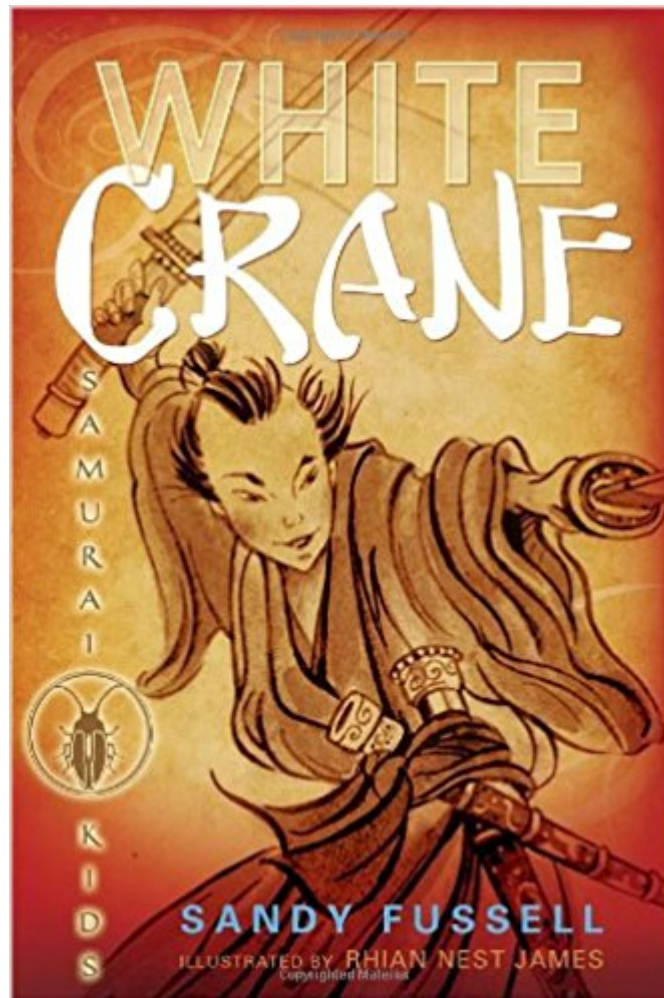




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# Samurai Kids #1: White Crane



## Synopsis

Can a one-legged boy become a great samurai warrior? Meet some unique aspiring champions in this kick-off to an exciting new martial arts series. Niya Moto is the only one-legged samurai kid in Japan, famous for falling flat on his face in the dirt. The one school that will accept him is the Cockroach Ryu, led by the legendary sensei Ki-Yaga. He may be an old man overly fond of naps, but Ki-Yaga is also known for taking in kids that the world has judged harshly: an albino girl with extra fingers and toes, a boy who is blind, a big kid whose past makes him loath to fight. A warrior in his time, Ki-Yaga demands excellence in everything from sword fighting to poetry. But can the ragtag Cockroaches make the treacherous journey to the Samurai Trainee Games, never mind take on the all-conquering Dragons? In a fast-moving, action-filled tale that draws on true details of feudal Japan, Niya finds there's no fear they can't face as long as they stick together • for their friendship is more powerful than a samurai sword.

## Book Information

Series: Samurai Kids (Book 1)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 5-7 • Friendship triumphs in this Australian import set in feudal Japan. Niya Moto and his friends all struggle with a disadvantage in their samurai training: he is missing a leg, and his fellow students are missing an arm, are blind, have extra fingers and toes, or refuse to fight. But by putting faith in their friendship and following the quiet wisdom of their sensei, they discover they can triumph against the odds. Filled with Zen-sounding aphorisms, the book has moments of sheer cleverness, making the obvious themes easier to swallow. The style seems geared toward struggling readers,

and the setting is sure to appeal to samurai vs. ninja fans who aren't too concerned about historical accuracy. Some details, such as sword making and bushido philosophy, seem well grounded in the period, while major plot designs, such as training children with missing limbs to be samurai, come across as utterly inaccurate, and Niya sounds like a modern Western narrator. Still, the depiction of children overcoming the physical odds is positive. Black-and-white illustrations enhance the storytelling, and the little bit of Japanese sprinkled in is well explained. Alana Joli Abbott, James Blackstone Memorial Library, Branford, CT  
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Four, later five teen samurai—most with physical differences—beat the odds at the annual Samurai Trainee Games in this opener to the Samurai Kids series. Once a mighty warrior but now an old man who seemingly prefers to doze in the shade, sensei Ki-Yaga has invited an unlikely crew to his Cockroach Ryu (school) for instruction in the arts and ethics of Bushido. As seen through the eyes of one-legged narrator Niya Moto, that instruction involves more horseplay than hard practice with pink-eyed Kyoko, who has extra digits on her hands and feet; one-armed Mikko; blind Taji; and other schoolmates—but the Cockroaches display sufficient spirit and teamwork to emerge triumphant in the games over the sneering Dragons. Though not exactly filled with wall-to-wall action like Jeff Stone's Five Ancestors series, the tale is lightened by pratfalls and wry bits of "wisdom" ("He who remembers what Bushido teaches will never miss out on great desserts") and is threaded with information about traditional samurai values. James' Japanese-style spot art and tableaus at the plot's high points supply martial-arts atmosphere. Grades 5-8. --John Peters

I picked up this book by accident. A friend had recommended another samurai series, but I couldn't remember the name. It was not the intended book, but I found a treasure!! read it aloud to my 7 yo son, and we were both enthralled. As previous reviewers have said, there is plenty of humor, action, and adventure---just perfect for a young boy! What I've not read in previous reviews is just how beautifully written these books are! It's absolutely lovely, almost poetic. And the themes are marvelous: teamwork, overcoming adversity, integrity, honor, courage. I think my favorite line in this book is the one in which Niya questions why another child will be invited to be in the Cockroach school the next year when he is able-bodied. Sensei responded so wonderfully. Something to the effect of---Silly boy, I didn't choose you for what you were missing. I choose my students by what they have inside them---great stuff. And such a marvelous message for everyone. Needless to say,

we will read them all!

"There just aren't enough books about Samurai." This was the lament I heard from my son last month. I wasn't aware of this lack, but once I started looking I realized he was right, there aren't many Samurai/Ninja books for middle grade readers. I found this one just by combining samurai/children books, but was wary of buying it, my son is notoriously picky about books, so I made him read the excerpt. A few minutes later I heard him yell, I rushed back into the room and he said, "I must have this book, I have to find out what happens next!" Well, he really enjoyed the story, especially the ending. It also inspired him to look up things online; kitana, dojo, sensei and rice pudding (weird, but he really likes pudding). He said the competition reminded him a little of Toph's school of metalbending (from Avatar the Last Airbender). All in all a fun and fast book that I highly recommend for kids, I took a look at the book and think the reading level is for 10-12 year olds.

SAVING THIS FOR LATER. WISH IT HAD GIVEN A RECOMMENDED AGE. MY 6 YO GRANDSON LOVES TO BE READ TO AND HE'S EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN SAMURAI SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD CHOICE. WE READ BOOKS FOR 8-11 AGE GROUP. THIS IS ABOVE THAT.

Anybody who wants to be a samurai or is just looking for a nice, fun tale of wisdom and courage must read this book. Full of action and adventure White Crane is a great book for young readers!

My 5th grade son, who I usually have a hard time finding books for, loved it!

Great series.

My 9 year old only read about half of the book. He said it was boring (now this is a kid who loves to read and reread books) but my son likes books more like diary of a wimpy kid books.

I gave this to my almost 8-year old nephew for the holidays and he read it very quickly and reported thoroughly enjoying it! I will find the next one in the series for his birthday.

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