

Meeting People



Over the past year, TJF produced the Deai resource, which is designed to introduce the personalities and daily lives of seven real Japanese high school students through photographs and text. "Meeting People" takes up one of the seven students each issue, turning the focus toward topics of concern to the individual student and introducing some of the photographs and text in Deai. In this way, we hope to provide information useful for a better understanding of the seven students and the Deai project. We will also offer, in conjunction with the Deai website (<http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/>), necessary explanatory material, related resources and data, as well as ideas for class activities. In this issue we take up Oishi Kanta, who wants to become a mystery writer, and what he seeks to express through his novels.

Meet Kanta



Profile

名前: ^{おおいしかん た}大石勘太

歳: ^{とし さい}17才

学校: ^{がっこう どうきょう とりつしんじゅくやまぶきこうこう}東京都立新宿山吹高校

住んでいるところ: ^{す どうきょう とみなとく}東京都港区

将来の夢: ^{しょうらい ゆめ}ミステリー小説家 ^{しょうせつ か}

^{おおいしかん た}大石勘太です。 ^{とうきょう とみなとく}東京都港区に住んでいます。 ^{さい}17歳、 ^{とうきょう}東京都立新宿山吹高校3年生です。 ^{えんげきぶ}演劇部に入っています。 ^{ちゅうがくせい}中学生のころから ^{しょうせつ か}小説を書いています。 ^{しょうらい}将来は ^{ほんかくてき}本格的なミステリー小説家になりたいと思っています。

今、日本では「いやし」ブームです。 ^いいやしについての ^{ほん}本がたくさん売れているそうです。 ^{ほん}そういう本には ^{こころ}心を ^{いやす}いやす方法や ^{かた}生き方の ^あアドバイスが書いてあります。 ^{でも}でも、 ^{かた}生き方について、 ^{ほか}ほかの人から ^{おし}教えてもらうだけでいいのでしょうか。 ^{ぼく}ぼくは、 ^{じぶん}自分で ^{しょうせつ か}小説を書いて、 ^{じぶん}自分で ^{こた}答えをさがしていきたくと思っています。



Notes:

演劇部	drama club	いやす	to heal, mend, soothe, ease, cure
本格的な	full-fledged, legitimate	生き方	how to live, way of living
ミステリー	mystery	ほかの人	other people, others
小説	novel, story; fiction	自分で	on one's own, by oneself
いやし	healing, soothing, rejuvenating	答え	answer, response
ブーム	boom, craze, fashion, fad	さがす	to seek, search for, look for
～そうです	it seems that ____; I hear that ____	さがしていく	to go on searching for

Kanta's View—Reasons for Writing Fiction

Discovering Mystery Novels

In elementary school I was known as the “Famicom Kid.” Like most boys in those days, we did practically nothing but play video games. I’d sit down to play right after getting home from school, and even when I went to my friends’ houses to play, all we did was play video games. My dream at that time was to make a game of my own. By the time I was in fifth grade, I’d lost all interest in school work. I wasn’t interested in reading at all. But one day I happened to borrow a book from the library. It was *Brown shonen no jikenbo* (*Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective*). Since then, I’ve been hooked on mysteries.

In junior high school I started to write stories. I was reading fantasy stories similar to role-playing games and I figured even I could write stories like that. I wrote a fantasy story and submitted it to a contest. My entry was quickly eliminated the first time, but the second time I submitted something, it got past the first screening. If I could have improved it with some reworking, it might have had a chance, but I was still pretty green, so it didn’t make it.

Then, when I was in my third year of junior high school, I read Ellery Queen’s *The Tragedy of Y*. Compared with that, stories by Akagawa Jiro*¹ and the other mystery writers I had been reading up until then were nothing. That story gripped me from the start and held me spellbound. The revelation at the end made me literally shiver. After I realized from reading this book what it takes to write a real mystery, I was pretty overwhelmed. Even now, after having read a lot of stories in this genre and knowing how high the writing standards are, I still consider this story the best by far.

I want to try writing true detective stories and mysteries. Why mysteries? It is the format that most appeals to me. I’m fascinated by the idea of trying to see what I can express in this particular style of fiction. I love the idea of writing that is highly refined, like that of Ellery Queen, in which every thing and every character is part of the story’s intricate plot and part of a pattern that leads to the solution to the case. I want to write stories that people will appreci-



This is the big “scramble” intersection in front of Shibuya Station where traffic stops and pedestrians cross from all directions at once. Kanta loves this kind of throng.

ate not just out of admiration for the trick and the resolution of the case but because they feel the story was compelling and moving to read. I’d say that is probably the meaning of a genuine mystery.

My Reasons for Writing Novels

The most important things to me are myself and the environment that surrounds me. I’m in touch with my environment (which can be the people immediately around me, the world, or even the universe) and influenced by it, just as I, in turn, influence it. I observe and accept things just as they are, and my mind works in response to things as I perceive and understand them. I think this whole process is really important. I want to be flexible and receptive and not be tied down by conventional thinking. I can’t explain what I mean very well in words, but perhaps it’s special exactly because I can’t explain it. I think I will just go on searching, keeping an inquiring mind.

“Healing” is all the rage these days. It’s the theme of television programs, art, and popular songs, and there are many how-to books on healing.*² This trend really ticks me off. Artists try to win acclaim with pop-art paintings featuring comforting phrases or soothing verses and publishers put out books explaining how to “heal” yourself—and everything they write or express is completely trite, obvious, and common sense. The way it’s all presented and marketed is just so presumptuous! People are easily fooled into making such simplistic, ordinary homilies their golden rules.

But I don’t see how anyone can do that kind of thing. How can a person be satisfied to swallow whole the answers provided by people they don’t even know? How can they just take such answers as conclusive and make their way through life light-heartedly, without asking questions themselves? I think I have answers for myself that even I cannot yet put into words. I’m attempting to give expression to my ideas by writing fiction.



Notes:

***1 Akagawa Jiro**

Born in 1948. Mystery writer. His debut novel, *Yurei ressha* [Ghost Train], was published in 1976. Akagawa has attracted a following of young readers with his light, humorous mysteries, such as *Mikeneko Homuzu no suiri* [The Deductions of Tortoise-shell Cat Holmes, 1978].

***2 Healing**

Iyashi, the noun form of the verb *iyasu*, carries the meaning of curing illness and injury, easing hunger, and alleviating pain. It is a popular buzzword today, referring to anything that is physically or mentally soothing. *Iyashi* goods—books, music, pictures, incense and aromas, bath

salts, and plants—abound, offering to salve the physical and psychological stress of the workplace and of daily life in general. The prolonged economic recession has added fuel to the *iyashi* boom.

Kanta is speaking in particular about an aspect of the *iyashi* boom that resembles counseling and is aimed at people seeking to recover from physical or mental fatigue and regain their original vitality. Contributing to the healing fad, major booksellers often feature entire sections devoted to self-improvement and lifestyle-related books that explain how to heal or soothe the spirit. Among them are picture books aimed at adults and literature on the theme of “accepting ourselves just as we are.”

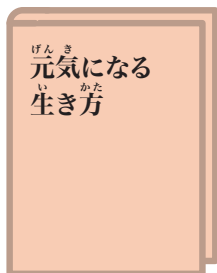


Class Ideas

***Questions**

1. 下の本のタイトルを、ミステリー小説の本と、いやしの本に分けてみましょう。

Let’s try categorizing the book titles below into mystery titles and books on healing.



- healing
- mystery

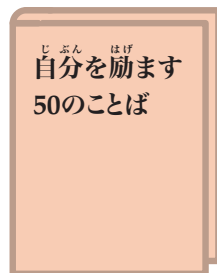
ヒント

元気→energy



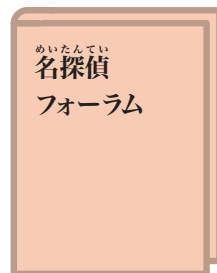
- healing
- mystery

スパイ→spy



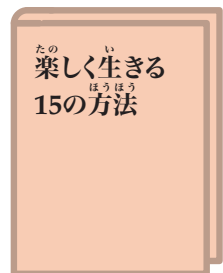
- healing
- mystery

励ます→encourage



- healing
- mystery

探偵→detective



- healing
- mystery

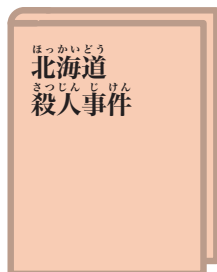
楽しく→happily



- healing
- mystery

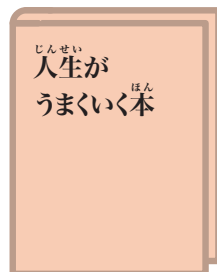
ヒント

犯人→culprit



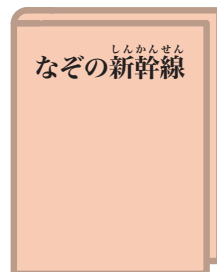
- healing
- mystery

殺人→murder



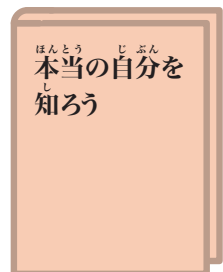
- healing
- mystery

人生→life



- healing
- mystery

なぞ→mystery



- healing
- mystery

本当の自分→real self

For the correct answers visit the web at: <http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/ce/ce04nletter.htm>

Reference

① *Iyashi*

Iyashi (“healing”) received the top award for Japanese neologisms and trend-setting words in 1999, when the governor of Wakayama prefecture, Nishiguchi Isamu planned and executed a unique local fair on the theme of *iyashi* in the Kumano district of the southern Kii Peninsula. The same year, the piano solo “Energy Flow,” by the well-known composer Sakamoto Ryuichi, was played during a television commercial for the energy drink Regain as a background tune “dedicated to everyone suffering from fatigue” and became a huge hit selling over 1.5 million copies. It is worth noting that the Regain energy drink also enjoyed great popularity in the late 1980s, at the height of the bubble economy, with another hit commercial featuring the song *Nijuyojikan tatakaemasuka* [“Can You Fight the 24-Hour Fight?”]

② *Iyashi* entertainers

The TV personality Igawa Haruka (<http://www.harukafan.net/>) was selected in a reader poll as the winner of the

“2002 *Iyashi* Entertainer Grand Prix” held by B20: NIKKEI NET for 20’s (<http://b20.nikkei.co.jp/>), a website run by Nihon Keizai Shinbun Corporation. What are known as “*iyashi*” entertainers are usually plump and have a quiet, gentle personality. They are the kind of people in whose presence others can relax and feel at ease.

③ Tanaka Koichi—the new *Iyashi* type (*Shukan Asahi*, 8 November 2002)

Tanaka Koichi, winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize for Chemistry, has been described by some television programs and weekly magazines as an example of the “new *iyashi*” type of personality. Many websites feature comments like: “He’s just an average middle-aged man you might find anywhere, and even though he received a Nobel Prize, he doesn’t make a big deal about it. The very sight of Tanaka is somehow heartwarming.” Tanaka, who always acts perfectly naturally and without pretense, seems to have a soothing effect on people today who suffer from stress.

2. ^{した}下は、^いい^{やし}系^{さい}サイトにある「^{しつれん}失恋^の傷^をい^{やし}たい」^{ひと}人のためのアドバイスです。日本語と英語を線でむすびましょう。ほかに、いい^{とく}特効薬[、]行動[、]おすすめグッズのアイデアがあつたらあげてみましょう。

Taken from an *iyashi* website, the advice that appears below is meant for “people who want to heal a broken heart.” Draw a line connecting the Japanese word with its counterpart in English. Also, try thinking up other ideas for effective remedies, activities, or helpful products.

① 特効薬

- 新しい恋人をつくる ●
- 時間 ●

① Effective remedies

- Time
- Find a new girlfriend/boyfriend

② 行動

- 運動 ●
- 部屋の模様替え ●
- 入浴 ●
- アロマセラピー ●
- 散歩 ●
- 旅行 ●
- 谷コンに参加する ●

② Activities

- Rearrange your room
- Take a bath
- Aroma therapy
- Take a trip or vacation
- Exercise
- Take a walk
- Attend a mixer (*gokon**) party

③ おすすめグッズ

- 入浴剤 ●
- ヒーリングCD ●
- アロマグッズ ●

③ Helpful products

- Bath salts or bubble bath
- Aroma products
- CDs featuring healing music

* abbreviation of *godo konpa*, a party usually arranged by two friends or acquaintances who invite a set number of both men and women, usually about six to ten people in all. The purpose of the party is to meet new people, have fun, or find a boyfriend or girlfriend.

※ Discussion points

1. 勘太は、心をいやす方法や生き方について書いた本を読むことはきらいだと言っています。あなたは、どう思いますか？
Kanta says that he doesn’t like to read books about how to soothe or heal the heart, or how to live. What do you think?

2. あなたは、体が疲れたとき、どうしますか。悩みがあるときは、どうしますか。
What do you do when you feel physically tired? How do you relax when there is something you are anxious about?