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Invisible Seam

Vicky M. Turner

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Frew, Andy William. *Invisible Seam*. Illustrated by Jun Matsuoka. Moon Mountain Press, 2003. ISBN 1931569028. \$15.95.

Reviewer: Vicky M. Turner

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Historical Fiction;

Subject: Sewing--Juvenile fiction; Japan--Juvenile fiction; Promises--Juvenile fiction;

A great Japanese volcano has erupted, burning down the home of Michi (roadway) and her Aunt Tsuru (crane). Since Aunt Tsuru has an injured leg and the two have little money, Michi is apprenticed to Mistress Shinyo (needle) to learn the art of making fine clothing for rich and powerful ladies. Mistress Shinyo's hands are old and gnarled and she is looking for just the right apprentice to sew the fine clothes like she did in her youth. She already has three other girls working for her, Taki (waterfall), Kaoru (aroma) and Hana (flower). Taki specializes in the care of the gardens and her hands are always stained. Kaoru loves to cook and the meals she prepares are very delicious. Hana has a magical way with flower arranging. But none of the three girls displays a real talent with a needle and thread. Michi seems to be born with the gift of small, tight stitches and quickly is given more projects, on better fabric, until the three other apprentices vow to get even with her. Their jealousy nearly ruins Mistress Shinyo's business when they give Michi red thread to sew a white kimono.

A first children's book for author Andy William Frew. A first book for illustrator Jun Matsuoka. A first joy for the reader. This tale is based on a true event in the life of Frew's great-grandmother-in-law. The story, painted with soft color washed watercolors, makes this first attempt at illustrating children's books a book that readers will want to look at a first time, a second time, and even a third time. The last page of the book gives the meaning of the names of the characters and also mentions a website, www.moonmountainpub.com, for readers to go to for more information about lesson plans and related sources.