

Background Information

Saigo Takamori and the Meiji Restoration

Background to Painting

The Satsuma Rebellion of 1877 was a rebellion of samurai who opposed the changes in the Meiji period. This painting shows Saigo Takamori, the central figure in the movie and book *The Last Samurai*. Saigo became a national hero for his role in restoring Emperor Meiji in 1868. He later played a significant role in the Satsuma Rebellion.



Source: "Saigo Takamori." *MSN Encarta* (Italian).
http://it.encarta.msn.com/media_461575500_761577854_-1_1/Saigo_Takamori.html (16 March 2007).

Deciphering the Explicit Message

- Who is in the painting? (e.g., soldiers, samurai, a man dressed in uniform)
- What is happening? (e.g., men carrying banners pointed toward the water; bow of sailing ship pointed toward land; fire smoking; samurais poised, holding sticks)
- Where is the action taking place? (e.g., on the shores of a rocky bay)
- When is the action happening? (e.g., daytime, during a warm month)
- Why is the action happening? (e.g., the fire is signalling to the ship; the men are preparing for war; they are claiming victory after a rebellion).

Deciphering the Implicit Message: Implied View of Human Nature

Supporting Evidence: the soldiers, commanding officer, swords, fire and banners.

Possible conclusion/inference: the artist believes that human nature is mostly evil and needs to be controlled.