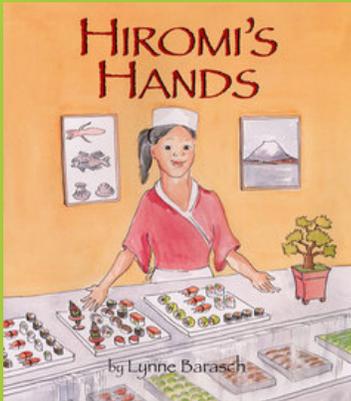


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# Hiromi's Hands

written and illustrated by Lynne Barasch

## About the Book

**Genre:** Nonfiction  
(biography)

**\*Reading Level:** Grade 3

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–5

**Guided Reading Level:** P

**Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points:** 3.7/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** AD600L

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Overcoming  
Obstacles, Mentors, Food  
(sushi), Families, Dreams and  
Aspirations, Breaking Gender  
Barriers, Biography/Memoir,  
Japan, Asian/Asian American  
Interest

## SYNOPSIS

Growing up in New York City, Hiromi Suzuki missed spending time with her father, a sushi chef who worked long hours in the family's Japanese restaurant. So one day when she was eight years old, Hiromi begged her father to take her to the Fulton Fish Market, where he bought fresh fish. Hiromi was fascinated by what she saw and learned; by the time she was thirteen, she was ready to take the next step. She asked her father to teach her to make sushi. Little did Hiromi realize that her request would lead her to the forefront of a minor culinary revolution, as women claimed their place in the once all-male world of sushi chefs.

Lynne Barasch was inspired to write this story by her daughter, who has been friends with Hiromi Suzuki since they both were in kindergarten. *Hiromi's Hands* is the true story of a young girl's determination to follow her dream, and a tribute to the loving family who supported her. Readers will cheer for Hiromi's success, and maybe decide to taste some sushi, too!



## BACKGROUND

**Author's Note:** I first met Hiromi Suzuki in 1983 as a five-year-old kindergartener in my daughter Dinah's class. They became lifelong friends. It was Dinah who suggested I write about Hiromi and how she became a sushi chef. Akire Suzuki, Hiromi's father, came to New York in 1964. Although he trained in the all-male sushi chef tradition of his native Japan, Akira adopted new ideas in the United States. He was willing to teach his daughter his craft, and in 1998 Hiromi became one of the first female sushi chefs in New York. Akira sold his restaurant in 2004 and retired. He does occasional catering jobs and would like to do more traveling. Hiromi attended culinary school and is currently working at a Japanese restaurant in New York City. In 2005 the Fulton Fish Market moved from downtown Manhattan to the Bronx. Now Akira and Hiromi can visit the fish market in this story only in their memories. –Lynne Barasch, 2006

**History of Sushi (From the Author's Note):** Sushi was developed from an ancient Southeast Asian method of preserving food. Fresh fish was salted and packed with rice. As the fish fermented, the rice produced a substance that preserved the fish. The process took a very long time. When the fish was ready to eat, the rice was discarded. Around the eighth century this method of food preservation was introduced into Japan. The Japanese developed a way to shorten the process. They began to eat the fish while it was partly raw, along with the rice. In the early 1800s a chef named Yohei Hanaya began to serve fresh raw fish over rice at his food stall in Edo, as Tokyo was then called. This was the beginning of the current style of sushi. After an earthquake in 1923, many chefs left Edo, taking sushi to other cities in Japan. Today sushi is eaten all over the world.

**Making Sushi and Becoming a Sushi Chef:** Sushi preparation is an honored Japanese tradition. While abbreviated courses are now available, traditional training takes ten years or more. Trainees begin with menial tasks like cleaning, then make rice, and finally learn to use a knife to cut fish and prepare and present sushi. This site gives more information about becoming a sushi chef: <http://www.kobejones.com.au/why-it-takes-a-decade-of-training-to-be-a-head-sushi-chef/>. This video gives insight into what it is like to train with a master sushi chef: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poyFIKT4Q5c>.

### Awards and honors for *Hiromi's Hands*:

2012 Paper Tigers 10th Anniversary Top 10 Multicultural Children's Books about Food

2009 March Book of the Month Rutgers University Project on Economics and Children

2008 Asian/Pacific American Award Honor for Literature, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA)

2008 KiriYama Prize Notable Children's Books, Pacific Rim Voices

2008 Bank Street Best Children's Books, Bank Street College of Education

2008–2009 Amelia Bloomer Project Feminist Task Force, American Library Association (ALA)

2008–2009 Maine Chickadee Award list

Celebrate with Books, Cleveland Public Library

Distinguished Children's Biography List, Cleveland Public Library

2007 Noteworthy Biographies, *San Francisco Chronicle*

Best Kids Books 2007, *The Miami Herald*

Starred review, *School Library Journal*

Starred review, *Kirkus Reviews*



## VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

fishmonger, apprentice, sushi, itamae (sushi chef), yanagi (sushi knife), full-fledged, salary, tuna, salmon, bonito, mackerel, clams, fluke, seasonings, glossy

### Academic

rural, scarce, afford, accompanied, fascinated, tradition, dictated, portions, opportunities, abundant, plentiful, simply, introduced, precious, sturdy, observed, pray, customs, pleaded, typical, dent, firm, demanding, high standards, eventually, mastered, present, artistry

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Have you ever heard of sushi? What is it? Have you tasted it?
2. Have you ever been interested in the job of one of your parents or other adult? How might a child learn about a parent's job? What are some ways that a person could become qualified for a particular job s/he dreams of having?
3. How might expectations and career opportunities differ based on someone's gender?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, end papers, title page, author's sources, illustrations, glossary and pronunciation guide, photograph, and author's note.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out about:

- How Hiromi's childhood experiences, family history and family values influence her life's work
- more about sushi and becoming a sushi chef

Encourage students to consider why the author, Lynne Barasch, would want to share this story with young people.



## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

- Who is the narrator of the story? Who is taking a vacation?
- What is Papa's childhood like? What does he do with his mother? What job does she suggest for him?
- What does Papa do first during his training to become a sushi chef? What does he do next? Then what? How long does it take for him to become a full-fledged sushi chef?
- What exciting news does Papa receive?
- What does Papa do in New York?
- How do Papa and Mama meet? What happens next?
- What does Hiromi do on Saturdays?
- What does Hiromi ask her father? What does he say?
- What is it like at the Fulton Fish Market? What does Hiromi's father teach her? Why is buying fish important to him?
- What does Papa say when Hiromi asks him if she can help at the restaurant? Based on the illustration, what does his response make her think?
- What does Hiromi's apprenticeship involve?
- What must Hiromi do to demonstrate her ability to be a sushi chef?
- Who is the surprise visitor? What does Hiromi think about while she prepares Mr. Ito's sushi? How does he react when he tries it?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

- Why is Papa's mother glad he is a boy? How are females limited in Japan during this time period?
- What does it mean to work 12 hours a day? Based on the information about his schedule, what is Papa's life like?
- What does Papa love about New York? How is it different than Japan?
- What does it mean to "live simply?" How does living simply allow Papa to open his own restaurant? How might Papa's childhood influences his financial attitudes and actions later in life?
- How does Hiromi feel about Japanese traditions? Why?
- Why does Hiromi love her trips to the fish market?
- How are the circumstances different for Hiromi that they were for her father as she begins to learn about making sushi? How do Hiromi's and Papa's experiences both illustrate the tradition of training to be a sushi chef?
- Why is Mr. Ito's opinion important to Hiromi? How does his response make her feel?
- What does Hiromi mean, "Those were just the words Papa needed to hear?" Why is it significant that Hiromi's parents are finally taking a vacation?
- Why do you think the author chose the title *Hiromi's Hands*?



★“An inspiring story of a young woman crossing a boundary, an informative glimpse into a career, and a study in perseverance, this title will appeal to a varied audience.”(starred review)

–*School Library Journal*

★“Barasch frames this profile of Hiromi Suzuki. . . as both an American story and a first-person tale of a young woman’s success in a trade traditionally dominated by men. . .” (starred review)

–*Kirkus Reviews*

“From the lively double-page spread of the fish market to the small, delicious pictures of the many kinds of sushi Hiromi learns to make, this book celebrates the riches of cultural diversity.”

–*Booklist*

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6)  
(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 8)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Read this interview with the author: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2404/interviews>. Why did Lynne Barasch want to write this book? Why do you think this story is significant? If you were to pick someone to write a story about, who would you pick? Why?
2. How could Hiromi be considered a role model? How could Papa also be considered a role model? Who is someone you consider a role model? Why?
3. Watch this video about training to become a sushi chef: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poyFIKT4Q5c>. Would you ever want to become a sushi chef? Why or why not? Would the training process and the job fit your personality and interests? If so, how? If not, what type of career would be a better fit for you and why?
4. How is this a story about honoring tradition? How is this a story about breaking tradition?
5. How is this book a window into Japanese culture? Give at least three specific examples.

6. Where do you like to go with your parent (or other adult family member) that feels part of a “grown-up world?” What is it like at this place? What can you learn?

### ELL/ESL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about sushi, or favorite foods from their family or cultures.



- The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

*(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)*

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)*

*(Writing Standards, Text Types and Purposes, Strand 3)*

*(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 4)*

- Work as a class to use details and specified dates in the text to create a timeline of events in Akira and Hiromi Suzuki's lives.
- Study the details in Lynne Barasch's illustrations. Add sticky notes to mark aspects of the illustrations that provide additional information about the setting and events in the story.
- Author Lynne Barasch got the idea for this story from her daughter, who was friends with Hiromi at school. Pair students up and ask them to discuss their career aspirations. Have each student write or compose orally an imaginary story that might be told about his or her partner one day.

- Read *Knockin' On Wood: Starring Peg Leg Bates* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/knockin-on-wood>) and/or *First Come the Zebra* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/first-come-the-zebra>), also by Lynne Barasch. Create a chart comparing how the main character in each story overcomes obstacles to achieve success.

### Social Studies

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)*

*(Writing Standards, Text Types and Purposes, Strand 2, and Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)*

- Locate Japan and New York City on a map. Trace the route Papa took when he immigrated to the United States.
- Try making sushi in the classroom with this activity: <https://www.leeandlow.com/educators/homeschooling/make-sushi-at-home>. If making actual sushi isn't possible, read the instructions as an example of informational text and act out the steps.
- Have your students read this *New York Times* article about Hiromi Suzuki: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/05/dining/she-has-a-knife-and-she-knows-how-to-use-it.html>. Make a chart with information about how the traditional identity of a sushi chef is changing.
- Have your students read excerpts from this BBC interview with Japanese sushi chef Yosuke Imada: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26762408>. Create a Venn diagram or chart comparing Imada's experience with Hiromi Suzuki's. How did Hiromi's training experience differ from Imada's because of her gender? Her location? Her generation? How were the two chefs' experiences similar?
- In this interview, Lynne Barasch says that Hiromi was "at the forefront of a minor culinary revolution, as women claimed their place in the once all-male world of sushi chefs" (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2404/interviews>). Have your students research other female pioneers in traditionally male-dominated professions, such as athletes, scientists, politicians, etc.



6. Have students research the training processes for other careers. Have them present their findings to the class. Include discussion about how these processes compare to the process of becoming a sushi chef.

### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1)

1. Invite parents or other adult family members to your class to talk about their careers, especially their ambitions as children, their training, and how their family traditions influenced their choices and actions.
2. Invite families to share traditional or special foods from their cultures and families with the class.

### Additional titles to teach about fulfilling your dreams:

***Ira's Shakespeare Dream*** written by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Floyd Cooper  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ira-s-shakespeare-dream>

***Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds: The Sammy Lee Story*** written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Dom Lee  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sixteen-years-in-sixteen-seconds>

***Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream*** written by Crystal Hubbard, illustrated by Randy DuBurke  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/catching-the-moon>

***Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree*** written by William Miller, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hue  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/zora-hurston-and-the-chinaberry-tree>

***Louis Sockaleix: Native American Baseball Pioneer*** written by Bill Wise, illustrated by Bill Farnsworth  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/louis-sockaleix>

***Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy*** written by Bill Wise, illustrated by Adam Gustavson  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/silent-star>

***Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story*** written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Lin Wang  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/shining-star>

***Jim Thorpe's Bright Path Story*** written by Joseph Bruchac, illustrated by S.D Nelson  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path>

***Tiny Stitches: The Life of Medical Pioneer Vivien Thomas*** written by Gwendolyn Hudson Hooks, illustrated by Colin Bootman  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/tiny-stitches>



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

**Lynne Barasch** has written and illustrated several award-winning books for children, including *Knockin' on Wood*, *Hiromi's Hands*, and *First Come the Zebra*, all three published by Lee & Low Books; and *Radio Rescue*, an ALA Notable Children's Book and Texas Bluebonnet Award Masterlist selection. Barasch was inspired to write *Hiromi's Hands* by one of her daughters, who has been friends with Hiromi Suzuki since they both were in kindergarten. Barasch and her family live in New York City. To find out more about Lynne Barasch, visit [LynneBarasch.com](http://LynneBarasch.com).

Check out Lynne Barasch's other Lee & Low titles:

*Knockin' On Wood: Starring Peg Leg Bates* <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/knockin-on-wood>

*First Come the Zebra* <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/first-come-the-zebra>

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

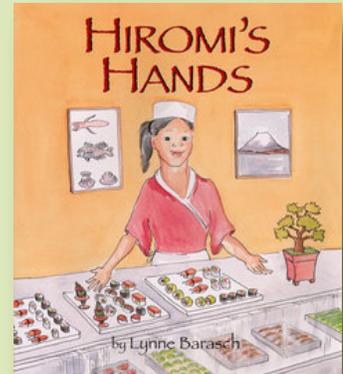
[www.leeandlow.com/books/hiromi-s-hands](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/hiromi-s-hands) (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for *Hiromi's Hands*



\$10.95, PAPERBACK

978-1-58430-275-9

40 pages, 9 x 10-1/2

\*Reading Level: Grade 3

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–5

Guided Reading Level: P

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.7/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD600L

**THEMES:** Overcoming Obstacles, Mentors, Food (sushi), Families, Dreams and Aspirations, Breaking Gender Barriers, Biography/Memoir, Japan, Asian/Asian American Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/hiromi-s-hands>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.