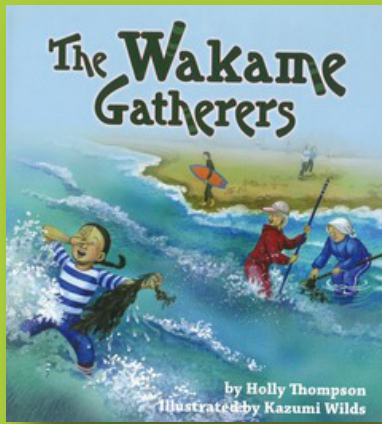


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# The Wakame Gatherers

written by Holly Thompson  
illustrated by Kazumi Wilds

## About the Book

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**\*Reading Level:** Grade 2

**Interest Level:** Grades K–5

**Guided Reading Level:** N/A

**Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points:** N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Asian/Asian  
American Interest, Biracial/  
Multiracial Interest,  
Childhood Experiences and  
Memories, Cultural Diversity,  
Environment/Nature,  
Families, Food (Seaweed),  
Friendship, Families  
(Grandparents), Home,  
Overcoming Obstacles, War,  
World War II

## SYNOPSIS

Nanami has two grandmothers: Bāchan, who lives with her family in Japan, and Gram, who lives in Maine. When Gram visits Japan for the first time, Bāchan takes her and Nanami on a trip to the seaside to gather Wakame, a long, curvy seaweed that floats near the shore.

While the three assemble their equipment and ride the streetcar to the beach, Bāchan explains how Wakame and other seaweeds are used in Japan. Gram shares stories about how seaweeds are used in Maine, and Nanami translates for them both.

By the end of the day, Nanami's two grandmothers discover that they have much in common despite being from countries that fought in the war they both remember vividly. Now, looking out across the beach at the surfers, dog walkers, and seaweed gatherers, they share an appreciation of this precious peace.

Holly Thompson's beautiful prose captures the exuberance of a young girl who easily traverses between two cultures and languages. It also illuminates the love and understanding that grow between two older women who are so different, yet share an unbreakable bond. Kazumi Wild's bright, vivid paintings make the Japanese landscape and the rocky shores of Maine come alive, reminding us all that we share this earth and the peace that we create.



## BACKGROUND

**Seaweed (From the author):** Seaweeds are large algae that grow in salt water all over the world. They are plants with leaf-like blades, a stem-like stripe, and a holdfast to hold tight to rocks. There are three main types of seaweed: green, brown and red. Wakame is a brown seaweed but when boiled, it changes color to bright green.

Although many cultures do not eat seaweeds or sea vegetables, people in Japan and Korea have been eating seaweeds for centuries. Many Japanese go to the shore like Nanami to gather seaweeds in the spring. The Latin name for wakame is *Undaria pinnatifida*—it is one of the most commonly eaten seaweeds in Japan. In the past, only naturally growing wakame was eaten, but now wakame is cultivated on ropes in the open sea and harvested several months later. Seaweeds don't really produce seeds; they produce spores and when Nanami is older she will help tie little sporelings onto the ropes for growing wakame.

In Japan, fresh wakame can be found in markets from early spring into summer. Dried wakame is available year-round. In North America, wakame can be found in Asian and natural food stores (the Atlantic equivalent of wakae is *alaria*.)

Dried wakame needs to be soaked in lukewarm water for about 20 minutes to be rehydrated; it will swell to about twice its size! After soaking, cut away any midrib or other tough sections (not necessary if your wakame is the pre-chopped variety). If you want your wakame to turn bright green, drop it into boiling water, then remove with tongs or a slotted spoon and quickly rinse in cold water. You can also drop chopped wakame into soup just before serving. Wakame is high in nutrients and should not be boiled or simmered for more than a minute, or it will lose these important nutrients. Wakame has a nice crisp texture and is delicious in soups and salads.

The website <http://www.seaweed.ie> provides a wealth of information about different types of seaweed. Information about some of the Atlantic seaweed Gram describes finding in Maine (Irish moss, rockweed, bladderwrack, kelp) can be found in the site's NE Atlantic section. The Uses and Utilization page lists products made with seaweed and provides a photograph.

**World War II:** World War II lasted from 1939–1945. Conflict in Japan began earlier, in 1937, when Japan attacked China with the goal of controlling Asia and the Pacific. On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, a US naval base in Hawaii. The United States joined World War II the next day. Japan surrendered to Allied forces in 1945 when they dropped nuclear bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Student-friendly information can be found at <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/general-history/world-war-two/> and <http://www.dkfindout.com/us/history/world-war-ii/>.

**Lobstering and the Maine Coast:** The American lobster can be found from Canada to North Carolina, but is most prevalent along the coast of Maine. More information and links can be found here (<https://www.maine.gov/sos/kids/about/wildlife/lobster>). Information about cooking lobster and a photo of lobsters cooking on top of seaweed, as Gram describes in the text, can be found here (<http://www.visitmaine.net/page/225/how-cook-maine-lobster>). This site has many photos of coastal towns in Maine (<http://www.visitmaine.net/page/5/tour-the-coast>).

### Additional titles to teach about overcoming cultural differences and new experiences:

**Grandfather Counts** written by Andrea Cheng, illustrated by Ange Zheng  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2399>

**The Have a Good Day Cafe** written by Frances Park and Ginger Park, illustrated by Katherine Potter  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2402>

**Going Home, Coming Home** written by Truong Tran, illustrated by Ann Phong  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2794>

**Two Mrs. Gibsons** written by Toyomi Igus, illustrated by Daryl Wells  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2828>

**A Morning with Grandpa** written by Sylvia Liu, illustrated by Christina Forshay  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2923>



## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

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

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

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: 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, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

surfers, streetcar, rocky shores, seaweed, crabs, lobster traps, wakame, fronds, breakwater, cauldron, Irish moss, rockweed, bladderwrack, kelp, carrageenan, dulse, surf, kimono, bombs, enemies, tongs, ponzu sauce

### Academic

translator, harvest, ashore, wasteful, shaggy, tasty, curvy, gather, struck, enemies, peace, tremble, collect, remove, unfurl, shriveling, silken, brittle, whoop

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and 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:

1. Where is Japan on the map? Where is Maine? Point out how each place borders the ocean. How might living next to the ocean impact someone's life?
2. What does it mean to be a "gatherer?" What types of things might a gatherer collect? Have you ever gathered food to eat or materials to use?
3. Do you have grandparents? Where do they live? Do you visit them or have them visit you? What's that like? What would it be like for two people who live in very different places to spend time together?

### 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. Then 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 (especially the illustration), illustrations, author's note, glossary and recipes.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out about:

- what Nanami does with her grandmothers and how she helps them communicate
- more about seaweed and how it can be gathered and used
- how people can create connections with one another when they share an experience

Encourage students to consider why the author, Holly Thompson, 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. Where does Nanami live? Who lives with her? What is her town like? Where does Gram live? What is Gram's home like?
2. What does Bāchan invite Gram and Nanami to do? Why is Nanami unsure about it?
3. What are the two ways wakame grows? What will Nanami do when she is a bit older?
4. Why does Bāchan ask if Nanami and Gram are okay?
5. What do they see when they arrive at the beach? How does Gram react? What does she say about seaweed in Maine? How does Bāchan react?
6. How do they get ready to gather wakame? What does Bāchan teach Nanami and Gram? What technique does Nanami develop on her own?
7. What questions does Nanami ask Bāchan about when she was a girl?
8. What does Bāchan say about her girlhood during the war?
9. What do they do with the wakame they collected?
10. What comes in the mail in April? What does Gram say in her letter? What does Gram send Bāchan?

### 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. Based on Gram's actions and her comments, describe her as a character. Is she a typical grandmother?
2. Why is Nanami unsure about the seaweed-gathering outing at first? Why is being a translator a big responsibility? How is a conversation using a translator different than a regular conversation?
3. Describe the mood at the beach when Nanami and her grandmother begin collecting seaweed. What do the author's descriptions help you understand about the sights, sounds, smells, etc.
4. Why does Gram stare at Nanami when she says, "Yatta?"
5. What does Nanami mean when she says, "I'm struck thinking of her as a young girl like me at this very same spot?" How does the conversation change when she asks about rain pants?
6. How does the information Bāchan shares about life during the war help you understand her comments about how not eating seaweed in Maine seems "wasteful?"
7. Why does Nanami hesitate before translating Bāchan's comments about the war to Gram? What does Nanami mean by, "I can't imagine parts of me at war with each other?" What does Bāchan mean when she asks Nanami to "always protect this peace?"
8. What's the significance of word "Daijobu" in this story?
9. How does Bāchan react to Gram's gift? What makes the plane ticket extra special?



“...a good example of how common experiences can bring people together across oceans and through time. It reminds us that reaching greater understanding of one another is always worth the journey.”

–*Paper Tigers*

“Holly Thompson’s warmly told, richly detailed story, illustrated by Japanese artist Kazumi Wilds, is a celebration of family.”

–*Children’s Cooperative Book Council*

“This is a heartwarming example of how being from different cultures, countries, and races and speaking another language are not really barriers to appreciation and acceptance...”

–*Multicultural Book Review*

## 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. Describe the setting of this story. How does the setting impact the characters’ experiences and interactions? What types of settings do you enjoy reading about? Why?
2. If you were invited on a seaweed-gathering adventure, would you like to go? Why or why not?
3. Describe Gram and Bāchan’s relationship at the beginning of the story. How do the events of the story change their relationship? How can sharing an experience with someone help create connections with that person?
4. List the ways in the book that seaweed is used. Did any of them surprise you? Do you like to try new foods? Why or why not?

## 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 what they learned about seaweed harvesting or what they do with their grandparents.
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.

6. Provide extra practice using the language structures that relate to the follow-up activities you choose. For example, if you plan to study the seaweed harvesting process or look at recipes, practice sequence words. If you plan to discuss different types of seaweed, practice the relevant descriptive vocabulary.

## 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

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–9)

(Writing Standards, Text types and Purposes, Strand 3)

1. As a class, read more about author Holly Thompson on her website ([hatbooks.com](http://hatbooks.com)). Discuss how an author's life experiences can serve as story inspiration. Based on what you read, what aspects of *The Wakame Gatherers* may have been inspired by Holly's experiences? What aspects were probably from her imagination?
2. Read Holly Thompson's poem "Wakame" (found on her April 7th blog post at <http://hatbooks.blogspot.com/2016/04/wakame.html?q=wakame>) Discuss the

imagery in the poem and relate it to scenes from the book.

3. Have students rewrite the story (or a scene from the story) from a different character's point of view. Share responses and discuss students' reasoning.
4. Have students write a sequel to the book depicting Bāchan and Nanami's visit to Maine. Before starting, review specific passages from the text that give information about life in Gram's town in Maine.
5. Read other stories related to the ocean, such as *Surfer of the Century* ([https://www.leeandlow.com/books/115/pb/surfer\\_of\\_the\\_century\\_the\\_life\\_of\\_duke\\_kahanamoku](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/115/pb/surfer_of_the_century_the_life_of_duke_kahanamoku)) or *Seaside Dream* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2722>). Explore the role the ocean plays in the text and the characters' lives using the discussion questions in this blog post (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/07/06/book-and-activity-suggestions-to-match-your-summer-adventure-beaches/>).
6. Read other stories featuring biracial or multiracial children and families, such as *The Two Mrs. Gibsons* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2828>), *The East-West House* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2708>), or *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2769>). Compare and contrast the characters' experiences. Discuss how stories can help readers understand the experiences of others.

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7–9)

(Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Use *The Wakame Gatherers* as part of a larger study of Japan. Many ideas can be found in this lesson plan (<https://www.colorado.edu/ptea-curriculum/texts-and-contexts/two-homes-living-two-cultures>), part of a larger unit (<https://www.colorado.edu/ptea-curriculum/texts-and-contexts>) that uses literature to explore Japanese culture, created by the Program for Teaching East Asia, University of Colorado (<http://www.colorado.edu/ptea/>).



2. Read more about lobstering and life near the ocean in Maine. (See resources in the “background” section.) Using outside research and specific examples from the book, create a chart comparing and contrasting life by the ocean in Maine and Japan.
3. Review Holly Thompson’s blog posts about wakame harvesting in Japan (<http://hatbooks.blogspot.com/2013/01/its-that-season-wakame.html?q=wakame>, for example, or type “Wakame” in the search bar for more options.) If students are able, you might divide the class into small groups and ask each group to read one post and report back to the class. Compile information into a list of facts about wakame harvesting or a step-by-step “How-to” chart.
4. Read the recipes using wakame that Holly Thompson provides at the end of the book. Additional recipes can be found on her website at [http://www.hatbooks.com/the\\_wakame\\_gatherers\\_63661.htm](http://www.hatbooks.com/the_wakame_gatherers_63661.htm). Have small groups each read a recipe and act out or report back to the class about how to make the featured dish. Or, vote on a recipe to try out as a class and poll students as to whether they like or dislike the dish.
5. Have students research and present about different aspects of World War II related to the story (e.g., the entry and actions of Japan and the US in the war, evacuation of children from areas affected by fighting, etc.).
6. Consult the Five College Consortium’s Mini-Unit Plan featuring *The Wakame Gatherers* ([https://doors2world.umass.edu/sites/default/files/The%20Wakame%20Gatherers\\_DN.pdf](https://doors2world.umass.edu/sites/default/files/The%20Wakame%20Gatherers_DN.pdf)). This unit provides suggestions on additional texts to pair with *The Wakame Gatherers*, as well as additional learning experiences and discussion questions for students.

## Science

(Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Look at photos of various types of seaweed (find many at <http://www.seaweed.ie/index.php>). Have

students describe their various features (e.g., color, texture, shape/parts, etc.). In pairs, have students sort pictures into groups or compare and contrast two pictures.

2. Purchase a bag of dried wakame and let the class observe it rehydrate in water. Describe how it looks, feels, smells and tastes. Record observations in a science journal entry.
3. In the author’s note, Holly Thompson shares that seaweed is grown from spores, not seeds. Have students research the process for growing something from spores instead of seeds (Note: mushrooms and ferns are other things that can be grown from spores).
4. Discuss the difference between gathering food from nature and cultivating crops. Have students research what’s grown in your region. Distinguish between cultivated crops and foods that can be gathered from nature near where you live.

## School-Home Connection

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students share a summary of *The Wakame Gatherers* with their families. Have them interview a parent or grandparent about tasks they recall helping their families with when they were children.
2. Have students discuss with their families the question, “If someone sent you a plane ticket in the mail, where would you hope to go? Why?” Share responses in class and compare destinations and reasons.

**Awards and honors for *The Wakame Gatherers* include:**

**Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2009**, National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

**Children’s Books of the Year**, Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC)



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Holly Thompson** has lived for more than twenty years in Kamakura, Japan, where she likes to gather wakame and observe the harvesting of cultivated wakame. Raised in New England, she studied biology at Mount Holyoke College and fiction writing at New York University. She currently teaches creative writing at Yokohama City University in Yokohama, Japan. She writes fiction and poetry for children, teens, and adults, and translates Japanese children's books into English. You can find her online at [hatbooks.com](http://hatbooks.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Kazumi Wilds** was born in Tokyo, Japan, and is a picture book illustrator and a creator of artist's books. She studied traditional Japanese painting at Joshibi University of Art and Design in Tokyo and graduated from the Graduate College of the University of Iowa Center for the Book, where she earned her MFA in Book Arts. Over the past twenty years, she has published picture books in Japan, the US, and Singapore. Her artist's books are included in collections at eleven universities and an art museum in the US. Kazumi is currently teaching art courses at Temple University Japan Campus in Tokyo.

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

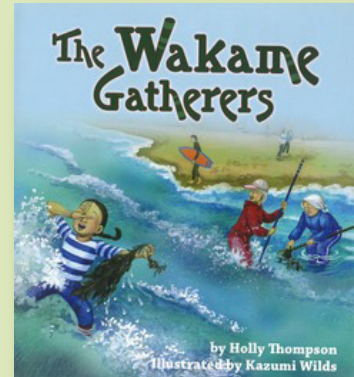
[www.leeandlow.com/books/the-wakame-gatherers](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-wakame-gatherers) (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

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

## Book Information for The Wakame Gatherers



9781643794594

32 pages

\*Reading Level: Grade 2

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades K-5

Guided Reading Level: Q

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

**THEMES:** Asian/Asian American Interest, Biracial/Multiracial Interest, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Cultural Diversity, Environment/Nature, Families, Food (Seaweed), Friendship, Families (Grandparents), Home, Overcoming Obstacles, War, World War II

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-wakame-gatherers>

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