EDUCATION ABOUT ASIA
TEACHING RESOURCE JOURNAL

Volume 29 ▪ Issue 1 ▪ Spring 2026
www.educationaboutasia.org

Folklore, Popular Culture, and Hometown Yōkai in the Twenty-First Century

by Michael Dylan Foster

Includes Pedagogical/Classroom Resources and a Glossary

Abstract

Within the folklore of Japan, the word yōkai generally refers to all manner of supernatural creatures, monstrous beings, spirits, and strange phenomena. This article explores what I call **"hometown yōkai"**—distinct local yōkai that reflect specific features of a given community and landscape. On a small island off the coast of Kagoshima Prefecture in the southern part of Kyūshū, for example, a murderous creature known as ***gamishiro*** once haunted the bay—and children were often warned to be careful about where they went swimming. In Tokushima Prefecture, on the island of Shikoku, a community celebrates a panoply of yōkai that reflect the challenges of living deep in the mountains. And in Mie Prefecture, in the Kansai region on Japan's main island of Honshu, traditional shellfish divers tell of a spirit called ***tomokazuki*** that threatens them underwater. These yōkai of local folklore are characterized by regional diversity and a variety of names, forms, and behaviors. They can be contrasted with the yōkai of popular culture that have appeared in mass-produced and commercial products since the Edo period (1603–1868) and today are more prevalent than ever in manga, anime, and video games. In such popular-culture media, regional distinctions and local characteristics are generally smoothed over, and specific types of yōkai assume generic forms, making them recognizable throughout Japan. This contrast between hometown and national yōkai also reflects distinctions between folklore and popular culture as modes of creative expression. Drawing on my own ethnographic research and experiences making television documentaries, this article focuses on three hometown yōkai, examples that underscore the diversity of yōkai in small community settings. These examples also illuminate the feedback loop between folklore and popular culture, and between the local and the national.

Michael Dylan Foster is a professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Davis, where he teaches courses about Japanese folklore, heritage, tourism, food, and popular culture. He is the author of many works on Japanese folklore and media, including *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai* (UC Press, 2009) and most recently, *The Book of Yōkai, Revised Second Edition* (UC Press, 2024). Among his coedited volumes are *Matsuri and Religion: Complexity, Continuity, and Creativity in Japanese Festivals* (2021) and *Möbius Media: Popular Culture, Folklore and the Folkloresque* (2024). Since 2022, he has been "Yōkai Navigator" for an NHK World documentary television series called *YOKAI: Exploring Hidden Japanese Folklore*.

What are Yōkai?

Are yōkai monsters? Spirits? Ghosts? Are they unexplainable phenomena, like mysterious sounds in a house at night? Are they folkloric creatures? Or are they cute shapeshifting characters in a video game or anime? Perhaps yōkai are all these things. But how is that possible?

I start with these questions because they are not easy to answer. In large part it is this inconclusiveness—the refusal of yōkai to be locked into easy definitions—that keeps them interesting and also makes them a powerful lens through which to explore Japanese culture and history. Having studied yōkai for thirty years (and counting), I feel my job is not to create definitions myself but to note how yōkai are understood on the ground, as it were, by people who engage with them in some way. And that is what I will try to do in the next few pages, through a variety of examples from different places.

Two (Related) Manifestations of Yōkai Culture

But first, I want to make a distinction. Roughly speaking, there are two modes of cultural expression through which yōkai have played a role in people's lives over the past several hundred years. Let's label these two modes ***folklore*** and ***popular culture***. Unfortunately, both terms are as hard to define as *yōkai* itself. Nevertheless, they are useful to think with.

Let's say you grew up in a rural village in Japan. As a child, you might have been told never to swim in the river behind your grandfather's rice paddy because a deadly *kappa* lives there. And a kappa, as everybody in the village knows, is a nasty green child-sized water creature with a small saucer on its head that contains water. It may look innocent enough at first glance, but it is notorious for drowning children and animals. This is an example of a local legend. You may not remember when you first heard about the kappa, and you might not even entirely believe what you heard, but you and your friends sometimes try to get a glimpse of the creature. And, of course, you never go swimming in that part of the river!

Or maybe you live in the city and one day your school friend tells you about a yōkai called *kuchi-sake-onna*, or "slit-mouthed woman." He tells you that she lurks on the street right near your apartment. She looks just like a young woman wearing a mask, as if she has a cold or something. But when she takes off the mask, you see that her mouth is slit from ear to ear! She has a knife and will chase you down no matter how fast you run.

These are both examples of ***folklore***—stories, beliefs, ideas passed from person to person informally, sometimes through word of mouth, or (these days) through texting or even TikTok. You may or may not believe the legends of the kappa or the slit-mouthed woman, but still you might tell them to a friend or family member. And then they will tell somebody else. Each recounting changes small details about these yōkai, like what they look like, what they do, or the places they haunt. In this way, they become localized, and relevant to the particular community and individuals living there. Of course, I am simplifying here (and legends like these are just one form of folklore), but I hope you get a sense of the basic process through which folklore is transmitted and changed. It should also be clear that folklore doesn't really "belong" to anybody. Your version of the kappa is just as authentic as mine. Folklore is, in a sense, an open-source resource available to all of us.

And this is where ***popular culture*** comes in. My guess is that if you have encountered stories of yōkai before reading this essay, it was not through local folklore but through some form of popular culture. Maybe you have seen some of the demonic creatures portrayed in anime series like *Dandadan* (2024–) or *Demon Slayer* (2019–24). Maybe you like to play video games, some of which feature shapeshifting *kitsune* foxes or long-nosed *tengu* goblins or even kappa like the one described above. And of course franchises such as Pokémon and Yo-Kai Watch are full of creatures inspired by yōkai.

These media often use yōkai in creative new ways. *Demon Slayer*, for example, features all sorts of *oni*—a Japanese word for "demon"—many of which appear with horns and fangs just like the oni of traditional folklore. But the creators of *Demon Slayer* also gave them new attributes—such as being susceptible to

sunlight.[1] In the same way, the *Dandadan* series features a monstrous character called Kashima Reiko, which seems to be at least partially based on the slit-mouthed woman discussed earlier. And certainly if we look at the various characters in the Pokémon franchise, we can find many that were derived from folkloric yōkai.[2] To take just one example, perhaps you know Lombre (called Hasuburero in Japanese), a green, child-sized creature who lives in the water and causes all sorts of mischief? Lombre is, of course, based on the kappa.

Such popular-culture yōkai are nothing new. For centuries people have made pictures of yōkai, often labeling them with names and descriptions. There have been "catalogs" of yōkai since the Edo period (1603–1868), most famously those by the artist Toriyama Sekien (1712–1788). And during that same period, especially the late 1700s and early 1800s, yōkai became characters in illustrated books known as *kusazōshi*, which were like early manga. Yōkai also appeared in woodblock prints, in board games known

Figure 1: Kappa by Toriyama Sekien, originally created in 1776. From Toriyama Sekien, Hyakkiyagyō, *1805 [1776]. National Diet Library Digital Collections.*

as *sugoroku*, in Kabuki dramas, in comic storytelling performances called *rakugo*, and in many other forms of entertainment. Since that time, the images, personalities, and behaviors of these yōkai have been shaped and reshaped so that we can easily identify them in contemporary literature and popular culture like manga, anime, video games, and films. And through the "soft power" of this Japanese popular culture, yōkai today have found homes in countries all around the world.

Popular Culture and Folklore

So what's the difference between yōkai of popular culture and yōkai of folklore? One distinction is simply *money*: ***popular culture generally operates within the realm of commerce***. Unlike a legend recounted in your hometown or at your school, manga and anime are "owned" by somebody; they are conceived by an author or producer (or team of authors and producers) and then sold by a publisher or production company. This contrasts with folklore. I can tell you a story about an oni or a kappa, and you can retell it (or your version of it) to somebody else and, generally speaking, no money passes hands. But in contrast, when a manga or anime features an oni or kappa, I have to buy it from a store, or pay for it online, or maybe borrow it from the library.

Another (related) difference is ***the possibility of change***. We don't have a record of who "invented" (or discovered?) the first kappa. It belongs to everybody. Every time you recount a story about that kappa who lives behind your grandfather's rice paddy, you tell it differently—depending on where you are and who you are talking to. And if I tell it to somebody, I will also change it to fit the particular audience and circumstances. All of these versions (and all the others that other people tell) are correct. There is no "official" or authoritative version of a kappa—or rather, they are *all* equally authoritative. Think about how you might recount a joke that you heard—to a friend one way, and to your mother a different way—but it is still (sort of) the same joke. This is how all folklore works.

But products of popular culture, such as manga, anime, films, or video games, were created by somebody (or by a group of people or by a company) that we can identify, and these creators and producers generally maintain rights of ownership. Lombre in Pokémon may be based on the kappa of folklore—childsized, mischievous, and green—but it also has an appearance and set of characteristics, such as a sombrero-shaped lilypad on its head, that are determined and controlled by the Pokémon Company. In this way, Lombre and other popular-culture yōkai are not "open source" or subject to change and variation like the kappa of folklore. If I wanted to include an image of Lombre here, or even put one on a T-shirt, I would need to obtain permission from the Pokémon Company. Of course, this is just one simplified example, and you can imagine all sorts of nuances and different situations, but my point is that yōkai of popular culture may be connected to yōkai of folklore, but they are locked into a certain form and "owned" by the people or company that created them.

Figure 2: Generic clipart kappa.

Hopefully the distinction between these two formats—***folklore and popular culture***—is clear. We should keep in mind that **the distinction is not a matter of past and present**. Popular culture has existed for hundreds of years, and new folklore is still being created today—even on the internet. Rather, what is important is that the yōkai of folklore are generally associated with a local community or specific group of people. The "same" yōkai may be found in different places, but it will always have particular characteristics pertinent to the people living in that community. In contrast, yōkai of popular culture are known by many people because they are shared in mass-produced form—such as a popular book during the Edo period or an anime streamed online today. Often this can make them more generic: to appeal to people from many different backgrounds and places (in Japan and throughout the world), they become less distinct and less local. Instead of a kappa living in the (specific) river behind your grandfather's rice paddy, the popular-culture kappa lives in any river or pond. In this way, such popular-culture yōkai become associated with the whole nation of Japan—we might call them **"national yōkai"** because they are readily recognized by people throughout the country and also identified as "Japanese" by people living elsewhere. And it is the image of this sort of national yōkai on which many producers build their characters; Lombre, for instance, was likely based on this generalized image rather than a particular local version of a kappa, like the one behind your grandfather's rice paddy. In contrast to "national yokai," yōkai of folklore, with their local specificity, are **"hometown yōkai"** because they are very much identified with a single small community—somebody's hometown.

After reading this, you probably realize there is often a connection between hometown yōkai and national yōkai, between folklore and popular culture. In fact, these are almost never separate realms—there is a sort of "feedback loop" between them, which is complex, varied, and fascinating. Let me give you an example from my own research.

Gamishiro

For many years I have conducted research on an island called Shimo-Koshikijima, located off the coast of Kagoshima Prefecture in southwest Japan. It's a small mountainous island with a beautiful coastline, rich cultural traditions, and a shrinking population—today there are fewer than 2,000 people. Talking to the islanders about their folklore, I learned about a yōkai called *gamishiro*. I had never heard of a gamishiro, and I couldn't find it in any yōkai dictionaries or guidebooks. According to the islanders, the gamishiro was a deadly water creature that lived in the ocean near the island. One of my friends, Hashiguchi-san, said that as a child he was warned never to swim in two specific areas of the bay because the gamishiro would grab his Achilles tendon and yank him underwater until he drowned! Once his cousin almost drowned—when she was rescued, they checked her ankles for claw marks. "But," Hashiguchi-san chuckled, "they couldn't find any."

The gamishiro is a perfect example of a hometown yōkai. It is only known within a very specific community but has meaning to the local residents and is embedded in their memories (such as Hashiguchi-san's story about his cousin) and in the landscape (or seascape), in this case the sections of the bay where children were told not to swim.

Nobody could tell me what a gamishiro looked like because, as Hashiguchi-san explained, they had never actually seen one! But everybody told me it was "like a kappa." One man intimated that even on this island, far from any major city in Japan, popular culture has changed people's perceptions of the gamishiro and "today we would call it a kappa." In other words, although Hashiguchi-san and the others had never seen a gamishiro or even a picture of one (because there are none), they had all seen images of kappa—in books, or in manga, or on television. And so they realized that their hometown yōkai, the gamishiro, which lived in the water and drowned children, was "like a kappa."

In a sense, then, the nationally known image of the "kappa" became an easy shorthand for the locally known "gamishiro." Even in an isolated place like a small island in southern Japan, modern media and technology have transformed the ways in which people receive information and the stories they hear.

Figure 3: Where the gamishiro lives: Teuchi Bay on the island of Shimo-Koshikijima, Kagoshima Prefecture. Photo by author.

Kids on the island, just like kids elsewhere in Japan, play video games and watch anime, and through such media, national yōkai came to the island—and gradually the gamishiro was overwritten by the kappa. Today the gamishiro is remembered only by the island's older residents: Hashiguchi-san was in his eighties when I spoke with him, and in fact the youngest people I encountered who had heard of the gamishiro were already in their mid-fifties. But of course, everybody—young and old—knew about kappa. In this way, the generic, national image of the kappa has influenced understandings of yōkai in this small out of the way place—and the original hometown yōkai has been all but forgotten.[3]

Yōkai House

Popular culture can sometimes have a rejuvenating effect on local folklore—and national yōkai can help revive hometown yōkai. In the village of Yamashiro-chō deep in the rugged mountains of Tokushima Prefecture, a charming small museum called Yōkai House (Yōkai yashiki) opened in 2010. Yōkai House has no works by famous artists, nor even any valuable historical artifacts. Instead, it has dozens of colorful sculptures of hometown yōkai, all handcrafted by villagers, displayed with explanations of the local legends in which they feature.

How did this come about? It started with a yōkai called *konakijijii*—which means, roughly, *old-guy-who-cries-like-a-baby*. Konakijijii was a very obscure hometown yōkai, perhaps known only to a few people, who would likely be forgotten today, like the gamishiro, if not for a manga artist named Mizuki Shigeru (1922–2015). Mizuki was the most important postwar popularizer of yōkai. Without him, most yōkai-related manga and anime today would be very different, or might not exist at all. Mizuki's manga, anime and lighthearted bestiaries dig deep into local folklore to put the yōkai there on a national stage. One of these was konakijijii, who Mizuki transformed into a recurring character in his famous series, *GeGeGe no Kitarō* (*Spooky Kitarō*).

When the people of Yamashiro-chō realized that this famous yōkai, now known by almost everybody in Japan, originated in their own backyard, they were inspired to collect stories of other local yōkai. They burrowed into their records and memories, and eventually created the Yōkai House. Most of the yōkai

Figure 4: A wooden statue of konakijijii (based loosely on Mizuki's version) greets visitors to Ōboke station. Photo by author.

displayed there are associated with specific features of the landscape, like a particular mountain pass or pool of water. In addition to the Yōkai House itself, the residents installed wooden statues of yōkai throughout the town, indicating locations of yōkai-related legends. Some of the highlighted yōkai are well-known, like the *enko*, which is similar to the kappa we have already discussed. Most reflect the dangers of living in a rugged mountain environment, with its wild rushing rivers and steep narrow roads that can be terrifying in the dark.

In the summer of 2023, I visited Yamashiro-chō to speak with people there for a television documentary series about yōkai for NHK World called "YOKAI: Exploring Hidden Japanese Folklore." One community leader, Shimooka-san, told me that when he was a child his grandmother would warn him to be home before dark or else the *ogyanaki* would get him. The ogyanaki is a flying yōkai that makes a crying sound as it streaks through the pitch-black night. Shimooka-san would always be sure to be home before dark and sometimes, from the safety of his house, he could hear strange sounds outside.

Figure 5: The steep mountain landscape of Yamashiro-chō. Photo by author.

Figure 6: Sharing enko legends with local children. Photo by author.

The ogyanaki is only one of many hometown yōkai Shimooka-san remembers.[4] He explained that folklore about yōkai was an important part of his childhood because it was not only scary (and entertaining), but because it contained vital traditional knowledge necessary for people to live in that region. Every yōkai represented a lesson, often a warning, that kept children safe and taught them to respect the natural environment with all its dangers and wonders. The importance of this folklore—and the cautionary function it served—was key to the creation of the Yōkai House. The museum reconstructs a hidden world of the past, enshrining all-but-forgotten interpretations of nature—the darkness, the gurgling of rushing water, trees creaking in the wind—in the memorable form of yōkai.

But the old yōkai on display are also an impetus for creating new hometown yōkai. When I visited in the summer of 2023, a university professor and a few adult villagers were leading a group of local children on a walk through the town and nearby woods. The adults pointed out locations of certain local legends—such as one about a giant mountain man called *yamajichi*—teaching the children about the history of their town. But mostly, they encouraged the children to observe nature carefully, to seek out tiny mysteries, such as the glassiness of the water running over the rocks, or the way a fallen leaf turned different colors, or how strange marks scarred the face of a boulder. They asked them to imagine (or create) yōkai that might be responsible for these occurrences. After the excursion, everybody gathered back at the Yōkai House to draw pictures of the yōkai they had imagined, to name them, and to describe their behavior and function. In this way, the children were learning not only to observe their natural surroundings carefully, but to make their observations personal, and to create meaningful new hometown yōkai as part of their own experience growing up in this community.

Figure 7: Depiction of the local legend of yamajichi at the Yōkai House. Courtesy of Yōkai Yashiki, Eki no Michi Ōboke. Artwork designed by and created under the direction of Shimooka Shōichi. Photo by author.

Figure 8: A wooden statue and sign indicating where the yamajichi legend occurred. Photo by author.

Tomokazuki

As we see in Yamashiro-chō, the meanings of yōkai change with the changing world. With this in mind, let me introduce one more hometown yōkai. This one is only relevant to a very small community of shellfish divers, known as *ama*, living on the Shima Peninsula of Mie Prefecture. These ama are part of a long tradition of shellfish divers found throughout East Asia going back many hundreds of years. Most are women and today there are only a few hundred still working in the Shima region. Ama have incredible stamina and skills: they are freedivers, which means they don't use scuba gear or any other breathing apparatus. They hold their breath and dive under the waves. In Shima they mainly gather abalone and another delicacy called turban shell (*sazae*).[5]

As you can imagine, diving in the ocean like this can be extremely dangerous, and ama risk their lives almost every day. The ama of Shima have long shared a frightening legend about a yōkai called *tomokazuki* that reflects this danger. A tomokazuki looks just like another diver. It swims toward the ama, and extends its hand to offer her an abalone. If the ama takes the abalone, the tomokazuki will draw her down to her death.[6]

When I visited Shima a few years ago with the TV crew, one ama—in her eighties and still diving—told me she had never encountered a tomokazuki but had heard about this yōkai long ago from an older ama. She interpreted tomokazuki as a warning against avarice. Just when you run out of breath and need to surface, the tomokazuki offers you one more abalone, she explained. If you give in to this temptation and accept it, you will die—a punishment for being greedy. She told me that ever since she heard about tomokazuki, she has kept this lesson in mind: always be prepared to swim away, to leave something for next time, and for future generations. For her, this very localized yōkai—specific not only to her hometown but also to her chosen occupation—provided a powerful lesson about how to do her job and, more importantly, how to think about life.

A few days later, I met a younger ama, only in her forties. She too had never encountered a tomokazuki but had heard about them from her seniors. She also spoke eloquently about how tomokazuki represented a warning against greed. But she emphasized that the lesson was more broadly applicable; it wasn't just about diving or about living one's life, but about how to approach the environment. Today the ocean's resources are being depleted by insatiable humans. And not just the ocean, she said, but nature all around the globe is being destroyed by unrestrained mining, drilling, logging, and pollution—all because of human greed. The tomokazuki is a stark reminder that we cannot give in to our desires for wealth and comfort; we should literally turn our backs on these temptations and swim back to safety—leaving something for the earth, and for the future. If we acquiesce to the beckoning of the tomokazuki, recklessly harvesting all nature's resources, the world, and humans with it, cannot survive.

Figure 9: A group of ama setting out for a day of diving. Photo by author.

Figure 10: Ama return from a day of diving with net bags full of shellfish. Photo by author.

This is a grim message. But a powerful one. And it is a good example of how a hometown yōkai, even one known only to a very limited number of people, can be interpreted in ways that transcend a local place and specific situation to resonate more widely with the global concerns of the twenty-first century. Unlike so many other yōkai, there is no popular-culture or national-yōkai version of the tomokazuki—but perhaps somebody will develop one, and it will become a powerful statement about our current environmental crises.

What are Yōkai?

After thirty years of reading books about yōkai, of speaking with people about yōkai, of exploring art, literature, and popular culture about yōkai, I still cannot fully answer this question. But perhaps the lack of a single coherent definition *is* the answer. Yōkai are meaningful because of their mutability, fluidity, and adaptability, because they are simultaneously characters in video games or anime, and also on-the-ground (or under-the-water or in-the-air) monsters that animate local lives in small communities. They are all of these at once, and still always changing, evolving, being forgotten, and being born. These various manifestations of yōkai are equally real and equally meaningful. The one thing we can say definitively is that yōkai are always open to interpretation: if we ask the right questions, they can reveal—for any given moment, place, and people—what is important, frightening, exciting, urgent, and valuable.

Notes

[1] For a comparison between fokloric oni and the oni in *Demon Slayer*, see Noriko T. Reider, "Demon Slayer Kimetsu no yaiba: Oni, Vampires, and Sexuality," *Japan Review* 39 (2024): 203–220.

[2] For a discussion of these origins, see the "Neccesary Monsters" substack, by Robert Walrod: https://necessarymonsters.substack.com/archive?sort=new (accessed October 14, 2025)

[3] For *gamishiro*, see Michael Dylan Foster, *The Book of Yōkai: Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore, Expanded Second Edition* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2024), 207–209.

[4] For more examples, see Shimooka Shōichi, *Yōkai mura densetsu: Otoroshiya* (Miyoshi-shi: Shikoku no hikkyō, Yamashiro-Ōboke yōkai mura, 2012).

[5] For *ama*, see D. P. Martinez, *Identity and Ritual in a Japanese Diving Village: The Making and Becoming of Person and Place* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

[6] For *tomokazuki*, see Foster, 192–195.

Folklore, Popular Culture, and Hometown Yōkai in the Twenty-First Century

Pedagogical / Classroom Resources

Key Concepts and Definitions

- Folklore
- Popular Culture

Comprehension and Discussion Questions

1. In your own words, describe the differences between folklore and popular culture. Then provide examples of both these forms of cultural expression from your own life or experience.
2. According to the author, what is a "national yōkai"? What is a "hometown yōkai"? Provide examples of each.
3. Why were legends told about the *gamishiro*?
4. Why do so few people today know about the *gamishiro*, but everybody knows the *kappa*?
5. Why are there so many different yōkai in Yamashiro-chō?
6. What is the lesson of the *tomokazuki*? Can it be applied to our own lives? In what way?
7. Can you think of examples from popular culture (e.g., anime, manga, films, video games) that have been influenced by folklore?
8. Discuss ways in which popular culture influences folklore?

Exercises

1. Write down any local legend (or urban legend) you have heard. Can you recall when you first heard it? How old were you? Who told it to you? What did you think at the time? Did you tell it to anybody else? What do you think the legend means? Did it contain a warning? Why do you think you still remember it? Share your observations with your classmates.
2. Go for a walk through the woods, in your neighborhood, or around your school. Look for little things you have never noticed before, especially things that seem mysterious or unexplainable. Then imagine a yōkai that might have caused them. What does it look like? What is it called? Why does it do these things? What does it tell us about the environment? Describe the yōkai, its behavior and habits, and draw a picture of what it looks like. Share your yōkai with your classmates.

External Links

- A television series (in English) produced by NHK World: YOKAI: Exploring Hidden Japanese Folklore. Each 30-minute episode features a different hometown yōkai
- Yōkai Art Museum, a museum displaying creative new versions of yōkai: https://yokaimuseum.on-the-trip.com/en.html
- Miyoshi Mononoke Museum, a museum with displays of traditional yōkai art and artifacts: https://miyoshi-mononoke.jp/
- A database of historical images of yōkai (in Japanese): https://www.nichibun.ac.jp/YoukaiGazou/

Interesting Words and People to Research Further

- *kusazōshi*
- Kabuki
- *rakugo*
- *sugoroku*
- *ama*
- Toriyama Sekien
- Mizuki Shigeru

Glossary

***Dandadan*:** Manga and anime series created by Yukinobu Tatsu and featuring yōkai and aliens.

***Demon Slayer* (J: *Kimetsu no yaiba*):** Extremely popular manga and anime series created by Gotōge Koyoharu; set during the Taishō period (1912–1926), it features a secret organization waging battle against demons (*oni*).

Enko: River yōkai related to the kappa. Found particularly on the island of Shikoku.

Gamishiro: Water creature that lives in the bay of the island of Shimo-Koshikijima in Kagoshima Prefecture in the southern part of Kyūshū.

***GeGeGe no Kitarō* (E: *Kitaro or Spooky Kitarō*):** Long-running and extremely influencial manga and anime series featuring yōkai, created by Mizuki Shigeru (1922–2015).

Kappa: One of the most commonly known yōkai. Generally portrayed as a small, green water creature with a beaked mouth, webbed hands and feet, a shell on its back, and an indent containing water on it head. Traditionally considered dangerous to swimmers and passersby. Famous for liking cucumbers—and therefore the reason sushi with cucumber is called a "kappa roll."

Kitsune: The Japanese word for *fox*; a real animal but also a yōkai found throughout Japan. Commonly known as a shapeshifter, it is notorious for assuming different (often human) forms and deceiving people.

Konakijijii: A yōkai described as an old man who cries like a baby. Originally documented in Tokushima Prefecture but made famous in the manga and anime of Mizuki Shigeru.

Kuchi-sake-onna (Slit-Mouthed Woman): Frightening yōkai woman with a slit mouth. Became very well known in an urban legend that circulated throughout Japan during the first half of 1979.

Lombre: Pokémon character based on the well-known image of the kappa.

Oni: The Japanese word for *demon* or *ogre*. They are traditionally thought of as large strong human-shaped beings, with red or blue skin, horns and fangs. They often wear a tiger-skinned loincloth, carry an iron staff, and enjoy eating humans.

Tengu: A famous kind of yōkai found throughout Japan, usually associated with mountains. Often portrayed as a tall monk-like figure with a red face and a very long nose; sometimes pictured with a beaked mouth, wings, and other bird-like features.

Tomokazuki: A yōkai that appears in the form of a shellfish diver underwater. Found in the Shima Peninsula region of Mie Prefecture.