



# Takarabako

たからばこ

December 2004 No. 2



## Feature

### コンビニ Konbini

Convenience Stores: "Can't Live Without Them!?"



photo: 7-Eleven Japan



photo: TJF Photo Data Bank

## Takarabako Website Opens!

This publication is available via the Takarabako website in both online book and PDF formats. When necessary, worksheets and photographs published in Takarabako will be provided at this site in large-format size for easy use in the classroom. Please be on the lookout for these valuable resources.

▷ [www.tjf.or.jp/takarabako/](http://www.tjf.or.jp/takarabako/)

This site is intended as a "treasure chest" in the true sense of the word, offering in English, on a quarterly basis, not only TJF's news but other information and resources useful for teachers engaged in Japanese language education, education for understanding Japan, and global education at primary and secondary schools.

## The Place to Meet Young People from Many Different Countries Deai Photo Essay Cafe Website Opens!

▷ [www.tjf.or.jp/photoessaycafe](http://www.tjf.or.jp/photoessaycafe)

The Deai Photo Essay Cafe is a place where students, who have "encountered" the Japanese high school students introduced with photos and text through the photo resource *Deai: The Lives of Seven Japanese High School Students*, can present a photo essay of their own. Already posted on the site are works by high school students who cooperated with TJF monitors testing this new program. These lively works offer candid glimpses of high school students in a variety of countries. Please visit the site and take a look.

With further improvements on the site, we hope to make it possible for visitors to the Cafe to send in comments on the works of others and about themselves in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean. We hope this will provide a place where young people can deepen their understanding of one another through photo essays they create themselves.

Entries may be submitted until end of March 2005. We look forward to receiving your entry. From among those who submit entries, seven students will be chosen to visit Japan.

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### Top page

Entry forms, as well as FAQs and sample flow charts explaining how to create photo essays are currently available on the Deai Photo Essay Cafe Website. Please feel free to contact us via e-mail ([photoessaycafe@tjf.or.jp](mailto:photoessaycafe@tjf.or.jp)) if you have any other questions.

### Photo Essays from Around the World

Examples of photo essays produced by project monitors can be found here. Messages submitted in languages other than Japanese will as a rule be accompanied by a Japanese version. Comments by the students and instructors who made these photo essays can be quite helpful.



# コンビニ

Konbini

## Convenience Stores: Can't Live Without Them!?

▶▶▶ <http://www.tjf.or.jp/takarabako/index.htm>



Four pages of *Takarabako* will be devoted to introducing and providing a wide variety of resources and information, mainly about the lives and culture of Japanese young people. Three pages will present various ideas and teaching plans for using these materials in the classroom. In this issue we take up convenience stores.



Photo: 7-Eleven Japan

“It’s the middle of the night and I’m starving.” “Oh, no, there’s a run in my pantyhose!” “I’m sleeping over at a friend’s house today, but forgot my toothbrush.” “I’m dying for something sweet.” “I’m bored!” Convenience stores, called *konbini* for short, answer all these needs.

Thirty years have passed since *konbini* first appeared in Japan as shops providing food and daily sundries at any time, anywhere. Today, they have become an established part of people’s lives.

Currently, there are approximately 40,000 *konbini* in Japan. Total *konbini* sales amount to 7 trillion yen. 7-Eleven, which boasts the highest sales in the industry, has 10,000 stores all over Japan, each store serving an average of 1,000 customers per day. This means that one in every ten Japanese citizens shops at a 7-Eleven every day.

*Konbini* continue to evolve, developing and offering more and more new services.

### The Three Conveniences of Konbini



#### Time!

Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Open even on New Year’s Day, through Golden Week, and Obon.



#### Location!

Located close to residential areas, work and school commutes, and in business districts.



#### Product Selection and Various Services!

Necessities of everyday life are all available, not limited to food and daily sundries, but also cosmetics, underwear, packing rope, and black ties for funerals. *Konbini* offer a variety of services as well. Parcel delivery service; film processing; air ticket reservations; photocopying; fax service; video game software downloads; and ATM service. Payment of electricity, gas, and water utility, and telephone bills, as well as insurance premiums can all be made at *konbini*. It is becoming increasingly common to use *konbini* for payment and pick-up of tickets and goods reserved or purchased online via computer or cell phone.

# I didn't know that!

## The History of Konbini

The history of convenience stores began in 1927 in Texas, U.S.A. when an Oak Cliff ice seller began selling bread and milk in response to customers' requests. This later developed into Southland, the operator of the 7-Eleven chain. In Japan, Ito Yokado signed a licensing contract with Southland and acquired their expertise while developing product selection and store layout that fit the needs of Japanese customers. In 1974, Japan's first 7-Eleven opened in Toyosu (Koto Ward, Tokyo).

There were 10,554 7-Eleven's in Japan as of September 2004, the largest number in the world. The United States came in second at 5,781 stores, while Taiwan had 3,550 stores, Thailand 2,525, and Korea 1,272 as of April 2004.



Photo: 7-Eleven Japan

## The POS System Supporting Konbini

The average *konbini* covers an area of about 100 square meters. The key lies in how effectively sought-after daily sundries can be displayed in limited space. *Konbini* have adopted the POS (Point-of-Sale) system to manage individual stores and entire chains, and they use it to plan marketing campaigns and develop product selections that fit their customers' preferences.

Whenever a barcode is scanned at the cash register, the POS system records the details of the sales' "when, what, and how many." The *konbini*'s overwhelming sales strength originates in the data collected from this system. *Konbini* do not merely sell products, but serve as nodes in a network, collaborating with manufacturers on product development and creating new distribution systems that take even things like storage temperature and delivery frequency into account.



Photo: 7-Eleven Japan

How is the data actually collected? When a customer goes to the checkout counter, the clerk guesses the customer's age from his or her appearance. After the product price has been fed into the cash register, the clerk presses the "customer base" key. At one chain store, a light blue button stands for "male," a pink button "female," and five buttons—"12" for under 12, "19" for 13-19, "29" for 20-29, "49" for 30-49, and "50" for 50 and over—each stand for age groups. Since a massive amount of data is collected at chain headquarters, it is possible to get a general sense of product trends even though the data is based on the estimated ages of *konbini* customers.

## Konbini ATMs a Hit

There has been a sharp increase in the number of ATM users at *konbini*. Three major companies (including IY Bank), which operate and manage *konbini* ATMs, counted a total of 280 million transactions in the 2003 fiscal year, five times that for the 2001 fiscal year. By the end of FY 2003, the number of ATMs in *konbini* was 15,987, twice the number in FY 2001. *Konbini* have come to assert their usefulness not only as places to shop, but also as places to withdraw money and settle accounts.



Photo: 7-Eleven Japan

## Development of Products

By collecting and analyzing sales data, *konbini* work with top manufacturers to develop products that reflect customers' views on quality and food preferences. *Konbini* take into account health and safety concerns, avoiding the use of preservatives and synthetic food dyes, and there are a wide variety of products, starting with *onigiri* and sandwiches. Over half the sales at 7-Eleven are of original 7-Eleven products.



Photo: 7-Eleven Japan

## The Appeal of the Onigiri

7-Eleven sales for the 2003 fiscal year was 2.343 trillion yen, accounting for approximately 30 percent of the 7 trillion yen total in sales of the entire *konbini* industry. About 30 percent of these sales are comprised of fast food such as *bento*, *onigiri*, and bread/pastries. 7-Eleven's total sales of fast food is 670 billion yen, twice that of food-service industry giant McDonald's, which makes approximately 300 billion yen.

In the 2003 fiscal year, 7-Eleven sold 1.039 billion *onigiri*, which comes out to approximately 2.84 million *onigiri* per day. This is equivalent to 8.2 *onigiri* per year for every Japanese citizen (127 million people). Recently, gourmet *onigiri* such as those made with *ikura* (salmon roe) filling or wrapped in *washi* (Japanese paper) packaging have become a big hit, accounting for nearly 20 percent of *onigiri* sales despite their higher price, at around 180 yen.

## Savoring the Seasons at Konbini

Especially in urban areas, we can get a sense of the seasons through the selection of products offered at *konbini* and their advertisements. For New Year's, you can get New Year's cards and *osechi* traditional-style foods

and in March, *hina arare* sweets. In May, *koinobori* carp streamers festoon the shop. As summer nears, they offer *ochugen* seasonal gifts, cool-weather fare like *hiyashi chuka* (chilled ramen), and refreshments like *kakigori* shaved ice. In the fall there is *matsutake gohan* (rice steamed with *matsutake* mushrooms) and *tsukimi dango* ("moon-viewing" *dango*), and in the winter there is *oden* (hot *oden* ingredients), *nikuman* (Chinese-style meat pies), Christmas cake, and *toshikoshi soba* (New Year's Eve *soba*).



Photo: 7-Eleven Japan

## Answer on page Feature-4

### Quiz 1

#### A-い

The most popular *konbini* products are A (*obento*, *onigiri*, sandwiches). It is effective to display them facing the entrance where customers can easily spot them.

#### B-え

When you buy a *bento*, you're certainly going to want to buy a drink. If B (soft drinks) are displayed next to *bento*, you'll naturally be inclined to buy a drink as well.

#### C-お

The store looks very lively if C (magazines) are displayed so that their covers can be seen from outside the store. Furthermore, the sight of people browsing through magazines gives the appearance of a busy store, pulling more people in. A well-patronized store is less vulnerable to crime in the late-night hours.



Photo: TJF

#### D-う

D (gum, candy) is located by the check-out counter. The checkout counter is an area everyone passes. It's a prime location for goods that customers buy on impulse as they wait their turn at the cash register.

#### E-あ

Fast food prepared right in the store is displayed next to the cash register, the most common of which are E (croquettes, frankfurters). Soft drinks and smoothies (frozen drinks) are also popular. In the winter, piping hot *oden* and *nikuman*, with their delicious smells, are served right at the counter, making them hard to resist.

### Quiz 2

According to one survey,\* the top ten *onigiri* ranking is as follows.

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 tuna-mayonnaise (41.2%) | 6 torigomoku (18.2%) |
| 2 salmon (40.4%)          | 7 tarako (17.1%)     |
| 3 mentaiko (36.4%)        | 8 takana (15.9%)     |
| 4 ume (25.2%)             | 8 ikura (15.9%)      |
| 5 konbu (22.4%)           | 10 okaka (11.8%)     |

The top three *onigiri* collected about the same number of votes, but tuna-mayonnaise is particularly popular among young people. Among people in their forties, it accounted for 27.9 percent of the vote, while over half of the people in their twenties said it was their favorite. On the other hand, *mentaiko* is popular among middle-aged people and seniors; while it gathered only 19 percent of the teenage vote, 44.2 percent of those in their forties declared it the best. Salmon are widely popular among all ages.

\* "Survey on Konbini Onigiri"

A survey conducted on the Internet with 488 subjects in their teens to their sixties. Survey Period: April 28 to May 6, 2004 Source: "Wish Open Report" by Index Digital Co., Ltd.

## Quiz 1 Secrets of the Store

There are approximately 2,500 types of products sold at *konbini* in a space smaller than 100 square meters. That's a lot of goods, and they aren't just displayed in a random manner.

Popular products are carefully and exclusively selected on the basis of data collected from the POS system. Unpopular products are relentlessly removed, and in one year, about 70 percent of the products are said to be replaced. The shelf height and product displays are based on human engineering rules, and advanced research on customer behavior patterns is used to develop new marketing strategies.

Take a look at the map below. Which products A-E are sold in sections あ-お? Think about the reasons why they are displayed where they are.

- A *obento*, *onigiri*, sandwiches
- B soft drinks
- C magazines
- D gum, candy
- E croquettes, frankfurters



## Quiz 2 What's the Most Popular Onigiri?

Below are the ten most popular *konbini* *onigiri*. Try putting them in order from one to ten, one being the most popular.



*ikura* (salmon roe)



*ume* (sour pickled plum)



*konbu* (kelp)



*tori gomoku* (chicken pilaf)



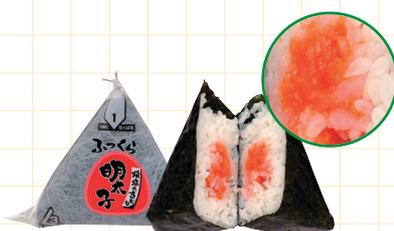
*takana* (leaf mustard)



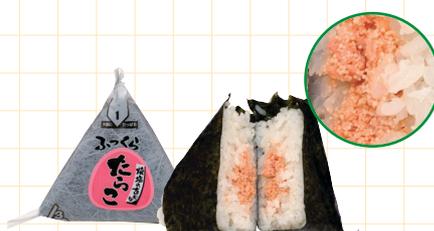
*okaka* (shaved bonito)



tuna-mayonnaise



*mentaiko* (spicy cod roe)



*tarako* (cod roe)



*shake* (salmon)

Photos: Hongo Jin

# Activities

(Activity supervisor: Murano Ryoko, Professor, Gakushuin University)

All photos used in this activity may be downloaded from the TJF Photo Data Bank. Search using the keyword: *konbini*, or convenience store.  
TJF Photo Data Bank > [http://databank.tjf.or.jp/intro\\_e.html](http://databank.tjf.or.jp/intro_e.html)

## Objectives

- ❖ To gain basic information about Japanese *konbini*.
- ❖ To gain an understanding of Japanese daily life from hints provided by the products and services available at Japanese *konbini*. Compare and contrast with convenience stores in your own country, and consider the reasons for these similarities and differences.
- ❖ To learn basic *konbini*-related terms and Japanese expressions necessary in making comparisons and giving reasons as well as in looking for products you want or asking where you can find them.

## Time required

Two class periods

## Topics of possible instruction

### Vocabulary:

コンビニ、おにぎり、おべんとう、のみもの、ぶんぼうぐ、はブラシ、シャンプー、ざつし

### Function:

- Beginners
- ▶ Asking if a product is sold in the store  
(Product) ありますか。  
はい、あります。
  - ▶ Asking where the product is located  
(Product) どこですか。  
(Place) にあります。
  - ▶ Asking where to find a product not in the store  
どこでうっていますか。  
(Product) は (place) でうっています。
  - ▶ Making comparisons  
日本のコンビニは、(place) のコンビニより (adjective) です。  
日本のコンビニには (product) はありませんが、  
(product) はあります。  
日本も (place) も、コンビニに (product) があります。
- Intermediate
- ▶ Giving reasons  
(Reason) からです／からだとおもいます。

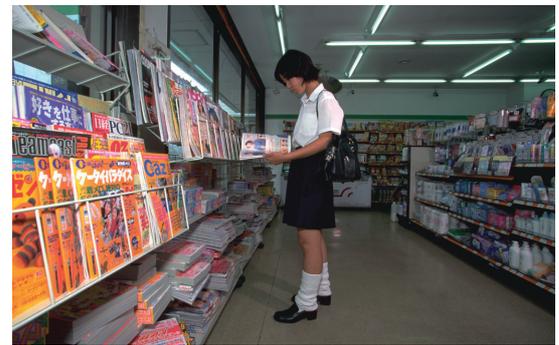
## ● Procedure

### Period 1

1. きょうは、日本人にとって、とても convenient なものをしょうかいします。“Today, we will discuss something that is convenient for Japanese.”

Write “コンビニ” on the board, and have students guess what it means. Provide hints if necessary. (E.g., パーソナルコンピュータ is abbreviated to パソコン; the ビ sound is actually a “v”; the topic in question is “convenient,” etc.) Once students come up with the correct answer, stir their curiosity about Japanese *konbini* by asking them what convenience stores mean to them, and what they imagine a Japanese *konbini* to be like.

2. Show *konbini*-related photos from *Deai* and *The Way We Are* and ask students what the subjects are doing in these photos. Using Japanese appropriate for students' Japanese language level, practice and review.



Photos: TJF Photo Data Bank

### Possible student responses

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| かいものをしています。   | しょうひんをならべています。 |
| のみものをえらんでいます。 | おにぎりをならべています。  |
| ざつしをよんでいます。   | おべんとうをかいました。   |
| アルバイトをしています。  |                |

### Key point

Help students realize that *konbini* are an important part of Japanese high school students' lives.

3. Briefly explain what kinds of products and services *konbini* offer, and how products may change with the seasons. Show photos and ask students to match them with the seasons. If possible have them give a reason (e.g., ははのひだから、5月です。クリスマス／ねんがじょうだから、12月です。).



A B Photos: TJF Photo Data Bank

Match illustrations A through D with the correct season.

はる	A		B	
なつ				
あき	C		D	
ふゆ				

Illustrations: Maeda Sumiko

**Key point**

Students should look for hints in words on signs in the photos.

**Key point**

Have students respond in Japanese appropriate for their language level. Teachers should provide additional explanations about events and holidays in English.

<p>ははの日 <b>Mother's Day</b>: A day celebrated on the second Sunday of May to express gratitude to mothers. Many people give their mothers carnations on this day. ⇒ Photo A</p> <p>クリスマスケーキ <b>Christmas cake</b>: Christmas takes the form of a popular year-end celebration in Japan today. Stores and shopping arcades are festooned with Christmas trees and other decorations. ⇒ Photo B</p> <p>ねんがじょう: New Year's cards that are sent out in celebration of the new year. ⇒ Photo B</p> <p>かきごおり: Shaved ice, served with syrup, adzuki-bean sauce or other topping. ⇒ Illustration A</p> <p>としこしそば: On New Year's Eve, many Japanese eat <i>soba</i> (buckwheat) noodles. Called <i>toshikoshi soba</i> (year-crossing noodles), these noodles symbolize the hope that the family's good fortunes will continue long—like the noodles—throughout the year to come. ⇒ Illustration B</p> <p>つきみだんご: <i>Dango</i> (rice-flour dumplings) made for "moon viewing" in the fall. ⇒ Illustration C</p> <p>ひなあられ: Sweetened puffed rice made as an offering on Doll Festival, a festival for girls held on the third of March. ⇒ Illustration D</p>
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**4. Konbini Quiz**

(1) **Secrets of the Store** (Feature-4). When using Japanese for this quiz, exchanges may include the following. Write A through E on the board, and have students match corresponding combinations.

**E.g.**

(Product)は どこですか/どこにありますか。

(Place)に あります。(Reason) からです。

Possible Answers

A: 入りぐちの しょうめん It faces the entrance.

(Reason) よく みえる からです。Because it can be easily spotted.

B: おべんとうの よこ Next to *obento*

(Reason) おべんとうと いっしょに かうからです。Because people buy it with *obento*.

C: まどの ちかく Near the window

(Reason) きれいだからです/にぎやかだからです。Because it's attractive. / Because it looks lively.

D: レジの まえ In front of the checkout counter

(Reason) レジを まっている あいだに かう からです。Because people buy it while waiting for their turn.

E: レジの そば Near the checkout counter

(Reason) あつい からです。Because it is hot.

**(2) What's the Most Popular Onigiri?** (Feature-4)

After the quiz, you can use the following sentences for a true-or-false quiz.

- ① わかい人は ツナマヨネーズより めんたいこおにぎりの ほうが すきです。  
Young people like *mentaiko onigiri* more than tuna-mayonnaise *onigiri*. (False)
- ② みんな しゃけおにぎりが すき です。  
Everybody likes salmon *onigiri*. (True)
- ③ 10代の人 は めんたいこおにぎりが あまり すきでは ありません。  
Teenagers don't care for *mentaiko onigiri*. (True)

**5. For homework, distribute the article on *konbini* (Feature-1-3).**

**Period 2**

Explain the objective: Today, based on the *konbini* reading, we will discuss Japanese *konbini* and compare them with convenience stores in our country.

1. Have students brainstorm and freely identify things they noticed in the reading and photos.
2. Divide students into groups of four or five, and have each group select a secretary and a presenter. Each group will then discuss the similarities and differences between Japanese *konbini* and convenience stores in their own country, and make a Venn diagram worksheet and fill it in (a sample worksheet can be found at the Takarabako website).

**Key point**

In countries where there are no convenience stores, students can discuss where they buy the products or receive the services that are available in Japanese *konbini*, and think about what their *konbini* equivalents would be.

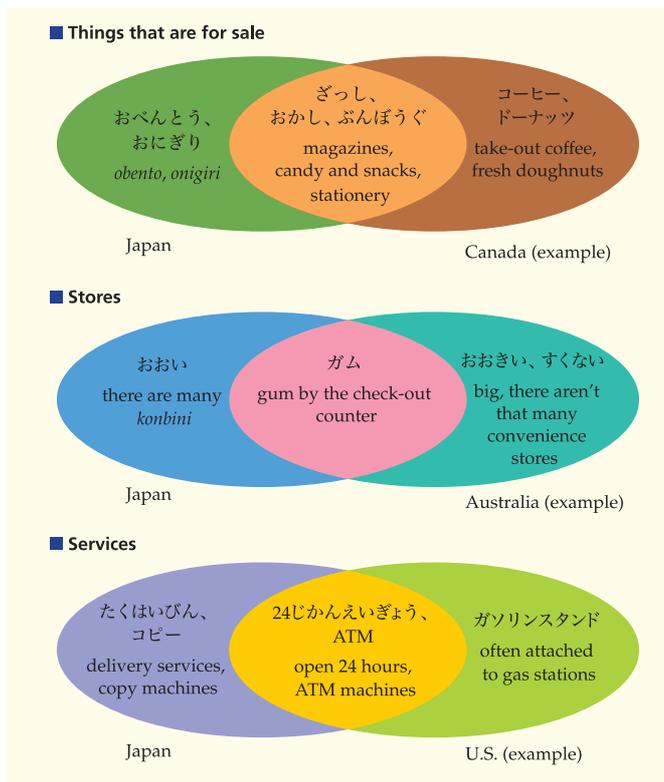
3. Using the Japanese words that groups have used to fill out their worksheets, have each group present their findings.

**Key point**

Depending on the students' Japanese language level, have them

present in Japanese as much as possible, allowing them to provide additional explanations in English if necessary.

E.g.



- ▶ (日本)のコンビニには、(おべんとう)があります。  
Japanese convenience stores sell *obento*.
- ▶ (カナダ)のコンビニには、(おべんとう)は ありませんが、(ドーナツ)は あります。  
Convenience stores in Canada do not sell *obento*, but they do sell donuts.

\*うっています、おいであります may be used depending on the situation and the students' language level.

- ▶ その理由は、(おべんとうをかう人がおおい/じぶんでりょうりをしない人がおおい)からです/からだとおもいます。  
I think it is because there are a lot of people who buy *obento*/there are many people who do not cook at home.
- ▶ (日本)のコンビニは、(オーストラリア)のコンビニより、(小さい)です。  
Japanese convenience stores are smaller than convenience stores in Australia.
- ▶ (オーストラリア)のコンビニは、(日本)のコンビニより、(すくない)です。  
There are fewer convenience stores in Australia than in Japan.
- ▶ (日本)も (カナダ)も、コンビニに ぎっしが あります。  
Convenience stores in both Japan and Canada sell magazines.

4. To wrap-up, discuss in English the differences in the meaning of the word "convenience" from culture to culture, and the fact that the convenience store, though originally from the United States, has been tailored to the needs of local cultures.

**Key point**

Pursue the themes raised in the group presentations, and if necessary, ask students to consider what products/services are available in their own country but not in Japan, and give reasons.

Where are the products/services that are available in Japanese *konbini* but not in their own convenience stores provided in their own country? What products are absolutely necessary in any culture? Ask students questions as necessary.

E.g.

- ▶ (日本)のコンビニでは(product)を かうことが できますが、あなたの 国には どうですか。どこで うっていますか。  
(Product)は (place)で うっています。  
In Japanese *konbini*, one can buy such-and-such, but how about in your country? Where do you buy such-and-such? We buy such-and-such at (place).

## Other Activities/Expansion

Suppose that each group is in charge of planning new products and services for convenience stores in their own country. They must make a presentation to the class. It can be conducted in a poster session format using an advertisement poster (e.g., lunch delivery, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., \$6, Phone 03-1234-5678). Have the class vote for the best idea.

**E.g. of Japanese to be used**

Stating opinions, making suggestions

- 1 あたらしい サービスを しましょう。(Product)を うりましょう。  
Let's offer a new service./Let's sell (product).
  - 2 わたしたちの コンビニで、あたらしい サービスを はじめたいと おもいます。/あたらしい しょうひんを うりたいと おもいます。  
We want to start a new service at convenience stores./We want to sell a new product.
  - 3 わたしたちの コンビニで (verb)たら どうでしょうか。  
How about (verb)-ing at our convenience store.
- Give reasons
- 4 その りゆうは (reason) です。  
Because (reason).

**Onigiri Contest:** Using ingredients available in your own country, what kinds of *onigiri* can you make? (Show students the list of *onigiri* fillings (Feature-4) for ideas.)

**Konbini** are a major part of high school students' lives because many of them work in *konbini* part-time. Compare wages and work hours. Refer to the TJF website <http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/ge/ge15okozukai.htm>

**Debate** the pros and cons of local stores turning into chain. In preparation for the debate, each group may fill out a form like the one below.

	Convenience Stores	Independent Stores
ちようしょ Strengths	24じかん あいている Open 24 hours たくさん しょうひんが ある Many products ちかい Easy to access	ひとつの しょうひんの しゅるいが おおい Many different kinds of the same product
たんしょ Weaknesses	ねだんが たかい Prices are high しょうひんが すぐ かわる Product selection changes often	あいている じかんが みじかい Store hours are short