

THE STORY
OF THE
FISHERMAN
FROM
KANAGAWA

Museum Adventures in Art



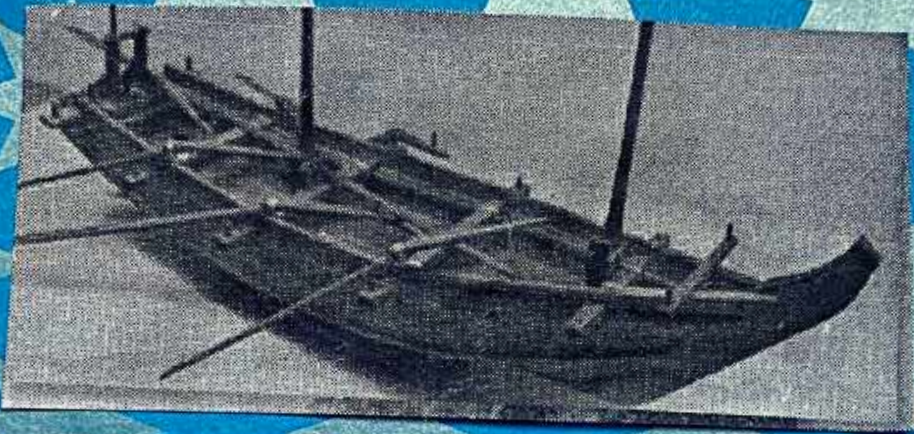
This week, we are going to learn about a special time in history when the fishermen of Japan would travel out to sea to provide food for their community. We will follow the journey of Hiroto, a young man from Kanagawa, Japan who wants to make his family proud!



In the early 1800s, there was no electricity. There were no cars, no cameras, and no telephones. To keep the city running smoothly, the people of Kanagawa had to work very hard. Without electricity or refrigerators, food had to be caught or farmed fresh, and delivered often.



Hiroto was a 17 year old boy from Kanagawa, a city just south of Tokyo, Japan. When Hiroto turned 17, his family decided he needed a job to help them get by. Hiroto wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father, and become one of the great fishermen of Kanagawa. At this time in Japan, only the most brave men could be fishermen.



The Japanese fishermen used special boats called oshikuri-bune. These long wooden boats were mainly operated by oars, but also had a sail that could be fully taken down by the men. The fishermen had to be extremely strong to move the boat forward through the rough ocean; they also had to be very brave to face the huge waves.

For young Hiroto, this was a nerve-wracking idea, but he was up for the challenge in order to make his family proud. In Japanese culture, it is very important to provide for your family and to make them proud. It is also important to be a good and honest person in order to make your ancestors proud too.



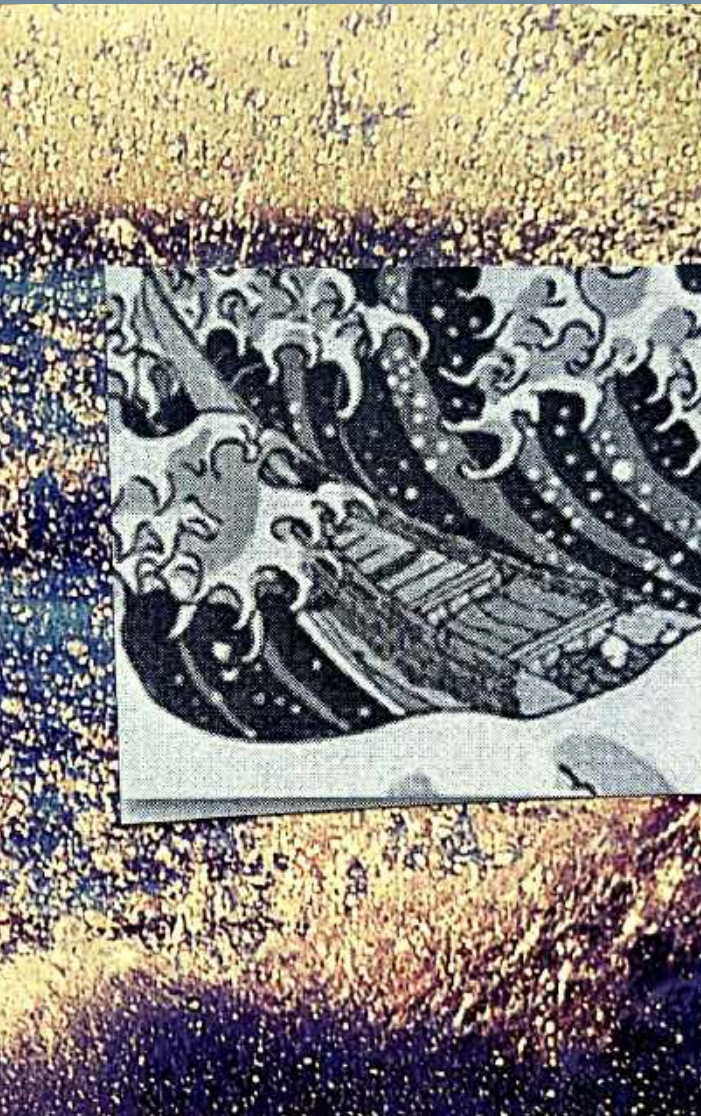
Each day, the fishermen of Kanagawa would load up their gear and climb aboard their oshiokuri-bune boats. On Hiroto's first day as a fisherman, he wanted to row an oar at the very front of the boat so that he could see it all! As the men started rowing the long boat out to sea, Hiroto could see that the ocean was more turbulent than usual : the waves were crashing loudly against the shore. This made the butterflies in his stomach flutter even more.



Once out to sea, the fishermen began casting their nets. The most important part of the fishing trip was to catch the fish alive, and make sure they could be brought back to shore alive too. Because there were no refrigerators, the Japanese markets were filled with live animals to be butchered. The fish had to be kept alive until it was almost time to eat them; that way they stayed fresh and wouldn't spoil and make the people of the city sick.

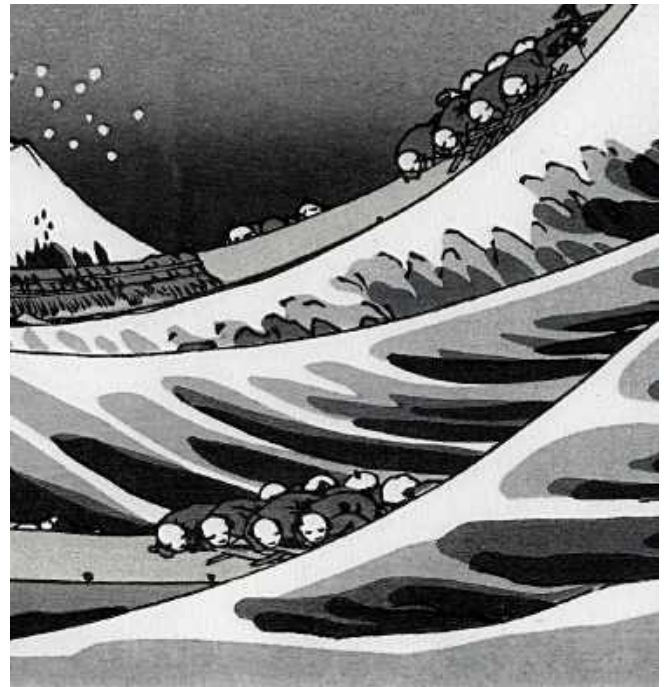


After the first few catches of fish were lifted onto the deck of the boat, Hiroto was very tired. He was using all of his strength to row the boat and lift the heavy nets filled with fish onto the boat. Just as Hiroto was wiping the sweat and salty ocean water from his brow, another fisherman yelled with delight, “Kyodaina, Kyodaina!” This means “huge” in Japanese. This signaled something exciting: the latest net to be cast out had brought in the biggest fish of the day! There it was, glittering in the sunshine... a bluefin tuna! This was the largest fish Hiroto had ever seen! All of the fishermen cheered, knowing this large tuna would bring a high dollar reward at the fish market.



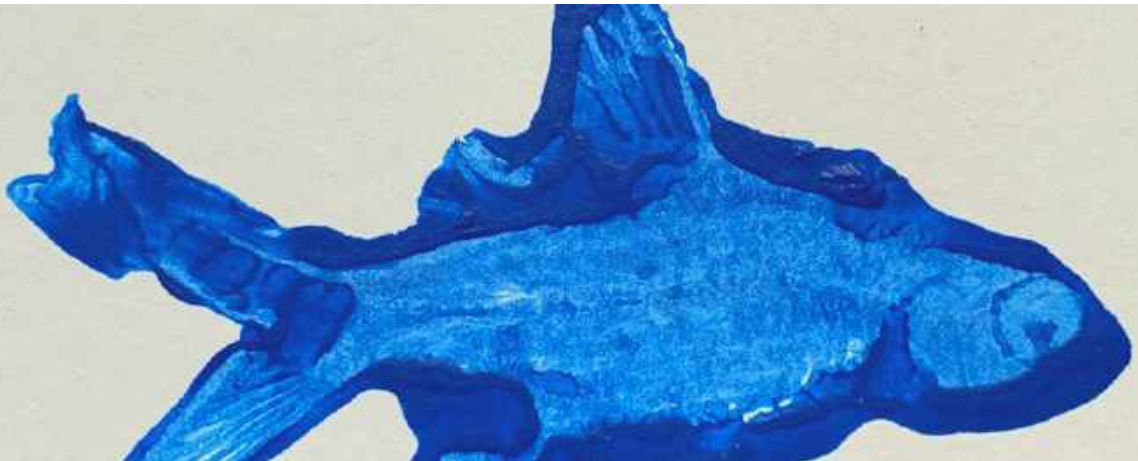
It was time to row back to shore. Soon, the waves began pushing the boat back and forth with more strength than earlier in the day. The fishermen began yelling to row faster, but Hiroto was frozen with fear. He looked behind the boat and saw a massive wave headed right towards them. As the wave grew beneath the boat, Hiroto could feel the boat lifting up, up, up into the sky. He could see the city below him as the boat began to ride the wave ashore.

Hiroto was terrified! He thought this great wave would surely overturn the boat, and the men would lose all their fish for the day. Luckily, the wave broke gently, and swiftly pushed the boat all the way to the shore of Kanagawa. Hiroto sighed a breath of relief. Thank goodness!, he thought. Hiroto was able to bring one fish home for his family as a reward for a tough first day on the boat. He picked a shiny fish that he knew his mother would enjoy. He plopped the fish in a bucket with some water and headed home. When Hiroto arrived at home, he told his family of the intense first day of work he had as a fisherman of Kanagawa. His mother was very proud!





Hiroto's mother decided they should remember this day forever, and help Hiroto record the story of the Great Wave of Kanagawa. Hiroto's mother had taught him about gyotaku, the process of making a picture by covering a fish in ink and stamping it on paper, when he was a young boy; he grew up with prints of his father's biggest catches around his home. Today would be the first day that Hiroto could make a gyotaku of his very own with the first fish he caught. Hiroto and his family would remember this adventure forever!



THINK, SEE, DO

THINK...

Why do you think storytelling is important to Hiroto's family?

SEE...

Go back to the pictures of waves in the story. What feeling do you get when you look at the waves?

DO...

Imagine you are Hiroto and you've just caught the biggest bluefin tuna in the ocean! Draw a picture of you with your award winning catch on a separate piece of paper.

EVERHART WORD LIST

Oshiokuri-bune - A long, wooden fishing boat.

Gyotaku - The traditional Japanese method of printing fish, dating back to the mid-1800s. This form of nature printing was used by fishermen to record their catches.

Fish market - A fish market is a marketplace for selling fish products.