

# Kitchen



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Kitchen By: Banana Yoshimoto Mikage Satsuki Growing up is tough; especially when you are alone and young. It forces you to fend for yourself against the world. Instead of playing with your friends, you spend your time figuring out where your next meal is coming from. Which is a sad and scary truth; few stop to think of these poor souls that get such an unfortunate fate. In Banana Yoshimoto's Kitchen, the character Mikage undergoes many of changes, but one thing throughout this book that does not change is her love of kitchens.

Her parents passed away when she was young and her grandmother raised her. When her grandmother also passed away, she became depressed, listless, and orphaned. In the beginning of the book she is lonely, since none of her blood relatives are still alive. After she moves in with the Tanabe's, however, she finds the courage to face life again. She has a strong bond with kitchens; they seem to give her a calming feeling and help to ease her loneliness. Kitchens serve as a comfort for her.

Throughout the course of this novel Kitchen, Banana Yoshimoto depicts Mikage as a person of great morals, who loves kitchens, and is incredibly strong-willed. In this novel Mikage appears to be an individualist who keeps her morals intact; her grandparents brought her up to be an accepting, gracious person. Mikage is a person of great temperance, although she is a little touchy about her relationship with Yoichi. She is also courageous for a person who lost her entire family, and, because she doesn't want to get hurt again, she distanced herself from other people. When was it I realized that, on this truly dark and solitary path we all walk, the only way we can light is our own? " (Yoshimoto, pg. 21). Her moral stature is apparent when Yoichi

tells her that Eriko is a transgender, and instead of getting upset about it, she accepted it because she feels she can trust them. Her dominant traits are her love of cooking and her love of kitchens. These traits originate when her grandmother passes away; the hum of the refrigerator keeps her from feeling lonely.

So each night until she moves in with the Tanabe's she curls up beside the refrigerator in her kitchen and goes to sleep. " Why do I love everything that has to do with kitchens so much? It's strange. Perhaps because to me a kitchen represents some distant longing engraved on my soul" (Yoshimoto, pg. 56). She teaches herself to cook, the summer after her grandmother passed away, at the Tanabe's house. She buys three books and studies them, following all the directions in them.

Subsequently, she becomes good at cooking and gets the job she has now as an assistant to a famous cooking teacher. Mikage is more of a rational person who knows her limits. At times, she can be emotional, but overall she thinks well on her feet and is a capable person. " However! I couldn't exist like that. Reality is wonderful. I thought of the money my grandmother had left me-just enough. The place was too big, too expensive, for one person. I had to look for another apartment" (Yoshimoto, pg. 5). Mikage handles change well; she might not like some things but she gets through them.

For instance, her grandmother's death was a great tragedy, but she got through it rationally, and she adapted very well to the Tanabe's and their kindness. The author wants readers to know how tough Mikage is. She has had a rough go at life, but she still manages to stay strong; reading about her really appeals to the reader's sympathetic side. Mikage appears to be a

nice girl who has just been unlucky lately. Fortunately, when Yoichi comes into her life, she starts to open up more and realize that she is not alone. He struck just the right note, neither cold nor oppressively kind. It made me warm up to him ;”( Yoshimoto, pg. 11). Another thing about Mikage is that she is a fighter, and readers see that towards the end of the story, she fights for what she wants. At the beginning of this book Mikage is very guarded and lonely, but as the book progresses she becomes less guarded and more open to people who care about her. At the end of the book, Mikage becomes the one who comforts Yoichi, when his mom passes away. She becomes the center of his support system.