

# News and Reviews

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"All Planes Now Kamikaze," reads a Japanese poster from the last months of World War II.

## Wings of Defeat

■ **Wings of Defeat.** Directed by Risa Morimoto. 2007. 90 minutes (full-length) or 56 minutes (abbreviated, educator version). In English and Japanese with English subtitles.

■ **Wings of Defeat: Another Journey.** Directed by Risa Morimoto. 2008. 39 minutes. In English and Japanese with English subtitles.

For teenagers, film can humanize history in a manner difficult to emulate in other mediums. It can also help students (or adults, for that matter) move beyond the visceral reactions they have

### REVIEW

to certain famous historical figures and events based on preconceived notions. Few people or events in Japanese history come packed with more emotional baggage and less humanity for Americans than the famous (or even infamous) kamikaze pilots of World War II. A pair of documentary films, *Wings of Defeat* and *Wings of Defeat: Another Journey*, put a human face on both these pilots and the men in the ships they attacked in a sophisticated and accessible manner with many potential uses in the classroom. Other than Ivan Morris' classic depiction of kamikaze pilots in *Nobility of Failure*, no source in English has been produced that portrays the kamikaze pilots as real people more effectively than *Wings of Defeat*.

*Wings of Defeat* opens with a series of contrast-

ing images: kamikaze pilots sink an American ship; six American survivors of kamikaze attacks reminisce; US propaganda posters depict Japanese as animals; a Japanese man poses with a teddy bear for a snapshot. Risa Morimoto, the film's director and narrator, sets out to reconcile the conflicting images she holds—those of the kamikaze as fanatical terrorists she internalized as a child in Long Island with those of her late Uncle Toshio, the teddy-bear-clinging, middle-aged man in the photo who, she has learned, once trained to be a kamikaze pilot.

Aside from the obvious historical lessons about World War II, the premise of the film provides two lessons about imagery that are central to the larger education we all wish to provide our students. On the intellectual level, the film illustrates the importance of questioning and moving beyond the stock images we have of historical events and of understanding the individuals in those events as

multi-dimensional, human actors living in complex times—in this case Japan during the end of World War II—a central purpose of teaching social studies. On a more personal level, the film shows not just the process of breaking down simplified, perhaps glorified views of adult relatives (something teenagers often do with incredible skill), but shows how replacing this image with a more complex and even flawed understanding can lead to respect rather than cynicism.

Morimoto anchors the film around interviews that are, at times, painfully honest with four surviving kamikaze pilots as well as with survivors from the USS *Drexler*, sunk by a kamikaze attack. These interviews are combined with historical footage from World War II, as well as additional interviews with historians and Morimoto's family members in Osaka, with voiceover narration by Morimoto. These aspects of the film introduce the larger historical narrative without resorting to the preachy tone of an educational documentary that often causes half the students in a class to tune out while also implying a single, authoritative master narrative that cannot be contradicted. Morimoto's family's contrasting interpretations

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The Asian Educational Media Service (AEMS) is a program of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Our mission is to help educators at all levels, from elementary through college, find multimedia resources for learning and teaching about Asia to promote understanding of Asian peoples and cultures. Our free services include:

- *News and Reviews*, published three times a year;
- An online database of audiovisual materials;
- Reference service;
- Educator workshops on teaching with film;
- Lesson plans, streaming video, film recommendations and other web resources;
- A lending library for local educators

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## FROM THE EDITOR

We open 2009 with a look at Japan through the prism of youth, with reviews of three recent Japanese feature films exploring what it means to be young in Japan today, one documentary film on Japanese youth of a very different era, and an essay on anime and manga, one of the best known products of Japanese youth culture.

This focus emerges from our sixth annual Asian Film Festival. On October 3–5, 2008, AEMS, together with the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies here at the University of Illinois, hosted a three-day film festival in downtown Champaign, Illinois, centered on the theme “Young in Japan.” A diverse Illinois audience of over 1,000 attended the nine screenings and 16 teachers participated in a workshop on *Wings of Defeat* with Gary Mukai (SPICE, Stanford University) and Roger Purdy (John Carroll University). For more information, including a downloadable program book, visit the **AEMS website**: [www.aems.uiuc.edu/events/filmfestival/filmfest\\_2008.html](http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/events/filmfestival/filmfest_2008.html).

This issue of our newsletter is an opportunity to share the success of our **Asian Film Festival 2008** with a much broader audience. The films we screened were selected from a pool of dozens in a process that took many months by a faculty committee, together with AEMS staff: Robert Cagle (Cinema Studies, University of Illinois), David Goodman (East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Illinois) and Jinhee Lee (History, Eastern Illinois University). To their expertise and good judgment, we add that of our reviewers.

Robert Fish leads us off with a review of the extraordinary documentary on World War II kamikaze pilots and their legacy, *Wings of Defeat*. We were privileged to host the filmmakers, Risa Morimoto and Linda Hoaglund, in May to lead sessions at our Digital Asia Workshop and were deeply impressed by both their filmmaking and their teaching. Karen Nakamura brings her expertise on the disabled in Japan to bear on the unusual love story, *Josee, the Tiger and the Fish*. Critically acclaimed in its limited U.S. release, *The Taste of Tea* is reviewed by Tim Engles, with special attention to its appeal to middle and high school students. Rachel Lenz, with her review of *Train Man* and its place in the “Densha phenomenon,” and Paul Dunscomb, with his overview of the origins and history of anime and manga, orient us to the world of Japanese popular culture, so familiar to so many of our students.

On the **AEMS website**, we have recently published...

Under the **Publications** tab:

- New reviews of films from our **Asian Film Festival 2007**, which focused on Southeast Asia:
  - Out of Poison Tree*, a documentary about Cambodia's recovery from the Khmer Rouge genocide, reviewed by Judy Ledgerwood, and
  - Citizen Dog*, a surreal Thai comedy poking fun at urban life, reviewed by Ellen Boccuzzi.
- A review by Stacey Gross of *Learning from Asian Art: Korea*, an online curriculum kit from the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Under the **Other Resources** tab:

- New current events pages on *The Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*, *Asian Reactions to the U.S. Elections*, and *HIV in Asia*. ■

—Tanya Lee, Editor



Reviews from our 2007 Southeast Asian film festival are now online. Pictured here are scenes from the Thai comedy *Citizen Dog*, directed by Wisit Sasanatieng.



## Josee, the Tiger, and the Fish

(*Joze to tora to sakana tachi*)

■ Directed by Isshin Inudo. 2003. 116 minutes. In Japanese with English subtitles.

**J***osee, the Tiger and the Fish* is a film about an unlikely love story. Tsuneo, a young and rather self-centered college student, stumbles into an old lady pushing a decrepit baby carriage, and finds a young woman inside who turns out to be the elderly woman's disabled granddaughter. The pair lives nearby in a small, dilapidated house in a very poor Osaka neighborhood.

The old woman's granddaughter, Kumiko, was born without the use of her legs. Her grandmother takes her out before dawn each day in the covered baby carriage as she is embarrassed by Kumiko's condition and does not want the neighbors to know of her disabled grandchild. Aside from this daily walk, Kumiko never leaves the house. She has not attended school and everything she knows she has learned from books and magazines that her grandmother scavenged from her neighbors' garbage piles.

Despite her limited contact with the outside world, Kumiko is a gifted cook and Tsuneo finds himself returning day after day to enjoy her meals, bringing Kumiko and her grandmother groceries as an excuse to visit. He is attracted to her aura of mystery, her wit, and her obvious intelligence. Well-read and imaginative, Kumiko calls herself "Josée" after the heroine of a story by French author François Sagan. On one occasion, Tsuneo takes Kumiko outside during daylight hours to roam around town. They return at night to an outraged grandmother who calls Kumiko "damaged goods" and is embarrassed that her neighbors might have seen her in public.

Tsuneo doesn't see Kumiko for a while after this

incident. He has almost forgotten about her when he hears that her grandmother has passed away and that Kumiko is struggling to live alone. He rushes back to her house and they cement their long-repressed feelings for each other by consummating their relationship. The film avoids a happily-ever-after ending however, masterfully pulling together various threads from the beginning and middle of the film and revealing Kumiko's emotional growth and strength of character.

*Josee, the Tiger, and the Fish* is based on a novel of the same name by Seiko Tanabe (b. 1928), a prolific and well-known author with over eighty books to her name, but unfortunately none in English translation. Her stories usually center on the ups and downs of life in the Osaka area of Japan where she lives, and her characters are famous for speaking in heavy *Kansai* dialect. First published in 1985, *Josee* is Tanabe's only book in her career of over fifty years that deals directly with the topic of disability. Not many readers know that Tanabe herself has a mobility impairment, but this must surely have colored her impressions of life with disabilities in Japan, especially growing up in the pre-War period.

Perhaps because of this, *Josee* is a rather dark portrayal of life with disabilities. Kumiko is sheltered from the world and never allowed to grow up until she meets Tsuneo. While it may seem unrealistic to American viewers, the broader lines of Kumiko's life story resonate with those of people with disabilities whom I have talked with in Japan. I have come across many parents who had seriously contemplated joint parent-child suicide

when they found out their baby had a physical disability, so the notion of a grandmother who is too embarrassed to acknowledge her granddaughter's existence to her neighbors is not a stretch.

It should be mentioned, though, that while the familial and employment circumstances for people with disabilities are bleak, the environment for social services and political rights in contemporary Japan could not be better. People with disabilities (physical, intellectual, and psychosocial) in Japan receive a considerable range of social welfare benefits, from a generous disability pension to full-time personal attendant support. People with physical disabilities in the United States do not receive anywhere near the same level of support by the government.

Unfortunately there is very little contemporary material in English that could supplement this film for use in the classroom. The best book for students might be Hirokata Otake's 1998 autobiography titled *No One's Perfect* (translated by Gerry Harcourt and published by Kodansha International), which describes the author's life growing up without any arms or legs in contemporary Japan. This inspiring and accessible book was a bestseller in Japan, topping the charts for months. But it provides little historical or social context, and so does not give a broader view of what it means to live with physical disabilities in Japan.

*Josee* is recommended only for college-age audiences because of scenes with nudity, sexual intercourse, gambling, smoking, and violence. Many of the characters speak in heavy Osaka dialect, which may be difficult even for advanced language students though English subtitles are available. The film was beautifully shot on location in Osaka with remarkable detail paid to the richness and vitality of the various neighborhoods. The film immerses us in the life and color of Osaka while it beautifully unfolds a moving coming-of-age story, a true modern classic. ■

**Karen Nakamura** is an assistant professor of anthropology at Yale University. Her first book, *Deaf in Japan: Signing and the Politics of Identity* (Cornell University Press, 2006) was awarded the John Whitney Hall Book Prize in Japanese Studies. She is currently working on issues surrounding mental illness in Japan.

*Josee, the Tiger, and the Fish* is available on DVD, Region-2 only, from YesAsia. Price is \$34.25 for purchase.

### Recommended Reading

Otake, Hirokata. 2000. *No One's Perfect*. New York: Kodansha International. The autobiography of a young Japanese man born without arms or legs, who has become an activist for the rights of the disabled.



## The Taste of Tea (Cha no aji)

■ Directed by Katsuhito Ishii. 2004. 143 minutes.  
In Japanese with English subtitles.

Written and directed by relative newcomer Katsuhito Ishii and the winner of multiple international film awards, *The Taste of Tea* is a relaxed, meandering introduction to the members of the Haruno family, who live in a rural setting just outside of contemporary Tokyo. With the help of dazzling and appropriately surreal imagery, Ishii externalizes the internal lives of his characters, eventually tying their stories together into a poignant celebration of family love and the individual pursuit of dreams.

Ishii's effort to explore inner states is coyly suggested by the parents' occupations—Nabuo, the father, is a clinical hypnotist who occasionally practices on his family, and Yoshiko, the mother, is a professional animator trying to revive her career. Their young daughter, Sachiko, is literally overshadowed by a giant version of her alter ego looming on her horizons, while her older brother, Hajime, struggles to make friends at school and to attract the attention of the proverbial girl of his dreams. Uncle Ayano drops in on the family for some rehab after his own battles with love, while grandfather Akira strikes

absurd poses for Yoshiko's artistic efforts, in between secret sessions of devoted attention to his own creative efforts and, we eventually realize, heartrending preparations for his own impending demise.

*The Taste of Tea* is a rich, multigenerational family portrait suitable for students of any age. Middle and high school students will appreciate the extended, sympathetic attention Ishii pays to

...a rich, multigenerational family portrait suitable for students of any age.

the inner and emotional struggles of the two child protagonists, as well as the extremely artful fantasy elements, which help to suggest these inner states. Students could be encouraged to discuss or write about such moments in their own lives, or to compare this film's portrayal of them to those in other films. The film also contains a good deal of psychological and symbolic depth that lends itself to substantive analysis by high-school and college-level students.



All of the actors exhibit a casual, natural grace that enhances the film's own dream-like atmosphere, and even the minor actors avoid descent into stereotypical, stock characters. The film also stays with individuals for extended periods of time, allowing viewers to get to a solid sense of their personalities and situations. Again, surreal special effects intriguingly invite interpretation of these inner states—in addition to the giant version of herself that stalks Sachiko, pink trees shed their leaves in a beautiful suggestion of a snowstorm, a train emerges from Hajime's forehead and travels skyward, and much more.

Since the film pays close attention to the dynamics of this family, instructors could use it to discuss where the Haruno family matches and differs from familial trends in contemporary Japan. How common is it, for instance, for three generations of one family to live under one roof, or for the woman to have a professional career, or for members of what Americans call the "extended family" to live with a related "nuclear family" for long periods of time?

The one drawback some might have with classroom use of this film is its length, 143 minutes. Nevertheless, *The Taste of Tea* has been hailed by many critics as a contemporary masterpiece of Japanese cinema, and its eccentric, gently humorous humanism has made each subsequent effort by the young writer and director, Katsuhito Ishii, a highly anticipated event. One final indication that this film will resonate with students: readers of the popular Internet Movie Database (imdb.com), many of whom are younger movie viewers, rate this film highly; a 7.9 on a 10-point scale may not sound stellar, but at this site, it's a very high rating. ■

**Tim Engles** is an associate professor of English at Eastern Illinois University. He teaches writing and multicultural American literature courses, and his primary area of interest is Critical Whiteness Studies. He has also worked as a journalist in Turkey, and as an instructor of conversational English in South Korea.

*The Taste of Tea* is available on DVD from Viz Media. Price is \$24.98 for purchase.

# Anime and Manga 101: A Primer for the Confused or Curious

Japan's brush with global economic leadership ended with the bursting of the "Bubble Economy" and its descent into the trough of the Lost Decade (about 1992–2003). Meanwhile, the rise of China often makes one forget that Japan remains the world's second largest economy. Yet in the realm of popular culture, especially visual culture, Japan's influence remains quite pronounced. In art and even live action film, the aesthetics of anime (animated video series and films) and manga (graphic novels) exert a powerful influence throughout the world. How did this come about? What are the origins of this powerful medium that more and more defines the international image of Japan?

Because popular culture plays such a role in the accretion of so-called "soft power" for Japan (that is, influence delivered through culture and ideology rather than through coercion), the Japanese government has begun to celebrate manga and anime as their nation's unique contribution to global culture and have insisted that both of these are ultimately derived from Japan's rich pre-modern visual culture, notably woodblock prints. This claim should be considered skeptically. Manga and anime are primarily postwar phenomena growing out of the unique circumstances of the postwar era. Perhaps the one carryover from prewar visual arts is *kamishibai*, or picture card shows, a form of performance art where a narrator tells a story using a series of drawings placed on a screen. Highly popular in wartime Japan, this medium included its own serialized stories. *Kamishibai* remained one of the most popular and cheapest visual arts of the harsh occupation period after the war and many figures who went on to become famous manga artists got their start as *kamishibai* illustrators.

The person most responsible for developing the distinctive look of anime and manga is the so-called "god of manga and anime," Tezuka Osamu. Tezuka established many of the critical



elements of manga with *New Treasure Island* in 1947, not just character design but also complex story lines and a cinematic visual style. Tezuka went on to produce nearly 500 manga over his prolific career, essentially creating the industry in the process.

While much of Tezuka's early output was targeted specifically at boys and girls, he, along with many other artists, worked in other venues in the 1950s—in particular, the more adult-oriented Red Books, so called for the red ink used for printing the cheap, disposable, small format books. Indeed, many struggling *kamishibai* artists lent their talents to the Red Book industry. In fact, the Red Books, with their grown-up themes and more mature story lines, created a specific genre of manga popular through the 1960s called *gekiga*, or dramatic pictures. *Gekiga* was significant in the development of manga as a medium not simply because it was the breeding ground for talented illustrators, but also because it established most of the conventions that underpin the adult manga industry even today (adult, in this case simply means a target demographic of males aged 15–40, although a significant portion of manga is dedicated to women and girls of similar age).

Two of Tezuka's early manga were the first to be converted to anime: *Mighty Atom*, Japan's first black-and-white anime series in 1963, and *Jungle Emperor*, the first color series in 1965. Tezuka's example—and commercial success—set the basic pattern for much of the anime industry. Almost inevitably, popular manga series would make the leap to anime.

Tezuka also gets credit for anime's earliest global forays when *Mighty Atom (Astroboy)* and *Jungle Emperor (Kimba the White Lion)* were broadcast on NBC in

the 1960s inaugurating a long line of anime coming to American shores. Notably many of these early shows like *Speed Racer*, *Gigantor (Ironman 28)*, and *Starblazers (Space Battleship Yamato)* lost much of their "Japaneseness," passing as ordinary TV cartoons without a distinctive Japanese provenance; this is somewhat true even today.

The real career of manga and anime as distinctly Japanese export products started in the late 1980s with the small but important commercial and critical successes of Otomo Katsuhiro's *Akira* and Miyazaki Hayao's *My Neighbor Totoro*. They were followed by the rise of a modest but devoted sub-culture creating a videotape and later DVD market for TV series such as *Ranma 1/2* and

*Urusei Yatsura* that didn't necessarily have any broadcast exposure.

Only as anime, and later manga, became successful export commodities did the Japanese government embrace it as a unique cultural product and try to assert its connection to traditional Japanese visual arts. Certainly when the government trumpets anime as an important contributor to global culture it would much prefer to talk about the works of Miyazaki Hayao—whose films *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away* have received international acclaim—than, say, *Cutey Honey*, the plucky magical girl whose clothing rarely seems to survive her battles with evil to save the world. Yet in volume if not in quality, it's the likes of *Pokemon* and *Yu-gi-oh* (which exist essentially as extended ads for games), *Dragonball Z* and *Naruto*, the young ninja in training who is presently the idol of high school children nationwide, that really dominate Japan's output.

While opportunities to encounter anime and manga have grown exponentially in the United States over the last two decades, they still represent only the tiniest fraction of the total output of the industry in Japan. Moreover, because here in America anime and manga are primarily aimed at a devoted teenage fan base, it's hard to appreciate the full range of stories available in Japan, from family sitcoms, detective stories, and romances, to stories centering on cooking, wine,

The person most responsible for developing the distinctive look of anime and manga is the so-called "god of manga and anime," Tezuka Osamu.

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## Train Man (Densha otoko)

■ Directed by Murakami Shosuke. 2005. 105 minutes. In Japanese with English subtitles.

Anime, manga, video games—these are the legacy Japan is leaving in the hands of today’s youth. Countless American students from elementary through graduate school have grown up with in this Japanophilic fan-culture and many have at least a casual familiarity with the Japanese fan-base—some go so far as to proudly claim the title “otaku” (an obsessive fan of anime, manga, and/or video games). But what they may not know is how far beyond the standard American “geek” archetype the word “otaku” goes, or just how much Japanese society looks down upon otaku and others who live outside the lines.

In America, a fan, even an obsessive one, of anime and manga is simply considered quirky if he or she draws attention at all. But in Japan, otaku are looked upon as social outcasts, incapable of functioning within the mainstream and unable to form relationships with anyone outside their own kind, interacting solely with pictures and computer screens. There is an entire genre of *renai* (also called “dating simulation”) games that cater to male otaku and allow them to pretend to engage in relationships—sexual and otherwise—with two-dimensional “girls” since they are incapable of doing so with someone real. The opening of *Densha otoko* merely hints at the contempt and invisibility encountered by otaku in Japan, a negative public image that is compounded by a serial killer named Miyazaki Tsutomu (aka “the Otaku Killer”) who raped and murdered four elementary

school aged girls in the late 1980s, creating an irrational panic about all otaku. Despite the seemingly insurmountable obstacle that is the otaku’s stereo-

In America, a fan, even an obsessive one, of anime and manga is simply considered quirky if he or she draws attention at all. But in Japan, otaku are looked upon as social outcasts, incapable of functioning within the mainstream.

typical image, Murakami Shosuke’s 2005 film, *Densha otoko* (*Train Man*) forced Japanese society to reexamine its opinion of otaku and the resulting media phenomenon has exposed this much-ridiculed but often misunderstood subculture to the world.

The *Densha otoko* (*Train Man*) phenomenon began in Japan in 2004 with the release of the

“novel,” a book that collected the purportedly real-life story of a 23-year-old Japanese otaku as told through postings on the popular online forum 2channel. The book was quickly carried over into numerous genres including four separate manga (graphic novel) series, an anime (animated TV series), a television drama, and of course, the film. While the movie differs somewhat from the original story (certain plot elements were changed for dramatic effect), it is nevertheless credited with the widespread success of the franchise and more importantly, a marked change in the way otaku are viewed in Japanese society.

“Densha,” the protagonist in *Densha otoko* (dubbed for his screen name on 2channel), is nothing like the serial killer who gave otaku a bad name. Instead he is a shy, marginalized young man ill-equipped to deal with social situations, who acts on instinct to defend a group of women from a drunk on a train and gradually overcomes his ineffectualness to find romance with one of them. “Densha” is no murderer, but neither is he the suave lady-killer one finds so often on the screen. He is vulnerable, flawed, more than a little unsure of himself, and this is the magic of the *Densha otoko* franchise: it humanizes otaku. “Densha” isn’t an archetype or a caricature; he is a person with faults and desires simply trying to find his way in an uncertain world where technology increasingly takes the place of face-to-face communication.

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## Wings of Defeat

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of the image of kamikaze pilots among Japanese effectively illustrate the diversity of opinion in Japan regarding memories of the war. It is the interviews with four former kamikaze pilots, however, that are the core of the film.

While either the full or 56-minute education version of the film can be used effectively in its entirety, many teachers may choose to use only excerpts. Fortunately, with proper contextualization, *Wings of Defeat* lends itself to excerpted use to teach specific lessons. A number of particularly poignant (and teachable) moments from the film stand out. For example, about forty-nine minutes into the shorter version of the film, Mr. Nakajima, a kamikaze gunner who survived because his suicide mission was aborted, explains how he realized that the war would end after the atomic bombing. "When I heard about the terrible devastation later, I truly apologize to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but I thought, 'Now I can live.'" That one, brief scene points to many of the nuances of warfare and history presented in the film: the desire of the "suicidal" kamikaze pilots to live, the contrast between human feelings for the victims of atomic bombings and the personal thankfulness that the bombs may have saved someone's life, and the general internal conflict that many people had to live with after the war.

Morimoto and writer/producer Linda Hoagland followed up *Wings of Defeat* with the moving, if not quite as tightly edited film *Wings of Defeat: Another Journey*, in which two survivors from the USS Drexler visit Japan to meet former kamikaze pilots. This film makes it clear that many of the most painful and long-lasting wounds of war are not physical but psychological. The octogenarian veterans of World War II from both sides of the Pacific poignantly express the pain they still feel from the war: an American naval veteran tearfully suggests, "Let's let the burden go. I can't live like this anymore," while a Japanese kamikaze veteran sympathizes with the pain of his former enemy remembering fallen colleagues, "It's the same for us. All our buddies were in their twenties." Teachers can easily use a brief excerpt of this film to powerfully provoke discussion of the long term effects of war on soldiers as well as the potential for reconciliation.

Both films are fine works with multiple classroom uses. As with all films relying heavily on oral history, teachers should provide students some pointers as to the difficulties of using an oral history, such as the tendency for memories to change over time, and the reality that the filmmakers could only include interviews from a small number of kamikaze. I strongly recommend using these films as a means to teach about World War II, historiography, and even simple lessons about the human side of warfare. ■

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**Robert Fish** is Director of Education and Lecture Programs at Japan Society, where he also serves as editor-in-chief of the website *About Japan: A Teacher's Resource* ([aboutjapan.japansociety.org](http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org)). Prior to his current position, Fish served as an assistant professor of history at Indiana State University and has also taught social studies at the secondary school level.

**HOW TO PURCHASE:** *Wings of Defeat* is available in both versions on DVD from New Day Media. Price for the DVD is \$295/\$165 for institutions and \$24.95 for individuals. The educator version is also available from SPICE (Stanford Program on International and Cross-cultural Education) for \$69.95. A teacher's guide, written by SPICE, is included with purchase of the documentary.

*Wings of Defeat: Another Journey*, is also available on DVD from New Day Media. Price for the DVD is \$99/\$60 for institutions and \$14.95 for individuals.

### Recommended Resources

Morris, Ivan. 1988 (1975). *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in Japanese History*. New York : Farrar Straus Giroux.

Official film website includes links to a number of peace museums, and to Kamikaze Images, a site analyzing images of kamikaze pilots, as well as recommended reading in both English and Japanese: [www.wingsofdefeat.com](http://www.wingsofdefeat.com).

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## Train Man

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The film also allows the audience to glimpse the quiet desperation and loneliness of those with whom "Densha" corresponds on 2channel, an Internet group that includes a married couple who can't speak to each other; a teenage boy who is too shy to leave his bedroom; a trio of classic, manga-obsessed otaku; and a nurse with a broken heart. This serves to expand the audience's conception of otaku as well as draw attention to additional social problems in Japan. American audiences react similarly to the struggles and triumphs of "Densha," whose endearing awkwardness and perseverance will make anyone think twice before they dismiss someone as nothing more than a geek, and will hopefully nudge them towards a more enlightened evaluation of so-called social misfits both in Japan and at home.

*Densha otoko* is an excellent film resource for secondary and higher education classrooms. It can be used in conjunction with numerous other resources to form a curriculum unit on Japanese

subcultures and/or the increasingly publicized social problems facing youth in Japan.

As the population and birth rate continue to decline, the attention of Japan's government, media, and society turns more and more to its youth, desperately working to understand the younger generations' increasing aversion to "traditional" life and motivate them to return to the dwindling group following conventional social paths. *Densha otoko* provides an engaging window through which educators and students may begin to examine the social obstacles faced by Japanese youth as they find themselves under an ever-brightening spotlight. ■

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*Train Man* is available on DVD from Viz Media. Price is 24.98 for purchase.

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### Recommended Resources on Otaku and Other Japanese Subcultures

*Genshiken* (anime), DVD. Directed by Ikehata Takashi. Tokyo: Anime Works, 2007.

Shimoku, Kio. *Genshiken* (manga). Vol.1-9. Del Rey, 2007. *Genshiken* is a manga and anime television series about a group of otaku who form a club supporting their lifestyle at college. It follows their lives, obsessions, the stereotypes and discrimination they occasionally face, and gives audiences an inside look at such popular otaku practices as cosplay and the creation of doujinshi (the manga equivalent of fan-fiction).

Kanehara, Hitomi. *Snakes and Earrings*. New York: Dutton, 2005. This Akutagawa prizewinning novel evocatively portrays the lives of Japanese youth following potentially dangerous subcultures; due to explicit sexual content of a disturbing nature it would only be appropriate for the college classroom. The book helps teach about the broader problems facing Japanese youth, how and why they fall out of "the system," and what happens to them when they do.



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## Anime and Manga

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or personal finance.

The first anime series to make it to America in the 1960s and 1970s were valued by distributors primarily for their cheapness. It was far less costly to edit and dub an existing product than produce one from scratch. This legacy lives on in the often insipid English vocal casts, especially for female roles, that many anime shows are still stuck with today. Yet by the late 1980s and early 1990s a significant part of anime's appeal was its foreign origins. While anime and manga may now be celebrated by the government as Japan's contribution to global culture and valued as export products, they were all originally designed (with a few rare exceptions) for domestic consumption. Created by Japanese for Japanese audiences, they are pervaded by assumptions and values—like acceptable levels of sex and violence and a willingness to kill off key characters—which may often shock and frequently thrill American viewers weary of Hollywood conventions and happy endings. Anime and manga were never designed to represent Japan to the world, and yet they have ended up doing just that. ■

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**Paul Dunscomb** is associate professor of East Asian History at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and director of the UAA Confucius Institute. He teaches broadly on Japanese and Chinese civilization and history. His research examines the politics of Japan's occupation of Siberia, 1918–1922, and its relationship to the evolution of Japanese imperialism.

### Recommended Resources

“Anime and Manga: It's Not All Make-Believe,” essay by Toni Levi, March 25, 2008, on using manga and anime as teaching tools, at *About Japan: A Teacher's Resource* ([aboutjapan.japansociety.org](http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org)), under the Essays tab.

“Anime—An Annotated Filmography for Use in the Classroom,” by Toni Levi, April 30, 2008, at *About Japan: A Teacher's Resource* ([aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/anime\\_filmography\\_1](http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/anime_filmography_1)).

“Imaging Japan: Teaching History Through Art” curriculum modules, including one on Tezuka Osamu and Astro Boy, at [www.colorado.edu/cas/tea](http://www.colorado.edu/cas/tea).

## Distributors in this Issue

**New Day Films**, 190 Route 17M,  
P.O. Box 1084, Harriman, NY 10926.  
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**SPICE** (Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education), 616 Serra St., Encina Hall East, Ground Floor, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6055. Tel: 650-723-1114 or 800-578-1114. Fax: 650-723-6784. Website: <http://spice.stanford.edu>.

**Viz Media**, P.O. Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107. Website: [www.viz.com](http://www.viz.com)

**YesAsia.com**, 9/F, Watson Centre, 16-22 Kung Yip Street, Kwai Chung, N.T., Hong Kong. Tel: 866-440-8388. Website: [www.yesasia.com](http://www.yesasia.com).