

Class

Name _____ Name Card # [_____]

Self-evaluation	
Preparation	10 9 8 7 6

Due Date _____
Topic # Model _____
Topic: Exploration / Travel



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. Why does outer space fascinate people? What do you think of the space race?

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3. What is the most interesting city to visit in your country? Why?

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4. What kind of adventure would you like to have in your life?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Model: Exploration / Travel

The new global race to space

From Dubai to the U.S., Tokyo to Moscow, Tel Aviv to Beijing and more, billionaires, privateers and political leaders are vying to land on the Moon, colonize Mars, mine asteroids.

There are a handful of reasons for the race, including national pride and irresistible interest in an estimated future multi-trillion-dollar industry. However the primary motivation for the private commercial actors who are the most powerful forces behind the new age like billionaires like Jeff Bezos with his Blue Origin, Elon Musk with SpaceX, and Richard Branson with Virgin Galactic is the romance of going to space. These people grew up watching science fiction TV shows about people going to space.

A space program has become a must-have for governments, and not just for the usual players:

- **United Arab Emirates:** In 2021, coinciding with the country's 50th birthday, the UAE plans to have a spacecraft orbiting Mars.
- **Saudi Arabia** is investing \$1 billion in Branson's space companies.
- **Indian Prime Minister** Narendra Modi said he aims to put humans in space within four years.
- **Israel's commercial SpaceIL** plans to land a spacecraft on the Moon next year.

All this activity looks a lot like the centuries-ago Age of Exploration, says Neil deGrasse Tyson, an astrophysicist, who says we are now becoming "spacefaring nations." He thinks the result can be peaceful enterprise as long as people are just going places for exploration, to mine asteroids, or set up colonies. However, if the purpose to go to the Moon or to Mars is to set up a military base that can be viewed as a threat and problems will develop.

Last summer America ordered the establishment of a Space Force and according to Nicholas Wright, a U.K.-based analyst, there is equipment in orbit that jams signals, blinds with lasers, and spies using cyber tools. That makes him wonder if the future of space is fundamentally a military story.

The private sector does not want this to happen. By 2040, estimates Morgan Stanley, the space economy will be worth \$1.1 trillion; Bank of America estimates \$2.7 trillion. The private sector is focused on what businesses will make money in space.

<https://www.axios.com/global-space-race-bezos-musk-spacex-e1ee8fa7-63a8-4f41-94c810860e59365f.html>

Class

Name _____ Name Card # [_____]

Self-evaluation	
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Due Date _____

Topic # 1

Topic: Cell Phone in Society



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. How do you use a cell phone in your daily life?

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3. What age do you think children should be allowed to have a cell phone?

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4. What do you think about using social networks?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 1 Cell Phone in Society

My Cellphone, My Love

If you think Japan is cellphone-obsessed, a recent poll found that all over the world people are closer than ever to their cellphones. A recent Time survey of eight countries reported that people nowadays feel they simply cannot live without their mobile devices. Cellphones have transformed the way we live and the way we feel.

In the countries where the poll was conducted (the U.S., the U.K., China, India, South Korea, South Africa, Indonesia and Brazil), 43 percent of people said their cellphone was the first and last thing they looked at every day. An amazingly high 68 percent of respondents said they put their cellphone right next to their bed, and another 16 percent said they placed it in the bedroom while they slept. People are becoming closer to their devices than ever before.

That might not be love, but it's close. Humans have always been fond of domesticated animals and pets -- dogs, cats, horses -- but never before in human history have people developed such close relationships to technological devices. Is that cause for concern or just an interesting shift?

Whatever the answer, cellphones are very much like an addiction. One-third of those surveyed admitted that being without their phone for even short periods left them anxious. The poll found that one in five people check their phone every 30 minutes. About the same number check their phone every 10 minutes. That anxiety and compulsiveness is similar to how people sometimes act when they fall in love.

And yet, most people in the poll felt that their cellphone was a positive addition to their lives. Just over 80 percent said they felt more safe and secure knowing they could get help anytime they needed it. Most also felt having a cellphone helped them achieve a better work-life balance, partially because cellphones made business more efficient. So, even though cellphones have become a sort of fetish, the benefits were plain.

Cellphones seem to mesh with life easily and completely. A majority reported using their cellphones while doing the most basic activities in life -- riding public transportation, watching TV or attending a party. An astonishing 17 percent said they check their cellphone regardless of whom they are dining with. Cellphones distract and focus attention. What other bit of technology is so diverse and so flexible?

Cellphones are like a screen onto which we project our needs. In the future, whether cellphones adapt to humans or humans change to fit cellphones remains to be seen. Ways may yet be found in which cellphones contribute substantially to improving our personal well-being and interpersonal relationships. Will we become closer to our gadgets or, like disappointed lovers, will the relationship between human and phone somehow break up? The end of this affair will not be anytime soon.

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Topic # 2

Topic: Quality of Life in Japan



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. What aspects of life do you think are good in your country? Why are they good?

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3. What aspects of life do you think are bad in your country? How can they be improved?

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4. Twenty years from now how do you think life will have changed in Japan?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 2 Quality of Life in Japan

Is Japan a better country than America?

In some ways, perhaps it is. In other ways, maybe it isn't. Then again, it might depend on the individual.

My parents (who were born and raised in Japan and moved here to the United States of America about 30 years ago) have told me that they like the United States because everything from houses, roads, parking lots, stores, etc. are spacious. They have also told me that people are less nosy here in the states.

They have also said that they do prefer some Japanese-made products over American products. According to them, Japanese products have a tendency to last longer and are made with more care.

When it comes to food, they like both :]

A coworker has told me that he likes that in the United States you don't have to go through the tedious process of separating all your garbage into burnables, plastics, etc. He likes that you can just throw it all away and not really have to worry about it. Although another person has told me that they like that Japan is more conscious about their waste and natural resources and that we should learn from their ways of dealing with trash.

I've had someone from Japan tell me that they think in United States it is easier to work up the ladder in terms of career because there isn't as strict of a "*tate-shakai*" system in the United States. Doesn't mean it is more lenient, just means that they will actually reward people based on skill and work rather than seniority being a bigger factor.

Another person has told me that they liked that Japan has more reliable, punctual public transportation systems and more vending machines.

But U.S. school systems makes it easier for people to receive higher education no matter what age you are at, whereas this is not really as acceptable in Japan.

So yeah. That's a bunch of random pros and cons about both countries.

On a personal level, I don't know. I'm Japanese (grew up in the United States), and have dealt with enough of the ruder Japanese people to not look at them from a rose colored glass.

But on the overall part, I think Japan's pro is that there is this attention to detail in terms of so many things that you wouldn't really find in United States...whereas the pro of United States is that on a day to day basis-people have good humor. I think when it comes to quick wit, U.S. Americans are definitely better at it.

The con of Japan is that it still is behind in terms of "global" thinking and have less of a sense in terms of accepting differences still. The con of the United States is that it is a very "short fuse" nation that sort of reacts aggressively in somewhat excessive ways when problems arise.

Of course, those are all statements with exceptions, but that is just from my observation.

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Topic # 3

Topic: Problems in Schools



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. What are the major characteristics you think a coach or teacher should have?

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3. What did you like the most and the least about your high school?

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4. What do you think about the system of clubs in high school?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 3 Problems in Schools

The continuing problem of school bullying

The alarming jump in the number of reported cases of bullying at schools nationwide — a record 414,378 in fiscal 2017, up 91,235 from the previous year — is attributed to greater efforts by teachers and school officials to identify even minor cases and take early action to prevent them from escalating into serious damage to the victims. At the same time, the number of grave cases in which bullying victims suffered severe physical or psychological damage also rose. Ten of the 250 schoolchildren who took their own lives last year were found to have suffered from bullying at school. Bullying continues to be a grave problem that needs urgent attention and action.

The law to promote efforts to stop bullying was introduced in the wake of the 2011 suicide of a 13-year-old boy in Otsu, Shiga Prefecture, who had been bullied at his junior high school. Responding to criticism that the boy killed himself after no action was taken to stop his bullying, the education ministry has instructed boards of education and schools to identify and report on broad forms of bullying, including seemingly minor cases, so that teachers and school officials can intervene before the situation escalates to a dangerous level.

The law defines bullying as a condition in which a child feels psychological or physical pain caused by the acts of other children. The number of reported bullying cases at elementary, junior high and high schools across Japan have increased nearly six-fold from around 70,000 in fiscal 2011. The education ministry says the surge in the number of bullying cases is proof that these efforts are paying off.

Still, the sheer number testifies to the breadth of the problem at schools and must be taken seriously. According to the ministry's tally of the reports from schools, 85 percent of the reported bullying cases last year had been resolved by this spring, but the rest are still being dealt with.

That there were as many as 474 "grave" cases points to the difficulty of preventing serious damage from bullying. Of the victims, nearly 200 sustained serious mental or bodily harm. About 330 of the victims were forced to stay away from school for 30 days or more. There are still cases in which schools didn't identify bullying before it resulted in serious consequences. In the case of a junior high school girl in Hiroshima who died in July 2017 in a suspected suicide, it was only after her death that the school and the local board of education acknowledged that she had in fact been habitually bullied by her classmates, even though her parents had consulted the school's officials several times over the suffering the girl had endured.

Previously, it was believed that many teachers were reluctant to acknowledge that bullying was taking place among the children in their classes. The sharp increase in the number of reported bullying cases may indicate that such an attitude is changing.

What used to be a wide regional disparity in the number of reported bullying cases per 1,000 children — a sign of the gap in the attitudes of teachers and school officials across regions in dealing with the problem of bullying — has narrowed significantly, although the gap still exists. At the same time, the education ministry's statistics show that about 25 percent of the schools nationwide did not report a single case of bullying in fiscal 2017.

What's crucial in the effort to stop the bullying problem is for adults to notice the signs from the victimized children as quickly as possible. In that sense, a growing number of bullying cases taking place at social networking sites are difficult for teachers and parents to find. The problem requires closer attention.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/10/26/editorials/continuing-problem-school-bullying/#.XApyntszaUk>

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Topic # 4

Topic: Japanese Language Diversity



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. What are the characteristics of the language in your region?

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3. What dialects do you like or dislike? Why?

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4. What do you think about young people's language (wakamono-kotoba)?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 4 Japanese Language Diversity

Dialect Diversity

"But you don't speak Osaka-ben," is often one of the first things people say to me when they find out that I used to live in Osaka. Then there are times when I'll say something that I think is standard Japanese, only to have someone express their surprise at my use of Osaka-ben.

My first experience of Osaka-ben was many years ago when, as a high-school exchange student in Osaka, I started a conversation with my host family. Although I had studied Japanese at my New Zealand high school for a number of years, after talking with my host family, I thought I had accidentally boarded the wrong plane and landed in a country other than Japan. The speed, intonation and vastly different vocabulary my host family were using were unlike anything I had learned in my textbook. It was fascinating, exciting and a little intimidating. For the next 12 months of my exchange, I decided to throw away my textbook and speak the way those around me were speaking. I grew to love, and more importantly to understand, the way Osaka people communicate. I have lived in Tokyo for just over two years now, and although I have grown accustomed to hearing standard Japanese every day, whenever I catch the odd Osaka-ben speaker, I feel like my day has brightened somewhat.

You see, for me Osaka-ben adds a touch of pizzaz and flavor to the Japanese language. This view appears not to be shared by everyone. A Kansai friend of mine said that her parents grew up and worked in an age where they were told not to speak in their dialect when they were job hunting in Tokyo, as it could result in employers discriminating against them. This is very unfortunate, as it seems like such a waste not to showcase and be proud of the rich and diverse local customs, dialects and cultures that Japan has. These days, Osaka-ben has gained more acceptance, but for some Tokyo people I have met, even in this day and age, they still find it vulgar and threatening.

Having grown up in Malaysia and New Zealand, where the people around me would often be mixing languages and dialects, I find both truly fascinating. In a way, Tokyo is the perfect place to come into contact with dialects from all over Japan. However, the reverse seems to be true, as the culture and language of non-Tokyoites end up diluted in the capital's melting pot.

It's quite common to see television programs featuring a prefecture's specialty food, but not much focus is placed on the dialects of each region. I think it would be even more enriching to celebrate not only what goes into our mouths, but also what comes out.

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Topic # 5

Topic: Japan's Food Self-sufficiency



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. What do you think about Japan importing so much of its food?

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3. What do you think about the current eating habits of young people?

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4. In order for Japan to increase its food self-sufficiency what should be done?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 5 Japan's Food Self-sufficiency

Nation's food self-sufficiency rate hits 23-year low as rice consumption decline continues

The nation's food self-sufficiency rate hit a 23-year low on a calorie basis in fiscal 2016 ended in March, due primarily to falling rice consumption, the farm ministry said.

The self-sufficiency rate fell 1 percentage point from the previous year to 38 percent, the second-lowest level on record after the 37 percent recorded in fiscal 1993, when the country suffered a serious rice shortage following unstable weather, the ministry said Wednesday.

The drop reflected significant falls in the production of wheat and other crops in Hokkaido, which suffered typhoon damage, in addition to the continuing decline in rice consumption. The government aims to raise the self-sufficiency rate to 45 percent by fiscal 2025, a task expected to be difficult.

The self-sufficiency rate shows how much domestic consumption is covered by domestic production.

Demand for meat is increasing, due to the Westernization of dietary habits, while consumption of rice, with high levels of self-sufficiency, is steadily declining.

Per capita annual rice consumption fell 0.2 kg to 54.4 g, less than half the amount consumed 50 years ago. On the other hand, meat consumption rose 0.9 kg to 31.6 kg.

On a production value basis, the food self-sufficiency rate rose 2 points to 68 percent, mainly because domestic beef prices rose. Imports of fruits and vegetables fell, while domestic production went up.

"It is necessary to enhance both the calorie-and production value-based self-sufficiency rates from the viewpoint of food security," a ministry official said, voicing determination not to backtrack on the calorie-based target.

"We hope to achieve the 45 percent target by expanding the production of rice and wheat that suit the needs of consumers," a senior official said.

An agricultural cooperative official, however, said, "With the number of farmers decreasing and trade liberalization progressing, the self-sufficiency rate will not rise unless the government goes all out to take necessary steps."

https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/10/business/japans-food-self-sufficiency-rate-hits-23-year-low-rice-consumption-decline-continues/#.XApj_dszaUk

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Name _____ Name Card # [_____]

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Topic # 6
Topic: English Education



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. What do you think about students starting to study English in elementary school?

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3. Describe what you have found successful to learn English?

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4. What do you think about high school classes being taught in only English?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 6 English Education

Learning English requires a different approach

The decision by Honda Motor Co. and other Japanese companies to make English their official corporate language is a belated response to the realities of the new global economy. The question now is whether schools in Japan will do their part to prepare students for a successful future.

To date the evidence is not encouraging, as English-proficiency scores from 480 randomly selected public high schools attest. But there is more to the issue than initially meets the eye. Foreign-language learners in any country will perform only as well as the instruction they receive.

It's here that widespread misunderstanding prevails. If the most important goal is to teach Japanese students how to speak the kind of everyday English used in the corporate world, then it's imperative that teachers provide them with frequent practice doing precisely that — followed by immediate feedback.

What happens too often instead is that students are given practice translating texts or engaging in other academic activities. While these may indeed help them acquire the wherewithal to pass university entrance exams, they are not appropriate to the objective. As a result, students are shortchanged, and their test scores reflect it.

English teachers in Japan can take a page from athletic coaches. The latter have long recognized the importance of specificity of training. The closer the training in the gym mimics the action on the field, the higher the likelihood of transfer. By the same token, the closer classroom practice mimics the language skills that will be subsequently assessed, the greater the chances that test scores will shine. In short, if teachers want their students to speak English, translating academic text is not sound pedagogy.

When I was teaching English in high school in Los Angeles, the curriculum called for students to be able to write a persuasive essay. I handed out editorials, op-eds and letters to the editor to students as models. I then gave them frequent practice writing similar essays.

It's not that writing a descriptive or narrative essay was not important. But the time and effort involved in doing so would not directly transfer to writing a persuasive essay. That's a distinction English teachers in Japan might want to consider as they prepare their lessons going forward.

One of the joys of learning a foreign language is the ability to communicate face to face with a native speaker. The enjoyment of studying English expressed by Japanese students would likely rise from its present low of 40 percent if they were able to feel more confident in orally expressing themselves.

However, convincing teachers of English in Japan to change their instruction, with greater emphasis on speaking than on reading, will not be easy. Tradition dies hard. But with so much on the line in the new global economy, the time is right to establish workshops to make the transition less stressful.

The primary beneficiaries, of course, will be Japanese students who are competing for jobs, but so will teachers themselves as they sense more positive attitudes toward learning English.

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Topic # 7
Topic: Money



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. If you win a large amount of money in the lottery, what will you do with the money?

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3. What do you think about saving money? What do you think about debt?

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4. What do you think about the cost of university education?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 7 Money

The King and the Farmer

Everybody needs money! But different people spend money in different ways. How people spend their money can tell us a lot about their priorities and the values of their culture.

When I was a student, I traveled across Asia on a very tight budget. It was exciting to visit countries such as Iran, Pakistan and India. In each country, I was curious to learn what people spent their money on and what they felt was important.

In Thailand, I came across a folktale about money called The King and the Farmer that illustrates traditional Thai values. Here's how it goes:

Once upon a time, there was a king. One day, he began to wonder how the people in his country spent their money. To find out, he went out to interview them.

The first person he encountered was a farmer. "Tell me," said the king. "What do you do with the money you earn? How do you spend the money you save?"

"Most of my money I use to buy food and clothing for my family," said the farmer. "The rest I divide into four parts. The first part I bury in the ground, the second I use to pay my creditors, the third I throw in the river and the fourth I give to my enemy."

The king was surprised at this strange answer. Throwing money in the river? Giving money to your enemy? What did it mean? The farmer explained: "The money I bury in the ground is the money that I give to charity. This is an investment for the future since my good deeds ensure that I'll go to heaven after I die.

"The money I give to my creditors is the money that I spend on my mother and father. I owe my parents everything and it's my duty to support them. The money I throw in the river is the money that I spend on gambling and drinking. The money I give to my enemy is the money that I give to my wife."

So, the farmer spends his money on four things: charity, his parents, entertainment and his wife.

The money that he invests in charity is his insurance for the future. The money that he spends on his parents is his way of repaying them. The money that he spends for entertainment is soon gone, just as if he threw it in the river. And the money he gives his wife is money that she won't let him use to enjoy himself.

Half of his money is spent supporting his family. The other half he divides between the temporary pleasures of life and the permanent treasure of heaven.

There's an old joke that goes, "Money talks ... but it usually says good-bye!" How people spend their money tells a lot about what they value. So, what about you? How do you spend your money?

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Topic # 8
Topic: Symbols of Japan



Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think about the source material?

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2. What do you think about the royal family system in Japan?

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3. What do you think about Japanese traditional culture? What should be done to preserve it?

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4. Which national holiday do you enjoy the most? Why?

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Write your own original question related to this topic and write your answer.

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Topic 8 Symbols of Japan

Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco

1. What are Japan's national symbols?

Japan is a country with a long history, rich culture and varied topography. Therefore, many symbols of Japan have developed over the years and are recognized worldwide. One of the most famous is Mount Fuji, a dormant volcano that last erupted in 1707. It is Japan's tallest mountain. Another is the red sun, as seen on Japan's flag. Cherry blossoms are also well known, as is the chrysanthemum, which appears on the crest of the imperial family. The crane, indigenous to Japan, is a symbol of peace. Cultural items such as kimono, tea ceremony, bonsai, origami and sushi are other traditional symbols of Japan.

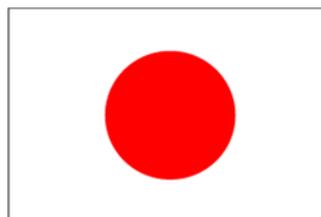
As Japan has modernized, especially following World War II, other more contemporary symbols have emerged. Japanese-made automobiles and electronics are well known and consumed world-wide. Robotic pets such as *aibo* are in high demand. Cultural icons like Pokemon and Hello Kitty have also gained popularity, not only among children. Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, Japanese animated films (anime or Japanime) and the 1950's film Godzilla are household words. Karaoke, which started in Japan, has sprung up in bars and restaurants throughout the world, and J-pop, or Japan's pop music industry, is making inroads internationally. New symbols of Japan will likely emerge as popular culture evolves.

2. What is Japan's national anthem?

Japan's national anthem, the *kimigayo*, was set to music about a century ago, but its words are nearly 1000 years old. They are interpreted as a wish for the lasting prosperity and peace of the country. Japan's national flag and anthem were designated as such under a law enacted in 1999.

5. What is the symbolism of Japan's flag?

The Japanese flag, which heralds a large red circle on a white background, is called the *hinomaru*. The literal translation of *hinomaru* is "sun disc". The sun flag has been used as a national symbol since at least the 17th century, with origins hailing back to Japan's earliest history. The *hinomaru* was designated as Japan's official national flag in August, 1999, concurrently with Japan's national anthem.



The vertical-to-horizontal ratio of the flag is set at 2:3; the disc is placed at the exact center; and the diameter of the disc is equal to three-fifths of the vertical measurement.