

New
Years
in
the
Year
of the
Tiger



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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, poetry, prose and any ideas to improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community.

Submit by the 20th of each month to:
publications@hyogo.ajet.net

http://hyogo.ajet.net/wiki/Hyogo_Times

We're also on Facebook!

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year, and apologies for the break in transmission. We figured that many of you would have rotated back to your own shores over the Xmas period, making a December issue unnecessary. Wherever you traveled in your endeavors to escape this particularly harsh Japanese winter, I hope you had fun and got back safely!

Sadly for us all, Term 3 has commenced and it's time to reattach our noses to the proverbial grindstone—assuming, of course, that said noses have not fallen off in the winter chill. It's also that time of year that we have to take stock of this crazy JET experience and decide if it is worthwhile recontracting. Never an easy decision. I may as well announce to the world that I've decided not to—that I've had my fill of breathtaking scenery, relaxing *onsen*, *tabehoudai*, *nomihoudai*, karaoke, friendly locals, convenient public transport and fast internet, and will be bidding you all a permanent *sayonara* on the roof of Sogo this summer. (At the beer garden, I mean! I'm not trying to be dramatic!) It's probably just as well—my work habits of late have started to resemble those of Jeffrey “The Dude” Lebowski. I look at it as a chance at a fresh start, and an opportunity to introduce to my home country of Australia the very best that Japanese culture has to offer (like fast internet! Did I mention the fast internet?) Nevertheless, I'll be spending the



next six months as Frodo did, saying farewell to my favorite haunts, and in all probability Facebooking the experience. Those of you who have chosen similarly will no doubt have heard about the Conference for Returning JETs being held in March in Yokohama. I'll see you there!

Term 3, aside from being the coldest on the school calendar, is also the shortest, and many of you teaching in senior high schools will (hopefully) notice a lightening of your workload, as the 3rd-year students spend most of the term taking exams. Nevertheless you may be struggling to find activities for those first few classes, so I thought I'd mention the “New Years” page at *Lanternfish ESL* (http://bogglesworldesl.com/new_year_worksheets.htm), where you'll find a slew of New Years worksheets and lesson ideas. You'll find more ESL website recommendations in English Sensei Spirit. Also

this month we have for you a belated stocking-stuffer of sorts, a leaner, fitter, happier *Hyogo Times* containing all your favourites: Travel Japan, Ramentary, I HEART T-POINTS, Where Are They Now?, Random JETs, “and so on” (as your students might put it). You can use it to soak up any *nabe* stock that spills from the pan or your bowl, lest it damage the *tatami* mats. You can use it to wipe the grease from your hands as you enjoy New Years' *karaage* by the bucketful at your local shrine. I don't think you can use it as an *onsen* towel.

Before I sign off, I should mention that our design editor has injured himself out on Japan's cruel ski-fields, and has been unable to do the layout for this issue. Jaclyn Threadgill has very kindly stepped in, so please give her a warm welcome!

Until next time, keep writing!

—Matt Stott

MESSAGE FROM THE PR

BY KYM FARRANT

Hello Hyogo,

Brrrrrr...さむいですね! This happens to me every year. I complain all summer about how humid it is, and as soon as winter strikes I completely forget about even the possibility that Japan could ever be humid, and I proceed to complain constantly about the cold.

JTE: “さむいね!”

Kym: “Yeah, it’s so coooold”

JTE: “Isn’t England cold?”

Kym: “Yeah kinda, but England has central heating”

JTE: “ah I see” (with a face indicating “*gaijin* aren’t strong like the Japanese”—well no...no I’m not.)

Also I’ve realized that even though British people do tend to talk about the weather a lot (it’s a comfortable conversation topic), we don’t go around muttering “oh the rain...so much rain...cold...cold”, we just comment possibly twice a day on the rapid change in weather, then job done. Now in Japan I’ve picked up the constant need to update everyone on my body temperature status throughout the whole year. Anyways, I thought I’d give you guys a few tips on how I survive the winter (especially you lovely people from hot or well built houses/centrally heated countries...is that all of us?):

1 Layer!

One day last year

I wore leggings, thick leg warmers, 2 pairs of socks, trousers, vest, t-shirt, long sleeved t-shirt, dress shirt and jumper at work. For clothes, many shops sell “thermal/heat” underclothes: thin garments which help you keep warm whilst not making you look like some stuffed teddy bear walking down the street. Also, I learned to secretly trade my smart trousers for some black jean-type trousers...still looks smart but way warmer.

2 Buy those heat packs.

I particularly like the ones you can stick on your under clothes (sometimes I stick them all over my body...toasty). Also the hand sized ones are good for when your hands are so freezing that you are unable to type any messages on Facebook!!!

3 Eat well and take it easy.

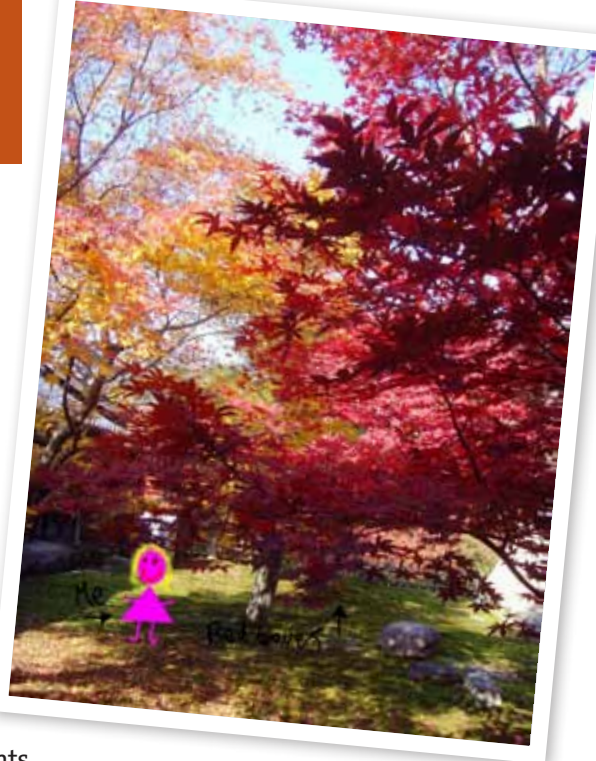
You don’t have to get fat... but well with all those extra clothes you are wearing no one will notice that extra layer of fat underneath ☺. At this time of year, beside the Pig Flu, all the kids will be riddled with winter germs. To keep them at bay make sure you take care of yourself. I know I sound like your mother...but seriously last year

I totally over did it in the run up to Christmas, and when I finally stopped to relax (on a beach in Thailand) I came down with the Flu, and then after one week of that I got really bad food poisoning. It really sucked to be ill during my holiday. I think if I’d just taken better care of myself beforehand, I would have been fine....or at least just been sick during school time :-P (Mr BOE I promise I am not promoting sick leave lol)

4 Seal up your house. Stick bubble wrap over the windows, those snake things along the bottoms of the doors, have many hot baths (the steam heats up your house), only eat body-warming things like *Nabe*, buy a *kotatsu* or heater and do not leave your room until late March.

So I hope you guys all have a great December, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

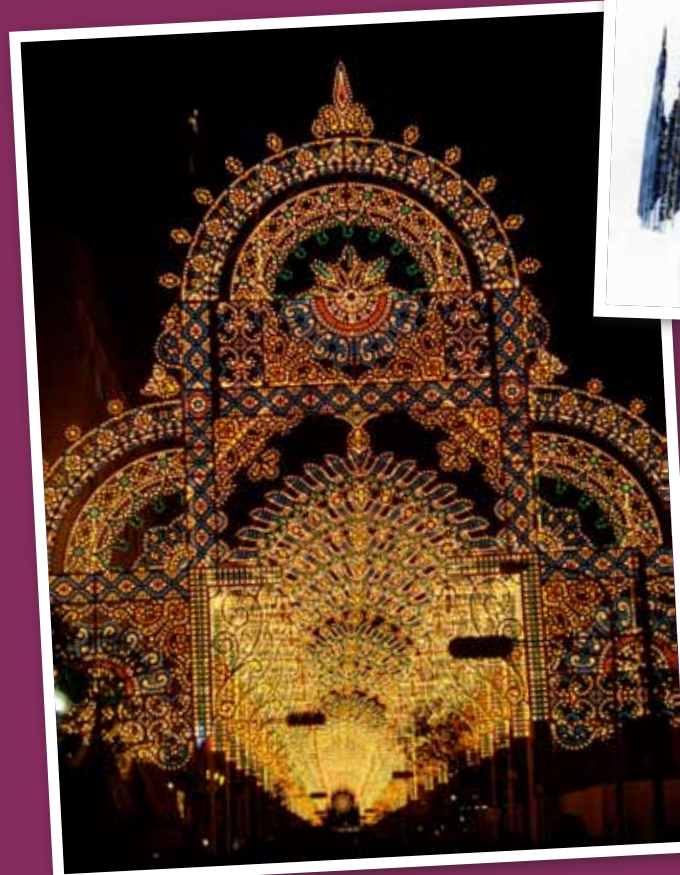
Love Kym xxx



Christmas in Roppongi



JESSICA GRIGG



Kobe Luminarie

LAUREN MCRAE



CAPRICIOUS WIND

BY EMMA NICOLETTI

The capricious wind took *me*
It tumbled and turned *me*
and when the wind subsided
My *me* was gone

I looked in the mirror
traces remained
upon my skin
my face, familiar, the same

But wait, look beyond the face
what is reflected there?
A mountain,
a starless sky,
a tall wooden gate.

These are the things unknown to *me*

I move back from the mirror
One
Two
Three . . .

I can't see myself for all the
brilliant colours
emeralds, silvers, magentas
I am lost
Swallowed by distance and difference
Swallowed by the exotic and strange
Swallowed by excitement and joy

But wait, maybe *this* is *me*

And was this always *me*?
Have I never looked beyond the face?
The colours too familiar
greens, grays and reds
A grassy park,
a concrete driveway,
a banksia in bloom.

My *me* never was and never was gone

The capricious wind takes *me*
It tumbles and turns *me*
It changes and makes *me*
It never subsides

German Christmas in Osaka

LAUREN MCRAE



MAIGO IN HYOGO



Where in Hyogo
was this picture
taken?

Leave your guesses on the
discussion board on the
Hyogo Times Facebook
group page. Hint: it's not
JUSCO.

*Solution to last month's
Maigo in Hyogo:
Yukemuri Plaza, Arima.*

We Want Your Stories!

...and pictures, and opinions, and po-
ems, and artwork, and essays, and....



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Kanazawa, Ishikawa-Ken

BY LAUREN MCRAE

Kanazawa is the capital of Ishikawa Prefecture, which is situated north of Tokyo and faces the Sea of Japan. Kanazawa is a city of contrasts. The city is filled with interesting modern art while still maintaining traditional houses and crafts. I visited Kanazawa for a three day weekend at the beginning of autumn. The best place to see the wonderful changes of autumn is at Kenroku-en, a beautiful garden in Kanazawa that is considered one of the top three gardens in Japan. The garden's main attraction is a stone lantern at the edge of the main pond, but don't miss the oldest fountain in Japan operating by natural water pressure. You can easily spend a few hours here wandering around and taking in its beauty.

There is a tea house and various souvenir stores throughout the garden.

The Higashi Pleasure District is a lovely area that has retained its original form since it was established in 1820. The Shima Geisha House offers self-guided tours through an original Geisha House for about ¥500. The house is beautiful and it totally feels as if you are stepping back in time. Nearby is the Nagamachi District where you can enter Nomura House, part of the old Samurai quarters.

You can't say you have been to Kanazawa unless you have been to the Omicho Markets and tried the seafood. Seafood is a specialty here because of the proximity to the sea, and within the markets there are many restaurants serving some of the

freshest seafood you will ever have. I recommend ordering a *kaisen-don*: a bowl of sushi rice topped with fresh various types of sashimi. I ordered the 'special' *kaisen-don* which was topped with gold flakes, and which tasted amazing!

Kanazawa produces 99% of Japan's gold leaf; even the gold leaf that covers Kinkakuji in Kyoto was produced here. The Sakuda Gold Leaf store sells products with gold leaf, and also features a display showing how it is made. After purchasing some souvenirs from the gold leaf store, we were served tea with gold flakes! Gold flakes are added to many food and drinks in Kanazawa, and by the time the weekend was over I had tried gold tea, ice cream and sashimi! It is said to be good for your health and vitality.



The next day we went to Myoryu-ji, which is known as the Ninja temple. It was completed in 1643 as a place of worship and as a watchtower. I went on a tour of the temple where we saw hidden rooms, trick staircases, secret floors, a suicide chamber and a look out. However, as no one ever attacked the Lord there were never any ninjas. The tour is completely in Japanese but they have created a step-by-step English information guide that you can use while on

the tour. Reservations are required as you must go on a tour to see inside the Ninja temple.

The 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art opened in 2004 and has a great collection of modern art with an always changing main exhibition. It is ¥350 for entrance to the collections and another ¥1000 for the special exhibitions. You can easily get to the Museum by bus from the JR station. ●

HOW TO GET THERE :

take a JR special rapid service train from Himeji or Osaka to Kyoto, from Kyoto take a Limited Express Thunderbird 19 direct to Kanazawa JR station. From Himeji the train takes about 4 hours to reach Kanazawa.

HOW TO MAKE A RESERVATION:

to make a reservation for accommodation at Toyoko Inn, go to the hotel's website www.toyoko-inn.com/eng/. Toyoko Inn is a business hotel that is very reasonably priced, is within walking distance of the JR station and includes breakfast. For reservations at the Ninja temple (Myoryu-ji temple) call (076)241-0888

PRICE:

taking a train from Himeji to Kanazawa will cost about ¥8500 each way





Chochin Matsuri



BY PATRICK HENNIGAN

Every year at the end of October in the town of Aboshi, near Himeji in Hyogo prefecture, people come together to celebrate the recent rice harvest and pay their respects to the gods. This festival is known by locals as *Chochin Matsuri*, or Lantern Festival. I have been told that lanterns are used in many festivals throughout the land, but not in the same way that they are in Aboshi. At Chochin Matsuri, large paper lanterns with lit candles inside are wielded by testosterone-fueled men and smashed against one another, breaking the lanterns into tiny pieces.

Through the grace of a co-teacher at my junior high school, I was

lucky enough to not only attend this festival but to be a *mawashi* or traditional loincloth-wearing participant.

I arrived in Aboshi at 10 in the morning to find about 40 men preparing themselves for the festivities. Many looked confused upon seeing a foreigner and being told that I was to participate alongside them. They were very friendly and helped me to put on the loincloth, which is extremely revealing and not at all comfortable, but obligatory for all who were invited to participate.

Our first endeavor of the day was to pull a large *danjiri*, or portable shrine, with the neighborhood's god inside to

the town's large Shinto shrine a few kilometers away. After four hours of hard work and many drinks shared between the men, we succeeded in our task and prepared for the event that makes this festival so unique: the lantern-smashing.

Naturally, I was curious as to why groups of men from different neighborhoods in the town walked to the large shrine brandishing candle-lit lanterns, only to bash them into nothing more than small scraps of paper and wood. I was told that we needed to light the way for ancestors and other gods to see the way to the temple, as it was important that they too join for the celebration of the rice harvest. As for the smashing part, all I got was a shrug of the shoulders, a slight laugh and an explanation that lantern-smashing had been practiced for a very long time, and the tradition must be kept.

When the sun went down we were all given bamboo sticks about 7 feet in length, with a lantern about 1.5 feet long attached to the top. I was repeatedly told to hold the bottom of my stick and put my head down when we were to all come together in a tight group and bash the sticks. I was warned that if the bottom of a stick came loose it could easily give someone a big gash on the head, or even knock him out.

After another long walk we arrived at the shrine where many people were gathered around to watch the different

neighborhoods break their paper lanterns to pieces. We stood in a circle hitting our sticks in unison together against the ground while chanting. I couldn't believe that I was participating in a ritual that seemed very ancient and surreal. Two leaders of our group entered the middle and began a loud and impassioned chant. After a couple of verses, all of the members joined the chant, at the end of which we all ran into the middle together, holding our lanterns high. The rush in was very intense; I remember I was pushed up against bodies in front of me and had many people pushing behind me. I put my head down, grabbed the bottom of my stick while waving it in the air, knocking my lantern against others. I had my head down and felt a lantern drop to the side of me, balanced on my body as well as the guy's that was next to me. I could smell the candle burning inside and began to

worry that the paper lantern might flame up and burn me, but luckily the whistle blew and we retreated to the perimeter of our circle. After the next chant I ran in I found myself in the middle of the mass of bodies. It was much more intense in the middle than it had been at the periphery of the group. My bare back was bumped by elbows, heads and parts of sticks. My shoulders and arms were scratched by sticks and broken lantern debris that fell, the whistle blew and we again retreated. We repeated this process for about 15 exhilarating minutes until all of our lanterns were nothing more than broken pieces strewn about on the ground.

At the end of the night, I left the shrine bruised, scratched and sore but most of all amazed and feeling extremely lucky to have had this amazing experience that I will remember for the rest of my life. ●



GETTING TO KNOW RANDOM JETS



THE BASICS

Name: Justine Murray
Please call me: Justine or Jae
School and Location in Hyogo: Ken-Nishinomiyah High School.
How we know you: I'm one of the rare new Australians in Hyogo this year.
Birthday: 9th April.
Born and raised: Perth, Western Australia.
Family: Mum, Dad and Myself.
University and Degree: Bachelor of Education (Primary).
Other jobs that you have had: Life Guard, Swimming Coach and Swimming Instructor.
Travels: All throughout Western Australia, Melbourne, Darwin and New Zealand.
Hobbies: Swimming, gym training, surfing (I love my sports!!), eating, amateur photography, travelling.
Staying another year? I have nearly been convinced!

FAVORITES

Food: Ice cream, *edamame*, Japanese Kit Kats, Caramello Koalas, Italian food.
Sports: Australia Rules Football, surfing, F1.
Music: Triple J (Aussie radio station), Foo Fighters, Bloc Party, Karnivool, Jack Johnson, Pearl Jam, Nirvana, etc.
Shop: Yodobashi Camera, Junkudo/Kinokuniya.
TV Show: *Gossip Girl*, *Greys Anatomy*,

Desperate Housewives, *Criminal Minds*.

Movie: *Shawshank Redemption*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *Mulan*, *Monsters Inc.*

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Graduating from university 5 years ago.
Best life experience: Moving away from my family, friends and partner of 4 years to start a new life here in Japan.
Motto to live by: I work to live. I don't live to work. Don't make assumptions. Say what you mean. Do your best. Don't take anything personally.
I remember when... I was a naïve, fresh faced Aussie setting foot in Tokyo for the first time 18 weeks ago.
What are you drinking? Good ol' water.
Who would you like to meet? Usain Bolt, Albert Einstein, Lance Armstrong.
Why should we elect you President of the World? You should elect me because being an Australian, I can teach you how to R.E.L.A.X and how to speak real English. You got that mate?!

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Always resort to humour!! Also, if the students are not grasping a concept; stop what you are doing and scrap the lesson. Why confuse the students any more?
When the class is TOO QUIET I... tell a joke or just stop talking.
Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? Yay, of course! Winning the students over is half the battle.
Funniest Story involving a student: you ask any Japanese student to say "Caramello koala"!!

THE BASICS

Name: Sifton Tracey Anipare
Please call me: Sifton, Sifto (a Canadian salt company), Siftonium
School and Location in Hyogo: Suma-Higashi and Kobe-Kita Senior High Schools
How we know you: I am the one behind all those e-mails on the Hyogo JET Yahoo! Group haranguing you to join Smile Kids Japan. I used to have long purple hair, now it's short and twisted, it will soon be long and blue.
Birthday: November 4
Born and raised: On the playground is where I spent most of my days? No? Fine, guess I can't fool you: born in Windsor Ontario, raised in Toronto.
Family: Still in Canada, and I have a surrogate sister in Tokyo.
University and Degree: University of Toronto, Hon. BSc. in Biology and Cinema
Other jobs that you have had: HMV wage slave, AEON Amity teacher, Toronto International Film Festival intern
Travels: Several trips to the U.S. (New York, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Detroit), England, Ghana, one trip to France and two to Japan. Within Japan, the farthest west has been Hiroshima, and farthest east would be Tokyo.
Hobbies: Watching movies, playing video games, knitting, sewing, getting ticked off at what I sew, playing more video games to get over it, dancing, baking, creative writing, watching anime, staying up late doing one or more of the above, going to Starbucks and getting hyper on lattes, doing things I should have grown out of years ago like jumping into puddles and sneaking into abandoned buildings
Staying another year? As long as the guy at the immigration office with the big red stamp says its okay, I'll be here.

FAVORITES

Food: Fudge. And popcorn. But not together. *Kitsune udon* is pretty good too.

Sports: Does karate count? If not, then N/A because I suck at sports.
Music: Weird music - Smashing Pumpkins, Final Fantasy soundtracks, Bjork, The Birthday Massacre, A Primitive Evolution (A.P.E.), Amon Tobin, ALI Project, Garbage, Cibo Matto
Shop: Shoppers Drug Mart (Canada), Honey's and Bodyline (Japan), Lush (anywhere)
TV Show: *Simpsons* 4ever, but *Xena* is a close second
Movie: Geez, too many - top 10: *Star Wars*, *Amelie*, *Coraline*, *Tank Girl*, *The Last Dragon*, *Cashback*, *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, *La Dolce Vita*, *Harry Potter*, *The Good the Bad the Weird*

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Coming to Japan and not starving to death in my first year.
Best life experience: Never thought I'd hear myself say THIS, but living and teaching in Nishinomiyah two years ago. It was an *eikaiwa*, so the first eight months could have been better, but everything I learned back then is paying off now. I've always been a patient person, but having the patience of ten men has definitely come in handy working for JET- not only for dealing with students (especially when they act like kindergarteners), but also with coworkers (who also act like kindergarteners). Plus the experience came in really handy for Smile Kids Japan Halloween; the kids we played with have a lot of special needs, and if I didn't know any better about children I don't think I would have had so much fun with them as I did. It was awesome, you should have been there!
Motto to live by: You can talk, but I don't have to listen.
I remember when... I had an oven, and I could make (and eat) all the rose cake I wanted. I also had several video game systems to choose from back then, too. Sigh... but it's okay now, because I was broke back then too.
What are you drinking? Chai latte with Kahlua or Bailey's in it.

Who would you like to meet?

My first boyfriend...or James Earl Jones (to record a greeting for my answering machine). Whoever comes first.

Why should we elect you President of the World? Tests for intelligence and maturity for parents would be mandatory! It would be like the JLPT, but...worse.

Best thing about Japan so far? When the bus/train/whatever says it's coming at 5:32, it means it's coming at 5:32. People in Toronto will understand what I am talking about. And the Kit Kat here is pretty mind-blowing.

If it was my last day on earth I would... Beg for an extension, like back in my uni days. Failing that, I'd rob a bank, spend all the money on fudge, eat it and paint the town blue.
Interesting Fact about me: I bellydance.

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Smile and take deep breaths. If your whole lesson plan goes down in white-hot flames, keep your composure - it's just one lesson out of a thousand. Plus, school is hard enough, so if kids are acting up or not doing what you want them to do, try not to punish them with English (e.g. writing a letter about why they were bad...in English! Ouch.) We're here to make English fun, not...traumatic. ^_~
When the class is TOO QUIET I... sneak up on sleeping students and steal their stuff. (Then I get everyone to try and say that tongue twister.)
Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? Eh, it depends. Maybe yay, for the ones who study hard and deserve the reward. I don't get extra money to import souvenirs, so I like forcing my students have to earn those stickers and chocolate loonies.
Funniest Story involving a student: this is not a JET story, but it's one of my favourites.

When I first started teaching my class of bilingual six-year-olds at Amity, the textbook was disturbingly easy. So one day we had to review colours. Here's how the caper came down:
Me: Okay everybody, what colour is this?
Maka: Ooh, I know I know!
Other students: Blue!
Maka: Awww...
Me: Good! And what colour is this?
Maka: Ooh, I know I know!
Other students: Green!
Maka: Awww...
Me: Excellent! Okay, last one - what colour is this?
Maka: I know I know!
Other students: Pink!
Maka: But I know! *pouts*
Me: All right, all right, nobody say anything, the next one is just for Maka. Okay, Maka... What colour is this?
Maka: I know I know I know! It's red!
Me: All right - how do you know it's red?
Maka: (big smile, serene voice) Red is the colour of Jesus blood. ●



The Science of Japan: Is it really dangerous to use your mobile phone on the train?

BY MATTHEW STOTT
ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN PARKER

If you take a bus or train in Japan you will nearly always see a “No Keitai” sign, and for good measure the bus driver or announcer will usually remind passengers to switch their phones to “manner mode” and to refrain from using them. I recall taking the bus home from work about a month after I arrived here, standing in the aisle and nattering away on my newly-acquired phone . . . only to find—the ambient noise having dropped from its usual “silent” to “deathly silent”—every other passenger staring at me, and the bus driver furiously waving the dame! wave. And if the endeavours of the public transport personnel fail to persuade you, other passengers—particularly senior citizens—can be relied upon to enforce the no-keitai rule. One morning on the way to school I saw a young woman thumbing an email message into her phone, only to be greeted by a sharp “Gommen!” by a grumpy old man seated nearby. With nary a glance at the complainant, she calmly put the phone away.

Why is mobile phone use proscribed on public transport in Japan? Well, for one thing, it’s considered “rude” (as is talking at the boisterous volume to which we barbarous Westerners are accustomed) . . . and over here that



should be the only reason you need. But it is also believed that the radio waves emitted by cellular phones can interfere with heart pacemakers, and therefore passengers are asked to switch their phones off in the vicinity of priority seats. Is this concern justified?

It is true that mobile phones emit electromagnetic energy. Many things do, including the Sun and the earth, as well as televisions and radios. Electromagnetic radiation is non-ionizing, meaning that it does not have sufficient energy, unlike ionizing radiation such as UV rays, to detach electrons from atoms and cause tissue damage. Exposure to very high levels of electromagnetic energy can cause tissue damage, according to the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), but such levels would be well above what the general public encounters (in Australia at least; I can’t

say whether it holds true for Japan). And worries about the risk of developing cancer from long-term exposure are generally what inspire people to protest the installation of towers or the use of handsets by children, but the jury is still out on how well-founded these concerns are. Nevertheless, the risk of tissue damage isn’t the main concern on Japanese buses and trains.

Concerns about cellular phones interfering with pacemakers and implantable cardioverter-defibrillators (ICDs) are well-founded, but the nature of the risk requires a little teasing-out. The purpose of a pacemaker is to ensure that the heart beats at an adequate rate, while a defibrillator will monitor the rate and rhythm of a heart and correct it if it is beating too slowly or too fast. Both essentially work by delivering electrical impulses to the heart muscles via electrodes, which in the case of the ICD is also

used to detect heart activity. According to ARPANSA, both the signal transmitted from the phone’s antenna, and any magnets inside the phone can affect the operation of implanted medical devices, if the phone is held and operated sufficiently close to the implanted device. The organization therefore recommends that phones be kept at least 15cm from the pacemaker or ICD, which can be achieved if the patient avoids storing the phone in a pocket over site of the device, or if the patient uses the ear furthest from the site of the implant when he or she uses the phone. ARPANSA also notes that electromagnetic interference from mobile phones appears to be temporary; the device can be returned to its normal operation by simply moving the phone away.

So unless you’re on a really crowded train or bus, or unless you are actually sitting next to someone with an implant, it seems that he or she is unlikely to be harmed by your using your phone. Still, the host of the dinner party is unlikely to be harmed by your refusal to remove your shoes—unless you have been wading in toxic waste—and yet in the interests of maintaining peaceful and harmonious relations with your fellow creatures, and not looking like a complete and utter jerk, you are best advised to do as your host requests and take off your shoes. It is a good idea to do likewise on the train (put the phone away, that is; you can keep your shoes on), and save yourself much embarrassment—not to mention the ire of the ojiisan and obaasan, who can be far more intimidating than their diminutive appearance would suggest! ●

“WHERE ARE THEY NOW?”

Name: Aaron Ragon

Age: 38

Placement school/s and location in Hyogo/Japan while on JET: Akashi Josai Koko, Akashi

Current occupation & jobs held since leaving the JET programme: I am currently employed as a high school counsellor in Highlands Ranch Colorado. Since leaving JET I have: worked in residential construction, as a small business account manager for a large telecom company, worked as a mental health counsellor at an inpatient psychiatric unit at a children’s hospital in Denver.

Highlight/funniest part of your JET experience: Making lifelong friends and travelling.

How the JET programme has benefited you career-wise: I was given credit for 2 years of teaching and that provided me with a pay raise in my new career which is cool. Also, I work with high school students and many of them have a fascination with anime and Japan, so that is a good connection to have as well.

What transferable skills JET gives you: Some language

ability, valuable teaching experience and the ability to adapt to a new situation.

What advice you would give to current JETs for getting the most out of the JET experience in order to further their career afterwards: First of all, I would encourage everyone to think carefully about what you want to do afterward. Go for a career that will make you happy and know that most of us never know for certain what it is that we want to do so you must rely on your best guess. I love being a high school counsellor, but it took me two years of research to realize that this is what I wanted to do.

Any tips for job hunting after JET: Play up your experience in JET! If you don’t toot your own horn, nobody else will. Also, know that the kind of employer that you want to work for will find your experience interesting and thus, will find you interesting. Emphasize your creativity and ability to adapt, learn and get along in a totally different environment. These are tangible skills that will come in valuable in any work setting. ●



Hula Girls

BY J J CAPPA

Merry Christmas everyone! Have you all pre-ordered your "Happy Birthday, Jesus!" cakes and made your Christmas Day reservations at Kentucky Fried Chicken? If you have not experienced the holiday season here before, you will soon learn that Japan is a country that would send "put Christ back in Christmas" zealots into tearful hysterics. If you have been through it, you can understand that it was nigh impossible to find a fitting film to review for a Christmas issue. Teachers laughed when I asked for recommendations, and the search kiosk at TSUTAYA yielded nothing but J-Pop Christmas concerts. In desperation, I settled on *Hula Girls* (フラガール) because it takes place in cold, snowy Tohoku, and happens to be a surprisingly good movie.

The first time I watched *Hula Girls*, it did not match my expectations. On one hand, it exceeded them. On the other, it scarred me deeply. To help you understand why, here is the brief plot synopsis given to me when a friend recommended this film. "*Hula Girls* is based on the true story of a coal mining company that attempted to save itself from bankruptcy by opening up a Hawaiian Center to attract tourism. The resort was to be completely staffed by mining families, so they taught miners' daughters how to hula instead of bringing

in professional dancers. It is really cute." Keep that last part in mind.

Lately, there has been a trend in the Japanese film industry which you might call the "*Water Boys-Swing Girls* Effect." If you have never seen these movies, let me briefly summarize them for you. *Water Boys* is about high school boys that unexpectedly find themselves on a synchronized swimming team with a comically unorthodox coach. Although they nearly miss their big performance, they put on a great show at the end. Likewise, *Swing Girls* is about high school girls that unexpectedly find themselves in a jazz band with a comically unorthodox teacher. Although they nearly miss their big performance, they put on a great show at the end. Seeing the pattern? Look around your local TSUTAYA; you will find the many hideous offspring of this formula.

On the surface, *Hula Girls* appeared to be just another *Swing Girls*, as expected. Ridiculous circumstances lead a pack of misfit girls to learn a bizarre new skill considered improper for women living in the sixties. Their teacher is an alcoholic that spends about as much time teaching as she does vomiting. Moreover, there are enough light-hearted moments to fool viewers into thinking that the movie is, in fact, "cute." However, watching *Hula Girls* as if it were just another teen comedy will leave you watching the wrong film.

Right around the time one of the dancer's fathers loses his job and beats her in a fit of rage, I realized I mistakenly spent an hour missing the point of the film (hence the

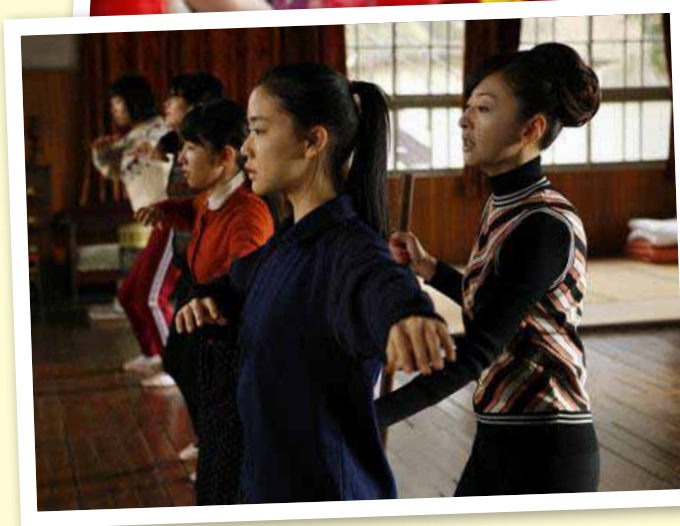
shock and scarring). Expecting *Swing Girls 2* meant ignoring that which sets *Hula Girls* above that pack of throwaway high school movies. There are funny moments in the story because the premise is, without a doubt, ridiculous, but they are not what define the film. Likewise, the teacher drinks to forget the skeletons in her closet that forced her to leave Tokyo, not because it makes her a more humorous character. Furthermore, the girls become dancers not as an amusing plot device, but because dancing meant becoming something more than just the daughters and wives of miners. Hula was their only chance to escape otherwise dead end futures in a failing mining town.

As the hula dancers slowly inspired their town to support the Hawaiian Center, I began to see that *Hula Girls* had set a new standard for films that

might otherwise be just another *Swing Girls* or *Water Boys*. Eventually, even the most staunch "anti-Hawaii" miners and their families realize that they need to move on, because if the hula girls can create a better tomorrow for themselves, so must they. The message is clear; do not foolishly grasp at tradition for tradition's sake. That powerful moral, coupled with award-winning acting, an enjoyable soundtrack and good directing, puts *Hula Girls* miles ahead of other similar movies.

The Joban Hawaiian Center is still open for business, but is now known by the name Spa Resort Hawaiians (スパリゾートハワイアンズ). It might be an interesting place to check out during a trip to Tohoku if you are in Fukushima Prefecture. They have a pirate ship.

Thanks for watching! ●



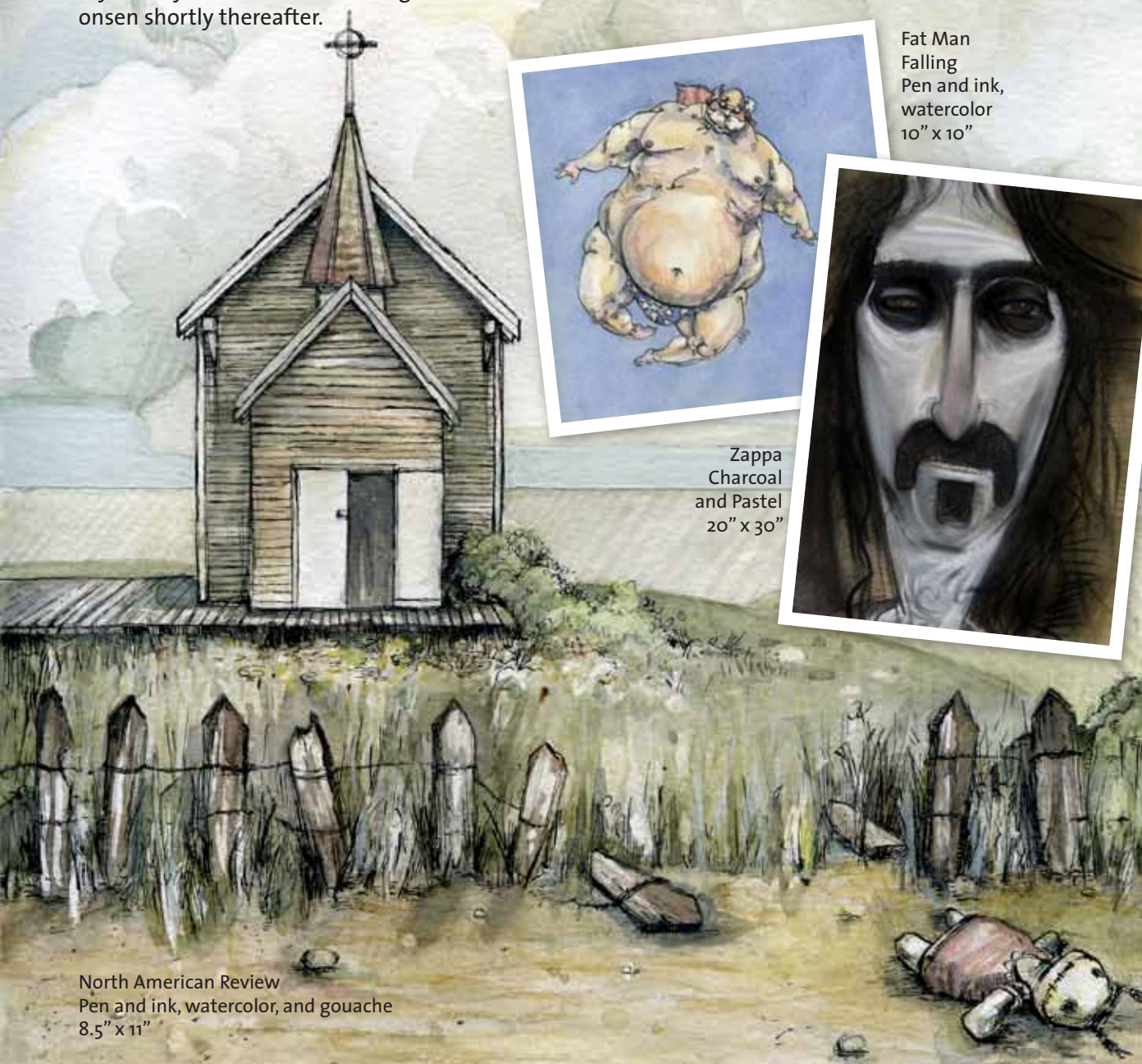
Allow me to introduce myself. My name's Ryan Parker.

I like chips, but not as much as I like cookies. I first hopped off the plane and into Japan in August, and I've been enjoying the life of an ALT ever since. I'm lucky to be stationed in lovely little Himeji.

Overall it's been quite swell, but some things in my new life have certainly required adjustment. For example, since I'm from the Arizona desert, I had to look up the word winter in the dictionary. Luckily, I learned the meaning of the word onsen shortly thereafter.

In my former life, I was an art director, graphic designer, illustrator, and occasionally even a drawing teacher. My toolbox includes pen and ink, water-based paints, charcoal, pastel, and of course my trusty Mac.

If you're killing time someday and Facebook fails to satiate your thirst for media, then check out my website: <http://idrawgoodart.com>. Enjoy, and I look forward to sharing more art with you soon! Cheers, and stay warm...and not by drinking hot blowfish liquor, if you can help it.



Fat Man
Falling
Pen and ink,
watercolor
10" x 10"



Zappa
Charcoal
and Pastel
20" x 30"

North American Review
Pen and ink, watercolor, and gouache
8.5" x 11"

Life After the B.O.E.

BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN CIR, 2002-04)



Seriously, your status update can wait.

ABOUT DAVID NAMISATO

David Namisato is an illustrator in Toronto, Canada, and a former CIR (Ajigawasa-machi, Aomori-ken, 2002-04).

David's recent projects include children's picture book, *Fly Catcher Boy* written by Rebecca Kool and published by Gumboot Books, *Gabe and Allie in Race Through Time*, a time travelling Canadian history comic appearing in *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*, illustrating *Archie* characters for trading card company 5finity Productions, and of course the monthly *Life After the B.O.E.* comic.

Tsukemen Tetsu

BY ANDREW TAMASHIRO

On the 9th floor of the Kyoto Station Esta, there lies a place where famous *ramenya* from all over the country gather to spread their name and sling some noodles for those that might not have a chance to partake otherwise. This is not a unique idea, as similar assemblies exist in Fukuoka, Yokohama, Sapporo and undoubtedly elsewhere as well. The Kyoto one is simply the easiest one to get to for this ramen fiend: a mere 2 hour train ride from the home station.

The Kyoto Ramen Congress houses some familiar names, like Tokushima's Toudai and Sapporo's Sumire (which I tried for the first time at this exact location). New this time around was Tokyo's Tsukemen Tetsu, a place that I had heard of online famous for some fantastic *tsukemen* (dipping noodles) and a charming cartoon explanation of how to eat their splendid noodle fare.

Every time I've been to Kyoto Station, it's been crowded, and today was no exception. There was a bit of a line in front of Tetsu on that overcast Sunday, as thousands bustled about Kyoto on Labor Thanksgiving Eve. Once I spotted the name Tetsu, I knew I'd wait for as long as it took. I bought the special toppings and opted for *oomori* noodles, an extra 100 grams over the typical serving.

It's a bit of a wait at Tetsu for your food, as they hustle slice, dice, and boil everything in a small

open kitchen to keep up with the crowds. I received a small plate with an egg, some *menma* bamboo shoots, onions and some absolutely amazing looking fatty pork. This was to be scooped into the thick soup and slurped up with the noodles as I saw fit. I saw fit to plop the entire plate into the soup upon receipt.

The soup is an oily, fatty, salty blend of brown and tan, fish stock and pork bones combining into a fragrant concoction that clings to the noodles and sticks to your ribs. The noodles are springy, chewy delights, perfect vehicles for the thick soup. The pork is tender and fatty, seemingly melting into the soup as you eat. Despite many restaurateurs fierce pride in their soup bases, Tetsu opts for a somewhat laid back approach, openly encouraging a great deal of customization to their soup (my favorite of which was the fried green onions) and eating the way you like. After dipping, swirling and slurping up the noodles and toppings, you're invited to pour as much of the soup thinner as you like into the bowl of remaining broth, and drink it up like any good ramentarian would. I opted against the burning hot stone insert (I would normally jump on something this wild, but had to catch a train...which I ended up missing anyway) and drank it down at its current temperature, which was still enough to warm my stomach and heart on this day. An amazing noodle meal that I can't wait to duplicate. ●



Sugar and Spice Shortbread

BY JESSICA GRIGG

This is one of my fave Christmas recipes. My family makes them every year.

INGREDIENTS

500g butter
220g caster sugar
675g plain flour
75g rice flour
1 teaspoon mixed spice
36 whole cloves, approximately (I often substitute cloves for those little shiny sugar balls, they can be a bit difficult to find in Japan)
2 tablespoons white sugar

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to slow (150°C).
2. Beat the butter and sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until smooth.
3. Stir in the sifted flours and spice; press the mixture together with hands to form a firm dough. Knead gently on a lightly floured surface until smooth. Cover, refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. Roll the dough between two sheets of baking paper until 1cm thick. Using a 6cm fluted cutter,



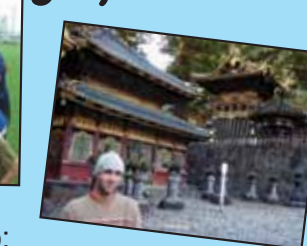
cut rounds from dough. Place onto greased oven trays, decorate with cloves; sprinkle with the white sugar.

5. Bake in a slow oven for about 30 minutes or until the biscuits are a pale straw colour. Stand the shortbread on the tray for five minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool. Store in an airtight container.

NB These bickies can be made 2 weeks ahead and can also be frozen! A few of these in a nice plastic bag make a great treat to share in the office, if you're feeling that Christmas generosity -J

We Want Your Stories!

...and pictures, and opinions, and poems, and artwork, and essays, and....



Submit by the 20th of each month to:
publications@hyogo.ajet.net



English Sensei Spirit 1.0

BY MATTHEW STOTT

You're all doubtless familiar with Dave's ESL Café. In this issue I want to take a brief look at some of the other online ESL resources that I've found useful, and which may save your skin when you're strapped for lesson ideas.

Lanternfish

(<http://bogglesworldesl.com/>) This site is maintained by a group of ESL teachers working in Korea and the U.S., and while

it may at first glance seem to be pitched at younger learners (there is an "ESL for Adults" section), the activities are graded to meet the needs of most students, from elementary to senior high school. *Lanternfish* offers a wide selection of lesson plans, worksheets and activities, all accessible from the front page, and it even includes a section containing board games perfect for ESS and conversation classes. For that first class back from the winter break, you could do no worse than heading over to the

"Holiday Worksheets" section to peruse the collection of New Years resources. I recommend the "Happy New Year Word Scramble" and "New Year's Resolutions," which together would easily fill 50 minutes and make for a fun and communicative lesson.

ESL Teacher Talk

(<http://www.eslteachertalk.com/>)

This is the first and, currently, only ESL podcast I listen to. The hosts and their guests teach in various Asian (or, in

at least one case, European) countries, including Japan, China, Korea and Taiwan, and it is interesting to glean from their perspectives the similarities and differences between teaching in Japan and teaching in other Asian countries. Each individual episode is themed, and the podcast canvasses a range of ESL-related topics, including classroom management, methodology, teaching tips, and even advice for job seekers. But by far the show's most practically useful feature is the "Game of the Week." That should require little further elaboration, but it is worth pointing out that the Game of the Week is often integrated with the podcast's sister site, *MES English* (<http://www.mes-english.com/>), where you'll not only find games materials (amidst a plethora of other useful resources), but also the means for generating your own board games, crosswords, word searches and other worksheets online. One Game of the Week that has already been featured in the *Hyogo Times* is the card game "Say Theirs"; another favourite of mine is the vocabulary game "Kletki" (<http://www.mes-english.com/games/files/kletki.pdf>), in which students fill up grids of 3 x 3, 4 x 4 and 5 x 5 squares with words containing a given vowel or consonant. This one has proved to be a raging success with the two students who comprise my ESS club; give it a go with yours.

Natto Database

(<http://www.nattoenglish.com/>)

Natto—that's National Archive of Teaching Techniques Online to you—is the brainchild of, in their own words: "a large community of Ibaraki ALTs too lazy to plan their own lessons, and one ALT who had so much time on his hands he thought solving that problem was a good idea." The database, which is searchable, and divided into "Games" and "Lessons", is available in both English and Japanese, making it a great resource to suggest to JTEs and to help encourage them to get involved in the lesson-planning process. And any classroom resource put together ALTs in Japan is worth a second glance, as it is very likely to have been tried and tested in Japanese classrooms. One lesson I sourced from Natto that I've had particular success with is "Music Opinions", wherein you play clips of 6 popular songs to students, and get them to write their opinions of each song and then interview each other about their views. The worksheets require little modification, but are conveniently available as Word documents in case you wish to make any changes. They also contain a list of important music and opinion-related lexis which you might want to pre-teach before conducting the main activities. I can also report that it makes a good foundation for a listening test, especially when you can surprise the students with "Linda Linda" or "Pop Star." (I'm kicking myself that I never took the opportunity

to use "Yuki Ya Kon Kon" . . . I'll leave it to you to take up the challenge.)

ALTs in other prefectures have also created some wonderful teaching sites. Here are a few:

Japan-wide:

Englipedia

<http://jhsenglipediaproject.com/default.aspx>

Chiba:

ChibaJETs Forums: Teaching
<http://www.chibajet.com/forums/viewforum.php?f=3>

Gunma:

GunmaJET Lesson Plans

<http://gunmajet.net/lesson>

Sendai:

ALTs in Sendai

<http://www.sendaiedu.com/index.html>

(I think it would be fantastic if JETs in Hyogo prefecture could do something similar, and there's no reason why we can't. As a matter of fact, the HyogoAJET wiki has a "Teaching" section where you can upload your lesson plans and activities Go to http://hyogoajet.net/wiki/Teaching_Resources.)

Obviously the websites described in this article merely scratch the surface of what's out there. And you might have encountered some good online ESL resources yourself. If you know of any, please post the links on the Hyogo Times Facebook discussion forum. Better than that, review it for us! ●