

Simple Discussion Questions:

1. After Yuma enters the painting, he sees a lot of details there that he couldn't see before. Can you spot those details that aren't visible in the painting on pages 1 or 3? (Rabbits & butterflies, for example). Why do you think he cannot see these things until he is IN the painting?
2. Yuma is frightened because the cave is very dark. Why does darkness sometimes scare us, and why does light give us comfort?
3. Yuma feels sorry for the creature in the cave and relates to his feelings. This is an example of [empathy](#). Can you describe a situation where you felt empathy for someone else, or when someone you know exhibited it? Why might empathy be considered a valuable skill? How can we [develop it](#)?
4. Yuma faces 3 main challenges while searching for his Mom in the painting: a scary man, a scary creature, and trying not to fall asleep despite feeling tired. How does he overcome each of these challenges?
5. How does Yuma find his Mom? (He cries). We don't often see or hear about heroes crying. But for the hero of this story, Yuma crying actually connects him with his Mom. Why might crying be a good thing? How can expressing our feelings benefit us or the people close to us?
6. Yuma mistakenly thinks his Mom isn't with him because he cannot see her. There are actually a lot of things we cannot see with our eyes naturally that are around us. Create a list of these things (the wind, [microorganisms](#), etc.). If we cannot see these things, how do we know they are really there?
7. Yuma has very intelligent thoughts for his age, but speaks simply. Have you ever wanted to say something but struggled to find the right words for your thoughts?
8. When Yuma is about to fall asleep, his Dad accidentally wakes him up. Yuma appears to fly at him with an imaginary sword. But on the next page, we see that Yuma is about to walk off of his bed. Do you think Yuma dreamed or imagined flying? Or do you think he really flew? Have you ever had a dream that you thought was real? How did you feel when you woke up from it?
9. Which would you prefer to have: a painting you could step inside, a magic brush that can create real objects, or friendship with a dragon?
10. Have you ever had trouble falling asleep? Why was it hard for you to fall asleep? What were some methods you used to help you fall asleep?

Advanced Discussion Questions:

1. In 1839, English author [Edward Bulwer-Lytton](#) wrote: "[The pen is mightier than the sword](#)." In *Sleepy Baby Samurai*, Yuma's brush is more powerful than a sword. Why was the brush more powerful? What can a brush/pen do? How is a brush or pen powerful in real life, so that this statement could be considered true?
2. Each of the characters in this story wants something. Yuma wants to find his blanket and Mommy so he can easily fall asleep. His Father wants to buy groceries. His Mother wants to add more details to her painting. The sword thief wants to steal a sword. The creature wants a blanket so it feels comfortable and safe. For some, they need the thing they want. For others, they actually need something different. How can we distinguish our wants from our needs?
3. There are many different ways to get something you want. You could buy it (like Yuma's father buying groceries), secretly steal it (like the creature that took Yuma's blanket), try to scare someone into giving it to you (like the man who wants Yuma's brush). Yuma goes searching for the things he wants, and ends up giving one of them away. Are there good ways and bad ways to get something you want? How do we know when something is right or wrong?

Activities:

1. On page 1, we can see a lot of things in the apartment where Yuma lives. After reading the book once, return to this page and look for all of the things that we see later on in the story. You can also try looking around a room for 30 seconds, then go to a different room/location and try to draw or write down as many things from the first room as you can remember.
2. In this story, we meet a creature that likes to steal blankets and socks. (If you look carefully, you'll see one sock on pages 1 and 2, and the matching sock inside the cave). Many people have experienced losing a sock. What could be a real or magical explanation for all of those missing socks?
3. Did you notice the 2 rabbits in the book? Why do they follow Yuma throughout his journey in the painting? Are they Yuma's friends, his Mother's friends, journalists trying to catch an eventful story for the news, or something else? Write about Yuma's adventure from the rabbits' perspective, or write an original story about these rabbits' own adventures.
4. [Glowworms](#) are one of the few living creatures that produce and emit light. They appear in the cave scenes of this story. What other creatures have this quality of [bioluminescence](#)? How do they glow and where can we see them?
5. There are some Japanese cultural elements in this story that could be interesting to research further: besides "[Samurai](#)" or "[Bushido](#)", you could also search for clothing like: "[Yukata](#)", "[Obi](#)", "[Tabi](#)", "[Hakama](#)" or things in the environment like "[Torii](#)" or "[Sakura](#)". The character of

Yuma's Mother is named Yuko Sakamoto, which is an homage to a real Samurai in history: "[Ryōma Sakamoto](#)". His story is quite interesting and has inspired multiple films, shows, and books. If you're interested in learning about the most famous female Samurai in history, then you can search for: "[Tomoe Gozen](#)".

Further Reading:

<https://andrewzeller.ca/getting-to-know-samurai/>

<https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2127.html>

<https://www.japanese-wiki-corpus.org/history/Bushi.html>

These discussion questions and activities were written by the author of *Sleepy Baby Samurai and the Magic Painting*. If you would like to make additional suggestions, please email them to: andrew@andrezeller.com.