

Memoirs of a geisha: a book report book review examples

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



Memoirs of a Geisha, a novel by Arthur Holden, is the story of Chiyo, later known as Sayuri, the main protagonist. At an early age, her parents sold her and her sister Satsu to an okiya, which is a boarding house for geishas, in the district of Gion. However, Chiyo and Satsu were forcibly separated because instead of being accepted into the okiya, Satsu was sent to Kyoto's pleasure district to work as a prostitute. In the okiya, Chiyo meets Pumpkin, a young girl with whom she develops a deep friendship until circumstances changed everything between them; Mother, who runs the okiya and whose only passion is money; and Hatsumomo, the pretty geisha who sees Chiyo as a threat, thus, does everything to keep Chiyo from succeeding. Despite her beauty, she cannot truly hide the brashness of her attitude. She is the novel's main antagonist.

One day, Chiyo devises a plan to run away and find her sister Satsu even with warnings from Pumpkin not to proceed with her plans. However, she falls off the roof when she attempts to escape and breaks her arm. Incensed with anger, Mother discontinues Chiyo's training as a future geisha and turns her into a slave instead so she could pay off her debts. She remains a maid working for Mother, while Pumpkin is on her way to becoming a successful geisha under the protection and sponsorship of Hatsumomo. Later on, Chiyo meets a kind man, known as the Chairman and is later on revealed as the chairman of Iwamura Electric, and gives her money. She keeps the handkerchief as a token of their meeting. For years, Chiyo's dream was to meet the Chairman once more, thus, her desire to become a geisha was born.

She soon meets Mameha, the most prominent geisha in Japan, known for her

beauty and strength of character. She is Hatsumomo's rival and the one who convinces Mother to take another chance on Chiyo. Mameha takes Chiyo under her wing and changes her name to Sayuri. She then trains to become the best geisha and after her training, Mameha arranges for Sayuri's mizuage, a deflowering ritual for females to become a full-fledged geisha. The highest bidder is Dr. Crab and because of the high bid placed on Sayuri, she was able to pay all her debt, which led Mother to appoint her as the Top Geisha.

When World War II came, Mameha and Sayuri were separated as Sayuri was forced to live far away with a kimono maker to save her from the war. After the war, Mameha seeks Sayuri and asks her to help entertain some guests doing business with the Chairman and Nobu, the president of Iwamura Electric and the Chairman's friend. Nobu asks Sayuri to allow him to be his danna, but she refuses considering that she had feelings for the Chairman and tries to become closer with him instead. The Chairman, on the other hand, would not act on his feelings towards her considering that Nobu is his friend and that Nobu once saved his fledging company from bankruptcy. But because Nobu ceased to pursue Sayuri, the Chairman then decided to let her know his true feelings.

Because she already got what she wanted, Sayuri opted to retire from working as a geisha and thus, the Chairman becomes her danna. They live together but because of her status as a geisha, she can never be the Chairman's real and legitimate wife. Soon, she bears an illegitimate son and realizing that it could affect how the status and leadership of Iwamura Electric will turn out, Sayuri decides to live in New York City where she opens

a Japanese tea house, which would serve as entertainment for Japanese men in the United States. When Mother learns about this, she expresses interest on Sayuri's endeavor, but Sayuri declines Mother's offers. The Chairman continues to be her danna until his death.

The novel's main theme revolves on how destiny plays a role in dictating how the life of an individual turns out. In the case of Chiyo/Sayuri, it all began when she was nine years old when her parents sold her to an okiya in Gion. Had she not been sold, she would have continually led a poor man's life and thus, would not have experienced any luxuries that she had in life, especially during the latter years. Although at first Chiyo/Sayuri was against the idea of training as a geisha, her fateful meeting with the Chairman changed all that as she began harboring secret feelings to be with the Chairman.

Memoirs of a Geisha is also a story about self-determination, which Chiyo/Sayuri displayed all throughout her life. When she attempted to flee the okiya, she showed courage in defying the odds despite repeated warnings that she should not pursue her plans. When she became a slave as a result of her defiance, she showed that she could be brave in the face of adversity. When she stood her ground against Hatsumomo and told Mother about Hatsumomo's sexual relations with her boyfriend, she did not show fear of retribution coming from Hatsumomo. Instead, she faced her fears and trod on life as she wanted it to be.