The story of Prince Yamato the Brave, once known as Prince O-usu, is one of glory and triumph. The surprising physical might of Yamato is revealed at the very beginning of the story. When asked by his father to teach his older brother not to miss the morning and evening meals, he obeys by “grasping him, crushing him, then pulling his limbs off and ... throwing them away.” (Shirane, 38.) This shows his supernatural might, and subtly suggests the magnificent scale of the story that is about to unfold. While Yamato’s strength is shown and praised many times throughout the tale, he also displays a knack for creating thoughtful, clever poems. Prince Yamato the Brave proves himself to be more than proficient with both sword and song; he is at the same time a cunning, magnificent warrior and a pensive, emotional poet.

While Prince Yamato may be incredibly strong, he does not always rely on mere strength to defeat his enemies. Initially dispatched by his father to eliminate the two “Kumaso Braves” of the west, Yamato uses deception, disguising himself as a young girl, to infiltrate their home. He also employs trickery when he meets the Izumo Brave. Having replaced his own weapon with a fake, Yamato playfully asks to exchange weapons and engage in a mock battle - which turns out to be a not-so-mock battle. Though Yamato does not initially face his foes head on, he grows in strength as the story progresses, eventually reaching a point where he would rather use his fists than the legendary Kusangi blade that he possesses, saying “I will take the deity of this mountain with my bare hands.” (Shirane 42.) Yamato is never actually defeated in battle, but instead meets his end because of a few misspoken words.

Despite the fact that his eventual doom comes from words, Yamato crafts many cunning poems throughout the story. He celebrates the defeat of the Izumo Brave, chiming that the “Izumo Brave / wears a sword / with many vines wrapped around it / but no blade inside, alas!” (Shirane, 39.) However, this silly revelry of his triumph hardly compares to the much more sincere song of desire he weaves for the lovely Princess Miyazu. He poetically speaks of her “arm, slender and delicate like the bird’s neck,” and perhaps not so poetically states “I desire to sleep with you.” (Shriane, 41) Though such bold and direct advancement may not work in today’s world, alas, this is a tale from a different time. Even Yamato’s final hours are spent singing songs of his homeland, which are still sung at an emperor’s funeral to this day.

Though he meets a tragic and unlikely end, Yamato’s tale still profoundly displays his ability to overcome nearly any obstacle that stands in his path. His might and skill allow him to dispatch an extreme number of foes in his days, while his witty and sometimes sorrowful poems and songs display his deeper, emotional side. It makes sense that such a grandiose tale would serve as a legend for the Japanese warrior - any disciplined individual who strove to imitate Yamato would make for an excellent, and more importantly honorable, warrior and man.