



STORY SUMMARY

A farmer and her husband are startled to find a giant peach at their door, and even more surprised when it splits open and a girl leaps out. Momoko, here to make the world a better place, sets out with a pocketful of peach dumplings to investigate the rumors of a fierce local ogre. She soon meets a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant who all agree to help her on her quest. When they find the ogre at last the friends learn why seeking truth—rather than believing rumors—is so important.

THE TRADITIONAL FOLKTALE

“Momotaro,” also known as “Little Peachling” or “The Peach Boy,” is a well-loved Japanese folktale. In it, an old, childless couple discover a large peach from which emerges a beautiful baby boy. They name him “Momotaro” from “Momo” (“Peach”) and “Taro” (“Eldest Son”). He grows up to be the strongest young man in the village and, at fifteen, sets out to fight ogres (or sometimes demons) living on an island some distance away. On his journey he meets a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant, who each ask for one of the dumplings he carries. Some versions say the dumplings give Momotaro and the animals extraordinary strength. The four complete the quest together, defeating the ogres and taking back the treasures they had stolen from humans.

Versions of the legend can be found in several picture books and many compilations of Japanese folk tales. Two free digital storybooks are available online:

Kids Web Japan: <http://web-japan.org/kidswweb/folk/momotaro>

StoryJumper.com: www.storyjumper.com/book/index/201/The-Legend-of-Momotaro

★ Toronto Public Library 2014 First & Best List selection

REVIEWS

“...this story has a satisfying ring and a tasty ending. A winningly good-natured version of a familiar favorite.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Nakamura’s playful twists on gender tropes combined with Bender’s outstanding visuals make this a fun and important book for boys and girls alike.”—*Quill & Quire*

“As Momoko likes to say whenever she is pleased, this book is “Peachy!” in all its lush, juicy goodness.”

—*National Reading Campaign*

“feisty Momoko is a truth-seeking explorer who doesn’t let gossip...deter her from having fabulous experiences...Momoko is surely a 21st-century original hero with epic potential.”

—*Smithsonian BookDragon*

“...told with humour and charm, and the repetition lends a lyrical quality to the story...wonderfully appealing pictures...highlight glorious landscapes.”—*CM Magazine*

Picture Book Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-927485-58-3 | Pages: 32

THEMES

Courage, Friendship, Rumor, Japan, Folklore, Humor

BISAC CODES

JUV012060 JUVENILE FICTION / Legends, Myths, Fables / Asian
JUV030020 / JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / Asia
JUV019000 / JUVENILE FICTION / Humorous Stories

BEFORE READING

Ask your students to name any folk tales or fairy tales they know. Ask them how they learned the stories (through movies, picture books, etc.). Explain that a long time ago, folk and fairy tales were told out loud. The people who told them often changed details, either accidentally or on purpose, so by the time they were written down there were many versions. Since then, people have been coming up with even more versions. Your students will likely be familiar with Disney's most recent adaptations of "The Snow Queen," "Rapunzel," and "The Frog Prince," among others.

Explain that *Peach Girl* is an adaptation of the traditional Japanese folktale "Momotaro" or "The Peach Boy."

PEACH GIRL AUDIOBOOK ACTIVITY

Play the free *Peach Girl* audiobook for your students without showing them the picture book. The audiobook is available here:

http://pajamapress.ca/resource/peach_girl_extra_content

In small groups, assign the students one scene from the story to illustrate.

Assemble the students' illustrations into a book.

Read the students' book and the picture book as a class, discussing the differences and similarities.

AFTER READING

Discuss:

- How did Momoko "make the world a better place" by going out to find the ogre?
- Why do you think people were scared of the ogre?
- What should we do when we hear a hurtful rumor about somebody we know? About somebody we don't know?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Play "Broken Telephone" as a class or in groups of 8–10 students to demonstrate how stories and rumors can change when they are re-told many times. To play, whisper a message in the ear of one student. She whispers it in the ear of the next student, and so on until everyone has heard it. No one may ask to hear the message repeated; they must simply pass on what they think they heard. The last student repeats the message he heard aloud to the whole group.
- Divide the students into groups of eight to practice a dramatization of *Peach Girl*, ensuring that each group has a strong reader to take the part of narrator. They may use the words exactly as written in the book or they may retell the story in their own way. **Roles:** Narrator, Momoko, Farmer, Husband, Dog, Monkey, Pheasant, Ogre
- Read a more traditional version of the "Momotaro" folktale to the class and ask the students to compare it to *Peach Girl*. What is similar and different about the two tellings? Why might Raymond Nakamura have made certain changes in his version? After the discussion, have students write their own adaptations of the "Momotaro" story or another folktale.

RESOURCES

Official Webpage:

http://pajamapress.ca/book/peach_girl

Official Book Trailer:

http://pajamapress.ca/resource/peach_girl_book_trailer

Free *Peach Girl* audiobook:

http://pajamapress.ca/resource/peach_girl_extra_content

Author Website:

<http://raymondsbrain.com>

Illustrator Website:

<http://rebeccabender.com>