

Showa Shinzan

MOUNTAINS ARE SLEEPING GIANTS.

THEY BEAR THE PASSAGE OF TIME BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION.

BUT IF YOU ARE FATED TO WITNESS THE BIRTH
OF A MOUNTAIN, YOU ARE BLESSED.

This animated story, based on actual events, evokes the look and feel of the Japanese art of Bunraku puppetry.

During the Second World War, young Yasuko goes to live with her grandparents in Hokkaido, northern Japan. When nearby Mount Usu erupts, her grandfather, postmaster Masao Mimatsu, decides to record its activity. As the realities of war creep into their remote village, the volcano continues to spew rocks and smoke. As Yasuko looks at her grandfather's drawings, she realizes that she is witnessing the birth of a new mountain, named Showa Shinzan.

Alison Reiko Loader combines 3-D computer animation with archival footage and drawings to present a story of nature's destructive beauty. These awesome forces provide the catalyst for personal transformation as a young girl learns about the world and begins to understand and admire the man who helps expand her awareness.

Director: ALISON REIKO LOADER

Producer: MICHAEL FUKUSHIMA

12 minutes, 56 seconds
Order number: C9102 142

 Closed captioned. A decoder is required.

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Showa Shinzan

昭和神蔵

A NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA PRODUCTION

Showa Shinzan



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written by:
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and JESSE NISHIHATA
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original music
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and *Edge of Dusk*
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excerpts from *Stealing
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special thanks to the
Mimatsu family
for use of Masao Mimatsu
artwork and photographs

12 MIN 56 SEC

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Showa Shinzan is the story of a man who devoted part of his life to surveying the land around him and recording what he saw. This animated short, appropriate for high school students, will enrich the study of geology, volcanology and Japanese history. (*Showa* refers to the reign of the Showa Emperor, Hirohito. *Shinzan* means "new mountain.") The film covers the time between December 1943 and August 1945, a period of great upheavals in Japan, both politically and physically. In the midst of World War II, there were earthquakes and volcanic eruptions at Mount Usu.

PERIOD BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR II

1926 Showa Emperor begins his reign.

1927 Economic crisis develops.

1928-1929 Over a thousand alleged Communists are arrested.

1930 Beginning of the Showa Depression.

1934-35 Tuberculosis spreads; persistent peasant uprisings.

1937-38 Massacre at Nanjing, where over a thousand Chinese are killed by the Japanese army.

1941 Japan attacks Pearl Harbor and Hong Kong.

1942 Japanese occupation begins in Southeast Asia; includes Burma and parts of the East Indies.

1944 Major attacks by the US on Japanese islands.

1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki are hit by atomic bombs.

POST-WORLD WAR II

1945-1952 Allied forces occupy Japan.

1972 Okinawa is returned to Japanese rule.

Many major cities in Japan were in ruins after the war, and widespread famine continued for several years. The occupying forces were mainly American, but the USSR controlled some islands. In 1947 Emperor Hirohito's authority was taken away, and a new political structure was established. Civil liberties dominated post-war social reform. Japan's Socialist and Communist parties were restored; women acquired the right to vote; and labour union laws were established.

MOUNT USU'S ERUPTION

Pre-Eruption: December 1943 to June 1944

Explosive Eruption: June to October 1944

Rise of Lava Dome: November 1944 to September 1945

Quieting Period: September to December 1945



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. During the period surrounding Mount Usu's eruption (1943-45), what was the economic situation in Japan, and how did it affect people from different social classes?
2. Name some significant events in Japan before and after World War II.
3. How did Japanese society change after the war? Describe some of the positive outcomes.
4. Japan lies along a major fault line where volcanoes and earthquakes frequently occur. This area is called the Ring of Fire. Name some other volcanoes located here.
5. What are the effects of these volcanoes on nearby cities and villages? Describe the damage and also the benefits.
6. How did Showa Shinzan come into existence? Can you name a similar occurrence in another part of the world?
7. What contribution did Masao Mimatsu (the grandfather in the film) make through his observations? Is his work useful to present-day volcanic and geological studies?

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

A Japanese Canadian born in Belleville, Ontario, Alison Reiko Loader came to Montreal in 1987 to study animation at Concordia University, minoring in studio art and art history. The following year she won a National Film Board of Canada Award for her first-year animated short. After graduating in 1991, she worked in desktop publishing and pre-press production for several years before applying her animation and computer skills at an advertising firm, creating animated spots for LED billboards.

In 1997 Alison left Montreal to live and work in Japan, creating photorealistic computer-generated artwork and animation for Sony Playstation and Sega Saturn games. She discovered Showa Shinzan while vacationing in Hokkaido, which kindled an enduring fascination that led to her return the following year, when she began conducting extensive research for her film. She returned to Montreal at the end of 1998. **Showa Shinzan** is Alison's first professional film. She lives in Montreal and teaches animation.



RELATED NFB VIDEOS

Minoru: Memory of Exile Animation and archival film footage combine to tell the true story of a Japanese Canadian family deported to Japan during the Second World War. (1992, 19 min)

Obāchan's Garden The story of a woman who came to Canada from Japan in 1923 as a picture bride. (2001, 94 min)

Savage Christmas: Hong Kong 1941 Canadian soldiers serving in Hong Kong in WWII become PoWs when the colony surrenders to Japan. (1991, 104 min) Part of *The Valour and the Horror series*.