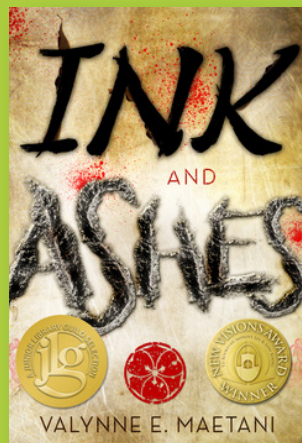


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

Ink and Ashes

written by Valynne E. Maetani

About the Book

Genre: Fiction (Mystery)

***Reading Level:** Grades 7–8

Interest Level: Grades 7–12

Guided Reading Level: W

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.0/15.0

Lexile™ Measure: HL740L

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Siblings, Families, Fathers, Friendship, Self-esteem and Confidence, Mystery, Persistence and Grit, Japanese American Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

SYNOPSIS

Claire Takata has never known much about her father, who passed away ten years ago. But on the anniversary of his death, she finds a letter from her deceased father to her stepfather. Before now, Claire never had a reason to believe they even knew each other.

Struggling to understand why her parents kept this surprising history hidden, Claire combs through anything that might give her information about her father . . . until she discovers that he was a member of the yakuza, a Japanese organized crime syndicate. The discovery opens a door that should have been left closed.

The race to outrun her father's legacy reveals secrets of his past that cast ominous shadows, threatening Claire, her friends and family, her newfound love, and ultimately her life. Winner of Tu Books' New Visions Award, *Ink and Ashes* is a fascinating debut novel packed with romance, intrigue, and heart-stopping action.

Awards and honors include:

- **Best Books of the Year**, *Kirkus Reviews*
- **Lone Star Reading List**, Texas Library Association
- **Asian/Pacific American Award Honor for Young Adult Literature**
- **Best Children's Books of the Year**, Bank Street College of Education
- **Starred Review**, *Kirkus Reviews*
- **Junior Library Guild Selection**
- **Starred Review**, *Shelf Awareness*
- **Paterson Prize for Books for Young People**
- **Best Fiction Book**, *Salt Lake City Weekly*



BACKGROUND

Ink and Ashes is a novel that centers around a mystery involving the Yakuza (Japanese Mafia). Author Valynne E. Maetani shared five facts about the **Yazuka**, via YA Books Central (<http://www.yabookscentral.com/blog/author-top-5-with-valynne-e-maetani>).

1. Yakuza members are known for their colorful tattoos, *irezumi*. The traditional method involves manually inserting the ink under the skin.
2. While the yakuza's activities are often illegal and secret, organized crime syndicates are, unlike other countries, not banned in Japan.
3. The yakuza are known for engaging in *sokaiya*, a form of extortion or blackmail.
4. While the yakuza are known for operating through extortion and sometimes violent methods, they are also known for helping those most in need.
5. Women are very rarely members of the yakuza because they are marginalized. Usually they are relegated to nothing more than servants, and even the wives and daughters of leaders are not spared this treatment.

Gangs: At the core of the novel lies the reality that Claire's father was, in fact, a member of an organized crime syndicate. His past catches up to the present, which brings about harm to the Takata family. While Hollywood often romanticizes gang violence, its impact is real and far-reaching. As such, educators should be prepared for thought-provoking questions from students regarding the intricacies of the mafia and gangs (both terms are often used interchangeably). The following online resources provide further information about gang prevention and awareness: <http://www.ncpc.org/topics/by-audience/parents/gangs-and-your-child> and <https://www.bcps.org/offices/sss/pdf/preventing-gang-involvement.pdf>.

According to the Violence Prevention Institute (<http://www.violencepreventioninstitute.com/>), the following factors contribute to the decision to join a gang.

1. Identity
2. Protection
3. Fellowship

4. Intimidation

Loss of a family member: Another issue that teachers must be prepared to address is dealing with the loss of a parent. Claire Takata is a resilient character who, after ten years, still struggles with the loss of her biological father. She copes by keeping a diary in which she writes to him, even though he is long deceased. It is likely that some student readers may have experienced similar loss and feel a deep connection to the main character. Teachers must equip themselves with proper resources both from the school district and outside. Consult with your school social worker regarding best practices and coping strategies. Some resources available in the public domain are: <http://www.esc3.net/cms/lib/TX00001506/Centricity/Domain/14/SupportingYourStudents2013%20AFT.pdf> and <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/tips-grief-at-school-2-chris-park>.

Lastly, it is important to note that *Ink and Ashes* is a novel rich in cross-cultural exchange. One important theme woven throughout the novel is identity, which reveals the blurred lines that exist when living between two cultures. It is imperative for teachers to consider the demographics of their classroom (and school district at-large) when predicting how such themes might impact the readers.

As such, we suggest this critical theme is taught with **deep sensitivity** and **open-mindedness**. Set the example of what **culturally responsive teaching** looks like:

1. **Collaborate** with students to establish guidelines early on. This will serve as a reminder for discussion etiquette as thought-provoking topics are developed.
2. **Anticipate** how your students will respond to controversial topics presented in the novel.
3. While teachers should **encourage** students to share their views without fear of judgment, teachers should consider how to respond to emotion, and use this to guide instruction and for future instructional planning.
4. Aim to **include** and discuss outside materials that align with the text and essentially address underrepresented groups' experiences in ways that do not marginalize their experiences.



VOCABULARY

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

Content Specific

muumuu, lei, Spritzkuchen, chopsticks, pidgin (dialect spoken in Hawaii), *kolohe* (Hawaiian term meaning wild or rascal), Oma (German term for grandmother), *moshi, moshi* (Japanese telephone greeting), *Otochan* (Japanese term of endearment for father/daddy), *itadakimasu* (Japanese phrase commonly said before eating a meal), butusudan (Buddhist altar), fútbol (Spanish word for soccer), touché (French term meaning “good point”), koa wood, manga (Japanese comic books/graphic novels), anime (Japanese animated films), yazuka (Japanese mafia), kimono (long, tradition Japanese robe), obi (sash for kimono), *kanzashi* (flowered hair ornament), foxtrot, aloha (Hawaiian greeting for hello and goodbye), chrysanthemums, kamikaze, samurai, headhunter, *tsuchigumo* (dirt, earth spider), *déjà vu* (French phrase meaning already seen), *irezumi* (traditional tattoos of the yazuka mafia), shi (Japanese number four, homophone for death), *yonsei* (fourth generation Japanese American), *juzo* (prayer beads)

Academic

incense, summon, lacquered, commemorate, nocturne, lilted, compel, insignificant, thrummed, euphoria, legitimate, contraption, ludicrous, oblivious, contemplating, cremated, chastised, anguished, urn, incipient, diligent, irreplaceable, culprits, colluding, pristine, pectin, avian, misdemeanor, autopsy, fratricide, emblazoned, jubilation, effigy, concussion, flustered, amnesia, lichesome, antiquities, presumptuous, triumvirate, precautionary, concussion, hypothermia, pummel, analogies

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:

- Class Discussion:** The immigrant experience is an important theme in the novel. The United States of America is a country of immigrants. Invite students to share stories of their families’ experience in moving to this country from their homeland(s). How has life changed? What adaptations were made in your family that more or less assimilated to American traditions? How has your family kept their cultural legacy alive?
- “Go Hunting”:** Break students into four groups. Each group will be assigned a specific topic. (i.e. Axis Powers, Yazuka, Hawaiian Pidgin, Process for US Citizenship) After reading the book jacket summary, students will scour through internet resources that include information related to their topic. Present this information in the form of a poster-size graphic organizer and share with the class. Extending these topics further, students may answer the following during the reading process:

 - What role does the Axis Powers play in the relationship between Claire, her brothers, Fed, Nicholas, and Forrest?
 - Summarize the code of honor that exists in the Yazuka.
 - Justify how Hawaiian Pidgin serves as a key toward helping Claire solve the mystery.
 - Compare Claire’s father’s process of becoming a citizen with the general process. Are there any similarities or differences?
- Quote Analysis:** Use quotes from the novel to analyze character traits and predict the plot. Type select quotes from the novel (enough for each student in the class) and cut the quotes into individual paper strips. Using the graphic organizer (sample below), students will analyze their quote and then walk around the classroom and switch with a classmate until they have analyzed a minimum of five quotes. (Chart can be extended or shortened to meet classroom needs.) At the end of the activity, lead a whole class discussion on the quotes and how they can help students get to know the characters and the plot before diving in to the text. (see the last page for quote analysis chart)



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. 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, title page, author's dedications, afterword, various types of text.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- the Japanese immigrant experience in the United States
- the intricacies of living between two cultures (in this case, Japanese and American)
- the difficulties of dealing with the loss of a parent
- the code of honor that exists among cultures

Have students also read to determine story structure and genre. Encourage students to consider why the author, Valynne E. Maetani, 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)

1. In the opening chapter, what special day are the Takatas honoring?
2. How does Claire's father's death impact her mother, specifically in relation to how memorable occasions are celebrated in their family?
3. What are the important traditions and provisions needed for this ceremony?
4. How does each sibling feel about the ceremony? Justify your answer with citations from the text.
5. Why does Mom choose not to display family pictures?
6. What secret does Claire discover? How does she stumble upon this secret?
7. What problem does Claire face in reading the letter? How does she solve this problem?
8. How does Claire's stepfather spend time with the children on the weekends? How do these skills come into play later on in the novel?
9. How does Claire learn the art of lock picking?
10. Why can't Claire and her siblings ask Mom about the note she found?
11. What does Parker do to conceal the letter? How does Mom react?
12. Who does Claire call upon to ask about the connection between her two fathers? What advice does he offer?
13. What is the significance of the Takata siblings passing each other bones with chopsticks?
14. What does the letter reveal about the relationship between the two fathers?
15. What is APM? How is that reflected in history? How do they make it fit in their relationship, despite the failure of the real Axis Powers?



★“[T]he novel’s twists and turns will keep readers riveted and guessing even after they finish the book. This fantastic debut packs a highly suspenseful blend of action, intrigue, and teen romance.”

–*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★“Valynne E. Maetani’s engrossing debut novel begins with a mystery that won’t release its hold on readers until the finish. . . . She is a writer on the rise.”

–*Shelf Awareness*, starred review

“[S]martly written debut. . . . VERDICT This thoroughly engaging tale in the tradition of Nancy Drew or Veronica Mars ends on a satisfying note, but readers will hope for a sequel because it’s just that good.”

–*School Library Journal*

16. In chapter 6, what reason does Forrest offer for his commitment to helping Claire figure everything out?
17. Retell the events leading up to Claire’s father’s death. How did he die? What would access to the autopsy report provide for Claire?
18. What does Claire do to obtain the autopsy report? How does she go undetected in its purchase?
19. How does the author use foreshadowing in chapter 8?
20. What does the letter reveal about the two dads?
21. In chapters 9 and 10, what is taken from Claire? Who does she accuse? What is her backstory with this person?
22. In chapter 11, how do we see the relationship between Claire and Forrest start to change? Cite from the text.
23. By chapter 12, another suspicious activity occurs that negatively impacts Claire. What is the event? How will this affect her extracurricular activities?
24. What surprising facts are revealed from the autopsy report, in chapter 13?
25. When Claire’s father died in the hospital, she and her siblings wet his lips with water. What is the cultural significance of such an act?
26. In chapter 14, Claire and Forrest sift through more pictures. What further clues do these pictures provide?
27. What facts from the pictures and the newspaper clippings lead Claire to conclude that her father was in the yazuka?
28. What do the five rings represent? What does the crest represent?
29. By chapter 16, the mysterious black SUV reappears. What does Claire find outside her window? What is this person doing? How does Claire connect this to the autopsy report?
30. In chapter 17, what does Fed offer Claire to ease her suspicion about the black SUV? How does it work?
31. In chapter 18, Claire is harassed yet again. What happens in this particular scene? How does Claire handle it? How does the school handle the harassment? What happens to Claire on her way home?
32. What does Claire discover in her room after the house party? What does Claire find beneath her window? How does this reemerge later in the novel?
33. What event threatens the Takata family in chapters 23 and 24? What does the song represent?
34. In chapter 25, Claire is followed yet again. How is this incident different from previous ones?
35. Why are the potted plants in Claire’s hospital room considered bad luck?
36. Describe Claire’s table of events and potential suspects.



37. How does Claire's stepfather handle the news that she is dating Forrest?
38. What does Claire learn about Mr. Tama in chapter 32? How does this conflict with the story he gave students about his background upon first arriving? What major clues lead Claire to believe that he is the prime suspect?
39. What plan does Claire concoct to go undetected and sneak into the classroom during the dance? What does she find once there? What does she do afterward? What happens to Mr. Tama?
40. What does Claire learn about her stepfather in chapters 35 and 36?
41. What are Claire's thoughts on Mr. Tama's leave of absence? How does his replacement, Coach Cesar, differ in teaching style?
42. What suspicions does Claire begin to have about Mumps?
43. Why did Mumps arrive at Claire's house with flowers? What do the four white flowers represent? What does the color of her written name represent? How does this particular scene impact the reading experience?
44. Retell the events that occur immediately after Mumps leaves Claire's house in chapters 37 and 38.
45. Who kidnaps Claire and Nicholas? What is his connection to the ongoing mystery?
46. How have both Arakaki and Claire suffered because of the decisions Claire's father made?
47. How does the kidnapping affect Nicholas? What do you think are Arakaki's motivations for taking him, even though Claire is the real target?
48. How will the police be able to locate Claire and Nicholas?
49. How does Claire show Arakaki mercy?
50. What is Mumps' connection to Arakaki? What were his motivations for helping Arakaki?
51. What does the APM change their name to? What reason does Nicholas provide for this change?

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)

1. At several points throughout the novel, Claire struggles with whom to trust. When her stepfather asks if she trusts him, she wonders, "If I felt his love, did that also mean I trusted him?" Do you think that love and trust are always the same? Is it possible to love someone without trusting them, or without knowing the whole truth about them?
2. What is APM? How is that reflected in history? How do the main characters make it fit in their relationship, despite the failure of the real Axis Powers?
3. Why did Mumps arrive at Claire's house with flowers? What do the four white flowers represent? What does the color of her written name represent? How does this particular scene impact the reading experience?
4. How does author Valynne Maetani use Claire's letters to her father throughout the book to demonstrate how Claire has changed? How is Claire the narrator different from Claire the letter writer? What do you think accounts for this difference?
5. What reasons motivate Claire's mother to keep the information about her husband from her children? Is she selfish or selfless in keeping this information? What would you do if you were in her position?
6. What are some signs that Claire's father was a part of the yakuza? What made the yakuza life attractive to Claire's father? Do you think his family and economic circumstances excuse or justify his decision to join the yakuza?
7. Why might Claire's father, Henry Sato, decide to become a judge after leaving the yakuza? How might his experiences in the yakuza help him in his new career as a judge? Is it appropriate for him to be a judge? Do a judge and a member of the yakuza have similar visions or interpretations of justice?
8. In chapter 8, how does the author use foreshadowing? Retell the events in this chapter



that cause suspicion. How do these events impact the plot later on?

9. How does shame influence both Chase and Arakaki to hurt Claire? What are the roots of their perceived dishonor, respectively? Why do they think hurting Claire will help them find closure? Do you think revenge can bring closure?
10. If Claire were to write one more letter to her father at the end of the book, what do you think she would say or ask him? Do you think she would forgive and accept him or has too much changed?
11. There are several moments in the novel where Claire's safety is threatened. How does Claire defy the stereotypical "damsel in distress?" What factors do you think attribute to this part of her character?
12. In chapter 8, Claire states, "When we first moved to Utah, there were too many times I wished I had blonde hair so I could look like everyone else." In your opinion, does this quote define how she sees herself? Does this self-concept change throughout the course of the novel? How so? How not?
13. After the fire in chapter 24, what clues are provided regarding who could be the possible culprit? Justify your opinion with text evidence.
14. Author Valynne Maetani has stated that her goal was to create a book she never got to read: a contemporary title with a Japanese protagonist. In your opinion, does the book reinforce or shatter stereotypes of Japanese culture? How so? How not?
15. How does this novel defy gender stereotypes? Cite specific examples from the text.
16. The book ends with most questions answered, though Maetani leaves the door open for a sequel. Would you want to read a sequel to *Ink and Ashes*? If so, what do you hope would happen in it? Where do you think Arakaki is? Do you think he has made peace? How so? How not?
17. In the author's note, Valynne Maetani briefly mentions the Japanese immigrant experience, directly related to World War II. How did traditional Japanese culture change for many families once they arrived in America? How were their civil rights violated?

18. What is the function of each member of the APM? What skills and qualities does each character bring to the team? Justify your opinions by quoting various supporting statements made by character.
19. How does the kidnapping affect Nicholas? What do you think are Arakaki's motivations for taking him, even though Claire is the real target? Justify your answer with text evidence.

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

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. What interesting Japanese customs have you learned by reading this novel? Cite examples from the text. Can you find any similarities to your own cultural or family customs?
2. If you were Claire, how would you organize the clues to determine your pool of suspects?
3. How would you modify the plot so that Mr. Tama is ruled out as a suspect, but isn't defamed?
4. Pretend that Claire did not have the remote for the GPS to alert her family that she was in danger. What alternative would you propose to rescue both her and Nicholas?
5. What details would you use to support Mom's reasons for not telling her children the truth?

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 immigrant experience and/or life as an American born to immigrant parents.
5. 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/Writing

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and

Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Conventions of Standard English, Strand 1)

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 9)

1. Creative writing activity: Research the recipes of the dishes mentioned in the novel. Can you identify the origin of the ingredients and the recipes? Are there any legends and stories attached to these dishes? Are there any additional Japanese dishes that you wish were included in the novel? Students will work in small groups to conduct the research, write the history, and find or create illustrations to contribute to the *Ink & Ashes* classroom cookbook. Students may culminate this activity with a potluck lunch, complete with the foods from the novel (and cookbook), in addition to traditional Japanese clothing, art, and music.
2. What real-life people or events are you reminded of by characters or events in the story? Prepare a critical essay, citing examples from the novel and your chosen event to justify the similarities.
3. Prepare a defensive essay that explains your views on which character changed the most throughout the course of the novel. Defend your views by citing specific examples.
4. Select a scene in which you disagreed how a character handled a situation, person, or event. In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have happened.
5. Creative Writing Activity: Write a Twitter conversation. Group students in pairs to summarize a scene from the novel as a Twitter chat among two characters. You may use the following Twitter template, made publicly available via Share My Lesson or create your own (<https://sharemylesson.com/teaching-resource/twitter-template-149015>). Be sure to use hashtags to reflect the characters' mood during the scene.
6. After years of searching for his daughter's killer, Arakaki has just received an unexpected telephone call from Claire Takata. Write a scene that depicts his reaction after he hangs up the phone and creates his plot to seek revenge.



7. Pretend you are Claire and write one final letter to Otochan after you've learned the truth from Arakaki. What would you say? What would you want Otochan to know? How would you feel?
8. Write a letter from the perspective of Claire's father to Claire. What would he reveal to Claire? What would he want her to know? What would he say?

Geography/Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Use a map scale to measure the distance Claire's father traveled from Tokyo to Hawaii. Create a map outlining the distance between the two points. Using this information, make a travel diary written in his voice.
2. Who are the Yazuka? Create a PowerPoint or other visual media detailing their history and legacy. Include a timeline and the Yazuka in contemporary times.
3. Create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences of the yazuka to an American gang in history.
4. *Ink & Ashes* touches upon the issue of immigration, specifically from Japan to the Pacific region of the United States. Conduct research about the migration of the Japanese to the U.S. Create a timeline that outlines dates and facts regarding the reasons they moved to the United States, along with their experiences upon arrival and assimilation.
5. The novel briefly mentions the Axis Powers that joined forces during World War II. Research the factors contributing to this war. Create an atlas or Google Earth project identifying the countries that represent the Axis Powers and the Allies.

Art/Media

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Hawaiian Pidgin is a creole-based form of English that is spoken by residents of Hawaii. Research various words and phrases mentioned both in the novel and from online resources. Draw or find online pictures that match each word or phrase. Present your findings in an illustrated picture book.
2. Oh no! An Amber Alert has just been released for the abduction of Claire and Nicholas! Write, recite, and film a live news report covering all the details of the event. Be sure to include key details leading up to the abduction. Interview important stakeholders who can speak to the character of both Claire and Nicholas.
3. Use earth-friendly materials to reconstruct a traditional butsudan. Write a brief description of what it is, its history, and how it's used in the novel.
4. Citing text evidence, select a theme portrayed in the novel, *Ink & Ashes*. Create a Power Point, Prezi, or other visual media presentation to reflect how this theme is developed over the course of the text.

School–Home Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 2 and 3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)
(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

1. In chapter 28, we learn that crow's eyes represent bad luck in Japanese culture. Interview a family member regarding superstitions in your own culture. Make a list of them and answer the following: From where do these superstitions derive? From childhood? From cultural or religious practices? Is there an oral history to justify this superstition? Be prepared to share the most interesting response(s) with the class.
2. In chapter four, we learn that the Takata siblings passed each other bones with chopsticks after their father was cremated. Cremation is common in Japan. Interview a family member or a neighbor from a culture other than your own, to learn about common practices. How does the family honor their loved ones upon death? Record key details and share your findings with the class.



Quote	What does this tell you about the character?	Make a plot prediction
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <p>“When we first moved to Utah, there were too many times I wished I had blonde hair so I could look like everyone else.”</p>		

From Prereading Focus Questions no. 3, Quote Analysis

(Option: Add a fourth column for students to determine if their plot prediction was correct, to be filled out during the reading of the novel.)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VALYNNE E. MAETANI grew up in Utah and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania. She has developed educational software for children with learning disabilities, but currently spends her time writing and as a part-time stage mom and soccer mom for her three daughters. She lives in Salt Lake City with her husband and their children. *Ink and Ashes* is her first novel. Maetani is a member of the We Need Diverse Books team and is dedicated to promoting diversity in children's literature because all children should grow up believing their stories deserve to be told. Visit her online at www.valynne.com/

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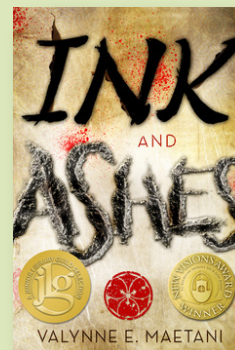
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By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Book Information for *Ink and Ashes*



\$19.95, HARDCOVER

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368 pages, 5-1/2 X 8-1/4

*Reading Level: Grades 7–8

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 7–12

Guided Reading Level: W

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
5.0/15.0

Lexile™ Measure: HL740L

THEMES: Siblings, Families, Fathers, Friendship, Self-esteem and Confidence, Mystery, Persistence and Grit, Japanese American Interest, Asian/Asian American Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ink-and-ashes>

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