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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://hyogoajet.net/wiki/Hyogo_Times

We're also on Facebook!

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

BY MATTHEW STOTT



Hello everyone!

Well, there's nothing so inspirational as being detained in the teacher's room under SuperMax conditions while the junior high school kids take their entrance exams, eh?

At least it affords me the opportunity to welcome to our stable of writers (if they'll pardon the expression) some exciting new columnists, with more to come in the months ahead. Joining the happy *Hyogo Times* family in March are Jonathan "Ruggles" Cooper, our Awaji Correspondent; our new chef-in-residence Travis Love; and Hannah Hunt, with ideas on ALT-*Nihonjin* "Conversation Starters." The proverbial "shout-out" also goes to Jaclyn Threadgill, who will be blessing us with her design editing skills on an ongoing basis. ("JAC-LYN THREADGILL!" ... Does anyone else listen to *Skeptic's Guide to the Universe*? OK, just me then.) Thanks, guys, for your wonderful efforts. And thanks to all of you, dear readers, for your feedback and for keeping the articles and

pictures flowing in. Your input is the lifeblood of this newsletter.

This has been quite an educational month for me. Thanks to the March issue, I now know what "larping" is, and where in Hyogo one may participate in this activity. I feel more confident navigating my way around the menu of a ramen restaurant, perhaps schooled enough to sample the wares of a venue other than Ohshou once in a while! (I guess I have some *yanki* DNA mixed in there somewhere.) There are at least six citrus fruits that, hitherto, I never knew existed. And to my utter chagrin I've discovered that one must sit *seiza* to properly do Japanese calligraphy. Are you serious? My thigh muscles are about as flexible as Japanese bureaucracy! I guess that's why I find it hard to keep within the lines.

Something else I learned, which I hope to cover more of in issues to come, is how this JET jaunt we're taking bears on our future professional lives. (That's right, folks ... like the slightly-disturbed uncle whose social awkwardness never fails to bring the mood down at parties, it is my duty to depress you with talk of ... the cold, hard light of day. Unless, of course, you make a mad dash for the crackers and refried bean dip in time. I'll give you a head-start.) I was fortunate enough—well, attendees did have to pay their own travel and food expenses—to attend the Conference for Returning JETs in bee-yootiful Yokohama, and if there's one thing I took away

from it all (pause to sample the bean dip ... hmm, not bad!), it's the need to make this JET experience count—to think about how you're going to sell it on a resume. What have you done, what have you learned, what skills have you acquired that, frankly, are going to make you look better than the other polished and manufactured business suits in the interview waiting room? Long story short: don't think of JET as a break from your life. In that regard, I strongly suggest becoming involved in Hyogo AJET—something Kym will expand upon a lot more in her Message from the PR. Coordinating events and functions, organizing venues, negotiating with locals ... this is the kind of evidence that employers are going to look upon very favourably. Not that I am suggesting this should be your prime motive for participating in Hyogo AJET, you understand. You should do it because you're a member of a community, a network, a global village, a social species. You should do it because you want to act so that the maxim of your action may be willed as a universal law. Just think of your enhanced employability as a fringe benefit. In any case, I hope to have more to bring you on the Conference in future issues.

OK, that's it from me. This issue is best enjoyed on a blue tarpaulin under a cherry blossom in the sunset, with a plastic cup of *ume shu* in your hand. So print off the PDF, and away you go!

—Matt Stott

HYOGO AJET NEEDS YOU!

BY KYM FARRANT

It has come to the time of year where I must hand over the delicious and sexy Hyogo AJET reins. I'm looking for some volunteers to take over. "But what do Hyogo AJET people actually do?" I hear you ask. Well...

- Remember when you first arrived...that blonde girl at Yashiro, that tall genki guy who shows up everywhere and knows everyone? Well, we were there to help ease your transition into your role as a Hyogo ALT and to

your new life in Japan. Unofficially, we liaise with the BOE to ensure the needs and wants of the ALTs are taken into consideration.

- Remember the welcome parties? Sweating at the top of Sogo beer garden... first meeting those beer machines (I love Japan)... beers in the Hub after JHS training? Well, Hyogo AJET organised those. We also arrange a farewell party, and parties for after the Mid-Year Conference.
- We organise various trips such as Shikoku rafting, Nagano skiing, pub quiz, Halloween and Christmas parties and of course HANAMI IN HIMEJI!! (my fav ☺).

- We also act as a means of communication for JETs. We forward on information from surrounding prefectural AJET groups, maintain the Hyogo AJET Facebook website, and forward details of any discounts and charity events going on via the Yahoo group. If an ALT has any questions, they can ask us,

and we will do our best to find the answers.

That's just a brief summary of what we do. In essence, Hyogo AJET can become what ever you want it to become, and so it changes each year. In general, we need regional representatives (from Awaji, Tajima, Himeji, etc.) to keep Hyogo AJET up to date with what's happening in their area, and we also need people interested in planning social, sports, cultural and charity events or programmes. Hyogo AJET can take up as much or as little of your time as you want. The only requirement is that you have re-contracted for another year, have regular internet access, and are a good team player.

SO ARE YOU INTERESTED?

Anyone who enjoys organising and planning or wishes things were a bit different in Hyogo, please volunteer to join the Hyogo AJET team. I will also be looking for someone to take over my position as Prefectural Representative (PR), so if you want to get involved and become part of the team, or take over as PR, send me an email (pr@hyogo.ajet.net). For more specific information, feel free to contact me.

Love ya
Kym xxx



NEWS FROM SHIGA: Lake Biwa Cleanup Challenge

BY KYLE KRAYER

Shiga AJET has an event in April that people might be interested in coming out to.

On Saturday, April 17th, Shiga will be hosting our annual Lake Biwa Cleanup Challenge. Lake Biwa is the largest lake in Japan and the 4th oldest in the world. Unfortunately the people of Shiga aren't the best stewards of their lake, so every year we host a massive clean up around Earth Day to help out the Mother Lake!

How does it work?

First, email me at kfkramer@gmail.com to register your team. Teams can have up to 4 members. Please tell me the names of your team members and the name of your team. I will email you back with your team color so you can wear the same color shirts to make you easy to identify (not required but super helpful for the organizers!). On the day, all you have to bring are cleaning gloves to protect your hands and rubber boots if you have them. Also, we ask that each participant pay a 200 yen

entry fee to help cover the costs of the trash bags and refreshments we'll have available.

What are the prizes?

We'll have a variety of prizes for everything from the most garbage collected to the strangest garbage found. This year's grand prize is tickets to see the Hanshin Tigers play at Koshien Stadium!!

Sweet! I'm there! Where is it anyway?

So glad you asked! We ask that all teams be assembled and ready at Nagahama Park at 2pm. I'll provide more detailed directions on how to get to the meeting point from Nagahama Station when you register your team. If the forecast calls for rain that Saturday, the raindate will be Saturday, April 24th. I will email teams Friday afternoon if we postpone for rain. Thanks! :D

Kyle Kramer is a Shiga AJET Coordinator



MAIGO IN HYOGO

"And thru her window shade
I watch her shadow move
I wonder if she.....?
Lily, my one and only"

Where in Hyogo can one see these monstrosities? You'll be even more of a legend in your own bento box if you can correctly identify the song and artist from whence those lyrics come.

Post your answers on the discussion board on the Facebook page.

Last month's pic: Shosha-zan. Nice work, Jonathan Shalfi!

March's reason why Awaji kicks ass:

ONION QUEST



Those of you who know me know that I am a big fan of larping. A *big* fan. And for those of you who don't know me, I am a big fan of larping. A *big* fan. And Awaji has dealt a critical strike to my heart this month with Onion Quest (<http://qr-awaji.jp/onionquest/>). You could say I'm under its level three charm spell. You could also say that I failed a saving throw and am now struck with a bad case of giddy like a schoolgirl! Someone cast a cure spell on me quick before I *plotz*!

I'm sure there are some newbies out there scratching their heads and wondering what the heck I'm talking about. Larping? Sounds like what I do after eating some bad *cod*! Let me remove this touch of idiocy from you (not

an easy task!). Larping is live action role playing. I suppose now you are gonna ask is that where grownups get dressed up all ren fair and prance around like fairies? Well... yes and no. We can also prance around like rock gnomes, halflings, drow elves, even trieflings! Such freedom! The mechanics vary from event to event, but your friendly neighborhood gamemaster will usually explain all that. As a general rule larping events are byofwmd (bring your own foam weapons and mountain dew) but occasionally you can purchase 'grog' from an 'inn' with your spoils of war (although I officially do not condone taking real world money from fallen enemies. Unless they are bugbears. Golly I hate bugbears).

Now that you have been initiated, let the campaign commence! From what I gather the quest is to find and conquer the most mythic places on Awaji. But don't think this island is all whirlpools and long bridges (I just hope the trolls aren't proportionate! Eek!)? There are many fascinating wonders to behold (just watch out for the Beholders! Eek!)? Can you resist the siren song of the mermen of Goshiki? Do you have the courage to face down Lich King of Mihara and his undead hordes? Is your broadsword stout enough to tame the succubi of Sumoto? Are your Onions +4 enough? Is your *tako sembe* enough?

The bad news for you (and your cache of experience points!) is that this will all be over by the time this newsletter reaches your grubby little e-paws (or is it i-paws?). But fear not, you can campaign vicariously through me! I'll be polishing off the old Gahandahar the Barbarian suit I used in last summer's Red Devilfish of Ichinomiya quest (you may remember me as the half Kobold Berserker who slew 4 dire wolves... *with his bare hands!*) and making some slight modifications to become Izanagi, God-King of Awaji! It won't be just the cut onions making the goblins cry! It will also be my scimitar (flaming, +3 for all you modifier fans out there)! You'd have to be lawful *crazy* not to love this!

Jonathan Ruggles reporting (all the news that's fit to print... digitally) ●

Image from gotomycodes.com/myspace-graphics/Fantasy-Posters/dragon-fantasy-3/

The “dou,” the “みち” or the “path” to... enlightenment?

BY RAENA MINA

As with many of the Japanese cultural arts there are specific traditions, rules, steps to follow and abide by in order to do things the proper way. This is seen in some of the names (*chado*, *kendo*, *shoudo*, etc) where the “dou” is the kanji for “way” or “みち, road, path” (道). “The way of tea”, “The way of the sword”, “The way of writing,” respectively. In order to learn anything, you must do so the right way, through hard work and paying your dues. Hearing the ever irritating “fight-o” or “がんばれ” any time a complaint is made or during a *たいへん* situation, hell even the Japanese love-hate relationship with cold and heat, you must “がんばる” and just bear through it, keep trying your best and deal with it. It is this fighting spirit that is really revered in Japanese culture and philosophy.

Perhaps for the *gaijin* mind taking these steps are tedious, or even pointless. In some ways we may see things in Japan that can be done so much faster, easier, and in the end perhaps even better. I'm sure many have been through situations where you think: “Nothing is easy in Japan.” And maybe it's true that in Japan they like it the hard way. But that's why the Japanese are so skilled at what they do. The Japanese are quite a sophisticated culture, and

this is reflected in many of their customs.

If you have ever been to an *ocha-kai* or tea ceremony, I'm sure you've noticed (or were annoyed by) the protocols taken in admiring the matcha bowl, or matcha bag, or incense container, and the steps taken in receiving and passing them on to other guests. Even when eating the “too-pretty-to-eat” sweet and drinking the matcha, there is a proper order to follow. It is hard to see just by looking at a kimono-clad woman, the steps taken in order to wear it. Under all that expensive silk, if done properly, she has a towel wrapped around her waist and gauze covering her breast bones, all to achieve the affect of having a straight, cylindrical torso. Which way the kimono crosses your body, the order of each piece you wear and put on, and from which direction all matter. During my 着つけ (technique for dressing in kimono) lessons, I noticed even the bow has a strict tying order to make sure it always looks a certain way. As a practicing *shoudo* student, I must sit the dreaded *seiza* until I can't feel my legs anymore or until the pain is too hard for me to bear any longer. I must hold my brush at an upright position and keep my left hand holding the bottom of the paper at a horizontal angle at all times.

Yet there is meaning in almost every step taken, and there really is a one right way to do things, no matter how tedious it seems. If a step is missed, a desired look cannot be achieved. Without taking the time to admire the ambience in the tea room, you aren't allowing yourself to experience the relaxation that tea ceremony offers, nor opening your mind to meditation and self reflection. As much as curves are celebrated in the Western world, if you skip out on the towel wrapping and gauze wearing, the kimono just doesn't look as good on, and if you don't tie strings the right way, they get loose or get in the way of the rest of the kimono. At home, I attempted to practice *shoudo* sitting normally and I just couldn't seem to write the figures properly no matter how hard I tried.

Sure there are ways to make things go faster, there are ways to do things easier, but I think we call this doing it “half-ass.” The most important part of staying on this “road” or “path” and doing it a certain “way” in Japanese culture and arts is the philosophy of respecting and honoring all the materials used, putting in effort to achieve quality. Life reflects art and vice versa. Concentration, meditation, reflection are the most important ways to learn things. You wouldn't want to treat your life and people and situations in it half-ass, but respect and meditate, reflect and appreciate them. This is the path to learning and obtaining skills. Maybe eventually, if we stop complaining and listen and think hard enough, we will truly get enlightenment, one of the basic treasures of learning. ●



BY GAIL MEADOWS

When most JETs think of Hiroshima, two places spring immediately to mind: the Atomic Bomb Dome, and Miyajima, the island world famous for its “floating” *torii* gate, which you all have no doubt seen featured countless times as a symbol of Japan.

Of course these places should be at the top of your travel itinerary when you visit Hiroshima — what stay in Japan would be complete without petting Miyajima’s tame deer? — but I’ll also recommend some other parts of Hiroshima-ken near and dear to my heart.

Hiroshima is blessed with a lot of scenic beauty, including both sand and snow. On one end, Hiroshima *ken* enjoys a beautiful coastline along the Seto Inland Sea and a number of nice beaches, many on small islands accessible by ferry.

Further inland, the mountains provide some excellent spots for hiking and skiing.

If you go to Miyajima, I highly recommend taking some extra time to explore the island beyond the *torii*. Climb Mt. Misen or take the ropeway up and hike the rest of the way to the top. The views over the Seto Inland Sea can be truly breathtaking on a clear, sunny day. And if your timing is right, you might even catch sight of some of the wild monkeys (just don’t look them in the eye, lest they feel threatened and decide to pick a fight!). Don’t forget to try the maple-leaf shaped *momiji manju* cakes, since they are the famous sweet of Hiroshima prefecture.

One island that offers a unique “only in Japan” experience is Okunoshima, alternately known as “Bunny Island” and “Poison Gas Island.” During

World War II, the Japanese used a factory to produce poison gas on the island and tested the gas on rabbits. After the war, U.S. forces destroyed the factory and the rabbits were set free. Since then, they’ve taken over the island, hopping around unmolested and happily procreating. A Poison Gas Museum was built to educate the public about the sordid history of the island, and the museum, combined with the booming bunny population, attracts plenty of visitors. As a result, the “wild” bunnies have become quite friendly and tame. Bring a bag of cabbage or carrots with you and you’ll have plenty of bunnies happily bounding up to greet you.

For those who’d like to venture into the mountains to see the more *inaka* side of life, the northwest part of the *ken* offers some excellent hiking trails in Sandankyo Gorge, a

10-mile-long ravine bordered by towering cliffs. There are several waterfalls in this area, including an impressive three-tiered fall. The gorge is particularly picturesque when fiery fall colors sweep the area around mid-November.

Within Hiroshima City, my favorite place to visit in any season, but especially in fall, is Mitaki Temple. Mitaki is among the most beautiful and atmospheric temples I have seen in Japan. It is home to three waterfalls (hence the name 三滝), countless *jizou* statues wearing bright red bibs and hats, moss-covered tombstones of unknown victims of the atomic bombing and a very old pagoda that was moved to the site from Wakayama *ken* after World War II. A hiking path up the mountain leads through a bamboo forest so stunningly beautiful that it took my breath away. It’s an easy hike

to the top of Mt. Mitaki and you’ll be rewarded with an excellent view of the city.

Besides its beautiful nature, Hiroshima *ken* boasts several festivals worth seeing as well, most notably the Hiroshima *Toukasan* (Yukata) Festival in early June, the Saijo *Sake* Festival in mid-October, or any of the number of oyster festivals that take place along the coast in mid-February (Hiroshima is famous as the top oyster producer in Japan). Not surprisingly, the *Sake Matsuri* is a particular favorite among JETs, since for just 1,500 yen you can get a souvenir sake cup and go around tasting as many of the 900 varieties of sake as you can possibly imbibe. Be sure to pick up a box of *Hibagon* Eggs as omiyage if you go — the *Hibagon* being the Japanese Bigfoot that supposedly lives in the mountains around Saijo.

I could go on and on about all that Hiroshima *ken* has to offer, but I hope that these few suggestions convince you that not only should you visit our lovely prefecture, but it’s worth spending a little extra time here to explore some places beyond Peace Park and Miyajima’s *torii*. Oh, and don’t forget to try Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki* while you’re here — you’ll never go back to Kansai-style once you try it! ●

Gail Meadows, a JET based in Hiroshima City, is Editor of Hiroshima JET webzine the Wide Island View (<http://www.wideislandview.com>), where you can find many articles describing the places and events mentioned above in more detail. Lots of information can also be found on Gail’s blog, Lost in Transition (<http://gailsensei.blogspot.com>).

Introduction Lesson Bonanza

PART ONE: Various Ideas and Activities

BY RAENA MINA, BRANDON KRAMER AND CAITLIN ORR
ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN PARKER
(IDRAWGOODART.COM)

Stuck for ideas for that first class in Term 1 with the new students? Your fellow JETs are here to help with some introductory lesson activities...

Guess Where I'm From (Raena Mina)

What I normally do, depending on how much time the teacher wants to give me for the introduction part, is pass out pictures and objects (animals, food, sports, nature) associated with my country and have the students guess where I'm from. Of course it starts out general and gets more specific. Then, if they still don't know, I give them some facts about my country (area, population, languages, etc). Eventually they guess it and then we talk a little bit about what they know of my country. After that, I talk about me, and then it's the

dreaded "question" time. Other than that, sometimes I pass out crosswords or a fill in the blank introductory card about me that they can fill out after we do the introduction of my country and me: that way they try really hard to understand my English and what I'm saying. Depending on time, you can hand out a small questionnaire sheet, where the students can write their name and a hobby or something they like (interesting things hopefully). Then you can collect it at the end of class, maybe photocopy their school photo (if it's available) and use it to help you learn your students by name, face, and get to know a little bit more about them.

Useful Classroom English (Raena Mina)

You can do this part in the lesson following your introduction; however, depending on time, I usually do it in the same lesson. I pass out a "Useful Classroom English" handout with English and the Japanese translation. I read the English in class, then the students pair

up, trying to memorize the phrases (e.g. Can you please say it again?, Can you say it more slowly?, etc.), one in English, the other in Japanese. Then, with one student not looking at the paper, one partner says the phrase in English (or Japanese) and the other partner must say the corresponding phrase in the other language, then they switch. Once they've practiced that a few times, we play a row game (where all students must stand up and can only sit once they answer correctly), I say the English phrase and the students answer with the phrase in Japanese; or the JTE does it in Japanese and the students answer in English. Finally, we all practice the English pronunciation. I find this activity gets the students competitive and really genki, plus it helps you all to communicate in class together and in English.

Paper Airplanes (Brandon Kramer)

First, introduce yourself. Then pass out blank self-introduction sheets to the class. Give them a few minutes to fill out basic information, like their name, middle school club, city they live in, favorite movie, favorite color, or whatever. Then ask everyone to fold their sheets into paper airplanes and get into a big circle. They then throw their planes all around the room, pick one up, and return to their seats. The first student stands up, and introduces the person on their sheet. That person stands up, and introduces

the person on their sheet, and so on until the end. If it returns to someone who has already been introduced, just choose someone else or have that student choose a friend to go next. I usually include myself in the mix and go first, to both eliminate the need to randomly choose a first student and to show them how it's done. Don't forget to teach them how to change the "I's" to "He/She", though!

ALT Multiple Choice I (Brandon Kramer)

Make up a quick multiple choice about yourself, and pass it out to the students. Have them answer the questions right away, guessing the answers. THEN introduce yourself with a brief slideshow or however you'd like, but be sure to include all of the questions/answers in your presentation. How hard they are and how directly you give the answer can depend on the level of your students. Then go through the questions and find out what they chose. I usually just poll the class by getting them to raise their hands to see who chose which answer before telling them the correct one. This keeps them involved, but they don't have to be nervous and speak out on the first

day. I usually give candy or some prize to the person who got the most correct.

ALT Multiple Choice II (Brandon Kramer)

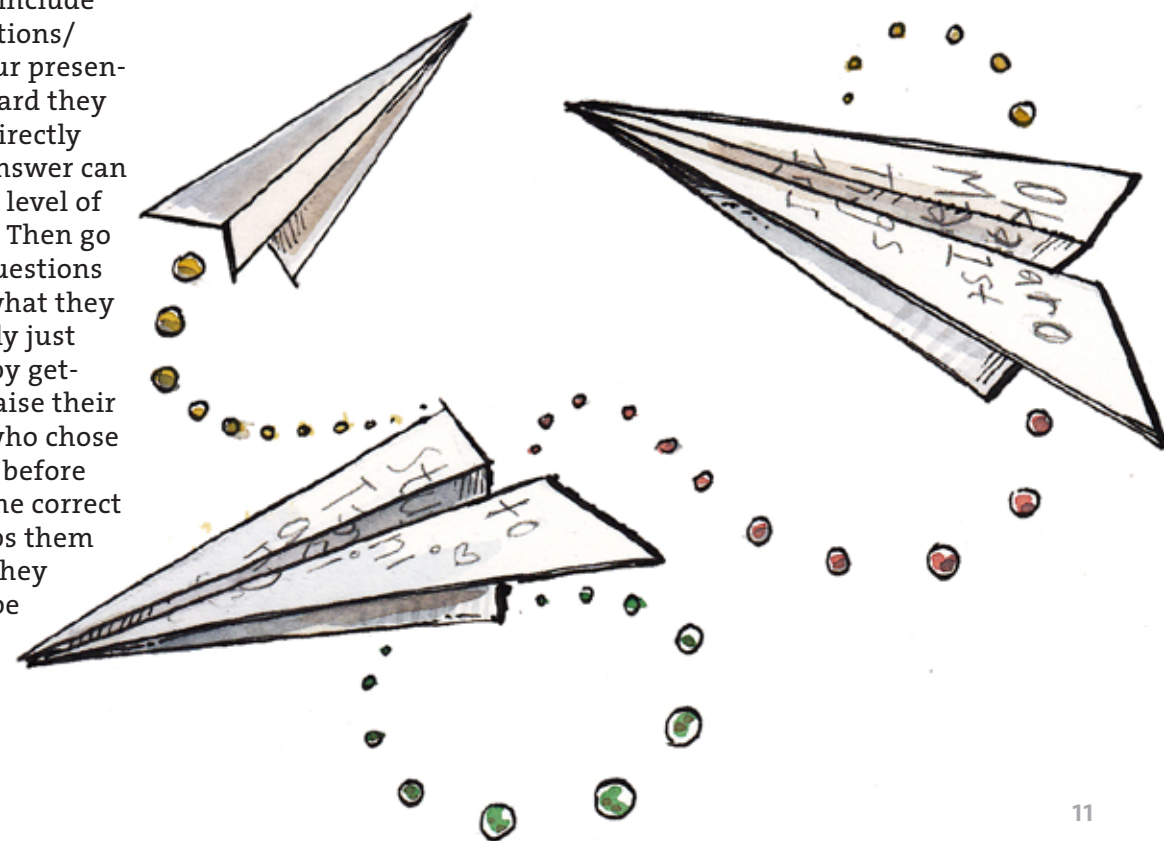
Make a multiple choice quiz sheet about yourself. You will also need a decent amount of fake money. Get the students into groups (about 6?) and pass out the sheets along with a certain amount of money (maybe 10 bills). Have them answer all of the questions. Then go through the quiz sheet, but stop at each question and have each team make a bet by putting a certain amount of their money up front. If they are correct, you double their money. If they are wrong, you take it for the bank. The team with the most money in the end wins a prize. Tip: If

a team runs out of money, you can give them a "loan", putting them in the negative, but giving them the opportunity to still play and possibly come back from behind. Don't tell them about this option ahead of time, though, and keep the loan amount small (maybe 2 bills).

Acrostic (Caitlin Orr)

I'm hoping to try this one out myself, but I haven't run it by anyone yet....but, I want the kids to write their names down vertically and think of an English word for each letter. E.g. My name is Caitlin, I go by Cait though at school, so I'd write something like:

Crazy
American
Interesting
Thoughtful



Introduction Lesson Bonanza

PART TWO: Lesson Plans



BY JOE KOCH AND EMMA NICOLETTI
ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN PARKER
(IDRAWGOODART.COM)

Introduction Miscellany (Joe Koch)

I do nearly the same introductory lesson for all my high school 1st year classes since it seems to work well. I've done this in classes up to 40 students.

1. *Self-introductions* - 20 min: I introduce myself and my country. Big visuals are good. I have a map of my country and blown up pictures of my home town. I have a powerpoint made for the more technologically advanced classes that have a projector. After my intro,

I make every student stand and introduce themselves by saying their name and one personal fact. For example: "Hi, my name is Ryousuke and I like baseball."

2. *Questions and Answers/Hot Potato game* - 15 min: I pass out two stuffed animals. I turn my back and play some music. While the music is playing the students must pass the toys around the classroom. When I stop the music the two students that have a stuffed animal must stand and ask me a question. You could also switch it so you ask them a question, or you ask one student

a question and the other student asks you a question. The students seem to really like this game. All the students want to ask you questions, but you need to give them an excuse with a game like this, or else they just sit there quietly. Oh, and they will definitely, without fail, ask if you have a significant other. Just a heads up. Lastly, pick a good, upbeat song! Usually I use Fatboy Slim's "Rockafeller Skank".

3. *ALT Quiz* - 10 min: Pass out a quiz that covers the info you gave in your intro. Go over the answers on the board. If you have a class that you only occasionally teach but still have to make a final based on material you taught, you can use some of these questions. Just mention that they should keep the paper.

4. *Passport Making* - 5/10min: In all my first year classes I have them make passports which keep track of participation points. On mine, I have a spot for them to draw a picture of themselves and below that is a place for their name, class/student number, hobbies, nick name, clubs, etc. On the other side of the paper is a grid for stamps. They get a stamp every time they answer a question in class. This passport thing absolutely works for getting students to volunteer answers. Again, they want to talk but they need an excuse to. Getting stamps is the excuse.

Hope that gave you some ideas for your first lessons!

Find Someone Who/ Information Swap (Emma Nicoletti)

I use these activities for first year high school students. In their first lesson, students are still getting accustomed to each other: they have come from different junior high schools, and don't know each other yet. The first activity allows students to meet lots of students in the class, and the second activity helps students to get to know the kids sitting next to them. The latter is particularly good if you intend on including a lot of pair and small group work in your teaching program.

1. *Find Someone Who* : This game is very simple. The

teacher says something like, "Find someone who was born in the same month as you." Students walk around the room and find other students born in the same month by asking and answering in English like this—A: "When were you born?" B: "I was born in _____." When students find other students born in the same month, they stand next to them. The group should get larger and larger. After a set amount of time, stop the students and ask each group what month they are born in. If separate groups born in the same month form, join the groups together. You can repeat the game with different categories. I have used the categories such as "the same number of cousins," and "the same first letter of your first name."

Hints to help the activity run smoothly:

- Write the question and answer stem on the board, and have students repeat it before starting the activity.
- Make sure the students understand the category; translate if necessary.
- At the end of each round, count the students in when they give the choral response to what month they were born in. For example, Teacher: "When were you born?"

se no . . ." Students: "March."

2. *Information Swap* : This is a basic interview and presentation activity. Prepare a worksheet that has questions like the following: What is your name? What Junior High School did you go to? What clubs did you do? What clubs do you want to do at _____ Senior High School? Students make pairs, ask their partners the questions on the worksheet and write down the responses. Once students have completed interviewing each other, ask students to make groups of four and introduce their partner to the group. Include an introduction scaffold on the worksheet like this:

This is

[name].

She/He went to

Junior High School.

She/He did

[junior high school club activity] and wants to do

[high school club activity]

at _____
High School. ●



SAPPORO/YUKI MATSURI



Sapporo, being the main city of Hokkaido, is a large, modern city but without the crowds.

Once a year, Sapporo takes advantage of the sub-zero temperatures and creates a wonderful world of ice and snow sculptures. The city holds the Yuki Matsuri (Snow Festival) every year in early February (this year it was held from the 5th to the 11th). For one week you can wander the main streets and see amazing ice sculptures and enormous works of art made from snow.

If you are visiting Sapporo during Yuki Matsuri you will probably want to spend most of your time at the festival. But there are many other great things to see and do. The clock tower has become the symbol of Sapporo and can be seen without too much trouble since it is on one of the main streets. The TV tower is a landmark and for ¥800 you can enjoy views of the city from the 90 metre observation tower. Susukino is the place to be for nightlife, restaurants and love hotels.

If you are visiting during winter and you enjoy winter sports, you must visit one of the many ski resorts. Most hotels in Sapporo have a pick-up bus service which will get you to a ski field and back to your hotel. Niseko is the most famous ski resort

and it has some of the best snow in the world. It also has a rotemburo (an outdoor hot bath) which means after a hard day on the slopes you can relax in the bath while snow falls around you.

The Sapporo beer garden and museum is definitely worth visiting. It is on the site of the original brewery established in 1876 and it was the first brewery in Japan. Free tours of the museum are given from 9am – 3pm. Sample beers and snacks are available for purchase. The beer garden is open from 11:30am – 9pm. They have Ghengis Khan BBQ which is all you can eat for ¥2700 plus ¥1000 for all you can drink in 100 minutes. The beer garden was fun and delicious but be warned that anything you wear will smell of barbecued meat for days!

While in Hokkaido you should try Hokkaido ramen. I tried the *miso* base soup with Hokkaido corn and Hokkaido butter. It was delicious, but there are so many different types it makes it hard to choose. Crab is also a delicacy in Hokkaido and it is easy to find restaurants specialising in crab. The other thing you must eat while in Hokkaido is the soft cream. Hokkaido is well known for its dairy products but I think they have outdone themselves as far as soft cream is concerned. ●



GETTING TO SAPPORO.

Trains – take a shinkansen from Himeji to Tokyo and then a limited express train via Aomori. It can be quite expensive especially if you get a room on the sleeper train. Prices can go up to ¥30000.

Ferry - overnight ferries leave from mainland Japan

Planes - flights are reasonably priced especially if you get a package deal. This is probably the best option considering time and price.

COST

The cost of a trip to Sapporo will vary greatly depending on when you go and how you choose to travel there. However, most travel agencies offer reasonably priced package tours to Hokkaido. During Yuki Matsuri we were able to get a package tour with flights, two nights accommodation at a nice hotel, breakfast and a return bus trip to Niseko ski fields. This cost about ¥45000 all up. This is the most popular time of year to visit Hokkaido which makes it that much more expensive but by going just a little out of peak travel time you can get really cheap packages for three nights for around ¥30000.

The Yuki Matsuri was amazing and I definitely recommend going but just be aware of the price hikes: try to shop around and plan ahead.



BY MIKE SHARP AND SIFTON ANIPARE. PICTURES BY MIKE SHARP.

Braving Okayama's winter chill for Japan's famous Naked Man Festival is never a task for the faint-hearted... even if you're viewing from the sidelines! Fortunately, Mike and Sifton were on hand to bring you dispatches from the war over wooden sticks.

Hadaka Matsuri (the "Naked (Man) Festival") has to be one of the most talked about festivals in the JET calendar and for good reason. Put very simply,

thousands of men dressed in *fundoshi* (loincloths) beat each other to a pulp in their attempts to retrieve one of several holy sticks that guarantee virility for the year (and in one case, a pretty significant cash prize). I somehow managed to miss it during my JET year so when the invitation to Okayama rolled in this time, I jumped at the chance. Given the choice between "participant" and "spectator" however, I soundly ticked the latter. The world really doesn't need to see me in a loincloth.

Hadaka Matsuri takes place mid-February every year in Okayama, two hours or so out of Hyogo by local trains. Following the fireworks to the temple, we saw hundreds of men wearing nothing but *fundoshi* and *tabi* socks swarming the area, locked together in impromptu group

hugs to keep warm. It probably didn't help that they were being repeatedly sprayed with water, which I'm told is to purify them before the festival. Once they had been rinsed, they hurried off again, disappearing into the night along with their shouts of "*wasshoi, wasshoi*" (the equivalent of "heave ho, heave ho", I suppose).

We handed in our tickets and assembled in the standing-room-only spectators' area and watched wave after wave of loincloths cram into a covered area in the middle. Before long, the seething mass had spilled over on to the ground in front and started to fill that too. The main group restlessly surged back and forward, often sending people tumbling down the steps on either side like the proverbial monkeys in the bed. In some cases, the medics would be called in to rescue some unfortunate who hadn't stood back up again in a reminder of how dangerous it was. Eventually, the last of the nine thousand were assembled and after a moment of silence, the floodlights came on, the sticks were thrown and all hell broke loose.

Steam poured out of the pagoda as everybody roared and crashed over one another, and before long the only indication of where the sticks were was which part of the crowd seemed to be most frantic. The "main" stick attracts a cash prize of 500 thousand yen, so you can understand why people would be pretty keen to get it.

Once it was all over, we joined the crowds streaming out of the temple. The naked men

who had managed to untangle themselves limped home, bodies scratched and bruised and big smiles tattooed on their faces. Maybe going through a washing machine of arms and legs is a spiritually uplifting process – who knows? I'm quite happy to take their word for it. Even from a distance, it was a great night and I thoroughly recommend checking it out if you haven't already. It will be one of the strangest things you ever see.

– MIKE SHARP

Two months ago I was talking to my mother and sister on Skype about my upcoming weekend: "Don't worry fam, I won't be sleeping in until four. I'm going to the 'Naked Man Festival.'"

Stunned silence. "Oh..." they eventually said, and exchanged a wary glance. So I explained: thousands of men come together to strip down to their skivvies in the dead of winter, put on a "sumo diaper" and some Japanese-style socks, get drunk, splash each other with cold water, run around a temple, repeat as needed, then fight each other for sticks thrown into their midst by monks. If you catch one you're guaranteed wealth and luck for the rest of the year. "It should be fun," I added optimistically.

My family looked horrified on the monitor. "And you're..." Mom chose her words carefully. "Participating in this?"

"What?! NO! I'm only going to watch!" I realized that only sounded worse, but at least my

family visibly relaxed. "Oh, thank GOD," they sighed. "Well...let us know how it goes!" Wary glance.

Well お母さん、妹ちゃん、it wasn't as exciting as the pictures on Facebook made it look – and by exciting I mean like *Bloodsport*, *Super Smash Brothers*, two-men-enter-one-man-leaves exciting – but it was still a must-see for people like me who don't visit Japan very often.

After realizing how generalized and idiotic my explanation of Saidaiji Hadaka sounded, I read up on it a little so the things I saw in Okayama would make more sense. When I saw one little old naked man being bodysurfed down the street, I figured he had to be the "Shin-Otokoa," the specially-chosen "naked man" that absorbs all the bad vibes from whoever can get close enough to touch him.

I was lucky enough to stand next to the building where men happily marched in arm-in-arm, chanting "*wasshoi! Wasshoi! Wassh-EEEEEEK!*" as they were splashed with icy water. Unfortunately, I spent most of the evening stuck in the crowd getting stall food or behind hundreds of elderly citizens with step ladders and giant tripods, so I only caught a few glimpses of a crowd of steaming, naked men moshing back and forth. Literally, you could see clouds of steam hanging over them, like localized fog. For a moment or two I was temporarily jealous of their warmth.

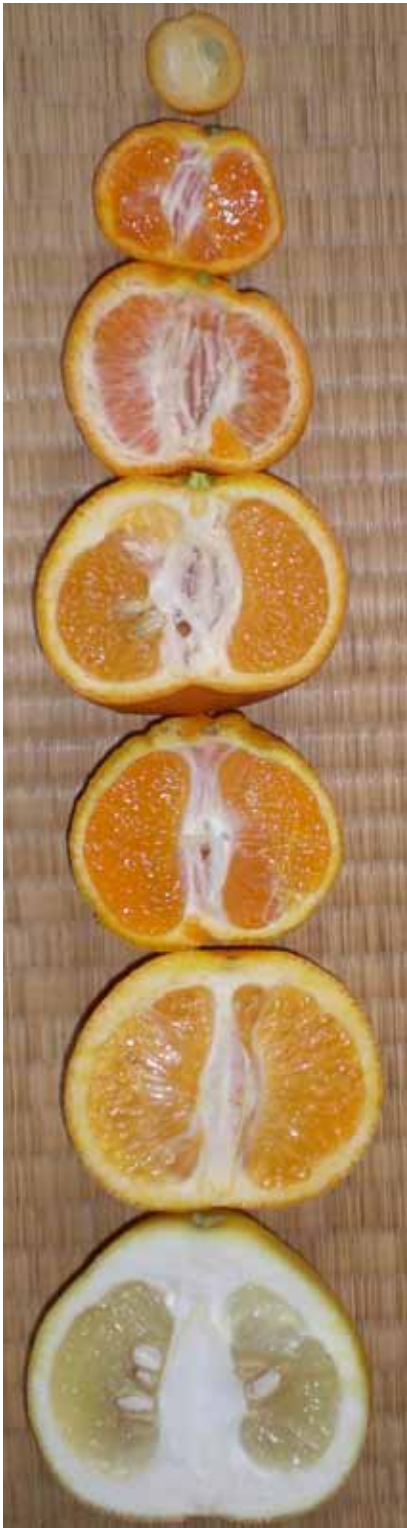
Then the lights went out and sticks were dropped. I didn't feel so jealous after that. But instead

of a massive melee, about eighty percent of the naked crowd suddenly gave up and stopped moving altogether. People picked up their step ladders and tripods and started leaving. The fight for sticks was significantly short – one stick was moshed out by a whole company with a game plan. Rumour has it that the other was re-claimed as the fully-dressed winner was leaving the temple and got mobbed.

In the end, I guess Saidaiji Hadaka is not about leaving with a lucky stick, but the camaraderie of naked dudes toughing out the cold and posing for photos afterward. Maybe it is more fun if you participate. Brave it if you dare and let us know how it is, because I promised my family I wouldn't. ●

—SIFTON ANIPARE





from top to bottom:
kinkan, mikan, ponkan, iyokan,
dekopon, hassaku, buntan

Know your ponkan from your mikan

BY HANNAH HUNT

As an ALT coming up on two years in the middle of nowhere, I feel I’ve become somewhat inured to the frequently asked, ‘*Hannah-sensei, what do you call (insert random object here) in your country?*’ question. Often, I leave these conversations with the proud knowledge that in the short time it took to answer the query, I have helped - nay, *educated* - this poor Japanese man/woman/child, perhaps equipping him/her/it with the knowledge they need to become the answer to Japan’s internationalization crisis.

OK, not really, but it is undeniably nice to know stuff. Yet I find that, roughly once a week, someone asks me this question in response to Japanese foods/traditions/customs and I actually have no idea what the correct response is. In this situation, where after an awkward pause the questioner’s eyes narrow, as if to say ‘*What good are you if you can’t instantaneously provide the correct translation for mochizuke in English, Huh? Huh?*’ I feel like a terrible ALT/all-things-gaijin

expert, and as my self-confidence circles the drain, my shame and self-disgust drive me to Wikipedia for a little research. I have decided that forewarned is forearmed, and I’ll share my discoveries here with you so that you might succeed where I failed, learn from my mistakes, and have many life-affirming conversations with Japanese people about...random stuff!!

Anyway, this week’s topic came about when Wednesday’s *kyuushoku* came with a quarter of a *ponkan* orange, and the question from the Vice-Principal; ‘*Hannah-sensei, how do you say ponkan in your country?*’ As I had had this conversation twice at Elementary School the month before, I recognized immediately that citrus fruit was an, admittedly unlikely-sounding, area in which Japanese-Foreign Relations could make huge leap forward. To this end, here is a primer on the citrus fruits of Japan (with bonus conversational phrases and a handy review system so you can fake an opinion)!

The humble kinkan (金柑)
Known as the *kumquat* in English (via Cantonese), this is the baby of the citrus family in Japan, and means ‘golden orange’. If you haven’t eaten one before, they’re by and large impossible to peel so you eat them with the skin on. To analogize, they are the M&Ms of the citrus world. They are deliciously sweet and sour, but beware the ridiculous number of seeds within.

Rating: 4/5 pips.
The deliciousness of a ripe kumquat is always slightly tainted by the number of seeds lurking within.

The ubiquitous mikan (蜜柑)
If, by this point in your time in Japan, you don’t know what a *mikan* looks or tastes like then I sincerely doubt you are getting enough fruits and vegetables in your diet - remember fibre is important, people! This is confusingly what we call a *satsuma* in the West - sweet and commonly found in your local *suupa*. Bonus point: Usually seedless!

Knowledge level-up: The *mikan* fruit is unaffiliated with *Basketball Hall of Famer* George Mikan.
Rating: 3/5 pips. Popular is boring. Also, they bruise quite easily.

Ponkan (ポン柑)
Ponkan has no name in English! They are a bit bigger than *mikan*, with a more fragrant taste. However, they are quite fleshy, and have less juice but more seeds.

Knowledge level-up: The most widely-grown mandarin in the world, according to my sources (someone on the Internet said so).
Rating: 3/5 pips. A staunch middle-of-the-road citrus. I also like saying the word, *ponkan*. *Ponkan*. See, it’s fun.

Iyokan (伊予柑)
Again, no name in English. This baby is a famed product of Ehime Prefecture, although I don’t love it, personally. The flavor is a bit watery, and not worth the effort of getting through the peel and seeds.

Knowledge level-up: Also known by the name *anadomikan* (六門蜜柑)
Rating: 2/5 pips. A lot of peel, not much taste, and SEEDS. Need I say more?

Hassaku (八朔)
Bloody hell, that’s bitter. Yuck. No seeds, but that can’t save its reputation. If you find one of these in your school lunch, force it onto one of the small children.

Rating: 1/5 pips, but only out of pity.

Dekopon (デコポン)
I’ll say it now: *dekopon* are awesome.. This fruit was invented in 1972 as a hybrid between a *kiyomi* and a *ponkan*. The resulting fruit is large and ugly; sweet and seedless. Interestingly, the generic term for the *dekopon* is actually *shiranui* (不知火) - the brand name *dekopon* was merely a portmanteau term - *deko* (凸), referencing the uneven bump on the top of the fruit, and *pon* from *ponkan*.

Rating: 5/5 pips. Interesting to look at, sweet and seedless. My favorite.

Buntan (文旦)
This is a *pomelo* in English, and is a cross between a grapefruit, a tangerine, and a kitchen sponge: It’s a slightly sweet grapefruit that must sadly be pried from the white, fleshy fortress in which it is encased. The flavor is zesty and refreshing, although the rind must be avoided at all costs as it’s BITTER like *hassaku*. It also has quite a lot of seeds.

Rating: 4/5 pips. A nice change from the grapefruit, but *mendokusai* to eat.

Talking about...
So, next time your opinion is solicited with regards to citrus fruit, you can feel confident that you are fully informed, and that whatever you say will be received with admiration and awe when all eyes are on you. But... how to express your feelings in Japanese? Here are this month’s key phrases:

<i>amai desu ne.</i>	Isn’t it sweet?
<i>ponkan wa [your home country’s name] dewa arimasen.</i>	We don’t have ponkan in [insert home country here].
<i>aa, suppai naaaaa.</i>	Holy moly, that’s sour!
<i>yappari, dekopon ichiban ne.</i>	Obviously, the dekopon is the best, right? ●

GETTING TO KNOW RANDOM JETS



THE BASICS

Name: Robert Miller

Please call me: Rob

School and Location in Hyogo:

Aioi High School, Aioi

How we know you: I was the guy that sung "House of the Rising Sun" at Yashiro.

Birthday: 4/4/84

Born and raised: Southampton, England

Family: A supportive Mum, Dad and sister.

University and Degree:

Computing at Exeter.

Other jobs that you have had: I'd worked in financial software for four years before coming here.

Travels: Not much. Around Europe on my motorbike mostly.

Hobbies: Martial arts (it's what got me interested in Japan), photography, all things steampunk.

Staying another year? Yep.

FAVORITES

Food: Cakes

Sports: Rugby, kendo

Music: Anything with soul. Jose Gonzales, Sia, Elliott Smith

Shop: Places that sell weird clothing.

TV Show: *Spaced*, *Dexter*, *Black Books*

Movie: *Fight Club*, *Spirited Away*, *Hot Fuzz*

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement:

Teaching kids back home to pass a martial arts grading.

Best life experience: Playing Beatles on a guitar to a room of drunk Japanese with them all joining in.

Motto to live by: Say "yes" more. I remember when... I got out of university and thought I knew everything.

What are you drinking? I'll take a Moscow mule from the Wake Iranian pizza place please.

Who would you like to meet? New people with an idea to share.

Why should we elect you President of the World? I look good naked.

Best thing about Japan so far? The people. I've never met so many people from here and abroad who were so willing to take the time to get to know you.

If it was my last day on earth I would... Sit on a beach and drink to the sunset.

Interesting Fact about me: I once got bored so I built a mobile phone into a glove so I could pretend to be Inspector Gadget. I called it the Glone.

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Everyone learns differently. Vary how you put across information.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... know that they are up to something.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? My bribery involves not picking on students that are trying hard that lesson.

Funniest Story involving a student: I have a special needs student who wants to be my friend, but he doesn't know much English, so every Friday he will ask me how tall I am.

THE BASICS

Name: John Cappa

Please call me: J.J. (or Sauce, if you'd like to help me relive my college days)

School and Location in Hyogo: Up north at Wadayama H.S. and Tajima Agricultural H.S.

How we know you: I write the Hyogo Times film reviews, but you should know me as the guy who thrust in your face while yelling "FUUU!!" and "OKAY!!" on Halloween.

Birthday: July 20th

Born and raised: In the same house my whole life, on Long Island, New York (but I'm not a stereotypical Long Islander, I swear!)

Family: 2 parents, 2 sisters, and a slew of pets that had tragic, permanently scarring deaths (ask me about the suicide hamster sometime)

University and Degree: Majored in Russian History and Japanese Language at the University of Notre Dame

Other jobs that you have had: Lifeguard at a pool for senior citizens and pizza *chef* at the restaurant in the basement of my college dorm

Travels: I have been to 23.5 of Japan's 47 prefectures. I plan to visit all of them before I leave.

Hobbies: Snowboarding, traveling, reading, studying Japanese, watching movies, training to become a ninja, making people laugh, talking too much

Staying another year? Yes. Hopefully my go-between knows this and won't try to order a new ALT again this year.

FAVORITES

Food: My mother's spaghetti and meatballs (alright, I guess I am a

bit of a stereotype, but she's not even Italian!)

Sports: I'm a wrestler at heart, so I love watching *sumo* and doing *ju jitsu*. I'd like to add *judo* to my repertoire as well.

Music: Anything sung in falsetto, which is why I love metal...but also why I love Hirai Ken. Oh, and I'm on a major Andrew W.K. bender right now.

Shop: TSUTAYA

TV Show: *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *America's Next Top Model* and *LOST* (which I still watch only because I've already invested so much time in it)

Movie: *Hana-bi* and *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Hands down, no question, coming to Japan. It was the logical next step that I was determined to take after college and when I was finally accepted, I spent the next half an hour of my life screaming, "I'M GOING TO JAPAN!" at anyone with ears. (Walls have ears too, right?)

Best life experience: 10 days of hitchhiking in Kyushu taught me an awful lot about Japan, myself, my friends, and what I want in the future. I think, in a way, it was when I became a man.

Motto to live by: "Superman isn't brave. He's smart, handsome, even decent. But he's not brave. Superman is indestructible, and you can't be brave if you're indestructible." Be brave; Be a Batman.

I remember when... I was about 15 kilograms heavier. It feels so good to have lost it. I also remember when the metric system and things like *kilergramms* meant nothing to me.

What are you drinking? Something frozen; my dad trained me in the fine art of

blending dangerously strong *and* delicious margaritas and daiquiris.

Who would you like to meet?

Beat Takeshi and Jack Black

Why should we elect you

President of the World? Because I believe in the party, the party party party. You cannot kill the party, long live the party. You wanna party, I wanna party, so I'm gonna get this party starty.

Best thing about Japan so far? Japan is a country of little pleasures. You can go anywhere, do anything and still have an amazing experience. If travelers actually had the time to leave places like Tokyo and Osaka, they'd see what Japan is really all about.

If it was my last day on earth I would... be well prepared for the zombie apocalypse.

Interesting Fact about me: Secretly, I'm a bit naïve.

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: Don't be overly hard on kids that are noisy while you are explaining something. It's much easier to

harness the energy of a student that won't shut up than to get a quiet class talking.

When the class is TOO QUIET

I...try to make the next lesson I teach that class the best I've ever taught. Changing on the fly has backfired on me way too many times, usually to the embarrassment of the JTE, which makes me feel terrible.

Bribery for students...YAY or

NAY? Yay, but remember that students are like dogs. If you give them candy too often, they will expect it every time. Stagger your bribes enough so that they work hard without being let down when there is no reward for it. (Thanks, Pavlov!)

Funniest Story involving a

student: I guess it's a toss-up between a boy that tried to convince me his wang was as long as a gardening hoe and the male student I literally picked up and threw into the girls' bathroom, hoping he might finally stop grabbing my butt during class. It worked. ●





Sukiyaiki Western Django

BY J J CAPPA

English dialogue in a Japanese movie or television drama is rarely anything short of painful, especially when it **SOUNDS... something...like...THIS...EVEN...FROM...native...S P E A K E R S.** Therefore, forcing a full cast of Japanese actors to deliver lines in English for an entire film must be a recipe for disaster. The result of executing such a foolish scheme *should* be, at best, a campy gimmick that distracts audiences from appreciating the director's vision. This risky venture might even produce dialogue so poor that the film becomes unwatchable. For some reason, director Takashi Miike took that chance with his 2005 film *Sukiyaiki Western Django* (スキヤキ・ウエスタン ジャンゴ) and somehow miraculously got it right.

Sukiyaiki Western Django is about a small community that has fallen victim to outsiders' greed for gold. During the "gold rush" in "western" Japan, prospectors traveled from town to town chasing gold *myths*. No one bothered panning rivers for gold flakes, relying instead on bedtime stories about buried treasure. In a flashback, we learn that prospectors invited themselves into one such town because of one such rumor, and dug up every holy site and

ancestral burial ground they could. To make things worse, gangs started showing up next; first the Reds, then the much prettier Whites. They kicked out the prospectors, but instead of continuing the hunt for buried treasure the gangs bided their time until someone else found it for them. *Sukiyaiki Western Django* begins when the gangs' pillaging, murdering and womanizing has recently been replaced by laziness and waxing philosophical. It is the ideal setting for a nameless gunslinger to ride into town and start putting holes in some freeloaders.

The name *Sukiyaiki Western* is a play on the "spaghetti western" genre (westerns produced by Italians) that became popular in the sixties. Unlike spaghetti westerns, however, *Sukiyaiki Western Django* does not attempt to pass off location shooting in Italy as the Mexico-U.S. Border. Instead, Miike creates a setting that acts as the foundation for a "sukiyaiki" western. For example, the first shot of the town shows a worn *torii* gate with a dead man hanging by his neck from its crossbeam. The *torii* asserts the Japanese setting, yet the wear and tear on the gate and the corpse suggest that this town has the same

character as the rough American west. This theme is reflected in the characters' words and actions; although the man with no name rides into town with **guns** on his hips, he is warned against becoming a *yojimbo*. The Reds aim to become more like Englishmen while the leader of the Whites teaches (with little success) his men to stop samurai swords with their hands while blindfolded. A sukiyaiki western is a new, interesting genre that is simultaneously a western and a *jidai geki* (period drama/samurai film).

The language gimmick works well in *Sukiyaiki Western Django*, but some exceptionally poor English pronunciation broke the illusion from time to time. The first time I heard it, it was jarring. ("Did that guy forget his lines for a minute?") The second time, it was getting ridiculous. ("Did he just tell someone to 'keep it in his pants' in *that* tone!?!") Eventually, however, it started to make sense; not only did Miike want to blend samurai and cowboy culture together for *Sukiyaiki Western Django*, he wanted to mock them both. What seemed like bad acting at first was actually the result of a conscious effort turn clichés into gags. In doing so, Miike skillfully mixed samurai films, spaghetti westerns and humor together to create something between a parody and a genre film: an irreverent homage.

Ironically, the only flaw I saw in *Sukiyaiki Western Django* was one of the two native English speakers in the film. One acts as a translator for the mayor, which is necessary because something

has rendered him incapable of speaking **any** language intelligibly. The translator is no more an actor than a prop, and his humorous role is as short-lived as the mayor. On the other hand, Quentin Tarantino plays a minor yet crucial role; he is a hardened cowboy that fathered one important character and trained another. This complaint is mostly about the casting decision; although Tarantino is a skilled director, his acting ability is severely lacking. His two appearances in *Sukiyaiki Western Django* are no exception. His line delivery varies from bad to offensive and left me wishing Miike had chosen someone else. Fortunately, the character is redeemed when he shoots Katori Shingo (my least favorite member of SMAP) in the face, but not before he temporarily disrupts an otherwise a good film.

Sukiyaiki Western Django features an almost all-Japanese cast and an almost all-English language script. The filmmaking is stylistically superb, yet it is full of unintended humor, awkward dialogue and delivery so poor it would ruin any other film. However, for every accidental joke there is another with a genuine punch line; each bit of campy, B-movie dialogue has a purpose. Before long, I found myself so immersed in *Sukiyaiki Western Django* that the language barrier became a subconscious thought; I ceased watching a movie about Japanese people speaking English, and started watching a western; a *sukiyaiki* western.

Thanks for watching! ●





Ramen Walkin' to Sansan Ramen, Nishinomiya

BY ANDREW TAMASHIRO

If you're a ramen freak like me, you've probably picked up the latest Kansai issue of *Ramen Walker*, a magazine that comes out every year (I think) in various regions throughout Japan highlighting ramen places you should check out. It's packed with info, great pictures, and even has coupons for 10% discounts, free drinks and so on.

Anyway, thanks to *Ramen Walker*, I dropped by two places recently: Hakata Ramen Makoto (博多ラーメン真実) in Himeji and Ramen Dokoro Nidaimé Sansan (ラーメン処二代目さ

んさん) near Nishinomiya Station. Seeing as I liked Sansan waaay better, I'll talk about that one.

They had a special ramen running: meaty spicy *miso tonkotsu* ramen (肉みそピリ辛とんこつラーメン...couldn't think of a better way to translate that) for 800 yen, and that's what I was there for. I ordered my ramen and a small *chashu* pork bowl and started salivating straight away. It was only AFTER I ordered that I noticed the free super size (大盛無料-oomori muryou) signs all over the place. Too bad, so sad.

The food came out and looked exactly like the

picture in the magazine. A full half-boiled egg, chopped in half with its slightly runny yolk just barely staying within the wobbly confines of its hardened white. Rich ground beef and accompanying oil spreading slowly throughout the broth. And large chunks of fatty white *chashu*.

The ramen was as good as it looked, packing a bit of *tantanmen*-like flavor into a *tonkotsu miso* broth that had depth and a rather pungent flavor without being overpowering. I'd definitely come back and this time bring a bigger appetite and opt for those extra noodles! ●



A Ramentary Glossary

Some common food terms often used at ramen restaurants (not always available, obviously)

大盛り/おおもり/Oomori:

Large serving. If you're lucky you'll see 大盛無料 (oomori muryou, or free super sizing)

ごま/Goma:

sesame seeds, often available in a can or bottle on the table for personal adjustment of flavor

特盛り/とくもり/Tokumori:

Special large serving, this is often double or more the regular size

チャーシュー/Chashuu:

Marinated/bbq/roasted pork – I assume it's from the Chinese *char siu* for bbq pork, but this is the default name for those pork slices you get in ramen. Integrated into things like チャシューメン (*chaashumen*, extra pork ramen) and チャシュー盛り合わせ (*chaashu moriawase*, basically a plate of pork, maybe with some *negi* on top)

替え玉/かえだま/Kaedama:

Noodle refill, a necessity for big eaters.

チャーハン・焼きめし/Chaahan or Yakimeshi:

Fried rice

「何々抜き」/「なになに」ぬき/(whatever) nuki:

Without “whatever”, this is what you say when you want them to take something out before serving it.

SOUP FLAVORS

塩/Shio: salt

醤油/Shoyu: soy sauce

豚骨/Tonkotsu: pork bone

味噌/Miso: fermented soy
There are many “double soups” (sometimes written as Wスープ) that feature a fish, chicken or plain *dashi* stock mixed with one of the above 4. Combining two of the main 4 is also prevalent, with items like *shio tonkotsu* ramen having already made it abroad.

面麻/メンマ/Menma:

bamboo shoots, yellow, narrow and flat, kind of like a small piece of chewing gum. A bit chewy, adds great texture to a fairly “soft” dish

ねぎ/Negi:

Welsh onion/green onion, often diced, but sometimes only thinly sliced

もやし/Moyashi:

bean sprouts, white, thin, with a bit of a crunch.



Kicchiri Kitchen: Kimchi Jigae

BY TRAVIS LOVE

I have an addiction to spicy food, and with hay fever and allergy season coming on, nothing makes your sinuses drain like a good spicy kimchi dish. Since I'm not a doctor, I can't tell you if spicy food is actually good for you, but this soup is certainly tasty. What's more, it can be made more or less spicy as your heart desires. Let your tastebuds guide you. While I love kimchi plain and fresh, this soup works best when you're dealing with old, old kimchi. Like the stuff you bought back in November and subsequently forgot. Kimchi used to be stored in clay urns underground for months at a time, so it doesn't spoil, just gets stronger. Don't throw out what you can still eat! Let's go!

Kimchi Jigae, Japan-friendly version (チゲ)

2-3 Tbsp sesame oil (ゴマ油)
1 package firm tofu, cut into

cubes. (I use やき豆腐)
2-3 cups of rank, sour kimchi
1 pinch dashi powder or two cubes of chicken bouillon
1 dash soy sauce or 1 tsp miso paste
2 cloves garlic, peeled & chopped
1 pinch sugar
2-3 green onions, cut into strips

1. Heat the sesame oil in a dutch oven or large pot.
2. Add the kimchi and garlic and saute for 5 minutes. For extra-spicy soup, add some of the leftover juice from the kimchi bag/container.
3. Pour in enough water to thoroughly cover the kimchi.
4. Add the dashi powder/bouillon, sugar, and soy sauce. Stir everything up, bring the pot to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Add the green onions and cook for five more minutes.
6. Taste the soup. Adjust the

flavor until you're satisfied. Use more soy sauce or miso paste, more sugar, or more kimchi juice. If you have Korean chili pepper paste, use it.

For a meatier soup, take some strips of pork belly, cut into bite sized pieces, and brown them on the bottom of the pan before adding the kimchi. For a more vegetable-filled soup, slice up and add some eggplants, piman, or whatever other non-leafy vegetables you like, about halfway through step 4. Be careful not to crowd the bowl, though.

Serve with rice. Hey, it's a Korean dish, what did you expect?

Serves 4-6. ●

*Questions? Comments?
Suggestions for future dishes?
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