

# Discussion Guide for The Big Wave

By Pearl S. Buck

1. (Slide 2) Where does this story take place? **Japan (that is all that is given for a location, but a fishing village near a mountain)**
2. (Slide 3) Where did Kino live? **on a farm on the side of the mountain**  
Where did Jiya live? **in a small fishing village at the foot of the mountain**  
Which boy said the sea was beautiful? **Kino**  
Which boy said the sea was our enemy? **Jiya**
3. (Slide 4) What did Kino's father do for a living? **He was a farmer.**  
What did Jiya's father do for a living? **He was a fisherman.**
4. (Slide 5) Who lived in a castle on the island Kino and Jiya considered their own? **An old Gentleman with a kind face who did not pay any attention to them.**
5. Why did the houses near the sea have no windows? **Kino asked Jiya this question and Jiya said the sea is our enemy.**
6. Why wouldn't Jiya stay overnight on the island with Kino?  
**He thought the sea might be angry.**
7. (Slide 6 ) Did Kino ever think the ocean could be angry? Did he share his thoughts with Jiya? **Kino did not think the ocean could be angry but one day he dove down far enough to find that the deep water was very cold. He did not tell Jiya, but could then understand why Jiya was afraid.**
8. (Slide 7) Why do you think did the fish glittered in the dark cave and turned gray in the sunshine?  
**It was only bioluminescent under water.**
9. (Slide 8) Why was Jiya's father angry when he came home late, and Kino's family less upset?  
**Jiya's family realizes the danger of the sea. Kino's father believed in living without being worried all the time, although he was anxious when the volcano began to erupt.**
10. (Slide 8) Why does Kino think fish harvest is easier than rice harvest? **Rice harvest is more**

difficult and takes longer than rice harvest. Also, Kino doesn't have to help all the time, he can help if he wants and has time. But Kino is glad his father is a farmer all in all.

11. (Slide 9) What does the volcano that Kino and his father can see have to do with the big wave? About how far away was it? The volcano has smoke rising from it, and the earth trembled sometimes. Later it causes the big wave when it erupts. It is about 20 miles away. Links to earthquake maps are provided on slide 9.
12. (Slide 10) What did the red flag on the top of the Old Gentleman's castle mean? How many times had Kino's father seen it? It meant bad weather, volcano explosion, earthquake, and Tsunami. Kino's father had seen it twice before Kino was born.
13. (Slide 11) When the big wave started to rise, why did Jiya's family send him up the mountain? He was the youngest one and they wanted someone to live after them if the worst happened. Note: It says in the book they send him up the mountain, but that meant the knoll with the castle. They thought they were sending him to the castle. Jiya decides to go to his friend up the mountain the book refers to as the mountain. Kino is waving white to signal Jiya.
14. (Slide 11) Why did Jiya become unconscious? He saw the big wave take the entire fishing village away, and was overcome with emotion. His family and home were gone all at once.
15. (Slide 12) How does Jiya show he is having grief? Does Kino's family allow him to grieve? Jiya sleeps a lot, cries, and doesn't want to eat. Yes, they allow him to grieve.
16. (Slide 12) What does the father say over and over to explain Jiya's grief to Kino? "Life is stronger than death." Kino's father says many wise things in this story, and one thing that may come up for discussion is that he thinks the Japanese people love life because they live in danger. He talks about death being a gateway, and that may also need to be discussed.
17. (Slide 13) When the Old Gentleman comes and wants to see the sleeping Jiya, he has a reason for wanting to have Jiya as his son. What is the reason? The Old Gentleman says Jiya is bright, handsome, and the best boy in the village.
18. (Slide 14) Why do you think Jiya says no to the Old Gentleman? He said there wasn't

everything in the castle (probably meaning a mother and siblings). He also takes note that the Old Gentleman thought he was better than other people and seems to not like that by saying he is the same as other people. The Old Gentleman didn't want any of the other orphans. He may also think Kino's father is very understanding. He may feel the Old Gentleman would expect too much of him, and maybe that he would not like his friends.

19. (Slide 14) Was the family happy when Jiya stayed with them? Was Kino surprised? **Yes. Yes. Kino had been worried Jiya would want to be rich and not be his brother anymore.**
20. (Slide 14) Why does the Old Gentleman go to the beach when the rebuilding started? Why was he angry? **The Old Gentleman didn't think they should rebuild because another big wave could come.**
21. (Slide 14) What does the Old Gentleman say when Jiya says he will save people again as he is a good man? **What a pity that Jiya would not be his son.**
22. (Slide 15) What does Jiya show the family in his house? **A window facing the sea.**
23. (Slide 16) When Kino thinks Jiya should not marry Setsu, what does his father say? **"What makes you miserable will make him happy."**
24. (Slide 17) What do you think could have happened differently if the Old Gentleman had been paying attention when the boys were on his island? If he had paid attention to them, do you think the story may have been different? What do you think could have happened differently if Jiya had gone to the Old Gentleman's castle instead of to Kino's house just before the Big Wave? Do you think Jiya would have had a good life? **Answers will vary. Maybe. Maybe if Jiya had known the Old Gentleman prior to the storm, he may have wanted to live there. Maybe not, if children think he probably wanted a mother, father, and siblings. Perhaps if Jiya had gone to the castle, the Old Gentleman would just have wanted him to stay there and Kino's family would not have had a chance to take Jiya as a son. Probably Jiya would have had a good life with the Old Gentleman, but maybe not as good as with a complete family (children's answers will vary).**



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