



Feature:

What's on the Minds of Japanese High School Students Today

Since 1997, the Japan Forum has held the Daily Lives of Japanese High School Students Photograph Contest annually, open to high school students in Japan.

The contest was organized as a way for Japanese students to describe, through photographs and in words, their daily lives and thoughts to their peers in other countries.

In preparing their entries to the contest, the participants are prompted to take a fresh look at their family and friends, to reexamine themselves through the discoveries they thus make, and on that basis to create and send a message to high school students overseas. Featuring selections from the entries to this year's contest, this issue of *The Japan Forum Newsletter* presents messages in two categories: messages to peers in other countries from the high school students who took the photographs and comments by the subjects of the photographs about their happiest, saddest, most irritating or most troubling recent experience.

We hope these brief glimpses of what occupies the minds of Japanese high school students will help readers identify with them as they strive to keep positive and get ahead while coping with interpersonal relations, apprehensions about the future, and other concerns common to high school students around the world.



The Way We Are —p. 8

アルバイトとお手伝い

Part-time Work and Helping at Home

A Day in the Life —p. 10

高校生のクラブ活動

Club Activities of High School Students

TJF News —p. 14

TJF Home Page—What's New?

At the ACTFL Convention

StarFestival Curriculum Package

The People Around Me

Accepting the Advice of Others

Probably the saddest thing is misunderstanding among friends. Somebody advised me: "You have to change yourself if you want to be able to get along with others." When I rebelled, saying that I didn't want to get along with anyone if I had to change myself, I was told, "then it is you who will be the biggest loser." I was really depressed, thinking that maybe there is no one who will accept me just as I am and still like me. But then—maybe I am pretty pitiful—I can't even accept the advice I get, and just reject everything. **【Hayashi Asako】**

Studying art



📷 Noto Meiko 📧 Hayashi Asako

In the cafeteria after school



📷 Yamamoto Kentarō 📧 Hara Hirofumi

My Girlfriend's Present

The greatest thing that's happened lately is the calendar my girlfriend gave me for my birthday present. Usually, the calendars you get are for the following year, but this one was a calendar of this year, with details of where we went and what we did each day so far. Reading through and remembering our good times was heartwarming and nostalgic.

My birthday this year was the first time I spent with my girlfriend. I felt an indescribable happiness and enjoyed it much more than ever before: It was so special I thought I might leak a tear or two. Just imagining that our relationship would ever go sour and come to an end scares me. She is the person I really don't want to lose right now.

【Hara Hirofumi】

Words Are Important

It always makes you feel good when somebody thanks you for something. I feel especially happy when someone tells me, "Thank you for always listening seriously to what I say." A simple, careless remark can sometimes hurt deeply, but an equally simple, unassuming expression of thanks can fill you with confidence and energy. Words are important. Among friends, of course it's important to know that we understand even what we don't actually say, but what you don't actually put into words, you won't completely understand. **【Uzawa Maya】**

With her dog



📷 Takeuchi Yuriko 📧 Uzawa Maya

The author is given at the end of each message. The photographer and name of the subject are identified under each photograph.

📷 : photographer 📧 : name of the subject

Finding It Hard to Get Along with My Parents

Recently, no matter what my parents say to me, I fly off the handle. It wasn't like this at all before, so I can't understand what has happened to me. Being like this is really awful. Maybe I'm taking out on my parents the stress I've been under lately. As usual, I'm probably the cause of my own difficulties, so I am going to try to do better from now on.

【Ogata Hiromi】

Helping out at the family's *rāmen* shop



Onodera Yūko S Ogata Hiromi

Sending an e-mail (on her cell phone)



Masagaki Aika S Sugawara Haruka

Encounter with Death

The saddest thing that happened to me lately was the death of my third-year junior high school homeroom teacher due to illness. All I could remember was the way she was always smiling, and I could not feel her death was real at all, so I was even laughing with my friends until just before the funeral. Then, when I actually saw her, lying there, tears poured down my cheeks and my mind went completely blank.

That was the first time a person close to me had died, and it really made me think about death—the terrible feeling of helplessness and frustration. Human beings die one day. Yet the days keep on coming and going. So, I began to think that I can't waste even a single second. I must live my life to the fullest. My teacher showed us that until the end of her life. It's so sad, but it's reality as well. Maybe because of this sadness I feel I can go on living. I feel full of gratitude to my teacher.

【Sugawara Haruka】

Snack in the classroom after school



Kondō Yumiko S Tsutsumi Yuka

The Importance of Communication

One of the realities of Japanese cities these days is that most people don't know who lives even two or three doors down from them. With things like the Internet becoming more widely used, I think it will get even easier for people to get things done without leaving their homes. With that kind of lifestyle, how can people learn to communicate with each other as human beings or appreciate the preciousness of life? I'm really worried that there'll be more and more people with fewer and fewer opportunities to interact with others, and therefore with little appreciation of other people's suffering. I'd like to communicate a lot more with the people around me. 【Tsutsumi Yuka】

On My Mind

Practicing the saxophone



© Mizoguchi Yūko S Kikuta Sayaka

We Are What We Make Ourselves

I think we have to work at developing individual character. Those who can't do that simply go along with trends or copy what others are doing. Even if you've been just going with the flow, once you discover something you like or you can really get into, your own personality will start to shine. **【Mizoguchi Yūko】**

What I'm Really Into These Days

Right now, what I am crazy about is a music-and-dance game called "Dance Dance Revolution." This is a computer game in which you dance according to what is shown on the screen. If you fall out of step, the "game-over" sign comes up very quickly. It's a lot of fun and good exercise as well. **【Tōgei Eri】**

Assignment for art class



© Tōgei Eri S Ashimine Ryōko

Worries Are Part of Life

I want my high school life to be the kind I can look back on after I grow up and remember all the good times I had. Although I have lots of problems and worries—about the future, about my friendships, about my lovelife—I think a life full of different experiences is more fun than just living a bland existence without anything happening at all, good or bad. **【Itō Miki】**

Refresh with a drink



© Itō Miki S Tanimoto Sachiko

What Hobby I Choose Is Up to Me

People think I'm strange when I tell them I like anime cartoons. They think I'm too old for that. But I think it is they who don't understand. Don't you think it's up to me to choose my own hobby? How can they tell me "You've picked the wrong hobby"? **【Sugihara Kenji】**

Heading off to his club meeting



© Sugihara Kenji S Satō Tetsurō

With his catch in hand



© Hirono Ken'ichi S Tsuchida Yōichi

Worried About the Environment

What troubles me lately is the changes I see in fishing areas. I've been fishing black bass since about four years ago, and I see more trash and shore-retaining construction projects that aren't really needed. The water is getting more and more polluted. I can't imagine what's in the heads of people who leave their garbage behind. If people keep on being that careless, we will not be able to fish very much longer. I never ever leave my trash behind. If every single person would change their attitude, the seashore would be a cleaner, tidier place. We are the ones who have to keep it clean so we can go on fishing. **【Tsuchida Yōichi】**

The Future of the Earth

Human beings are feeding off on the earth just like parasites and their population seems bound to increase until they exhaust all the earth's resources. These problems are the symbol and reflection of foolhardy human egoism completely oblivious of the way nature works. If we keep living this way, the earth will certainly perish, and in the not-so-distant future.

If we are told to go back to primitive lifestyles in order to protect natural environment, there is no way we can manage it, no matter how hard we try. What we need to do now is learn how to co-exist with nature. There must be a way to help both humans and nature. I bet I could find a way. I am still 17 years old, so I have the potential to do anything! **【Ono Mikiko】**

Her computer is a part of her life



© Yamamoto Naomi S Ono Mikiko

My Future

Singing at the school festival



© Iwasaki Tomoko S Ōta Kumi

I Want to be a Public Health Nurse

I really think I have been very lucky. I love and respect my family and they have given me plenty of love. I can do pretty much anything I want to do in my life. I guess I knew it before, but recently I realized from watching TV that there are an awful lot of people in the world who do not enjoy life like I do. There are children who don't have much longer to live, and children who give up what they want to do to support their families. I decided I can't just go on enjoying life for myself.

I want to be a public health nurse. I will join the Japan Overseas Cooperation Association and work to help the children suffering from disease. I hope I can share my happiness with them. **【Iwasaki Tomoko】**

Dreams for Children

What I dream about changes day to day, but now I think I want to have a job that will give “dreams to children.” The number of children is dwindling in Japan now, so the number of such jobs are also declining, but I myself have been lucky to have been brought up by adults who showed me what to think and dream about. When I become an adult I, too, will be able to give children dreams.

【Igarashi Yoshimi】

At the baseball tournament



© Igarashi Yoshimi S Onda Ayumi

My Future

I hope to become a designer or a singer—not a big-time professional singer, but the kind who sings occasionally in small theaters and clubs. If I am a designer, I want to make clothes that are simple and modern. I love art, so I want to be able to spend my time drawing and creating things. I also think it would be great to have a job in which I can use the three languages I know (Japanese, English and Korean).

【Han Yūjun】

Is Getting a Job Right Away All That Important?

The unemployment situation is very bad in Japan, and many university graduates are finding it difficult to find jobs. The number of young people who make a living as *furitā* (part-time casual workers) is rapidly growing.

At a CD shop



© Sueoka Miki S Nishi Junko

I don't think it's bad to be a *furitā*, if you take responsibility for yourself and have confidence in the way you live. I don't necessarily reject the conventional way of thinking of my parents' generation: that it's important to get a permanent job and settle down. But nowadays there is nothing to guarantee that “if you just get a permanent job and work hard you will be happy,” as was once the case. I can't be convinced that it's worthwhile giving up all my dreams just to get a stable life. I don't know whether this just goes to show that I don't know how tough the world really is, or that values are just undergoing big changes from the time our parents were young.

【Sueoka Miki】

With her younger brother



© Tatebe Onka S Han Yūjun

Me working on my laptop computer. I'm into computers. I do consulting work by computer. I'm really interested in artificial intelligence. My dream for the future is to do research.

【Matthew Haddox】



This is me playing the flute in the family room. I love playing the flute in my pajamas in this room. Dream: To play the flute on the moon!

【Venessa Lynn Maltin】



Letters from Abroad

We received letters from students of Marist Sisters' College in Sydney, Australia, who saw *The Way We Are 1998*,* the collection of photographs from the 1998 contest. At the bottom are some of the photographs sent by students of Lick-Wilmerding High School, who took them after they saw *The Way We Are* booklet in their Japanese-language class.

*To obtain copies of *The Way We Are*, send inquiries to forum@tjf.or.jp. One copy is ¥1,000 plus postage.

To Ohashi,

You are really into computers, aren't you? I love computers as well. We used to have access to the Internet but we stopped it because all I did was look up sports! It didn't take me by surprise that Japanese guys enjoy computers because that's common down here in Australia as well. Do you just use the Net or do you enjoy playing games as well? What do you search for on the Internet? Sports? Movies? I enjoy looking at sports, especially rugby league!

Well, I'm happy that you are doing what you love most and I hope you do become a system engineer when you are older. Do guys in Japan usually go into the computer and technology field for work or are you just unique?

Best wishes & Merry Christmas from the down under!

Arda より

To Naoki Shibano,

I find it interesting that you enjoy hard rock music and you play the electric guitar. I like all types of music including hard rock. Have you heard of the American bands "Korn" and "Marilyn Manson"? I like their music! I only enjoy listening to music. I don't like to play instruments at all. When I was younger, I used to play the piano, but I quit because I hated it so much.

Good luck in your studies. I hope you will be able to become a teacher. At the rate of your study, I'm pretty sure you will be a teacher. Don't forget to relax from time to time and don't stress out too much! Bye,

From Chantele

To Masami,

I think that it's really great that you want to own your own boutique and make your own clothes. From the picture that you have sent, I can tell that you are very much into the fashion business and you seem very good at it. I also like fashion and shopping very much. I go shopping every week and I have to buy something every time I go. I hope that one day I can get to buy your clothes here in Australia.

From Cathy

Dear ひろよ ころご

How is school in Japan? Very hard? In Australia school is okay. Not too bad. You said you are preparing for your university entrance exams. がんばってね!! I hope that you get the marks that you want. Never give up and you can do it!! I really agree with your quote "Don't rush. Just do what can be done today." That is true. I have a quote for you: "I'll think about it tomorrow, because tomorrow is another day."

From Vanessa

Family roomにフルーツを置いて
いるところです。床は family
roomに pajamaを着て
フルーツを置く
のが"大女子"です。



Sometimes when I'm bored I pull silly faces. This time I laughed so hard my sides hurt. Future: I want to become a scientist and win the Nobel Prize.

【Alison Sumiko】

ときどき、とてもつまらないとき、
おかしなかおをしています。
おなかかいたいくなるほど
わらいました。