

# Hyogo Times

September 2007



<http://hyogoajet.org>

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## Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Tori Lowe

Design Editor: Emily Duncan

Contributors: Angela Nicholson, Brandon Kramer, Brenda McKinney, Joe Benno, Rebecca Tucker, Heather Whited, Julie Rodriguez, Jeff Weese, Wendy Boon.

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

*Submit by the 15th of each month to:*

**submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com**

*<http://hyogoajet.org>*



## From the Editor



So by the time you read this, your classes should have started. Perhaps you have even had the chance to enjoy the ever-riveting Sports Festival.

You might find it a bit hard to get into the swing of things after such a long break- I know I do. But finally your life will have a bit more meaning, you will have a reason to get up in the morning, and each day you can go to sleep in the glow of contentment of a job well done. Hopefully. Otherwise, it's going to feel like a long time until Christmas! Keep in mind that by the end of this semester, we will be cowering under *kotatsu* or going snowboarding on the weekends. So I hope you did everything you planned to in the summer!

The *Hyogo Times* is here to help you through the next semester. This month, we have a helpful article on how to protect your self from mukade, the creepy centipedes found around

these parts. There are also some great travel ideas for the succession of long weekends coming up in the next couple of months. Plus, Brenda gets into the nitty-gritty of dating a Japanese man. Woot!

I am extremely happy to say that I am currently recruiting some new contributors for the *Hyogo Times*, so next month will see even more new names and new articles. I don't know how this makes you feel, but I am pretty bloody excited, I tell you what!

Have fun teaching your classes! I find the students are a bit of a handful straight after the summer vacation, particularly the first years (senior high), who are at their most.... teen-aged... at this time. Oh puberty, how cruel you are to all around.

*Tori*

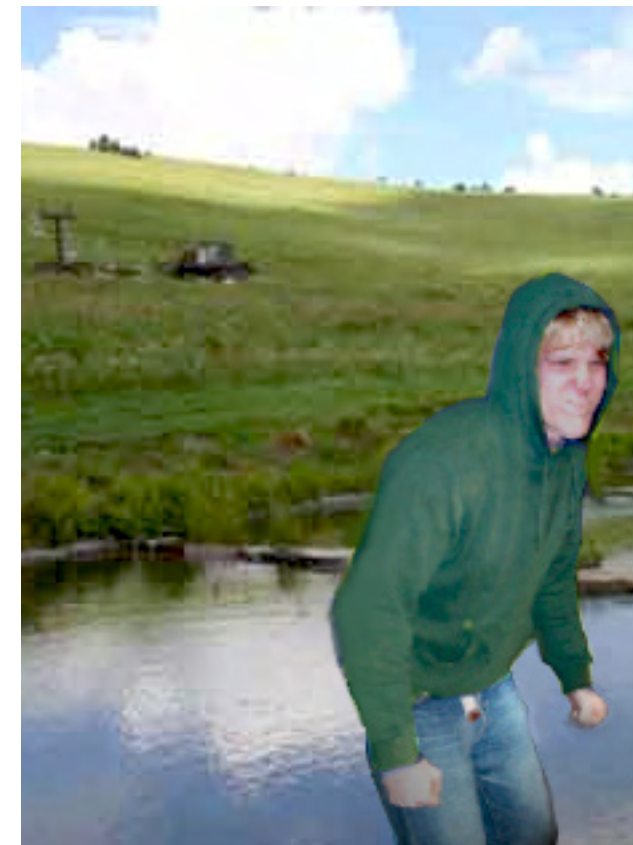
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## From the PR

*vacation finished  
the kids need deodorant  
perhaps I do too.*

I hope you all enjoy the haiku I have created, but more importantly, I hope you are enjoying the fall term of school! I know I am always filled with joy at the thought of teaching all my students everything they forgot from last year.

After a long summer holiday spent mostly at my desk, this new term is a welcome breath of fresh air. I can once again joke around with my students and do my best to break them from the strict curriculum of their English text books. The only question that still remains is what I will do on the weekends...



*many great events  
created for your pleasure  
we all can enjoy!*

This is a very exciting time of year for all of us. With the Back to School Beer Garden behind us, a surfing trip, a scavenger hunt, and more 3 day weekends than we know what to do with, there is no excuse for weekend boredom in Hyogo! Our committee has worked hard to plan exciting trips and events for you, so go and have a great time!

Say hi to your mum for me!  
Brandon



# August Reflections

Wendy Boon

I think that august is so miserably hot because you wish for it to pass so quickly. And if it was beautiful outside why would anyone want the time to fly? August is always the end of something you're used to: complete comfort, a fun summer, a fling...and the beginning of usually something dreadful: a job, school...reality. You beg for the hot summer days to pass and the cool fall breezes to come because by then you'll be used to a new life, a new way of making it through your day. I remember a few years ago I was going through a rough patch and just wishing that time would get on so I could reach the next chapter of my life. And my mother told me to "never wish your days away, cherish them." A bit corny, yes, but wise advice nonetheless. And during times like these when I want to wish my days away so badly I choose not to. I will myself not to think of Christmas coming and going home to see familiar friends and faces. Instead I decide to



cherish the moments when I'm so frustrated I want to get the first bus to Kansai International Airport. The annoyances may be because I don't know which packet in the grocery store is cheese and which is butter, or when I can't communicate with a student how many siblings I have, or when my vice-principal and I are on two totally different pages because of the language barrier, or I don't know which bus to take because there is no English in a mile radius of where I stand. I choose to giggle at these moments, cherishing the fact that....I'm here. August has been a rough month. Completely alone in a city, away from everything I know, waiting and tempting a new life to start. But as I walk my streets, hop on and off buses, push a dozing Japanese woman off of me on the train, and eat yet another creature of the sea when I thought I ordered vegetables, I decide to stay and conquer this country. But mostly... to conquer myself.

# BILLY WAS A DANCER

A excerpt by  
Joe Benno

Billy was a dancer. Well actually this isn't so true, Billy just loved to dance and he considered it to be his one true love. He isn't actually very good at dancing, nor did he put any effort into learning dance styles or any particular moves. But when the music starts to play, he is the first onto the dance floor (or the lounge room floor or any floor where there is room to move when the music plays) to trip the light fantastic, body flailing with the occasional click of his heels or his fingers to the all powerful rhythm.

He loved to dance but there was another fetish of his that consumed him more than 'feeling the groove' and this was murder, or as he called it "coordinated assumption of final conscious ascension" which he likes to abbreviate to KAFKA. He likes this little twist to the name because he thinks his modus operandi is quite Kafkaesque. He also likes knowing what Kafkaesque means because it makes him feel smart, or learned (fully emphasizing the *ed*). The truth of the matter is the only Kafka book he has ever read was *The Trial*, despite this he is more than willing to launch into a diatribe about why this was Kafka's finest work. However, if someone was foolish enough to engage him, whilst he is elucidating the finer points of *The Trial*, with a comment about *Der Prozess* he would simply laugh, lambaste them and continue.

Just because Billy thinks that he operates in a Kafkaesque style, it doesn't necessarily mean it is true. In reality he is just another cold-blooded murderer who commits his crimes without compassion or any sense of remorse. He wouldn't be considered an intelligent psychopath, as his IQ despite being higher than average is still only rated at 120. He could be considered a wily killer though. He never uses poisons or conventional weapons. He does not kill those who have slighted or antagonized him, nor does he kill anyone he has ever met, so as to lower

the risk of there being a link to him if the death is indeed considered a crime.

At times he is opportunistic, and at others he is cold and calculated. He does not kill for the rush; the sense of God-like power, the sexual arousal or any of the other reasons that are usually attributed to serial killers. He simply does it for the thrill of confusion. That moment when someone realizes that they are going to die and there is nothing they can do about it, that mixture of fear, uncertainty and sometimes relief or serenity.

It is for this reason that he first discovered photography. He enjoys being there at that moment of epiphany, and he realized that he also enjoys the process and mechanics of taking and developing photos. Billy believes that it is much like the process of taking someone's life and liberty. There is timing, composition, framing and a hundred other variants to take into account in the initial setup and then actually developing the photos and bringing them to fruition requires another skill set entirely. He only ever takes photos of 'the moment' though; the aftermath is never pretty and tends to make him a little sad. He doesn't like to feel sad, none of the people in his photos ever look sad. He has quite a collection now and one day Billy wants to put on an exhibition. Of course he wouldn't tell anyone that the people are dead. Most people wouldn't understand how he suffers for his art.

*fin*



# Japanese History and Culture Lesson

## Meiji Ideology and the Search for a National Identity

Tori Lowe

*Meiji Nation Building: Part Two of an epic three part series....*

The Meiji leaders centralized the polity, begun developing the economy, and rearranged the social classes, but realized that it just was not enough- the people also had to be “influenced” and their minds and hearts made one’ (Gluck 1985, p.3). So the Meiji government not only had to create a state, but bring the ideology of this state into the population’s consciousness- they had to also create a ‘nation’. A nation differs from a state in that it is a social concept rather than political. A nation is defined as ‘a large group of people who perceive themselves [sic] to have a common bond based upon a common ethnicity, language, history, set of behaviors and values’ (Stronach 1995, p.xvii). A sense of nation is a Western concept, and relating it to a non-Western country has one basic fundamental contradiction: it requires adopting alien institutions and ideas in the place of traditional ones, but celebrating old traditions in order to establish commonality and goals that set the nation apart from others (Tanaka 1994, p.25). The Meiji government had to formulate, and then apply, strategies that would build a sense of Japanese national identity, whilst emulating the West.

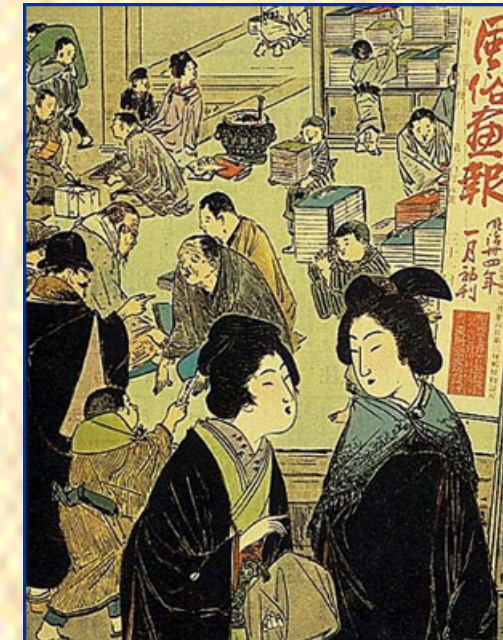
As the nation is a Western concept, the Meiji government copied its early institutions and ideas directly from the West. The slogan *bunmei kaika* was related to the Westernization of Japan- it was used to encourage the Japanese people to adapt Western customs (Morris-Suzuki 1995, p.762). Major concerns in the early Meiji period were with how to master the ‘secrets of their (Western) enemies wealth and power’, rather than protecting their own traditions and culture (Daikichi 1985, p.51). Articles four and five of the Charter Oath, which was the statement of progressive principles issued by the new Meiji leaders in 1868 stated: “Evil practices of the past shall be discarded and [all our actions] shall follow the just way of the world. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to broaden and strengthen the foundations of imperial rule” (Tipton 2002, p.55).

The Meiji government tried to overcome international political inequality by attempting to bridge the cultural gaps between East and West. Rejecting Japanese cultural heritage in favor of Western models was seen as a way to improve the international position of the Japanese nation. A strong nation would be able to maintain its independence in times of Western expansionism.

In the face of Western expansionism, the Meiji government believed that it only had one alternative: “Conquer or Be Conquered” (Anderson 1991, p.97). Retaining independence for Japan was of major concern to the Meiji government. Unlike other Asian countries, Japan was not colonized, but became a colonial power itself. In other Asian countries, ‘nationalism’ emerged as a reaction to colonization but Japan’s nationalism was associated with efforts to overcome the economic and military gap between Japan and the West (Mackerras

1995, p.189). The slogan ‘*fukoku kyouhei*’ was incorporated into national policy with the aim of playing an important part in promoting economic growth, as well as being an outlet for ever expanding nationalist sentiment. The military was important to the nation in terms of conveying a sense of Japanese power. When the conscript army was successful against China in 1894-1895, nationalist propaganda was proliferated through schools and print media (Anderson 1991, p.96). By leading Japan into the leagues of colonial powers, the oligarchy created an image of itself as an authentic representative of the nation that the Japanese were gradually becoming to imagine themselves as members (Anderson 1991, p.96). The military was a state institution that was able to contribute to a more defined sense of ‘national identity’.

Another state institution invaluable to creating a sense of national identity was the school



system. A top Meiji bureaucrat- one of three<sup>1</sup> that were holding the reigns of the emperor system- Kido Takayoshi, was a pivotal figure in advocating a school system through which to educate the population (Daikichi 1985 p.55). During the feudal regime, much of the population was deliberately kept in ignorance (Daikichi 1985, p.55) as it helped in suppressing the lower classes. However, after visiting America, Kido decided that implementing a school system was the only way to improve ‘social conditions and uproot social evils’ (Daikichi 1985, p.55). Kido believed strongly that the only way forward for Japan was to have all citizens educated. In 1872, the Fundamental Code of Education was established, which made schooling compulsory (Nagai 1971, p.36). It was not immediately successful, and many different school systems from different countries were trialed and then discarded.

It was not until the late 1880’s and early 1890’s that policies of indiscriminant ‘borrowing’ of Western institutional models were replaced with ones that had been adapted specifically for Japan’s own particular conditions and needs (Tipton 2002, p.55). The shift from Western models and the slowdown of institutional borrowing was necessitated by the limited

<sup>1</sup> Okubo Toshimichi, Kido Takayoshi and Ito Hirobumi were all “reform” and “enlightenment” bureaucrats that were extremely influential during the early decades of the Meiji era, when there was much discussion over what a ‘modern Japan’ should be like (Daikichi 1985, p.52).



influence of Westernization outside of the urban areas, which highlighted the superficiality of Westernization in daily life and customs. Japan could not be unified with such great cultural divisions between the city and country. The success of Western models in Japan attempt establish new institutions and Meiji government was to create a nation with its own national identity, it had to develop models specific to Japan.

An important concept to the nation is 'culture'. Cultural borrowing is highly problematic in the case of creating of a nation. National culture is an essential ideology to the integration of the nation state. If Japan were to become a nation in its own right, it was important to develop and encourage its own cultural characteristics. Even the strongest advocates of Western 'enlightenment' could not deny that it was important to maintain a cultural distinction between Japan and the West. An influential figure in relation to retaining Japanese tradition whilst engaging in Westernization was Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), who wrote many books 'educating' the Japanese population in Western ways (Beasley 1987, p.30). Like many other leading intellectuals of his time, he was originally in favor of adopting Western customs and leaving Japanese tradition behind. However, Fukuzawa soon realized that no matter how 'civilized' Japan became in Western cultures, Japan could not escape 'the scorn of the white people' (Beasley 1987, p.31). It became evident to Fukuzawa that the practice of cultural borrowing was not the way forward in all cases. In the first edition of his newspaper 'Nihon', Fukuzawa commented: 'We recognize the excellence of Western civilisation. We value the Western theories of rights, liberty and equality; and we respect Western philosophy and morals... Above all, we esteem Western science, economics, and industry. These, however, ought not to be adopted simply because they are Western; they ought to be adopted only if they contribute to Japan's welfare' (Beasley 1987, p.32). Fukuzawa used his writing and publications as a means to reach the 'average' Japanese citizen, and was a pivotal figure in the design of Meiji ideology.

Next month: *The Constitution and the Emperor.*

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# English Sensei Spirit

Angela Nicholson

## Battleships!

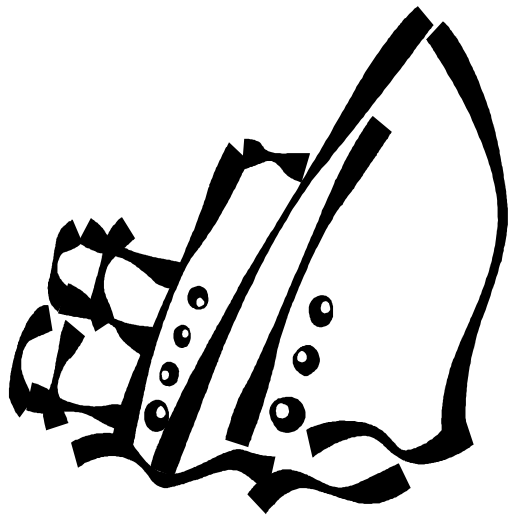
Here's a game I use at least once every year without fail with my 1st Year High School Students. Some of you will know this game from your childhood, but this is the 'Let's have fun with English version.' The object of the game is to sink the other players' ships. The ships are set up on a grid, and players take turns in trying to "hit" the other player's ships. The ship

must be hit in each square it touches for it to sink. The first player to sink all of the other player's ships is the winner. In this version, you have parts of sentences down one side of the grid, and another part of the sentence along the top (see worksheet). You can change it to review or teach any grammar structure you like but here's a basic outline for a lesson.

Topic	Activity Details
Warm-up (10 min)	* Use any warm up activity you like. I sometimes ask simple questions and get the students to expand on their answers. Start with questions like, "Have you ever ...?"
Invitation Battleships (30 min)	* Introduce the main sentence structure for the game. You can do this by role playing a little with the JTE... if you're students are really low level get the JTE to explain the grammar. * Hand out the Battle ships sheet and explain how to play the game- demonstration is probably the best way. * Get the students to draw their three ships on their sheet and tell them it's a secret and not to show anyone. * Break students into pairs and have them start the game.
Role-play (5 min)	* Check that the students have understood the invitation expression by getting a few students to demonstrate the line as a role play or get them to invite you somewhere
Closing (3 min)	* Finish up however you normally would!

An Example Game of

## Battleships!



**Question:** Would you like to (go to the movies) on (Sunday)?

**Answer:** Yes, I would love to.  
No, I'm sorry but I'm busy.

	The Weekend	Sunday	Saturday	Tomorrow	Monday	Friday
Go to the movies						
Meet me for coffee						
Come to my house for dinner						
Go to Universal Studios						
Go to a concert						
Go to Osaka						
Go out for dinner						

Draw three ships on your sheet:

**Ship 1** = 1 square long   **Ship 2** = 2 squares long   **Ship 3** = 3 squares long

# Getting to Know Random JETs



**Music:** Hip Hop, House, Latin, Elvis, anything off of my satellite radio  
**Shop:** REI (aka, Recreational Equipment Incorporated), Zappos.com, Amazon.com  
**TV Show:** *Battlestar Galactica* (so nerdy!), *Lost*, *Law & Order SVU*

**Most Proud Achievement:** Is yet to come!  
**Best life experience:** My Elvis Vegas Wedding with pub crawl reception  
**Motto to live by:** Life takes no prisoners.  
**I remember when...** I once walked into a whore house with a chihuahua....

**What are you drinking?** I wish I was drinking a margarita. Ah, sweet booze on my tongue. I have this great bottle of Calzadores (I'm pretty sure you can't get that here) that will have to wait for my return. The tragedy! Plus, you can't get decent limes here, so might as well wait.

**Best thing about JET so far?** Random Japanese people...I love 'talking' to the old ladies on the corner...they don't know what I'm saying, I don't know what they're saying, but somehow it works. I also love the people who ride their bikes with dogs/babies in the basket, and chicks who dress in the most scandalous outfits....to go to the beach, grocery store, etc.

**Why should we elect you President of the World?** I will one day take over the world, and if I like you, your death will be quick and painless....

**Funniest story involving a student?** I was once doing punnet squares (aka genetics) with a girl and we figured out that she would go bald! I also once had a student ask me "Ms. Tucker, why do dead skunks smell like pot?" Another kid asked me "My mom slept around alot, and I have blonde and brown hairs on my head, so could I have 2 dads?" Ah, the state of the American educational system....

**My top tip for teaching:** Never yell...yelling is failure. Unless you are yelling out some funny random stuff...in which case, yell away! Also, always plan ahead, but don't get too wrapped up in following your plan. Murphey's law will happen!!

**When the class is TOO QUIET I...** Like to tell random stories of mayham and mischief of others....not sure if these kids will 'get' my sense of humor!

**Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY?** I'd bribe anyone if I could get away with it...But I am a cheap-ass, so not too often...

**Name:** Rebecca Tucker

**Please call me:** Anything you want, but don't call me late for dinner!

**School and Location in Hyogo:** I live in Kakogawa, but work at Takasago HS

**How we know you:** Probably by my loud and obnoxious voice

**Birthday:** 26 June

**Born and raised:** St. Louis, MO, USA

**Family:** My husband Steve and our 'children', 2 dogs (cookie and tasha), 2 cats (kimchi and sully), a chinchilla (Jake), and miscellaneous other critters

**University and Degree:** I have classes from 5 universities, so lets just go with degrees! BS Forestry from the University of Missouri, and a MED in Teaching and Teacher Education from the University of Arizona

**Other jobs you have had:** I was in the Army for 4 years as a communications officer, I worked for Home Depot Corporate in the buying office (why the hell did I quit THAT job??!!), and I have had so many other miscellaneous jobs...my favorite was working as the late night quickie mart clerk on campus...SOOO many drunk people!!

**Travels:** I have been to every continent except Antarctica, but I have only been to 35 States in the US. I'm not leaving the country for years after this

**Shumi wa nan desuka:** WTF??!!

**Favorites:**

**Food:** Chocolate

**Sports:** Rugby, baseball

**Name:** Kasarine-sensei

**Please call me:** Kate

**School and Location in Hyogo:** Nandan and Nushima JHS, down on lovely Awaji!

**How we know you:** I lectured, and gave out poo stickers at this year's Yashiro. Or you know me from Awaji.

**Birthday:** January 2

**Born and raised in:** The PA/MD border in good 'ole USA

**Family:** Two parental units, an older brother and sister, a younger brother, and three younger sisters. Yes there are seven children, and yes it does blow all of my students' minds.

**University and Degree:** Chatham College Pittsburgh, double History/ Art History.

**Other jobs you have had:** Gettysburg Tour guide, Movie Theater lackey, and Blockbuster monkey.

**Travels:** A little bit of Europe, a little bit of America, a little bit of Asia. I'm working on expanding it all to a lot of traveling.

**Shumi wa nan desuka:** Photography, art, eating and beating the hell out of people on Mario Kart DS.

**Favorites:**

**Food:** Everything, but especially Jabenero crisps and cheddar cheese.

**Sports:** To do- swimming; to watch- ything else

**Music:** I have notoriously bad taste in music. My mp3 player was banned from my car on the Golden Week road trip.

**Shop:** The Cute store in Jusco. Everything there is just so....gosh darned cute! Plus you can buy poo stickers. Rainbow poo stickers. Rainbow poo stickers, with glitter.

**TV Show:** *The Venture Brothers!*

**Movie:** *Zoolander*

**Most Proud Achievement:** Passing and Graduating College.

**Best life experience:** Living abroad.

**Motto to live by:** If you don't like it, change it, and if you can't change it...go with the flow.

**I remember when...** the question "how many licks does it take to get to the center of a tootsie pop?"

was the most important thing on my mind.

**What are you drinking?** Saori Tea, and I must admit, it's rather nasty.

**Best thing about JET so far?** The people. Both Japanese and foreign. And *takoyaki*. Can't forget that.

**Why should we elect you President of the World?** Because there are times when you just need a good laugh, and if I am President of the World, I will give you that good laugh, every second Tuesday of every month. Promise!

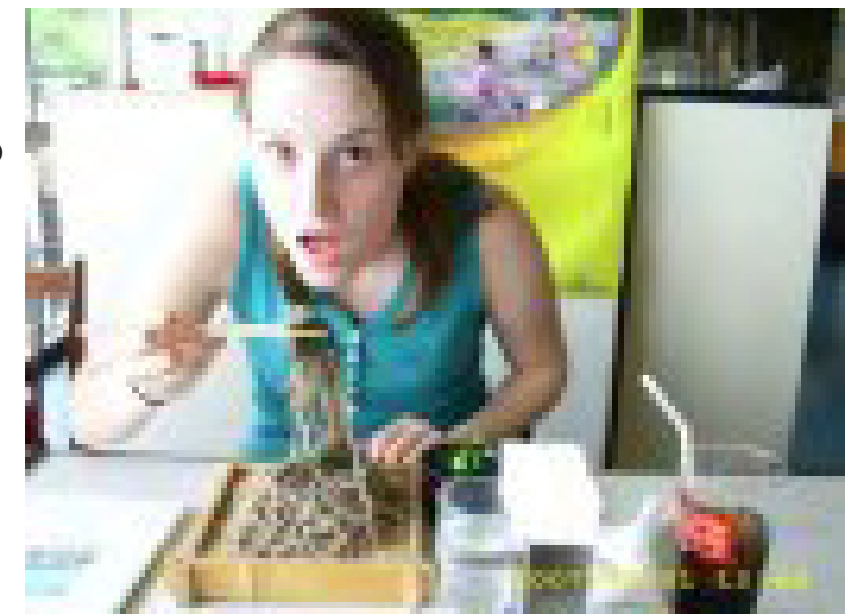
**Funniest story involving a student?** The time my JTE and I were walking to class and one of the bad students came down the stairs and "accidentally" dropped his pants in front of us. You would never think that a 15 year old boy would wear blue leopard print underwear!

**Other interesting trivia:** I teach at the largest and smallest JHS in my city. I can touch my nose with my tongue. And I once ate an entire duck in one sitting.

**My top tip for teaching:** Purposely make a mistake. Then fix it loudly. The kids love it when you screw up, and it keeps them awake.

**When the class is TOO QUIET I...** play games that involve either the possibility of injury, or groups running at top speed towards to blackboard.

**Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY?** YAY, yay, yay, yay, yay! My kids will jump through hoops for a Hello Kitty stamp.





# ***Ironich Chef***

## *Summer Cooking*

Today, Ironich Chef is pulling out all the stops and not only giving you something to make, admittedly not dinner though unless you want ice cream for dinner... but also something that's simple and fun to do with your super-excitable ESS club. One would think Ironich Chef was becoming a nice person, what with all this multi-purpose duality. One would think Ironich Chef is trying to encourage you to do your job properly. One should probably stop thinking. Today's recipe is Home-Made Ice-cream without an ice-cream maker!

Now sure, you can go to the conbini and pay for an exceptionally cheap, yet delicious, cool ice-cream, but humor Ironich Chef here. This is more about the fun of the making **and then** the eating and if you want to get all spiffy, you can make all kinds of wacky flavors.

### *Home-made Ice-cream without an ice-cream maker*

This project calls for ice, salt, sandwich sized Ziploc bags, and a large Ziploc bag big enough to hold the small bag, the ice and the salt. You'll need to wrap the large Ziploc bag in a couple of plastic grocery store bags, since it had a tendency to leak. You also want a towel to hold the very cold bag as you shake the ice cream.

Now, knowing you all like Ironich Chef unfortunately does, this is definitely a project which should be done outside or in the bathroom as there is potential for no-fun cleaning time, or if you are the perfect slob and you don't care if you get ice-cream on your ceiling, by all means go ahead and shake away indoors.

**1. Make and chill the ice cream base**  
- Make sure your ice-cream mix is well-chilled - preferably overnight. Here is a basic recipe, but if you are feeling particularly creative, you can google for a different one!

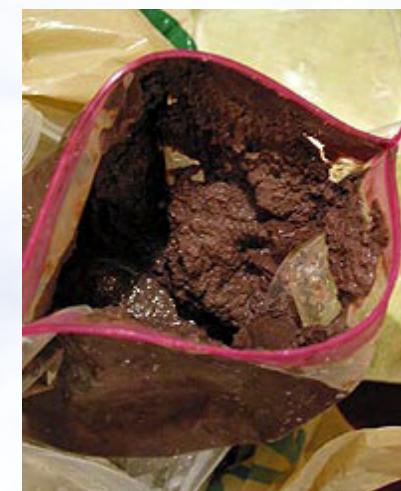
### ***Basic Ice-Cream Mix***

1 cup of cream  
1/2 cup of milk  
1/3 cup sugar  
1/4 tsp vanilla essence  
Extras such as nuts, choc-chips, coffee powder etc.

**2. Bag up ice cream mix, plus ice and salt** - Put no more than 2 cups of the ice cream mix in the small baggie and seal securely. Fill the large bag halfway up with ice, then pour in about 1/2 cup salt. Mix it around, then put in the small size bag. Make sure the smaller bag is covered with ice.



**3. Shake, shake, shake** - Seal the larger bag securely and place it in a couple layers of plastic shopping bags. Shake or rotate the bag for at least five minutes - preferably 10. Carefully! Get moving! This is probably the first lot of exercise that you've had in weeks.



**4. Open and check** - Open carefully to avoid getting salt in the inner bag. The ice cream should be in a soft mass by now - if not, close up again, add some ice and shake some more. Move like you really mean it now, not in the half-assed attempt like last time.

**Tip:** Turn the little bag inside out into a large bowl, carefully, to get all the ice cream out. Carefully. Remember Ironich Chef is warning you to be careful, because while Ironich Chef would find it endlessly amusing that you got salt in your ice-cream before you got to eat it, yes, it would totally suck after all that hard work.



# *Get the Great Divide*

Rebecca Tucker

I am a closeted ex-member of the United States Army. In America, I am proud of my service to my country, but when I am abroad, more often than not I try not to bring this fact up in public. In fact, I try to divert attention away from anything vaguely having to do with America, because when my homeland inevitably pops up in conversation, the Iraq war will be about ten seconds behind.

Everyone wants to know how you feel. “Do you hate Bush? Do you hate the Iraq war?” I think it’s some sort of a test. If you don’t have a self-loathing of your own national identity then there must be something wrong with you, as if you’re not to be trusted if you can’t America-bash along with the rest of the world.



It’s such a complicated issue that I can never put all my thoughts into words very well when someone asks me on the spot. It seems like someone asks me what I think about American foreign policy when I am preoccupied with something more immediately important to me (like getting another beer) and I either come off as a super-liberal or a war-monger.

This is really what I want to say when someone says “What are your thoughts on Iraq?”

I will freely admit that I thought we were right when we invaded Afghanistan. When we invaded Iraq I feared for all of the soldiers going over. But, like most Americans, I felt that there was a great moral imperative to seek justice for the victims of September 11th, and to assure that this would never happen again.

We were a people fearful of the unknown terrorist threat but determined nonetheless to lay claim to vengeance. At the start of the war, there was overwhelming public support for the invasion. We thought the Iraqis would welcome our intervention, and indeed, the pictures of jubilant people celebrating in the streets by overthrowing statues of Saddam seemed to confirm our assumption that the Iraqis were happy to see us. For a time, all was calm in Baghdad, and America was lulled into a false sense of security. As Iraq descends into the chaos of civil war, most Americans are dissatisfied. A lot of us still think we made the right



decision to intervene, but we are angry about the way the war was and is being fought. Americans grow increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of progress in Iraq. We are tired of seeing our young men and women come home disfigured or in body bags. We are tired of spending billions to the detriment of our own health care and education systems, and we are tired of hearing about the endless carnage on the news.

Today, the great burning question consuming public political debates and private citizens’ conversations is how to proceed. Should we bring the troops home and risk the conflict further engulfing the region in turmoil, or should we see the job through and honor the commitments we have made? Thus we find ourselves a house divided. The blue-state liberals (including most of the JETs you know) demand immediate withdrawal, and the red-state conservatives demand that we honor the sacrifices already made by bringing some semblance of law and order to the Middle East before we leave.

Most Americans though, probably simply feel weary. Almost all of us have friends and loved ones in Iraq, or Afghanistan, or some other far-off corner of the globe, and we’d like to see them back. Like everyone else, we are human. We are tired of worrying about Iraq, and we’d like to get back to our lives; to paying bills, dance recitals, job

hunting, watching the big game on TV, and all sorts of other things that form the nexus of life for most ordinary folks. Iraq is simply too far off and too ambiguous a threat for us to focus our attention there forever. We are ready for this chapter in the book of US history to end, preferably with our dignity intact.

I know that’s not what you wanted to hear, but thanks for asking my opinion anyway.

## **For Further Browsing**

Combined Public Opinion Polls  
<http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>

The Liberal Media View  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/topics/topic.php?topicId=1010>

The Conservative Media View  
<http://www.nationalreview.com/>

BBC on Iraq  
<http://search.bbc.co.uk/cgi-bin/search/results.pl?scope=all&edition=i&q=iraq>

Al-Jazeera  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/55ABE840-AC30-41D2-BDC9-06-BBE2A36665.htm>





# Life as a First Year JET: **The Arrival**

Heather Whited

We left the shelter of Tokyo orientation and headed off to our Japanese homes on a Wednesday afternoon. Everything about Tokyo had been safe, from the nice detailed schedules to the planned meals, to mass of English speakers with smiles always ready to help. Even the weather had been easy on us. Rain had slipped in with the airplanes and cooled things down, but on that morning when the Hyogo JETs followed our PA to the bus, it was full on Japanese summer. We all sweated waiting for the train and tried to fan ourselves while juggling luggage and impromptu snacks brought from the shop just outside the station. On the train, I sat next to an Irish boy who swore that he never thought it could be this hot anywhere, ever. I sympathized. I'm from Tennessee and even I was uncomfortable. We settled in our seat on the (thankfully!) air conditioned bus and with a flash of green as we rolled past the mountains and hills, we were on our way to Hyogo.



and hills, we were on our way to Hyogo.

The other JET going to Himeji and I were the first introduced to our supervisor, within seconds of being lined up in the order the new arrivals were to be presented. He'd made a sign for us, he said, but left it in the car by accident. Sure enough, when we got into the back seat, we saw it on the passenger side with our names on it and "Welcome to Himeji".

In my apartment, my two big red suitcases were waiting for me by the door. Food the previous ALT hadn't been able to take with him was waiting for me in the fridge. He was apparently a fan of beer and fruit. I was surrounded by appliances that I knew there was next to no chance I'd remember how to use after the initial explanation we were rushed through before dinner. It was a good thing I was so tired that night and didn't have a chance to think, otherwise I'm not sure I'd have been able to sleep. When I woke up, I couldn't remember how to turn the air conditioner down. As I pushed every button I couldn't read and realized that jet lag had woke me up too early to knock on anyone's door and ask for help, it hit me that I was really in Japan.

The feeling wasn't what I was expecting, which had been unadulterated excitement. This feeling was much more real. It was peppered with curse words as the AC still wouldn't budge and I started to sweat. Hadn't they talked about this at Orientation? It was something I'd smugly thought wouldn't happen to me: culture shock. I didn't think people got it so soon, but I'm an overachiever, so I had to be the first, I suppose. Luckily for me, I remembered how to work the shower, so I abandoned the air conditioner

remote for that and getting dressed for my meeting with my supervisor later that morning.

In the midst of all the great food and excitement and new experiences of my first week, there was a lot I hadn't anticipated. I was hotter than I'd thought I'd be (myself and the Irish boy), I was lonelier than I'd thought, more confused than I'd thought and more frustrated by the confusion than I'd expected. I found on my first day that my job for the first few weeks would be to teach adult education classes downstairs in my apartment building with some other ALTs and that I'd go to my school later in the month. One of the ladies in the class approached a fellow instructor one afternoon and invited her to a festival in a town a few hours away that she was going to a with a friend.

Thankfully, she accepted and extended the invitation to me and the other new JET. Not really knowing what to expect, I accepted the invitation and was ready to go on the afternoon of the trip.

About half an hour into the excursion, the car stopped at a rest station and the driver (my student's friend) fanned herself to show how hot she thought it was and asked if we wanted a drink. It was the first of many, many times that day that I was shown such incredible generosity from these two ladies that I hardly knew at all and could honestly barely speak to.

When we arrived in Nara, that Japanese sun was once again showing us just how strong it could be and we followed our hosts through the deer park to the biggest Buddha in the country and later, all around the city. We had dinner at a hole in the wall curry place that smelled of incense and served only one delicious dish. We were taken to cold green tea and dessert, which we had at a table on the floor. This continued until night fall, when what we'd came for finally happened; a display of lanterns that surrounded



the streets and rivers. I took pictures with festival goers in traditional garb, asking their permission and thanking them with the few words of Japanese I know. It was late when we headed home

and I was exhausted and felt the sweat that had dried on my legs and back. It was the best time I'd had since I'd been here and I realized that this was the other side of culture shock; the awe that comes from discovering the unfamiliar and the fascination with the kindness of two women so proud of their country that they would take us with them and share this experience with two people ready to discover Japan.



# A Guide to Fortifying Against MUKADE

Julie Rodriguez

That time of year when the mukade come out to play is upon us once more. It's time to batten down the hatches and get a mukade proof home BEFORE they set up nest inside your place. I've lived in an old home and had everything from roly-pollies to a snake slither past my legs while I sat on the floor so I'm familiar with, and HATE, the battle against nature during Japan's warmer months. May I present to you, my guide to building an island fortress against mukade.

## Know your enemy!

Mukade are fast moving and aggressive predators that eat everything from small bugs to small mice. They usually prefer moist places or areas of high humidity. They like to shelter or hide under things and are mostly nocturnal. They don't sting like bees rather, like scorpions, they have poisonous claws behind their head which they inject venom into their pray to paralyze or kill it.



For more info, look here:

<http://animal-world.com/encyclo/reptiles/information/centipedecare.php>

**FIGHTO!** *Make your home undesirable to mukade!*

**\* Exterminate all your bugs!** Remove their food source: bugs. Clean your place SPOTLESS! Set off a bug bomb or spray in every corner, around every door jamb and under every crevice for roaches etc... Show no mercy. Rolly-pollies (pill bugs) might be cute and harmless, but they are food for the beasts. Spray repellent spray for bugs regularly to keep normal bugs away. Coat the spray on thick around entrances and exits to your home. Sadly, there isn't a repellent for mukade.

**\* Traps!** In addition to spraying, set out the STICKY roach traps under everything and a few out in the open. (The ones I use come in a teal colored box and have lovely cartoons of roaches stuck in glue). These will catch remaining roaches and bugs. Don't throw them away as soon as a roach is caught. They stay sticky and useful for quite a while. The caught roach can act as bait for a mukade. I have caught a few mukade, albeit only 3 to 4 inch long little ones, in these sticky traps since they too can't escape the stickiness.

**\* Seal your fortress!** Most of the homes that have mukade problems are old, drafty Japanese style places. Along with the annoyance of not being insulated, these

places are full of cracks and holes and openings that let the nature in. Get some sealant from a home center and seal the cracks by the flooring, windows, walls, ceilings, everywhere! In places where it can't be sealed (gaping holes by the floor of the genkan or drains), secure a hard wire screen over the hole to keep them out. Don't ignore those drains since they are often just a hole to the underside of your house and an entrance they use to get in. Put foam insulating tape around your doors as well.

**\* Keep it dry!** Mukade like warm and humid environments, so keep your place dry!! Buy lots and lots of dry pet buckets and place them all around your home, at least one in every room. Place 2 in your bedroom for added security when you sleep. Dump the water and replace them with new ones as soon as they are near full to keep the dryness. This is also great to fight mold.

**\* Keep it clean!** It's hard, I know, but keep your place spotless and organized. Nothing on the floor; nothing for them to hide under. Be able to see all your available floor space and vacuum regularly.

**\* GET OFF THE FLOOR!** Perhaps the most important is to get off the darn floor in the first place! Get a raised western bed and keep NOTHING under it. Instead, place a sticky roach trap under there. I've caught a mukade UNDER my bed before, but never in my bed ... knock on wood. When you sleep, don't let any of your blanket touch the floor so they can't climb up it for easy access.



Also, think 'island fortress'. Your bed shouldn't touch or be near any walls as mukade can climb walls and so being against a wall defeats the purpose of being off the floor. By this logic, they can climb a bed... yes. But that's why we hope they go for the bait in the sticky trap first.

**\* Added security for you room** (if you have an AC). In addition to the dry pets, raised bed and clean floors in your bedroom, go for one level up in security and comfort. An hour or so before bed, seal off your bedroom and turn on your AC. Let the room get cold, dry and comfortable. When you go to bed, set the timer to turn itself off in an hour or so and go to sleep. This dry cool environment will be undesirable for the mukade once they start stirring in the night. By the time your room is as warm as the rest of your house, hopefully the sun is coming up and they hadn't yet found a way into your fortress or up your bed.

While there is no magic medicine to make mukade go away, a little precaution and common sense will go a long way. Good luck!



# Izu Hanto

Jeff Weese



*Between the middle of September and the end of November, there are four 3-day weekends that are screaming to be taken advantage of! If you want to begin to explore the depths of Japan this is the time to get out and do it! The big cities are great...you can take on Tokyo or Osaka in full-on gaijin style...but if you want to see the hidden gems of the country, you're going to have to leave behind the lights of Shinjuku and Namba and head off on the roads less traveled, well at least less traveled by gaijin!*

There is a little peninsula South West of Tokyo called Izu Hanto that is full of charm, history, great seafood, fun beaches, and onsens galore! The access point to the peninsula is through Atami: which is not where you want to get off, regardless of how many Japanese tourists disembark here! It is an overpriced Japanese

tourist town. If you want to truly experience the Japanese inns, you can order dinner and breakfast (*shyokuji*) which will be homemade and fresh guaranteed...the only thing to keep in mind is that there is no menu to choose from, you get whatever was caught or picked on that day! If you're not adventurous enough to trust grandma's random but delicious cooking, Shimoda is a large enough town that there are plenty of eating options. So how do find these *ryokans*, *minshukus*, and restaurants? Shinguya is an immaculately clean and very charming *minshuku* run by a very cute and huggable grandma/grandpa couple. The style is a very pleasing mix of Western and Japanese décor and the views from the rooms are stunning! You can contact them directly at 0558-22-0555 or use the *Minshuku/Ryokan* reservation service at 0558-22-8424. If you stay at Shinguya and you opt out for the meals, ask them to show you how to get to Nakagawa Restaurant (It's one of their faves!). For about 2000 yen you can taste the freshest seafood including platters of sashimi, giant goldfish (*kinmedai*) marinated in a sweet soy sauce, or a plethora of other delicious seafood options.

Your time in Shimoda will no doubt be consumed quite quickly with all the fun and interesting things there are to do! There are two excellent beaches, Shirahama to the North and Ohama (Kisami) to the South. The waves are great for body boarding, surfing, or just getting taken for a ride all over the beach. There are beach huts there so you can relax and eat some yakisoba out of the sun, have an ice cold beer and/or chuhai, or rinse the salt and sand off your now sun burnt body.

Back in the town, the Ryosen-ji area is home to the Black Ship Art Gallery, Ryosen-ji Treasure Museum, and the Ryosen-ji temple itself, which is set on a beautiful mountain hillside, and is full

of fascinating bits of American and Japanese history. Learn of the tragic life of Okichi-san, view the different depictions of Commodore Perry, and swing by the erotic Buddhist art and sculpture gallery all under one roof and for a mere 500yen! Hopefully you have some time left over to make a quick trip up the cable car (Nesugata-yama) which you can board just East of Shimoda Station. Make sure your cameras are charged because at the top there is nothing but breath taking views over all of Shimoda and the bay stretching all the way out to the Pacific! The RT cable car ride is going to set you back 1000yen, but you also are given the chance to see Aizenmyououdou Temple which apparently is a good place to go if you are looking to get married or pregnant! OR....it can easily be skipped.

If there is one thing you should definitely skip in Shimoda, it's the Black Ship Bay Cruise. It will cost 900yen for a 20 minute ride on black ship that is a reconstruction of the original Black Ship the Commodore Perry sailed to Shimoda on. It only sails around the bay and doesn't allow any better view than you could get from the top of Nesugata-yama.

When it's finally time to leave Shimoda behind, you can venture back the same way you came down (via Ito) or head across the peninsula by bus to Matsuzaki. The bus ride will cost you about 1200yen and will wind you through deep valleys of lush vegetation and towering mountains. Upon arrival in Matsuzaki, the bus terminal also serves as tourist information. You can leave your luggage, pick up some maps, and get directions to the bicycle rental shop just over the bridge where a full day rental will cost you about 1000yen. It's quite enjoyable to ride around and look at the collection of some 200 traditional houses scattered through out the city, all with the signature diamond shaped tiles set in plaster. You can also visit a number of nearby onsens, cool riverside cafes, or the interesting

port/beach area where jet skis are available for hire.

From Matsuzaki, the next logical stop would be a town just to the North called Dogashima. If you've made it all the way to Matsuzaki, you can't not stop in this little seaside town. The dramatic rock formations are beautiful and you can even climb up some of them and have a soak in an onsen right on the edge of a cliff overlooking the very blue Pacific Ocean (Sawada koen Rotemburo is the name of that onsen).

Eventually you will need to start heading back to the main train lines and the best way to do this is by bus to Shuzen-ji. It will cost almost 2000yen for the 1 1/2 hour bus ride, but just before you pass through the sleepy town of Toi, you can catch stunning views of Mt. Fuji if the weather is right. Upon arrival in Shuzen-ji, freshen up with a ice cold wasabi flavored soft cream (it's actually pretty good if you like wasabi), grab a bite to eat, have your last dip in the

famous onsens (Shuzen-ji Onsen) of Izu Hanto, and catch the train (the Izu-Hakone Tetsudo line) back up to Mishima where you can change to a JR train to head in whatever direction calls you next.

To access this phenomenal peninsula, you can do it on the cheap by taking the night bus to Tokyo and back tracking for about 13000yen RT or conveniently, Mishima and Atami both have Shinkansen stations. The RT shinkansen fare from ShinKobe would cost around 24000yen but of course only takes a fraction of the time. There are other options such as the night train but that also will cost between 18000yen and 32000yen depending on which train you board. With so many options for transportation up there and even more onsens and goldfish calling your name, I hope that you have a chance to experience Izu Hanto for yourself soon! If you have more questions about IzuHanto or any other destination that has been published in the Hyogo Times, please feel free to email me at [ilovenatto@mac.com](mailto:ilovenatto@mac.com) and I would love to help you out. Happy Travels...





## Love and Relationships

# Dating Japanese Guys: The Shy Factor

Brenda McKinney

I am going to start with a little story. So a few weeks ago, one of my close girlfriends on the JET program came to my school for the first time. She basically knows everything about it from my stories, but it was the first visit. We did the *jikoshokai* thing with several teachers, *Kyoto Sensei*, and *Kocho Sensei* before walking around and exploring the almost deserted campus. When we came to the third-floor library, we discovered a group of some of my favorite second-year girls doing research for their summer homework. And who happened to be helping them? “Mr. Smith” himself. Mr. Smith is a Japanese, young, attractive teacher at my school. We are the same age and joke around every now and then, but he can be really shy around women, especially me (the only foreigner at my high school). Nonetheless, he is a work buddy, and I was excited to introduce my friend to him.

Anyways, my friend and I talked to the girls and then Mr. Smith for a while before continuing on our tour. My friend thought Mr. Smith, who had been pretty funny and outgoing in the library, seemed cool, so we decided to see if he wanted to go get a drink with us after school. When I saw him in the hall later on and asked him, I definitely wasn't prepared for the reaction to our izakaya proposal that followed. A scared and panicked look came over Mr. Smith's face, the confidence completely dissolved, and he literally ran away when another teacher walked by. He waved and yelled goodbye to my stunned friend and I, as we just stood there, a little bewildered by what had just happened. Ok, granted, my friend and I can come off as a little *genki* when we're together, but Mr. Smith acted like we were vampires. And the next day at school, Smith was back to normal, asking how the izzie was and telling me that we should go get a pint together sometime. OK, seriously....What gives?! I mean, we're friends at school and that reaction was seriously strange. All the dude had to do was say no, but he ran away!

For my sake, I'll let you know that boys don't always run for the hills when they see me coming, but it's not the first time someone has been scared of me for really no reason since I've come to Japan. If you ask me, the situation we witnessed was yet another example of the Shy-Japanese-boy syndrome.

While Japan has its fair share of the romantic and the erotica, for example, the Japanese have a reputation for being some of the shyest people

the world. This especially transcends to the dating scene. So, for this month's issue, I thought I'd delve in a bit deeper into why Japanese men are so shy and see if we can't make something more out of this issue. (Sorry, boys, this is more of one for the ladies.)

**But...Why?**

I'd love to tell you that after extensive...erm, “research”... into

what makes Japanese men tick, I have found the potion to make all of your dating issues go away, but that just isn't the case. I still think the shyness issue is one of the biggest obstacles to getting to know the Japanese people around you (gotta get somewhere before you can work on the rest, right?). One of the biggest concerns for female JETs that stay here for more than a year, from my observation, is a frustration with the fact that Japanese boys don't approach them or aren't as forward. This is not specific to just Hyogo chicks, either. I was with a group of third-year Chiba-ken JETs earlier in the summer who were complaining about how their stock would be worth more at home (or at least they'd get more attention). And these were fun, cute girls.

I did some poking around to try to identify a cause for the shyness factor, and I discovered some interesting reasoning. It seems a lot of the cause really does seem to be cultural, something that most of my coworkers (um, not Smith...) attribute to history, or specifically, the Samurai rules and

culture. As one female coworker explained, in Samurai times (and even today) “Japanese men were taught not to show personality too often. For example, anger or pleasure. They had to be reserved. Especially men. It came from Bushi [or samurai]. Men have to have no expression on their faces and as little words as possible. They have to be quiet, of course, they should not cry in front of people. But these days, it's slightly changing. In Korea, men cry in front of people. They have jukyo [oriental religion], but not bushido [samurai spirit].” In my research, Bushido actually came up quite frequently.

Another male Japanese friend, who spent a while in America, attributed the shyness to something we're all familiar with: the school system. “As you know, in Japan, students don't ask many questions in classes. Students just memorize what teachers say. So our creativity is not trained. Without creativity, people don't come up with questions. That means they don't know what to say without manuals. Some Japanese can't have confidence in their word. It is especially apparent when they were asked by gaijins. I think that creativity is the keyword in this issue.”

I was also told that the shyness was just an issue with “asserting oneself” because Japan was an isolated island for so long. The friend that told me this explained that Japan has a history of not communicating with foreigners, thus making Japanese men nervous when they do – even today – which, in turn, also gave them an inferiority complex. I am not sure I agree that the isolation period excuse is plausible considering the astronomically-fast modernization of Japan during and after the Meiji Restoration (and strong western-influence since then). Then again, the same guy also told me that Japanese men are just really nervous around western women because “they're so beautiful....like Hollywood actresses”, so I might just be slow to sell him short. Another friend noted that Japanese people live in very close-knit societies and communities, often finding few opportunities to meet a new person, which seems like a more poignant way to state the isolation point.

As far as inferiority complexes are concerned, I would say the language barriers play a big part. I know a lot of people who are shy to use a language they have not mastered (ie English), even though they are quite good at it. Couple this with the normal nerves that can creep up with asking someone out – and yeah, it makes sense. As one friend in Akashi said, “My opinion is Japanese guys want to get to know western women honestly!! But we don't know how to approach or how to do ice-breaking with western women. We try to ask for hanging out, having a tea, dinner or any fun stuff, but for western women, it doesn't seem to mean that, I think. If we can know the way of your countries, we can see the differences. Language is another thing. We just learnt English for the exams. So, even when we've got something to say to girls, we don't know how to say [it] in English. Even if we try to say something, it's gonna be unnatural expression.”

So many responses! And that's just the tip of the iceberg from my coworkers and friends!

**So what to do about it?**

OK, ladies... While Japanese men might be shy at first (although you will find those few aggressive nanpa types) and this is a cultural trait, it is good to remember that the Japanese being shy is also a stereotype. Like in any country (certainly those we all come from), people are different so you just have to give everyone a chance. Japanese men (and women) that have spent more time outside of Japan may be more direct and open when you first meet them, but that doesn't mean that you won't ever feel the sparks flying at you from that cute Japanese guy you've secretly been crushing on if it doesn't happen right away. You just might need to approach the situation a bit differently than you would at home. It's important to remember why you came here, which hopefully includes some reasoning about living in another country or another culture. We're not in Kansas here anymore, Toto. Learning to accept or at least adapt to different situations and approaches is essential in enjoying your time in Japan. You will probably meet more western-minded Japanese people at gaijin hangouts, but also consider taking matters into your own hands. Don't be shy to initiate conversation, ask for a keitai number or even a night out.

I'm not going to lie to you guys, I have yet to acquire a Japanese boyfriend, and I still have a thing or two to learn myself about relationships (as this year's breakup is testament, whew). BUT, I have been here a while and have seen or experienced enough (not all of which can be shared here) to know that there is pot of gold at the end of the rainbow if you're really looking for it.

In closing, if all else fails, there's always alcohol (I'm not joking!). It's a big part of the Japanese culture and the ultimate social lubricant. If you've ever been to an enka, you know what I'm talking about. This is probably why you're more likely to hit it off with people at bars, too. So don't just sit at home, reading your Hyogo Times (you can do that on the train, honey!). As Hyogo JETs, we're lucky enough to live in close (enough) proximity to several big cities. Grab your friends and head out for an evening on the town, or better yet, your local izakaya. You'll be amazed at how fast that icy-cold shyness just melts away (at least until the booze wears off).

I'm going to leave you guys with a Japanese proverb that might also help you out. Until next time, enjoy the heat and good luck!

*“Kotoba yonjyu pasento,  
hyojo jyugo pasento, omoi jyugo pasento,  
egao sanjyu pasento, gokei  
komyunikeshon hyaku pasento.”*

“40% words, 15% facial expression,  
15% memories, 30% smile,  
total =100% communication.”



# Top 10 Lessons I have learned in Japan

**10. Look before you leap.** Print out a single copy of the worksheet, check it, and *then* proceed to print out 400 copies.

**9. 2PSS+1PM(+1TSPS)=T.** 2 parts Soy Sauce to 1 part *Mirin* with a teaspoon of sugar equals Teriyaki Sauce. And Teriyaki Sauce can go on just about anything.

**8. Green means go, orange means go faster, red means proceed with caution.** Only in Japan though. Try this back home and you will get a ticket or beaten up road-rage style.

**7. Practice does not always make perfect.** If my “stroke of genius” lesson plan didn’t work well the first, second, or third time, the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th time I do the lesson it won’t be any better unless there are some major changes.

**6. Try before you buy.** “M” size in a Japanese boutique shop is not the same as an M size back home. Also, Japanese fits are completely different to Western fits. If the shop has no change room, leave immediately.

**5. If you are happy and you know it, clap your hands.** There is no better way to show your extreme happiness than clapping your palms together with your fingers spread out.

**4. If a response to a question starts with sucking air through teeth, you are not going to get a straight answer.** This noise is worse than fingers down a black-board after a while.

**3. Japanese food is fatty.** The really, really delicious Japanese cuisine won’t have any diet books written about it.

**2. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.** I have never felt such national pride. And vegemite is so delicious, I want to eat it every day.

**1. Respect Yourself (nah nah naah naah nah).** Alcohol is the devil! Teaching a class with a hangover is like ... hmmm well I just can’t describe the pain. Don’t do it! Keep the drinking to the weekends.








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Give us a Buzz!



# Interview with the “Nightfillers”

Following in the tradition of Monkey Majik, two lads that have come to Japan to teach English have consequently turned themselves from human tape-recorders in to rock stars. Brendan ‘Magsy’ Maguire (bass/vocals) and Ryan ‘Rocken Ronny’ Trio (guitar, vocals), both 3rd year JETs from Perth, Australia, started the band “the Nightfillers” and have done several gigs around Akashi and Kobe in the past year. You will get a chance to see them again at the upcoming AJET Charity Halloween event. I caught up with them for an interview.

## Firstly who are you and how did you meet?

**Ryan:** Well we’re two dudes from Australia. We came to Japan in the summer of 2005 on the JET program. The Great Spirit in the sky deemed that we should be placed in neighbouring towns.

**Brendan:** I think the first time we met was at a bowling night set up by the JET Alumni in Perth. However, Perth is a pretty small place and the music scene is even smaller so we know quite a few of the same people and have probably been at the same parties but just didn’t know it.

## When did you decide to start a band?

**R:** The details are a bit hazy but basically we found that we had similar musical backgrounds and a lot of free time – so we got a couple acoustic guitars and started playing Pink Floyd and Velvet Underground songs down at Akashi Eki. We sorted clicked musically so starting to write originals was a pretty natural progression from there.

## What exactly IS a “nightfiller”? Why the name?

**R:** It’s a very Australian thing. For those who don’t know, it’s what we call those poor doomed souls who stack shelves in supermarkets and department stores after hours like repentant catatonics in hell. We both did it for years. But actually it’s not as bad as you think - as long as you’ve got some-



and riding around on palette-jacks. So I guess the name has a kind of humble double meaning – like being a nightfiller and filling the night with music or whatever.

**B:** Originally we were only going to have other members in the band if they had also had been a nightfiller. We may have been able to pull this off in WA but here we can’t as picky as that. Actually we may be having a drummer joining us within the next week or so. I’m yet to ascertain whether he has been one.

## Tell us about your musical backgrounds?

**R:** Let’s see... well, we’ve both had other bands

back in Perth. I’ve been playing guitar since Nirvana ate my brain as a teenager. I was in a punk band called “the Fuckwits”. We were great. Then I went through a gothic phase and started doing electro shit in a group called “Unaesthetic” and later “Gate”. It was genius but must have well ahead of it’s time. Nobody loved us. Magsy?...

**B:** Well, I grew up in family that was obsessed with music. Everyone in my family either sang or played something, add to this the fact that in my small hometown you had the choice of music, sport or drugs as a way of passing the time. Although I dabbled in all three, music was the only one to really hold my interest.

## So how would you describe the Nightfiller’s sound?

**R:** Ahh my mind’s a blank!! Part of me wants to talk about how it’s uncool to classify music into genres blah blah blah. But saying that is kinda clichéd too and not necessarily true anyway. Personally I’m interested in a lot of different styles but I never sit down and think – I’m gonna write a blues song or I’m gonna write funk or I’m gonna write a post-Gregorian neo-emo shoegaze nu-metal jazz punk fusion song.

**B:** Predominantly rock-based, but as Ryan said, whenever we write, we are writing a song not a style.

## You both started on guitars, so how did it evolve into the current setup with Brendan on bass?

**B:** Well, I guess we felt that the acoustic guitar didn’t have as much balls and our music was suffering as a result. This doesn’t mean that we won’t at a later date, or just at random, introduce it in again on occasional songs. We might even bring another member in so that we can introduce keyboards and regular acoustic. Oh and my girlfriend, that is you Tori, bought me a bass for my birthday.

**B:** I think Helluva Lounge in Sannomiya is probably my favourite. It costs about 1500y or more (depending on who is playing) to get in but you can catch some awesome bands there. There are many others but this is a good starting place, also of note in Sannoms are Starclub and Varit.

What has been the greatest moment in the Nightfillers career to date?

**B:** We have had a couple of great gigs, but for me the greatest moment, more a group of moments spaced over about 3 weeks, was a bout of heavy writing that we fell into and wrote what I feel are some of our strongest songs.

What do the fans love most about you?

**R:** The way we sing off key.

**B:** We have fans?

Thanks boys! Looking forward to your next show!

*Are you a budding journalist? The Hyogo Times is looking for a person to take over the monthly interviews. If you are interested, please email me at [submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com](mailto:submit.hyogotimes@gmail.com).*





# Kansai Concerts

## September

### 3rd- FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND

Club Quattro,  
Shinsaibashi  
6000 YEN (adv. with one  
drink)  
Open 18:00, Start 19:00

### 14th- SPACE COWBOY/ TEENAGE BAD GIRL

Big Cat, Osaka  
5,500YEN (adv. drink fee  
charged @ door)  
Open 18:00, Start 19:00

### 22nd- PUNKROCKERS BOWL

Shangri-La, Umeda  
2,500YEN (adv. drink fee  
charged @ door)  
Open 18:00, Start 19:00

### 22nd- PUNKROCKERS BOWL

Shangri-La, Umeda  
2,500YEN (adv. drink fee  
charged @ door)  
Open 18:00, Start 19:00

### 26th- LESS THAN JAKE

Club Quattro, Shinsaibashi  
5,250YEN (adv. with 1 drink)  
Open 18:00, Start 19:00

## October

### 20th - FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE

Club Quattro, Shinsaibashi  
6000YEN (adv. with 1 drink)  
Open 18:00, Start 19:00

October's not a big month for  
bands in Kansai but keep your  
eyes peeled for LINKIN PARK  
in November and DAFT PUNK  
in December.