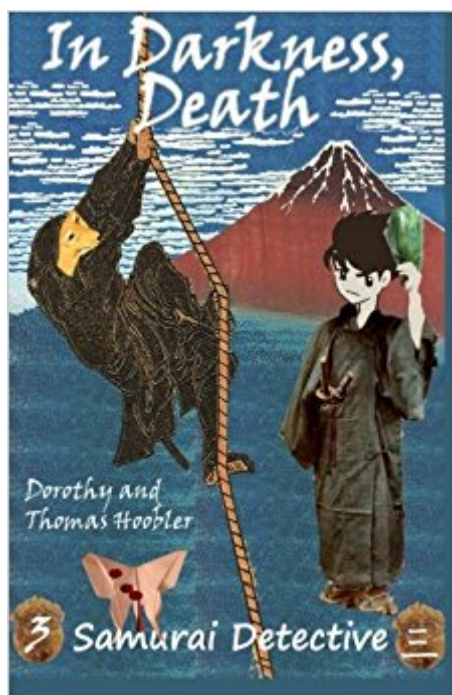


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# In Darkness, Death



## Synopsis

In his most exciting adventure yet, Seikei has to chase a shape-shifting ninja to the sacred mountain that is his lair. He has only one weapon: a mysterious stone given to him by another ninja--who may or may not be trusted. The 2005 Edgar award-winner for best YA mystery.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 5-8--This fine mystery set in 18th-century Japan continues the adventures of Judge Ooka and his 14-year-old adopted son, Seikei. This time, they are asked to investigate the death of Lord Inaba, who was murdered under the watchful eye of the shogun. Their only clue is a bloodstained origami butterfly. The judge sends Seikei to a distant town in the care of the enigmatic ninja Tatsuno to find out who bought the paper from which the butterfly was made. This leads them to a remote monastery and, unwittingly, right into the killer's hiding place. The plot falters a bit when Seikei takes it upon himself to argue the case of starving peasants to the local lord, known to be ruthless, and is thrown in jail. He is much too smart to be so naive about the morals of the local ruler. However, this development illustrates his big heart, and readers will easily forgive this minor flaw considering the story's solid suspense, fast-paced action, and authentic setting. Overall, a satisfying mystery that's sure to please fans and likely to win a few converts.--Karen T. Bilton, Somerset County Library, Bridgewater, NJ Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Gr. 7-10. This is the third installment in the authors' series of intriguing mysteries set in

eighteenth-century Japan, beginning with *The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn* (1999). In this book, 14-year-old Seikei and his adopted father and mentor, Judge Ooka, set out to discover who murdered a powerful warlord. Signs point to a ninja, a hired assassin. But who procured the services of the ninja? Judge Ooka orders Seikei to travel to a northern town with the seemingly inept Tatsuno, who turns out to be a ninja himself. Eventually, Seikei's journey takes him to a sacred mountain, where he brushes with the supernatural and a dangerous encounter with the murderer, who reveals the name of the man who hired him. Although the mystery plot itself is not as elaborate as those in the other novels in the series, this is a great adventure story, featuring lots of action, authentic period details, and an evocative, shadowy atmosphere. Todd Morning  
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I don't know, I just like these books. Seikei is smart but is humble and learns from his mistakes. I like the Judge Ooka character as well.

I'm not a Young Adult but got this because it was an Edgar Winner. I'm no longer using that as a serious criteria. Not a bad little book but I suspected the murderer early on and wasn't sympathetic to the young protagonist who did not seem worthy of becoming a Samurai. The feudal setting in Japan was of interest and it's a quick read. I gave it to my young teen great-nephew of the video game generation and I'm eager to learn if he actually reads it and, if so, his thoughts.

Just like the other books in the series *In Darkness, Death* is a must read! I use the Hoobler's Samurai Series in my 7th grade classroom to teach ancient Japanese culture. The books are highly entertaining while being also highly educational. I recommend them for public, private, and home-schools.

The third in the series takes a different path from the first two books to show a different path to true honor. In this story, the main character is a samurai in training, but learns that the way of the ninja has its own set of honor. This leads to him understanding that honor is based on the man and not what his title or class is.

My 7th grade students used this book to supplement our reading of the first novel in the series, *The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn*. The Hooblers did a great job creating characters that help readers understand the world of medieval Japan. We even contacted the Hooblers to ask some questions

about the books, and they graciously responded.

This is the book that got me interested in historic Japanese culture as a backdrop for detective novels. Really good read. This book arrived as described and it was well worth the purchase price.

My grandson liked how the story was told, the ninja characters and Seikei, the main character. It helped him understand and enjoy Asian culture.

**Synopsis:** Samurai Lord Inaba is murdered in his sleep while under the protection of the Shogun. Judge Ooka and his adoptive son, Seikei, attempt to investigate with a bloodstained origami butterfly as their sole clue. Judge Ooka enlists the aid of a "retired" ninja, Tatsuno, to accompany Seikei as he travels across Japan searching for the maker of the origami butterfly. Their travels lead Seikei and Tatsuno to meet impoverished farmers, wary monks, and powerful daimyos. While Tatsuno attempts to warn Seikei to rein in his idealistic fervor, Seikei's code of honor wins Tatsuno's respect. In the end, Seikei must flee from false imprisonment and face a dangerous and powerful ninja to find the truth behind the assassination.

**Review:** In *Darkness*, Death introduces another interesting character in the series. Tatsuno, the "retired" ninja is cynical and resists having to accompany the young Seikei. Though Tatsuno could have abandoned Seikei numerous times, we find that Tatsuno follows a strict code of honor of his own. I enjoyed learning about Tatsuno and the lives of ninjas during the 1700s, their relationship to the monks and to the local farmers. This adventure shared the wonderful balance of action and insight into Seikei's personality. His slow realization of the plight of the farmers, the power of the daimyo and the role of the Shogun and his officials was sad but very interesting. The dilemmas that he faced added further depth to fourteen year old Seikei's character.

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