



## Yuki and the Tsunami

### Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

**AUTHORS:** Elaine Lindy & P.J. Rittiger, **COUNTRY:** Japan, **GENRE:** Adventure/Legends



#### CHARACTERS

NARRATOR or NARRATORS (one person or more than one person)

YUUKI

YUUKI'S FATHER

YUUKI'S MOTHER

FIRST VILLAGER

SECOND VILLAGER

VILLAGE BOY

OTHER VILLAGERS (non-speaking roles)

- **JUAN** \*If there are performance notes, they can be found on the pages following the script

## Scene 1 – Yuuki’s Family Home

[**Stage Set:** The stage is divided into two sections - a rice field on one side, and mountains on the other. There are two additional scenes – Yuuki’s family’s home and the beach. The scene of Yuuki’s family home is in front of the rice fields, and the beach scene is in front of the mountaintop area. (See **Performance Notes.**)]

[The play opens in Yuuki’s family’s home. A table and three chairs are on stage. On the table is a teapot and three small cups.]

**NARRATOR:**

Hello, everyone. This play is called “Yuuki (pronounce: YOO-key) and the Tsunami (pronounce: su-NAM-ee).” What’s a tsunami? It’s a huge ocean wave – we’re talking giant. Sometimes there’s an earthquake under the sea. When that happens, the ocean floor shakes, bigtime. That makes giant waves that spread out in all directions. When one of these waves rolls onto shore, it’s called a tsunami. This legend from Japan is about a boy named Yuuki who saved everyone in his village from a giant tsunami wave. The story is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*.

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

**NARRATOR:**

Yuuki’s Grandfather was the head of the village - the wealthiest, wisest, and most respected man around. If there was a problem in the village, everyone knew who to see.

[GRANDFATHER enters. He is followed by VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #2 who are in the middle of a dispute.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

Your goats keep coming into my field and eating my rice!

**VILLAGER #2:**

Oh, so it’s MY fault that YOUR fence is torn?

**VILLAGER #1:**

My fence is torn because YOUR goats ATE it!

**VILLAGER #2:**

So don’t make your fence out of GRASS!

**GRANDFATHER:**

Friends, friends! Please calm down. Sit, let’s discuss this over tea.

[GRANDFATHER sits in the middle chair, and gestures for VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #2 to sit in the other two chairs. They each take a cup and pantomime talking while NARRATOR speaks the next lines.]

**NARRATOR:**

Yuuki loved to watch his Grandfather in action.

[YUUKI peaks out from behind the curtain, or edge of the stage wall, and makes a “shush” sound, holding one finger to his lips, then disappears.]

**NARRATOR:**

How could such a dispute be resolved?

[NARRATOR exits.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

So I’ll replace the fence with bamboo.

**VILLAGER #2:**

And I’ll give you goat cheese every week for a year.

[VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #2 shake hands, then exit.]

[GRANDFATHER doesn’t turn his head, but speaks up so YUUKI can hear.]

**GRANDFATHER:**

Come on out, grandson.

[YUUKI enters and slowly walks over to table, as if he has been caught.]

**GRANDFATHER:**

So. You overheard our little drama. Tell me, what did you learn?

**YUUKI:**

Umm...don’t let your goats eat a hole in your neighbor’s fence?

**GRANDFATHER:**

Haha, yes. Generally, not a good idea (*gestures for Yuuki to sit*). Yuuki, listen to me. I’ve been thinking it’s time to tell you something important. The truth is, I am old. I will not be around forever.

**YUUKI:**

Grandfather, no! Don’t say that!

**GRANDFATHER:**

*(finger to his mouth to hush)* Hush! Before you know it, you and your parents will be the ones to cultivate the family's rice crop. Our fields are the largest in the village, so it's important everything goes well. You remember what I told you?

**YUUKI:**

If you take good care of the rice crop, the rice crop will take good care of you.

**GRANDFATHER:**

Excellent! Anything else?

**YUUKI:**

Oh, I know! "Fixing right takes thinking right."

**GRANDFATHER:**

Yep, it all starts with thinking. Thinking ahead. Well, and then there are times when it's enough with all this thinking. Like now. It's playtime! How about some kemari? (pronounce: keh-MAR-ee)

**YUUKI:**

Sure!

[YUUKI takes out a ball the size of a melon and starts kicking it to keep it in the air. When Japanese children play kemari, they try to keep the ball in the air using any method – their feet, arms, or head. YUUKI and GRANDFATHER play a bit, and then exit.]

## Scene 2 – The rice field/mountaintop

[**Stage Set:** The table and chairs from Scene 1 are taken offstage. This half of the stage will now be used to show the rice field (See **Performance Notes** for how to indicate the rice field.) The other half of the stage is the mountaintop (See **Performance Notes** for how to indicate the mountaintop).

[NARRATOR enters.]

**NARRATOR:**

Sadly, Yuuki's Grandfather passed away not long after. Yuuki's family took over the care of the family's huge rice fields. By then, Yuuki was 10 years old. (*looks offstage*) Oh. Looks like it's almost time for the annual harvest celebration.

[NARRATOR exits.]

[FATHER, MOTHER, and YUUKI enter.]

**FATHER:**

What a year this has been! Perfect weather. The rice crop has never been better! Tomorrow starts the celebration.

**MOTHER:**

Yuuki, you were very helpful in the fields, brushing the rice with your stick. Next year you'll be ready for the sickle.

**YUUKI:**

I've been ready for a long time, Mother! (*takes a swing*).

**FATHER:**

All in good time, son. Well, if Grandfather were here, he'd say, "Yuuki, what are you doing standing around with your parents? Don't you have something better to do, like playtime?"

**MOTHER:**

(*laughs*) That does sounds like him.

**YUUKI:**

In that case, I'm gonna go climb up the hills.

**FATHER:**

Have fun!

[YUUKI exits.]

**MOTHER:**

*(calling after)* Just make sure you're back by dark!

[All four VILLAGERS enter. VILLAGER #1 stands next to VILLAGER #2, and VILLAGER #3 stands next to VILLAGER #4. They all talk excitedly, and carry something for the celebration (See **Performance Notes**). Each carries a bag with decorations inside.]

**VILLAGER #3:**

*(talking about Villager #1 and Villager #2)* Hey, check out these two. Remember when they used to fight all the time?

**VILLAGER #4:**

What will we do for fun now?

**VILLAGER #1:**

Hey everyone, I made paper lanterns!

**VILLAGER #2:**

*(stops smiling and looks angry)* I made paper lanterns!

**VILLAGER #1:**

Like you couldn't tell me you were already making them?

**VILLAGER #2:**

Why couldn't YOU tell me first?

[VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #2 stare at each other.]

**VILLAGER #3:**

Uh, oh! Here it comes.

**VILLAGER #4:**

*(to Villager #3)* You asked for it. *(brightly, to Villager #1 and Villager #2)* Hey, it's great you guys brought lots of paper lanterns. We don't have anywhere near enough this year.

**VILLAGER #1:**

Really?

**VILLAGER #2:**

Well, then.

[VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #2 clap each other on the back and laugh heartily.]

**VILLAGER #3**

*(to Villager #4)* Smooth.

**MOTHER:**

What are we waiting for? Let's get those decorations up!

[VILLAGERS, MOTHER and FATHER start to hang decorations (see **Performance Notes**) while pantomiming conversation.]

[YUUKI enters. He is on the mountain top. He is playing, pretending to be different animals.]

**YUUKI:**

I'm a super-strong giant wild pig! UUURRG. Going after a mountain lion! ROAR! No, I'm a mountain lion - going after a giant wild pig. GROWWWL!

[As YUUKI "growls", a loud, long rumble is heard (See **Performance Notes**).]

**YUUKI:**

Whoa. I am good!

[There is an earthquake. YUUKI simulates this effect by moving his body from side to side as if the ground were moving. MOTHER, FATHER, and VILLAGERS do the same on the other side of the stage.]

**YUUKI:**

That wasn't me.

[After a minute, they all stop moving.]

**MOTHER:**

*(looking around)* Everyone okay?

[VILLAGERS nod.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

Just a small earthquake.

**VILLAGER #2:**

Not enough to do any damage.

**FATHER:**

Alright then, let's get back to work. There's still a lot to do.

[ALL go back to decorating/preparing for the fest, pantomiming conversation.]

**YUUKI:**

That had to be an earthquake... but what a squishy feeling to it. (*looks “down” at the village*) Everything looks good down there. I guess all’s fine. (*hand over forehead as he looks out to the horizon*) The sea, though, looks so dark. And why is it pulling away so fast from the shore? Wait a minute. Didn’t Grandfather tell me something about that...?

[GRANDFATHER enters. He is shrouded in a cape of sheer material that covers his head.]

**GRANDFATHER:**

Yuuki...

**YUUKI:**

Grandfather!

**GRANDFATHER:**

Remember what I told you about when the sea turns dark and rolls back very fast?

**YUUKI:**

Um... what was that again?

**GRANDFATHER:**

It’s what my own grandfather had told me. It may only happen once every 100 years. When there’s an earthquake, and then the sea pulls back far from the shore, it can mean only one thing – a tsunami is coming!

[GRANDFATHER exits, slowly stepping backward until offstage.]

**YUUKI:**

A tsunami! The huge wave that will cover everyone and everything! I must warn them all!

[YUUKI exits.]

[BOY #1, BOY #2, GIRL #1 and GIRL #2 enter on the other side of the stage, in front of the mountain. They pretend they are playing/dancing in the sand at the water’s edge.]

**BOY #1:**

Hey, Yuuki! Come on, look at the beach! It’s HUGE!

**BOY #2:**

I’ve never seen so many shells!

**GIRL #1:**

Look how far we can run around on this beach! This is AWESOME!



**GIRL #3:**

*(bends over)* Some of these I've never seen before!

**BOY #1:**

Let's check 'em out.

**GIRL #1:**

Follow me!

**YUUKI:**

No, NO! We all have to get out of here. A tsunami is coming! There isn't much time! Everyone has to clear out!

[They all stare at YUUKI for a minute, then burst out laughing.]

**BOY #1:**

Good one, Yuuki!

**YUUKI:**

This is serious. A giant wave is coming any minute!

**BOY #2:**

*(looks backstage, to where the sea would be)* You're talking about from that blue sky out there? Yeah, THAT's not happening.

**YUUKI:**

Not right this second, but soon!

**BOY #1, BOY #2, GIRL #1, and GIRL #2 (together):**

*(shrug)* Whatever.

[They all return to playing in the sand, laughing, and not listening.]

**YUUKI:**

*(steps aside, speaks to himself)* What can I do? There's not much time! I can't MAKE them leave!

[GRANDFATHER enters.]

**GRANDFATHER:**

Yuuki...

**YUUKI:**

Grandfather, tell me what to do!

**GRANDFATHER:**

Yuuki, just remember what “fixing right” takes.

**YUUKI:**

“Thinking right.” But what does that have to do with...? (*stops for a moment*). Wait a minute!

[YUUKI runs offstage, at the same end of the stage as the rice fields.]

**GRANDFATHER:**

I think he’s onto something. (*turns to audience*) Which is good, because I have absolutely no idea here.

[GRANDFATHER exits.]

[YUUKI enters and runs over to the rice fields. He holds a torch. Yuuki touches one tuft of rice, then another, and then another. (See **Performance** Notes.)]

[BOY #1 enters and watches YUUKI.]

**BOY #1:**

What is Yuuki doing with that torch? He’d better be careful.

[BOY #1 exits.]

[YUUKI stands and faces the audience.]

**YUUKI:**

I’d better go tell them.

[VILLAGERS are in the village area, at the opposite end of the stage. They are putting up festival decorations.]

[YUUKI runs up to VILLAGERS.]

**YUUKI:**

Everyone! The rice fields are on fire!

**VILLAGER #1:**

Yuuki, don’t go around saying such a thing.

**VILLAGER #3:**

People could believe it, and panic.

**YUUKI:**

But they really are...!

**VILLAGER #2**

Hey, it does like smell like something's burning.

**VILLAGER #4:**

Now that you mention it...

**VILLAGER #3:**

*(points to the rice fields)* Look! I see smoke!

**VILLAGER #4:**

Oh, no – the rice crop!

[ALL look toward the rice fields, in shock.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

Where are the children?

**VILLAGER #3:**

At the beach, last I saw them.

**VILLAGER #1:**

Let's go warn them!

[VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #3 go to the beach area, a scene that's behind them.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

Kids! The rice fields are on fire!

**VILLAGER #3:**

This can spread fast! All of you, up to the mountaintop – quick!

[All BOYS, GIRLS, VILLAGERS and YUUKI run off stage, worried.]

[BOYS, GIRLS and VILLAGERS go behind the stage, unseen by the audience. They re-enter on the opposite side.]

### Scene 3 – Mountaintop

[**Stage Set:** Same as the mountaintop set in Scene 2.]

[As they re-enter, BOYS, GIRLS and VILLAGERS pretend to be “climbing” to reach the mountaintop. On “top” they stand there, looking at the rice fields.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

*(points to rice fields)* Look at our fields. The rice crop is ruined!

**VILLAGER #2**

That fire came so fast! That could have been us down there.

**VILLAGER #4:**

*(points offstage, on the same side of the stage as the mountaintop)* It was THAT boy who warned us about the fire.

[MOTHER, FATHER, and YUUKI enter.]

**VILLAGER #3:**

*(points to Yuuki)* He’s the one!

**VILLAGER #2:**

The one who came and warned us!

**MOTHER:**

*(proud)* Yuuki, is that true?

**YUUKI:**

*(hesitates)* Well...

[BOY #1 rushes onstage.]

**BOY #1:**

But Yuuki’s the one who STARTED the fire!

**VILLAGER #2:**

What?!

[BOY #2, GIRL #1 and GIRL #2 enter.]

**BOY #1:**

I saw him!

**BOY #2:**

Yuuki's been acting wild. First, he was running around on the beach talking crazy about some big wave.

**GIRL #1:**

We were just playing on the beach and he wouldn't let us alone!

**MOTHER:**

*(horrificed)* Yuuki, you started the fire? Could that be true?

**YUUKI:**

*(hesitates)* Well...

**FATHER:**

*(sternly)* Why on earth would you do such a thing?

**YUUKI:**

It was only because...

**VILLAGER #3:**

All the crops are gone!

**VILLAGER#4:**

By now, our homes could have caught fire by now, too!

**MOTHER:**

Yuuki, have you lost your mind?

[VILLAGER #4 looks out, towards the ocean.]

**VILLAGER #4:**

*(points)* Look, everyone!

**VILLAGER #3:**

Whoa, look at the size of that wave!

**VILLAGER #2:**

That's not just a wave – it's a... you know... whaddaya call it?...

**VILLAGER #4:**

It's a TSUNAMI!

[ALL look out, in shock.]

**VILLAGER #4:**

It's going to hit the whole village!

**VILLAGER #3:**

It's going to COVER the whole village!

**VILLAGER #2:**

What's left of it!

[A loud sound of a wave's crashing is heard from a recording offstage. Everyone pulls back and huddles together in fear.]

**VILLAGER #1:**

The sea covered our entire village!

**VILLAGER #4:**

I can't even see our rooftops!

**VILLAGER #3:**

We would have been drowned!

**VILLAGER #2:**

*(realizes)* But we're safe up here.

**MOTHER:**

Yuuki, what's going on?

**YUUKI:**

I'm sorry I burned the fields...

**FATHER:**

Son, you saved us! You saved the whole village. That's why you set fire to the fields, right? To get everyone to run up the mountain to safety.

**YUUKI:**

Well... I had to.

**VILLAGER #1**

Three cheers for Yuuki! Three cheers for the boy who saved our lives!

[ALL crowd around YUUKI.]

**VILLAGER #2:**

Hip, hip—

**ALL:**  
HOORAY!

**VILLAGER #2:**  
Hip, hip–

**ALL:**  
HOORAY!

**VILLAGER #2:**  
Hip, hip–

**ALL:**  
HOORAY!

**VILLAGER #2:**  
Hip, hip–

[Everyone freezes.]

**VILLAGER #1:**  
Well, let's not get carried away.

**FATHER:**  
Yuuki, that was very smart, what you did. How did you think of that?

**YUUKI:**  
I'm not sure. "Fixing starts with thinking, right?"

**MOTHER:**  
Sounds familiar ...

**FATHER:**  
You know what else your grandfather would say if he was here right now?

**YUUKI:**  
He'd probably say, "Why is everyone standing around? Let's find something to celebrate!"

**GIRL #1:**  
Um, that's easy – like, we're alive!

**ALL:**  
Yay!

[ALL start dancing, talking, laughing, etc, happy to have survived the tsunami.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

**NARRATOR:**

And that is the legend of how one boy in Japan years ago saved the lives of 400 people from a tsunami. True story. And now, (*bows*) as they say in Japan, Sayonara (pronounce: say-yon-NARA).