learns English?
- 6. Skye chides herself for not helping Hiroshi more at school. Do you think she should be helping him more? Why isn't she?
- 7. Read Skye's description of the dragon kite in chapter 15. Draw what she sees. How does this differ from the kite on the book's cover? Why do you think illustrator Kelly Murphy chose to draw a dragon extending from a red kite?
- 8. Read the description of the wooden reel with twin dragons on page 86. Why did Skye's father design the reel this way? If Hiroshi and Skye could design a reel of their own, what might it look like?

Predict: Hiroshi wonders about the medallion around Grandfather's neck. To Hiroshi, it represents winning, but to Grandfather, "it is a reminder of the value of humility." What do you think is the story behind the medallion?

CHAPTERS 16-20

Discussion Starters

- 1. Hiroshi has a hard time remembering the difference between *pear*, *pair* and *pare*; and *to*, *too*, and *two*. How would you help Hiroshi with this problem?
- 2. When Mr. Jacobs tells Hiroshi that he doesn't want to "push him" too fast with harder spelling words, Hiroshi misunderstands the use of the verb "to push." What other idioms would be confusing for someone who is learning English? Choose 10 idioms that you know, or use this source: http://www.eslcafe.com/idioms/. Rank these 10 idioms from most difficult to easiest. Have a partner do the same and compare your rankings.
- 3. Why doesn't Hiroshi want Skye to fly the dragon kite with Grandfather and him?
- 4. Grandfather doesn't think Hiroshi should be angry with Skye about stepping on the dragon kite. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 5. What caused the misunderstanding between Skye's father and his family back in Japan? Write or tell about a misunderstanding you've had with a friend or family member. Was it resolved? If so, how? If not, what could you do to resolve it?
- 6. How is the dragon kite personified (how does it act like a person) in these chapters?
- 7. In chapter 18, how do Skye and Hiroshi communicate their anger to each other while trying to hide their emotions from Grandfather? How else do we communicate emotions without speaking?
- 8. For whom do you feel more sympathy, Hiroshi or Skye? Explain your thinking.

Predict: How will the Japanese and English lessons go with Hiroshi and Skye? Will the lessons help them to become friends, or will they cause more conflict? Explain your thinking.

CHAPTERS 21-25

Discussion Starters

- 1. Why does Hiroshi act distant when Skye tries to apologize?
- 2. Compare the way Hiroshi expresses his anger with Skye and with Grandfather. Compare this with the way you react to friends and adults when you're angry. What are some similarities and differences?
- 3. Tell or write about a time when you had to apologize to someone. What did you do or say? How did that person react? How did you feel afterwards?
- 4. What are some signs that Hiroshi's and Skye's relationship is starting to change?
- 5. Learn how to write the days of the week using Kanji with a site like this one: http://www.elementaryjapanese.com/vocabulary/weekdays/Japanese-Weekdays-Kanji.pdf. What tricks could you use to learn these words? How does this help you empathize with Skye and Hiroshi?
- 6. Should Hiroshi and Skye continue to have hope? Is hope important? Explain your thinking.
- 7. What does Grandfather ask Hiroshi and Skye to do? Why do you think he asks this?
- 8. Tell or write about a time when you made a promise that you didn't want to make.

Predict: Will Hiroshi and Skye fulfill their promise to Grandfather? If not, why? If so, how will they perform as a kite-fighting team?

CHAPTERS 26-30

Discussion Starters

- 1. In chapter 26, Hiroshi runs upstairs to get the dragon kite while Mrs. Grimley and the other adults talk downstairs. What do you think they say while he's upstairs? What clues from the text helped you infer how their conversation might have gone?
- 2. How is the wind personified in this chapter?
- 3. How would Skye define "being Japanese" at the beginning of the book? How would she define it now?
- 4. Is it Ravi's fault that the dragon kite is damaged? Explain your thinking.
- 5. Grandfather says that the cherry blossoms "...are a sign of spring, a promise of beauty yet to come." What do the blossoms symbolize to Hiroshi and Skye?
- 6. After hearing the story about Grandmother, Skye wishes she'd known her so that she could miss her, too. Is it better to know and love someone and miss them when they're gone, or is it easier to not know someone and not feel sadness when they die?
- 7. Kumamoto Sensei tells Skye, "Become a lifelong learner of your language." How does Skye react? Why?
- 8. Why do you think Skye was so upset about the sprig of cherry blossoms that were knocked from the tree? Why does Hiroshi want the blossoms to stay on the trees as long as possible?

Predict: Will Skye and Hiroshi build a new kite together, or will Hiroshi do the job himself? Explain your thinking.

CHAPTERS 31-35

Discussion Starters

- 1. Why doesn't Skye want her dad to postpone her Japanese exams?
- 2. How do you think the dragon kite was repaired?
- 3. Why do you think the cherry blossoms in Skye's jacket pocket haven't withered?
- 4. What traditions does Grandfather's family follow as they say goodbye to him? Compare this with your own culture's traditions when a loved one passes.
- 5. Although Hiroshi and Skye will miss Grandfather, what have they learned from him that will help them in the future?
- 6. Sketch a design of a miniature kite that you would give to someone. Think of an idea or theme that is important to you or to this person. Design an object, shape, or design that would symbolize your idea or theme.
- 7. How has Grandfather's death affected Hiroshi's and Skye's relationship?
- 8. When Skye learns that her family is supposed to take a different route home from the funeral parlor, she thinks: *Who cares about tradition?* Why are traditions important? When should they be changed or ignored?

Predict: Will Hiroshi and Skye be ready for the kite battle? How will they do against the other competitors?

CHAPTERS 36-40

Discussion Starters

- 1. Why does Hiroshi think the painted design on the new kite is so important?
- 2. Skye is nervous about helping paint the kite's design, but Hiroshi insists on having her help. Does it really matter if Skye helps paint the circle on the kite? Why or why not?
- 3. Skye blames herself for losing the second round. Was it her fault? Why or why not?
- 4. After Skye trips during the kite battle, Hiroshi tells her about a time when he accidentally tripped Grandfather during a battle in Japan. Why does he tell her this story?
- 5. What is Hiroshi's reasoning for not telling the judges about the other team's *manja* line? Should he have said something? Explain your reasoning.
- 6. Why does Mr. Sato first speak in English to Hiroshi and in Japanese to Skye? How does this scene represent the changes in Skye and Hiroshi from the beginning of the book?
- 7. Each chapter in the book alternates by Hiroshi's and Skye's points of view. The last chapter, however, is titled *Hiroshi and Sorano* and is told from both characters' points of view. Why do you think the author wrote the last chapter in this way? Hiroshi's sun symbol and Skye's cloud symbol are also combined. What does this represent?
- 8. What do you think of the dragon cloud and cherry blossoms that appear in the last scene? Are these coincidences, or is there another explanation?

Wrapping Up: If you could interview Skye and Hiroshi as sixth graders, what questions would you ask? How might they answer?

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

The following projects incorporate Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Consider having students choose culminating projects that best match their learning styles.

He Said, She Said

(Verbal-Linguistic)

Poems with two voices are lines of poetry that are meant to be read aloud by two readers. Some lines are read simultaneously, and others may be read one at a time. Examples of these poems may be found in the book *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleishman and illustrated by Eric Beddows, and also in this National Writing Project lesson: http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2229.

Students can explore different perspectives in *Flying the Dragon* by writing poems for two voices that compare and contrast the experiences and points of view of any two characters in the book, even the dragon kite.

Foreign Language Immersion

(Intrapersonal)

If you know a teacher or parent who speaks a language other than English, invite him or her to the classroom to teach a 5-10 minute lesson that includes asking students questions or encouraging participation—no English allowed!

Have students reflect afterwards on how they felt during the lesson. Did they enjoy any aspects of the lesson? Which part was the most stressful for them? How does this activity help foster empathy for Hiroshi, Skye, and other new language learners?

Picnic-Inspired Poetry

(Musical, Naturalistic)

In chapter 30, Hiroshi tells Skye about *hanami*—the Japanese custom of appreciating flowering trees in the spring. Learn more about this tradition here http://www.japantravelinfo.com/heritage/bf_cherry.php.

Create your own class tradition of picnicking under a tree—a flowering tree, a colorful tree in autumn, or any favorite tree near your school. Bring five large pieces of paper for recording sensory words during the picnic—things that students see, hear, taste, touch, or smell. Use these words as a springboard for haiku poems.

Variation: Teach students the Japanese folksong "Sakura," which means "cherry blossoms." Students can sing the song in Japanese, or write their own lyrics to honor their favorite tree.

Exploring Color

(Visual-Spatial)

Read the description of the dragon kite on pages 66 and 67:

When the kite danced far up in the sky, the dragon appeared to be different shades of red, depending on the light of the sun. But up close its skin and scales were tiny strokes of color and light—hundreds of lines of black, reds, blues, and greens.

The author got the idea for writing about this painting technique when she visited the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Holland. There she saw Van Gogh's famous self-portraits. From far away, the colors and shading looked natural—a blue jacket, a reddish-blonde beard. But up close, she saw that Van Gogh had created these seemingly natural hues with thousands of strokes of different colors.

Visit the museum's site here http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl, and choose your language from the drop-down menu. Mouse over the *Museum* tab and choose the *Permanent Collection* link, and then *Self-portraits*. Choose one of the self-portraits and then click on *show enlargement* to see the colors up close.

Have students draw their self-portraits (or any object) and fill them in with small lines of color using colored pencils, crayons, or paint.

Lunchtime

(Interpersonal)

In Saturday Japanese school, Skye's *obento* snack isn't as fancy as the other kids' food. Read about the preparation and reasoning behind *obento* lunches, and take a look at some samples here:

http://www.pbs.org/opb/meaningoffood/food_and_family/obento/

Beside each photo is a list of that *obento*'s ingredients. Have students rank their preferences for the lunches based only on the ingredients. Next, have them do the same with the photos only (without listing the ingredients). Can they guess which ingredients go with each photo? How do their rankings compare?

If your students are willing to try *yomogi mochi*, Hiroshi's (not Skye's!) favorite snack, here is one recipe to try:

http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2005/Aug/24/il/FP508240313.html.

Go Fly A Kite

(Bodily-Kinesthetic, Logical-Mathematical)

In researching kite-flying and *rokkaku* battles, the author consulted kite expert David Gomberg. Take a look at Mr. Gomberg's video for the basics on flying a single-line kite: http://www.gombergkites.com/how.html.

Try flying kites with students using the suggestions in the video. Students can log their efforts by recording how many attempts it takes to launch their kites and how long their kites stay aloft. Have students mark their lines with colored tape every yard in order to estimate the height of their kites in flight.

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR NATALIE DIAS LORENZI



Flying the Dragon is your first novel. How long did you work on this book before it was published? How much did it change from the first draft to the finished book?

I started this manuscript after we moved to Italy and I made the switch from teaching to staying at home with my kids. I wrote while my little ones napped, so it took about a year to complete a first draft. That early draft was quite different from what would become the final

manuscript that my agent submitted to Charlesbridge. Hiroshi was the only main character, and Skye (then called Susan) was just a mean girl in his class. Truth be told, it was a bit of a depressing tale—Hiroshi moves away from his home in Japan to the US where he feels like an alien, his grandfather is ill—there wasn't a lot of lightness to the story.

My agent and I later decided that the story needed a major revision, and that Susan was itching to tell her side of the story; maybe she wasn't really the meanie I'd made her out to be. So Susan became Skye (a name that holds more significance in the story), and she became Hiroshi's cousin who both wants to help him and yet is embarrassed by his lack of English and cultural missteps at school. She added a lightness and humor that the story needed, and Hiroshi became a more multilayered character thanks to her influence.

You've lived in various parts of the world—the US, Germany, Italy, and Japan. What was it about Japan that made you want to write a story with characters from that culture as opposed to any of the many other cultures you've been exposed to in your life thus far?

Japan was the place where I felt the most foreign, if that makes sense. I lived on a US Air Force base in Germany as a child, but although we were in a foreign country, everyone on the base was American. When I lived in Italy as a young adult, I learned Italian fairly quickly because I was able to look up new words in my trusty pocket dictionary. But when I moved from Italy to Japan, I really struggled with the language and the culture. The Japanese are a lovely, polite people, but they are SO

polite that I wasn't getting any feedback when I'd mess up a phrase or a word in their language. Whereas the Italians would cock their heads, squint and shrug whenever they couldn't understand me, the Japanese would always smile and nod, no matter what mistakes came out of my mouth.

I wanted to use those feelings of befuddlement and frustration that I experienced as a second language learner and transplant them into my main character so that his emotions would feel authentic to readers. So I created Hiroshi, brought him halfway around the world, and plunked him down into a class where he feels lost and confused. I hope he's forgiven me!

What was the most difficult part about writing Flying the Dragon?

We've all heard the "write what you know" adage, but with *Flying the Dragon*, I was definitely veering off into unknown territory. Having lived in Japan for two years, I had plenty of knowledge about how the Japanese interact with *gaijin* (foreigners, like me), but I didn't know anything about the ins and outs of a Japanese family's daily life—their routines, the way they interacted with each other, the way their roles play out in the family hierarchy. I had a lot of help from Japanese friends and colleagues, two of whom read the entire final manuscript to check for cultural and linguistic accuracy. But even so, it was difficult to write scenes in which Hiroshi reacts to a situation differently than his American peers would. For example, there's a scene in which Hiroshi is angry with his grandfather. If Hiroshi were an American kid, he likely would have yelled and shown more anger than Hiroshi does in that scene. I had to portray his anger in a way that American readers would understand, yet remain true to the cultural norms in which Hiroshi was raised.

The kite-making and kite-fighting scenes also required a significant amount of research. My experience with kites was limited to flying cheap kites in my backyard in or in a park, both as a kid and, later, with my own kids. Luckily, two kite experts were willing to take the time to read the kite scenes in my manuscript and were integral in guiding the details so that those scenes will feel authentic to anyone who knows a thing or two about kites.

How did you decide that you wanted to become an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) specialist? Are you fluent in any languages other than English?

Prior to becoming an ESOL teacher, I had been an elementary classroom teacher for nine years. Most of the schools in which I worked were very multi-culturally and

linguistically diverse. During the two years I spent at a culturally homogeneous school, I realized how much I missed teaching diverse groups of students. At around the same time, my first child was born, and my Italian husband and I knew we wanted to raise our children in a bilingual, bicultural home. My husband and I are both second language learners—I learned Italian and he learned English when we were both adults, so we know first-hand what it's like to muddle through those early months and years of acquiring a new language in a foreign land. Because of those experiences, I gained more empathy for my students who were new immigrants to this country. Although it was initially difficult for me to accomplish daily tasks like grocery shopping and navigating the public transportation system in Italy and Japan, I still got to spend my days in an English-speaking environment at the international schools where I taught. But my newcomer students have to spend all day in school where they don't understand a word of English, and I still can't imagine how they do it. I wanted to focus on helping them to make a smooth transition to life in a new place as they learn a new language.

Have you ever participated in a *rokkaku* kite battle?

Believe it or not, no, I never have! But I have been to the Cherry Blossom Rokakku Kite Battle in Washington DC several times. Kelly Murphy, the artist whose work graces my book's cover, attended her first-ever kite battle in Japan. It really is an exciting sport to watch! If you ever get the chance to attend one, be sure and watch the fliers more than the kites; most people's eyes are fixed on the kites in the sky, but all the action is definitely on the ground.

What advice do you have for kids who want to become authors?

- 1. If you write, you're already an author!
- 2. Read as much as you can.
- 3. Pay attention to what makes you love a book—is it the characters who feel like friends? Is it a fast-paced plot? Interesting descriptions or settings? Also pay attention to why you *don't* like some books.
- 4. Don't be afraid to make mistakes! As with any skill, practice makes you better.
- 5. Don't feel as if you need to write an entire story—experiment with scenes, settings, and snippets of dialogue.
- 6. Share your stories and ask your readers questions, like what part did they like best? What was confusing?
- 7. Don't give up! Sharing stories is what connects us to one another.

TEACHER RESOURCES

- For information on Japan and Japanese culture, visit http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/.
- Learn more about the sport of rokkaku from the American Kite Fliers Association: http://kite.org/styles/single-line/rokkaku-kites/.
- A TCK (Third Culture Kid) is a child who spends a significant portion of his or her childhood immersed in a culture that is different from the parents' culture. There are both benefits and challenges to growing up as a TCK. Learn more here http://www.tckworld.com and here http://tckid.com.
- For resources on working with second language learners, visit the TESOL site here: http://www.tesol.org.
- For information and images from the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC, visit: http://www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org.
- Visit the author's website (http://natalielorenzi.com) and Pinterest Board (http://www.pinterest.com/nataliedlorenzi/flying-the-dragon/) for more information and activities related to *Flying the Dragon*.