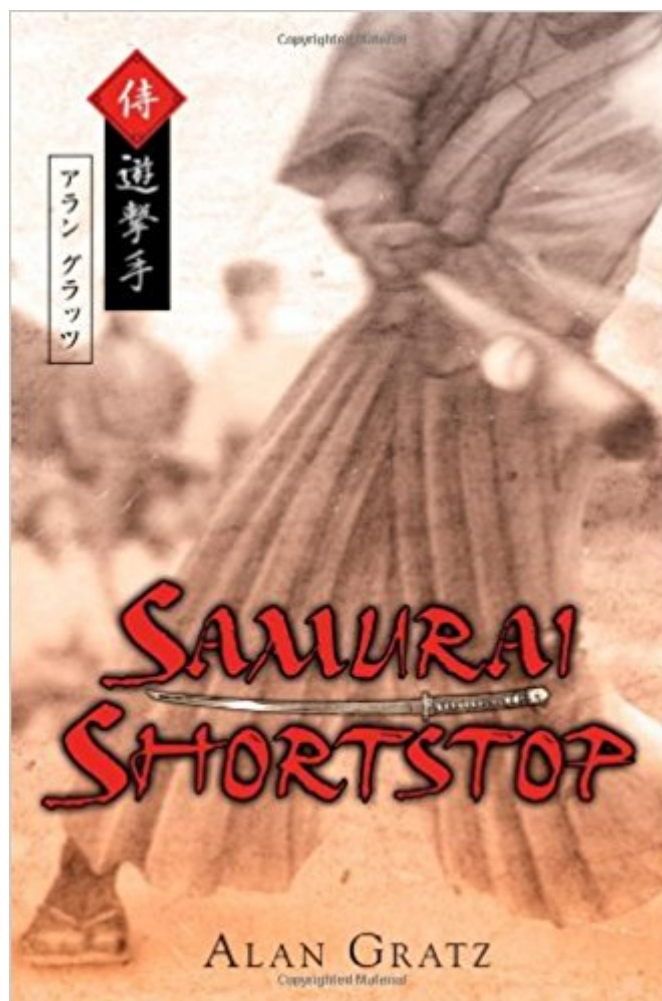


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# Samurai Shortstop



## Synopsis

Tokyo, 1890. Toyo is caught up in the competitive world of boarding school, and must prove himself to make the team in a new sport called besuboru. But he grieves for his uncle, a samurai who sacrificed himself for his beliefs, at a time when most of Japan is eager to shed ancient traditions. It's only when his father decides to teach him the way of the samurai that Toyo grows to better understand his uncle and father. And to his surprise, the warrior training guides him to excel at baseball, a sport his father despises as yet another modern Western menace. Toyo searches desperately for a way to prove there is a place for his family's samurai values in modern Japan. Baseball might just be the answer, but will his father ever accept a "Western" game that stands for everything he despises?

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 25 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up – It is 1890, and 16-year-old Toyo Shimada is uniquely poised to witness the clash of old and new ways in his native Tokyo. Emperor Meiji has instituted a series of radical reforms; one of them requires that all samurai hang up their swords. In the hypnotic opening scene, Toyo and his father assist as his Uncle Koji commits ritual suicide or seppuku. Toyo's father, Sotaro, is a scholarly samurai whose weapon has always been his ink brush, but he too has decided that he

cannot live in this new Japan. He tells Toyo that once he has taught him the ways of bushido, or the warrior's code, he, too, will take his own life. Meanwhile, Toyo begins his studies at an elite high school where the hazing by the senior students makes the first-year students miserable. Eventually, the teen and his friends are able to stand up for themselves, and Toyo wins a place on the school's besuboro or baseball team. His lessons in bushido include meditation, balance, and swordplay, and Toyo finds in baseball a way to make the connection between both modern and ancient, mental and physical. Gratz's concluding notes offer more on the period as well as sources for more information. This well-written tale offers plenty of fascinating detail, a fast-paced story, and a fresh perspective on America's pastime. It should delight baseball fans and win a wide audience. --Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 8-11. Growing up in Tokyo in the 1890s, after the emperor outlawed the samurai tradition of his ancestors, Toyo was not trained in the old disciplines. He must find his own path between the old ways and the new ones, which are symbolized for Toyo by the sport he loves: baseball. In the riveting opening scene, Toyo watches his father help Toyo's beloved uncle Koji perform *suppuku*, a samurai ritual involving disembowelment and decapitation. Soon after this disturbing event, Toyo becomes a boarder at the most esteemed high school in Tokyo. His high hopes are tempered by a brutal hazing inflicted on the entering class, and the ongoing cruelty of the students in power. Under his father's tutelage, Toyo's growing understanding of traditional samurai arts enables him to grow in skill and self-discipline both on and off the playing field. An engaging protagonist in a harsh, difficult situation, Toyo must work to earn the respect of his father and his teammates, but he will have readers' sympathies from the beginning. Unfolding through the convincing portrayals of individuals in turmoil, the story culminates as most baseball novels do--in the big game. An appended author's note discusses Gratz's research and lists his sources. A memorable chronicle of boys' inhumanity to boys, and a testament to enduring values in a time of social change. Carolyn Phelan Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I loved this book! The setting, Japan around 1890, was fascinating. The author made the city and the boys' boarding school come alive with selected details. I loved the character of Toyo, a boy who is coming of age at a time when the world is changing drastically. Toyo is under pressure from his

father to reject the new ways (baseball, for one, introduced by the Americans) and respect and live up to the old ways (of the samurai), even though the old ways are dead or dying away. In addition to the stress of which path to choose, which kind of person to be, Toyo has to contend with his classmates in the boarding school -- and each and every one of us who has gone through school knows that this is not only not easy, it is often the most important conflict a young person faces before he or she leaves school and enters the larger world. Definitely worth reading!

Great job!

Very interesting how quickly the change in Japan from the Samurai culture to the modern culture. Little bit violent at the start but explanation at the end of what traditions were all about.

I really enjoyed this book. The only thing I would change is to move the historical information from the end of the book to the front of the book. I had no idea this novel was historical fiction until after I had finished reading it. I purchased extra copies to give to my baseball/softball playing grandchildren.

My son enjoyed it! He did his book report and then found other books by the same author. So check it out

14 year-old baseball player actually read it. I know something about the Meiji period and this author is for the most part quite accurate

WOULD RECOMMEND THIS BOOK FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE, MY 12 YEAR OLD SON LOVED IT ! I ACTUALLY READ IT AS WELL , AND I LOVED IT !!!!!!!

Starting with the first line in the novel. Samurai Shortstop grabs your attention and makes it extremely difficult to put down!!

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