



Takarabako

たからばこ

December 2005 No. 6



Feature

アキバから、世界へ！

From Akiba to the World!

Striving to Become
a Top Digital Content Hub



Deai Photo Essay Cafe: 14 High School Students, Headed for Okinawa

The seven students chosen from the 157 persons who submitted photo essays to the Deai Photo Essay Cafe visited Japan November 17 through 27. Along with the seven students of the Japan-side team, they went to Okinawa's Izena Island, home of Deai Photo Resource student Tamaki Shun'ichi, where they worked on joint photo essay projects. Returning to Tokyo, the seven

visitors stayed with the families of the Japanese students and attended classes at their high schools. (Details of their schedule may be found on the TJF website.)

What kinds of encounters did the students have during the program? Please have a look at the website for their photo essays.

▷<http://www.tjf.or.jp/photoessaycafe/>

The 14 students describe themselves

- Seven students from overseas
- Seven students of the Japan-side team



Ko Soo

17, Second year at Sehwa High School (Jeju, Korea)
I am always smiling. Well, maybe not always; but I am a happy person.



Abby

16, Year 11 at Dandenong High School (Victoria, Australia)
I am a pretty happy, easygoing girl and I love shopping, listening to music, going to the beach and hanging out with my friends.



Baiyun

17, Second year at Changchun Korean Secondary School (Jilin, China)
In Japan I want to experience the life of an ordinary high school student like myself.



Rosie

17, Year 13 at King Edward VII School (Sheffield, UK)
My hobbies are quite varied, I like going out with my friends, reading, films and theatre.



Malee

17, Year 12 at Menasha High School (Wisconsin, USA)
I would love to travel the world. Traveling would allow me to be more open-minded and have the chance to experience other cultures.



Paul

18, formerly Durango High School (Nevada, USA)
My hobbies are tennis, partying, driving fast, and eating sushi.



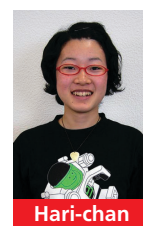
Kensuke

17, Second year at Yokohama Commercial High School
I love music and dance. I'm hoping to get a job in something related to fashion.



Vicki

14, Year 10 at Horowhenua School (Levin, NZ)
My Mum and Dad are from China. I was born in New Zealand, so was my brother. I speak Chinese and English, both fluently. I love my country.



Hari-chan

17, Second year at Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin High School
Since fifth grade in elementary school I have been a reporter for the *Yomiuri shinbun's* Junior Press. I like making things with my hands.



Maya

17, Third year at Tokyo University of Agriculture Daiichi High School
I'm a member of the photography club at my school. I love shopping and the Okinawan rock band Orange Range.



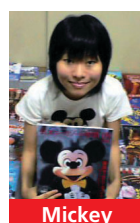
Kin-chan

16, Second year of Kanagawa Prefectural Senior High School of Foreign Studies
I came to Japan from China when I was nine years old. I love languages and speak Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.



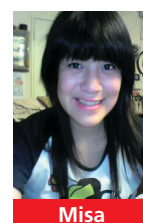
Ko-chan

17, Second year of Kanagawa Prefectural Senior High School of Foreign Studies
My hobby is playing the saxophone. I am studying Chinese.



Mickey

17, Freshman at Yokohama Commercial High School
I am a huge Disney fan. I also love English.



Misa

16, Freshman at Yokohama Commercial High School
I am active in the cooking club at school. I want to become a Japanese language teacher.

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



Four pages of *Takarabako* will be devoted to introducing and providing resources and information, mainly about the lives and culture of Japanese young people. Three pages will present ideas and teaching plans for using these materials in the classroom. In this issue we will take a look at Akihabara, which evolved from an electric parts retail district to an *otaku* mecca, and is now becoming a major hub of the IT industry.

Basic Akiba Information



What is Akiba?

Akiba is the nickname of Akihabara, the commercial area of approximately 500 meters square centered on Akihabara station (Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo) on the JR train line. There are roughly 600 shops of various sizes that carry household appliances, audio equipment, computers, and electronics parts, packed with customers from both

Japan and abroad. Recently, stores specializing in computer-game software and DVD's, as well as *anime*-related paraphernalia and character figurines targeting respective *mania* (enthusiasts) have been attracting attention.

JR Akihabara station is about five minutes by train from Tokyo Station on the Yamanote line.

History

Electrical parts district → household appliance district → computer district
→ *otaku* mecca → major IT industry hub

1945-1954 (Showa Twenties)

□ The location of electrical parts wholesalers during the first decade following the end of World War II, Akihabara attracted retailers from various parts of the country with its low prices and easy accessibility by train. In the days when it became popular to build radios by hand at home and vacuum tubes were in high demand, street vendors selling radio parts gathered in Akihabara. With prohibition of open-air markets by the Allied Occupation in 1949, the vendors moved to spots under the train overpasses and in nearby buildings. This was the beginning of today's Akihabara.

1955-1964 (Showa Thirties)

□ Black and white televisions, electric-powered refrigerators, and electric washing machines, the so-called three sacred treasures of modern convenience, became symbols of the comfortable life. The number of wholesalers and retailers of household appliances in Akihabara increased.

1965-1974 (Showa Forties)

□ By 1970, 91.7 percent of Japanese households owned a black and white television set. Then color television was introduced, and the color television became one of the "new three sacred treasures," along with the air conditioner and automobile. The rapid economic growth period kicked off an era of mass production and mass consumption. As the needs of consumers diversified, household appliance stores in Akihabara grew bigger, and many new buildings were built.

1975-1984 (Showa Fifties)

□ Japan's first "maikon" (personal computer) store opened in 1976, and the number of such stores steadily rose thereafter. Two oil crises (in 1973 and 1979) and the deterioration of the environment encouraged conservation and energy-saving. The label "Made in Japan" became a symbol of high-quality electric and electronics products, and tourists and businessmen from overseas began to shop

in Akihabara for Walkman portable stereos and household appliances to take home as gifts.

1985-1989 (Showa Sixties)

□ Audio-visual equipment such as VCRs and CD players, as well as information-related household appliances including word processors and cordless telephones became a huge hit. With the burgeoning of the bubble economy, even expensive products sold quickly.

1990-2005 (Heisei)

□ The appearance of the Windows computer set off the personal computer boom and stores specializing in personal computers (PCs) opened in Akihabara. In 1994, sales of PC-related products surpassed that of other household appliances, thus making Akihabara into a center of the PC retail market.

□ Mass retailers and discount stores carrying household appliances and computers opened in city centers like Shinjuku and Ikebukuro, and the suburbs. Akihabara lost its appeal as a unique electronics district where products were available for lower-than-market prices, and failed to keep customers.

□ There were many computer game fans among computer users, and these fans were also enthusiasts of the *anime* and *manga* related to these games. Although computer sales leveled off, sales of game software along with *anime* and *manga* goods continued going strong, and from around 1997, the number of stores carrying *manga*, fanzines, *anime* paraphernalia, figurines, and DVD software increased. Because of the many large-scale stores with wide selections of products and smaller stores carrying rare products with appeal to hobbyists, many *otaku* began to gather in Akihabara. Signs and posters depicting game and *anime* characters were found all over the area. Akihabara became an *otaku* hub.

□ With the redevelopment of the JR Akihabara station area, there is great hope that Akihabara will become a major hub of the IT industry, serving as a source of cutting edge technology and Japanese software to the rest of the world.

Source: Akihabara Electrical Town Organization Website (<http://www.akiba.or.jp/>)

Akiba Map

A. Main Street Area

Large-scale stores selling household appliances and computers, game software and DVD's, and *manga*- and *anime*-related goods line both sides of the main street in Akiba. On Sundays and holidays, the road is closed off to vehicles.



Main Street



PC store



Electronic parts on display

B. Electronics District Area

The area just outside the JR Akihabara Station Denkigai (Electronics District) Exit. Underneath the overpass are stores selling electronic parts reminiscent of the stores in the immediate postwar era. There are also many duty-free shops catering to tourists from overseas. Of the shops in the Radio Kaikan building, which has been around for a long time, the majority once sold electric parts. With the passing of time, most stores carried household appliances and computers, and now, stores specializing in figurines and fanzines occupy most of the building.



Duty-free shop

Akiba, the Otaku Mecca

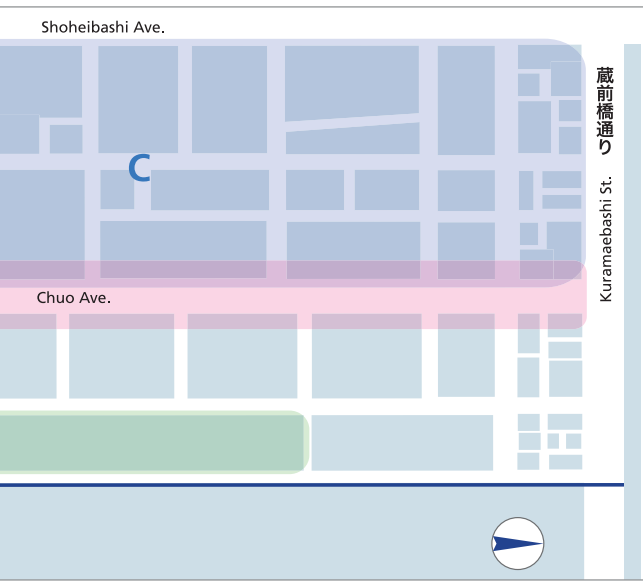
Otaku [オタク]

Akihabara today is called Otaku Town. But what exactly is *otaku*? Its original usage is as a slightly honorific word used to address someone with whom one is not very familiar. In the early 1980s, the custom among *anime* and science fiction buffs of calling each other "otaku," morphed into a term referring to passionate fans of *anime*, live-action "special effects" TV dramas, *manga*, and/or computer games. Ever since this term was appropriated for this usage, there has been a biased perception of *otaku* as being introverted, gloomy, lacking in sociability, and exhibiting poor taste in clothes.

Today, however, *anime* and *manga* have become firmly estab-

lished as widely popular genres especially among youth, and it is difficult to come up with a typical *otaku* image. For example, at Comic Market (known also as *Comike*, a *manga* fanzine exhibition and sale held in Tokyo twice a year), approximately 35,000 amateur groups sell their work, and about 500,000 visitors attend the event during the three-day period. Both male and female *otaku* gather at *Comike* from all over Japan, but many participants appear to enjoy socializing with each other, and their fashion tastes are diverse.

Many of the Japanese *anime* and *manga* creators whose works are widely known around the world today are so-called *otaku*.



蔵前橋通り
Kuramaebashi St.

C. Back Street Area

Small stores selling computer peripherals and parts, game software, and *manga* and *anime* fanzines crowd this area, a maze of buildings and alleyways. There are also many restaurants.



Shop selling computer peripherals



The road is closed off to vehicles, creating a "pedestrian paradise."

D. Redevelopment Area

Among the new additions to the area are Akihabara Crossfield, which is striving to become a major hub of Japan's IT industry, the Tsukuba Express train line, which opened for service in August 2005, the newly opened Central Exit of JR Akihabara station, and the household appliance retailer, Yodobashi Camera, which opened in September 2005.



Radio Kaikan



Tsukuba Express entrance



Yodobashi Camera

For the very reason that they are *otaku*, or in other words, consumers with a critical eye, they are able to understand and express precisely what other consumers seek. It could be said that *otaku* are people who can become completely absorbed in particular things or ideas.



Comike



Figurines and dolls

Akiba-kei [アキバ系]

Otaku who flock to Akihabara in search of electronic parts, computer parts, *anime* and *manga* fanzines, game software, and *aidoru* photo collections are known as “Akiba-kei (Akihabara-type *otaku*).”

In June 2005, the movie *Densha otoko* (Train Man) about an *Akiba-kei* character became a huge hit. Over one million people saw the movie. The book, *Densha otoko* (Shinchosha, October 2004), on which the movie was based, is a love story originating in bbs messages on the Internet, and has sold over one million copies. The book was also made into a television series aired July to September 2005, which showed viewer ratings of 20 percent, the highest of any television serial dramas aired during that three-month period. The show popularized an expression frequently used on Internet bbs sites, through scenes in which the characters scream “kitaaaa” (I’ve got it!) when they are moved or excited.



Anime-related goods store

キタ——(°▽°)——!!

(°▽°) is a smiley emphasizing the meaning of “Kitaa!”

The Future of Akiba

Akihabara Redevelopment

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government sold the former site of the Kanda Produce Market (approximately 16,000 square meters) located next to JR Akihabara station to private contractors for redevelopment, and now Akihabara is being transformed from an electronics district into a major hub of the IT industry. The redevelopment area is called “Akihabara Crossfield,”* comprised of two high-rise buildings, Akihabara Daibiru (completed March 2005), a base for industry-university ties



New buildings

ups and information networks, and Akihabara UDX (to be completed in March 2006), equipped with convention halls and event space. The Daibiru offers space to universities and corporations. In addition, in April 2005, Digital Hollywood (Tokyo) opened the University of Digital Content, the first university established by a company. This university strives to nurture contents creators such as designers, producers, engineers, and game creators.

Data

According to research conducted by Nomura Research Institute, the “*otaku* population (Japanese’s *mania* consumer population)” is defined as consumers who partake in consumption behavior dictated by their own individualistic values in placing priority on money and time. The study showed that in the five areas of comics, *anime*, games, *aidoru* (“idol” TV personalities), and PC assembly, they account for a market of approximately 290 billion yen. Furthermore, the study found that this population exerts a strong influence on the rest of society due to their high Internet usage and generation of information. They were also found to forge groups that span related fields. The *otaku* are an enthusiastic consumer population, and are said to be valuable driving force behind the next generation of technological innovations.

Estimated Market of *Otaku* Population

Field	Population (thousand)	Market size (billion yen)	Major indices used
Anime ^{*1}	200	20	DVD sales per title
Aidoru ^{*2}	800	60	Size of concert audiences, sales of first-release CD’s
Comics ^{*3}	1,000	100	Number of participants in spot sales of fanzines, magazine subscriptions rate
Games ^{*4}	800	78	Number of hours spent playing games, circulation of magazines
PC Assembly ^{*5}	50	32	Sales at PC parts shops in Akihabara, circulation of magazines
Total	2,850	290	

*1 *Anime* enthusiasts who spend their time watching *anime* films, TV animation, and OVA (original video animations).

*2 Person who actively collects information on and participates in fan activities relating to a particular artist or media personality and gives high priority to those activities on a daily basis.

*3 Persons who participate in comic coterie magazine spot sales and/or contribute to comic coterie magazines.

*4 Heavy users of video games who spend the bulk of their time playing games (for home use, via PC, on networks, or in game arcades).

*5 Persons interested in personal computers, not for their use in writing or other uses, but out of fascination with the assembly process.

Source: “The Otaku Group from a Business Perspective: Reevaluation of Enthusiastic Consumers” (Nomura Research Institute, Ltd., August 24, 2004)

With the founding of the university, Akihabara is likely to attract attention as an educational district. Furthermore, with the Tsukuba Express connecting Akihabara to Tsukuba Science City** now in operation, Akihabara’s role as a base for industry-academia cooperation is expected to grow. The Akihabara station area has seen many other changes, including the recent opening of the large-scale appliance retailer, Yodobashi Camera, with Japan’s largest sales floor space at 23,800 square meters.



Tsukuba Express

Akihabara will continue to develop into an increasingly attractive city as it advances towards its goal of becoming a premier center not only of hardware such as electrical equipment, but also of digital content.

*Akihabara Crossfield Website ▶ <http://www.akiba-cross.jp/>

**The development of Tsukuba began approximately forty years ago. Currently in Tsukuba, there are close to 300 research institutes and corporations, both public and privately owned, and approximately 13,000 researchers. It is Japan’s largest repository of science and technology.

Photos: Hongo Jin, TJF

Activity 1: My Showcase

Objectives

- ▶ To learn to use expressions to show one's ability through discussing rental showcase stores.
- ▶ To make a presentation to share one's own interests as well as learn about others' interests by setting up a showcase for display in a mock store.
- ▶ To become acquainted not only with rental showcase stores but also with the town of Akihabara.

Expressions

- ▶ (Place) があります。
- ▶ V することができます。
- ▶ お店、お客さん、レンタルショーケース、値段、借りる、決める、入れる、買う、売る

Learner level: Early beginner

Time Required: 90-100 mins., including preparation of displays

Materials: *Takarabako*, Worksheets

Procedure

● Preparation

Copy the *Takarabako* feature article and column on rental showcase stores as well as the activity worksheet for each student in the class.

1. Show the class a photograph of a rental showcase store and ask, “これは、^{みせ}お店です。何のお店ですか？” Have students discuss and give their answers in pairs or groups.

2. Explain to the class that the photograph is of a rental showcase store.

Example

これは、レンタルショーケースのお店です。お客さんは、お店からショーケースを借ります。(そしてお客さんは、)ショーケースに好きなものを入れます。(そしてお客さんは、)好きなものの値段を決めます。(そしてお客さんは、)それを売ります。ほかのお客さんは、それを買います。

(This is a rental showcase store. Each customer rents a showcase from the store. Then they stock the showcases with whatever they choose. Then they put prices on the items they have chosen to display. Then they sell the items. Other customers buy items from the showcases.)

3. Check students' understanding of the above explanation by asking them what people can do in this store. Have them answer by using the sentence pattern “V することができます。”

Question

お客さんが、レンタルショーケースのお店に来ます。何をすることができますか。

(A customer comes to a rental showcase store. What can he/she do there?)

4. After the students have finished responding, summarize again what people can do in a rental showcase store.

Rental Showcases

As a new and unique marketing system, the rental showcase is gaining popularity in Akihabara and other cities. Acrylic showcases can be rented by anyone who wants to sell some sort of merchandise.

On the seventh floor of the Radio Kaikan just outside the Denki-gai (Electronics District) exit of JR Akihabara station is the rental showcase shop Volks, a long-established model manufacturer, opened in 2001. This shop has some 800 rental showcases on display filled with a tremendous variety of goods: figurines, trading cards, antique toys, hand-made dolls, cameras, insect specimens, and so forth. Each case rents for 2,000 to 5,000 yen per month, with prices differing by size and location in the store. The renter of the box is free to set the price of the goods sold in the showcase. In exchange for

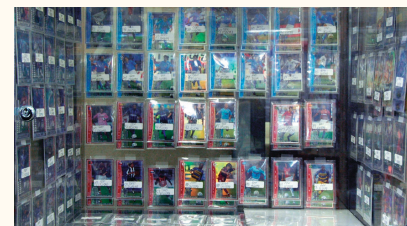
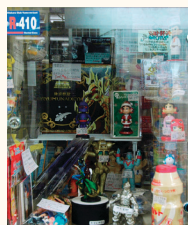
housing the case and marketing the merchandise, the shop receives 15 percent of any sale.

The appeal of the rental showcase is that it allows renters to operate a miniature “shop” of their own at little cost. It is also a place to put on public display articles one has collected from a personal interest or hobby and can serve as a mini-gallery for hand-made items as well. Shoppers in the store are attracted by the enjoyment of finding, in the vast quantity of goods on display in the cases, items they had long been searching for or that exactly suit their tastes.

Cooperation: Volks, Inc. Otakara Club “Yume no Kuni”

http://www.volks.co.jp/jp/volks/otakara/index_otakara.aspx

Reference: <http://www.designboom.com/snapshots/venice04/japan.html>



Example

ショーケースを借りることができます。／ショーケースに、好きなものを入れることができます。／(好きなもの)値段を決めることができます。／好きなものを売ることができます。／好きなものを買うことができます。

(People can rent a showcase from the store. They can stock the showcases with whatever they choose. They can put prices on the items (that they have chosen to display). They can sell what they want to sell. People can buy what they want to buy.)

- Have students read the column in *Takarabako* about rental showcase stores in order to deepen their understanding. (See notes 1 and 2.)
- Mention to the class that Akihabara has not only rental showcase stores but many other shops for enthusiasts of various kinds, and then have them read the feature in *Takarabako* if time permitted.
- Next, assign the students the project of designing their own showcases to display their favorite things or activities. Have them list the things they want to display in the Showcase box of the worksheet. Students should attach photographs, cutouts of magazines and advertisements, illustrations, simple explanations (mixture of Japanese and other languages permissible), and the like to indicate what their showcases will look like.

Collect the worksheets and put them together into a pamphlet to be given to the students at the time the showcases are displayed (or, if not setting up actual displays, at the time of the oral presentations) so they can refer to it while looking at or hearing about what others have done. (See notes 3 and 4.)

Example 1

- Theme: The Theater
- Contents of the display: Ticket stubs for plays I have seen, pamphlets, scripts of plays I have participated in, stage photographs, etc.
- Expressions to use
わたしのショーケースのテーマは演劇です。
(The theme of my showcase is the theater.)
わたしは演劇が好きです。
(I like the theater.)
ショーケースの中に、半券と、パンフレットと、台本があります。
(There are ticket stubs, pamphlets, and scripts in my showcase.)

Example 2

- Theme: My Sources of Energy
- Contents of display: CDs by my favorite artists, books I read when I am discouraged, photographs with friends, etc.
- Expressions to use
わたしのショーケースのテーマは「元気のもと」です。
(The theme of my showcase is "my sources of energy.")
わたしは、Xの歌とXの本が好きです。
(I like songs by X and books by X.)
ショーケースの中に、XのCDと、Xの本があります。
(There are CDs by X and books by X in my showcase.)

Keypoint

Students can either design their showcase around a specific theme, as in example 1, or group several of their favorite things under a theme such as "my sources of energy," as in example 2.

- Hold a class exhibit of the showcases. Since distributing actual display boxes to the entire class may be impractical, let the students set up their displays in appropriate spaces instead. If the class is small, have everyone take turns presenting their displays to the class; if large, divide the students into two groups, one to present and the other to be the onlookers, and have them switch roles halfway through. Those assigned to looking can listen to presentations of whichever displays interest them. (See note 5.)

Notes

- Collectors and enthusiasts who attain a certain level in their collecting and/or expertise will typically go on to seek (or set up on their own) places for sharing and enjoying their interests with others. Rental showcase stores provide one such meeting place. Students should understand that these stores are meant less for selling off unwanted items than for trading coveted items with people of similar interests and exhibiting one's hobbies to others.
- For secondary school students: Hold group discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of rental showcase store versus other types of stores such as retail shops, garage sales, and flea markets (use mixture of Japanese and other languages if desirable).
- In situations where setting up actual displays are difficult, students can give oral presentations instead, using the photographs, magazine and advertisement cutouts, and other visual materials they have attached to the worksheets. Referring to the worksheets should prove useful to classes in which actual exhibits can be held as well, since comparing the Japanese vocabulary listed on paper to the actual objects displayed will reinforce the link between the two and help students learn the words even if they were previously unfamiliar.
- The worksheets feature several set sentence patterns, so this will accommodate even low-proficiency learners.
- During presentations, high proficiency learners can also be called upon to practice additional objectives, for example expressions of giving and receiving or the topic of "gifts," by using expressions to relate anecdotes about their displays in response to such questions as "どこで買いましたか?" (Where did you buy this?) or "だれにもらいましたか?" (Who gave this to you?) asked by the teacher or by other classmates.

Worksheet

名前
[テーマ]
[好きなもの]
[ショーケース]

発表の表現

- ・ショーケースのテーマは、()です。
- ・わたしは、()が好きです。
- ・ショーケースの中に、()と()と()が、あります。

Worksheet may be downloaded at Takarabako website.

Activity 2: Things Change

Objectives

- ▶ To learn how to talk about the past by making presentations about the history of the Akihabara district.
- ▶ To understand that urban areas have special characteristics and that those features differ according to the conditions of a country and its industrial structure through learning about the characteristics of Akihabara and its history.
- ▶ To study the history of students' own town and, while thinking about how it might develop from now on, think about what they themselves might be doing from now on.

Key expressions

- ▶ Vました/Vていました。
- ▶ ～か～にあります。
- ▶ ～年前、～だった時、～年

Learner level: Mid-beginner

Time: 30 mins. x 2 or 60 mins. x 1

Materials: *Takarabako*, Worksheets 1, 2

Procedure

● Preparation

Download Worksheets 1 and 2 from *Takarabako* website and copy them for each student in the class.

1. The teacher should read the English text of the “Basic Akiba Information,” and ask the students several questions in Japanese, having the students respond in Japanese as much as they can.

Examples of questions

- 1) 秋葉原は、東京の何区にありますか。
(Akihabara is in what ward in Tokyo?)
- 2) 秋葉原に、いくつの店がありますか。
(How many stores are there in Akihabara?)
- 3) 秋葉原に、どんな店がありますか。
(What kinds of stores are there in Akihabara?)
- 4) 最近、秋葉原にどんな店がたくさんありますか。
(What kinds of shops are recently numerous in Akihabara?)
- 5) 東京駅から秋葉原駅まで、何分ですか。
(How many minutes does it take to get from Tokyo Station to Akihabara?)

Answers: 1) 千代田区 (Chiyoda-ku) (2) 600, (3) 家電製品、パソコン、電子辞書など (Household appliances, personal computers, electronics parts, etc.), (4) ゲーム機、DVD販売店、ゲーム関連グッズ、アニメ関連グッズの専門店 (video game software stores, DVD retail stores, stores specializing in anime-related goods and figures), (5) 11分 (約5分) (5 minutes by the Yamanote Line)

2. After having the students read the “History of Akihabara” from *Takarabako*, form them into groups of 3 or 4 members. Distribute Worksheet 1, which gives questions about the history of Akihabara, and have them consult as a group and fill in the answers. The teacher should circulate through the classroom, giving advice to groups having trouble with the exercise. If some groups finish up the worksheet early, have them help out the groups that are having trouble.
3. When all the groups have finished, have them each present their answers.
4. After saying, “We have just studied the history of Akihabara.

Now let's think about the history of your town,” ask the following questions.

Questions

- 1) 秋葉原は、今は何の町ですか。
(What kind of town is Akihabara now?)
- 2) (学習者の居住するところ)は何の町ですか。
(What kind of town is [town where students live]?)
- 3) どうしてですか。何がありますか。
(Why is that? What do we have here?)
- 4) (学習者の国の大都市や有名な都市)は何の町ですか。
(What kind of city is [big or well-known city in the students' country]?)
- 5) どうしてですか。何がありますか。
(Why is that? What does it have?)

Keypoint

If useful, introduce “Kanda-Jinbocho, Town of Books” and “Ameyoko, Shopping Town (Okachimachi).” (See note 1.) The reason for introducing Kanda-Jinbocho or Ameyoko here is to show students, by introducing areas of Tokyo other than Akihabara, how the people and neighborhoods of each part of the city have their own character. It is also helpful in getting students to notice how those shared characteristics foster attachment to and pride in a community.

5. Have the students return to their regular seating arrangements and distribute Worksheet 2, which gives questions about the history of the students' own town.

Keypoint

If the students' Japanese ability is limited, it may be better to assign the worksheets to them in pairs or in groups.

6. When they have finished filling out Worksheet 2, have them draw pictures or paste photos in the empty space. It may also be a good idea to have them draw or work on a large sheet of paper using Worksheet 2 as a model. (See note 3.)

Keypoint

The completed worksheets can be hung on the walls, used for individual presentations, or other opportunities for the students to transmit information to others.

Note

1. Kanda-Jinbocho is a district where many large-scale and long-established bookstores are clustered. With some 170 secondhand bookstores, it is known as a book district that has frequent book sales and other festive events involving books. “Ameyoko” is a nickname of Ameya yokocho [Ameya Alley]. A long shopping street extending from the JR station at Tokyo's Okachimachi (Taito-ku) toward Ueno station, it is lined with more than 400 shops.
2. Learners interested in an unfamiliar place like Tokyo's Akihabara may find great appeal in this story, but it may hold little fascination for others, making the class less absorbing for them. One strategy for dealing with this situation is to make the activity involving the Basic Akiba Information a group project, and, after showing examples of how Akihabara has changed over the years, turn to the students' own town, getting them to think about how it has grown or change with the passage of time. Then, focusing the subject on the students themselves, have them think about how they are growing up in the future, making the theme something that feels close to home for them.

Worksheets 1 and 2 may be downloaded at *Takarabako* website.