



AJET
CONNECT

March 11

INSIDE

March 2012

- 02** The Prez
- 08** March 11
- 16** AJET Elections
- 28** Life After JET
- 32** Culture Corner
- 42** AJET Volunteer
- 50** Travel
- 64** Food
- 72** Workplace Tips
- 80** Haiku
- 82** Fashion and Beauty
- 88** Entertainment
- 98** AJET Photo Contest

Jan/Feb Photo Contest Winner



Josh Del Pino Izumo, Shimane

This month's winners will be entered in the yearly Photo and Haiku winners, where they will be eligible to win a prize.

Welcome to Connect

The monthly e-zine produced for JETs, by JETs, featuring the best news and articles from all over Japan. We are currently looking for writers, editors, photographers, and artists who want to create content for this national publication!

We need YOU, the JET community, to get involved.

Send us your short stories, news articles, photographs, comics... whatever it is that you do best...to communications@ajet.net.

**We're waiting to see what you've got!
Make your voice heard!**

AJET Connect Workplace Safety Advisory System



Signup for AJET Connect

Not signed up for AJET Connect?
Then you can sign up [HERE!](#)

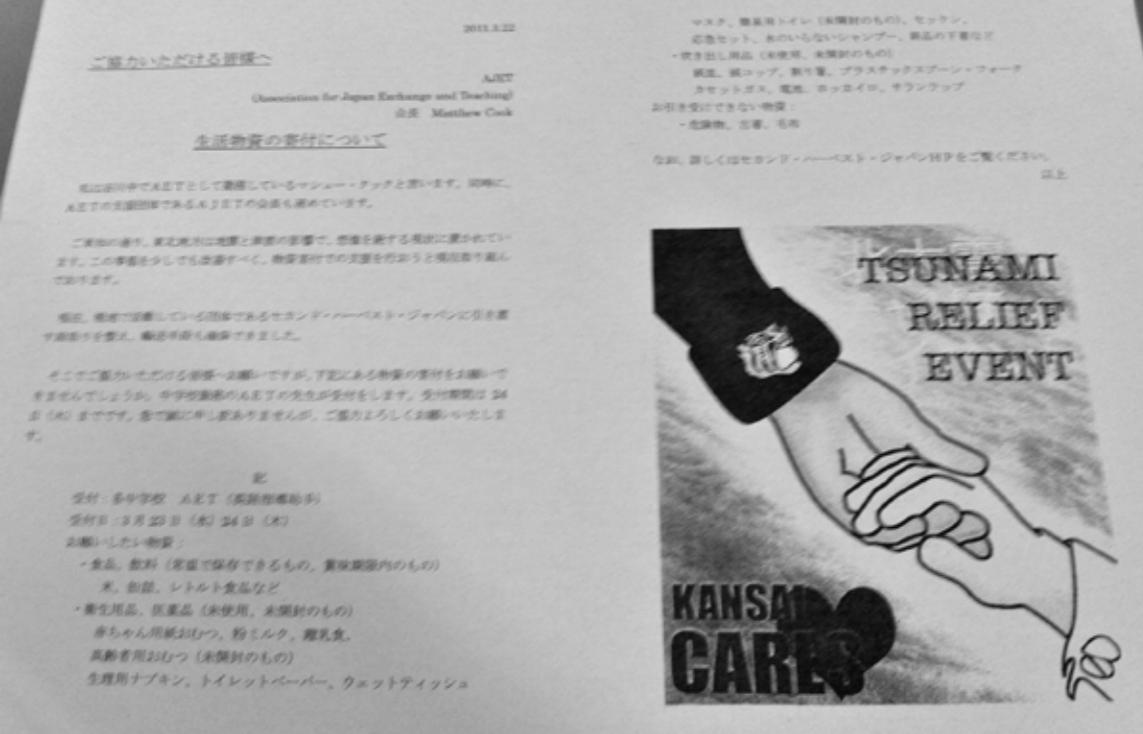


for JETs, by JETs

CEO Matthew Cook **PR/MEDIA** Cailin Arena **ART DIRECTOR** Rob Maxwell
EDITORIAL Sarah Blenkhorn **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS** Cailin Arena ([News](#))
Annabella Massey ([Fashion & Beauty](#)) Amelia Hagen ([Travel](#)) Simon Daly ([Food](#))
Chris Barstow ([Entertainment](#)) Adam Chludzinski ([Sports](#)) Lisa Cross & Sarah
Blenkhorn ([Events](#)) ... ([Education](#)) Sarah Blenkhorn ([Culture](#)) ... ([Short Stories](#))
Melody Wong and Matthew Thompson ([Volunteering](#)) **ADVERTISING** Amelia Hagen,
Miriam Rollason & Genba Bigby **ADMINISTRATION/ACCOUNTING** Mark Noizumi
IT Kevin Mitchell

www.ajet.net

communications@ajet.net



It's hard to believe it's been one year since that tragic day, when all our lives changed and all of us saw Japan affected in a way we never imagined. Here in Osaka, when the world slowly started swaying, I had no idea how coming months would shape my communities' sense of togetherness and responsibility to helping those who needed our help in Tohoku.

For those of us scattered around the country, I imagine we all spent similar, painful minutes watching the same horrific scenes unfold online and on television. Nightmarish scenes of the ocean sweeping through cities and taking homes, cars and most tragically, lives with them. Not just the lives of the helpless victims', but the lives of all their friends and family, which would never again be the same.

When the waters receded and we all began to slowly come out of our initial shock, we began to recognize the magnitude of this tragedy and most of us started thinking the same thing: "How can we help?"

Unfortunately, in the first few days and weeks, there weren't many options unless you were a first responder or medical professional. Elections had just finished for AJET and I was the soon-to-be Chair, so I was able to help in a variety of information gathering and resource providing efforts that were done under the various AJET umbrellas. Members of last year's council were working around the clock to help different groups and set up ways to keep the JET community informed and up-to-date on what could be done. I was proud to assist them with those efforts and do what little I could in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

At the end of the first week after the Earthquake, local prefec-tural governments across the country were still waiting and had little to no options on how to get relief and supplies to the affected regions. At that point, I couldn't stand by any longer or wait another day to start actively helping somehow.

I quickly found out that some groups like 2nd Harvest Japan, Peace Boat, and Kozmoz International were pushing forward and driving supplies to the affected areas, despite the government's instructions and statements against it. Reports were pouring in, at this point, on the foreign news and online about dire conditions. People without clothes, babies without diapers, a lack of sanitary supplies and more. Finding this out, and hearing these reports, I was determined to get aid and supplies there.

I went to my school, and lobbied teachers and my principal to do a drive of supplies and food for the survivors. It took a lot of convincing, because of the circumstances at the time. They were being told one thing by the media and by the city's spokespeople, and yet another story by me. I backed up my points and told them that I'd take on the full responsibility for whatever happened. When I finally had everyone on the same page, it was contingent on the pro-





gram being "the ALTs project", to protect the school, and I was fine with that.

In the following few days I was overcome by everyone in our communities generosity. These people were all just waiting for a chance to do something to help. Turns out, they felt just as helpless as the rest of us that previous week. Before I knew it, the PTA, our students, and our teachers brought armful after armful of their own contributions.

At the time, we were taking anything we could get our hands on to help. Food, clothing, eating utensils, bathroom supplies, paper, batteries, gas..... Literally: ANYTHING. It took us hours and hours to categorize the items and box them and mark our total inventory on the boxes and on paper. I gave a call to my friend, Barry Wyatt at Kozmoz International in Kyoto prefecture and he swooped in with his team with a van and a 2 tonne moving truck that we stacked to the top.

I was determined to see this effort through, and despite the fears of radiation exposure and other things on the news, I climbed aboard with Barry and a few others on our way to Ishinomaki city in Miyagi prefecture. It took all day and overnight, but those hours did nothing to prepare us for what we'd see. Peace Boat had volunteers in the field doing clean up and by the time we'd arrived, the volunteers were coming home to their "tent city" at a local university campus where they'd set up shop next to a field house they had converted to a warehouse for supplies to be distributed. This was "base camp" right next to ground zero for the tsunami.

As we unloaded, I was overcome with emotion looking at these brave souls who had traveled here out of a sense of responsibility and desire to help their fellow man in a time of need. Without any comforts or even running water, they were bearing the elements night after night, sleeping in tents and grueling in labor all day long at ground zero. I was instantly struck with guilt that I'd just come here and drop off these trucks filled with supplies, only to turn around and go home. After talking with some of the leaders of these volunteers, they agreed that I could stay and help them if I wished.

The next couple couple days were days I will never forget. I can't even begin to tell you the devastation that I saw, the destruction of a city, the ruins left behind. But all of those scenes in my mind are standing side-by-side with my personal hope for mankind. People helping each other. Grateful citizens arms outstretched in thanks. People who were so struck with grief and anguish....And yet still at the same time insisting that we share in what little food they had with those of us there helping. I saw compassion of the human spirit. Heard stories that still make me want to cry. But most importantly, I realized that we're all part of the same community. Even though I was "foreign" to these people, during those days there were no "foreigners". There were





no outsiders. There was only us, and we were all part of the great community that is mankind.

I left Ishinomaki feeling a great sense of irony. I had traveled so far to give these people something. But really, I was leaving with something much greater. I was leaving with a sense of what this world truly needs. Each other.

Without each other, we are nothing. A man that stands alone can never accomplish or be the things that dreams are made of without his fellow man. No matter where you are, or who your community is, I urge you to remember that we, as individuals, can only be as good as what we make of our communities. That community may be where you live, it may be your country, or it may just be a group of like-minded individuals sharing a hobby.

I dedicated this year to AJET. Doing my best to make more opportunities for all of you, so that you, in turn, could do more to make life better for others in your communities.

On this eve of the one year memorial of the daishinsai disasters, I challenge you to make the lives of those around you richer and fuller, by whatever means you can, big or small.

I challenge you again, with the same words I used in my election campaign, one year ago this month:

Let this be the year that we say: We can do more. We can help more. We can be MORE.

Connect with you again soon,
Matthew Cook
AJET Chairman





Helping Out

This month marks the first anniversary of the 2011 Great Tohoku Earthquake. Although Nara wasn't physically affected, the entire nation was shocked by the devastation from the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters. In inspiring Japanese fashion, people didn't sit around waiting for someone else to fix things; they immediately started rebuilding and collecting donations to help those in the affected areas.

Yet what really surprised Japanese people was the influx of international support, including aid from the thousands of foreigners who call Japan home. Last year almost 5,000 JETs and former JETs pledged to take part in the "Man Up" campaign and donate 10,000 yen to a charity of their choice. Locally, Nara JETs also got involved, organizing and participating in clothing and supply drives, blood donations, an eikaiwa fundraiser, and a DJ fundraising event. Since then, some of us have even been to Tohoku to volunteer in the cleanup!

There is still a lot of work to be done, and families are still in need. If you have ideas to raise money or help out in another way, please share them on

the AJET page or through email. If you feel uncomfortable donating through a bank transfer, we can collect money and donate it on behalf of all Nara JETs. We are extremely fortunate to be earning the amount of money we make and living where we are, so let's keep Japan in mind this March and help where we can!

^_^ Neetha

Some Ways to Contribute to Relief Efforts

1 The Japanese Red Cross is the easiest and probably largest organization to donate to. You can donate to them by direct bank transfer. They recently also posted their totals from last year's donations and you can choose where you want your donation to go.

Bank info

www.jrc.or.jp/english/relief/l4/Vcms4_00002070.html

Where do you want your money to go?

www.jrc.or.jp/eq-japan2011/donation/index.html#A

2 National AJET has a page (slightly outdated so double check the information) about various ways to help. Ignore the Foreign Buyer's Club option as that ended last September.

<http://ajet.net/opportunities-to-volunteer/>

3 If you like to donate and get something in return, buy a Fukushima t-shirt! On the bottom of the National AJET page is a t-shirt fundraiser by Fukushima AJET. I really like the design and you can get it in all sorts of colors. The shirts are 2000 yen and just over half of that goes to charities in the region.

A blog about the shirts and ordering (English)

<http://fukushimatshirt.blogspot.com/>

The color and sizes (in Japanese)

www.esgraphic.co.jp/shop/d_t-shirts/085-CVT/

Their Facebook page

www.facebook.com/groups/128322477250963/

And Jason Ishida, in charge of FUJET's merchandising and publications, can also take orders via email:

jasonishida@gmail.com

4 This site has lists of smaller NGOs that are helping with tsunami relief. If you have something specific in mind you'd like to help with, this website could help.

From the Classroom to the Disaster Zone

Making a Difference

Mark Flanigan

Hello, my name is Mark Flanigan. I am a JET alumnus, and I was placed in Nagasaki from 2000 to 2004. I'm back in Japan as a Rotary Peace Fellow at the International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo. After my graduation this coming June, I will work for the Japan ICU Foundation in NYC as a Program Officer.

I really wanted to volunteer after March 11. As a former ALT and current Rotary Peace Fellow, I have called Japan my second home twice now, so I felt it was my duty to do whatever I could to help this country and its people in their greatest hour of need. As well as volunteering in Ishinomaki, I have helped coordinate others from my university to go.

I'd like to give thanks to the excellent organization and management provided by our sponsoring organizations, The Nippon Foundation and The Nikkei Youth Network. Our daily schedules and logistical affairs were very well managed and easy to comply with. I also enjoyed the camaraderie of my fellow team members and enthusiastic Rotary Peace Fellow friends from ICU, Mara Duer, Lydia Humenycky and Nelson Sanz-Cadena, who made a very challenging job much easier to tackle each day.

Going with an organized group is safe and well worth the time and effort. Many more ICU students, both graduate and undergraduate, are planning to volunteer in follow-up missions. We are so happy to be able to share our stories in the hope that more people will seek to serve in such a volunteer capacity. The need is still so imperative in the affected regions of northeast Japan. I have found that, even a year after the tragic event, the physical and psychological scars still run quite deep in those most directly affected by the disaster.

In retrospect, before I volunteered for the first time, I might have done a bit more specific research on Ishinomaki in order to prepare a bit more for the culture and people we would meet. All the same, the first time we went, we were only there a short time and the research I conducted on my return has helped me to reflect on what we experienced there and thus plan for longer stays.

Despite the initial shock at seeing just how horrible the devastation really was and, indeed, still is, I experienced the warm feelings of helping people in a disaster situation. I felt like we could make an active contribution to helping them rebuild their lives. Seeing such images on TV or the Internet simply can't prepare you for the overwhelming sights, sounds and smells that surround you once you arrive in Tohoku.

I feel really fortunate to be here in Japan at this critical time, and to be able to give something back to the area affected by the earthquake and

tsunami. After March 11, it looked as if our Rotary Peace Fellows program here might be suspended due to valid concerns over possible radiation exposure. We all spent a few weeks in limbo, waiting for official word. I am really happy that ICU kept the program going and feel like it was certainly a safe and responsible decision. As a volunteer, I feel as though I am really putting peace into practice.

ICU is taking an active role in terms of providing individual counseling and also financial support through the Earthquake Tuition Waiver Fund to students directly affected by the disaster. Several faculty members are also working with students to develop projects like service learning coursework, which integrates active volunteering in northeastern Japan as a key component. It's a great feeling to be part of an institution like this. I've found a great community of students who are interested in connecting with their global community and pitching in where needed. For example, Mariko Baba, an undergraduate student, has been instrumental in organizing ICU students volunteering in Ishinomaki. Jennifer Maruyama, another undergraduate student here from the US, has utilized her position as president of our Global House Dormitory to promote volunteering as an activity for the new students as well. So, together we are all now organizing another volunteer trip for ICU participants in the spring of 2012.

On my first trip there, on the second day, our team was clearing debris from the first floor of a house that had been swamped by ocean water from the tsunami. I noticed an elderly woman hanging clean laundry on a clothesline outside her shattered home. At that point I felt an immense sadness for her loss, but I was also really inspired by her ability to survive and somehow persevere in the face of such a complete and utter tragedy. She had lost the only home she ever really knew, along with almost all of her valuables, heirlooms, photos and personal possessions from her time here on earth. And yet, she was still out there, washing and drying the clothes for her children and grandchildren. That struck me as the best form of humanity...true resilience against all odds. That lady, and so many more like her, keeps me motivated to return again and again.

The photo was taken during Golden Week 2011, in the Oshika Hanto fishing village area of Ishinomaki.



Sorting through the Entropy

Emma Pierce

It was one year ago. In south Nagano's countryside, I was teaching at an elementary school that day. Walking across the grounds after a lesson, I suddenly felt violently dizzy. Then, I realized what was happening. The ground was moving abnormally. Somehow, in that moment, it wasn't so scary.

In the night, however, a scary one came. When I had first drifted off to sleep, I couldn't get the tsunami images from the news out of my mind. The biggest shake came around 4am. I sat up from the futon, but the shaking stopped. After that, I felt many smaller ones through the night. It was impossible to sleep.

For many of us in Japan, the next several weeks were stressful. However, I knew my stress could not compare with people who lived in the heavily affected areas. Starting the morning of March 12th, after all those earthquakes, I got an idea got inside my head. I wanted to go there; I wanted to help.

The chance came a little more than a month later. I had gotten in contact with an NGO called Peace

Boat, and went to an orientation in Tokyo about volunteering in Ishinomaki, Miyagi. I had never done anything like it before, and I never imagined I would. Now, I have been to Miyagi's coast a total of three times. There are some things that stand out, most clearly, in my mind.

On my first trip there, in early May, I stayed for a week in a tent. It was the most physically difficult of the three visits, because I had to bring most of my own living supplies, and the work required was more intense then.

Even now, I cannot believe the level of nastiness I endured on the second and third days. The district of Ibarazu, Ishinomaki was especially hard-hit by the tsunami. When we got there, it seemed like only roads and bodies had been cleared. Everything else appeared as it was after the waves hit on March 11th.

On top of this, the town had a unique problem that was evident in the smell of the air. In the heart of this fishing community, there was a cannery storing tons and tons of fresh fish and seafood in fridges. Before the earthquake, it had all been sorted in bags and boxes, ready to be shipped away for canning. The tsunami had rushed in and busted the



place open, destroying the coolers and dumping loads of fish in every corner of town, in places one would never imagine. More than a month later, the rotting bags of seafood remained, and the entire town reeked of rotten fish corpses. Not even a heavy dust-mask could shield me from the stench. It was enough to consider holding my breath.

Our job was to search through the toxic rubble and remove the rotten fish. We had to help relieve the locals of the smell. There was everything ranging from mid-sized red sea bream (tai), to squid, to half-meter-long tuna. The wasted catch had to be worth millions: motainai!, or in English, "such a waste!"

This was something I could handle, I thought. I grew up fishing on inland lakes in the Midwestern US, and I had a strong stomach for things. However, when I found my first 'wet' bag, I doubted myself a little. With only one layer of gloves as my protection (later I doubled-up), I peeled back dried, prickly red tai to uncover a slimy mess of liquid flesh and maggots. I reeled back, gagged, and suppressed the urge to vomit. It was so foul it made me dizzy. They told us volunteers to take it easy – if it was too much – but I didn't want to be like that. I didn't want to be a person who couldn't handle it. I got through it somehow, and I went back there again the next day.

It was then that we saw three small children walking amongst the rubble near us: a girl and two little boys. They teased some of us volunteers and told us we all smelled foul. It was so true; it made

some of us laugh. The girl stepped over the wall, another volunteer instinctively warned her, "abunai yo!" (It's dangerous! get back!) This trash heap of a neighborhood had become a toxic playground for these children. They were still living here; it was real. Was this all we could do?

A few days later, for our last project of the week, we went to a local woman's house near downtown Ishinomaki. This was another thing that remains etched into my mind. Right from the start, there was something strange about the place. Peering into the first-floor tatami, it looked untouched since the tsunami came through. The old woman who had called for volunteer help was not living there at that time. She was in an evacuation center nearby. However, her son, living in the upstairs part of the house, greeted us at the door. He didn't give us much of any instruction; we just cleaned the place, removed wet tatami and damaged items, and scrubbed the floor and the kitchen as best as we could.

As we were rinsing our buckets after finishing our task, a neighborhood local wandered over to say hi. Perhaps he wanted to meet some foreign volunteers, or maybe he just wanted to talk to someone. He told us about the earthquake. He could hear the sound of it coming before the shaking. He hadn't known about it at the time, but the elderly woman of the house we were cleaning, she had broken her back in the earthquake. Two days later, rescue officials found her on the first floor, and took her to the evacuation center. It must have been so traumatic for her, waiting like that.

However, the next detail leaves the clearest impression. The son, who had to be well over 30, with no job, was living upstairs the entire time.

I still don't know what to think, but now I realize that – even in disaster – the lives of individuals are more complicated than one might imagine.

On my second trip there, in July, I went for a weekend. We volunteers stayed in a shelter this time. It was hot, and there were so many flies that landed on us when we slept. For two days, we helped dig and uncover memorial stones. The small community wanted to hold its annual summer festival at the local temple, so we tried to make it fit for celebrations again.

Like the first time volunteering, locals worked with us. Especially here, the stones we uncovered were very special to them; it was a delicate thing. Because of the July heat and physical work in the sun, we had to take many water breaks. During one of these breaks, a local man opened up to us.

His mother had died a few years before the tsunami came, and he was in his car with his father at the moment of panic. Their car was swept up in the waves with them inside it. Miraculously, it hit something that stopped it, and they were able to wait unharmed for 3 hours before being rescued. The man took out his cell phone and showed us the image of his car tipped up on end, lodged in the rubble. The thing that the car had hit, saving their lives, was a grave stone. Astonishingly, it was part of the very same site where his mother's stone had stood...only meters away. He told us the kamisama, or the god(s) must have been looking out for him.

After finishing work that day, we went to a place called Onnagawa. It was hit so hard by the earth-

quake and tsunami; it would never be the same again. The ground there had shifted several meters. We had only about 15 minutes to see it, take pictures, and leave before the tide came up and flooded the streets between the buildings, tipped over on their sides. Everything still stood in devastation, and yet the yellow-oranges of the sunset struck the sides of the ruined buildings, and the sea was astonishingly clear. In a way, I thought it was beautiful. I looked out over the ocean and thought about the man's story from earlier. The world is so big, I thought. And we are so small.

My most recent trip, in September, was also during a weekend. We cleaned Ishinomaki's naga hama, or long beach. Again, it was hard physical work, carrying heavy boards and fiberglass. Also, the millions of small things – plastic caps, poly-foam bits, pill bottles, fishing rope bits – were all tossed and intermingled with the sand. By the end of our work though, the beach was clear enough for the people to enjoy it again. Once again, I stood so near to the sea. It was a sea that locals might come to know again, now. If they could find a way to forgive it.

So that is my story. I volunteered for a week and two weekends, doing the same work that affected locals have had no choice to do for nearly a year now. What to make of it? I know my impact alone is small, but I hope the efforts – collectively – add up to something. Also, it has done something for me, even though I can't fully understand it. The world is full of tsunamis and typhoons, war, thirst and confusion. Sometimes the earth spits up and churns over itself again. It can be thought of as sad, natural, profound, or meaningless. Existence is just the moments of sorting through the entropy. I am happy I did some sorting.



Aoba Ward, Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture



©2012 Google - About Street View

Share this location



Tweet



Share

Map data ©2012 GIS Innov

Memories for the Future

A Google Project

On March 11, 2011 a devastating earthquake and tsunami hit northeastern Japan, causing unimaginable damage. Many people lost their lives, their homes, and all their precious memories collected over generations. Among the things lost were precious photos and videos — cherished images of family, friends, pets and once-in-a-lifetime events — buried in rubble or washed to sea.

To help people in Japan share their photographs and videos that did survive, Google created a website, "Mirai e no kioku" (text is in Japanese only), which means "Memories for the Future". Through this site, people have been able to rediscover lost memories of their homes and towns.

Google is now also providing thousands of miles of Street View imagery in the affected areas that were collected before and after the disaster. Seeing the street-level imagery of the affected areas puts the plight of these communities into perspective and ensures that the memories of the disaster remain relevant and tangible for future generations.

Click the "Before" or "After" links at the top of this page and use the Google Maps display to see the

areas where we have Street View coverage. Find an image in Street View by dragging the yellow "Pegman" icon onto the map where you see a blue overlay. Then click between the "Before" and "After" links to see how the earthquake and tsunami impacted that area.

English

<http://www.miraikioku.com/streetview/en/>

Japanese

<http://www.miraikioku.com/>



Photos by Emma Pierce



**AJET needs
you to >>> VOTE! <<<**

psst click me I'm a hyperlink ;)

Chair Platform

Simon Daly

3rd year JET, Hokkaido

Beyond our titles as "JETs", it can sometimes seem as if we have little in common with our peers. The one thing that we all have in common is that we were all selected for our skills, professionalism, and excellence in varying fields. Our collective power, as one of the most prestigious groups of foreign professionals in the world, is a great resource just waiting to be tapped.

That, is where AJET's true potential lies. We are 4,000+ talented individuals linked by this national organization and once organized we can fulfil our potential. JETs are an incredibly passionate pool. If we can increase participation in AJET and keep each other informed through the newly revamped website and magazine, we are off to a good start. Beyond this, our hard work and success stories should be held up as examples of the ongoing worth of JET for all to see. Meaningful partnerships with businesses, government entities, and charitable organizations should be sought out, not only that reflect well on us as JETs, but those which can enable us to provide JETs with more resources, scholarships, funding, and classroom tools.

My personal vision for AJET is to be the best resource for JETs from the moment they arrive until the last day of their contracts. I'd like to be there for new JETs as they find their feet. We should work towards a meaningful interconnectedness between prefectures so that all JETs looking to give back can be involved. Stronger bonds with worldwide alumni associations and former JETs would help those about to move on. Huge steps have been made in the past year by a motivated and dedicated council to rebrand and reinvigorate AJET and yet it still only feels on the cusp of being relevant for those whom it should be an invaluable resource. AJET is the foremost structure through which we can express ourselves through tapping into the talents of JETs outside of the classroom for the good of individuals and the community alike.

I bring to this position experience, enthusiasm and a proven track record of striving for excellence and exceeding all expectations. During my term as the president of Hokkaido AJET our membership grew and participation in our events across this island soared. My background is as a chef, so I have a highly developed creative edge. You may have seen something I have written in Connect. I spoke as a MEXT presenter at Tokyo Orientation, won the TOA t-shirt design contest in consecutive years and represented my country at the Sapporo Snow Festival snow carving contest for the past three years. I am 32 years old, coming to JET later than most and my time here has been a revelation for me. I have personally experienced how opportunities arise from a willingness to meaningfully contribute and you can too.

My passion for education is reinforced having my own children in the Japanese education system. They bring daily inspiration and insight into all aspects of my life. My wife is a returning JET having lived in Shikoku previously. She is the main reason my exuberance has been well directed. We have experienced so much as JETs that I feel it is time to give back.

I know that with charismatic leadership, creative thinking and the ability to work collaboratively AJET can bloom. I am eager to represent you, but humble enough to not presume to know the needs of every individual. Perhaps above all else I am a good listener and would love to hear what you have to say.

Thank you for your time.

Chair Platform

Mark Hykes

1st year ALT, Tokushima-ken

Is JET what you thought it would be? For me it has been everything and more; and I want it to continue being that for years to come, for other JETs as well.

Unfortunately, as many of you may be aware the JET Programme has been on the proverbial chopping block for the past few years. I feel that AJET is a major player in remedying this issue. I would like to further help remedy this issue as the AJET Chair.

My previous experiences have allowed me to hone my social and professional skills that I believe will be vital assets for a successful AJET Chair. During my college years I served as general manager of a country club and as the Chair of Ohio University's Linguistic Association, these have given me experience in a leadership position. My experience delegating tasks under time constraints has taught me to effectively manage others with confidence while working under pressure. One crucial component of the AJET Chair's responsibility is fostering the relationship between The JET Programme and Japan. My time serving as an AJET Translator along with two years of experience living in Japan and an academic interest in Japanese Culture and Society taught me to effectively and professionally interact with the Japanese community that we have all come to know and love.

I know I can offer a diverse mix of culture, experience and knowledge to the AJET Council. While serving, I want to accomplish four things:

> To continue enhancing the face of the AJET Council's with the help of Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) as part of the council's dedication to improve awareness both within JET and in Japan.

> To continue providing an avenue through which JETs can access educational resources and as well a platform for their voice to be heard on the AJET website.

> To research what JETs need/want that will encourage them to stay for longer than a single year, decreasing the strain on the budget of the JET Programme.

> To strengthen the connections between the prefectural AJETs to foster a more national JET Community.

I know that my interpersonal and managerial skills will make me an effective Chair and will allow me to work for the betterment of AJET, for all JETs. In addition, I am a good team player who is dedicated, dependable, hard-working and reliable in getting the job done well. I would like to be able to make a huge contribution to AJET as my vision is to help foster more togetherness amongst JETs in our communities so we can show Japan what we have to offer.

A council that can work well together and that gets along is a major factor in the running of an organization such as AJET. Because of this, I have asked, Mr. Alex Heichelbech to run for Vice-Chair. On top of us getting along very well and seeing each other on a regular basis he is well qualified for the position. Please place your trust and support in us as we aim for the executive council.

Chair Platform

Mark Noizumi

3rd Year Minamiaizu, Fukushima

Hello! I'm excited to be running for AJET Chair. I am a third year JET in Minamiaizu, a small mountain town in Fukushima. As the only candidate for office with experience as an Executive Officer on National AJET this past year, I feel I am in a unique position to hit the ground running from day one. I have loved my experience in JET and am going into my fourth year eager to take on new challenges. I, like so many of us, have a great love for the JET Programme and the opportunities it offers. I have had an amazing experience and I want to help ensure that other JETs can have equally wonderful experiences.

Communities, properly harnessed, are powerful vehicles for learning, friendship, social change, networking, and personal growth. And the JET community is a particularly vibrant and strong one. Just think of the vast countries, cultures, and perspectives our community represents. Last year participants from 39 different countries came to Japan. That's roughly 20% of the countries in the world all united by our common experience and interest in teaching and/or working in Japan.

As chair, it will be my goal to more closely link the work on the national level with your local prefectural AJET chapters. There is so much useful information that we can share. I envision JETs inviting each other to the exciting events in their towns and prefectures. I envision opportunities for JETs to not only get to know people in their local areas, but to have opportunities to reach out into prefectures all over Japan to attend events and meet people all over the country. After all, many of us come to Japan to explore it, to travel it, and to experience the best of it. The JET Programme gives us a network of people who are highly knowledgeable of their own communities within Japan who can help share the best of their areas. I believe National AJET at its best, facilitates these types of connections.

I have extensive experience working on councils similar to NAJET. I have always taken on leadership roles at the various institutions I have attended for education and where I have worked including positions such as chair, vice-

chair and treasurer. In Japan, I have also been very active in my local AJET chapter as well as serving this past year on the National council (as Treasurer on both). I have taken on many duties like Tokyo Orientation Assistant (Some of you may have seen me speak on the ALT Panel at Orientation A or present the Finance Workshop.), Area Support Leader, and I even organized an orientation in Fukushima this past year because the local government didn't have the time or resources to organize one. In all of these roles described above, I have demonstrated a great enthusiasm to make the institutions that I loved better for all of its constituents. I will bring this same passion to the job of AJET Chair.

I believe that I have the skills necessary to perform well in this job. But beyond that, I believe I have the enthusiasm, vision and passion that will make me work hard for you as a fellow JET. I will also listen to what you have to say and seriously take your input to heart. Thank you for taking the time to read my platform and vote. I wish you all the best!

Sincerely,

Mark Noizumi

Vice-Chair Platform

Martin Barry

3rd Year, Shimane

Hello! My name is Martin Barry and I am a 3rd year ALT in Shimane Prefecture. I am asking you to elect me Vice-Chair of National AJET.

I am running for National AJET because I believe in its vital importance, both as a representative body, and a support for JETs. As a rural JET, the services AJET provides have been essential for me in the past. I want to see further advancements in connecting JETs across the country to their association. I believe that increased cooperation between all JET participants and NAJET will bring greater opportunities to all of us and our communities through the sharing of advice and experiences. Together we can support each other and help promote the JET Programme in villages and cities throughout Japan. It is especially important that we come together now to secure the future of the JET Programme in a Japan which is facing difficult economic decisions. I am confident that with my experience on JET, and previous council work, I can make a valuable contribution to the success of this National AJET executive.

I have worked hard to bring JET beyond my schools and out to the wider community. I worked with the Oki Islands Geopark, writing the English material for their application to be recognized as a 'Global Geopark' at the UNESCO Global Geoparks Convention in Norway last September. I have promoted Irish culture through music events and talks. I established an Adult Language Class in my first year. These have all allowed me to get to know very interesting people, while giving the locals an appreciation for the JET programme.

At university I served as Event Manager and Vice Chairperson of the Hispanic Society, working to help integrate students from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. I created a language exchange programme which provided a platform for better integration of foreign students. I ran cultural events, and managed a series of academic lectures with speakers from the Cervantes Institute. I enjoyed making a real difference to foreign students' experience and I believe that with this background I can be a positive influence for JETs.

At last year's Tokyo Orientation I was the project leader for AJET's workshop on Adult Language Classes. I learned first-hand what is required to organize and prepare the Orientation workshops to welcome and support new JETs. I believe that I have the skills, dynamism, and knowledge necessary for the role of vice-chair. My strengths lie in

- Leadership and commitment – With my record of hard work and commitment to the JET programme, I would dedicate myself to ensuring an efficient and successful council.

- Flexibility – Working at 18 schools and a Board of Education, running community language classes, and preparing Oki Geo-Park's UNESCO application I have gained a variety of professional experience. It has required teamwork, research skills, and leadership. These are qualities that I would bring to the position of vice-chair.

- Good interpersonal skills – A good working relationship with the Chair and the Treasurer is key to the smooth and successful performance of the executive body and the council as a whole. Building rapport with all members will be a top priority for me – team work is very important!

Thank you for your time and I hope you will help me take on the exciting challenge of representing you as vice-chair of National AJET.

Vice-Chair Platform

Michelle Castro

1st Year ALT, Shimane

Hello, my name is Michelle Castro and I am a 1st year ALT in Unnan city, Shimane. I am running for the National AJET Vice-Chair position.

I want to be more involved with the AJET community because of how welcoming the AJET members were and how willing they were to help prepare me for my new life in Japan. I have the free time to contribute to AJET along with the leadership skills needed to perform my job requirements.

During college I was a resident assistant for first year college students who lived on campus. The main component of my job was event planning for my housing complex. As a resident assistant it was essential for me to listen to my resident's concerns and to create workshops that were relevant to their needs. I provided opportunities for them to foster their personal growth outside the classroom.

Also during college, I managed a city swimming pool. During this job I created schedules for our swim lesson and recreational swim programs. Working at a pool taught me how to communicate efficiently to large and small groups and to work with people from various backgrounds to complete a common goal. Although I had work commitments and competed for my college swim and cross-country team, I was able to be flexible and manage my time, which I see as being an important part of being the Vice-Chair and an ALT.

I know the job of Vice-Chair can be demanding and challenging but I didn't come to Japan to sit alone in my apartment twiddling my thumbs. After college I worked at group home for foster children and while in Japan I have volunteered at an orphanage through the smile kids program in Shimane. Being involved in my community outside of work has proven to be a rewarding experience. I want to use my leadership and time management skills to ensure an efficient Executive body. My goal is to publicize the accomplishments of special interest groups in an effort to help other JETs find a way to impact their community outside of the classroom.

Please take a minute to vote for me to be your Vice-Chair.

Vice-Chair Platform

Alex Heichelbech

1st year ALT, Tokushima-ken

In my short time on the JET Programme I have received help and support from a variety of sources including my supervisor and the new friends I have made here in Japan. But without a doubt the group most responsible for my enjoyment and success thus far is the Tokushima chapter of TAJET.

This group of intrepid individuals has the challenging and often thankless job of planning innumerable outings and activities within our prefecture while also ensuring we maintain a positive standing within our respective communities. My ultimate goal as a member of the AJET Council would be to continue to provide useful resources for JET's while also continuing to make the JET Programme a more respected and understood organization within Japan.

I possess a diverse set of skills that I feel would help to make me an effective asset for the AJET Council. Achieving the rank of Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America required me to display leadership, organization and a drive to succeed. My time serving as the President of the Alpha Phi Omega volunteer fraternity at Western Kentucky University gave me multiple opportunities to work closely with different groups in both outreach and service capacities. In addition I was fortunate enough to study in Japan prior to my time on the JET Programme where I developed a passion for Japanese culture and language. I always approach new goals with a positive attitude and strive for professionalism in everything I do.

I am confident that I can be an effective asset for the AJET Council and I will work towards the ultimate goal of continuing the JET Programme's exemplary service within Japan. In addition, while serving on the AJET Council I hope to accomplish four goals:

1. Currently the future of the JET Programme is uncertain due to budgetary concerns and the increase in private hires within Japan. We must continue to display our value to Japan, not just within our individual prefectures and blocks but within the country as a whole. This is a goal

that the AJET Council is well suited to undertake using social media and other resources..

2. To continue the strides in progress made with the AJET Connect Magazine and the AJET Website not only to extend resources to current and past JETs, but also as a means of showcasing our talents and contributions to the rest of Japan. Both of these outlets have been invaluable for JET's seeking educational resources or a platform from which to express their ideas and opinions.

3. To reduce the degrees of separation between AJET blocks. I hope to help foster the creation of a sense of community between AJET blocks and not simply within prefectures in order to make us a more cohesive organization.

4. To research what JET's need/want that will encourage them to stay for longer than a single year, decreasing the strain on the budget of the JET Programme.

My skills and my drive to succeed will be vital in helping me to present and achieve these goals as a part of the AJET Council in an effort to better AJET and the JET Programme. I will work hard with my fellow AJET Council members and the AJET community as a whole to encourage a greater sense of community within AJET and to help show Japan what we have to offer. In order to accomplish these goals an AJET council must be united in their goals, as such I am running alongside my fellow JET Mark Hykes whom I believe has all of the necessary skills and ideas to be an effective AJET Chair. We share the same ideas about the future of AJET and the JET Programme and I hope you will consider us both in our bids for the AJET Council.

Vice-Chair Platform

Sarah Lewis

3rd Year ALT, Hyogo

Objective: My name is Sarah Lewis, and I am currently a 3rd year ALT in Kobe-shi, Hyogo-ken. My goal is to be the National AJET Vice Chair. I will apply my previous experience, including 2 years as the Hyogo AJET Prefectural Representative, to being an effective member of the National Council.

Why Vote for Me? I am a leader who values the opinions and skills of those who work with me, and who will personally work towards goals while knowing how and when to delegate. In addition, while I am comfortable in leadership roles, I am an effective team member, and enjoy working in a group.

I have spent 2 years as the AJET Prefectural Representative in Hyogo, the prefecture with one of the largest JET populations in Japan. As a member of Hyogo AJET, I not only manage events, organize and preside over meetings and record the meeting minutes, but I also offer assistance to current and incoming JETs. By listening to their concerns, I was aware that the Hyogo Skill Development Conference was a source of dissatisfaction, so I developed surveys and organized the results into a report, which was presented to the BOE and those in charge of Conference planning. I dedicated extra time and provided input based on the needs of JETs for the development of the workshops. The result has been a more professional and useful conference as well as much happier Hyogo JETs. The improvement of the Conference is just one example of my willingness to strive towards positive change in the JET community. It also demonstrates my experience in the planning process of workshops which will be useful when working on a larger scale with Tokyo Orientation.

Various other positions that I have held include Tokyo Orientation Panel Discussion Presenter (2011), Hyogo Orientation Presenter (2010, 2011), and Hyogo Skill Development Conference Discussion Leader (2010, 2011). Prior to coming to Japan, I spent 1 year on my university's nationally-recognized events committee as a graphic designer and member of the publicity team.

Goals

1. To emphasize the expansion and awareness of National AJET's growing network of teaching resources, especially the lesson plan database.
2. To promote the professional nature of National AJET by calling attention to its role in networking and professional development resources.

In Summary.... By electing me as the National AJET Vice Chair, you will have someone capable and reliable, with years of both leadership and collaboration experience. I enjoy the responsibility of AJET, and the opportunity it provides me to get involved and get to know JETs from all over Japan. I am looking forward to the new challenges and responsibilities that will come with National AJET, as well as using the skills and knowledge I've gained from working within Hyogo on a national level.

Treasurer Platform

Amelia Hagen

4th year ALT, Kitakyushu

Hi! My name is Amelia Hagen and I hope to represent you as Treasurer on the 2012-2013 AJET National Council. I am currently a fourth-year ALT in Kitakyushu City, Fukuoka. Since my arrival in Japan, I have taken a very active role within Fukuoka JET society. For two years, I passionately shaped Fukuoka AJET into a springboard for further JET involvement in the community. In addition, I have served on our Fukuoka JET Orientation Committee and have presented at our ALT Skills Development Conference multiple times. On the national level, this past year my positive JET experience inspired me to strengthen our network by relaying information, promoting events, and reiterating your thoughts and ideas at our CLAIR/AJET Opinion Exchanges as your Block 10 Representative for Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Oita, and Saga. I have also been a Tokyo Orientation Assistant and a Tokyo Orientation MEXT Presenter. Through these experiences and as your AJET Treasurer, I hope to give back to the people and the Programme that have given me so much over the past three and a half years.

What do I hope to accomplish? Having observed the actions and characteristics of the AJET Executive Council these last eight months, I aim to improve the best of their work and bring my own sense of leadership, teamwork, and organisation to the table. As the current Block 10 Representative, I have witnessed and been a part of an incredible, increasing sense of community down here among Kyushu JETs. I would like to extend this cohesiveness throughout Japan and work with both national and regional representatives to make this happen – whether it's volunteering in Tohoku, Naked Man Festival in Okayama, or frisbee in Kumamoto! More specifically, as Treasurer, I would strive to maintain and improve the financial well-being of AJET so that we are able to continue our services such as AJET Peer Support Group, AJET Connect ezine, and information and assistance at both Tokyo Orientation and the Conference for Returning JETs.

Prior to and during JET, I have had a variety of experiences that have required business and

leadership skills crucial to the Treasurer position. As an undergraduate International Business major, I was heavily involved in Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity, winning business case competitions and bringing in local business leaders to speak. Also while at the College of William and Mary, I had the opportunity to do pro-bono consulting and review financials for a Virginia medical firm. As the former leader of Fukuoka AJET, I worked closely with our treasurer to oversee accounting procedures and assist with banking transactions. Along with being the Block 10 Representative, I have served as AJET's Director of Corporate Advertising since last June. This has allowed me not only to cooperate well with AJET's current treasurer, but to understand AJET's business affairs, processes, cash flows, and expectations from the inside out while working with our corporate sponsors and partnering organisations.

In conclusion, I believe I have the skill set to excel for you in this position and encourage you to elect me as your AJET Treasurer. Give me a chance to use my enthusiasm for JET to help you have an even better experience than the one I have been lucky enough to have here in Fukuoka. In doing so, you will allow me the privilege of continuing to work tirelessly for the advancement of JETs during their time on JET and beyond.

Treasurer Platform

Lisa King

1st year ALT, Shimane

My name is Lisa King and I am currently a first year ALT in Shimane Prefecture. Shimane is a wonderful prefecture and though it is small in size and population, it is big in heart. It is for this reason I hope to give back to my JET community by becoming the next National AJET Treasurer.

NAJET Treasurer is a job that requires a great deal of time, patience, and the expertise to handle finances and help make budgetary decisions. It is also a job that requires the ability to work amiably with other people while keeping the integrity of this position and the JET program intact through good fiscal responsibility and honest communication.

If I am elected NAJET Treasurer I can promise to fulfill these duties by,

- > Helping to foster better communication between NAJET and the general JET community while prioritizing my duties as Treasurer and how it best relates to the JET community's needs
- > Representing your economic interests from both a rural and urban perspective.
- > Providing a proactive approach concerning the duties and responsibilities of the Treasurer position.

I am confident I can accomplish these tasks through my own personal experience and qualifications as I:

- > Hold a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and Japanese Studies with an Asian Studies focus: have completed courses in accounting as well as international business, politics, and economics.
- > Worked with The United States Department of Commerce as an International Trade Intern: have experience working in international government and business settings such as assisting business clients with trade law matters and participating in international trade events and seminars.

Treasurer Platform

Marissa Lubong

2nd Year Oyodo, Nara

My name is Marissa Lubong, a 2nd year ALT from Oyodo Town, Nara prefecture.

I grew up in Hawaii, the melting pot of the Pacific. It is due to the influence of that multicultural environment that I strongly believe in the importance of internationalization. After pursuing my Bachelor's Degree in International Economics and Japanese Language and Literature, I applied to the JET program wanting firsthand experience of the international grassroots outreach I encountered while studying international affairs in university and interning at the Japan International Culture Center in Washington, D.C. In my time on JET, I've come to realize the importance of this program in bringing cultural exchange to Japan's communities. As National AJET works to further awareness and support of the JET Program and its participants, I want to contribute to the efforts of such an organization.

A position of this level of responsibility requires more than just a desire to get involved. I believe I have the experience and skills, both in terms of leadership and finance, needed to be an asset in this role. Prior to JET, I have experience in large scale event planning and coordination as President of the George Washington University Hawaii Club, and management in my work as a Supervisor of Intramural Sports and a Logistics Manager at the Lerner Health and Wellness Center. This past year I have also assumed a role on the council of the Nara AJET chapter, helping plan and coordinate events as well as act as a Japanese translator and liaison.

My leadership style would be characterized as "responsible", "efficient", and "caring". I work efficiently to maximize the strengths of myself and my co-workers. I put sincere effort into every task. My strongest asset is that I am not afraid to make decisions and always work with the good of the whole in mind. In my opinion, these traits are essential for the National AJET treasurer to possess as the position is a supportive one that works ultimately to find the means to enable the agenda put forth by the Council.

Although my economic studies and previous leadership capacities have allowed me to gain familiarity with organizational finance work, I would say my work as the treasurer for Nara AJET, in particular, has allowed me to hone the skills I need to fulfill this position for National AJET. My current responsibilities include book-keeping and budgeting for all or our projects (Nara AJET scholarship, Smile Kids Outreach Program) and events (like our annual Bunkasai, Halloween fundraiser, Pub Quiz events, etc). Furthermore, I am responsible for handling of all the cash and banking transactions and budget analysis for our AJET chapter.

If I am elected, I will use all of my experience and effort to ensure that National AJET finances will be properly managed and that the Council will have the monetary resources to fulfill its goals for the oncoming 2012-2013 year. I gratefully appreciate your support. Thank you.

**LIFE
aFTER
JET**





Sylbeth Kennedy

What interested you in coming to Japan?

I grew up in Southern California, near cities that have large Nisei and Sansei populations. Many of my teachers were Japanese Americans and brought their parents' culture into the classroom. We read "Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes" and dressed up in kimonos for Childrens' Day in elementary school. I also grew up watching Godzilla movies and Fuji T.V. on Saturday nights. In college, a lot of Japanese schools brought students to my campus in the summer to study English and we became friends. The year before I joined JET, I won a scholarship to study at a community college in Fukuoka for a month.

Where were you and what did you do on JET?

After graduating college, I joined the JET Program as an ALT in Fukuoka. I spent three years teaching pre-school through junior high along with night classes for adults, and the next two years as an elementary school specialist in another part of the prefecture. During my five years, I was a volunteer with the AJET Peer Support Group, where I was the National Coordinator for two years. I was also

the editor of the Women's SIG magazine and helped with G.O. M.A.D. by selling holiday cards to support an orphanage in Thailand, as well as helping coordinate a trip for JETs to volunteer in Vietnam during the winter break.

Why did you decide to become a diplomat?

One day while on JET, I opened up my English language daily newspaper and found a full-page ad by Colin Powell. He was inviting U.S. citizens living in Japan to take the Foreign Service Exam and become diplomats. It stated that by living overseas, the reader had already demonstrated some of the skill needed to be a successful diplomat- a curiosity about the world and willingness to learn about other languages and cultures. As a daughter and granddaughter of immigrants, I have always been interested in foreign cultures and I wanted to give back to the U.S., so I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to do so. I took the exam at the Fukuoka Consulate and after leaving

JET, joined the State Department to become a diplomat.

Where have you been as a diplomat and what do you do?

My first post was Lima, Peru. One of the reasons I wanted to work in that country was because of the Japanese population there. As a Vice Consul in Osaka-Kobe, my second tour, I now interview visa applicants, including students and dekasegi (Latin Americans of Japanese descent that have immigrated to Japan for work). I also work in the American Citizen Services Section, helping fellow Ameri-



cans with passports, registering the birth of their children, registering their children in Japan, notarizing documents, visiting prisoners, and working on International Parent Child Abduction Cases. I've also helped organize large-scale events, such as our annual Independence Day celebration.

What do you like about your job?

I really enjoy doing student outreach. I did home stays while in college and tried to promote travel to English-speaking countries while I was a JET. When I do outreach, I show students the benefits of learning English while studying overseas, which not only teaches them the language but also the culture of the U.S. I demystify the visa process, as well as explain what it's like living with a host family, school life in the U.S., and how studying overseas can benefit them back home. It is always great when students come up after the presentation to say that they are now motivated to study abroad. I want to work with as many JETs as possible to bring our presentation to their schools.

I like the diversity of the job. There are opportunities to work in the Public Affairs, Management, Political, and Economics Sections. My co-workers range in age, country of birth, educational experience, and sexual orientation, so I am exposed to a lot of different backgrounds and opinions. Since we rotate every couple of years, we get to learn new languages and live and work in various countries.

What has been your proudest moment as a diplomat?

Working for almost a month at Embassy Tokyo after the Tohoku Earthquake. I was part of a team working 24 hours a day, helping to get information out to people in the U.S. about the situation on the ground, coordinating efforts to get people out of the effected areas, helping people get emergency passports, talking to Washington about the latest developments, handing out potassium pills, and locating missing Americans. Through emails and phone calls, our team was able to find thousands of American citizens reported missing by their families. Being able to tell someone in the States that their loved one is alive and well made the long hours worth it.



Are there many former JETs in the U.S. Foreign Service?

Yes. In fact, my current supervisor was an ALT in Hyogo Prefecture. Some are working in Japan right now, while others are serving at posts around the world. Many came back to work at Embassy Tokyo to help Americans after the Tohoku Earthquake. Also, my first year as a diplomat, I met one of the people that interviewed me for the JET Program in San Francisco. He was also a former JET and is now working in China.

What advice would you give to someone who is interested in becoming a U.S. diplomat?

The first step is to take the test. It may take a couple of years to get through the entire process, so I recommend taking the test every chance you get to expose yourself to it. There is a lot of information on careers.state.gov on the steps you need to take to join the Foreign Service, as well as programs for graduate students. The journey to join may be a long one, but it is worth the effort.

A Season for Nostalgia

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

March in Japan is a season of change, its ending marked by the first bursts of breathtaking cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms themselves are symbolic of the transience of life and the short glory of youth. As such, they hold a cherished place in the hearts of the Japanese, and those of us visiting Japan. Turn on the radio, or look up 'さくら' at karaoke for clear proof of the popularity of cherry blossoms.

Change is in the wind in spring, as graduations and job transfers mean the beginning of new lives, often far from home. This is a time to celebrate memories as we bid farewell to friends, co-workers, students and families.

We also remember last March, with no nostalgia, but with sadness and pain for those who were lost after the March 11th earthquake. However, we also feel touched and inspired by the strength and determination of those who live in Tohoku, who continue to rebuild their lives after disaster. There are still plenty of ways to help – please check our volunteering section!

In this issue of AJET Connect, our advice columnist, Rosie, offers some advice on travelling close to home and on a budget in 'Word to the Wise'. We briefly introduce one of Japan's most famous performing arts, kabuki, and take a look at what to expect at the end of the school and work year. Our cultural event calendar includes a bevy of interesting Japanese festivals, from markets to lion dances to penis festivals, and a first-year JET gives us some insight into conquering personal fears and finding hidden treasures in Kyushu.

This month, indulge your sentimental side and enjoy a walk down memory lane. Next month, it will be busy again all too soon!

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn is a second-year ALT living in Matsue, the 'Venice of Japan.' This month, you'll find her wandering by the castle moat in warmer weather, or trying to convince herself to start jogging again.



culture corner

Calendar of Cultural Events in February 2012

March 1st-3rd, Awashima Jinja Grand Festival, Uto, Kumamoto Prefecture	At only 30cm tall, the torii gate of this shrine is the smallest in Japan. It is said that women who are able to pass through the gate will deliver children safely and not suffer women's illnesses.
March 1st-14th, Todai-ji Temple, Zoshi-cho, Nara City	Priests at Todai-ji Temple, famous for its enormous statue of Buddha, confess their sins before the Eleven-faced Kannon enshrined in Nigatsu-do Hall, and also pray for world peace and a rich harvest for 14 consecutive days. This ritual, called Shuni-e, has continued since 752.
March 2nd, Jingu Temple, Obama, Fukui Prefecture	Water is drawn from the Onyu River and presented to the principal image of the temple. Said to represent the 'sending' of water to Todai-ji temple in Nara whose well is fed by the river according to legend. A ritual dating back over 1200 years.
March 2nd, Kyokusui no Utage, Dazaifu Tenmangu, Dazaifu, Fukuoka Prefecture	Recreates a popular leisure pursuit of court nobles in the Heian Period (794-1192). Poets dressed in Heian-style kimono sit amongst the plum trees, composing poems on narrow strips of paper that they slip into sake cups floating by in nearby the stream.
March 3rd, Hina Matsuri, Hokyo-ji Temple, Kyoto	Hina Matsuri (Doll Festival), held every year on March 3, has its roots in an ancient Chinese purification ceremony in which evil was transferred to doll surrogates (katashiro) which were then cast away on a river. Hokyo-ji is often referred to as the 'Doll Temple' due to its extensive collection of dolls.
March 3rd-4th, Jindai-ji Daruma-ichi, Jindai-ji Temple, Choufu, Tokyo	Annual festive market selling all kinds of Daruma dolls for good luck.
March 3rd-10th, Shimabara Hatsuichi, Shimabara, Nagasaki Prefecture	Festive market to commemorate the construction of Shimabara castle. Ceramicware, plants, food and much more on offer.
March 6th, Kirishima Jingu Otaue-sai, Kirishima Jingu Shrine, Kirishima, Kagoshima Prefecture	Ceremonial rice planting festival to mark the beginning of Spring. Features time-honoured kagura dances and bugaku court music.
March 9th, Takaosan Hiwatari Matsuri, Hachioji, Tokyo	A chance to witness the rigorous ascetic exercises of the mountain priests of Takao-san such as walking on hot coals. Visitors are welcome to take part.
March 10th, Shiogama Jinja Hote Festival, Shiogama, Miyagi Prefecture	Lively mikoshi parades and Shinto music and dance all day.
March 15th, Honensai Festival, Tagata Jinja, Inuyama, Aichi Prefecture	Bizarre fertility festival where the sake flows and a freshly carved 3m wooden phallus is paraded around the shrine. Infertile couples come to pray for a child by touching the monster phalluses.

March 16th, Hatsuuma Taisai, Takekoma Jinja, Miyagi, Iwanuma	Mikoshi parades and a procession of 700 in period dress.
March 15th-16th, Oumihachiman Sagicho Matsuri, Oumihachiman Shrine, Hachiman, Shiga Prefecture	Gaily decorated floats parade around the city streets before being ritually burned to the accompaniment of dancing and music.
March 18th-23rd, Oidematsuri, Hakui, Ishikawa Prefecture	Horse- back Archery contests and a parade in ceremonial dress.
March 21st, Aizu higan shishi, Aizu wakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture	Lion dances are performed around the city marking the end of the long winter and the Buddhist services of the equinoctial week.





Culture Corner

Kabuki

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

Kabuki. The very word conjures up mental images of thick white makeup and gorgeous costumes, elaborate scenery, and incomprehensible Japanese. As old as Shakespeare's theatre and as stylized and unique as opera (some would argue more so), kabuki has lasted as a theatre tradition for over four hundred years.

The word 'kabuki' 歌舞伎 is made up of the kanji for 'sing', 'dance' and 'performer'. However, another origin for the name suggests that 'kabuki' was a word meaning 'leaning' or 'slanting' and 'kabuki' may have originally meant an eccentric or deviant person (such as an actor or dancer).

Kabuki originated on the dry riverbed of the Kamo River in 1603 or thereabouts, based on earthy folk dances and humorous skits of illicit romance. The creator was a woman, Izumo no Okuni, who had been sent to Kyoto from Izumo Grand Shrine, where she was a temple maiden, to collect donations for the shrine. She gathered a troupe of women and directed them in their roles. She herself frequently played men in the plays.

Whatever the authorities may have thought of the raunchy and colourful spectacle of singing and dancing, kabuki was certainly very popular with the public. Over seven years, Okuni's troupe became more and more famous, spawning imitators (including men's and boys' troupes) and developing into a more dramatic presentation. Okuni herself retired from kabuki in 1610.

Twenty years after Okuni's departure, women were banned from the stage because of moral concerns (read: rampant prostitution and patrons fighting over the female actors), and kabuki became limited to only men. This led to the development of one of the most interesting aspects of kabuki, the onnagata. These are men who specialize in playing women's roles in kabuki, using very stylized motions and voices to portray women.

The golden age of kabuki spanned the decades of the late 1700's to the mid-1800's. In that period, kabuki took on the form we can see today. The white makeup with dramatic eyes, dramatic poses (*mie*) and elaborate costumes now an essential part of the tradition were first introduced. Kabuki 'dynasties' such as the Ichikawa and Nakamura families were established, passing plays and performance styles down through generations. Kabuki was (and is) an all-day affair, with people buying a bento lunch and settling in to watch several dramas.

Kabuki spans several different styles of theatre, from historical dramas to domestic dramas to dance pieces. The styles of different plays range from presentational to representational, and naturalistic to extremely stylized. The plots of kabuki were often based on historical events or on contemporary news, such as the suicides of young lovers or spectacular scandals. Names, plot points and time periods were changed for such true stories, but audiences of the time would certainly have been familiar with the original stories. Some plays were lifted and adapted from the popular bunraku puppet plays popular then.

For example, Kanadehon Chushingura is a famous kabuki play based on a true story. When forty-seven samurai assassinated a court official in revenge for their master's death (laying the head of their enemy on their lord's grave) and then committed ritual suicide by order of the Emperor, the public was stunned. The tragedy was later introduced to the stage as a bunraku play, then a kabuki play. It is still one of the enduring dramas of the kabuki theatre.

Riding the ups and downs of the Meiji era, World War Two and the modern world, kabuki has adapted and survived to entertain contemporary audiences. The beautiful theatres welcome spectators with bright banners featuring the actors. Many theatres offer headphones providing English translation and explanations to the non-Japanese speaking partons.

Kanamaru-za, the oldest theatre in Japan can be found in Kotohira, Shikoku, near the famous Konpira Shrine. Built in 1835, it has been restored to its original state and still boasts performances each spring. It has an original hanamichi (actors' walkway for entrances and exits), a revolving stage, trap doors and flying apparatus which can be viewed by the public for a small fee when there are no performances.

For more information, check out this website:
<http://www.kabuki-bit.jp/eng/top.html>

This informative website provides a wealth of information on kabuki, plus links to the kabuki theatres in Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka.

Akita, Nagoya, Fukuoka and Kotohira also have kabuki theatres.





To Boldly Go

Bella Besong

My story begins with a young British JET who came to Japan seeking adventure. Little did I realise that along with adventure comes the task of facing up to and overcoming a few fears.

First stop, Shikoku. With its numerous mountains, beautiful beaches and countless rivers, it seems the perfect setting for all manner of adventure. Within six months of residing on this lovely little island, I had already experienced many new things, such as dancing the Awa Odori in front of thousands of spectators, undertaking daring hikes to shrines and temples and white-water rafting for the first time, in the perilous Yoshino River no less.

Amongst all of these new experiences, I feel my biggest personal triumph was learning to ride a bicycle! That's right, I was a twenty-something year old living in Japan, with its millions of cyclists, and due to a traumatic experience I had had as a child, I couldn't ride a bicycle. Successfully being able to face my fear and ride a bicycle is something I may never have had to do, were I not on the JET Programme. This gave me an empowering sense of 'Yes I can'!

The next test of my resolve was just around the corner, when I came across a breathtaking picture of a frozen waterfall - just a few miles from my apartment. 'This can't be real!' I thought to myself, 'Photoshop at its best'. I had to find out whether or not it really did exist. So on a crisp weekend in February, off we went, just four determined ALTs and two iPhones. We arrived at our destination, the foot

of a rocky, forested path in the mountains of Kamiyama. There was no sign of a frozen waterfall, and very little sign of snow or ice, but according to the directions we had received, there would be a 'really exciting 15 minute walk' between us and this wondrous beauty. And so began the climb along a path which was no more than a foot and a half wide in places, with warning signs for falling rocks on one side and an ever increasing drop over a cliff on the other. Yes, I'm scared of heights, but 'This isn't that bad' I said to myself as we shuffled past an elderly Japanese couple on their way back down. Five minutes later there was no question that this was indeed quite a precarious trek. The path, now covered in ice, felt smaller. The drop which faced any unfortunate souls who slipped on the ice was off a twenty-foot cliff with only rocks and trees to break their fall. We continued our climb, telling jokes to disguise our fear, as the adrenaline coursing through my veins increased considerably. I felt dizzy. I could feel my heart beat between my ears, and all the time I thought 'this waterfall had better be the best waterfall I have ever seen!'

Finally, there it was, water frozen in midair, creating beautiful shapes which could only have been sculpted by nature itself. Some of the water continued to flow, yet the waterfall beneath it was frozen. It was indeed a sight to behold. On our climb down, still consumed by the danger of the treacherous path, overly careful of where I placed my feet, I thought to myself 'Thank you Japan'.

I write this article not only to encourage others to visit this beautiful waterfall and many others like it in Shikoku, but also to highlight the importance of our experiences in Japan and on the JET Programme.

Yes, I have amazing pictures and memories of my time in Japan thus far, but what is more, because of these experiences - something as small as riding my bike to work every day or as big as facing my immense fear of heights by taking an icy mountain path to a frozen waterfall - I feel empowered!

For those wanting to pursue adventure in Tokushima Prefecture, our local AJET Chapter is constantly organising events and trips such as the white-water rafting trip I mentioned, so it would be best to get in touch with them for more information on things to do and see in Tokushima Prefecture and throughout Shikoku.



March The End, The Beginning

Sarah Jane Blenkhorn

March in Japan brings big changes to our lives; everyone who has been here longer than a year has experienced it. Unlike Canada, where school begins in September after a two-month vacation and workplaces don't have specific 'job-change' seasons, everything in Japan seems to spin up into the air every March and land in a new arrangement come April. That was my feeling when I, all unprepared, experienced it for the first time working at a language school here.

So, if you haven't experienced it yet, what can you expect? Finally, the damp cold of winter suffers its first defeats as the plum blossoms, daffodils and early blooms appear. At school, with graduation parties and ceremonies in early March, expect a downpour of sentimental songs about parting, good-byes and cherry blossoms. Graduating students will sing to their misty-eyed homeroom teachers, giving them extravagant bouquets and handmade gifts. Other students will sing to the weeping graduates, and the radio will be flooded with touching songs. Clubs will honour graduating members with parting gifts and messages. At the graduation parties, all the third-year teachers might make speeches. At these parties, you'll realize that everyone's secretly a comedian, deep down inside. Teachers tell clever, entertaining anecdotes that will have everyone around you in stitches. (You may not get them, but smile anyway.)

And then the third-year students are gone, leaving classrooms empty and echoing. The third-year

teachers will pretend to be busy, but everyone knows they're rejoicing in this hard-earned downtime. Everyone else is still busy, still teaching, still preparing lessons, but the pressure of constant tests has eased a little. This is a good time to play games, since your students might have the attention spans of gnats.

In Shimane Prefecture, it's the custom for teachers to change schools every seven years or so. I'm not clear on the intention behind this, though perhaps it's considered a way of sharing skills and knowledge among schools. Sometime in March, a list goes up in the main teacher's room with the names of those who are being transferred. I couldn't read the one in mine. Depending on the size of your English department, you're almost certain to lose (and gain) one or two. This might be a good or a bad thing.

At the closing ceremony in the chilly school gym, the departing teachers will all say a few words. At my high school last year, the gruff Chemistry teacher/baseball coach, whom I had barely spoken with at all, surprised and moved me by weeping like a child during his farewell speech. His baseball boys seized him afterwards and threw him high in the air just like in a movie. Unfortunately, they failed to catch him. Oops. Many of the graduates at my school returned for the closing ceremony – their final farewell. They slunk into the back of the gym, unsure of their place anymore. A handful wore uniforms and a few wore trendy casual clothes, but the majority who entered had transformed into adults in their new business suits. They were already different people, embarking on their new lives.

The same dramatic changes taking place in school will also take place in the outside world, as companies shuffle their employees to different positions, different branches and different cities. The 単身赴任(tanshin funin, or 'business bachelors') move to new places far from their homes, leaving their families behind. Some suffer in this arrangement, while others embrace their freedom. Some people take their families along with them in the big move. The whirlwind of farewell parties in March is replaced by a whirlwind of welcome parties in April.

When the dust finally settles, you'll have new co-workers. If you work in a school, you have a whole school of new students with new names to remember. Welcome this new challenge, and the warmer weather! お疲れ!

A Word to the Wise

Dear Rosie.

I'm in a small-ish city, without a lot of other JETs in the area, and the problem I have is that I'm pretty bored these days. A lot of the JETs I came over with are traveling a lot and having fun, but I'm trying to save some money here – and I don't have a lot of extra time! I'd like to get to know Japan better, and maybe travel around Asia later, but how can I do that?

Dear "Bored at Home,"

Even if you don't have a lot of time or money, there are still ways to travel and find exciting things within a reasonable distance to your home. First, try going to your local bookstore (or evenコンビニ) and find the travel section. There they will have books and magazines for local, national, and international traveling. They may also have resources specific to your local vicinity as well. Most of these books are likely to be in Japanese, but usually they have many pictures and convenient maps showing you how to get to local sightseeing destinations. There are also specific monthly travel magazines that are geared toward walking travel-

ers, and these mini adventures can take you around the back alleyways of your local towns and cities, giving you a new perspective of an area that you once considered so familiar. In this way you can discover new stores, local history, and ideally find new opportunities. If you live in the very inaka and do not have easy access to a bookstore or travel guides, choose the next closest town or city to visit, or create a budget to be able to support a trip to your destination of choice. With enough planning, you'll be able to save and prepare for your next great getaway.

Good luck with your future adventures!

Readers: send pictures of your local finds to communications@AJET.net to have them featured here! Please send a short blurb with the photo of your favorite spots, and why you would recommend them to other JETs or members in the community.

Until next time!

-Rosie



Yoyo Market delivers the best imported and organic foods as well as products from IKEA and Costco.

- We offer the largest volume of Costco Japan products online nationwide. Looking for hard to find products like Vegemite, Macaroni and Cheese or Heinz Beanz? We have all those great products too plus organic and health foods and a ton more!
- We offer as fast as next day shipping and don't charge extra for frozen or cool items.
- We are the only service that offers IKEA products for sale online in English in Japan.
- Come see why over 80% of customers surveyed rate our service as AMAZING!

yoyomarket.jp is Japan's trusted online supermarket!

AJET exclusive discount!

Enter AJET-0001 in the coupon code section during checkout to receive a 500 yen discount for orders over 10,000 yen!

Life After the B.O.E.

The Book



Life After the B.O.E. is now a book!

With new art work, new comics, and some really old comics, too, Life After the B.O.E. the Book has everything you enjoyed about the webcomic plus more!

Life After the B.O.E. the Book is the perfect Holidays gift for the JET or JET alumnus in your life.

Available now at [Amazon.com](#) and [CreateSpace](#)!

ISBN-13: 978-1466340725

David Namisato



Winds of change

Melody and Matthew

Spring is here again, bringing with it many different kinds of change. The school year is just ending, with another just around the corner. Soon, a whole new bunch of fresh-faced first years will be eagerly sitting in class, listening to your self-introductions. You've just decided whether or not to renew your JET contract for another year. The sakura are in bloom once again. Everything changes, yet much remains the same.

So perhaps your mind is pondering the next big change in your life - what comes after JET? Even if you decided to stay in Japan for another year, I'm sure you can't help but consider this question from time to time. Will you stay in Japan? Travel more? Go back home and start a career?

Another question that all this change around you might be evoking is that of how to make the most of your remaining time in Japan. You've already been here a while and no doubt there's much more to see and do. Before you know it, it'll be time to leave and you could be wishing that you had done more with your free time.

When faced with the two big questions - what to do after JET and how to make the most of Japan while you're still here - maybe you should consider volunteering as a possible answer to both. It's a great way to travel both inside and outside of Japan and to visit the kinds of places that you would not normally get to see on a packaged tour. You'll get to meet new people and learn about the kinds of problems that affect their lives. Most importantly, you'll be able to make a difference in these people's lives. A change for the better!

This month, we have articles featuring volunteerism in Japan and how it has made a difference in people's lives around the country. Also, Matt writes about his experiences working as a volunteer English teacher on a round-the-world cruise for the Japanese nonprofit organization, Peace Boat.



volunteering

image via shutterstock.com

We hope that these articles will inspire you to make the most of being a JET and even perhaps give you some food for thought as to where your adventures might take you next.

If you would like to contact us, you can reach Melody at melodywong1@gmail.com and Matt at sanoramen@gmail.com.

Happy Volunteering!
Melody and Matthew



For more Information → <http://www.aiu.ac.jp>

Graduate Program Options:

- English Language Teaching Practices
Learn the methods and skills to teach English as a foreign language.
- 日本語教育実践領域 (Japanese Language Teaching Practices)
高度な専門知識と技術を有し、国内外の教育機関で活躍できる日本語教師の養成
- Global Communication Practices
Gain the expertise for international communication work in media and PR.

Program Features:

- September Matriculation
- October, February, June Application periods
- Full-time or Part-time Study
- No Application fee

AJET PEER SUPPORT GROUP

The AJET Peer Support Group, the JET community's overnight listening and referral service, is currently recruiting new members for the 2012-2013 JET Year. Re-contracting JETs interested in volunteering several nights per month to the service may get further information, or request an application form, by contacting Hal Edmonson at psgapplications@gmail.com. Applications will be distributed until March 31 2012. JETs of all backgrounds and experience levels are encouraged to apply!





Around the World in Eighty Days With Peace Boat

I don't remember how I first heard about Peace Boat. It might have been the posters that they cunningly place in izakaya toilets all around Japan. These posters describe a voyage around the world on a cruise liner, visiting twenty countries over three months, learning about their cultures and the kinds of issues people face there, all organised by a non-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO). It's the kind of thing that sounds so fantastic that you can hardly believe it's real. Can there really be an NGO that sends a boat full of passengers around the world several times a year?

Well, yes, there is. It's a Japan-based NGO that aims to promote a culture of peace around the world. It was started in 1983 by a group of Japanese university students who were tired of the governmental censorship surrounding Japan's overseas involvement in the Second World War. They set out to charter a ship and sail to these countries themselves, to find out what really happened from the very people affected.

Since then, each voyage has grown in size and scope, with the boat now taking approximately a thousand participants on voyages that go around the world, each taking several months to complete. The Peace Boat now has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the

United Nations, meaning that it can report to the UN on the discoveries it makes during the course of each voyage.

At the time of writing, Peace Boat is on its 75th global voyage. I was fortunate enough to be a member of its staff on the 70th voyage, working as a volunteer English teacher from August until late October of 2010. We circumnavigated the globe over eighty days, visiting Vietnam, Singapore, Oman, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Morocco, Cuba, Jamaica, Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Mexico. Yes, I know. I am an incredibly lucky person.

For three months, I lived the strangest life imaginable. Working with a team of ten other English and Spanish teachers, and another large team of interpreters, our job was to teach and entertain people on board the boat. Every waking hour was spent not just planning lessons, but also fancy dress dinners, salsa parties, music festivals, crazy gold tournaments and rap battles. Every few days we'd arrive in a new country and either spend all day exploring the historical sights of an ancient city, or just getting some well-earned rest on the beach.

One of the many highlights of the voyage was getting to see Fidel Castro himself when the ship called in at Cuba. He had arranged a conference upon our arrival in Havana, and everyone on the boat was invited. Thanks to Peace Boat, I can now say that I've been in the same room as Fidel Castro. A truly terrifying thought!

The team of teachers and interpreters I worked with were truly special. These are some of the most talented and inspiring people I've ever met in my life. I also made so many great friends amongst the other participants aboard the boat. There's something about being trapped on a boat together for three months that seems to really forge the closest of relationships.

Every single day was packed to the brim with excitement, with never a dull moment. Even when we didn't have classes to teach or events to help with, there were always activities to do and things to learn. On every voyage, the Peace Boat invites a selection of 'guest educators' to give a series of lectures on board. The educators on board can be expert professors on conflict in the Middle East, professional musicians and dancers, documentary makers, representatives of other NGOs or survivors from the atomic bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every voyage has a different range of people like this on board that you can talk to and learn from. It was amazing to learn about the experiences these people had, and what they were doing to make the world a better place.

I left the Peace Boat with many, many fond memories. I will never forget all the amazing things I saw and did there - helping a cultural exchange visit to a school in India, teaching two groups of old ladies how to compete in a rap battle, the pre-departure parties whenever we left a port, giving a speech in Japanese about the virtues of being bald, inventing and teaching a new kind of dance, and - of course - teaching some of the loveliest students

in my classes. Peace Boat isn't just about travelling to many different countries - most of the fantastic experiences I had were on the boat, whilst we were sailing between ports.

Before Peace Boat, I believed that it would be impossible for anyone to have a real adventure in this modern world. 'Travel is too easy.' 'Everywhere has been discovered.' 'It's all been done.' The Peace Boat changed my mind. I can't imagine a better way to end my time in Japan.

Matt Thompson was a JET working as an ALT in elementary, junior high and senior high schools in Sano, Tochigi from 2006 until 2010. He's now back in university in the UK, studying how to create intelligent computer programs to enslave the human race.

Photos by Juan Carlos Tallón





When the Snow Melts, What Does it Become?

Jen Garcia

This isn't a riddle. This question was in a conversation between two characters in one of my favorite manga series, Fruits Basket (Furuba). A melancholic character asks the cheerful heroine this question and is surprised by the answer he gets.

"Spring!"

She is a cheerful, optimistic girl and her answer reflects it. If you didn't think of spring, don't worry. It's not that you're not an optimistic person. It's just that you have probably had too much snow to worry about or none at all. I can't decide which person is better off...

Spring is a time of new beginnings. In Japan, it is synonymous with cherry blossoms, the start of the new school year, and welcoming in the warm weather. Though this year, all eyes will be on Japan as the country remembers its most catastrophic natural disaster in recent history. There will always be great sadness that goes along with this commemoration. However, the nation is gearing up to put its best foot forward and show the world how far they've come in such a short amount of time. Every day, new before-and-after photos are released that show the tremendous amount of work that has gone into the rebuilding process. Remarkable as these are, they can't show the progress of each affected individual. They can't accurately tell

us about the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant situation. These photos simply cannot express to us the entirety of the situation.

When I first arrived in Japan and was giving my self-introduction lesson, I had one teacher in particular who was very curious to know why I decided to come when so many foreigners had fled. In truth, it's a long story but the most important part was that I believed this country was safe and would bounce back swiftly and strongly. He thought I had erased all traces of danger from my mind so he promptly warned me of areas still experiencing radiation. I appreciated his concern but I wanted to remain positive. Since that time (also featured in my article for AJET last month), I have been to the Tohoku region and indeed, found that there was a lot of hope and optimism.

The road to recovery is long and it may even be a lifetime. Despite all the amazing progress we will see at ceremonies around the country for the first anniversary, we must keep this in mind. With more difficult years ahead for many, my hope after this March 11th is that Japan will remain strong and keep looking for spring to come when the snow melts.

[Picture Caption] This picture was taken at Sapporo Station earlier this month. It reads: "Do your best Tohoku! Do your best Japan! One heart."

Jen is a high school ALT in Tamba-shi, Hyogo-ken. When she's not changing her hair or nail color, she enjoys traveling and having fun, new experiences.

Completing your JET contract this year?

Teach English One-to-One

Stay on in Japan!

**Work from the exciting city of your choice:
Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, more...**

**Round out your teaching experience in a new, dynamic setting.
Visa sponsorship available - apply early to get a head start!**

- Choose your own schedule
- Career opportunities available in sales and support
- 36 convenient locations

<Kanto>Akabane Akasaka-Tameike Aobadai Chiba Ebisu Fujisawa-Shonan Futakotamagawa Ginza Hachioji Ikebukuro Jiyugaoka Kashiwa Kawasaki Kichijoji Kitasenju Machida Meguro Omiya Omotesando Otemachi Seijo Shibuya Shimokitazawa Shinagawa Shinbashi-Shiodome Shinjuku Tachikawa Tokyo Yokohama
<Chubu>Nagoya Sakae <Kansai>Chayamachi Kobe Kyoto Namba Umeda



gaba One-to-One English

teaching-in-japan.gaba.co.jp Apply now!

Application and Visa inquiries / 03-5790-7054 (Monday - Friday 10am to 7pm)



Spring Awakening aka March Travel Time

Amelia Hagen

What does AJET Connect Travel have in store for you this month? A little bit of Japan nestled into Hyogo, a sprinkle of vibrant Macau from greater Asia, and a bunch of Berlin! If you're still pondering those spring break plans or dreaming of Golden Week already, our writers just might whet your appetites. I find myself wishing once again that I had a few extra days of nenkyu to go here, visit this place, or check out this festival.

This issue, our Entertainment Editor, Chris Barstow, gives us his spin on ever-changing Macau – only a hop, skip, and a jump (or a ferry ride from the airport!) from Hong Kong. Do you absolutely adore your particular Japanese town? Our resident Hyogo writer shares her love of Izushi. Believe me, Taj Ultimate is an awesome event but Hyogo's Tajima area isn't all about frisbee ;) If you're looking outside of Asia, don't miss 'Berlin Bound'! Elysse Hurtado confirms everything my Berlin-obsessed JET friends from the UK have told me about this bustling, artsy city.

Whether you're exploring your local area or venturing abroad this spring, I encourage you to share your experiences with AJET and the JET community inside and outside of Japan! Got a travel blog and want to show off your wacky or thought-provoking adventures? We'd love to hear from you. Drop me a line at block10@ajet.net to get involved with AJET Connect Travel.

Amelia Hagen is a fourth-year ALT in the home of Ayumi Hamasaki, also known as Fukuoka Prefecture. When she is not traveling to the far ends of the earth, she enjoys chodo-ing, or paying with exact change, fist-bumping Hello Kitty at Oita's Harmonyland, and searching for the next jetset bargain. Amelia is the former President of Fukuoka AJET.

TRAVEL

image via shutterstock.com

March 2012 51



Magnificent Macau

Chris Barstow

One of Asia's more curious destinations, Macau is a land of captivating contrasts, blending the sensory stimulation of China, the architecture and religiosity of former colonial masters from Portugal as well as a dash of Las Vegas razzmatazz.

Indeed, Macau is an intriguing cultural melting pot, with its ascent as the world's premier gambling hub juxtaposing with its fascinating history to provide an increasingly imperative stop on any Asian itinerary.

Macau's history with Portugal started when traders from the country settled there in the 16th Century. During the colonisation of Asia by European powers in the late 1800s, the territory officially fell under the control of the government thousands of miles away in Lisbon. However, over 100 years of colonial rule came to an end at the turn of the millennium as Europe's final outpost in Asia reverted to an administrative region of China.

Whilst Macau's prime geographic location enabled it to become a relatively prosperous gateway into

the mainland Far East, it has traditionally been overshadowed by its bigger, flashier neighbour Hong Kong. During the Asian economic boom, Hong Kong proudly flexed its muscles as the financial centre of the region with its imposing skyscrapers increasingly dominating its landscape.

By comparison, Macau was experiencing success in more modest terms by developing itself as a cheap manufacturing hub in the days before China had fully embraced the global marketplace.

At the same time, in the 12 years since the handover, Macau has undergone radical changes. The relaxation of rules relating to gambling licences, combined with the dramatic increase in wealth in neighbouring China, has fuelled a casino boom in the tiny territory. There are currently 33 casinos in Macau and in recent years, it has overtaken Las Vegas as the world's most profitable gaming centre.

Casinos are filled to the brim with workers from China and Hong Kong who flood in on the weekend to spend their hard-earned Yuan and dollars. Many of Vegas' famous brands such as Wynn and Sands have made second homes here with other big names set to follow in forthcoming years.

Another renowned brand who has made an impact in Macau is the Venetian, which boasts 800 gaming tables and 3,400 slot machines and became the world's largest casino when it opened in 2007.

Whilst Macau may lack a little of the polish and glamour of Vegas, there is no doubt that the gambling juggernaut is continuing to roll on and has brought greater financial prosperity to the territory. In fact, gambling now accounts for a staggering 70% of government revenues and contributes to Macau's status as having the third highest GDP by purchasing power in the world according to the World Bank.

However, whilst the high-rollers breeze in and out of town to spend their time in air-conditioned halls in pursuit of wads of cash, the Macau peninsula also has a rich historic past to explore.

The compact centre contains a number of interesting sites which were collectively granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 2007. The Ruins of St. Paul's, a legacy of the first Portuguese settlers, offer a glimpse into Macau's Christian influences and also provide great views over the entire territory. It is also customary to throw coins from the top of the building for luck, so it's best to schedule a stop here before hitting the casinos!

Be sure to also visit nearby Senado Square, regarded as the centre-point of Macau, just a stone's (or maybe coin's?) throw away from St Paul's. This area also contains a number of other churches and sites of interest which provide great photo opportunities.

Those keen on culture will enjoy the fortress-located Macau Museum which offers an engaging insight into its diverse history, whilst the fascinating Maritime Museum provides a look at the sea-based industries upon which the territory was built.

With large parts of the city dominated by characterful buildings, cobbled streets and brightly-coloured walls, Macau is a delight to walk around. Whilst it is reportedly the most densely populated area on earth, its relaxed, harmonious atmosphere makes it much less chaotic than you may expect despite the volume of people milling the streets.

Though the main island part of the city is compact enough to be able to navigate on foot, there are many steep hills and if you choose to visit in the humid, sticky summer, it does mean that it's best to take things at a leisurely pace. Therefore, a light brunch at one of the numerous street eateries is an essential stop for visitors. The delicious Chinese street food is in plentiful supply and will satiate even the largest of appetites. However, be sure to save some room for the delicious Portuguese egg custard tarts which can be found in any of Macau's famous bakeries.

From one pit stop to another, Macau's winding streets turn into a racetrack each November and host a variety of races for different categories of cars and motorcycles. There is even a museum dedicated to motor sport containing a number of different vehicles and Grand Prix related artefacts.



The sports-mad territory also boasts a popular race-course and a number of large arenas which were built for the 2005 East Asian Games.

Macau is increasingly easy to reach, with native budget airline Air Macau offering affordable fares to numerous destinations throughout Asia. However, the most popular route to visit Macau from Japan is through Hong Kong. With the option to eschew border control at Hong Kong International Airport and hop straight onto a shuttle ferry, you can be off the plane and walking the streets of Macau in less than 90 minutes.

With its ideal position between Japan and South-east Asia, Macau acts as an interesting alternative to Hong Kong as a stopover destination. It also serves as a fascinating short break away although those on a budget should be advised that cheap accommodation is in short supply here.

Then again, you could always throw a coin off the top of St Paul's, head for the nearest casino and see if your luck's in...



Berlin Bound

Elysse Hurtado

My first thought on arriving in Berlin was, what am I doing here? The dark, grey and brown buildings were matched in their monotony only by the dark, monochrome coats of the citizens, and my hopes for what I had been told was the art capital of Europe fell accordingly. Granted, I had just come from the gaudy, glitzy streets of Paris, and the comparison was a lot less than favourable... plus, the flight in had teamed up with my residual head cold to leave me deaf in one ear and half-deaf in the other, so my mood was slightly tainted from the outset. But within the space of my first day there Berlin won me over, heart and soul.

My first stop was Alexanderplatz, to taste Berlin's specialty, curry wurst. aka boiled sausage with curry sauce and bread. Eating the steaming meal outside in the misty cold air was perfect for heating up my tired body. From there I wandered over to Hamburg Bahnhof, home of one of the world's premier modern art museums. Standing outside waiting to get in, I slowly absorbed the subtle details hidden around the old train station compound; the flags were designed to look like people

were trapped inside; the cobblestone pathway had stones carved with the names of famous people like Michel Foucault. Once inside I was treated to the awe-inspiring sight of several large transparent spheres, ranging from the size of a beach ball to a one-bedroom apartment, hovering throughout the open space inside the old terminal building. Fastened to the floor, ceiling, and walls with thick, curving black ropes, and containing plants, water, air, or all the above, these were meant to be a study on floating worlds, cities of the future. An added bonus? The largest were made so that you could go inside and bounce around.

Further along, among the mesmerizing Keith Haring paintings and the fascinating documentaries, the earth art relics and Andy Warhols, I lost all sense of time and space, and wandered for what seemed like days among the great contemporary artists of our time. Each color and shape seeped through the layers of my brain, setting off cascades of ideas and images, infecting me with the desire to create and filling me with the joy of discovery. By the time I was sated, the sky outside was providing a black background for the brilliantly blue neon lights decorating the building. This is when I realized - Berlin's true beauty is that it has nothing to hide.



My next stop was the free subculture tour conducted by volunteers every day from Alexanderplatz, one of the deciding reasons that had weighed my itinerary in favour of Berlin in the first place. The guide was charismatic and knowledgeable, and cute to boot. Following her footsteps, we learned about the city's main graffiti artists, the underground centers, the political struggles, the unseen city. Though every stop was as fascinating as the last, the most exciting of all was probably Tacheles, the city's oldest and most renowned squat house.

Claiming a history of nearly 20 years, this rundown five story building once housed dozens of self-supporting artists, living and working together as a community. With every interior inch covered in graffiti and art, dark and hidden from the sun, it is easy to see why it would be appealing as a hideaway from the everyday. Unfortunately, thanks to some underhanded machinations by banks and the city council, Tacheles' once proliferating population has been reduced to a scant few hardy folk who refused to be bought or intimidated. They still live there and sell their art directly to the public, and exploring their grottoes was as thrilling as it was inspiring. Live for art, art for life.

With some new purchases tucked into my bag I followed the tour to its end...but that was not the end of the day. Through some unbelievable stroke of luck I was befriended by some wonderful people, and invited to share in their New Year's Eve celebrations. From the awesome house party to the fascinating patrons, I had much to be thankful for...but the real surprise came when it was time to ring in the new year.

Since before sundown there had been fireworks going off at random everywhere in the city, setting my nerves ajangle, but midnight, I was informed, was when the real onslaught was supposed to begin. As a group we carefully picked our way through the trigger-happy crowds to a nearby bridge, where nearly 200 people packed in and began to set off entire stores worth of fireworks right in the middle of it. With coloured sparks and

Unlike the bright, blithe streets of Paris, Berlin seems to be bathed in a perpetual gritty haze. The haunting, gothic architecture, the subversive seduction of the street art, the muted tones blending into spray paint's day-glow hues, the stoic cityscape hiding a frenetic nightlife, it is all there on display. No artifices, no excuses. Berlin breathes integrity and independence.

The following day, I journeyed out to the Mauer Museum, to see the relics of the Berlin Wall. For a city that was so long split in two, it seems to have reunited almost seamlessly in the 20 years since the storming of the wall. The pieces of wall are covered in street art evoking the pain and struggle of the people on both sides, hearts pulled apart by society's arbitrary rules, reunited by mankind's indomitable spirit. So many lessons to be learned, so little time...

ear-shattering pops surrounding and invading me I welcomed the new year with new friends and a new outlook on life.

The revelry went on till nearly dawn, and by the time I stumbled home I was fully exhausted and content. Notwithstanding the creepy guy who asked me if I 'make sex for pay' at the Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof S-bahn platform, it was a night full of wonderful memories.

When I awoke around noon the same day, I had to force my sluggish body outside to make the most of my last day in one of my new favourite cities. After a quick donut hunt (because German bakeries are some of the best in the world and what else do you want after a crazy night?) I wandered through the rainy streets to the C/O photography gallery that was conveniently right down the road from my hostel. The paparazzo exhibit was less than thrilling, but on the upper floor they had entire rooms filled with the work of Gundula Endowy Shulze.

Her documentation of the intimate lives of the inmates of East Berlin, her unflinching look into the tragedy of our civilization, it was all more than I could have hoped for. I began very quickly to regret only having time for 3 days on my visit to Berlin; clearly this is a city that hides many remarkable sides. But that gives me all the more excuse to return.

And return I will, because even now Berlin's grim realism haunts my thoughts and its art inspires my heart.

Elysse Hurtado is a first year CIR living in Ibaraki, where she fills all her new-found free time with books and writing and cooking and basically anything creative. Current projects include teaching herself Chinese, crocheting a random stuffed animal, a series of short stories on her blog, and travelling as much as possible. Elysse misses having a social life very, very much. You can visit her blog at <http://wanderingbluesky.wordpress.com>





Castle Town Izushi

CJ Stearns

Travel is a beautiful and exciting experience - encountering the new, reimagining the old, and leaving your mark on a distant place or perhaps letting it leave its mark on you. But sometimes it is worth it to let the wanderer's eye gaze a little closer to where you lay your head. Of all the places about which I have written for Connect thus far, none come closer to my heart than a little country town in Hyogo, right here in Japan.

Tucked into the mountains that roll through Tajima, in the northern part of Hyogo, down to the Sea of Japan, sits a tiny town many refer to as "the Little Kyoto of Tajima." Quiet Izushi-cho is just a small piece of a larger whole, being one of the six towns that make up the greater Toyoka City. But it was once much more than that.

During the Edo period, Izushi was a bustling thoroughfare, a prosperous castle town that teemed with samurai. The original castle, built by the Yamana family, stood for over 200 years before falling to Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1569. Another was built on the top of Mt. Arikō (at the base of which

the oldest section of Izushi rests), but that castle too was destroyed. Its remains still sit on the top of the mountain.

After this time, Izushi was mostly forgotten by the world. During the Meiji Era, the train tracks were built around this once important town. But as many say, this was probably a blessing in disguise. Castle town Izushi remains largely untouched by time. It brims with temples, old samurai houses and lovely gardens. Kyoto it is not, but Izushi is definitely one of the most well preserved Edo period towns in Japan.

In 1979, the castle walls at the base of Mt. Arikō were reconstructed. Alongside them climbs a stone staircase with 37 red torii gates running all the way to the top. This small renewal brought (or borrowed) a lot of tourists from nearby Kinosaki. Izushi found its bustle again.

Izushi cannot be named without bringing one very important thing to mind – soba. It is the town's specialty dish, or should I say, dishes. Izushi sara soba (or plate buckwheat noodles) is served in five small servings (or more, but you have to ask) on five small plates, each about the size of a coffee saucer.

The idea is to mix your own dipping sauce made of dashi (fish sauce) and any or none of the following: a raw egg, spring onions, crushed daikon, a bit of deliciously goopy mountain potato and wasabi. You put one plate's worth of soba into this mix at a time, and it is served cold, which is very refreshing in the summer, though some shops serve hot soba as well. There are over 40 soba shops in this small town of only 11,000 people. And every soba plate and every dashi container is made of another Izushi specialty – white pottery: Izushi yaki. The pieces are beautiful and you can purchase one to take home yourself.



Soba is a large part of life in Izushi, and the people here take pride in the tradition. In fact, every year there is a soba-eating contest, during which (usually) men compete to see who can eat the most plates of soba. And since the contest was cancelled last year out of respect for those suffering in the Tohoku region, this year's contest, which takes place on April 15th, is very much anticipated.

If you're not in the mood for buckwheat, there are many different restaurants in town. A big favorite is the pizzeria Sakai, which has stone fired pizza and real cheese! For a more traditional approach there is the restaurant Freedom, which has many Japanese and Western dishes. There are several ramen and udon shops in town as well.

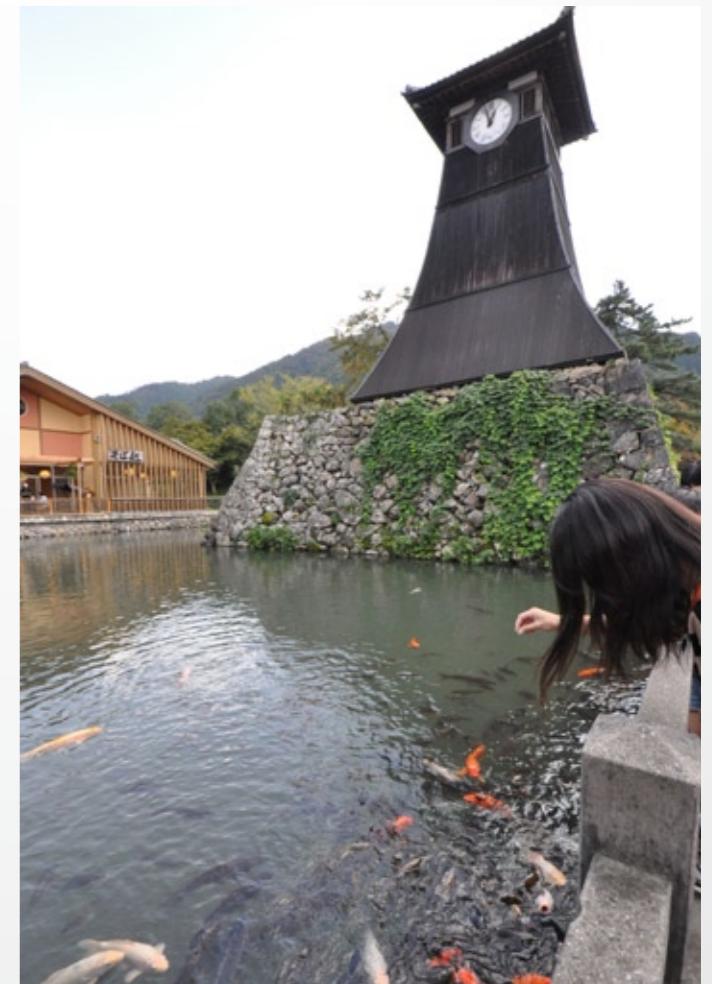
The tradition of soba in Izushi is said to have come with a buckwheat-loving lord down from Amanohashidate, one of the Three Views of Japan, which is only an hour away by car, or a little over an hour away by train from nearby Toyoka. Izushi is in fact very well situated, despite its relative obscurity. Though indeed no trains run through the town, it easily accessible from the big cities of Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and Himeji. There is a reliable bus service called Zentan that can be taken from Toy-

oka or Yabu train stations, either trip taking less than half an hour to reach Izushi. The buses start running at 6:30am and stop around 8:30pm.

As mentioned before, the famous hot springs of Kinosaki are only half an hour away. Izushi is a very popular day trip location for those who are staying in the onsen town enjoying the hot springs at night, and want to see something a little different during the day.

But Izushi is not all about castle walls and soba noodles. It has several temples and historical points of interest, including a wooden tower, Shinkoro, which was built in the 1800s as a drum tower. In its heyday, every morning at 8am a drum in the tower was struck to tell people it was time to go work. Nowadays it serves as a clock tower and a beloved symbol of Izushi.

There is also an old wooden lantern built into a tree that marked where samurai would disembark on the river. There are temples in the town and in the hills, and an old, preserved playhouse theater with hand-painted advertisements from the 40's and 50's still hanging high on the walls. There is history everywhere.





A large part of that history and a lot of its fun is in its festivals. The summer is of course the time for festivals all across Japan, and Izushi is no exception. In August, Izushi holds its annual Fire Festival. Every year young men bring fiery torches down from the top of a mountain to a temple courtyard below, where people wait. After a brief ceremony, they light hay bales attached to large ropes. It is good luck, apparently, to pick up a rope and spin that burning pile of hay around you. Traditionally Japanese men were the only ones allowed to perform this ritual, but recently women and foreigners are allowed to participate.

In October is the Izushi Danjiri or Shrine Festival. While a shrine festival is not in itself unique around that time of year, Izushi does what only a few other towns do with their shrines – smash them! Each neighborhood of the town has their own shrine, color, costumes and drum rhythms. They march their shrines, which sit on large, heavy logs, around and through their neighborhoods and then out in front of the castle walls. There, they do battle, two at a time, each team trying to smash the other's shrines with the logs and claim victory. It has been a very dangerous tradition, sometimes claiming lives in the past, but no one has died in this festival for a very long time. It is perfectly safe to watch – and very exciting!

November hosts the Izushi Castle Festival itself. Here, men and women dress in Edo-era garb and parade through the streets, starting out from a temple near the castle gate. Food stands and games are set up in the streets, with live music, dance and taiko performances showcased in front of town hall.

Spring is the time for cherry blossom viewing, and Izushi Castle has an impressive garden of cherry trees that shower their petals down through the torii gates.

In the spring, I love to climb Mt. Arikō all the way up to the old ruins of the castle and look out over the valleys and rice paddies around Toyoka, and over the beautiful, friendly little town I have come to know as home. I know I don't belong here, and I know I can't stay forever, but Izushi and the people who live here have already become a part of me, as I know the towns where you live may have for you. They say throughout JET, every situation is different. I don't know a life in Japan without Izushi, and I don't know what life will have in store for me when I leave it in only a few months. All I know is that I'm here now, and I feel lucky.

Come visit this lovely town & let its charm take you.

MEIJI UNIVERSITY LAW IN JAPAN PROGRAM: TWO-WEEK SUMMER LAW COURSE IN TOKYO

POST CARD

Meiji University holds a summer law course which gives participants an opportunity to participate in English language lectures on Japanese law together with accompanying field trips. In 2012 the Course will be held from **July 23 to August 3**. This two-week program covers major fields of Japanese law and legal institutions such as Criminal Process, Civil Justice, Family Law, Law of Enterprises, Competition Law and some other contemporary fields. In addition, this program offers lectures on the Judicial System and the Legal Professions in its social, cultural and historical context so that students are able to appreciate the characteristics of Japanese law in a broader perspective. Our program includes field trips to the National Diet, the Supreme Court, law firms and others. The main purpose of this program is to offer to interested foreigners a chance to learn about Japanese law without the language barrier. For those who are interested in understanding Japanese law or Japanese society, this program would be an excellent foundation for further studies.

Dear
AJET
Members



From **MEIJIRO**



Greetings from Meiji University
めいじだいがくほうがくぶ
School of Law (明治大学法学院)!!

- ✓ All lectures are in English
- ✓ About Japanese law & society
- ✓ With field trips
- ✓ Recommended for beginners

Why not join our 2-week summer program in Tokyo?

2012 Summer Program ONLINE FORM NOW OPEN (due date; MARCH 16, 2012)

<http://www.meiji.ac.jp/cip/english/programs/law/index.html>

▼ Doshisha Business School

Discover the Doshisha Global MBA Made in Japan, designed for the 21st century

- Build your own program in general Business Management or one of our focus areas: **Business in Asia**, **Green Business**, and **Culture and Creativity**
- Excellent **Career Opportunities** in Japan and with Japanese companies seeking global talent
- **Scholarships** available for all international students
- **Social Responsibility** focus
- **Recruiting now** for September 2012 entry

Looking to advance your career and help make the world a better place?

Come and join us in the Global MBA Program. At Doshisha University in Kyoto.

TO LEARN MORE Visit: <http://gmba.doshisha.ac.jp> Call: 071-251-4600 Email: ji-gmba@mail.doshisha.ac.jp





AJET PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST!

Entries Close 25th March 2012

Welcome to AJET Connect's monthly photography contest! Submissions relevant to the JET experience are welcomed from current JET Programme participants. Your submission will be featured in the NEXT issue where our readers can vote on their choice for the best photograph. The winning entries will be entered in the yearly AJET Photography Contest.

To Enter

- 1_your name
- 2_your mailing address
(this will not be published)
- 3_your JET number
(this will not be published)
- 4_a title and brief caption
describing the scene

Submissions should be original, high quality JPG files. Contestants may submit one photo each month. This contest is for JET participants only. Send your entries to contest@ajet.net, Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter. In the case that you submit photographs where people are clearly featured, you must get permission from those featured before you submit their image.

Ownership/ Use Rights

Photographers retain the rights to their photograph. By entering the contest, photographers agree to have their submitted photograph published in the AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Photos will be credited to the author named in the entry form.



image via shutterstock.com

The sea ice before the spring

Simon Daly

In eastern Hokkaido we are advised to leave winter tires on our cars until Golden Week. The possibility of snow until the beginning of May must seem ludicrous to those of you living in the subtropical south, but it is not without its upsides. This past weekend I took a cruise on the Aurora ice-breaking boat out of Abashiri to see firsthand the wonder of the drift ice that annually inundates the Okhotsk coastline. However, there are obvious downsides too.

The goals I set myself for this year are going well thus far. My house is the clearest of snow in the entire twenty duplex teacher housing area in which I reside. There is only a thin layer of ice and snow over my back yard, which has amazed my neighbours, seeing as many of them have motorized snow ploughs, whereas mine has all been done by hand. It has been a lot of work. The main reason I am putting in so much effort is that I want to get my garden in early this year and make the most of the warmer weather, but it is still a long ways off. I grew a lot of my own vegetable and herbs last year and where I could I supplemented what I grew myself with local produce. At the moment though, with nothing growing in the here and now though, this is impossible.

When it came time to think about what to cook this month I was at first a little stumped about what to make without fresh produce. Of course, we can now get whatever we need year around, but that is not the point. So here I stand, in my kitchen contemplating what I can make with what is in the cupboards. It struck me that in the past this must have been necessity for our forbears and I am wondering if I have enough space to bottle fruit and preserve vegetables for next year, but that is getting too far ahead of myself. What follows is the simplest of Italian dishes, made with the contents of my pantry and those vegetables hardy enough to have not disintegrated in the bottom of the refrigerator, after a week away at the Sapporo Snow festival and without taking the easy way out and fleeing to market.



Stout School

Brian Laggis

When talking to people about beer I find that Stouts, despite their popularity, are one of the most misunderstood styles of Ale (yes, with the exception of all but a few, Stouts are top-fermented Ales). In this article I'd like to clarify other misconceptions as well as offer up a recipe for one of my favourite beers – a hearty Imperial Chocolate Oatmeal Stout.

The word Stout was originally used to describe any strong beer, thus in England during the 1800s you'd be able to find Stout Pale Ale. Over time, the word stout came to be solely associated with dark beers, namely Stout Porters. Eventually, the addition of roasted barley came to separate Stouts from Porters and that distinction holds true for the most part today.

Typically, barley is malted before being used in brewing. This process creates enzymes that are activated during the mashing process, converting long starch chains into sugars that are later converted into alcohol by yeast during fermentation. Roasted barley is the darkest coloured malt used in brewing and gives stouts their black colour. When creating it, the malting process is skipped over entirely and it is sim-

ply, as the name suggests, roasted. The resultant ingredient contributes no fermentable sugars, but is responsible for the taste that stout lovers can't get enough of – that dry, bitter, coffee like flavour. A small amount of roasted barley packs a lot of flavour and adding large amounts can quickly overwhelm the other flavour components of your beer. However, the potency of roasted barley can be beneficial to the novice brewer because minor blunders can be easily concealed behind this intense flavour.

If I were to ask you to think of a stout, Guinness would probably be the first thing that comes to mind, but within the sub-category of stout there are numerous styles representing a surprisingly varied range of beer. Guinness is considered an Irish Dry Stout, which, despite popular belief, is a super dry lower alcohol beer. The low sweetness allows the roasted barley flavour to really come through. The creamy feel you get in your mouth is created by nitrogen carbonation (versus standard carbon dioxide). Reproducing the clean perfection of a dry stout is one of the harder feats to pull off as a home-brewer. The toughest part is getting the final gravity of your beer low enough to produce the distinctive dryness. Luckily, the other varieties are much easier to brew and are actually some of the most forgiving styles.

Imperial Stouts, like India Pale Ales, are high alcohol beers that were originally created to ensure they would keep during long journeys and the alcohol acts as a preservative. The former was traditionally exported from Britain to Russia and the latter to India. In essence, simply doubling the ingredients of a normal stout creates this style. These beers, despite their ingredients and appearance, taste quite different than their dry counterparts. They are big, sweet, strong, thick and roasty – typically having an alcohol content of more than 8%. While easier to brew than a Dry Stout the sheer amount of fermentable sugars in an Imperial presents similar challenges to the brewer. If you fail to get a good fermentation your beer can be cloyingly sweet, so for your first stout I'd recommend one of the styles below.

A lesser known but classic style is the Milk Stout. Why the name? To create this style brewers incorporate sugar derived from milk, also known as lactose, which is inaccessible to yeast. The result is a sweeter beer that is surprisingly delicious. It is not hard to imagine that the coffee notes of the roasted barley mix very well with the milky sweetness of lactose.

Coffee and Chocolate Stouts are two interesting styles that are relatively new to the beer scene. Believe it or not, you can make Coffee or Chocolate Stouts without adding any actual Coffee or Chocolate. Malt Roasters discovered that by roasting barely to the same degree as one would roast cacao or coffee beans they could create very similar flavours. Using large amounts of Chocolate Malt creates chocolate Stouts, while Coffee stouts are created with Black Patent Malt (the darkest of the Roasted Barleys). With that said, many home-brewers and commercial brewers alike will add coffee or chocolate to their beer, which intensifies and reinforces these flavours. This is just one example of how the four standard ingredients – water, yeast, hops and barley – represent unlimited flavour options for the brewer.

The last style I'd like to cover is the Oatmeal Stout. Oatmeal can be added during the mashing stage to any of the styles above to enhance "mouth-feel" and head retention. The silky smoothness that is characteristic of any oatmeal stout comes from the proteins extracted from the oats. However, regular rolled oats don't add any distinguishable flavour to your beer. Side note: If you'd like to get flavour out of your oats it is best to throw them in the oven for a quick toast before adding them to your mash. This can be a good option for certain styles – the strong flavour of roasted barley in a standard stout would probably overwhelm the subtle flavour of toasted oats, but baked oats along with raisins and cinnamon can be used to create a very tasty oatmeal cookie porter.



Recipe

Imperial Chocolate Oatmeal Stout

This recipe combines many of the styles described above, utilizing chocolate malt, rolled oats and roasted barley. Crystal Malts are added for additional sweetness and to complement the other specialty malts. Hops are only added at the beginning of the boil to add bitterness and balance out the sweetness of the specialty malts. By not adding them later in the boil their flavour and aroma are minimized, thus allowing the malts to take centre stage. The large amount of fermentable sugars will have this beer topping 8% alcohol so it's one that is best sipped at a slightly warmer temperature. As stated above, this beer doesn't fit neatly into any of the sub-styles I described above, hence the descriptive name.

Appearance

dark black with a frothy light brown head.

Aroma

chocolate, roasted coffee.

Taste/Mouthfeel

creamy dark chocolate with a somewhat dry "roasty" aftertaste.

Partial Mash/Extract Version

Makes approximately 22 Litres

Malts

- > 700g Chocolate Malt
- > 700g Flaked Oats
- > 350g Crystal 140 Malt
- > 350g Crystal 60 Malt
- > 100g Roasted Barley

Malt Extract

Pale Liquid Malt Extract 4kg

Hops

68g Cascade hops at 60 minutes

Yeast

American Ale or British Ale

Step 1

Bring your brewing water up to 68 degrees and soak the first 5 ingredients in a large muslin sack, maintaining a more or less constant temperature.

Step 2

Remove the sack and bring the water to a boil. Stir in the Liquid Malt Extract just as the water begins to boil.

Step 3

Bring the wort to a full boil. Add the hops and boil for 60 minutes.

Step 4

Remove the wort and quickly cool to 20 degrees in an ice bath.

Step 5

Pitch the yeast and ferment for 2 weeks at 20 degrees

Step 6

Bottle with 3/4 cups sugar and bottle condition for at least 2 weeks.

All-Grain Method makes approximately 22 Litres

Substitute 4.5 kg of 2-Row American Pale Malt for the Liquid Malt extract. Mash at 64 degrees for 90 minutes, "sparge" and continue from step 3 above.

Brian Laggis is a second year ALT in Sapporo, Hokkaido where he lives with his wife Jess. He is obsessed with all things fermentable and employs around ten billion microbes who, among other things, ferment his beer, fertilize his garden and keep him in good physical condition. Brian has fully embraced his nerd-ism.





Katsuo-carbonara orecchie with wakame giardiniera

Simon Daly

Cleaning out your pantry can be the most liberating of exercises. Creative use of dry ingredients, the ones hiding in the back of cupboards and atop high shelves, will not only simplify your life and save you time, but also it will save you money. I will admit that I was a little stumped at first when all I unearthed, in terms of dry ingredients, was flour, eggs, fish flakes, seaweed and a few dusty condiments. Thankfully, some hardy vegetables and overpriced cheese had survived my winter vacation relatively unscathed.

I have owned a pasta machine for years. It was one of the select few items I shipped with me to Japan. It is a simple model that rolls sheets. These sheets can be used for dishes such as lasagne or cut into spaghetti or fettuccine on the machine itself. You can also cut the pasta by hand to make paperelle or fold the pasta to make ravioli or tortellini. I use it often and while pasta machines are available here, I don't expect that you own one. This is the main reason I did not use this to roll the outside layer of

the timpano last month and why I will not use it again now. If, however, you do develop a taste for fresh pasta they are a great investment and a solidly built model will last a lifetime.

One of the simplest pastas I have ever come across that does not require the use of a roller is orecchie. The name of these small round pasta cups is a diminutive form of the Italian word for ear, orecchio. Originating in southern Italy (around the heel of the boot) this rustic handmade pasta variation is notable for the fact that it is usually bound with water, as opposed to egg, and is simply formed by hand.

The celery, carrots and onions I had at hand would have been a fantastic base for any number of classic French dishes. Together, they are known as the holy trinity of French cuisine (replace the carrots with green peppers and you have the base of many Cajun dishes), though by themselves they seemed very plain. I decided on a fast and lightly flavoured version of the classic Italian pickle giardiniera (with the notable exception of cauliflower).

Provided your pantry is stocked similarly to mine this meal is cheap. It is not however quick to make. That said, the giardiniera can be made ahead of

time and if you don't have the patience to make pasta by hand, then a store bought variety can be used instead.

For the pasta

- > 1.5 cups of plain white flour
(durum or semolina flour can also be used if you have them)
- > 80mls warm water
- > 1 tsp salt

Place flour in bowl and make a well in the centre. Pour in your water and salt and mix with a fork till combined. This step can be done in a bench-top mixer with a dough hook or in a food processor. When the dough is combined, tip it onto your bench and knead until it is smooth and elastic. If it sticks to the bench sprinkle a little flour over the dough and continue kneading. The dough should be firm but pliable. Wrap it in kitchen wrap and place in the refrigerator for at least an hour.

When completely cool and rested, take the dough from the fridge and cut into four pieces. Flour your bench and roll these pieces into long snakes/ropes that are about 2cm in diameter. With a knife cut a ½ cm disc from the end of the rolled pasta and then press the knife into its centre, then invert the pasta with your tip of your thumb to create an ear shape. This process is hard to describe, but a simple search will turn up many videos of orecchie being made.

Bring a pot of water to the boil and add your pasta. Cook the fresh pasta for 5 minutes and then drain.

Katsuo-carbonara sauce

- > 2 large eggs
- > 1/3 cup grated Parmesan
- > 10 grams of Katsuobushi (bonito) flakes
- > A pinch of salt
- > 2 cloves of garlic crushed
- > Ground black pepper
- > 1tsp olive oil

While the pasta is cooking (yes you have time, the sauce is that easy) find a large bowl and crack two eggs into it. With the exception of the olive oil, add the rest of the ingredients to your bowl and mix together to form a paste. Add the hot drained pasta to your bowl and mix together. The heat of the pasta will cook the eggs and in combination with the slightly melted cheese you will end up with a thick sauce around your orecchie. Spoon the pasta onto two plates and drizzle a dash of olive oil on top.

This style of carbonara sauce is incredibly versatile. I make versions with bacon and onion, another with Japanese shimeiji mushrooms, and yet another with green beans and large amounts of fresh herbs blended simply through the egg. Be creative with what you have in your pantry and you might hit on something delicious. I was surprised at how much, in combination with the cheese and garlic, my brain was convinced that the katsuobushi actually tasted like bacon. Even if you think you don't like bonito flakes, you might be surprised.

For the Wakame giardiniera

- > 1 large carrot
- > 1 red onion,
- > 3 sticks of celery
- > 10 grams of dried wakame seaweed
- > 250mls white vinegar
- > 125mls water
- > 1 tsp of salt
- > 1 tsp olive oil

Cut vegetable into fairly even thin strips. I am not going to specify julienne or any such classic cut, but do try to get the pieces relatively even and small. Place in a saucepan and add vinegar water and salt. Bring the pot to the boil, then set aside to cool. In a bowl reconstitute your wakame. I recommend doing this in cold water to avoid turning it to mush, but follow the instructions on the packet and once reconstituted drain off any excess water. Once the vegetables are completely cool, mix through your wakame and place into a jar or plastic container with a lid and refrigerate.

If you want to prolong the life of the giardiniera you can use sterilized jars, but for me, since I knew it would get eaten over the course of a couple of days I did not bother. To serve, remove the vegetables from the brine with a slotted spoon and place on your plate. Drizzle with a touch of olive oil. In combination with the carbonara you will have two classic Italian dishes, lightly flavoured with staples from a Japanese home kitchen.





A hand is pointing towards a central user icon in a network graph. The network consists of several user icons connected by lines, representing social connections or a professional network. The background is dark, and the icons are white with a slight glow.

WORKPLACE TIPS

Taxes & American JETs

Frederick W. Gundlach

An acquaintance who is involved in AJET asked me to explain about the need for Americans abroad to file a tax return with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. I lived in Japan for about five-and-a-half years, and was surprised that quite often Americans in Japan were not familiar with the requirement.

Even though it's a requirement, there is almost always a silver lining: most filers making modest income owe nothing or very little to the U.S. Treasury. This is due to an exclusion that I will describe in a bit.

Americans are taxed on their worldwide income. This has been so since the 1920's, when the U.S. Supreme Court determined that "all income, from whatever source derived" meant income earned outside America as well. This presented a problem for American expatriates, because the countries where they were living usually had their own income tax as well. Someone could be stuck paying taxes to two countries. This would be a type of double taxation.

To help people avoid double taxation, the U.S. Congress allowed the choice of either a "tax credit" or an "income exclusion" on foreign earned income. Earned income is income from your work. Income from investments was traditionally called "unearned income", because it did not require your labor.

So, in general, your two protections from double taxation are the choice of a credit, or an exclusion. You may have heard about this Foreign Earned Income Exclusion. Overseas Americans often say something like, "Uncle Sam doesn't tax your first \$80,000 of income, so you don't have to worry (about a tax return.)" This is wrong. Usually, the person who tells you this isn't filing a return themselves. That is a mistake. Their mistake.

The Foreign Earned Income Exclusion (FEIE) allows you to exclude up to \$92,900 of your income earned abroad if you meet two tests. These two tests are very easy for most JET participants:

- 1) There is either the physical presence or bona fide residence test ; and
- 2) The "tax home" test.

In short, for the first one: if you are working outside America for 330 of any 365-day period, you meet

the physical presence test. OR, if you have set up a residence in Japan for a full year (January 1st to January 1st), you are a bona fide resident (regardless of how many days of the 365 you were in Japan). Key to this is we are assuming that you intend to be a JET for at least one year and a day. The key word is "intend".

The tax home is a bit more confusing, but according to the IRS:

"Your tax home is the general area of your main place of business, employment, or post of duty, regardless of where you maintain your family home. Your tax home is the place where you are permanently or indefinitely engaged to work as an employee or self-employed individual."

If you are working in the JET Programme and no other country, your tax home would be Japan. You would meet this test.

We will assume that you meet the two tests, and are eligible to exclude up to \$92,900 of earned income. What do you do?

If you don't have any stateside income, you file Form 1040, which is available at www.irs.gov. Your earned income, translated from yen, will go on Line 7.

You will probably want to exclude your JET income, as foreign earned income. You will want to use Form 2555, or 2555-EZ. While these forms look confusing, there is plenty of help at the IRS website, including Publication 54. The questions you are asked on the form, basically, are those to determine if you meet the tests I described above. If you were only in Japan for part of the year, say, since September, you have to divide the \$92,900 by twelve months, which is about \$7,742 a month, and take for only as many months as you were working. (Obviously, if you were making less than that per month, you are still going to wipe out the federal tax on it.)

The IRS even allows you to delay the filing of your tax return until you meet the 330 days of physical presence, or the bona fide resident test. To do this, you need to file Form 2350. It is also fairly straightforward. You would probably have to do this in your first full year as a JET, and then, afterward, you easily should meet the physical presence test.

If you completed it correctly, the amount on Form 2555 or 2555-EZ should be your JET income. It goes on the 1040 as a subtraction in Line 21. (Even though Line 21 says "other income", this is the line the IRS wants you to use. You just write Form 2555 or 2555-EZ where it says "other income" and subtract your foreign earned income.)

Line 21 is the exclusion. If you have no other income, your "adjusted gross income" is then zero. If you have stateside income, then that must also show on your return. You are still entitled to the standard deduction and personal exemption, so your tax may still be zero. There is also a Foreign Housing Allowance, but that comes into play when you are making at least the \$92,900 cap for FEIE.

Of course, if you have unique circumstances beyond this example, you need to seek out additional assistance.

Finally, remember the example of the advice given above, about the \$80,000? The part they don't know about is that you don't get the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion unless you file. If you do not file, and the IRS comes to you first for a tax return, you may lose the possibility of claiming FEIE. You don't want that to happen.

Additionally, if you don't file, the tax year never "closes". Normally, the IRS cannot audit you about

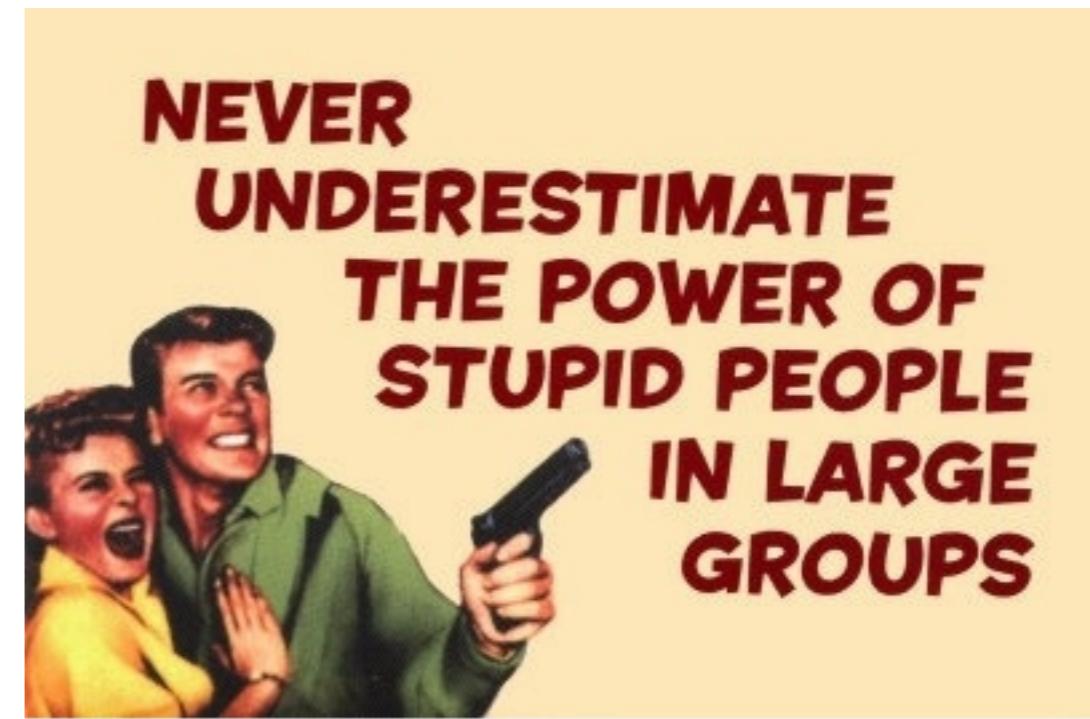
a year that is three years before the latest tax year for which the filing is done. (So for example, a 2007 return ordinarily cannot be questioned at this point.) A tax year where you didn't file is like it said on the old Denny's sign: ALWAYS OPEN. The IRS can come to you 10 years from now and ask about the year 2011. You can be faced with needless anxiety, the possibility of losing the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion, plus paying interest and penalties. This is especially so, because the Japanese national and residence taxes - the only thing you'd get a tax credit for - are lower than the federal income tax.

If you sought work for the government after JET, you can be sure they'd want to know if you've been filing.

Although it seems like a headache, filing is the best thing - and easy, once it's done once. It is the right thing to do. It is the American thing to do.

This advice applies only to American JETs. For detailed information on other countries' taxes, please visit your government's website or contact your embassy in Japan.

Frederick W. Gundlach, an attorney and CPA-inactive, has been licensed in New Jersey since 2004. From 2005 to 2010, he lived in Tokyo, Japan, and worked for multinational companies there.





Canada National Group

Mark Bull

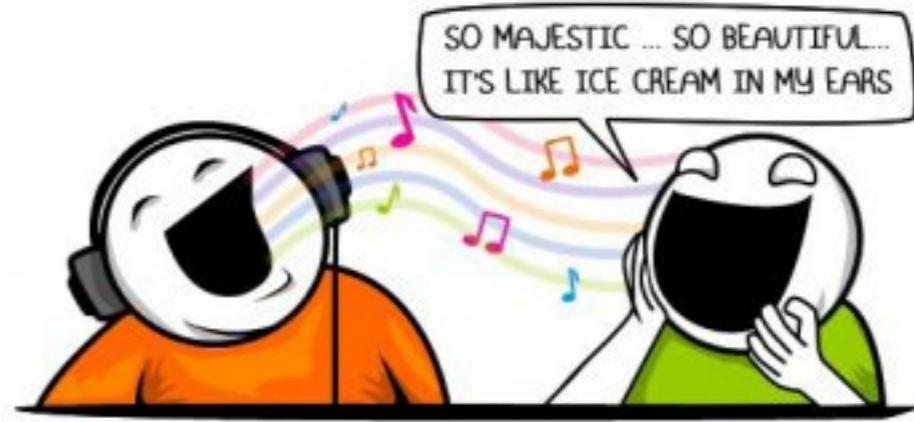
The Canada National Group will be a new AJET group starting this month. The aim of the group will be to create a network of Canadian JETs to share and exchange ideas and lessons to promote Canada inside and outside of the classroom. The group will use Twitter, Facebook and email to keep in touch. I am sure that the ideas and materials posted on the Twitter and Facebook pages will be helpful to Canadian JETs and hope they will be inspired to share their own.

My schools are not very academic; however, I have had several students express an interest to study English in Canada. I like to believe that my classes have something to do with it. When I first became a JET, I taught my students as much as I could about Canada. I did whole classes on culture differences and holidays like Canada Day (which is now my favourite lesson). This past academic year I started teaching a third year senior high school class called Eigo Sougo or General English. For that class I wrote a short essay on a Canadian topic each week and based my lesson on it.

Those lessons have been quite successful and after the first semester, I thought that other Canadian JETs might like to try some of the lessons in their classes. I checked the AJET website for contact information of the Canadian National Group and found that the group was no longer around. Thus, I decided to start CanadaNG.

As a fourth year JET, I will also be able to give information (or refer you to where you can get better information) regarding issues related to Canadians in Japan. A representative of the Canadian Embassy will also be providing periodic updates on its activities and events you may join. So, please follow the group on Twitter (CanadaNG), like the Facebook page (Canada National Group – AJET) or email your questions to canadaNG@ajet.net to join the group.

How you think you sound:

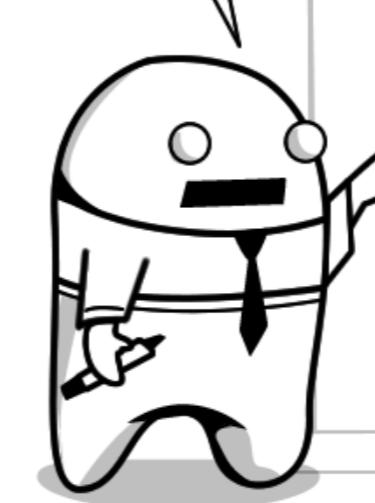


How you actually sound:



English

First, we're going to do a bit of review of some words you learned when you were little. After that I'm going to teach you how to write a résumé that doesn't suck.



Definately
↑
If you put an A in
definitely then you're
definitely an A-hole

irregardless is not a word unless you're an imbecile

lose - opposite of win → loose - your mom

Effective Team-Teaching Methods

Lisa Cross

In its general sense, team-teaching encompasses a wide variety of arrangements. One specific form that has become prevalent in recent years consists of two teachers in the classroom teaching simultaneously. This is very common in many Asian countries, especially in Japan with the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, though there are also private institutions that facilitate other team-teaching scenarios as well.

In the case of JET particularly, usually one person in the team-teaching pair is a native speaker of the target language. The title Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) is used to describe these teachers. The main teacher, on the other hand, usually has more teaching experience and is not a native speaker of the target language, hence the need for an ALT. These non-native speakers of the target language are called Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs).

Successful team-teaching has the potential to benefit both students and educators. Teachers stand to gain in terms of their professional development. Team-teaching provides them with a partner to help them set objectives, make plans, implement lessons and evaluate the results. They have someone from whom they can draw inspiration and who can provide them with constructive feedback on their teaching. Students benefit from increased quality of lessons and a lower student-to-teacher ratio.

In a recent presentation on Effective Team Teaching Methods for the JET Programme, I addressed several topics. These were: the Role of Team Teachers, the Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) and the Japanese Teacher of English (JTE), a Three-Step Teaching Plan and Useful Team Teaching Tips.

In my experience, team-teaching is not effective for students or teachers if lessons are not transferred efficiently. Many articles written about team-teaching merely provide lesson plans that demonstrate which teacher will speak on which topic or lead a particular activity, but do not effectively provide teachers with tips or ways to enhance an effective learning environment for students. My main goal was to offer other ALTs useful and relevant team-teaching tips that could be implemented in the classroom.

The team teachers' roles are to ensure that they provide students with the necessary educational tools to improve their English language abilities, which include

listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. To do this, team teachers need to work together to do pre-lesson preparation, lesson planning and implementation, and post lesson activities. Team teachers also need to fulfill active in-class duties which include accurately providing explanations of student activities, giving students instructions, fulfilling leadership roles and evaluating students' performance. I found that a very important part of being an effective team teacher in the classroom, and fulfilling the aforementioned duties, is to maintain eye contact with my JTE. This is critical in our team-teaching classroom, and it is crucial that other ALTs foster a relationship with their JTE that allows for eye contact. We often need to signal each other for transitions to new activities, communicate when to bring activities to a close, or make modifications, and if ALTs do this with their JTE, they will have more success in their lessons.

Talking things through with JTEs at every stage, especially before lessons, will also help ALTs define their individual roles within the team. This is essential in developing a better understanding of one another's teaching philosophies, along with the personal and cultural factors that have shaped them and affect their practical applications. Honest discussion also clears up any potential misunderstandings before they have the chance to obstruct the flow of a lesson, and ensure that JTEs and ALTs are taking equal responsibility for staying on course towards established objectives. Planning ahead will help ensure that both members are feeling comfortable and productive within the team.

Sometimes, despite the best intentions, ALTs have doubts about the strength of their partnership with their JTE. In these situations, frank discussion with departmental management about pair reassignment, or if that is not possible, solving problems directly with assigned teaching partners, and above all maintaining a professional demeanor, may help diffuse potentially unsatisfactory pairings.

As a guide to effective team teaching, my presentation stressed having good working relationship with JTEs. This means planning lessons ahead of time, keeping in constant communication, discussing the motivation of students and re-evaluating each class after lessons are completed.

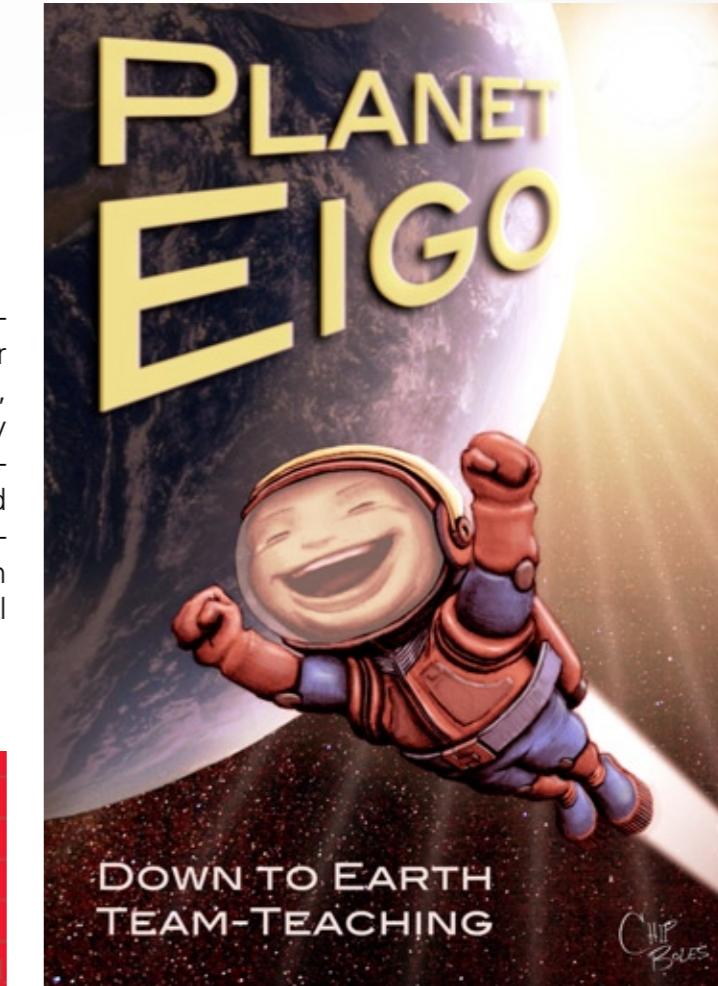
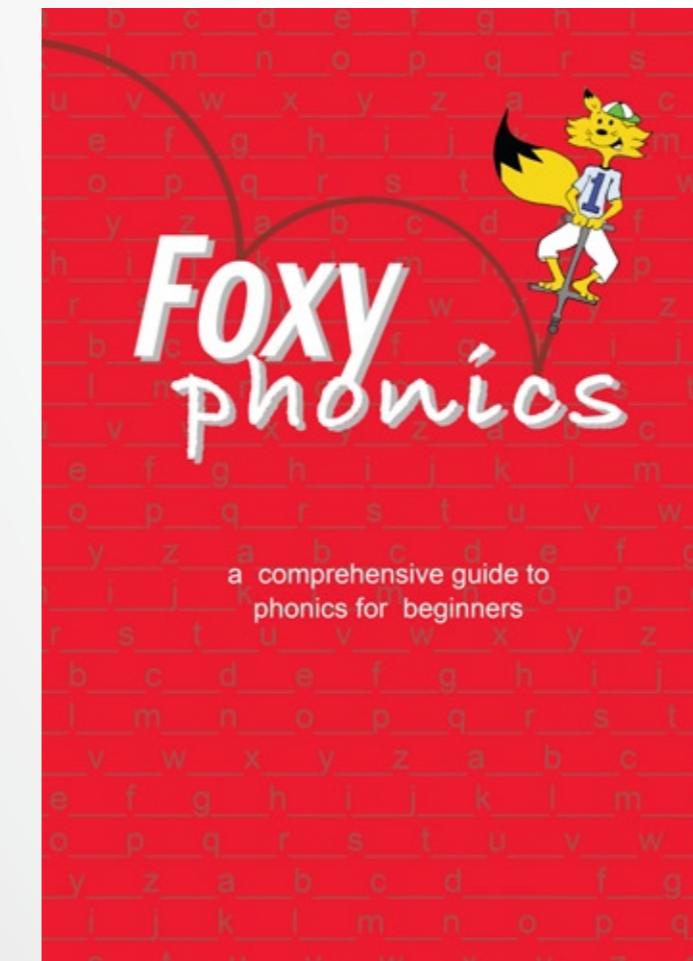
Team-teaching can be challenging, but it can also be an extremely beneficial and professionally rewarding experience if all goes well. In order to get the full benefits of it, however, both teachers need to respect each other inside and outside the classroom to create the most positive teaching and learning experience for both themselves and their students.

AJET BOOKS

Planet Eigo

¥4,000 non AJET member *
¥3,000 AJET member *

Planet Eigo is a collection of lesson plans and helpful teaching methods specifically designed for team-teaching in Japan. In addition to lesson plans, activities and games, Planet Eigo includes nearly 100 pages of detailed explanations on Team Teaching, Learning Theory, Instructional Planning and even has a section dedicated to teaching in Elementary Schools. Planet Eigo is also written with English and Japanese side by side, and is spiral bound for easy photocopying.



**GET BOTH BOOKS
FOR ¥4,000***

Foxy Phonics
¥2,000 non AJET member *
¥1,500 AJET member *

Studies show that learning phonics in the beginning stages of language instruction is important for proper language development. Starting with the basic sounds, this book teaches phonics of English to students with over 100 worksheets, illustrations, phonics activities, and tongue twisters. This book is sure to set katakana English in its place.

Foxy Phonics and Planet Eigo can be ordered via email publications@ajet.net

THE AJET CONNECT MONTHLY HAIKU CONTEST

**Create a haiku?
and maybe even a few?
don't mind if I do...**

**Whether you're an experienced poet,
or have never written poetry before,
let inspiration strike and send us
your haiku! Every month we accept
haikus from JETs across Japan.
Readers can vote on the best, and
the winning entry will be entered
into the annual contest next spring!**

**Voting is underway now -
please vote for your choice.**

**Start counting out the
words and composing!**

This Month's Haiku

ENGLISH

gentle snow sidewalk
the steam from the ramen shop
fogging up windows

Alex Kraus

**VOTE at
ajet.net/haiku**

Entries due March 25th, 2012

Submissions should be original haiku accompanied by:

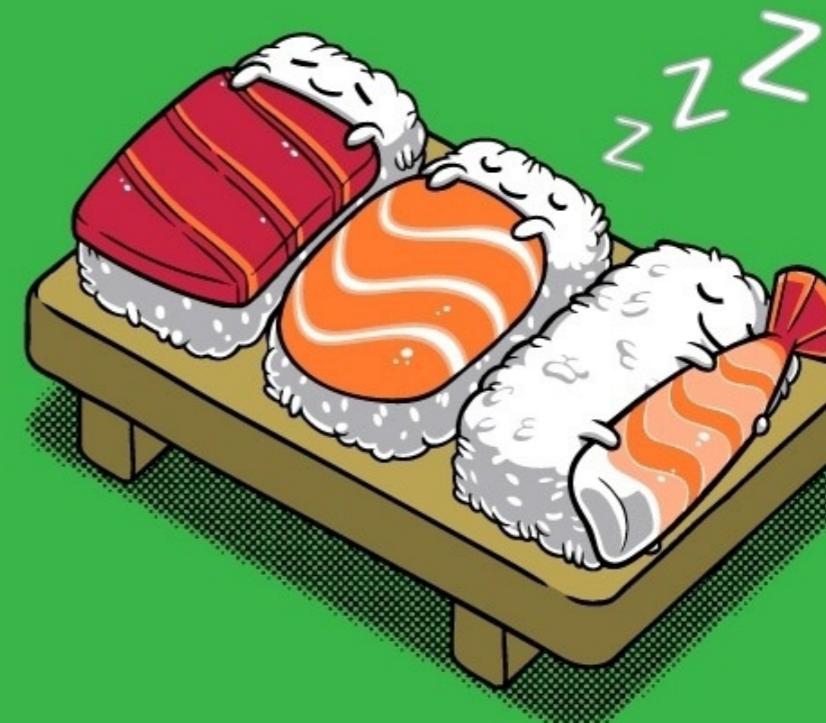
- 1_your name
- 2_your mailing address (this will not be published)
- 3_your JET number (this will not be published)
- 4_written in English or Japanese (if written in Japanese, your haiku must be accompanied by furigana and an English translation)

Contestants may submit one haiku (per category) each month. This contest is for JET participants only. Current National AJET council members are not eligible to enter.

Send your entries to contest@ajet.net

Ownership/ Use Rights:

Haiku authors retain the rights to their haiku. By entering the contest, the authors agree to have their submitted haiku published in the AJET Connect magazine, displayed on the AJET website and posted on AJET Facebook sites. Haiku will be credited to the author named in the entry form.





FASHION & BEAUTY

image via shutterstock.com

For the past month, I've dutifully been keeping track of the various fashion weeks taking place round the globe. In New York, Preen impressed audiences with an exquisite botanical theme, post-birth Victoria Beckham updated the brand's signature hour-glass figure with sportswear (and introduced a new 'Harper' bag), and Derek Lam sent out feminine beehives and gorgeous printed collars. I'm sorry to say that the London coverage left me feeling slightly homesick this time round, particularly as this season's offerings were unanimously hailed by all, with each new unveiling triggering Facebook hyperventilations from my friends based in the capital. Sarah Burton brought the McQ show back to London after a prodigal decade in Paris, Burberry literally staged a rainstorm on the catwalk (this is all I had to hear; I love umbrellas), and I challenge anyone to look me in the eyes and tell me they don't want one of Mary Katrantzou's typewriter dresses. At the time of writing, it's Milan now, then Paris next.

On this side of the world, the schedule for Japan Fashion Week (18 - 24 March) has now been set and the city is gearing up for the event. JFW is a smaller scale than the main four: the internationally famous Japanese brands tend to show in Paris, and the overall feel is off-beat and individualistic street fashion, giving the smaller labels room to shine. This spring, there will be a number of accompanying events which are open to the public. A sakura exhibition will be held all week at Nihonbashi Mitsui Tower, featuring a kimono show and a traditional cafe. The department stores Matsuya Ginza and Ginza Mitsukoshi will be at the hub of the parallel side project, Ginza Fashion Week, while 365 items from the calendar 365 Charming Every Day Things will be showcased and sold at Pola Museum Annex. If any fashion-crazed JETs happen to be in Tokyo during this period, drop by these venues or just stroll round the area – the energy in the city should be infectious, providing ample opportunity for people watching.

I'd also like to draw attention to Roppongi Art Night 2012, which has been firmly marked in my diary. Starting from sundown on March 24 and lasting till sunrise, this is an all-night celebration of the arts in the Roppongi district. Sculptures by the much-anticipated headlining artist, Yayoi Kusama, will be installed in the area, museums and galleries will be throwing their doors open, and various performances are planned. The event is free and should draw huge crowds: 70,000 people attended in 2010. For lovers of fashion and art, March is looking to be an exciting month – enjoy and take advantage of it.



The style icons of Japanese silent cinema

Annabella Massey

Silent cinema is having something of a mini-moment. Homages to these early origins of film, in which eloquent gesture and expression meant everything, are cropping up in all parts of the world. *The Artist*, of course, is the most obvious example of this nostalgia boom, but many other revivals of this era have been dreamt up elsewhere. Martin Scorsese's much acclaimed *Hugo* (2011) has been shot in 3D and described as steam-punk; in conjunction with these contemporary flourishes, it also manages to deliver fond tribute to George Méliès and lift prime silent clips into the narrative. This upcoming year will see a Broadway musical based on the life of Charlie Chaplin, while Vlad Kosloc's *Silent Life*, a film about the last days of brooding legend Rudolph Valentino, is also scheduled for a 2012 release. We are, it seems, diverted and charmed by silent charisma and the switching off of sound.

Nostalgia has always been a powerful social force. At a guess, this is even more pronounced in the depths of a world recession; see the schmaltzy John Lewis advert which aired in the UK last Christmas as potential evidence. Fashion, in particular, exists in a hyperactive state of nostalgia, typically reworking looks from past decades: a chic (and pricey) *déjà vu*, if you will. And in fairness, there are only so many basic dress shapes

Sessue Hayakawa

'Sessue Hayakawa. The greatest movie star in this century ... When Sessue was getting out of his limousine in front of a theatre at a premiere showing, he grimaced a little because there was a puddle. Then, dozens of female fans surrounding his car fell over one another to spread their fur coats at his feet.' – Miyatake Toyo (photographer)

Pictured here with Chinese-American silver screen legend Anna May Wong, Sessue Hayakawa was one of the most prominent and highly paid Hollywood actors of his time, throwing legendary and extravagant parties in his 'Castle' and driving a gold plated Pierce-Arrow (I assume just because he could). Appearing in productions such as *The Cheat* (1915) and *The Dragon Painter* (1919), Hayakawa usually played a tempestuous, surly cad. For some time, he was the sex symbol in America (hence the fur coats) until he found himself ousted by Rudolph Valentino. Later on in life, he formed his own production company and became a Zen master in Japan. Take a leaf from Hayakawa's extremely cosmopolitan look, make sure you're impeccably suave at all times and perfect that intense glare: with the right suit and hair, you too can become a brooding and tumultuous villain.

a designer can realistically refresh and build upon. Recently, Karl Lagerfeld jumped on the proverbial bandwagon and released his own silent cinema tribute: a ten-minute film starring Chanel's latest muse Alice Dellal, entitled *My New Friend 'Boy'* (this particular 'boy' is a handbag collection), and accompanied only by the rather somber intonations of a piano. Lagerfeld famously (and, I think, justifiably) quipped, "When people talk about the good old days, I say to people, 'It's not the days that are old, it's you that's old.' I hate the good old days. What is important is that today is good." Nevertheless, he knows the potent trick of combining modern innovation with just enough nostalgia – using it as seasoning; as a tool to tug on the audiences' heartstrings and provoke emotions of familiarity while artfully guiding them towards his vision of the future.

Fashion's fascination with Western twenties glamour is long-standing. The film stars who embody the roaring Jazz Age look are endlessly invoked and conjured up on the catwalk. To name just a few: Lillian Gish; Gloria Swanson; Louise Brooks (if nothing else, you'll know her hair); Greta Garbo; Anna May Wong; Charlie Chaplin; Buster Keaton. This obsession, once again, is taking off in full swing. Marc Jacobs launched rejuvenated flapper dresses, drop waists and fabulously oversized headwear

(what's not to love?) into 2012 for his spring ready-to-wear collection. In Milan, Alberta Ferretti sent out cloche hats, rich fur lapels and neat Gatsby references down the catwalk. Incidentally, prepare to see much more of fashion's take on Fitzgerald in the year to come.

But what of Japan? Early Japanese cinema was innovative, stylised and experimental, but the genre barely registers on the world scale – at least, from the standard Western perspective. The scene certainly wasn't lacking in silver screen idols, but few of these names are recognised overseas. This is partially due to how Japanese silent films literally haven't lasted as well as their Hollywood counterparts. The Great Kanto Earthquake, bombing in WWII, and the instability of nitrate film (particularly when subject to humidity) have ensured that relatively few pieces now exist in their complete form. Many films made by pivotal directors (Kenji Mizogushi, Daisuke Itoh, etc) were irrevocably destroyed. Furthermore, a crucial component of Japanese silent cinema has fallen out of use: the benshi, a live narrator who comments when necessary, performs the lines mouthed on the screen above, and gives an initial introduction to the film. It's also important to remember that many Japanese and Asian actors who attempted Hollywood were often restricted to degrading and stereotyped roles. These limiting factors are not to say that what's left of Japanese silent cinema isn't worth viewing (on the contrary), but they do indicate why exploring this genre can be difficult.

Nevertheless, as a small introduction into Japanese silent film, I'll be profiling five influential actors from the period, all of whom have copious amounts of talent and a certain stylish magnetism. Who knows, you might find a masterful new look to channel along the way. So, in no particular order:

Tatsuo Saito

A great pair, both father (Saito) and son are totally working some kind of sneaky chic here. It's all in the angled hats, the cocked eye and the squints. Co-starring with Sumiko Kurishima in Naruse's *Every Night Dreams* (1933), Saito plays the feckless, forlorn husband. He ultimately disappeared from the Japanese movie scene and set out to attempt Hollywood, but not before appearing in twenty of Yasujiro Ozu's early productions.



Tsuru Aoki

A geometric pattern paired with a light print, fingers toying with an open fan, butterflies in big hair, a knowing half-smile and a faraway gaze – Tsuru Aoki delivers. The co-star and wife of Sessue Hayakawa, Aoki was a major player in her own right. She was the first Japanese actress to land lead roles in early Hollywood productions: *The Wrath of the Gods* (1914), *The Breath of the Gods* (1920) and the aforementioned *The Dragon Painter*.



Kinuyo Tanaka

With her hair twisted up and pinned modishly in place, youthful make-up (and a gorgeous button nose), Kinuyo Tanaka makes the potentially fussy lace collar feel young, lady-like and fresh. Multi-talented, she was both an actor and a director. In 1975, she won a Best Actress Award at the 25th Berlin International Film Festival for her role as a prostitute in *Sandakan 8*, directed by Kei Kumai.

Annabella Massey is a first year UK ALT based in Yamanashi Prefecture.



Sumiko Kurishima

Fierce, fierce, fierce! Sumiko Kurishima teaches us how to serve grown-up elegance with a huge dose of attitude. The finely shaped eyebrows, the impeccable upsweep, the no-nonsense print of her kimono, the ice-queen glare... sure, she might be daintily kneeling by a pond, but she's also poised and ready to lance you with her (fabulous) parasol. She's widely acknowledged as the first Japanese female movie star, but the peak of her career, she retired from the film business and concentrated on her prowess as a dancer instead. That said, director Mikio Naruse managed to persuade her back for *Flowing* (1956) in later years.

Japanese silent cinema: recommended viewing

Kurutta Ippej (A Page of Madness); 1926; dir. Teinosuko Kinugasa

Taki no Shiraito (The Water Magician); 1933; dir. Kenji Mizoguchi

Minato no Nihon musume (Japanese Girls At The Harbour); 1933; dir. Hiroshi Shimizu

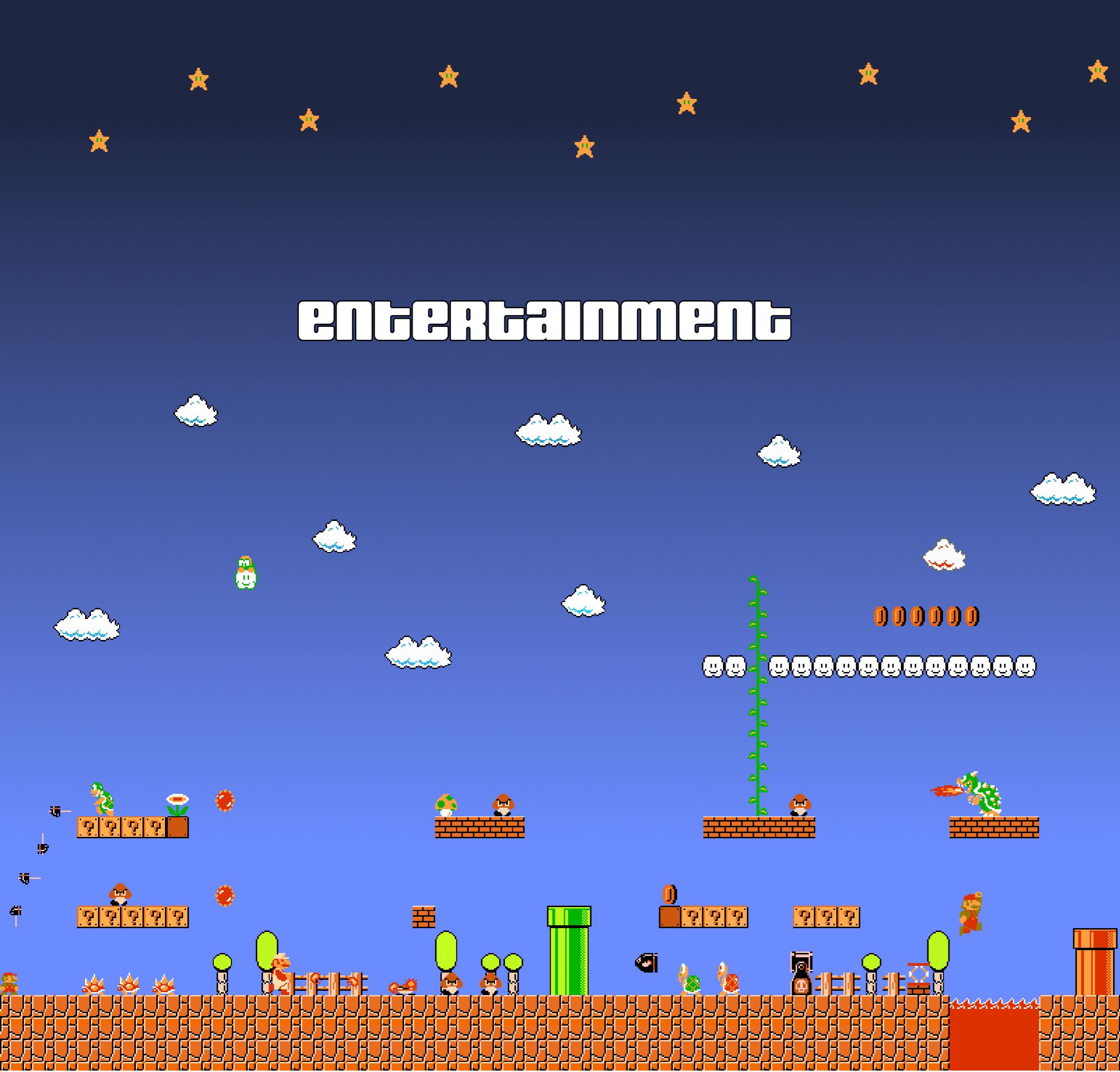
Rojo no Reikon (Souls on the Road); 1921; dir. Minoru Murata

Izu no Odoriko (The Dancing Girl of Izu); 1933; dir. Heinosuke Gosho

For those who might be interested, the thriving Matsuda Film Productions in Tokyo regularly holds silent film screenings with live benshi, the acclaimed Midori Sawato being one of them.

Memories





Despite Esperanto's best efforts, there's no denying that music is the world's universal language.

Japanese music has acquired an international reputation for being impenetrably idiosyncratic and out of step with the rest of the world. It has been difficult for more than a handful of Japanese artists to experience any degree of success outside of Asia and the country is still looking for its first truly worldwide superstar. However, the internet has opened up world music to new audiences and slowly but surely, the sounds of J-Pop are becoming increasingly popular in many corners of the globe.

In this musically themed month, we take a look at some of the biggest J-Pop bands around and give you some nuggets of information to pull out the bag and impress your students with. We also find out the origins of the English language songs which were selected to go into millions of junior high school textbooks up and down the land and serve as a classroom introduction to western pop music.

In addition, if you make your own music and fancy a bit of exposure, e-mail us and tell us all about yourself or your band for an upcoming feature...

Chris Barstow is a first year ALT in Yamagata Prefecture. He is still working in his poker face when his students enquire about his favourite Japanese singer and he answers with "Yoko Ono"...

Old Songs and New Horizons

Chris Barstow

Anyone who has taught at junior high in Japan will know the 'New Horizons' textbook series inside out. Who could not be enraptured by the infectious joie de vivre of chirpy Canadian Ann Green as she strums her guitar and talks about herself. A lot. And how about the controversy over whether to have a park or a parking area and the compelling arguments made by Jackie Pepper that enjoying a bit of grass is more important than the snapped limbs of fragile youth? And is there an ALT in the land who wasn't brought to tears as they read about the tragedy of Freddie the Leaf?

However, in between the stories about blind parent-hating opera divas and picnic flirtations being abruptly halted by cola calamities, there are various English language pop songs dotted about New Horizons' pages. But how much do you know about the songs that were selected as a snapshot of Western music culture and how can you use them in the classroom? Here's a look at the eight songs that are currently used in 'New Horizons'...



We Are The World (USA For Africa)

As well as shoulder-pads, big hair and synthesizers, the 1980s music scene also brought us the advent of the charity record. The American recording industry decided to get in on the act shortly after the success of Bob Geldof's UK-based Band Aid project, which raised millions of pounds for Ethiopian famine relief with its multi-platinum selling single 'Do They Know It's Christmas'. Featuring an all-star cast including some of the most successful, talented and respected names in the music business (and LaToya Jackson), the song repeated Band Aid's success and became a glo-

bal hit. Among the solo artists to feature were co-innovator Stevie Wonder, the soulful Supreme Diana Ross as well as a straining Bruce Springsteen, who tries to wring every ounce of emotion out of his one line. Recorded in one night after a glamorous awards ceremony, stars were famously asked to check their egos at the door upon arrival at the recording studio. It's safe to say that the cloakroom was probably empty again by the time they all left...

The song's international appeal and feel-good sentiment make it a suitable candidate for the textbook, but many lines may confuse (Dionne Warwick probably wasn't endorsing auto-cardiectomies when she sang 'send them your heart so that they'll know that someone cares...') If playing the audio, run your fingers down the blackboard first to acclimatize students to the Cyndi Lauper solo in the third verse.

Sailing (Rod Stewart)

A cover of a 1972 single by folk singers The Sutherland Brothers, 'Sailing' remains the biggest hit of rock superstar Rod Stewart in the UK. However, it didn't manage to successfully navigate the choppy Atlantic waters and the song sank without a trace upon its release in the USA. The song became associated with the British Navy following its use in a documentary about the HMS Ark Royal and one politician even proposed that it become the anthem of the annual Remembrance Day.

Its gentle lilt, slow delivery and simplistic rhyming couplets make this a highly understandable song for younger junior high learners, featuring plenty of gerunds, too. There are lots of ways to base activities around the song, and it's rather more apt for the classroom than some of Stewart's other hits such as 'D'ya Think I'm Sexy' and 'Ain't Love A Bitch'.

500 Miles (Peter, Paul and Mary)

Like 'Sailing', '500 Miles' is a folksy travelers lament, with its protagonist sullenly complaining about being destitute and far away from home. An oft covered ditty, it was made particularly famous in Japan by Peter, Paul and Mary, whose version is a karaoke standard up and down the country. The band performed together for nearly 50 years before Mary's death in 2009.

With negatives, counting and repetition, it's easy to see why this standard was chosen for inclusion. It is, however, a little bit on the morbid side and

uses imperial measurements rather than the metric ones that Japan are more used to. 804.672 kilometres doesn't quite have the same ring to it though, does it?

Beautiful Sunday (Daniel Boone)

Whilst many of the songs featured in New Horizons are well known to ALTs, 'Beautiful Sunday' stands out as something of an anomaly. A minor hit on both sides of the Atlantic for Daniel Boone in 1972, the song sold an incredible 2 million copies in Japan and remains one of the best selling foreign language songs here. It has spawned numerous cover versions across the world, with a variety of bands having enjoyed success with the tune across Asia. Its cheerful, optimistic tale of a care-free Sunday has also been adopted by soccer club Dundee United, probably making it the only crossover between the Scottish terraces and the Japanese classroom.

With its upbeat, repetitive lyrics, the song acts as a great starting point for productive activities about students' ideal weekends. Confusion may arise as Boone doesn't mention 'club activities' at any point during the song.

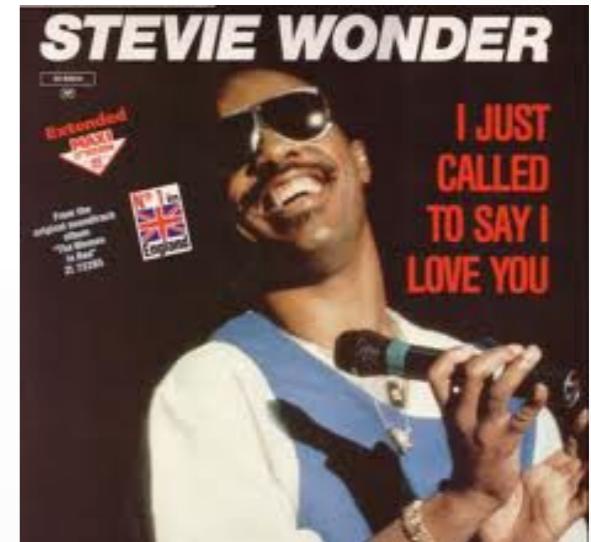


Hero (Mariah Carey)

Before she became content to base her career around reciting a few breathy lines whilst writhing up and down guest rappers half her age, Mariah Carey was known for her lung-busting power ballads. 'Hero' was co-written by Carey herself and was originally meant to be recorded by Gloria Estefan as the soundtrack to a Dustin Hoffman film of the same name. However, despite her reservations about its schmaltziness, her record executive husband persuaded her to keep the song for herself. As a result, she gained a huge international

hit along with several lawsuits against her claiming that she stole the lyrics to the song, although Carey emerged triumphant in court on each occasion. Carey says she is proud to have received thousands of letters from fans who say they have drawn strength from the song's inspiring lyrics. Whether any Japanese children have written a letter to her in broken English a la Jackie Pepper thanking her for her contribution to their education remains to be seen...

'Hero' is the newest of the songs in the textbook. Using plenty of present simple constructions, its lyrics strike a chord with the typical Junior High School slogans designed to inspire performances in and out of the classroom. That said, it's pretty wordy and some of the notes scale greater heights than Fuji-san, so perhaps it's not the best choice for a class sing-a-long...



I Just Called To Say I Love You (Stevie Wonder)

There are few musicians as cool or as adored as Stevie Wonder. However, with an impressive back catalogue that incorporates the toe-tapping classic 'Uptight', the irresistible rhythms of 'Superstition' or social commentary funk of 'Living For The City', it's seems unjust that his most successful song was the cheesy slush-fest that was 'I Just Called To Say I Love You'. Forming a double-pronged attack in 1984 on telephonically abled women everywhere with Lionel 'Hello, it me you're looking for?' Richie, Wonder spends most of the song eliminating possible reasons for wanting to pick up the receiver. Once it's established that he's not put a nickel in the phone booth to discuss the April showers, Libra sun or any other meteorological phenomenon, he declares his love from the bottom of his heart. After enduring some syrupy produc-

tion, several key changes and some sudden climatic synth stabs, one feels that Stevie's beau may very well be screening her calls in future...

With lots of references to months and seasons, this works wonderfully as a gap-fill exercise, although at four and a half minutes, it's a little on the long side.

Stand Be Me (Ben E. King)

Originally written in 1961 by Ben E. King of the Drifters, the song's lyrics are surprisingly inspired by lines in one of the Bible's psalms. 'Stand By Me' had a revival in the late 80s when it was used to soundtrack a film of the same name as well as a Levi's jeans commercial. 'Stand By Me' has been covered by over 400 artists, including John Lennon, U2, Elton John and Usher, and was rated as the fourth most performed song of the 20th century.

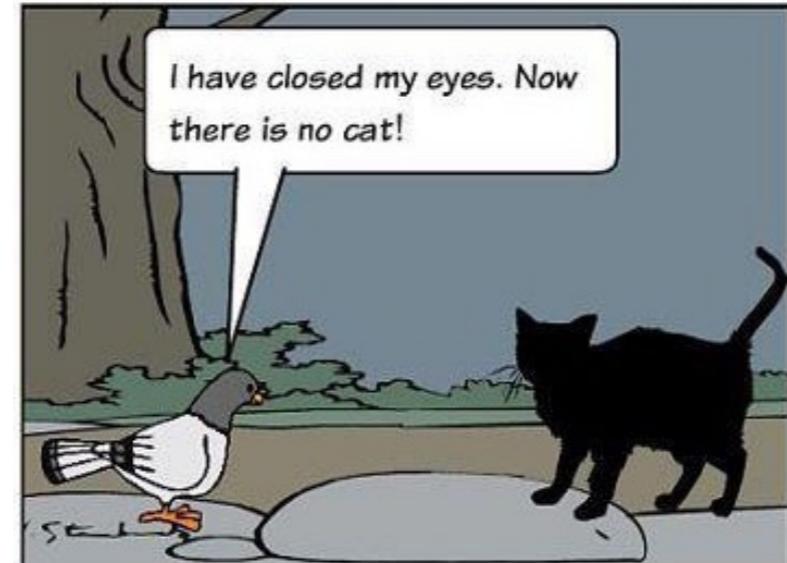
With its simple and concise lyrics, 'Stand By Me' is one of the better songs in the New Horizons selection for a class sing-a-long. There's also lots of opportunity to crack out some 'gesture' and get the jazz hands going to explain tumbling and crumpling. If you're going to show part of the film for a bit of extra context, don't show the bit where they swim in the river unless you really want to traumatize any aquatics-loving boys in your class.



Happy Xmas (War Is Over) (John Lennon)

The ubiquitous John Lennon pops up a number of times in the textbooks and his Christmas favourite is included as a song in its own right. With a beautiful, subtle and tuneful contribution by his wife Yoko Ono (ahem), the 1972 song was a protest against the Vietnam War, although has subsequently had a general theme of peacefulness attached to it.

There's lots of adjective spotting potential in the second verse which would make a good listening exercise. The topic also gives rise to some creative writing about what students would wish for at Christmas - another magic box, perhaps? I think I may very well opt for not having to listen to Yoko Ono's music ever again.



Your guide to Japanese pop culture.

Music; Part 1

Amanda Horton

We've all been there, suspended in the awkward silence that arises when you suddenly find yourself face-to-face with students OUTSIDE of class time. After exchanging the mandatory pleasantries and making a brief comment on how cold/hot it is, suddenly you realise you have nothing more to say. Instead, you start to think longingly of those tedious family gatherings or a disastrous first date.

Fear not, however, for I am here to help. Having been inspired by the interest shown by my students when I started talking about manga, I decided to explore further into Japanese pop culture.

"Great idea Amanda, but where do I start?

This is what I want to help with. This will, hopefully, help bridge that language barrier and really get you interacting with your students. It's amazing how animated even the shy girls get when they start talking about boys.

I'll start with J-pop. J-pop is everywhere. You will have heard lots of it, as it is unavoidable. You would have a better chance trying to avoid getting sick whilst working in an elementary school. So stop fighting and embrace it. You don't even need to understand the lyrics; that's the beauty of music. I guarantee that dropping a few of these names will help kick start a conversation.

This month I'll be covering bands managed by Johnny and Associates Talent Agency. One of the biggest talent agencies in Japan, they specialize in launching teenage boys into stardom. Their artists are collectively known as Johnny's. Any Johnny's band is likely to be at least semi-well known, but here are a few to get you started.



Arashi (嵐 Storm)

One band you should all know is Arashi, simply because they are EVERYWHERE, even at the airport. Even if you haven't heard the name, you've probably heard one of their songs playing in a store, or seen their faces advertising KDDI.

Who are they? :

Satoshi Ohno (大野智)(aka Leader). - Ohno is the oldest at 30, and, in my opinion, the best singer (though he is the lead singer, so I'm probably not the only one who thinks so). Ohno is also the best dancer and choreographs many of Arashi's dances. He is the reluctant leader of the group (he became leader by losing at janken) and is very popular with my SHS students. He is known for being very quiet, stoic and calm; he is a very laid-back leader who allows the members to do what they like and it is often commented that he does not act like a leader at all.

Sho Sakurai (櫻井翔)(aka Sho-kun). - Sho is the designated rapper and spokesman/deputy leader for Arashi. He is credited with breaking through the barrier between idol and rapper, and his raps are known as "Sakurap". He gives the impression of being puppy-like, but is actually very smart. Despite his success with Arashi, he attained an economics degree from Keio University in 2004. He is also very popular with my students because of his cuteness.

Masaki Aiba (相葉雅紀)(aka Aiba-kun). - Aiba is Arashi's glue. He sets the mood of the band when they are together. During their early days, his segments in their variety shows were very well received. He is a very spontaneous person and often says inappropriate things.

Kazunari Ninomiya (二宮 和也)(aka Nino) - Although all the members of Arashi are also actors, Nino is known as the Actor of Arashi for his talent in the area. If you've seen "Letters from Iwo Jima", you've seen Nino act. (If you haven't, where have you been?) He is also the comedian, having a sharp wit which he uses to ease any tension during interviews. He is known to love money and for molesting Ohno with such frequency that they claim to be dating.

Jun Matsumoto (松本 潤)(aka MatsuJun) - Known as one of the elite within Johnny's, he is credited with building Arashi's fan base due to his performance as a lead in several highly popular dramas. He is Arashi's 'idea man'. He deals with stage sets, props, costumes and new ideas for their concerts. The famous "Johnny's Moving Stage" was the brain child of MatsuJun. He often acts very cool and seems very self-conscious but he takes care of the other members. Extremely popular amongst the Yamagata JETs, my students tell me MatsuJun has a king aura, so they don't want him as a boyfriend.

Information

A group of five very delicious looking guys (if you're that way inclined), they were first formed in 1999, but, after an initial success they fell into a slump. In November 2005 Arashi took off again, rising ever higher to become one of the biggest J-pop bands in Japan. In 2011 they were voted artist of the year at the Japan Golden Disc Awards. Their music style is typical cheesy pop; think the 90s and all those hours dancing around your bedroom to The Spice Girls and The Backstreet Boys, and you've pretty much gotten the idea. There's nothing terribly original about them, but they have very catchy songs which vary between slow melodies, up-beat dance tracks, and Sakuraps. Music isn't the reason I (and many others) love Arashi so much though. The key to their success is their interaction with each other, which is so fun to watch. They are an incredibly prolific band, and almost every one of their songs is used as the theme song to some film or TV series. This is mostly due to the fact that all the members of Arashi also act in films and TV series on a regular basis. Arashi has several variety shows.

Amanda's Top Song

Monster (モンスター)



KAT-TUN

Who are they?

Kazuya Kamenashi, (亀梨 和也), (aka Kame) – The unofficial spokesman of the group, Kame is in my opinion the best singer amongst them. He is a great speaker and very charming and dependable, often taking the lead in interviews despite being the youngest member. He is very competitive and hates to lose, probably a remnant from his baseball days. Probably the most popular member with my students, he is a delight to watch as both a singer and an actor.

Junnosuke Taguchi, (田口 淳之介)(aka Junno). He is the baka ...erm, acrobat of the group. Very methodical, especially when it comes to money, he is known to be a bit of an airhead as he is very bad at reading the atmosphere in a room. This tends to make him very direct when dealing with people. He also likes to randomly switch topics. He is light-hearted and has the innocence of a child, which makes him hard to dislike. One of the more entertaining aspects of watching KAT-TUN in an interview is watching poor Taguchi being picked on for over-using dajare (Japanese puns).

Koki Tanaka (田中 聖) – The Rapper. (This seems to be a mandatory position in Johnny's). He is the artist and comedian of the group. He designs his own outfits and likes to do comedy skits on stage with Nakamaru. If his singing career ever fails, he would probably be a very successful comedian. Popular with the girls, his reputation as a squeaky clean boy-band member took a bit of a hit when it emerged he had had relations with a famous Japanese porn star.

Tatsuya Ueda (上田 竜也) – The composer of the group, Ueda has written songs for both himself and KAT-TUN. Very quiet and soft-spoken, with a fondness for including flowers in his lyrics, he gives the image of being a delicate, sensitive, dreamer. Do not be fooled. He is an excellent boxer, having been advised to go professional in the past.

Yuichi Nakamaru (中丸 雄一)– The group's beatboxer, he is the most mysterious of the group. He doesn't really care what others think of him, so has a very nonchalant attitude. He will sleep anywhere, so has been likened to a university student. A great talker and host, he is very diligent, having studied hundreds of hip-hop albums to learn beatboxing, and attended Waseda University to study Environmental Science despite already experiencing success with KAT-TUN. He is the second half of TaN-aka, a comedy duo he formed with Tanaka.

Information

KAT-TUN's name is an acronym based on the family names of the original members, but when Jin Akanishi left in 2010, they decided to start cheating rather than be a letter short. They were formed in 2001, but were initially backing dancers and developed a growing fan-base in this role. Johnny's, seeing the opportunity; decide to let them split off into a new band. However, it was a long and arduous five years before they found the lime-light. Since their debut in 2006, they have consistently topped the charts, proving that good things come to those who wait. Their style is hard to pin down, and they generally differ from the generic happy-go-lucky pop you hear, so if I had to choose, I would class them as pop-rock. I personally find their music very hit-and-miss. They tend to bounce around a lot in terms of genre, with albums being a mix of ballads, indie-rock, RnB, and pop, which is not always a bad thing, but does give them something of a marmite effect.

Amanda's top song

Real Face – Their debut song, so a little out-dated now, but I love it!



SMAP

Who are they?

Masahiro Nakai, (中居 正広) – The Leader of SMAP and a Johnny's elite, he is actually a terrible singer and wouldn't make it past round one of any Simon Cowell talent show. This lack of ability in one of the most successful pop groups is considered "a national joke" by fans. A funny person, and extremely talkative, he's good at lightening the mood. Fortunately he is a great dancer, and is an expressive singer, even if he's bad at actually holding a tune.

Takuya Kimura, (木村 拓哉) – A gifted actor, he famously declined a Japanese Academy award nomination for Best Actor on the advice of his management. I think he's the best singer of SMAP as well. He's a very determined and willful person, and an all round talented guy. He has a successful restaurant business, is an award-winning photographer, is skilled in both Kendo and surfing, and is a great model. He is one of the best known male idols in Japan. ,

Goro Inagaki, (稻垣 吾郎) – A quiet person, Goro usually gives off a very mysterious air, he frequently looks like he is deep in thought and keeps a lot of his personal life a secret. He is usually very polite, so it was a shock when he was arrested for arguing with a police officer in 2001. He is the worst dancer of the group.

Tsuyoshi Kusanagi (草彅 剛) – Probably the most cheerful of the five, he is always smiling. He is more of a follower than a leader, and admits to having trouble taking the initiative. Initially he wasn't very popular as a member, but this changed in 2002. He is very popular in South Korea, and has his own Korean stage name. A sensitive person, he was arrested for dancing naked in a park in 2009.

He asked the police “裸だったら何が悪い”, (“What’s wrong with being naked?”) which became an internet meme in Japan. He publically apologised for the incident.

Shingo Katori (香取 慎吾,) – The baby of the group, he’s a bit of a clown and can be very cute. A lover of English, he hosted his own English oriented show. He has also appeared in many dramas and films. He infamously cross-dressed as Shingo Mama on a variety show, and the character became a hit for a short time.

Information

SMAP stands for Sports Music Assemble People. They were formed in 1991 with 6 members. Initially they struggled to sell, with 1993 being their breakthrough year. In 1996 one member left to become a motorbike racer. After that, they launched the variety show SMAPxSMAP, which cemented their success. They have attracted a number of big name guests, with celebrities such as Michael Jackson, David Beckham, and Lady Gaga appearing on the show. SMAP are credited with being the reason Johnny’s are now so successful. They were one of the first idol groups to be “a group who can do anything”, branching out from their role as a boy band and paving the way for the newer generation of Johnny’s. They remain one of the most popular bands in Japan to this day, with the members being involved in a wide variety of work. It is their great personalities and inspirational, up-beat songs that really make SMAP an awesome band though, so we can forgive, and even laugh at, the odd wrong note.

Amanda's top song

Sekai ni Hitotsu Dake no Hana (世界に一つだけの花)



NEWS

Who are they?

Keiichiro Koyama (小山 慶一郎) – The leader of the band, he is their spokesperson. As the oldest member, he is often seen at the mother of the group. This is also due to his experience in other bands prior to joining Johnny’s in 2001. A history buff, he obtained a degree in Oriental History from Meiji University in 2007. An entertaining person, he hosted Shounen Club alongside KAT-TUNs Nakamaru until last year. Now he is a news-caster for NTVs daily news programme. Like many Johnny’s he also acts, currently appearing in Lucky Seven with the gorgeous MatsuJun.

Takahisa Masuda (増田 貴久) – Masuda spent time as a backup dancer for KAT-TUN and others before NEWS was formed. He made his breakthrough as an actor first, landing a starring role around the same times NEWS was formed. He has continued to work as an actor, as well as being active in NEWS and the subgroup Tegomass.

Shigeaki Kato (加藤 成亮,) – The composer of NEWS, he plays the guitar very well and has composed songs for himself and the band on occasion. He joined Johnny’s at 11 and was involved in several groups before joining NEWS. A very private person, he likes to keep to himself.

Yuya Tegoshi (手越 祐也) – Widely thought of as the best singer in NEWS, his voice is a dream to listen to. He is also the most talented actor, in my view anyway. He landed a role in the film Shisso (aka Dead Run), voiced Japanese Mumble in Happy Feet and has been in multiple dramas. He also divides his time between NEWS and Tegomass. Phew!

Information

If you’ve ever celebrated a birthday with Japanese people in a karaoke joint, you’ve probably heard NEWS’ rendition of “Happy Birthday”. Their name stands for the cardinal directions, North, East, West, and South. Originally a nine-member group,

they are now down to four, for various reasons. The first member left shortly after they debuted in 2003. They immediately rocketed to popularity; however, two of their number were suspended for underage-drinking and the band took a hit. They came back in 2007 with the Japanese theme-song for Happy Feet, proving that a cute dancing penguin can save anything. Last October, another two members left and they are expected to continue as a four-man group from now on.

Amanda's top song

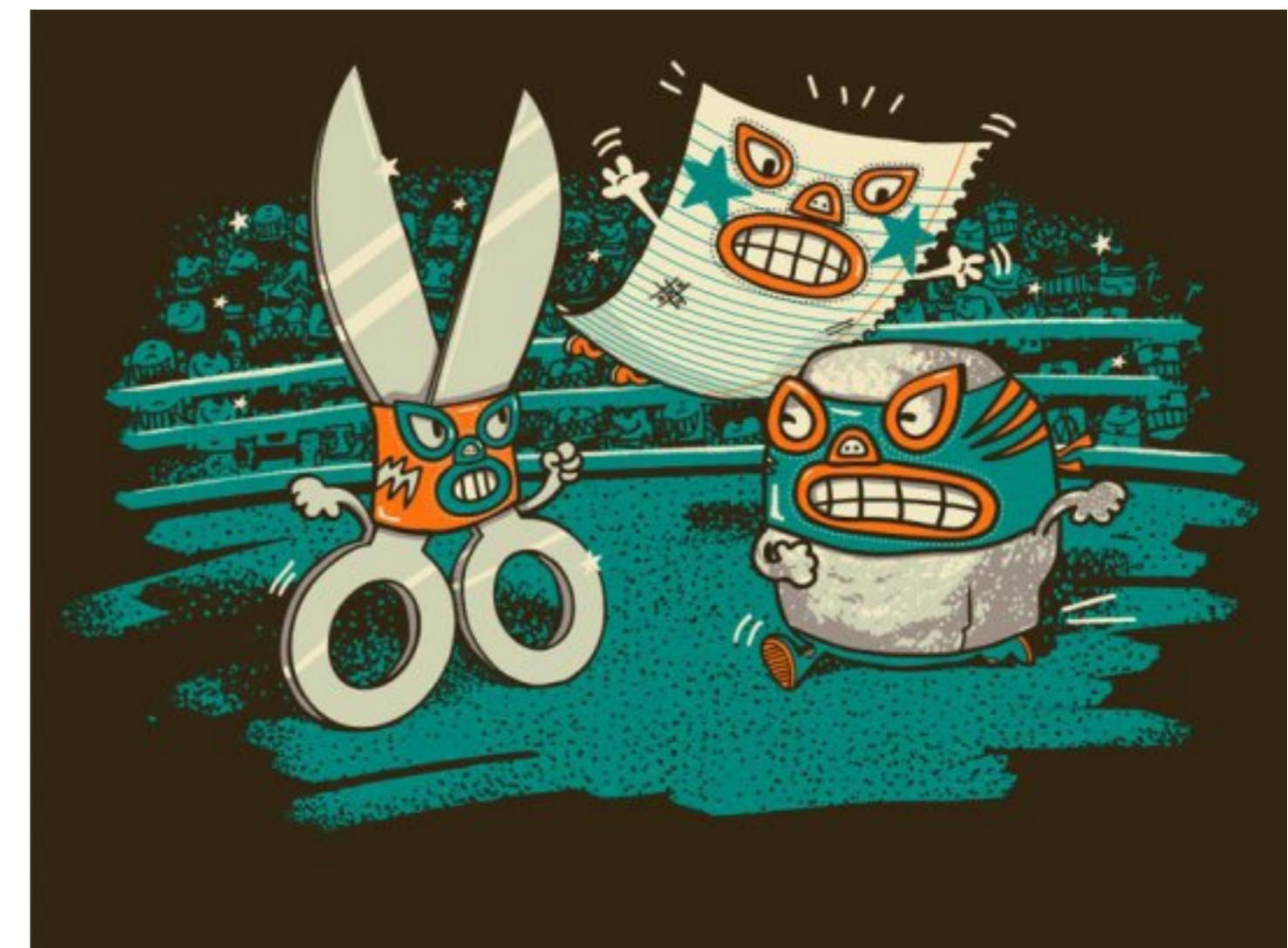
Hoshi o Mezashite (星をめざして),

Ok, so that should keep you busy. Since they are all young, good-looking, talented guys, Johnny’s tend to be a big hit with the females. However, boys can, and do, like Johnny’s as well. So worry not guys, you are allowed to listen to them. The biggest danger with Johnny’s is that I seem to end up fan-girling with my students in the corridors, which

can get a little noisy and trigger heated discussion about our favourites. Luckily, this is all in English, so the other teachers don’t seem to mind when I regress to a teenager on occasion.

Next month, I’ll be taking you on a whirlwind trip through non-Johnny’s acts, which will give you a little more variety and some female stars to look out for as well.

Amanda Horton is a 2nd year ALT from England and is based in Yamagata Prefecture. When not in class, she enjoys playing her flute, being beaten in kendo and obsessively worrying about her 2 goldfish. She spends far too much time on her computer, usually watching YouTube videos or dramas, and strongly believes that a cup of tea will cure all ills. Trust her. She’s a scientist.





Jenna Pollard - Mizuho Highlands

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.



John Fowler - Miyajima

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.



Josh Del Pino - Its Golden

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.



Mark Fujishige

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.



Michael Ignatov - Fleeing from Talas

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.



Orrin Heath - Osaka Plum

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.



Stephanie Stoner - Yasuda-Cho

Which is the best picture? YOU decide!
To VOTE go to ajet.net/photos by March 25th.

fair use disclaimer

Logos, links, and Fair Use

Some of the images used to represent links in this document may qualify for fair usage in the context described following. Some of these images may be screenshots of a copyrighted logo of an organization, and are protected by copyright and/or trademark. The copyright for the image is most likely owned by the company or corporation that produced it. It is believed that the use of a limited number of web-resolution screenshots purely for identification and visual association to represent a link to the associated organization, qualifies as fair use under International copyright laws. Any other uses of this image, here or elsewhere, might be copyright infringement. Certain commercial use of this image may also be trademark infringement. For more information, see the individual copyright information by following the appropriate link to the organization's web site. Use of the image here does not imply endorsement of the organization by Ajet, nor vice versa.

Non-free use media rationale

The entire logo is used to convey the meaning intended and avoid tarnishing or misrepresenting the intended image. The logo is a size and resolution sufficient to maintain the quality intended by the company or organization, without being unnecessarily high resolution. The image is placed in the document strictly as a visual aid to identify the organization associated with the link, solely in context of a subject of public interest. The significance of the logo is to help the reader identify the organization, assure the readers that they will reach the intended web site associated with the organization by clicking on it, and to illustrate the organization's intended branding message in a way that words alone could not convey. Because it is a logo, there is almost certainly no free equivalent. Any substitute that is not a derivative work would fail to convey the meaning intended, would tarnish or misrepresent its image, or would fail its purpose of identification or commentary.

Image/Content Removal

If it is the organization's belief that the usage of specific images used in our document containing copyrighted information conflicts with authorized use, and/or does not comply with fair use as described in this context, please contact us and we will remove the offending image(s) immediately. Contact us on visual.media@ajet.net

Copyright Information

The content within this document are the property of Ajet or its suppliers and are protected by copyright laws and international treaty provisions. The compilation, organization and display of the content used on and in connection with this document are the exclusive property of Ajet. Ajet reserves all rights in the document and its content not specifically granted in any agreements with Ajet or in the Terms of Use. The views expressed in this document may or may not reflect those of its owner. Don't take us too seriously.

Reviews

AJET or the JET Program doesn't endorse, sell or profit from reviews and links posted within this document. All opinions, images and statements are that of the author and not of aforementioned parties.

Submissions

Ajet retains the rights for editing of articles and/or submissions as necessary. Ajet reserves the right to not display or post any submissions we deem inappropriate or unacceptable. Ajet will not limit content based on age, gender, race, or sexual orientation. By submitting material to Ajet, you agree that Ajet can display, modify, transmit, publish, distribute or delete your submission without needing prior or further consent from you. Submissions may be removed by Ajet at any time at our sole discretion. Authors who submit their works, material, artwork, graphics, ideas or content to us retain their copyrights, but grant Ajet irrevocable JET wide, royalty-free, non-exclusive rights to reproduce and distribute their submitted material in printed form or by any other medium either now known or hereinafter devised, and forego any payment or compensation for the submitted material. They also certify that this material (written and photos) is their own original material (unless otherwise stated) and does not violate any copyrights. All submissions will be considered.

Limitation of Liability.

(a) We and any Affiliated Party shall not be liable for any loss, injury, claim, liability, or damage of any kind resulting in any way from (1) any errors in or omissions from the publication or any services or products obtainable therefrom, (2) the content contained in the publication, or (3) any delay or failure in performance beyond the control of a Covered Party.

