



Kuizu Gojūnin ni Kikimashita

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Ages: 14–18 years old
Level: Beginning–Intermediate
Culture: Japanese students' thoughts about their schools, hopes for the future, etc., as compared to those of American students
Language: Related vocabulary



Objectives

My lesson focuses on Japanese culture through the ideas and thoughts that Japanese students have in comparison to those American students have. A questionnaire was answered by 50 students in my American high school and by 50 Japanese nationals studying at universities in the United States. The responses to the questions, predominantly dealing with high school life, were very different for some questions and very similar for others. The differences and similarities in the responses stem from the cultures of the countries the respondents represent. The responses also explain some of the differences and similarities in the cultures of Japan and America. Through this lesson American students will gain an insight on what Japanese students think about their own schools, families, leisure activities, and hopes for the future. They will also be able to compare these responses to see how similar or different Japanese students are from them. American high school students are very interested in what students in Japan think about. Being of the same age group, they feel they can better understand the thoughts and ideas that other students have. They also empathize with students who are going through similar growing pains.

Materials

- results of the questionnaire on butcher paper
- small prizes for student responses

Procedure

1. Explain the rules to the game Family Feud. Two teams will compete at a time to come up with the most common answers on the questionnaire. The game will start with *jankenpon*, and the winning team can decide if they want to do the American or Japanese responses. The first question will be read and the winning team will start. Team members will take turns coming up with the four most common responses to the questions. Each correct response earns points. The point spread is as follows:
 - Most common response - 40 points
 - Second most common response - 30 points
 - Third most common response - 20 points
 - Fourth most common response - 10 pointsAfter two wrong answers, the opposing team has the right to answer. If they are able to come up with at least one correct answer, they gain all the points that their opposing team earned.
2. Divide the class into teams of four. Allow them to come up with a Japanese team name.
3. Every student needs to take notes on all the questions and responses. If both the teams playing the game are unable to answer, they will be allowed to respond and receive a present for a correct response. This keeps the whole class focused!
4. Call up two teams at a time and rotate through the class. Discuss the reason for some of the Japanese



responses. This is your opportunity to discuss Japanese culture.

5. Tally up points earned by all teams and give the team with the most points a prize.
6. Culminating activity: Discuss what the students gained from this lesson. List things about Japanese culture that you discuss on a bulletin board.
7. Extension activities: Bring a video on Japanese schools, etc. and further discuss aspects of the Japanese culture introduced through the Family Feud activity.

Questionnaire: You may want to use the results of my questionnaire or create one yourself and have students in your sister school reply.

1. If you win the lottery, what will you buy with the money?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. world trip -11	1. car -14
2. house -9	2. house -8
3. clothes -8	3. education -4
4. save -7	4. clothes -3

2. What is the best part about your school?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. socializing -19	1. socializing -22
2. atmosphere -6	2. lunch -7
3. club -5	3. learning -5
4. sports -3	4. nothing -3

3. What are you not allowed to do in class?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. eat -17	1. eat -8
2. talk -9	2. fight -6
3. smoke -5	3. sleep -5
4. chew gum -3	4. talk -4

4. What is your favorite food served in school?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. school lunch -9	1. nothing -8
2. noodles -8	2. pizza -6

3. curry rice -6	3. chicken-fried steak -4
4. Chinese food -5	4. tacos -3

5. What is your favorite free time activity?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. going out -10	1. sports -15
2. shopping -6	2. sleep -4
3. sports -5	3. going out -3
4. movies -4	4. eating -2

6. What is the most exciting event that takes place in your school?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. festival -20	1. sports -14
2. sports -7	2. dances -10
3. school trip -5	3. fights -4
4. falling in love -3	4. lunch -2

7. Give a one-word description of your family.

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. cheerful -5	1. loving -5
2. open-minded -4	2. dysfunctional -4
3. warm -3	3. interesting -4
4. lonely -2	4. happy -3

8. What do you want the most right now?

<i>Japan</i>	<i>America</i>
1. freedom -11	1. sleep -14
2. to be smart -6	2. money -4
3. car -5	3. food -4
4. money -4	4. car -3

9. What would you like to be when you grow up?

10. How old would you like to be when you get married?

The last two questions were not used because the results from my Japanese students were quite predictable and not representative of Japanese high school students. Because they were students of English at an American university, most of them wanted to become teachers and marry after thirty.



Student Response

Through this lesson, American students gain an insight on what Japanese students think about their schools, families, leisure activities, and hopes for the future. Through the understanding of how their peers think in Japan, I hope American students will have a better appreciation and understanding of Japanese culture and people.

These are some of the comments my students made after the lesson:

"I knew that the results would be similar to what I had in mind, but I was amazed that so many students in the U.S. were unhappy in comparison to their Japanese peers."

"I found it interesting that a lot of things they value, we value also."

"I learned that although Japanese culture and American culture differ in many small things, people everywhere are fundamentally the same and have the same needs."

"In Japan, school is more strict. They get served much 'cooler' food and seem to like school more than kids in the U.S."

Students at most American high schools fall asleep during lectures even if the topic is something as interesting as the Japanese culture. The game format utilized in my lesson, gets students actively involved in figuring out what American and Japanese students think about. Since my students were very involved in guessing the Japanese student responses, they will be very interested to know why the Japanese students responded in a certain way. The differences and similarities in responses is an

excellent way to discuss various aspects of Japanese student life and Japanese culture.

Culture and the Foreign Language Class

American students and students around the world are absorbed in their own life. They expect everyone to think and feel just like they do. They tend to have a very limited understanding of people especially from different cultures. Language classes should focus not only on language but also on the culture of the country or countries where the language is spoken. This will help students widen their thinking and learn to appreciate other cultures and people. Students should learn that people around the world think and act sometimes just like they do, and yet, sometimes, very differently. They should also be respected for what they are.

The other reason to teach culture in a language class is because language always reflects the culture of its people. In the Japanese language, we have informal and formal speech. Part of the reason for this is the hierarchy in the position of the people and the need to communicate accordingly. For American students, this is a very new concept because in their culture, there is one form of speech regardless of the position of the people involved in the conversation. The context in which I communicate explains a lot more than just what I am actually saying. Japanese teachers need to convey such information to their students to help them understand not only the culture, but also the language that they are studying.



Comments from the Feedback Committee



Educating for Cross-cultural Understanding

This quiz-show-style language-and-culture class is a provocative way of teaching and learning. It is not mentioned who made the questionnaire, but it would be very meaningful to the students to design and administer the questionnaire which could then be used for the game. By incorporating Japanese vocabulary into the questions and answers both the linguistic and cultural aspects of the quiz could become even more meaningful.

When it comes to learning about other cultures, teenagers are more interested in what teenagers are like in other parts of the world than in strange customs and habits. Our teenagers are living in a worldwide information age. Thanks to Internet, information can be easily acquired from throughout the world. Communicating with other high school students inside and outside the country is not an insurmountable problem. Everybody would want to be involved.

This survey involved Japanese university students in the U.S. and American high school students. This difference in age and the probability that the Japanese came from similar social backgrounds could affect the reliability of the cross-cultural comparison.

Language Learning

The linguistic aspect of this lesson is quite limited, but there are enormous possibilities. If

the students design the survey, get them to write the questions and answers in both English and Japanese. You can help students understand any responses they receive and could then create a lesson focused on the vocabulary, phrases, and terms which appeared most often. Then, as much as possible, conduct the game in Japanese. Students will certainly absorb the language, quickly especially since it means more to them than the language from a textbook.

Lesson Plan

The general theme was clearly articulated. It is a good idea for young people around the world to compare what they are thinking about on topics of mutual interest.

The quiz game would be a good culminating activity for a unit of study which began with student groups compiling questions they would like to ask their Japanese peers, and, as mentioned above, send out questionnaires, or on the other hand to give them more speaking practice, they could learn to ask those questions and then go to a nearby university and actually interview Japanese students in Japanese. The teacher could secretly compile the results for the game which would then be played in Japanese.