

# 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

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Showa Shinzan



VHS  
C9102 142



A NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA PRODUCTION

# Showa Shinzan



concept, direction  
and animation:  
ALISON REIKO LOADER  
written by:  
HIROMI GOTO  
and JESSE NISHIHATA  
narration voice:  
BRENDA KAMINO  
original music  
and sound design:  
NORMAND ROGER

with the collaboration of:  
DENIS CHARTRAND,  
EMIKO TOGUCHI  
excerpts from *Chikurin*  
and *Edge of Dusk*  
composed by:  
KIYOSHI NAGATA  
excerpts from *Stealing  
Thunder* composed by:  
BOYD SEIICHI GREALY,  
JOHN ENDO GREENWAY,  
BONNIE SOON  
additional animation:  
PAUL MORSTAD, JEAN-  
JACQUES TREMBLAY  
picture editing:  
HANNELE HALM  
sound editing:  
PIERRE YVES DRAPEAU  
re-recording:  
SHELLEY CRAIG, JEAN  
PAUL VIALARD  
calligraphy:  
HIROKO OKATA  
executive producer:  
DAVID VERRALL  
producer:  
MICHAEL FUKUSHIMA

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.

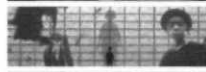
## MOUNT USU'S ERUPTION

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*.