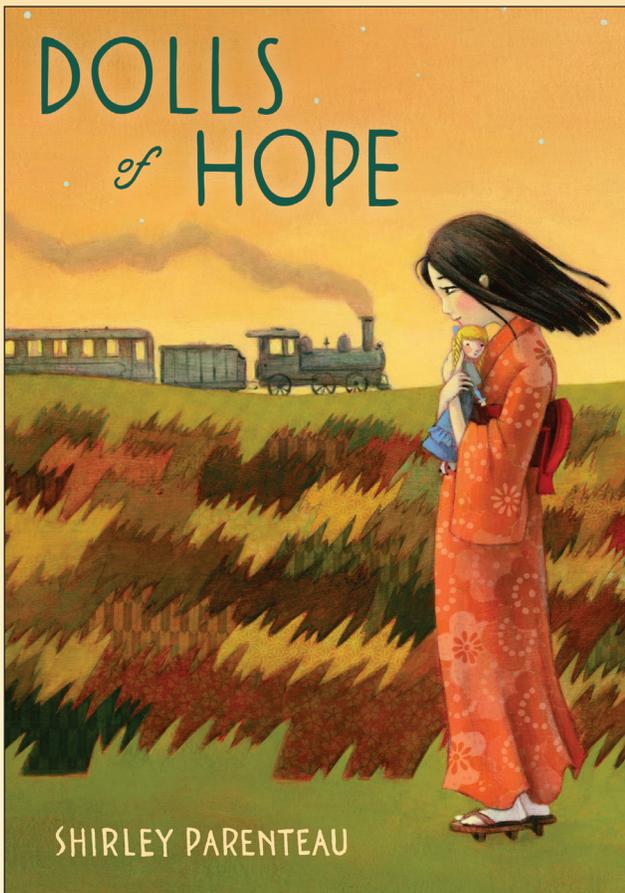


DOLLS *of* HOPE

A Note from Author
SHIRLEY PARENTEAU



A few years ago, pictures of my little granddaughter dressed in a beautiful kimono led me to research the Japanese Girls' Day festival called Hinamatsuri, where treasured dolls are put on display. That research led to the all-but-forgotten Friendship Dolls project of 1926 and eventually to my novel *Ship of Dolls* and to telling more of the story through the eyes of a Japanese girl in *Dolls of Hope*.

In 1926, Dr. Sidney Gulick, a teacher missionary who retired after working in Japan for thirty years, worried about approaching war between the two countries he loved. He began the Friendship Doll project, urging children across America to send thousands of dolls to children in Japan in hope of creating friendship between the two countries. Children in nearly every state responded. The "Blue-Eyed Dolls" received an enthusiastic welcome in Japan, with parties and ceremonies held throughout the country. Children there donated money to have fifty-eight large

dolls created by their country's finest doll makers and dressed in rich kimonos. These, with many accessories, were sent in gratitude to children in America in time for Christmas of 1927.

Sadly, the beautiful hope for friendship expressed by the children of both countries could not prevent war. With the Japanese bombing of American ships in Pearl Harbor in 1941, America was drawn into World War II. In both countries, the dolls became symbols of the enemy. The Japanese government ordered the American dolls to be destroyed. In America, the Japanese dolls were put into storage and forgotten.

Now, long after WWII, the two countries have healed and become friends. The friendship project lives on as well, with dolls again sharing the culture of each country.

Bill Gordon's website on the Friendship Dolls, www.bill-gordon.net/dolls, provided a major source of information for the novels, with photos and facts from 1926 to today.

Doll maker Hirata Gouyou really lived and created some of the Dolls of Return Gratitude, including one I have visited in a museum at the University of Nevada in Reno. Hirata Gouyou, who eventually became one of Japan's revered Living Treasures, was a young man of twenty-four and already a master doll maker in 1927. If Chiyo had been real instead of a fictional character, I believe she would have enjoyed knowing Hirata-san, just as I have enjoyed giving him an important part in the story.

The value of the Japanese yen has fallen dramatically since WWII. In Chiyo's time, one yen was worth about fifty cents in U.S. money. Chiyo's two 10-yen coins from the mayor of Tokyo were together worth about \$10.00 in U.S. money. Of course, prices in 1927 were much lower than today, and to Chiyo that amount was a fortune. She rarely had even a sen, worth about 1/100th the value of one yen, as a penny is worth 1/100th of a U.S. dollar.

For research on life in rural Japan in 1927, I relied on a fascinating collection of interviews in the book *Memories of Silk and Straw: A Self-Portrait of Small-Town Japan* by Dr. Junichi Saga. And I am indebted to my daughter-in-law, Miwa, for researching Japanese-language Internet sites for information needed for the story and for help with cultural descriptions and occasional words in the Japanese language. Writing Chiyo's story has been a challenge, an adventure, and a joy. Any mistakes that may have slipped through are entirely my own.



SHIRLEY PARENTEAU is the author of many books for young people, including the historical novel *Ship of Dolls*, as well as the picture books *Bears on Chairs*, *Bears in Beds*, and *Bears in the Bath*. About this book, she says, "When I discovered that in 1926 to '27, so many dolls were exchanged between the United States and Japan, I wondered about the children who took part. The question prompted *Ship of Dolls* and *Dolls of Hope*, the stories of two girls, half a world apart, who give their hearts to Emily Grace, a doll whose tumultuous journey ignites unexpected strengths in them both." Shirley Parenteau lives with her husband in Elk Grove, California.



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