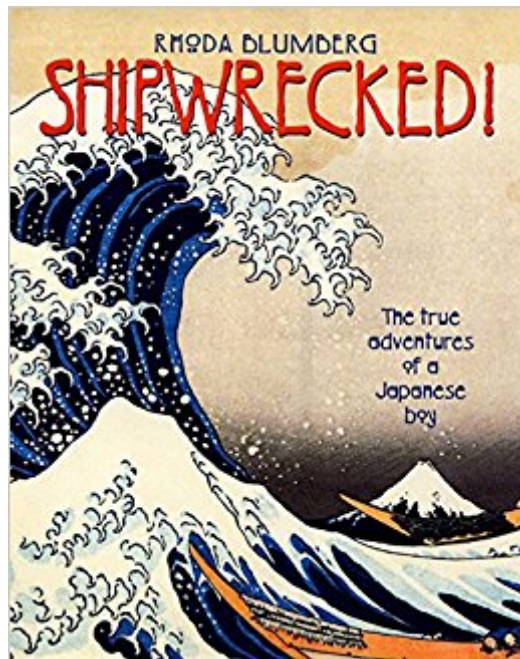




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# Shipwrecked!: The True Adventures Of A Japanese Boy



## Synopsis

Any person who leaves the country to go to another and later returns will be put to death. This was the law in Japan in the early 1800s. When fourteen-year-old Manjiro, working on a fishing boat to help support his family, was shipwrecked three hundred miles away from his homeland, he was heartbroken to think that he would never again be able to go home. So when an American whaling boat rescued him, Manjiro decided to do what no other Japanese person had ever done: He went to America, where he received an education and took part in events that eventually made him a hero in the Land of the Rising Sun.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

From 14-year-old castaway to honored samurai, Manjiro Nakahama (1827-1898), the first Japanese person to come to the United States, had more adventures than the hero of many a swashbuckler. With insight and flair, Rhoda Blumberg relays Manjiro's life story in *Shipwrecked!: The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy*. Handsomely illustrated with period drawings, sketches and woodblock prints, the text also explains such historical elements as 19th-century Japan's carefully enforced isolation from the Western world, the importance of the American whaling industry and the enormous cultural gaps between Japanese and American societies. (Feb.) Copyright 2001 Reed

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Grade 4-8-The true tale of a 14-year-old Japanese boy who, after being shipwrecked while fishing in 1841, was marooned for six months, rescued by an American whaling ship, educated in New England, and returned home to become an honored samurai. Blumberg was inspired to rescue this incredible story about Manjiro, also known as John Mung, when she realized that although it was well known in Japan, it enjoys only a small awareness in the West. The author's presentation illuminates what Japan's isolationist policies meant to individuals living there at that time and the immediate cultural differences that Manjiro experiences such as eating bread and sitting in chairs as the "first Japanese person to set foot in the United States." Her book packs a lot of excitement and drama into a few pages, and has lots of large, well-chosen illustrations. The title doesn't begin to hint at the incredibly varied adventures that are compacted here, deserving of a longer and more thorough treatment, but the text does convey the author's enthusiasm and awe of her subject. This is a good addition to libraries, as not only is it a fluid story about a fascinating person not yet on the shelves, but it also sheds light on many topics such as Japanese history, whaling practices, and 19th-century America. Andrew Medlar, Chicago Public Library, IL Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A remarkable story that is well told. I bought this book, and her other book about Commodore Perry, for my grandsons. As kids, they wonder about such things as alien invasions and abducted by aliens, typical sci-fi stuff of young boys. This story is a true story of a young boy who is rescued, as opposed to abducted, by an alien culture and what he records about the experience. The story pairs perfectly with the Blumberg book about Commodore Perry. As she states in the opening chapter of that book, the American ships were viewed as alien invaders. I guess they were, in a sense. This story of the poor Japanese boy, Majiro, is the perfect counterpoint. He is rescued by an alien vessel and transported to a far-away culture as foreign to his own as anyone could imagine. The Americans treat him well, for the most part, educating him and allowing him to support himself by his own work. He returns to Japan and... I won't spoil an amazing story that ends well.

This is a slender book written for young readers. But it is a fascinating story of a real-life adventure by a plucky and intelligent boy. Manjiro's father died when he was nine. To support his mother and an invalid brother he became a fisherman. A storm blew their boat to an uninhabited island about 300 miles from Japan and left the shipwrecked. After more than a year an American whaling ship

rescued them. Two of the castaways stayed in Hawaii for some years. Manjiro continued to America and became a foster child of the captain. He learned to speak English, to read it and write it, and he was also a talented artist. He eventually decided to return to Japan, even though Japanese law forbade the return of any Japanese who left. Manjiro was arrested upon his return and interrogated many times. Fortunately the Daimyo who had custody was quite intelligent and recommended sparing Manjiro. Soon after this Commodore Matthew Perry arrived. Because Manjiro spoke English and had visited America, he became an adviser to the Shogunate. Since a peasant fisherman was too low caste for this role, Manjiro was promoted to Samurai status, which was highly unusual. Manjiro aided Japan in building modern ships and recommended adopting western technology. His final career was a professor of nautical engineering - the first in Japan.

I purchased this used and it was well worthwhile. Unfortunately, I bought it for my 8 year old son, he didn't like it so much but my 10 year old daughter did. Maybe the boy will come around. It's one of our school's 3rd grade reading selections this year; while a different author's extended version is in use in their 6th grade class. "Shipwrecked" is a true tale of young Manjiro shipwrecked on a remote isle with 4 Japanese fishermen after a storm. Several but not all of the survivors are picked up by a whaling vessel and taken to America. Manjiro takes a difficult tragic experience and becomes a fascinating young man showing resilience and a desire to learn--great lessons. As he ages, he becomes important in international relations between Japan and the USA. If you can wrap this read in a lesson about perseverance and adaptability you'll find it even more appealing. If you are squeamish about whaling, oh well--you can work in why we don't do that anymore. Told elsewhere in greater or lesser detail, this book is fine reading to your children at bedtime, especially if of mixed parentage (there's a little Japanese and American in all of us). Will take a few nights. For your 8-11 year old it's an hour or two read. About right for the 8-12 year olds. One thing that makes the book shine is the inclusion of many of Manjiro's ink drawings. My older child readily appreciated his talent. Nicely done.

I use this book in a class of 5th graders when we work on a year long study of literature from around the world. Many of my students have visual impairment, and I like the size of the book/pictures. Fantastic story read in a more historical manner than a narrative one.

My 13 year old grandson said this book was "awesome" - about a young Japanese boy who was shipwrecked while fishing to support his family, taken by his rescuers to America where he was

raised. He returned many years later to Japan and "saved Japan".

I was unaware of this story and found it of surprising (though not great) interest. I think somewhat more historical background for the locations would have been helpful. Otherwise this was quite OK. The layout and art add nicely to the impression. I have no regret having looked into this obscure minor corner of history.

Gorgeous

good

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