

Challenging students in freshman reading: A balanced approach

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In 1996, Japan Women's University instituted a new curriculum in which Kiso Eigo Ic/II (KEIc/II), a required reading course for English Department freshmen, are taught by native instructors. Currently, there are six of these classes taught on Wednesday afternoons. Prior to this curriculum change, the reading class was taught to second year students instead of freshmen and unfortunately, was often a dreaded class for native instructors due to a general lack of motivation among the students. However, this does not seem to be the case with the freshmen students.

According to Prof. Ann Slater, who coordinates the class, the guidelines for KEIc/II are as follows: one semester should be devoted to nonfiction, which may include essays and news articles, and one semester to fiction, which may include short stories and poetry. The goal of the class is to increase the students' reading comprehension skills and give them a basic understanding of literary terms and devices such as plot, setting, character, irony, metaphors and similes. Instructors are free to choose appropriate reading materials and they are encouraged to share their materials with other teachers in the materials folder kept in the General Education Office. Still, finding reading materials that are suitable and interesting for students remains a challenge.

In April, 2004, I decided to try an experiment with my KEIc/II students in which they would be given increasingly difficult reading materials (nonfiction essays, journalistic articles, short stories, and poems) in the first semester, followed by two complete novels in the second semester. While I had to "bend" the rules of the class somewhat, the results were excellent and my students responded very positively to the class. Therefore, for the 2005 Academic Year, I decided to try this approach again but this time, the students would only read nonfiction in the first semester followed by short stories and poems in the first half of the second semester and read one novel in the second half of the second semester. The following is a detailed explanation of my KEIc/II class, including sample readings and lessons as well as grading criteria.

Because my class becomes increasingly challenging for students, I decided to incorporate both self-study as homework and cooperative learning methods in the classroom. According to Coelho: "Cooperative learning restructures the traditional classroom into small, carefully planned learning groups to provide opportunities for all students to work together and learn from each other." In short, cooperative learning is group work. And in my reading class, each student is equally

responsible for answering the assigned questions and will share the same points earned as a group which will count towards her final grade.

I have found that an added benefit of cooperative group work is, as Slavin states: "In a cooperative classroom, a student who tries hard, attends class regularly, and helps others to learn is praised and encouraged by group mates, much in contrast with the situation in the traditional class." In addition, Homan and Poel affirm: "This phenomenon, called positive interdependence, makes cooperative learning one of the better tools for increasing students' motivation" and "positive interdependence interacts with a second kind of motivation, individual accountability. In effect, this is a type of negative motivation where students feel they must do their best so that the other group members are not let down. Thus, these dual motivating factors work together to inspire the students to work as a group, as opposed to...individuals occupying the same space." In other words, having students work in groups gives them motivation to succeed in completing the assigned tasks that they may lack if they only worked alone.

In the first half of the first semester, students are given short, nonfiction essays to read based on a comparison of Japanese and American culture. For example, in Lesson 1, students read the essay by Charles Clark, "Cherry Blossoms":

April in Japan is the time for cherry blossom festivals and viewing parties. It is also when the new school year starts for Japanese students. April is also the month when companies begin their new business year and when many college graduates start their working lives. Radio and TV programs kick off their new seasons in April as well. So it's natural that the cherry blossoms should make people think of new beginnings.

Cherry blossom viewing parties give the Japanese a welcome break from the stress that big changes bring unless you are one of those graduates just starting out at a big company. Their first assignment is usually to find the perfect spot for their company's cherry blossom viewing party.

Americans are unlikely to have seen anything like Japan's cherry blossom season, except maybe in Washington, D.C., which hosts its annual two-week cherry blossom festival from late March through early April. As you know, Washington's cherry trees were a gift from Japan.

In America, the new school year gets under way in September, as do new TV series. The closest association with a holiday is with Labor Day, which is celebrated on the first Monday in September. The typical American family uses the three-day Labor Day weekend as a final summer mini-vacation, traveling to a nearby resort area or to visit friends or relatives. By the way, American universities offer graduation at different times of the year, so starting a new working career is not associated with a particular season as it is in Japan.

In all of their reading assignments, vocabulary words and phrases are underlined and students are asked to use an English/English dictionary to learn the meanings of the words and phrases. Then, in their own words, they are required to write a sentence using each of the vocabulary words and/or phrases. This part of the assignment is worth 10 points (two points per sentence) with points being deducted for mistakes in usage and grammar.

The importance of building students' vocabulary cannot be overemphasized in this reading class for, as Beglar and Hunt assert: "Building a large vocabulary is essential when learning to read in a second language. Simply put, people with large vocabularies are more proficient readers than those with limited vocabularies." Furthermore, a reading class provides the perfect venue for enlarging our students' vocabulary for, as Critchley states: "Studies of implicit vocabulary acquisition have shown that learning through extensive reading is not only possible, but is almost certainly the means by which native speakers acquire the majority of their vocabulary." Of course, the students in KEIc/II are not native speakers, and as Laufer points out: "For such learning to occur, however, the reader must understand approximately 95% of the running words in the text." Therefore, the solution lies in providing students with relatively easy essays, such as "Cherry Blossoms" above. In a sense, my approach follows that of graded readers which give students the means to improve their vocabulary with each reading assignment they complete.

After reading the passage for homework and writing their five vocabulary sentences, the students then answer five comprehension questions based on what they have read. For example:

1. What do cherry blossoms and April represent in Japan? Why?
2. What is the importance of cherry blossom viewing parties in Japan?
3. What might a new company employee in Japan be asked to do in April?
4. How are Japanese and American school years different?
5. How are Japanese and American universities different?

The students write their answers which are worth three points each for a total of 15 possible points. In addition, the students are required to write a weekly journal assignment based on what they have read. For example, based on the essay above, the students answer the following question: Why do you think Japan chose April as the month when the new school year and work year begins? The students are required to type their answers on a separate piece of paper and each journal assignment is worth 10 points. While I do some error correction, the students are graded mostly on the content of their journal entries. That is, I put more emphasis on what they have written than how they have written.

The assignments explained above are done individually as homework. The students are asked to make a photocopy of their answers since I collect their homework assignments at the beginning of each class session. Therefore, the students will need a copy of their answers for the in-class review of the homework assignment. There are two ways to approach this: first, review the

homework at the beginning of class, before the students are put into groups; or second, ask the students to compare their homework answers with their group and then be asked to give their answers at the end of the class.

After assigning students randomly to one of five groups, the students are given another essay to read in class, followed by vocabulary, comprehension and discussion questions. For example, in Lesson 2, the students read the following essay, also by Clark, about “Capital Cities”:

I like to spend a weekend in Tokyo from time to time, but I would not want to live there. With 26 percent of Japan's population, Tokyo is by far the largest and most crowded city in the country. The city is the heart of Japan, geographically, politically and economically.

The Japanese government has thought about moving the capital to reduce the concentration of political and economic functions in Tokyo. Many people fear that government services might break down and the country's economy will fall apart if a major earthquake were to occur in Tokyo. Those opposed to moving the capital say that the project would be too expensive.

In America, Washington, D.C. became the political capital early in the country's history. In 1800, the national government bought the land where the city is located for that purpose only. Unlike Tokyo, Washington is not part of another state, nor is it a major economic center. It was New York City that evolved into America's primary financial and business center. New York's excellent harbor makes the city an ideal location for international trade. Washington does not have such an advantage.

The United States is probably happy to have its main political and economic centers divided between Washington, D.C. and New York. The two cities have avoided the problems of the over-concentration of political and economic functions that Tokyo now faces. While both large cities, Washington and New York have not become as congested and over-developed as Tokyo, and their land prices are not nearly as high.

Each group is assigned one of the vocabulary words or phrases underlined in the essay and are asked to write an original sentence using the word or phrases. The group's sentence is worth five points. Next, the students, as a group, answer five “Group Comprehension Questions” that are worth three points each (15 points total). For example, based on the “Capital Cities” essay above, the students answer the following questions:

1. Why is the Japanese government considering moving the capital from Tokyo?
2. How are Tokyo and Washington, D.C. different?
3. What factor made New York City America's primary financial and business center?
4. How do most Americans feel about New York and Washington, D.C.? Why?

5. Compared to Tokyo, how are Washington, D.C. and New York different?

Since the students evaluated as a group, one person is given the task of writing the group's answer on one answer sheet that I collect at the end of class. In addition, each group is required to answer a "Discussion Question" that is worth five points. For example, for the essay above, the students are asked: As a group, are you for or against moving the capital of Japan from Tokyo to a different location? Why?

There are several ways to approach the in-class, group assignments. One method is to ask the students to answer all of the vocabulary, comprehension, and group discussion questions and be prepared to share their groups' answers with the class. Each group comes to the front of the class and answers questions which I have chosen. For example, one student is asked to give the groups' vocabulary sentence, another student is asked one of the comprehension questions, and the remaining students are asked to answer the discussion question. A second method is to allow the students enough time to answer the questions and then call on individual students to give their groups' answers. A third method is to ask students to raise their hand when their group has finished answering all of the questions. I then visit the group and call on individual students to answer different parts of the assignment. When they are finished answering my questions, the group is allowed to leave class early which provides an extra motivating factor for not only answering the questions correctly, but also quickly.

After collecting both the individual homework and group answers, the students are given points for each section which are then added and recorded in the grade book. So for Lessons 1 and 2, 50 points are possible for vocabulary and reading comprehension, and an additional 10 points for the journal assignment. The lessons are returned to the students the following week with the correct answers:

Lesson 1: "Cherry Blossoms"

I. Vocabulary

1. The new school year will **kick off** in September in the U.S.
2. Summer vacation will be **a welcome break from** the busy school year.
3. I can't wait until the new baseball season **gets under way**.
4. The **typical** Japanese is shy, modest, and hard working.
5. To most Americans, "Japan" is **associated with** cars and electronic goods.

II. Comprehension Questions

1. They represent "new beginnings" in Japan because April marks the start of the school as well as the business year. April is also the start of the new TV and radio season.
2. They allow Japanese people to relax and forget their stress.
3. He or she might be asked to "find the perfect spot" for the "company's cherry blossom viewing party."

4. In Japan, the new school year begins in April. In America, it begins in September.
5. In Japan, students graduate from college in March and begin to work in April. In America, college graduations occur at different times of the year, so there is no particular season when graduates start working.

Lesson 2: “Capital Cities”

I. Group Vocabulary

1. My Chinese language class is **by far** my hardest class at this school.
2. Shinjuku represents **the heart of** the city of Tokyo.
3. Since graduating from JWU, she has **evolved into** a powerful woman.
4. My **primary** interest in college is American literature.
5. There is an **over-concentration of** coffee shops at my train station.

II. Group Comprehension Questions

1. Because they are worried about what will happen to all the “political and economic functions” that are concentrated in Tokyo if a big earthquake were to occur.
2. Washington D.C. is different from Tokyo because it is “not part of another state” and it is not the center of economic power in the U.S.
3. The main factor that makes New York City America’s main business and financial center is because it has a very good harbor which is suitable for international trade.
4. They are glad that America’s political and economic centers are separate.
5. Although Washington D.C. and New York are both big cities, they are not as crowded, developed, nor expensive as Tokyo.

The students complete similar lessons during the first half of the first semester and then take a final exam based on the vocabulary from the previous lessons as well as comprehension questions and a short essay based on a new reading passage. In Part I of the exam, students fill in the blanks with the letter that corresponds to the most appropriate vocabulary word or phrase for each of the sentences. Each question is worth two points for a total of 25 points possible in Part I. For example:

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| A. a welcome break from | N. loyalty |
| B. alternative | O. make ends meet |
| C. an added attraction of | P. more likely to |
| D. associated with | Q. mystique |
| E. at the peak of | R. not nearly as |
| F. by far | S. over-concentration of |
| G. counterparts | T. quite an adjustment |
| H. evolved into | U. relatively |
| I. factors | V. rituals |

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|-------------------|---------------------|
| J. gets under way | W. state-of-the-art |
| K. in most cases | X. symbolize |
| L. incorporated | Y. typical |
| M. kick off | |

1. April is when Japanese schools and universities ____ of the new school year.
2. The Golden Week holidays in Japan are ____ the stress of going to work.
3. On New Year's Eve, many Japanese are glued to their TVs as the NHK song contest ____.
4. In the ____ Japanese family, the husband goes to work and the woman stays home.
5. Japan has many holidays and festivals ____ the seasons.
6. Tokyo is ____ one of the most expensive cities in the world.
7. Japanese animation has ____ a popular form of entertainment all over the world.
8. Major cities in Japan have an ____ people which makes them very crowded places.
9. Tourists who visit Akihabara can see the very latest ____ electronic equipment.
10. Mt. Fuji has come to ____ Japan for many Japanese.
11. Besides the great shopping, ____ living in Tokyo is that it is very easy to get around on the excellent public transportation system.
12. Getting used to being in college can be ____ for many students.
13. Housing prices in small towns are ____ expensive as in major cities in Japan.
14. Because foreign actors have a certain ____ about them, it is common to see them in Japanese TV commercials.
15. With the prolonged economic recession in Japan, it has become increasingly difficult to ____.
16. Japanese students are relatively shy in comparison to their American ____.
17. Most Americans are ____ show their emotions than are Japanese.
18. Test scores are just one of many ____ that determine who can enter American universities.
19. Japan has ____ many elements of foreign cultures and languages into its own, unique form of popular culture.
20. In the late 1980s, ____ the economic bubble, Japanese corporations were buying many foreign companies and buildings overseas.
21. One of the requirements of lifetime employment in Japan is having ____ to one's company.
22. Changing dresses several times is one of the ____ of a Japanese-style wedding.
23. Graduating from a Japanese university is ____ easy compared to entering one.
24. One ____ to marriage is living together.
25. It can be said that ____, American women are much more independent than Japan-

ese women.

In Part II of the exam, students read a new passage and answer 10 true or false questions based on what they read. Each question is worth one point for a total of 10 points possible in Part II. For example:

Japan is seriously concerned about its demographic trend. The birth rate is going down and the number of elderly people is going up. The younger generation increasingly values material goods and more independent lifestyles. Fewer people are getting married and, of those who do, more and more are having only one child. This is not surprising. With one of the highest costs of living in the world, raising a child can be very expensive for a Japanese family.

At the same time, more Japanese women are beginning to work full-time outside the home. In the past several years, women have been delaying marriage and having children in order to concentrate on their careers. When these women eventually do marry, most prefer a one-child family.

American families are also getting smaller. However, the situation in America is a little different from that of Japan. The cost of raising a child is also high, making it necessary for most husbands and wives to work. But working mothers in America are more likely to get help from their husbands in cleaning the house and in raising the children. Some husbands even stay at home and run the house while their wives work. Such men are known as househusbands. Other husbands try to balance their responsibility to their job with being a good parent at home.

There are lots of private and public day care centers in America to ease the burdens of working parents. Many companies try to help out their married employees by sponsoring day care centers at the office. Other companies offer both parents longer child-care leave and flexible working hours. Under such favorable conditions, many working couples still believe they can have more than one child.

After reading the passage above, the students answer the following true or false questions:

1. Young people in Japan seem more concerned with physical wealth than with starting a family. T F
2. The high cost of living in Japan has had a relatively small impact on Japan's demographic trend. T F
3. A woman's desire to work outside the home has a great affect on her desire to have children. T F
4. American couples have more children than Japanese

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| couples because of the low cost of raising a child. | T | F |
| 5. Many married American women work because they have to, not because they want to. | T | F |
| 6. The role of the American husband is very similar to that of Japanese husbands. | T | F |
| 7. An American father tries to create a balance between his personal and professional responsibilities. | T | F |
| 8. There seem to be more childcare options for working couples in Japan than in America. | T | F |
| 9. Good working conditions have a direct impact on a working couple's ability to raise a family. | T | F |
| 10. Japan expects less elderly people in the near future due to the increase in "one-child" families. | T | F |

In Part III of the exam, students choose one of the following topics and write a well-organized composition using examples to support their answer. For example:

1. What actions do you think the Japanese government and society must take to stop the declining birth rate in Japan?

OR

2. What is your opinion of "househusbands"? Do you agree or disagree with this idea in Japan? Why?

This part of the exam is worth a total of 15 points and evaluated on content rather than form. The total number of points possible on the midterm exam is 50. Unfortunately, in some classes, the students fail to study the vocabulary words sufficiently and as a result, they do poorly on Part I of the exam. In this case, I allow the students to complete an "extra points" take-home assignment in which they write original sentences for each of the vocabulary words they got wrong on the exam. However, one way to avoid this problem is to allow students to use their electronic dictionaries during the exam.

In the second half of the first semester, the focus of the class shifts to journalistic writing and the students read articles from newspapers and magazines, again completing both take-home, individual assignments as well as in-class, group assignments. For example, the students are given the following lesson for homework:

Nagoya-jo dress to kill, keep economy vibrant

Tokiko Oba, Daily Yomiuri Staff Writer

Ayako Sakakibara looks elegant with her long, lightly colored, curled hair and (a) exquisitely applied make-up. The first-year student at Nagoya Future Culture College (NFCC) is vogueish in a black sweater (b) adorned with a ribbon, a white miniskirt, knee-high boots and a tweed coat. She is a typical Nagoya-jo, a girl in her late teens to early 20s from the city or the surrounding region, dressed stylishly with (c) swanky accessories and bags. The term and the style have gained nationwide recognition in recent years.

The word Nagoya-jo most commonly meant Nagoya Castle. But the girls are so distinctive that they are just as likely to pop into people's minds at the word. "There are so many Nagoya-jo at my school," Sakakibara said. "Many of them own brand-name goods, such as Chanel." She was speaking in the college's luxurious hotel-style powder room, reapplying makeup and recurling her hair after class. "I come here often because I can check my reflection and it's convenient," Sakakibara said.

The purchasing power and (d) pervasiveness of Nagoya-jo has seen them evolve into a symbol of the city's (e) prosperity. Noriko Kato, marketing manager at Matsuzakaya department store in Sakae, downtown Nagoya, said the floor (f) targeting Nagoya-jo had been posting strong sales. She added that many Nagoya-jo shopped with their mothers. The mother almost always paid, so the purchases tended to be girlish and suit the tastes of both women.

Nagoya-jo became a national (g) phenomenon in autumn 2003, when JJ fashion magazine ran a feature on their unique look. Until then, Nagoya had barely (h) registered on the fashion radar as Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe drew more attention.

Kato said: "Now fashion magazines across the country devote sections to Nagoya fashion. It feels good to be the center of attention." She added that the phenomenon (i) peaked at the beginning of 2004, but since then had shown signs of leveling off. One possible reason for this might be that Nagoya-jo are paying greater attention to their inner beauty and developing a more elegant (j) demeanor.

Clavis-Planners, a company that offers language and (k) etiquette seminars, in February launched a course titled Nagoya-jo Package. Students learn etiquette, language, fashion and other tips to become the perfect (l) embodiment of the Nagoya-jo. NFCC offers a postgraduate curriculum designed to teach young women table manners, tea ceremony, cooking and other skills. Akane Hattori, a student in the postgraduate courses, said she enrolled in the course because she wanted to become more (m) refined. Another student, Sayaka Maruo said: "We don't spend money buying many small things, but (n) splurge on something we really want. That's probably why people outside Nagoya say we're (o) well-off."

Based on the article above, the students complete each sentence below by filling in the blanks with the letter (a-o) that matches the appropriate vocabulary word above:

1. Because of the continuing economic downturn in Japan, many Japanese aren't as _____ as they once were.
2. Everyone liked her calm, friendly _____.
3. It's not good _____ to talk when your mouth is full of food.
4. Japan Women's University used to be well-known for the _____ of brand-name bags among students.
5. Korean dramas have created a popular _____ in Japan among women of all ages.
6. Many Japanese miss the _____ of the economic boom of the late 1980s.
7. Recently, cigarette companies have been accused of _____ young people in their marketing campaigns.
8. She had a _____ sense of fashion that made her always look elegant.
9. She looked _____ in her black suede mini-skirt.
10. She was dressed _____ for the dinner party at the palace.
11. She wore a gold watch _____ with diamonds and sapphires.
12. Some believe that Mt. Fuji is the _____ of all that is Japanese.
13. Some believe that the athlete _____ after winning a gold medal at the Olympics.
14. The idea of being rich and famous hasn't _____ in her mind yet.
15. Tired of being frugal and saving money, she decided to _____ on some expensive shoes.

Next, students complete the following true or false exercise based on the "Nagoya-jo" article:

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| 1. Nagoya-jo fashion and style has been popular in Japan for about ten years. | T | F |
| 2. Nagoya-jo girls are having an economic impact on the city of Nagoya. | T | F |
| 3. Currently, the Nagoya-jo phenomenon continues to spread across Japan at a fast pace. | T | F |
| 4. Despite the number of Nagoya-jo in Nagoya, Japanese fashion magazines still prefer to target Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe. | T | F |
| 5. Most people think that Nagoya-jo are rich because they are always buying many things when they go shopping. | T | F |
| 6. Nagoya-jo focus all of their energy on their appearance, showing little interest in any other aspects of themselves. | T | F |
| 7. Some companies and schools have begun to | | |

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| target Nagoya-jo. | T | F |
| 8. The Nagoya-jo phenomenon is only recognized in Nagoya and surrounding areas. | T | F |
| 9. Traditional Japanese customs seem to have little appeal to Nagoya-jo. | T | F |
| 10. Unfortunately, many department stores have suffered financially from Nagoya-jo shopping with their mothers. | T | F |

Finally, students complete the following journal exercise in writing: Do you think that fashion is important to students at JWU? Why/Why not? Is fashion important to you? Why? What does “inner beauty” mean to you? Why?

The following week in class, students work in groups and complete another exercise based on the “Nagoya-jo” article. First, they write an original sentence using their assigned vocabulary word or phrase: **Group 1:** demeanor; **Group 2:** embodiment; **Group 3:** pervasiveness; **Group 4:** phenomenon; **Group 5:** swanky. The sentence is worth five points. The students then answer five group comprehension questions based on the same article: 1) What are the characteristics of a Nagoya-jo girl?; 2) What do Nagoya-jo symbolize? Why?; 3) What made Nagoya-jo become recognized throughout Japan?; 4) What seems to be important to Nagoya-jo?; 5) How have businesses and schools reacted to the Nagoya-jo phenomenon? Each question is worth three points, for a total of 15 points possible. Finally, the students answer the following group discussion question which is worth five points: Are JWU students fashionable? Why/Why not? Do JWU students have “inner beauty”? Why/Why not?

After collecting and scoring both lessons based on the “Nagoya-jo” article, the lessons are returned to the students with sample answers:

I. Vocabulary

1. O, 2. J, 3. K, 4. D, 5. G, 6. E, 7. F, 8. M, 9. C, 10. A, 11. B, 12. L, 13. I, 14. H, 15. N

II. True or False

1. F, 2. T, 3. F, 4. F, 5. F, 6. F, 7. T, 8. F, 9. F, 10. F

I. Group Vocabulary

- He had many troubles in life because of his unfriendly **demeanor**.
- She was the **embodiment** of all that was good about being a Japanese woman: refined, delicate, feminine, kind, and caring.
- The **pervasiveness** of state-of-the-art electronic goods makes Japan one of the most high-tech countries in the world.
- Seeing a ghost is a **phenomenon** that most people have not experienced.
- She made a point of looking **swanky** by wearing the shortest mini-skirts she could

find.

II. Group Comprehension Questions

1. They are girls in their “late teens to early 20s,” dressed very “stylishly” with perfect make-up and hair, and they live in or near Nagoya.
2. They symbolize the “prosperity” of Nagoya because they are everywhere and have money to spend, thus helping Nagoya’s economy remain strong.
3. They became recognized nationwide because fashion magazines all over Japan contain sections about “Nagoya fashion.”
4. Having both inner and outer beauty: looking nice in appearance (fashion, hair, make-up) and having refined etiquette in language, good manners, and traditional Japanese customs.
5. Department stores target Nagoya-jo shoppers and schools offer many courses in “etiquette, language” and “fashion” as well as “table manners, tea ceremony, cooking, and other skills.”

One week prior to the final exam, the students are given the following article to take home and read and study:

A woman’s happiness is in the home...huh?

Kaori Shoji, The Japan Times

The term “shufu (main woman of the house, or housewife)” has shifted from (a) derogatory to almost (b) exalted. Ten years ago, a lot of young women would have rather shot themselves in the foot than be called a “sengyo-*shufu* (a woman with no independent income who (c) sticks to being a housewife),” but now surveys show many of the Shibuya-resident joshikosei (high-school girls) actually (d) aspire to being just that.

The *shufu no za* (the housewife’s throne) is seen as an (e) enviable place to be, the quickie passport to *ai* (love), *antei* (security) and *sonkei* (respect). Before, it was hip to pretend one couldn’t even boil water, let alone cook anything; now girls proudly lay claim to culinary skills that would impress those “*ryori no tetsujin* (iron chef)” folk. I wish I had known such a trend was coming at a time when it still would have mattered. At least I could’ve saved on all those instant cup noodles.

But my gut feeling is: Girls, why do it? In other parts of the world, women have jobs and maintain households, very often at the same time. But in Japan, society and a lot of women believe it’s nearly impossible to do both and retain one’s sanity, so many women (f) opt for one or the other.

Currently, the popular choice happens to be “shufugyo (professional housewife),” despite the fact that the Japanese *kaji* (household chores) are so multilayered, complex,

and time-consuming. Yes, in spite of all the high-tech *kaden* (appliances), the abundance of *sozai* (ready-made or precooked meals) and the recent (g) advent of the *shokusenki* (dishwasher), the average Japanese woman still devotes a huge chunk of her time to household duties and concerns.

Compared with her (h) counterparts in the West, she spends longer hours in the kitchen, more time circling the house with a vacuum cleaner and attending to the needs of her children. The Japanese *shufu* is mistress of a thousand tasks, the bulk of which she must do alone, since outsourcing is still an alien concept (too costly) and the husband is (i) perpetually stuck in the office. Besides, many women are (j) averse to the idea of having someone else come and do the dirty work. They don't even like having friends over unless they're sure that everything has been (k) meticulously cleaned, the kids are scrubbed and smiling, and the *kyakuyo shokki* (guest china) is out on display.

From childhood, Japanese women learn the drill: if a girl doesn't acquire the fine art of maintaining a household, she can't get married. And the threat that she may remain single while others smile triumphantly in the peal of wedding bells is so unbearable, she gets cracking. She learns to cook, she learns to sew. She learns the (l) rudiments of gardening and arranging flowers. She also learns to mix drinks and pour the beer so there isn't too much head (Japanese men don't like that). And she's told by her elders that “*Toire soji no jozuna onna ni wa kawaii onnanoko ga umareru* (A woman who's good at cleaning the toilet will be blessed with a beautiful daughter).” Or as my grandmother used to say: “*Otoko wa tokusuruyoni dekiteiru. Onna wa nakuyoni dekiteiru* (A man will always get the better end of the stick while a woman will always end up weeping).”

There's also the sense that housework is a (m) virtue, that these tasks will help her grow as a human being and her skills as a domestic goddess will increase her feminine worth (“*onnaburi o ageru*”). She can be bilingual or have a master's degree in nuclear fusion; the Japanese woman will still say that *onna no shiawase* (a woman's happiness) depends on her success as a wife, a helpmate and mother. The ultimate role model is Princess Masako, who (n) ditched a brilliant Foreign Ministry career for, well, a marriage. Now, if Masako-sama thought it was worth it, then surely, for the rest of us the choice should be obvious.

And now for the good news: the term *shufu* has expanded to include men as well. Where once the kanji character for “fu” meant “woman,” it can now be written with the character that means “husband.” Indeed, a steadily growing number of house-husbands (still (o) deplorably small, but they're there) are coming out of the closet, admitting their status, and even willing to say this housework thing isn't all that bad. Award-winning horror novelist Koji Suzuki (author of “The Ring”) was the first house-husband to make it all look cool – he even said in an interview, “*Jitsu wa otoko no hoga kaji ni muiteiru* (Actually, men are better suited for housework).” If only grandma was around to hear

that.

The students are instructed to bring the above article to class to refer to during the final exam. They are also allowed to use their dictionary, but no notes. In Part I of the exam, students must fill in the blanks with the letter (a-o) that corresponds to the most appropriate vocabulary word or phrase from the “A woman’s happiness” article to complete each of the sentences below. Each sentence is worth one point, for a total of 15 points possible in Part I of the exam:

1. After getting a big promotion, Keiko’s position in the company was very ____ among her coworkers.
2. After getting an “A” on her exam, Makiko felt ____ with pride.
3. Aiko is never satisfied with her cell-phone, so she is ____ changing brands and services every time a new feature is offered.
4. Akiko had the ____ of always being patient and understanding with people.
5. Because Mari doesn’t like change, she tends to ____ what she is familiar with.
6. Before embarking on her career as a journalist, Misako decided to study the ____ of writing.
7. Emi was upset because she heard some of her classmates making rude, ____ remarks about her.
8. I have a dream. I ____ to be an actress someday!
9. In general, American students are more independent compared to their Japanese ____.
10. Kanako ____ her dream of becoming a singer and decided to get married and have children instead.
11. Mitsuko is always ____, checking her hair and make-up to make sure that she looks her best.
12. She couldn’t decide whether to ____ the Gucci or the Prada purse.
13. Since Takako has always been very shy, she is ____ about going out on dates with boys.
14. The quality of life is ____ bad in many parts of the world today.
15. The way we communicate and share information changed drastically with the ____ computers and the Internet.

In Part II of the exam, students answer 10 true or false questions based on the same article. Each question is worth one point, for a total of 10 points possible in Part II:

1. Despite being educated or skilled at something, Japanese women still believe that being a good

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| housewife and mother is the key to being happy. | T | F |
| 2. Doing housework means that a Japanese woman must sacrifice her self-worth as a woman. | T | F |
| 3. Even though there are many modern conveniences in Japan, women spend a large portion of their time doing housework. | T | F |
| 4. Fortunately, many men today have come forward to say that they are househusbands and they don't mind doing housework. | T | F |
| 5. It is now very common in Japan to ask for outside help with household chores. | T | F |
| 6. Japanese women have been taught that unless they learn how to keep house, they cannot find a husband. | T | F |
| 7. Japanese women today are more confident about balancing a career and a family than their Western counterparts. | T | F |
| 8. Many Japanese women today are proud of their cooking skills. | T | F |
| 9. The Japanese term "shufu" used to have a negative image among women a decade ago. | T | F |
| 10. Today, very few Japanese girls actually want to be housewives. | T | F |

In Part III of the exam, students answer five comprehension questions using examples from the same article to support their answer. Each question is worth three points for a total of 15 points possible in Part III: 1) How has the image of "shufu" changed in the past ten years?; 2) What does the author mean when she says: "I wish I had known such a trend (the ability to cook) was coming...when it still would have mattered"?; 3) How have "high-tech" appliances and "ready-made, precooked meals" affected women in Japan?; 4) Why is the ability to do housework seen as a "virtue" in Japan today?; 5) What example does the author give regarding a woman giving up her career for marriage? Why does she use this example?

In Part IV of the exam, worth 10 points, the students answer the following essay question in writing: How do you feel about the author's statement: "The Japanese woman will say that...a woman's happiness depends on her success as a wife, a helpmate and mother"?

After collecting and grading the final exam, the tests are returned to the students with sample answers:

PART I (Vocabulary)

1. e 2. b 3. I 4. m 5. c 6. l 7. a 8. d 9. h 10. n 11. k

12. f 13. j 14. o 15. g

PART II (True or False)

1. T 2. F 3. T 4. F 5. F 6. T 7. F 8. T 9. T 10. F

PART III (Short Answers)

1. Ten years ago, the term “shufu” had a very negative image among Japanese women. Today, however, many Japanese women want to be housewives because they see it as a “passport to love...security...and respect.”
2. Because had she known that the ability to cook would become such a valuable asset among Japanese women, she would have learned to cook herself instead of eating instant noodles.
3. Although these items are supposed to make life easier for Japanese women, they still spend a lot of time cooking and doing housework.
4. Because many Japanese women believe that being good at doing housework “will help her grow as a human being” and “increase her feminine worth.”
5. She uses Princess Masako as a “role model” because she gave up her successful career as a diplomat to marry the Prince.

In the first half of the second semester, students are introduced to short stories and poetry and are told that they must learn and understand the following literary terms: narrator, plot, setting, simile, and metaphor. As in the second half the first semester, they are given a homework assignment which includes reading a short story or poem, answering questions, and writing a journal assignment. For example, the students are given the following short story by Sandra Cisneros:

“My Name”

Sandra Cisneros

In English, my name means hope. In Spanish, it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse of a woman, too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window all her life, the

way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best of with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school, they say my name funny, as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as my sister's name, Magdalena, which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Martiza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the W will do.

Based on this story, the students answer five comprehension questions worth a total of 15 points: 1) Who is the narrator of this story? How do you know?; 2) Why doesn't Esperanza like her name?; 3) What are the five similes in this story?; 4) What is a metaphor in this story?; and 5) Why doesn't Esperanza want to be like her grandmother? The students are instructed to answer the questions in their own words and by using quotes from the story, in clear, concise English. In addition, the students write the following journal assignment which is worth 10 points: Think of a metaphor (not a simile) to describe yourself an object or image that reveals something important about you. Explain why this metaphor is an accurate description of you.

The following week in class, the students work in groups and read another short story by Sandra Cisneros:

"Boys and Girls"

Sandra Cisneros

The boys and girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls. Carlos and Kiki are each other's best friend...not ours.

Nenny is too young to be my friend. She's just my sister and that was not my fault. You don't pick your sisters, you just get them and sometimes they come like Nenny.

She can't play with those Vargas kids or she'll turn out just like them. And since she comes right after me, she is my responsibility.

Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell my secrets to. One who will understand my jokes without my having to explain them. Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor.

Based on this story, the students, as a group, answer the following five comprehension questions worth 15 points, again in their own words and by using quotes from the story: 1) How does the narrator feel about her sister? Why?; 2) What is the metaphor in the story?; 3) What does this metaphor tell you about how the speaker sees herself?; 4) Why is it a metaphor and not a simile?; and 5) Rewrite the sentence as a simile. Finally, the students answer the following discussion question worth 10 points, in which each member of the group must answer: What does your name mean in your culture? Were you named after anyone? Do you have a nickname? If so, how did you get it? Do you like your name? Why? If you could change your name, what would you change it to? Why?

After collecting and scoring the homework and group work assignments, they are returned to the students with the sample answers:

I. Vocabulary

1. narrator: The person/voice telling the story. *Note: It is not always the author! It is often a character in the story.
2. plot: The pattern of events or the main story in a narrative or drama.
3. setting: The time, place, and circumstances in which a narrative, drama, or film takes place.
4. simile: Comparing two dissimilar things using the words “like” or “as.” For example: “She was sly as a fox.”
5. metaphor: Comparing two dissimilar things without “like” or “as.” For example: “She was a fox, fast and sly.”

II. “My Name” Comprehension Questions

1. The narrator of the story is Esperanza. “Esperanza. I have inherited her name...”
2. She doesn’t like her name because “It means sadness” and because the kids at school make fun of her name: “At school, they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth.”
3. 1) “It is like the number nine...”; 2) “...songs like sobbing”; 3) “...as if she were a fancy chandelier”; 4) “...as if the syllables were made out of tin...”; 5) “...a softer something, like silver.”
4. “...a wild horse of a woman.”
5. Because her grandmother had a very unhappy life: “She looked out the window all her life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow.”

I. “Boys and Girls” Comprehension Questions

1. She doesn’t like her because she “is too young to be my friend” and she is her responsibility.
2. “I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor.”
3. It tells us that she wants to be free but she can’t be free because she must take care

of her younger sister.

4. It is a metaphor because it doesn't use the words "like" or "as."
5. I am like a red balloon tied to an anchor.

In addition to short stories, students are also exposed to poetry in the first half of the second semester. For example, the students are given the following poem by Sakae Roberson to read and answer questions:

"Okasan/Mother"
Sakae S. Roberson

twenty-five years she's been here
and still
a-me-ri-ka makes her mouth sour tight
sticks in her mind like spit-wet thread
caught in the eye of a needle

twenty-five years of doing christmas
and still
she saves generation-old
bamboo mats for wrapping new year osushi/
rice cakes
hum songs of japan
in the quiet dark of christmas mornings.

every year
for twenty-five years she plans new year
and still
one more dress to sew
one more bill to pay
one more year passes
she celebrates
sewing silk gowns for rich ladies

twenty-five years
and still
she tells no stories of war to a daughter
she saves marriage lace and

satin baby kimonos in a cedar chest for
a daughter who denies her conversation
watches her sew her life designs
into someone else's wedding day

twenty-five years of city living
people calling her oriental or chinese
sometimes jap
and still
her eyes, like teardrops turned sideways,
say nothing.
with pride, she writes from right to left
of the greatness of a-me-ri-ka to her people

twenty-five years
alone.
still
she cries in japanese

After reading the poem, the students are asked to answer five comprehension questions worth 15 points based on "Okasan/Mother": 1) What does Okasan/Mother do for a living?; 2) What are some of the things that she does which reveal that she still feels close to Japan?; 3) What are the two similes in this poem?; 4) What are some of the ways she has adapted to living in America?; and 5) What lines in the poem illustrate how Americans have treated her? The students are also asked to answer the following journal question worth 10 points in writing: Imagine that you had to go live in America for the rest of your life. How well do you think you could adapt to the new culture? Why? What would you miss most about Japan? Why? What Japanese customs or traditions would you continue to use in the U.S.? Why? After completing the homework assignment, the students, as a group, read and answer questions based on the poem, "Chinatown Talking Story" by Kitty Tsui.

The midterm exam consists of three parts and is worth 50 points. Part I, worth 20 points, is based on vocabulary from the short stories and poems. Students complete each of the following sentences with the appropriate vocabulary word by writing the corresponding letter in the blanks:

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|----------------------|---|----------------|
| A | a shade | H | gist | O | pilgrimage |
| B | Angel Island | I | had their feet bound | P | self-mockingly |
| C | baptize | J | illiterate | Q | simile |
| D | came hard to | K | metaphor | R | solitaire |

	me	L	mock	S	the scum of
E	dropped the	M	narrator		the earth
	pretense	N	palatable	T	uncanny
F	eloped				
G	for Chrissake				

1. "He ran as fast as a horse" is an example of a ____.
2. "She is a bold warrior, fighting to break free of the social chains that enslaves her" is an example of a ____.
3. Her excuse for being late was not very ____ to me.
4. I couldn't tell him how I truly felt, so I just smiled ____.
5. I had a hard time understanding the ____ of what he was trying to explain.
6. I know it's not real, but I like to think of my Toyota as my "____" Mercedes Benz.
7. I was shocked when I learned that many girls in ancient China ____.
8. If I could ____ under a new name, I would call myself Ai, instead of Tomoko.
9. If you move that plant just ____ to the left, it will get more sun.
10. It's sad to think how many Americans are _____. Can you imagine not being able to read or write?
11. It's ____ how well she can play the piano at such a young age.
12. Many immigrants from Asia were interned on ____ before they could enter the United States.
13. My parents would never forgive me if I ran away and ____ with my boyfriend.
14. Oh, ____! I can't believe you made the same mistake again!
15. Our ____ to the shrine in the mountains was long and very difficult.
16. Sachiko is very shy, so she usually stays home and plays ____ by herself.
17. Sometimes I have trouble figuring out who the ____ is that is telling the story.
18. Suddenly, she ____ and started speaking very honestly to me about how she felt.
19. To me, people who harm young children are ____.
20. When I was in elementary school, math always ____.

In Part II, the students read the following short story by Jamaica Kincaid and answer the comprehension questions that follow using examples from the story to support their answers (*Note: vocabulary definitions are given in parenthesis):

"Girl"
Jamaica Kincaid

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color

clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothes line to dry; don't walk barehead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum in it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna (Some kind of inappropriate Caribbean song) in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays, try to walk like a lady and not like the slut (A woman who easily has sex with different men) you are so bent on (determined to) becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat (low class) boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street flies will follow you; *but I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school*; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra far from the house, because the okra tree harbors (gives shelter to) red ants; when you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else your throat will itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all; this is how to make a pepper pot; this is how to make good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man, and if this doesn't work there are other ways; and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it; and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you; this is how to make ends meet (to survive on a limited amount of money); always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh; *but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?

The students then answer four comprehension questions, worth 20 points, based on the story above: 1) How do you think the girl feels about her life? Why?; 2) How would you describe the relationship between the girl and her mother? What is the girl's mother most worried about the girl becoming? How do you know?; 3) What does this story tell you about the life of women in Antigua?; and 4) As a Japanese female, do you have anything in common with this girl? Why or why not? Finally, the students answer the following essay question worth 10 points: How would you describe the traditional female role in your culture? The typical male role? How have these roles changed since you were born?

The second half of the second semester represents the most challenging part of the course because students are asked to read an entire novel, *Farewell to Manzanar*, by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston. Because this task is so challenging, it is divided into five class sessions, spanning the entire second half of the second semester. In addition, the students watch the movie, *Come See the Paradise*, directed by Alan Parker, which tells a story based loosely on *Farewell to Manzanar*, about a Japanese American family forced to live in an internment camp during World War II. Students answer questions and write journal assignments based on both the novel and the film.

First, students read Chapters 1 through 5 of *Farewell to Manzanar* and answer the following ten questions worth 50 points for homework: 1) Compare the author's description of her father in Chapter 1 to her description of her father when he arrived at Manzanar from Fort Lincoln in Chapter 5; 2) In Chapter 1, why was Papa arrested by the FBI? How did he react to his arrest? Why?; 3) In Chapter 1, why does the author describe her father as "a man without a country?"; 4) In Chapter 2, why was the author so afraid when she moved to Terminal Island?; 5) In Chapter 2, why do you think Mama broke all of her china?; 6) In Chapter 2, what does the author's first meal at the camp tell you about the U.S. military?; 7) In Chapter 4, what is the metaphor on page 30? What does it mean?; 8) In Chapter 4, how did the Japanese adapt to life in the camp?; 9) According to the author in Chapter 4, why were the Japanese Americans able to adapt to life in the camp?; and 10) In Chapter 5, what aspect of life in the camp does the author think affected her family the most? Why?

The following week in class, I review the answers to the questions above with the students. We then watch scenes 1-12 of *Come See the Paradise*, after which, the students are given the following journal assignment worth 10 points in which they can choose one of five questions to answer:

- 1) Why does Papa Kawamura have a negative image of Chinese people? Do Japanese still feel prejudice against Chinese today? What about Koreans or other Southeast Asian people?
- 2) Papa Kawamura has a gambling problem, but he insists on doing what he wants to do, no matter how it affects his family. Is Papa Kawamura a "typical" Japanese father? How is he the same and/or different than your father?

- 3) Jack's brother, Jerry, tells Jack that America is "a great country. Best country in the world." Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?
- 4) Mr. Ogata killed himself because his wife was cheating on him. Charlie tells Joyce that he did it "because of honor." What does "honor" mean to you? Do you think that suicide is socially acceptable in Japan? Why?
- 5) Lily is told that she must have an omiai meeting with Mr. Fujioka because Papa Kawamura owes him a lot of money from gambling. What do you think about Lily's parents forcing her to have this meeting, even though he is much older than Lily and she doesn't love him? Why?

In addition, the students are asked to read Chapters 6-9 of *Farewell to Manzanar* and answer the following five comprehension questions worth 25 points: 1) In Chapter 6, why does the author compare Papa's cane to a Samurai sword?; 2) In Chapter 6, why did Papa go to America? What did he do there? What was he always searching for?; 3) In Chapter 7, what does Papa mean when he asks the interviewer: "When your mother and your father are having a fight, do you want them to kill each other? Or do you want them to just stop fighting?"; 4) In Chapter 8, why was Papa called "inu"?; 5) In Chapter 9, why didn't Papa want to talk about the time he spent at Fort Lincoln?

After reviewing the answers to the above questions in class, the students watch scenes 13-26 of *Come See the Paradise* and choose one of the following five journal questions to answer in writing:

- 1) Charlie explains to Jack that working seven days a week is a "Japanese custom" that "people expect." Is this still true in Japan today? Why/Why not? What are some other Japanese customs that people expect? What's your favorite and least favorite Japanese custom? Why?
- 2) Why do you think Charlie doesn't want Jack to be interested in Lily?
- 3) If you were Lily, how would you react to Jack in the Chinese restaurant? Would you let him kiss you even though you just met? Why?
- 4) Jack tells Papa: "...what I can never be, not ever, is Japanese." What does it mean to "be Japanese"? What makes you Japanese?
- 5) If you were Lily, would you marry Jack? Could you marry someone without your parents' permission? Why?

For homework, the students are asked to read Chapters 10-13 in *Farewell to Manzanar* and answer the following six comprehension questions worth 30 points: 1) In Chapter 11, why did the Loyalty Oath cause so much controversy in the camp?; 2) In Chapter 11, why did the JACL support the all-Nisei combat regiment?; 3) In Chapter 11, what would happen to those who answered "No No" on the Loyalty Oath questionnaire?; 4) In Chapter 11, Papa sings the *Kimi ga yo*. According

to the author, what does this song mean? What does this song mean to you? Do you agree or disagree that it should still be sung in Japan? Why?; 5) In Chapter 12, what are some of the ways the people made life in Manzanar more bearable?; and 6) In Chapter 13, why did the author continue to practice baton twirling?

Again, I review the answers with the students the following week in class. We then watch scenes 27-53 of *Come See the Paradise* and students choose one of the following five journal questions worth 10 points:

- 1) Jack and Lily have an argument about Jack wanting to participate in a union protest at the fish cannery. Lily thinks it is too dangerous, but Jack strongly believes in workers' rights. Who do you agree with in this situation, Lily or Jack? Why?
- 2) During their argument, Lily tells Jack: "You can't spit against heaven." This is supposedly a Japanese proverb. What do you think it means? What is your favorite Japanese proverb? Why?
- 3) Jack learns that Japan has bombed Pearl Harbor, which started the war between the U.S. and Japan. What is your opinion about Japan's actions just before and during W.W.II?
- 4) After Pearl Harbor, the FBI arrest Papa because they think he's "a potentially dangerous alien." Why do the FBI think this?
- 5) When Lily returns home, she meets Mama for the first time since she married Jack and had Mini. In your opinion, who should say they are sorry in this situation: Should Lily say she's sorry for marrying Jack without her parents' permission, or should Mama Kawamura apologize for not writing back to Lily? Why?

After reading Chapters 14-19 in *Farewell to Manzanar*, the students answer the following seven questions worth 35 points for homework: 1) In Chapter 15, why did Woody accept being drafted into the U.S. military?; 2) In Chapter 16, what legal case led to the closing of the internment camps?; 3) In Chapter 16, why didn't the author's family react in joy to the closure of the camp?; 4) In Chapter 16, what did the author fear most, personally, about leaving the camp?; 5) In Chapter 16, why did the author's older brothers and sisters decide to move to the east coast after leaving the camp?; 6) In Chapter 17, why was Papa so reluctant to leave the camp, even though he was now free to leave?; and 7) In Chapter 19, why does the author write about Papa: "It was another slip of the castrator's scissors, and he never really recovered from this, either financially or spiritually?"

In class, after reviewing the answers to the questions above, the students watch scenes 54-78 of *Come See the Paradise*, then choose one of the following four journal questions worth 10 points:

- 1) Mini is sent to the camp with Lily and her family. However, Mini is an American citizen. Do you think Mini should be with her mother (in the camp) or with her father (not

in the camp)? Which would be better for her? Why? If you had to choose between staying with your mother or staying with your father, who would you choose? Why?

2) The truck driver tells Jack: "Real good people, some of them Japs. Real hard workers. Trouble is, you don't know which ones to trust, which ones will shoot you in the back. Hard problem. Beats me." What would you say to the truck driver? Why?

3) Throughout the movie, we hear the term "Jap," which was a racial slur used during World War II to refer to Japanese people. A racist person might still use it today. Other examples of racial slurs are: "nigger" (African American/Black), "Chink" (Chinese), "Gook" (Korean), "Wap" (Italian), and "Kraut" (German). How does the word "Jap" make you feel? Are there any racial slurs used in Japan today? Towards who? Why? What affect do these racial slurs have on people? Why?

4) Harry tells Mama that Charlie has changed. Lily replies: "No one changes inside." Why has Charlie changed? Do you agree or disagree with Lily? Why? Has anything in life "changed" you? How? Why?

The students finish *Farewell to Manzanar* by reading Chapters 20-22 and answering the following 10 questions, worth 50 points, for homework: 1) In Chapter 20, what does the girl's comment, "Gee, I didn't know you could speak English," make the author realize?; 2) In Chapter 20, why did the author say, "...part of me yearned to be invisible"?; 3) In Chapter 20, how does the author relate to her shame of being Oriental to being sent to the internment camp?; 4) In Chapter 20, what did the author's experience as a baton twirler for the Boy Scout drum and bugle corps make her become aware of and realize?; 5) In Chapter 20, how did Papa change after Woody returned from Japan?; 6) In Chapter 21, what kinds of discrimination did the author experience at Long Beach Polytechnic? How did she usually react to this discrimination?; 7) In Chapter 21, why was Papa so against the author being the annual carnival queen?; 8) What is the metaphor on page 191?; 9) In Chapter 22, what difference does the author realize about her life and Papa's life at Manzanar?; and 10) In Chapter 22, what made the author remember the "hollow ache" she "carried during the early months of internment"?

Finally, after watching the final scenes, 79-105, of *Come See the Paradise*, the students choose one of the following five journal questions, worth 10 points, to answer:

1) Why did Papa lose his self-respect in the camp? Who's fault is it? Why? What does "self-respect" mean to you? Why?

2) Lily tells Mini: "We all wanted so badly to have a life here. It's a beautiful country, if only you have eyes to see it. But suddenly, we all felt like a blind man peeping through a fence." What does she mean? Have you ever felt this way? Why?

3) The Kawamuras must make an important decision. If you were in Harry and Charlie's situation, would you answer "yes" (Join the Army and fight against Japan) or "no" (Stay

in the camp) to questions 27 and 28 on the loyalty questionnaire? Why?

4) The Army Captain tells Jack: "Maybe locking your people away is the best place for them." Do you agree or disagree with the Captain? Why? What is your opinion about the internment camps?

5) Most Americans claim that it was necessary for the U.S. to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II. What is your opinion? Was Japan a victim, or was Japan responsible for these attacks? Why?

The final exam has three parts and is based on the novel, *Farewell to Manzanar*, as well as the movie, *Come See the Paradise*. In Part I, the students answer 25 true or false questions based on the novel:

1. After finally leaving the camp, Papa was not allowed to have a commercial fishing license. T F
2. After the war, there was less racism on the east coast of the U.S. toward Oriental people than on the west coast. T F
3. After Woody returned from Japan, Papa's role in the family completely changed. T F
4. Although the camp was very hard on the author's family, at least she was able to eat all of her meals with her family. T F
5. As a child, the author felt very uncomfortable around other Asian children at school. T F
6. Because Papa had lived in America for 35 years, he was able to obtain U.S. citizenship. T F
7. Due to Japan's economic strength in the 1970s, the author was reminded of anti-Japanese feelings in America. T F
8. For Papa, the worst thing about being sent to Fort Lincoln was not being able to see his wife whom he loved very much. T F
9. If someone answered "No" on the Loyalty Oath questionnaire, they were immediately executed by the U.S. military. T F
10. It is ironic that many families were afraid to leave the camps after they were closed. T F
11. Many people in the camp suspected Papa of helping

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| the U.S. military and they hated him for this. | T | F |
| 12. Papa felt a lot more loyalty toward Japan during the war, and he secretly hoped that Japan would defeat the U.S. | T | F |
| 13. Papa had trouble when he first came to America because he refused to do any job besides being a fisherman. | T | F |
| 14. Papa often thought of himself as a military officer, wielding his power over his family. | T | F |
| 15. Papa was against the author becoming the annual carnival queen because he thought she wasn't pretty enough to succeed. | T | F |
| 16. Perhaps the people in the camp were able to endure such a terrible hardship because of the traits they had inherited from their Japanese ancestors. | T | F |
| 17. The author kept practicing the baton in high school because she wanted to prove to everyone that Japanese Americans were very skillful. | T | F |
| 18. The JACL supported Nisei fighting in the war because they believed it was the best way to show that they were loyal Americans. | T | F |
| 19. The Loyalty Oath forced the people in the camp to defend Japan, even though most of them were U.S. citizens. | T | F |
| 20. The people in the camps did a lot of gardening and farming to make life more bearable. | T | F |
| 21. The women in the camp were very creative in adapting the clothes they were given by the U.S. military. | T | F |
| 22. What the author feared most about returning to U.S. society was being hated because she was Japanese. | T | F |
| 23. Before Papa was arrested by the FBI, he did everything he could to avoid being arrested. | T | F |
| 24. When the author first arrived at Manzanar, she was amazed that they were served such delicious Japanese food. | T | F |
| 25. Whenever the author experienced discrimination outside of the camp, she always protested strongly. | T | F |

In Part II of the exam, students answer 15 true or false questions based on *Come See the Paradise*:

1. After leaving the camp, the Kawamura family returned to Little Tokyo to reopen Papa's movie theater. T F
2. Charlie and Harry couldn't join the U.S. Army because they were considered "friendly enemy aliens," just like German and Italian Americans. T F
3. Compared to Charlie, Harry went through the biggest personal change because he was so angry about being in the camp. T F
4. Dulcie was forced to work on a sugar beet farm in Idaho. T F
5. Jack immigrated to the U.S. from Scotland, where he was born. T F
6. Lily couldn't marry Jack in California because it was against the law. T F
7. Lily was forced to have an omiai meeting with Mr. Fujioka because her father owed him a lot of money. T F
8. Mama Kawamura was not allowed to work in the camp. T F
9. Papa Kawamura owned a movie theater in Little Tokyo. T F
10. Papa Kawamura was able to obtain U.S. citizenship only because he ran a successful business in Little Tokyo. T F
11. President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 required all Issei men and women to go to Fort Lincoln, and all Nisei to go to Manzanar. T F
12. Right after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans became even more afraid of Japan because it was winning most of the battles. T F
13. The Kawamura family was sent directly to Manzanar from Little Tokyo. T F
14. The Kawamura's originally lived in New York City before moving to Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. T F
15. Unlike Japanese men, most American men will try to

kiss a woman they have met for the first time. T F

In Part III of the exam, worth 10 points, the students are asked to compare and contrast, in English, the novel *Farewell to Manzanar* with the film, *Come See the Paradise*. How are they similar? How are they different?

I believe that teaching this movie and book are important because they both give a very accurate account of the internment camps as well as a glimpse of life in America for Japanese Americans just prior to World War II. The movie also includes a love story between Lily Kawamura, a Nisei Japanese American, and Jack McGann, an Irish immigrant. Thus, it provides cross-cultural awareness issues as well. Each year, I am always amazed at how little my students know about the aftermath of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and how the wartime hysteria and decades of prejudice against Asians created one of the greatest horrors of American history: the mass relocation and imprisonment of Japanese Americans in internment camps. My students are always astounded to learn that from 1942 through 1945, more than 120,000 Japanese Americans, American citizens, and Japanese nationals alike were uprooted from their lives on the West Coast and Hawaii and incarcerated in these camps.

How much do your students know about this era in American history? Could it ever happen again?

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