

Japanese Culture and Traditions

Losing Face	"If you are troublemaker, then I am troublemaker...I am bad father, bad family" (pg 9).
Protect Family Name	Causing trouble will bring shame to the Nakaji name (pg 7).
Tatami mat	Grampa slept on the floor in Tomi's room on a tatami mat (pg 30).
Butsudan	Japanese family altar. "A place to go to when you need some help, when you have a problem" (pg 32). A place to talk to one's ancestors, seeking advice and guidance.
Shaved (bald) head	Grampa's head was kept bald in an old traditional Japanese way for men (pg 37).
Bad-luck on fishing boats	Bananas on a Japanese fishing boat brings bad luck and haoles on a Japanese fishing boat brings bad luck (pg 42).
Rice and shoyu-egg	Traditional Japanese breakfast food. Raw egg and soy sauce over rice (pg 44-45).
Katana	Samurai sword. "That belong to your ancestor. Long time ago. Nobody since then bring disgrace or shame to the name of the family" (pg 164).
Gift Exchange	Billy gives an expensive gift to a poor family creating a awkward situation (pg 169-170). Billy thinks the generosity of the gift expresses his care. In fact, the generosity of the gift highlights Reiko's poverty creating a little embarrassment. Tomi whispers to Billy to take something. For Billy taking something minimizes the value of the gift as gift (a thoughtful gesture, with "no strings attached.) To accept something suggests to Billy (and Westerners) that this is an exchange, not a gift; it suggests "strings were attached;" it suggests Billy gave the gift trying to get something in return. This is a difficult situation for many westerners.