Post-Reading Worksheet for "The Telegram"

Kuroshima Denji was part of the Proletarian Writers Movement (1927-1932). The purpose of this literature was to raise social awareness of the proletariat (worker) through the promotion of social justice. Proletarian literature looked at national, colonial, class, and gender issues.

1. Describe the region in which the story is set. What role did nature play in this story? Explain and cite at least three specific examples of nature's role in the plot.

2. Contrast the two views presented in the story. First list how each felt about education. Next, deduce what Kuroshima was trying to tell readers.

Wealthy Landlord View	Poor Peasant Farmer—Gensaku
What was the landlord's view on education?	What was the peasant farmer's view on education?
How did the author seem to feel about those who are solvent (soy brewer and landlord)?	How did the author seem to feel about the rural poor?

3. How did Gensaku's insistence on sending his son to school reveal his personality and/or set the tone for the rest of the story? Explain.

4. How do you feel about Gensaku? Do you feel sorry for him? Are you annoyed by Gensaku? Why or why not?

5. How did Gensaku communicate with his son throughout the story? What was the significance of using postcards and telegrams in the story? What might this method of communication suggest? How does the symbolism of the telegram relate to the major themes of the story?

6. Consider the interplay of three aspects of the story: the poor rural farmer, the passive mother, and the powerful landlord. How are these three aspects of the story thematically important? How do they lead us to interpret the story?

7. The story concludes with the arrival of a letter from the boy's school stating, "the boy had passed the entrance examination, but the parents did not enroll him" (24). Does this final line convey hope, paradoxical hope, or futility? Explain.

8. Think about this story in comparison to "The Telegram" and "The Broken Ring."   What are some of the similarities? What are some of the differences?