Purpose: Some Japanese people are uncomfortable with the uniformity of their society.

Essential questions:
1) Do all Japanese see conformity as positive trait?
2) What is a talisman?
3) What is irony?

Rationale: Exposure to Japanese literature and the concept of irony.
All people in a society do not think alike.

Chalkboard, poster paper, or white board, with chalk or markers.

Activities: Prior to this activity, lessons on Japanese cultural practices and expectations establishing that social conformity has traditionally been a highly valued trait.
- Write the terms "talisman" and "irony" on the board.
- Ask the group for definitions, descriptions and examples of each term until they understand.
- Distribute copies of "The Talisman". Explain that this is a story that describes a conversation between two men as one relates a series of recent events from his life to the other.
- Ask them to look for the talisman and irony of the story.
- Have students volunteer to read one paragraph at a time aloud as the rest of the class follows along.

Assessment: After completing the story, ask the following questions:
1) What was the talisman?
2) What is the irony found in the story?
3a) What is the author's attitude toward conformity?
3b) How can you tell?
4) Is this attitude the one promoted by mainstream Japanese society?

Grade Adaptation: Target group = Grades 10-12. Scale down by reading the story to the students yourself.
Inappropriate subject matter for younger students.