

Kiko: Entry to Wakaki Senshi

The morning sun had barely climbed over the mountains when Kiko stood outside her family's wooden home in the peaceful village of Hoshinomura. Dressed in a neat blue training uniform, she took a deep breath and smiled. Today was the day she had been dreaming about for years.

"You look ready," said her mum, brushing an invisible speck of dust from Kiko's shoulder.

"I've been ready for ages!" Kiko replied confidently.

Her dad chuckled as he picked up her small satchel. "Confidence is a wonderful thing," he said, "but remember, even the greatest warriors were once beginners."

The walk to Wakaki Senshi Warrior School wound through forests filled with cherry blossom trees. Pink petals drifted lazily through the air, and birds sang from the branches above. Kiko barely noticed the scenery. Her mind was racing with excitement. By the end of the day, she imagined she would know impressive sword techniques and perhaps even earn praise from her teachers.

When they reached the school gates, dozens of children were gathering in the courtyard. Some chatted happily while others stood quietly beside their families, their expressions betraying a mixture of excitement and nervousness.

"You'll do brilliantly," Mum whispered, giving Kiko a hug.

"We'll see you this afternoon," Dad added with a reassuring smile.

Kiko waved confidently as they walked away.

Inside the training hall, Master Hiro stood waiting. Although he was elderly, his posture was perfectly straight and his sharp eyes missed nothing.

"Welcome," he said calmly. "Today you begin your journey. Remember this: a warrior's greatest weapon is not a sword—it is their character."

Kiko frowned slightly. She had expected to begin sword fighting immediately.

Instead, the first lesson involved balance. Each pupil had to walk slowly across a narrow wooden beam without rushing.

"That looks easy," Kiko thought.

The moment she stepped onto the beam, however, her confidence disappeared. She hurried forward, wobbled, waved her arms wildly and tumbled safely onto a padded mat.

Several children giggled.

Kiko's cheeks burned with embarrassment.

Master Hiro did not laugh.

"Stand up," he said kindly.

Kiko climbed back onto the beam.

This time she moved more carefully, but halfway across she lost her balance again.

She sighed loudly.

During the next lesson, the class practised kneeling respectfully before entering the dojo. Kiko forgot the correct order and accidentally stepped inside before bowing.

Later, they learned how to hold a wooden practice sword. Kiko gripped hers so tightly that her hands quickly became tired.

By lunchtime, she felt exhausted.

As she sat beneath a maple tree eating rice balls, another girl sat beside her.

"I'm Emi," she said with a friendly smile.

"I'm Kiko."

"You looked disappointed this morning."

"I thought I'd be good at everything," Kiko admitted quietly.

Emi laughed gently.

"I thought so too. My older brother told me he fell off the balance beam six times on his first day."

"Really?"

"He became one of the best students."

Kiko smiled for the first time since arriving.

Perhaps everyone found the first day difficult.

The afternoon lesson surprised her most of all.

Master Hiro placed a tiny teacup on a table.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"A cup," several pupils answered.

Master Hiro shook his head.

"I see patience," he replied. "The potter who made it could not rush. If they had hurried, the clay would have cracked. Becoming a warrior is the same. Great things take time."

The hall became silent.

Kiko glanced at the teacup again. It no longer seemed ordinary.

When the school bell finally rang, she felt relieved.

Outside the gates, Mum and Dad were waiting.

"How was your first day?" Dad asked.

Kiko hesitated.

Part of her wanted to pretend everything had gone perfectly. Instead, she looked down at her shoes.

"It was much harder than I expected."

Dad nodded thoughtfully.

"That usually means you've learned something worthwhile."

As they walked home, Kiko told them everything—the beam, the wooden sword, forgetting to bow and feeling embarrassed.

She expected them to look disappointed.

Instead, Mum smiled warmly.

"I'm proud of you."

Kiko blinked.

"But I wasn't very good."

"You kept trying," Mum replied. "That matters far more."

They continued along the blossom-lined path towards Hoshinomura. The evening breeze carried the sweet scent of flowers through the village.

For the first time that day, Kiko realised something important.

She hadn't become a great warrior.

Not yet.

But she had taken the very first step.

As they reached their front gate, Mum and Dad exchanged a quiet smile.

It looked as though they had a little surprise waiting inside.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Kiko think the first day at Wakaki Senshi would be easy?
 - A. She had already attended lessons there.
 - B. She believed she would quickly master the skills.
 - C. Her parents had trained her at home.
 - D. She had watched other pupils practising.

2. What does the word *betraying* most nearly mean in the sentence, "their expressions betraying a mixture of excitement and nervousness"?
 - A. Hiding
 - B. Causing
 - C. Revealing
 - D. Ignoring

3. Why didn't Master Hiro laugh when Kiko fell from the beam?
 - A. He understood that making mistakes is part of learning.
 - B. He had not noticed her fall.
 - C. He was disappointed with Kiko.
 - D. He expected everyone else to laugh.

4. What is the main lesson Master Hiro teaches using the teacup?
 - A. Tea ceremonies are important traditions.
 - B. Warriors should make their own cups.
 - C. Every object has a hidden purpose.
 - D. Patience is essential when learning new skills.

5. Which word best describes Emi?
 - A. Boastful
 - B. Encouraging
 - C. Careless
 - D. Competitive

6. Why does Kiko decide to tell her parents the truth about her day?

- A. She realises pretending would not help her.
- B. She hopes they will complain to the school.
- C. She wants them to teach her sword fighting.
- D. She thinks they already know everything.

7. Which sentence best suggests there will be another adventure after this story?

- A. "The hall became silent."
- B. "She hadn't become a great warrior."
- C. "The evening breeze carried the sweet scent of flowers."
- D. "Mum and Dad exchanged a quiet smile. It looked as though they had a little surprise waiting inside."

8. Which theme is explored most throughout the story?

- A. Winning is more important than trying.
- B. Families should never let children make mistakes.
- C. Perseverance and learning from failure lead to growth.
- D. Natural talent is the key to success.

Answers

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. D
5. B
6. A
7. D
8. C