

04.12

ht

hyogo times

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Readers' Recommendations

Wanted: New Staff

Driving

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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 15th of each month to:
publications@hyogo.ajet.net

Message from the Editor

Howdy-do Hyogo!

Hope you've got your allergy medication ready for this, the most touching season to the Japanese soul. It's almost time for sakura blooms and flavored treats, warmer weather too! I've got some winter goods I wanna sell you... but before that, please check out my 'ad' for an editor to replace me. If being Editor in Chief isn't your thing, make sure to check out Jonathan's online editor wanted piece.

This issue delivers the promised driving test information, as well as a great look at some regular features new and old. We're introducing a new thing this issue (since all things change in April... seriously) called Readers' Recommendations, which

as may be apparent from the title, cannot function without your input! Send us some input!

In non-HT related shameless promotion, seriously, take my stuff (we're going to put together a big 'free stuff' event sometime in the coming months), and also check out the April 15th PEPY bike ride in Himeji!

Good luck as we kick off the new school year,

Lemmon



Paul Schuble's

J-word play

タバコをやめると何円?

Answer: きんえん (no smoking)

This one may not translate into English so well, but it's a great pun in Japanese. The question asks "How many yen does it cost to quit smoking?" Much like so many other riddles, to arrive at the correct answer you have to think outside the box. Another way to think of this question could be "What **en** do you get when you quit smoking?" The answer in that case would be 禁煙 (きんえん), the word most commonly used for non-smoking, which you may have heard or used yourself at restaurants.



洒落

Hello x 2!

Message from the PR

Welcome to APRIL, Hyogo!

This year Easter and hanami season coincide nicely with the start of the new school year, so it's time to break out the new suits and turn off your kotatsu (at least once?) and enjoy the spring atmosphere. Go outside for some sun and fresh air, sit under a sakura

tree and enjoy one of Japan's most beautiful seasons – it only lasts a couple of weeks at most, then the blossoms are gone before you know it. So sad...but such is life. Sigh...

As always, if you are interested in getting involved with **Hyogo AJET** or you have any questions

comments or suggestions, please contact us at pr@hyogo.ajet.net.

Have a happy hanami, everyone. 楽しみ!

Peace out,

Sifton

Hyogo Prefectural Advisors

Liz

A second-year CIR from Seattle, USA.

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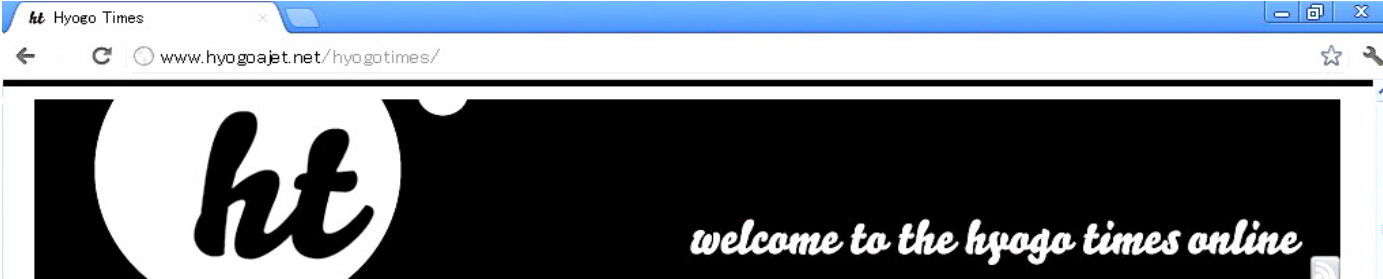
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A first-year CIR from Milton Keynes in the UK.

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Looking forward to hearing from you!
We'd like to know how you're doing.



Wanted: Online Editor

Interested in helping out

with the **Hyogo Times**? This is my last year as a JET and so I'm looking for someone to eventually take over my position as Online Editor. All you need is an interest in becoming part of HT, some basic computer skills, and a little bit of time.

The work of the Online Editor revolves around maintaining the website. This includes uploading articles, adding/modifying site features, and working with the design. Duties also include managing the Flickr photo group and posting on the HT Facebook page. We use Wordpress, a simple

system almost anyone can figure out. Other than some basic web proficiency, the only skills needed are simple photo editing; resizing, reformatting, etc.

The most important thing in being Online Editor though is consistency and reliability. It's important that articles and the site are updated on a regular basis, and that you can quickly respond to emails from the editor or whoever else. Ever since we started the website there's been a steady increase in readership, meaning that more and more people are relying on it. It

would be your job to make sure that we keep our readers and get new ones – by maintaining an awesome site, and any other web features you might want to run. Remember that some content is web-only, so readers count on the Online Editor for a lot.

If you're interested in this position please send me an email at ht.online.editor@gmail.com. Of course, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Thanks,

Jonathan

Life After the B.O.E.....

By David Namisato



You were worried that your dad would be weirded out by your office at the onsen. Unfortunately, he fit right in.

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

David recently released the *Life After the BOE* book! Check it out, along with more Life After the B.O.E. comics at his [website!](http://www.lifeaftertheboe.com)

www.lifeaftertheboe.com

“There’s more to being king than getting your way all the time.”

“There’s more?”

(Musfasa, Simba)

As you already know, your faithful editing staff is going to undergo some changes with the upcoming new JET year. As I, your humble benevolent throne-holder retire from my ALT position, I will also be stepping down from the position of Editor in Chief of the Hyogo Times. I’d like to begin working with a successor sooner rather than later, to make for a smoother transition.

Of course, there are all the perks of power and all the responsibility that goes with it. There’s the satisfaction of knowing that your work goes out each month to educate, edify, and entertain many many Hyogo JETs. There’s also the bonus that being in charge of things looks really good on post-JET resumes, especially for those interested in careers in writing, editing, or anything that deals with managing. But it does take a special kind of person to handle this helm, and I’m looking for a few good applicants amongst whom to make the choice.

Things the editor must have

◎ People skills

Editor is a managing position before all else. You might find yourself spending more time requesting articles than reading or reviewing them. It helps to be connected to a lot of JETs (and non-JETs) in Hyogo and beyond, though that is not required. What is required is the ability to keep in touch with people, follow up with them, set deadlines, and check in regularly without either giving up or going medieval on anyone. Some of your writers will be on time without fail; others are late without fail. You have to learn who is who and how to cope with all of them.

◎ Organizational skills

Keep track of stuff: know what you have, what you need, and what you have to do to get it. I’m a messy-organizer (the desk only looks like chaos to the casual observer) but I make lots of lists. How do you keep up with things?

◎ Efficient work ethic

Or else a lot of downtime at work. You have to create a system that works for you for obtaining content, reviewing it, and making sure the online and design editors get stuff.

◎ Some idea of what the Hyogo Times is all about

You should probably read an issue or two all the way through, just to see what it’s like. But also notice that the content changes over time with different writers and time periods.

◎ Dedication

What can I say? You gotta want it. While this is an unpaid, volunteer position, the magazine cannot be any better than what you put into it. If you want this on your resume, you should also want this to look spectacular, be full of awesome content, and come out on time.

◎ Timeliness

This is basically the same as dedication. Publishing late doesn’t look classy, so do what you have to do to keep things more or less on the solid and professional.

Preferable but not necessary

◎ Mad grammar skillz

Catching typos, grammar mistakes, and spelling errors is part of this job, but it’s not the end of the world. At the end of the day, a writer owns his or her article. Your corrections or help can give the magazine a classier feel and make it look less like we’re a bunch of amateurs. We might be, but who needs to know? I will say that I’ve missed plenty of grammar stuff which the other editors have thankfully caught for me. And probably other stuff which hopefully no one caught at all.

◎ Editing or writing experience

(With Hyogo Times or any similar, or for that matter, not at all similar publication) Always a plus, of course, but not strictly needed.

Things the editor doesn’t have to have

◎ Lots of extra time

I manage to fit this in around all my workin’ and other extracurricular activities thanks to scheduling and planning.

Don’t underestimate the amount of time it’ll take (I suppose I should say, especially at first as you find your editorial feet) you to gather and edit everything, but don’t overestimate it either. This is something you can handle from your desk during those off hours or days when you don’t have any class. Once you have your system, things just kind of flow.

◎ A lot to say

Sometimes there are a lot of articles, sometimes there aren’t. Occasionally, you might want to generate content. The great thing is, you can do this on your own timetable, about whatever you want, because you’re the boss.

◎ Extensive experience in Hyogo Times writing or other association

You don’t need to have written for HT or even to have lived in Hyogo for years to be a good candidate. Some people have the stuff. Maybe you do.

Hyogo Times is a publication by and for the Hyogo ALTs (and beyond, actually – our readership is larger than our borders). We want this to keep up the professional standard worthy of the magazine, but we also want to have a good time. Give your fellow Hyogonians information that is relevant, entertaining, interesting, personally relatable, or useful, and they will reward you with their attention.

Anyone is welcome to apply. To do so, please send an e-mail to publications@hyogo.ajet.net in which you choose any issue of Hyogo Times from the past year, and name *two things* you would change about it (they can be as small as deleting a comma or as big as inventing a whole new column), or that you would change about the magazine in general. **Due May 7th.**

Please feel free to contact me with any questions!

*Your humble and glorious
Editor in Chief*

Yakushima

If you're anything like me,

by the time spring rolls around you'll be itching to get outside to pay homage to the return of the warmer weather. One of my favourite Japan holidays to date was one such outing. Hiking through the vast ancient forests that escaped the ravages of the Second World War in Yakushima, Kagoshima-ken is the perfect way to shake the winter chill.

Located a 2 hour high-speed ferry ride from Kagoshima's Dolphin Port, Yakushima is the home of 'Yakusugi', a name given to cedars over 1,000 years old. The air is fresh, clean, and filled with the scent of cedars both young and old. Hiking and nature enthusiasts from Japan and around the globe come to Yakushima to experience the magic firsthand. It's not hard to see how it inspired the forests of Studio Ghibli's *Princess Mononoke*.

The most famous of the Yakusugi is Jomon-sugi. Jomon-sugi is believed to be somewhere between 2,170 and 7,000 years old, and its name refers to the Jomon period in Japan's prehistory. The tree can be found on the north face of Mt Miyanoura and was not discovered until 1968.

The hike to Jomon-sugi winds itself around rivers, brooks, moss, and countless cedars. A one day's gentle hike from the Arakawa trek base station takes around 9 hours along reinforced pathways and platforms that have been put down to protect the forest and root systems that intertwine with the course.

Wilson's stump is one of the highlights of the trek. Looking up into the canopy of the forest thought the hole in the stump at the right angle, and you'll be greeted by a very 'lovely' view.

Many cedars here have taken on interesting forms over the years, including the Medusa cedar and the Kirin cedar. Some 3 generation cedars also line the much worn path, each generation growing upon the other.

Our guide took us through the forest and off the beaten path to a place where beautiful turquoise waters stretched between the trees, inviting us to soak our weary feet. We navigated the precarious stone path to the boulders in the centre of the river for a rest. The water was fresh and icy cold, come summer it would be the perfect swimming hole.

Upon reaching Jomon-sugi, I felt a great sense of achievement and wonder, the light streaming through the canopy of trees just adding to the magic.

Although hiking through the forest is the main event on this beautiful island, there is still much to see. Most of the coast is accessible via the single bus route (except between Ooko Falls and Nagata beach on the western road), but hiring a car will give you the freedom to explore other parts of the island.

Ooko falls in the south of the island is 88 metres tall; the huge volume of water that falls into the river below sprays a mist across the landscape. Nearby local vendors fry up the island's specialty, flying fish, as the monkeys play in the trees.

Yakushima's Nagata beach, on the western coast, is known to be one of the world's important spawning grounds for loggerhead turtles, so head there from mid-May to mid-July to take a peek.

The western road is home to the Nagata lighthouse. Many animals casually sauntered onto the road, unafraid of us as we passed by. From the lighthouse we took in the wide view of the ocean and the beauty of the steep cliffs, then turned to the spectacular view of the mists clinging the mountains across the island.

So if you are as yet unsure of the perfect way to once again become friends with nature, Yakushima is worth travelling the distance for. It really is one of the gems of Japan that should not be missed.

How to get to and around Yakushima

If you have time to spare the 'Sunflower' Ferry goes overnight from Osaka Seagull Port to Shibushi Port, Kagoshima Prefecture. The ferry departs at 17:55 and arrives at Shibushi at 8:55. Once in Shibushi Port, you'll need to jump on the shuttle bus into Kagoshima City which takes around two hours depending on traffic. I'd recommend a 'tourist sleeper'. The lowest class was described to me by my friend as 'the Dragon's lair'; a huge humid room where travellers lay down their futons together and attempt to sleep.

For those needing to get to Kagoshima in a hurry, flights to Kagoshima Airport start from ¥7,800 one way. Train lovers can check out the new Sakura Shinkansen for around ¥21,000 one way, which takes around four and a half hours.

To connect to Yakushima, you'll need to take the ferry. The high speed ferry 'Topsy' costs ¥7,700 one way or ¥14,000 return and takes around two hours.

For those with a decided lack of hiking gear, most accommodations and tour guides are able to arrange gear for your hiking needs. Some accommodations such as Kagoshima Youth Hostel also have K-cars for hire, at around ¥6,000 per day (you'll also need to re-fill the petrol tank before returning it).

For further info check out the JNTO Yakushima fact sheet @ <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/rtg/pdf/pg-708.pdf>

Jess Grigg



Maigo in Hyogo

おい、そち！この人、わかりまんねんか？

This dashing young man may look familiar if you're big on Japanese history and drama - moreso if you're interested in books you shouldn't write in.

だれでござるか？

Your favorite restaurants & hangout spots!

“You’re going to love it,”

I insisted as we navigated the confusion of streets near Himeji station. I was taking my friends to the place we affectionately had dubbed “Himeji Burger,” a location introduced to me one tired evening by Himeji ALT Ryan Parker, and thereafter shared with every foreigner I could hook with “Do you want a good burger?”

Recently, I thought, places like that, the good places, they ought to be shared. Deliciousness should be rewarded with more business, other ALTs should be allowed to know about those around-the-corner alleyway locations and their charms.

Presenting:

Readers' recommendations, a new Hyogo Times feature. Send us notes about your favorite places to eat, drink, be merry, shop, read a book, go for a stroll, or any other gem you think deserves sharing. Think of it as the kind of advice you'd give someone who e-mailed you to say, "I'm going to be in your city next weekend, what's good?"

Write us a few lines about the place, why you like it, what you recommend there, attach a picture if possible, categorize it, and give us the location.

We're also creating a **Hyogo Times Map** of these places, to give information in another way! We want you guys to adjust the map to reflect what's good today. (To see another example, check out the Shiso Map attached to the Harima Happenings column for this month)!

Emily Lemmon

By way of an example,
your editors will provide a few
recommendations of their own:

n.b. Café

Restaurant/Café

670-0935, Hyogo-ken, Himeji,
Hojoguchi 1丁目-20番
079-281-5537

The aforementioned “Himeji Burger” (though they serve more than just burgers). Great view of the tracks so you can watch the trains whiz by. Recommend the burger, but the other stuff is also good!

Bakery Lamp & Café

Restaurant/Café

670-0012, Hyogo-ken, Himeji,
Honmachi, 68平和不動産ビル1階西
079-284-9775

Burgers here are awesome,
and they actually have root beer
and Dr. Pepper among the drinks!

Bakery Lamp is counter service only, but the newly opened café section around the corner offers comfy seating and good atmosphere.

Café Comfort

Restaurant/café

Kobe Chuo Ward, Hyogo Prefecture
650-0001, 6丁目-5-1 Kanocho
078-392-1185

An inexpensive coffee shop on the 24th floor of Kobe City Hall. Great views and the place doesn't get too crowded. And they make fresh waffles!

Kobe Central Library

Library

650-0017 Hyogo, Kobe, Chuo ward,
Kusunoki-cho (兵庫県神戸市中央区
楠町) 7丁目2-1

078-371-3351

A great place to study or do work, and they're open relatively late (to 8 PM). There's a big room for studying and a smaller one specifically for laptop use, with free wifi.

Shiso

the biggest little city in Harima region

Literally, that is.

On a map, Shiso looks like a massive entity, and on the ground, like the west end of nowhere. Famous for its lack of trains and its zealous JETs (right? RIGHT?), this sprawling countryside retreat actually means you are just a bus ride away from leagues upon leagues of awesome.

Shiso awesome?

I really shouldn't be so surprised when I meet strangers from Osaka out to take in some countryside in Shiso, but it does feel like a total reversal. I occasionally go to Osaka to get into a real city, but they come to Shiso to get out of it. So what's drawing these travelers? Well...

Special buses run for season offerings, especially to the shrine housing the 千年藤, *sen-nen fuji* (thousand-year-old wisteria) in early May, just

around Golden Week, when the plant is dangling its millions of purple blossoms in all its scented glory.

June is the time for the Iris Garden, where scores of variously colored iris plants stand through the rainy season, along with hydrangeas. The garden has other attractions during other months, but I think the iris bloom is the most spectacular.

In the dead of summer, you can swim in the clear waters of the Ibogawa river at a few different points along its northern banks. There are a few places for taking in the nighttime sight of the *hotaru*, Japanese fireflies, which only live near clean rivers. Seeing them is a truly magical experience impossible to capture on film.

Once the fall rolls around, Shiso's got its share of *momiji*. Less famous (see: less crowded) than Kyoto, the fire-red leaves of the *Momiji-yama* mountainside do not disappoint.

In the winter, Shiso sports two ski-jou locations, in Haga and Chikusa, for your snowsporting pleasure.

Shiso has several onsen areas, the nicest of which is the somewhat remote Mahoroba of Ichinomiya, but Yoi is pretty.. よい, and Isawa-no-rin and Haga's Forest Station are not to be sneezed at. There's also Haga's picturesque waterfalls, and the tiny Haga Castle to see!

Shiso also has monkeys! Well, okay, it's technically not part of Shiso, but located just off the edge of the map in Sayo you'll find Ruri-ji Temple and its adjacent Monkey Park (I think this is the only place in



Hyogo outside of Awaji where you can visit a monkey park!). You can sit and watch the primates play against the backdrop of.. whatever season it happens to be.. or you can buy a little can of beans and feed them.

Shiso also has a decent selection of restaurants and coffee shops of various sizes, cuteness levels, English friendliness, and price ranges. Lots of establishments are open late or 24-hours along route 29, owing to the fact that it connects the north and south coasts and lots of trucks roll through late; this means you can get your Mickey-Dees



(or MaxValu) on any time of day or night.

Getting to Shiso is easier than you think! There are direct buses from both Kobe and Himeji, and if you happen to live along the route from Tsuyama to Osaka, you can snag any highway bus that has a stop at Yamasaki interstate (山崎インター). From Himeji station on the north side, buses 31, 32, 33, and 41 all run to the Yamasaki bus station in Shiso (from where you can catch buses to other Shiso locations, or meet up with one of the many Shiso JETs) about once every half hour or so.



Shiso is easier for those who have a car, or know someone with a car, as the further north you want to go, the sparser the bus schedule tends to become (dwindling to once an hour midway, and almost only once every two in the upper reaches).

Come play with us in the biggest little town in Harima!

MAP IT: check out this annotated map of Shiso!

Emily Lemmon



Picturesque Flower Parks and Scrumptious Burgers

Besides being famous for

onions, puppets, whirlpools, and the first island of Japan, Awaji Island is known for their elaborate flower gardens. Since it's spring, my friends and I decided to pack up and check out Awaji Hanasajiki, which is just one of the many parks. This place is accessible by car with plenty of parking and is closer to Kobe because it's located in northern Awaji. It is open from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

This scenic park is called, "Awaji Hanasajiki." (あわじ花さじき) Right now the park is sprinkled with yellow rapeseed (菜) and *murasakihanana* (ムラサキハナナ) flowers. The hillside will soon be covered with a cascade of colorful *Rinaria* flowers through early May, and about mid-April you'll be able to smile at the sunny plethora of poppies. The park is pretty big and you could spend all day there admiring the amazing view of Osaka, Kobe, and the

Akashi Kaikyo Bridge. I would suggest bringing your painting supplies, a good book, a camera, and allergy medicine if you're allergic to flowers. Being a hopeless romantic, my favorite part of the park was this small platform called, "Love Catch Point." With the help of my friends, we attempted translating the instructions for you. We think it says something like, "Stand on top of the flower platform. Face toward the sea under the blue sky and say your message of love." The bottom has broken off letters but we guessed it says something like "and it will be heard and come true."

As every good park should, it has a tempura food stand and an omiyage shop. In the omiyage shop you can find refreshing and delicious biwa soft cream. If you're wondering what biwa is (like I did), it's a type of citrus fruit which

is also known as a loquat. It is often known as Japanese or Chinese plum.

If you aren't in the mood for tempura or soft cream, or it is closed as it was for us, you can head down the road to Awaji Country Garden (淡路カントリーガーデン) for one the best cheeseburger I've ever had. Random fact: Awaji breeds and distributes the amazing beef known as Kobe beef and Matsuzaka beef. In fact, if you walk from the Hanasajiki to the Country Garden like my friends and I did, you will pass by some Kobe beef cows. Nope, it didn't ruin our appetite one bit, and so for about ¥1,000 we consumed the whole set: the savory and mouthwatering burger paired with American-like fries, a refreshing drink, and a small, delectable dessert. Even though it's a food stand, don't mistake it for fast food. It took about 20 minutes to get our individual,



handmade burgers but it was soooooo worth it. As we sat on the cute picnic benches enjoying every morsel, I debated going back for seconds and I don't even like hamburgers!

After you inhale one of these bad boys, you could head to the petting zoo behind the burger stand. This place is open from 10:30 am to 6 pm and you can enter the park for ¥400 and the animal food is ¥200. Let's just say that my favorite part of the park was the giant sea-saws, the bubble stand, and feeding the lone reindeer and donkeys. The park is a bit well-loved but pretty fun if you have a good group of people to go with. They have a good variety of animals from peacock to pig.

There will be more coverage on more of these breathtaking garden parks to come. I am excited to check out the Akashi Kaikyo National Government Park soon. It's filled with different flowers throughout the season as well. So if you have free time, come on down to Awaji and stop to see and smell our infamous flowers!

You can find more information on the facilities listed above at the these websites:

© www.hyogo-tourism.jp/english/spot/152_awajisajiki.html

© www.awaji-garden.jp

Veronica Chung

Oyster Cream Stew.....

かきの
クリーム
シチュー

Ingredients

(serves 3-4)

- ◎ 1 pack of oysters (kaki), or 300 grams chicken/pork
- ◎ 1 onion
- ◎ 1 pack mushrooms (any kind that you like)
- ◎ 1 clove garlic
- ◎ 1 small bunch broccoli
- ◎ 3 tablespoons flour
- ◎ 2-3 tablespoons butter
- ◎ 1 tablespoon of chicken soup powder (torigara supu)
- ◎ 3 cups milk
- ◎ 1 ½ cups water
- ◎ salt and pepper

Step One

Mince the garlic and onion, and slice the mushrooms.

Step Two

Cut the broccoli into bite size pieces.

Step Three

Wash the oysters in cold water three times and drain well.

Step Four

Put the butter into a heated fry pan and stir-fry the garlic, onion and mushrooms. Add the chicken or pork now (if you aren't using oysters) and stir-fry.

Step Five

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Step Six

Add the flour and stir-fry a little more.

Step Seven

Add the milk little by little and bring it to a gentle boil.

Step Eight

Add the water and continue to boil until the sauce thickens, if needed add a little extra flour to thicken it.

Step Nine

Lastly add the oysters and broccoli and gently boil for 7-10 minutes.

Step Ten

Serve with rice or crusty bread.

Lauren McRae

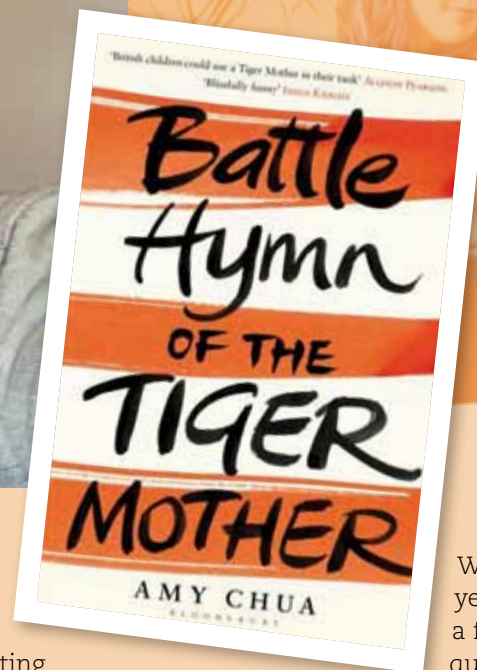
English corner



The deadliest game of all...
...the game of love.

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother

by Amy Chua



It may be the year of the dragon,

but Amy Chua, **Tiger Mother**, is still lingering in the spotlight. Last year, her bestselling book on Chinese parenting, **Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother**, created uproar after an excerpt was published in *The Wall Street Journal*, and angry parents railed against her controversial parenting style. Ms. Chua's criticism of "Western" softness and her glorification of extremist "Chinese" parenting strategies quickly made her one of the most hated people in America. American parents were outraged and horrified that this mother from Illinois was suggesting a superior method of child rearing that included depriving children of play dates, sleepovers, and the freedom to choose their own extra-curricular activities!

Admittedly, I found myself grimacing as Ms. Chua described screaming herself hoarse during hours-long music practice sessions with her daughters, Sophia and Lulu, or when she threatened to burn all of Sophia's stuffed animals if she didn't get her piano piece perfect the next time. (In interviews she claims she was trying to make fun of herself with these quips.) Reading about Ms. Chua manically searching for a practice studio and disrupting the family vacation in Europe so that neither daughter would miss a single day of practicing suggested to me that the woman was mentally unstable. And when she rejected the homemade birthday cards the girls had made for her because they were not up to snuff, I was asking myself why am I still reading this?

Then, slowly the voodoo magic started to happen. I found myself respecting Ms. Chua for her dedication to her daughters' success. I found myself wishing I had had a **Tiger Mother**. My own mother was and is a big softie. I was raised on Little Debbie snacks and Nickelodeon. She probably broke all of the **Tiger Mother** rules. I cannot tell you how many times I heard "You can be anything you want to be," and how few times I heard the word "No," during my childhood. My mother was successful at making me feel loved and giving me confidence, but she was no **Tiger Mother**. She enrolled me in dance lessons and gymnastics, signed me up for softball and Campfire, and found me the best piano and art teachers we could afford in our little town.

Within a few years (sometimes a few days) I had quit them all.

My mother never

wanted to make me do something I didn't want to do so she had left the decisions to me, a lazy child with thoughts of playing outside or watching TV on the brain. My mother never told me she was disappointed in my choices, but looking back I wish she had. I have always intrinsically wanted to do well, but after reading **Battle Hymn** I was asking myself what if I had been pushed to do my best?

One thing that cannot be disputed is that the **Tiger Mother** way seems to have worked with at least one of Ms. Chua's daughters. The oldest, Sophia, gave a concert in her early teens

at the prestigious concert venue Carnegie Hall, and is now enrolled at an Ivy League university. Lulu is a different story, and well, it is really her story that her mother is telling.

There are plenty of manuals on how to be a parent, but this book isn't one of them. **Battle Hymn** is a memoir which tells of a mother relentlessly following old cultural traditions in a modern era and being surprised at the outcome. Ms. Chua's story forced me to reflect on my life here in Japan and my sometimes stubborn approach to cultural differences. Amongst all of the controversy and craziness in the **Tiger Mother** tale, I found redemption in learning to develop fresh cultural perspectives. It is what happens after you read **Battle Hymn** that makes it really worth reading.

This wasn't the best book of 2011 or anything, but it really challenged my way of thinking and was just extremely entertaining in a daytime talk show sort of way. If you are inclined to always choose books because they align with your way of thinking or you are living abroad surrounded by a culture different from your own, this book is for you. If you just want to know what the **Tiger Mother** buzz is all about, I recommend grabbing a copy. You may find yourself frustrated and angry with Ms. Chua or you might find yourself totally convinced your own mother had it all wrong. Either way, you will have to read to find out!

Rebecca Stock

It didn't even show up: A review of *In Time*

In the future humans stop

aging at 25. They have one more year to live unless they can refill the clock on their arms with more minutes, hours, or years. Jobs pay time; things cost time. In the future, time literally is money, and when you're broke, you die. That's the premise of the newest Justin Timberlake vehicle, *In Time*. My expectations were sky high for Andrew Niccol's return to the sci-fi genre after the superb *Gattaca*. Unfortunately, all we get this time is a poor-man's MTV version of his previous opus, if that poor man had no money at all to his name. I'm all over the place again; let me be concise, since time is life now: *In Time* = awful.

JT plays Will Salas, who lives literally day to day in a future ghetto. Now, I understand it's the poor part of town because I am told so; honestly, I don't think the filmmakers have ever seen an actual housing project. This one features broad, clean boulevards and no discernible street crime. Also, everyone is beautiful. That's actually a recurring theme in the entire film; there are no ugly people in the future. I guess they discovered immortality-tech after eugenics-ing fat people

away. Anyway, life is tough for Will Salas, and his hot-25-year-old-looking-mother, played by Olivia Wilde. They both work menial, low-paying jobs, and don't seem to ever have more than a few hours left on their arms.

Everything changes when Will meets a rich man with over 100 years on his arm named Henry Hamilton (TV's Matt Bomer). Hamilton is tired of being handsome and rich and living forever because...well, life is a burden, bro. So he decides to gift all his remaining years to Will, and then commit emocide. Soon after, Will's mom dies because life is unfair, and Salas waves his fist in the air, yelling "Kahnnnnn!!!!" No, just kidding. He does swear to take it to the man, and break the horribly unfair system by crashing into the rich part of town. The city is divided into different time zones, and migrating around is tough since it costs money to change zones, so the rich people all live here, and the poor people all live there etc. This aspect of the theme was mildly interesting, as everyone always runs in the poorer areas, where time is at a premium, but rich people walk leisurely, and take their damn time. Though everyone

in the film looks like this; so I guess rich people must do cardio at some point too...

The rest of the movie is sure to make the kids happy since it showcases hip stylez and even better looking people, with even less thematic content. I won't go into more plot details because I have been told I spoil stuff too much, but just broad strokes: Will teams up with a hot chick (Amanda Seyfried, who will always be little Karen Smith from *Mean Girls* to me) and goes Bonnie and Clyde/Robin Hood on the rich people, stealing time from banks and the affluent and giving it to the poor. They are constantly hounded by the time keepers, led by Detective-like person Raymond Leon (Cillian Murphy), whose aims and ideology are imperceptible, and somehow also contradictory, and in the end mean nothing anyway.

The film's antagonist is supposed to be hyper-rich man, and maybe president of the city, Philippe Weis (*Mad Men*'s Vincent Kartheiser), but, honestly, he's the most likable character onscreen. Weis is more than civil to Will when they first meet,

and later on displays genuine concern over his daughter's kidnapping. He is presented as evil just by being wealthy and immortal and not sharing his infinite life with other people. Oh yea, the metaphor is *that* shallow. Is it even a metaphor? It's just sort of literal. I'm way liberal myself, but even I found the sophomoric socialist stuff distasteful.

The one aspect of ageless immortality that is barely adequately explored is how no one ages. The film's first scene shows Will approach an attractive lady, and seemingly go in for a kiss on the lips, which then switches to a peck on the cheek. We then find out the woman is his mother. Weis later jokes with Salas asking him whether that attractive lady over there is his daughter, mother, or wife. I won't spoil the surprise, but anyway, Oedipus would love the future.

Visually, the film is...interesting I guess (sigh). It employs the same ageless aesthetic as Niccol's previous work *Gattaca*. It seems less a future, and maybe more an alternate reality. Everything in the city is slick and modern and zen, but Weis' seaside villa alludes to the Riviera. The one in France,

not in Las Vegas across from Circus Circus. The cars and clothing also exhibit a blend of classic themes interpreted through modern veneers. The music is non-descript and I don't even know if it had music, really. I'm just glad they didn't slap some techno over the dialogue like in 80% of all sci-fi, because it's the future, so music must be electronic.

JT isn't bad in his role; he's really a pretty good actor in general, I think. Amanda Seyfried is great as Sylvia Weis, Philippe's daughter. Her haughty, presumptuous attitude quickly evaporates once she is torn from the comforts of the upper crust. However, after she conquers her initial fears, Sylvia's childish energy fills the screen with merriment. She is quite charming, even while shooting a gun. Cillian Murphy is awful, as he always is, but in all fairness this time around he was handed the most poorly constructed character in modern cinema. The "climax" where detective-like Leon faces down against Salas is ridiculous. You will know what I mean, if you end up disregarding my advice and watching this bad movie.

Basically, we are handed an interesting sci-fi concept that is never explored adequately. Agelessness and immortality is such a loaded theme; two hours should be more than enough time to explore any of the myriad social implications. Instead, we're given 100 minutes of car chases, gun shots, and Wall Street attack ads. And what's up with the awkward arm wrestling stuff? Everyone keeps mentioning "fights" throughout the film, and I'm expecting some crazy future immortality cage fighting... it ends up being awkward arm-wrestling.

Skip *In Time*; it's bad.

Sagamore

Guest Movie Review is from Sir Sagamore, of *Impetuous Windmills* where he is part of a podcast and blogging team based in Japan and the US. To the podcast, visit their website!

Often, students would do projects that combined English and another skill, such as drawing or presentation. Here are pumpkins with an English backstory that were displayed at last year's Cultural Festival.

My year without JTEs

Last school year I heard my vice-principal half-whispering to my principal: "Oh, Amanda? She can do it."

"It" was teaching two out of three junior high school grades without a JTE. We had gone from three JTEs to two because of students-to-staff proportional downsizing, and it was just too many classes for them to teach. To get around me not having a Japanese teaching license, there was a teacher from another subject assigned to each of my classes. Sometimes that teacher was fluent in English, sometimes not. They were helpful, but there was no question: I was 100% in charge. I planned all my 3rd grade classes as well, which I did have with a JTE.

My class print-out binders show the extent of the workload change: the binder for 2011-12 is almost twice the size of the binder for 2010-11. I had planned full classes in years past, so I wasn't completely without a clue, but it was with nowhere near the volume of classes I planned this year.

Setting a routine was being the best planning decision I made. First, students would ask a partner English questions of the day. Then, a randomly picked group demonstrated the questions and their answers.

After that, the students wrote an answer to a question in their journals. And finally, they worked on a project; an oral presentation on a foreign country or writing letters to other ALTs, or any number of other projects I came up with.

I tried to balance fun with actual English practice, and find activities students like. The last part ended up being the most difficult, as my particular students seemed to hate every tried-and-true recommended-at-CLAIR-orientation game like Criss Cross.

I started using my planner regularly and learned how to read the calendars from staff meetings for schedule changes. I tried to plan an entire semester in advance, but that failed, because there continued to be schedule changes decided even after the semester started.

I learned a whole lot of student names, and learned kanji for other names so I could at least read nametags. It made it much easier to use names when calling on a student in class,

or telling a student talking to stop it. The students and I had a much stronger relationship, and they respected me. Telling someone to stop in English usually got results – even if they didn't understand all the words in the sentence, they knew they were doing something wrong.

Other teachers respected me more too. After a first year class was late multiple times to the English classroom with no real excuse, I gave them a lecture in Japanese about how class started when the bell rang. The students stared at me, the most silent they'd ever been while I was talking. The other teacher in class with me remained silent. Later she related the events to that grade's head teacher, who laughed and told me I did a good job.

It was difficult for me to take days off, because if I was gone at JHS in anything other than 3rd grade, the class had to be replaced with a non-English class. Planning and grading work was constant, and I often had to do it on my twice-a-week visits to elementary school.

There was a little overtime, a little working at home. I was always very tired on weeknights, and my JLPT N2 score reflects that mustering up the energy to study Japanese was something I failed miserably at.

I won't lie – I didn't conduct class entirely in English. Sometimes, it was worth it to repeat instructions multiple times in English until a bright and outgoing student got it and spoke up. In other situations, I was losing minutes that the kids could be using to reinforce what they just learned. Especially so with shy classes, where no students would volunteer and if called on would mumble "I don't know" in lieu of answering, whether they understood or not. I still only had one class with each grade a week, and that's not a whole lot of time to spend interrogating shy students as to the meaning of my English.

My year mostly without JTEs is over now, and I received thank you notes from some of my JHS 3rd grade students. They've had me for 2.5 years, all but one semester, and many of the things they wrote warmed my heart. "I was able to communicate in English." "Getting a letter back from the ALT I wrote to made me happy." "I like your class!"

All those notes but the last were in Japanese, though. I don't know what next year will bring for my school and class and JTE wise, but I know my next goal: I will work toward making those final messages in spontaneous English, no matter how broken.

Amanda Hahn

Amanda is a third-year Kobe ALT. Some of her lesson and project plans from the past few years are online at [Kobe SpeakRaku](http://KobeSpeakRaku.com).

We live in an era of branding, labeling, slogan-ing, identifying, and trying to fit in even when we purposely stand out: an age of individualism, but where you want that individualism to be called something. A period where having no identity is an 'identity'. A dispensation of 'me', my way. A time of "I want to do XYZ because I like it, but just because I do XYZ doesn't mean I am an XYZ-er." We are beings who seek to belong, even when not belonging... is 'belonging' to something. Weird, huh? Well, welcome to the Genesis of the ANTI-LABEL era.

In fashion, labels are crucial. That's what sets Versace jeans apart from Arrow Jeans. It tells you what runway that garment should be on, how it should function on the runway and who should take it home. But, without these labels, could you really tell if a sweater is made by Hermes or DKNY? And either way, isn't the sweater fulfilling the same basic function? – keeping you warm on a cold day. So, really, when it all comes down to it, how important are labels? Can we survive without them? Could you function effectively without being labeled? Wouldn't it be a little more fun just to exist... live even, without a 'tag', without an 'identity', without an 'ISO 9000', without being forced into

one group and subsequently being stereotyped according to 'outsiders' perception of who you are? I believe it would! And that's the way the world is heading now: Anti-labels!

Gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, top, bottom, versatile, bi-curious, transsexual, transvestite, butch, fem, stud, passive, active, boyfriend, girlfriend, dating, fooling-around, husband, wife, mistress, life-partner, civil-union, lovers, play-mates, and f@k-buddies are just some of the labels we ascribe to ourselves in hope of making things 'easier'. But does it really make things easier or does just complicate the whole game? – One way to find out, huh?

So, two people managed to rise above the disco smoke of a dance floor and found each other at a party while sipping on their cocktails; began seeing each other and sharing lazy lunches, candle lit dinners, romantic French films, walks on the beach, Cherry Blossom BBQs, bowls of ramen, Christmas, New Year, and maybe a birthday, but the minute one of these individuals asks, "So, where are things going? Are we in a relationship?", things start to spiral out of control. Is it that in a weird quasi-universe, the absence of a label ensures security?



Is it that the whole 'free agents of the universe' have some weight to it? But there might be some truth in that! Is it that a label applies pressure and people start to 'freak out' whenever they are labeled? What's the deal? Or maybe, just maybe when two persons find each other and are so connected that they do not need a marketing department to come in and brand the uniqueness that they share, but rather live freely as two connected agents of the universe and allow themselves to "see where things go" and by going there together, they would both know that they are "on their way" and when they have arrived "there", they would know that "they have arrived", label-less-ly!

Growing up in a religious household with a mother who had Jesus on speed dial; a father who DIDN'T; a brother who hated my guts for one reason or the other; and a society that demands you to be on ONE SIDE of the 'fence' and stick to it, I believed that things were either 'black or white': gay or straight; top or bottom; butch or fem; Bob Marley or Cher; Obama or Bush; Christians or sinners; meat or fish; night or day; crazy or sane. But the older I got I realized that a 'black or white' universe is a boring

one, a narrow-minded approach to existence, a limited belief structure. As you embark upon the 'rainbow-shaded gray' areas, you realize that that's where LIFE is and that's where the citizens of Anti-label planet dwell. On this planet, one can afford to dabble here and there in the 'rainbow-shaded gray' area without having to give up their 'citizenship' on earth and be forced to be labeled as 'ALIENS'. But rather feel free to indulge in the splendors of the 'planet'.

But honestly, I lift my Phillip Treacy hat (the designer who makes Sarah Jessica Parker hats) to our Asian friends who live a little closer to Anti-label planet than most people. These are the guys who don't even bother to affix a brand to themselves, but happily indulge in any shade the rainbow has to offer. Needless to say, they know how to indulge... (lol...)

Wouldn't it be such a wonderful world if we had no 'identity', no stereotypes, no pre-conceived notions, no expectations, no hang-ups, but just allow ourselves to love, live, experience life and all the different flavors and splendor that it has to offer, label-less-ly? I would be first in line!

Dwayne Cobourne

All About Golden Week

Golden week is coming up.

For many of us, that means travel – whether it be to places in Japan we haven't been before, or to a new destination abroad – there seems to be no better time to travel than in the long, warm spring holiday.

Despite the cost that is. As all of us who have been here a while can attest to, and perhaps some new people may already know, Golden Week is the most expensive week of the year here in Japan to do just what it tempts you to do. Train and hotel costs triple, and popular tourist areas are flooded with people. Even going overseas is costly, as flight prices go up exponentially, and most locations in East Asia are also flooded with vacationing Japanese tourists.

So while some of us brave the rush of the crowds and climb the mountain of high prices, others of us look forward to Golden Week as just some

well needed time off at home. I know this will be my first time remaining in country for early May since I got here. So I find myself wondering now that I have the time – what is Golden Week all about? We all of us enjoy the fruits of holiday freedom, but do we know why the holidays are there in the first place?

Well, to begin with, Golden Week consists of four public holidays in the span of seven days. If one of these holidays happens to land on a Sunday (as one will this year and two next year) then the following Monday is taken off as a make up holiday. The intent is to create two separate holiday periods, one consisting of three days, the other of four. The creation of this set of holidays is relatively new – it only began in 1947.

Why in 1947? That has to do with the nature of the holidays themselves, starting with the April 29th holiday known as *Showa Day*.

Showa Day used to be known as *Greenery Day*. But there's already a *Greenery Day*! So what happened? Why make a new *Greenery Day*? Well, *Showa Day* (somewhat confusingly) actually started off as the Emperor Hirohito's birthday, just as December 23rd is that of Emperor Akihito. Emperor Hirohito was a somewhat controversial Emperor, whose 63-year reign saw the end of Taisho Democracy, World War II, the post-war occupation of Japan by the United States, and the rise of Japan as an industrial and economic power on the world stage, among other things. After his death, his son succeeded him and the new holiday for the Emperor's

birthday was moved to the current December 23rd date. The Japanese now consider this date as a day to reflect on the tempestuous years of Hirohito's reign.

May 3rd is *Constitutional Memorial Day*. As one can guess, it is a day set aside to celebrate the Constitution of Japan. It is also the only day of the year that the Japanese National Diet Building is opening for viewing to the public.

May 4th is *Greenery Day*. For a long while, May 4th used to be just an empty national holiday, because it sat between two existing holidays. But as recently as 2007, it has become *Greenery Day*, which was removed from its old spot on April 29th and replaced with *Showa Day*. *Greenery Day* is also celebrated in honor of Emperor Hirohito, without mentioning him by name, as he was known

to love nature. It is a day to be thankful and commune with the natural world.

Finally, we have May 5th; *Children's Day*. Originally called *Boy's Day*, it was a day for Japanese families to pray for the health and success of their sons. Carp streamers and samurai dolls are put on display to symbolize strength and success. Traditionally an answering holiday to the March 3rd *Girl's Festival*, the name of *Boy's Day* was changed however, to include both boys and girls. It is now a holiday to celebrate the happiness and personalities of children, and to appreciate mothers. Sorry boys! Although I think strong tradition still holds over from *Boy's Day*, as the fifth day of the fifth month of the year is reserved for a boy's holiday in many parts of Asia.

Golden Week is the most important holiday week in Japan, closely followed by Silver Week and Obon. Though a strange mix, it is a good opportunity for some rest and relaxation.

What are you doing for Golden Week?

CJ Stearns



My Japanese Driving Story

When I decided to get my

Japanese license I did some investigating and found out that the closest location for Himeji people is in Akashi. Although you can get there by taking a train to Akashi and a bus that drops off directly in front of the driving center, my wife drove me there for my first attempt. After arriving I took the written test. Surprisingly it was only ten questions long and entirely in English. I scored 7 out of 10 (the minimum score to pass), but they wouldn't show me which ones I had missed. After passing the written test I went to another area to sign up for the driving test. I have since heard that it is impossible to do both tests in one day, but I distinctly remember doing both of mine on that 1st day. I took the written test at 10:00 am, but the driving testing didn't start until 1:00pm, so my wife and I went to McDonald's for some breakfast.

When I returned I went to the waiting area where they have a film running on repeat that explains the important points of the driving test. It is also possible to physically walk the course so you can familiarize yourself with the layout, which I did.

When it came time to start the test I was lined up with the other test takers in my group and

given instructions in Japanese which I did not understand. Then I went outside and waited by the testing vehicles. The test is administered with one test taker driving the course while the next test taker in line sits in the back seat. This caught me off guard and immediately my anxiety level spiked. When I pulled onto the course I turned on the windshield wipers instead of the turn signal (Japanese cars have one arm on the right side for both turn signals as opposed to an arm on each side of the steering wheel).

Once I settled in I felt like I was doing well. Then came the tricky part; a zigzag section where you have to maneuver three ninety-degree turns in a short distance. Both sides of the road are lined with ditches, and if you go through one of these it is an automatic fail. If you enter the ditch you can stop the vehicle and reverse out without failing, but that's not what I did. I didn't realize I was in the ditch until it was too late. Even worse was that I didn't fully understand the consequences, and since I thought I had done well on the rest of the test I still expected to pass. When I found out I had failed I was shocked. I had been driving in America for more than 20 years, so failing was

almost incomprehensible to me. I collected myself and did the only thing I could; sign up for another try.

I was still feeling the effects when I returned a month later for my second attempt. I remember feeling extremely nervous as I repeated the beginning steps of the test. I was actually shaking as I pulled out onto the course, although I did manage to use the turn signal as opposed to the windshield wipers this time. I calmed down and finished the course with what I thought was perfect precision, even navigating the tricky section without incident. When I finished however the result was the same. I was slightly angered at the explanation I was given, which included the retort, "You are driving like an American." Later I realized there are certain peculiarities of the test that I was doing incorrectly. Specifically, you must get as close to the curb as possible when making turns; the logic being that this prevents mopeds and bikes from squeezing beside you as you turn. Also I wasn't looking around enough at the traffic signal that is part of the course. It is very important to make an exaggerated show of looking both ways before proceeding

through the light once it turns green. The tester needs to distinctly see that the driver has looked in all possible areas that other cars might be. Another section that might possibly cause some trouble is a series of short turns that come rather quickly in the middle of the course. The tester is expected to cross the closest lane when making the original turn, go immediately into the far lane, and then make another quick turn, rather than turning into the closest lane, putting on the turn signal, and then passing into the far lane.

Once I realized what I was doing wrong I felt much better heading into my third attempt, but as I pulled out can you guess what I did? Yep, turned on the windshield wipers again. Then I started to fumble with the lever and instead of turning the wipers off I switched them to a faster interval. Argh-instant anxiety attack! I thought- great- failed again and I haven't even made it 100 meters. The tester, who was the same man from my first attempt, smiled, then reached over and casually returned the arm to its upright position. The irony to this inauspicious beginning is that I actually relaxed, thinking I had already failed. The rest of the test went without incident, and I was

thrilled when the tester told me to get out and come around to his window (this is the way of telling successful candidates that they have passed). After the test I got my picture taken and sat down with Ms. Emily Lemmon who had also passed her test that afternoon (third try as well). We were told to wait several hours while they finished processing our applications, but apparently they had decided to make a special exception for us, because someone came out just a few minutes later and handed us our shiny new licenses. I felt great, almost giddy, like I was suddenly a 16 year-old again!

Jason White



Hyogo Times April Event Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
01 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	02 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	03 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	04 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	05 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	06 Himeji Castle Sakura Night Lightup Himeji Castle April 6, 6:30pm – Sun, April 15, 8:00pm	07 Sasayama Sakura Festival Around the ruins of Sasayama Castle 9am – 4pm
08 Nishinomiya Sakura Festival Shukugawa Park	09 Himeji Castle Sakura Night Lightup Himeji Castle April 6, 6:30pm – Sun, April 15, 8:00pm	10 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	11 Himeji Castle Sakura Night Lightup Himeji Castle April 6, 6:30pm – Sun, April 15, 8:00pm	12 Kinosaki Lamp Festival Kinosaki Onsen Apr 1 – 15, 2012	13 Himeji Castle Sakura Night Lightup Himeji Castle April 6, 6:30pm – Sun, April 15, 8:00pm	14 Himeji PEPY Ride
15 Ako Kotto-ichi (antique market) Oishi Jinja (Shrine)	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 Showa Day	30 Showa Day (Substitute Holiday)	01	02	03 Constitution Memorial Day	04 Greenery Day	05 Children's Day

For more indepth details about all the events, please visit our website: www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes