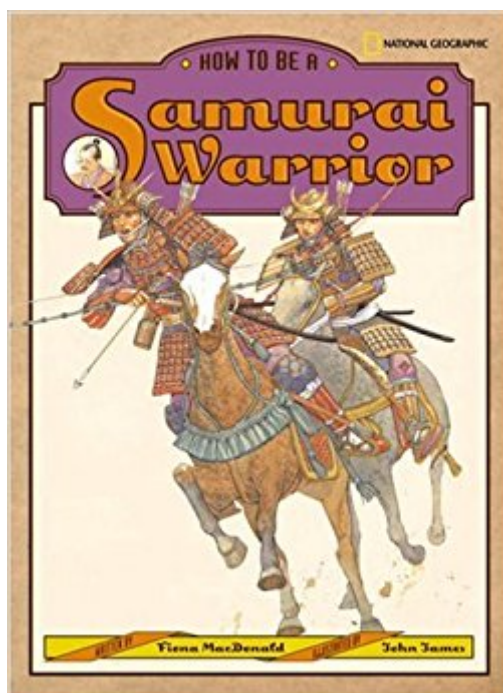


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# How To Be A Samurai Warrior



## Synopsis

Can you handle a horse? Are you skillful with a bow? Are you brave in the face of danger? Will you wear this smelly, lice-infested armor with dignity? Have you truly earned the respect and honor shown to the samurai? Are you of honorable lineage? Will you show absolute loyalty to your lord? Do you understand that dishonor will bring death; by that same sword that you must sleep beside every night of your life? Are you ready to rise in rank?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0870 (What's this?)

Series: How to Be

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Publisher: National Geographic Children's Books (June 1, 2005)

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Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #896,372 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #136 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Asia](#) #431 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Cultural Studies > Customs, Traditions, Anthropology](#) #474 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Military & Wars](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

"High-interest topics brought to life through readable texts." [School Library Journal](#)

Fiona MacDonald studied history at Cambridge University and the University of East Anglia. She has taught in schools and universities, and is the author of numerous books for children on historical topics, such as the Middle Ages and ancient Rome. Some of these titles include *How to Be an Aztec Warrior* and *How to Be a Medieval Knight*.

This is a fantastic book about men who were trained to kill people and break things. It is both

informative and easy to read, and if a child is going to read about soldiers or warriors, she or he should understand what happens in battle.

My kids, ages, 5, 8, and 11, love this book, very informative and even entertaining. They have seen severed heads in Star Wars movies, so no big deal about that one page other reviews seem so focused on.

Like the other volumes in this National Geographic "How to Be" series, "How to Be a Samurai Warrior" pretends that it is trying to recruit you to serve your local daimyo or even the shogun. Young readers imagine that they are living in Japan four hundred years ago and that they are considering a career as a samurai warrior. Fiona Macdonald explains that your main duties will include leaving your home to fight if your daimyo summons you, following "the way of the warrior," and studying ancient wisdom, writing poetry, and admiring art. Aided by John James' illustrations, Macdonald tries to tell young readers everything they need to know about their chosen career, warning them that at the end of the book there will be an interview to see if they qualify for service. Four centuries ago in the Land of the Rising Sun the daimyo Tokugawa Ieyasu had defeated all of the other warring lords, become shogun, and built a new capital city of Edo (now known as Tokyo). The Shogun needs plenty of samurai to maintain his rule, but there are requirements. Macdonald explains you have to come from the right family (or show exceptional loyalty and fighting skill), and then covers what you will learn when you go to school (forget being left-handed). Each two-page spread addresses a key question: Can You Use Deadly Weapons? Can You Afford Armor? Do You Have the Right Attitude? Will You Be Loyal? Could You Survive on Campaigns? Part of the purpose of this book is to get young readers (who we presume will mostly be male) to be interested in a book about becoming a warrior, and then introduce them to key parts of Japanese society four centuries ago. So the last chapters of the book talk about what it is like to live in a castle, what happens when a castle is under siege, and what it is like when you visit a town and perhaps catch a Noh play. However, the final chapters on back on point, explaining how you can never be emperor but you might rise to the rank of shogun, and then looking at what the future would hold for you if you became a samurai. You could be killed in battle and have your head taken back to the daimyo of the samurai who cut it off, or you could survive and retire to a quiet place to become a Buddhist monk. However, if you live after 1868 forget about becoming a samurai, because you will soon be outdated. In the back of the book is Your Interview, where you have to answer ten questions (e.g., What's the best way for a samurai to die? Who is the real ruler of

Japan?). Be forewarned that you need to get eight out of ten right to be a good samurai. Macdonald provides a Glossary that defines key words in both English (e.g., "Arquebus," "Lacquer") and Japanese (e.g., "Hatamoto," "Yari"). There are only a couple of books listed for Further Reading, but certainly Macdonald and James give young readers a solid introduction to what it was like to be a samurai. The conceit of saying samurai are needed and trying to recruit the readers becomes an active context for providing the information. Other books in the series do the same thing with Roman soldiers, Medieval Knights, and Aztec Warriors.

I was very excited about buying this book for my young niece and nephew for Xmas. However, when I received it, I was unhappy with two pages. On page 10, "It's very difficult to shoot arrows while galloping on horseback. Samurai practice by shooting dogs." And moreover, on p 28, "If you're killed in battle, an enemy samurai will cut off your head, tie it to his horse's saddle, and carry it back to his daimyo." And there is an illustration with a samurai, riding a horse, with two severed heads tied to his saddle. Because of these two sections, I did not feel comfortable giving the book as a gift. It is a shame that these two sections ruin an otherwise nice book.

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