Title: *Tsunami Girl*  Author: Julian Sedgwick and Chie Kutsuwada

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| **LIKES** |
| * Based on a real event – exploring the after effects. The depiction of the disaster felt very real and had a sense of the difficulty of finding a way to move on – made us think about what it would be like to be in that situation.
* The fox/dog and the way it appeared and disappeared and was both real and supernatural.
* The way the theme of death was handled – spirituality, ghosts, the supernatural, the grandfather communicating with her.
* The family relationships:
	+ nice to see representation of a grandfather/granddaughter for a change, the tonal shifts and deepening of their relationship
	+ other family relationships a believable mix of complex emotions – often sweet, but also argumentative or scratchy sometimes
	+ the presence of the grandmother through various objects
* Relatable protagonist – anxiety and EBSA a very current issue for many young people.
* A realistic ending – no magic wand, but there is hope for recovery and moving forward.
* Interesting to get to know more about Japanese language and culture including ideas about respect/formality, the supernatural, spiritual and religious elements. Enjoyed looking things up and finding out more. Liked the way folklore was woven through the story e.g. the catfish.
* The representation of what it’s like to have two cultures. Particularly interesting to see a character who is second generation and a quarter Japanese – she mentions that many people don’t realise she is part Japanese. Interesting to explore her sense of connection/disconnection. Don’t often see a character like this although it is the position of many in Britain today. Lots of teens will relate to that.
* Japan a ‘home away from home’ which is then taken away from her. Questions about where feels like home, where do you fit, which are both specific to Yuki and universal, especially for teens.
* The mix of forms. The manga allowed for layers of meaning and a blurring of the boundary between imagination and reality, the physical and spiritual worlds. Seemed very appropriate for the subject matter.
* The romance was well-handled – gentle, mutually supportive.
* The fact that the village was fictional, although many other details were real. Enabled the authors to amalgamate people’s experiences to keep it realistic, but also respectful of privacy and grief.
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| **DISLIKES** |
| * The dialogue was not so strong – too much of it and often rather inane/slowed the pace
* A bit slow to get going (students who have read it or started it have said this too). Tried recommending it to kids who like manga – but the pace was too slow for them.
* The sojourn back in the UK – understood why this was important, but it both took too long and covered too much time. Couldn’t wait to get back to Japan! The therapy sessions seemed a bit clunky – ‘just put your feelings into your drawings’. This was clear in other ways, didn’t need spelling out/not convinced this would work in the way it works for Yuki.
* There were things that were clearly important that we didn’t understand and this made some people impatient/feel they were missing something. E.g. Half Wave – could he have been better used in the story?
* The romance didn’t seem necessary – Yuki had enough going on! And a bit of a cliché to fall for the misunderstood bad boy.
* Hard as a reader to spend so much time in the post-disaster world, with all the death and grief and other difficult emotions.
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| **PUZZLES** |
| * What was the purpose of Joel? A rather two dimensional character who just seems like a rehearsal for the relationship with Taka. Some thought there was an important reason for Joel – it showed that although she went back to her friend and to school, it wasn’t enough. She had to return to Japan.
* The map – couldn’t quite picture how different bits of the disaster zone fit together.
* What was the purpose of the recurring song? Seemed significant but couldn’t quite work out why it cropped up when it did or what it meant.
* Were there manga tropes we missed, because this isn’t a genre we read?
* We’d love to ask Sedgwick and Katsuwada how they decided when and how to move between the prose and manga sections.
* The kokeshi doll and the grandmother’s objects. These were intriguing and would like to have worked out more about the significance of these.
* Had lots of questions e.g. which bits were real, the meaning of some things such as the fox, or the song – but was able to let these go. These unanswered questions seemed to fit with all the questions about identity, being different in different situations etc.
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| **PATTERNS (Within this book and links to other books and real-life experiences)** |
| ***Within the novel***Animals esp fox/dogBeing on a path/ walking away or towards – literal and metaphorical.Action and inactions.Identity, shifting ideas about yourselfLanguage – communication and being misunderstood. The unknown – that it can be positive.There can be hope even when no resolution is possible.***Real life links***The experience of learning a language and working out notions of formality/how culture is intrinsic to language.Moving home and being teased at school for my accent/dialect.When you have more than one language (or dialect) – which do you use and when? Links to your identity.Sedgwick’s inspirations e.g. the community centre which is determined to build the future rather than simply commemorate the past.***Links to other books / film**** Coming of age stories – it’s an unusual thing she has to overcome, but these stories are so common.
* *Sunset Song* by Lewis Grassic Gibbon. Written in Scots dialect. An experience of having to let go of the things you don’t understand to immerse yourself in a book.
* *To Kill a Mockingbird* – Boo Radley’s youth – misunderstood – people overacted to a justifiable action. Like Taka.
* Studio Ghibli films – esp Spirited Away for the use of the supernatural
* *Punching the Air* – art as a way to deal with difficult emotions and situations
* *The Last Paper Crane* by Kerry Drewery. Set in 1945, the day the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Also explores a grandfather/granddaughter relationship. Written in poetry, but the illustrations are very important to the story.
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| **HOOKS** |
| * Students interested in East Asian culture through K-Pop/J-Pop might enjoy it
* Students who really enjoy art might be interested in the novel through the importance of Yukki’s art to her/the story.
* Might appeal to students struggling with mental health/wellbeing especially anxiety and school avoidance
* The ghost story aspect would hook some
* Might tempt a student who is a competent reader but a bit stuck in the romance genre
* Studio Ghibli films as a way in (an alternative to Disney)
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| **READING ALOUD, HAVING IGNITED THEIR CURIOSITY** |
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| **OUTPUTS FOLLOWING READING (ORAL AND WRITTEN)** |
| * ‘Climbing my Grandfather’in the AQA Anthology – could use an extract from *Tsunami Girl* when studying this poem
* Link to *The Woman in Black* at GCSE. Create a manga insert for part of the novel using *Tsunami Girl* as a model
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| **RESOURCES** |
| * The English and Media Centre’s free Carnegie resource includes work on *Tsunami Girl*: <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/the-carnegie-medal-award-shortlist-2022-resources-download-emc-free>
* Lots of short films with Sedgewick on YouTube – e.g. talking about the mythology or why he decided to include manga. There is also a short trailer for the book. All really useful for book groups.
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| **OTHER** |
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