

Meeting People



Meeting People introduces real Japanese students, presenting a snapshot of their personality and daily lives through photographs and text. Here, students studying Japanese overseas can meet Japanese students of the same age group and, while learning about each in turn, gain a deeper understanding of their Japanese peers' cultural background as it appears in various aspects of their daily lives and activities. Up through the previous issue, this section took up each of the seven Deai high school students in turn, introducing photographs and text from the Deai resources and providing information to help students better understand the seven Deai students. Beginning with this issue, however, we plan to use this space to introduce more of the diversity of young people in Japan. In this issue we introduce Chiya, a promising young photographer who has won consecutive prizes and actively participated in TJF's annual Lives of Japanese High School Students: Photo and Message Contest. Looking back on her life up to now, she tells how she first encountered photography.



Meet Chiya

ずっと真^まっ暗^{くら}なトンネルの中^{なか}にいました。でも写真^{しゃしん}に出^で会^あって、いまやっとそのトンネルから出^でられそう^きな気がしています。

For the longest time I felt I was in a dark tunnel. Now, finally, because of my encounter with photography, I feel I'm coming to the end of that tunnel.



Profile

なまえ 名前:	ちや 知弥 (定時制高校 ^{*1} 4年生)
とし 歳:	18さい
す 住んでいるところ:	おおさか 大阪府
クラブ:	しゃしんぶ 写真部
しょうらい 将来の夢:	カメラマン

Class Objectives

「自分の居場所を見つけた知弥のストーリーを読んで、自分をふりかえてみましょう。」

Let's Read How Chiya Found Her Own Place and Look Back on Our Own Lives.

Between her older sister who was talented at everything and her younger sister who was doted on no matter what she did, Chiya has been searching for her own niche for a long time. She stopped going to school toward the end of elementary school and didn't attend junior high school either. Entering a part-time high school attended by students of a variety of age groups and backgrounds, Chiya says she found in the school photography club a place that suited her. She reflects, "My future seemed really bleak. But after I encountered photography, I finally began to find my way out of what had been a long, dark tunnel." What

do you think photography means to Chiya?

After reading Chiya's essay and looking at her photos, discuss what you could relate to in her story and what it made you think about.

Those studying Japanese can also try the True-or-False Questions in Japanese. By answering the questions, students are encouraged to do a follow-up reading of Chiya's story to confirm its content and understand it in greater depth, in addition to finding out how Chiya expresses herself in Japanese. Then, students can try thinking up questions in Japanese that they want to ask Chiya.

Two Rivals

My sister, older than me by two years, always seemed to enjoy the lessons² she took after school, so, without any cajoling from my parents, I, too, took various lessons in piano, painting, calligraphy³, swimming, and drums, as well as cram school⁴ lessons during elementary school⁵. Many times I thought of giving up, but I kept up with them, and looking back, I am aware of my sense of rivalry with my sister. I never gained the confidence that I could do anything as well as my sister, and I was always being compared to her—"But your sister can do it so well . . ." or "She can do such and such, so why can't you?" I really hated that.

When I was seven my younger sister was born. Until then my father and I had often gone hiking in the mountains, but after that our trips gradually stopped. My parents lavished their attention on my younger sister. On the surface, I, too, acted affectionately toward the baby, but actually this new rival presented me with a real crisis. Just by existing, my younger sister was the center of everyone's attention; I envied the way they doted on her. Around that time, both at home and at school, I assumed a "good girl" mask and did my best not to cause trouble.

When my older sister began attending a cram school to study for private junior high school entrance exams⁶, I followed her example and began attending cram school myself, setting my sights also on the junior high entrance exams. I was a fourth grade student then. I was getting fairly good grades in school, but my cram school marks and nationwide mock exam⁷ scores were average. I got a real shock when my cram school instructor declared that it would be impossible to get into the school of my choice with the scores I was getting.

Can't Play the Good Girl Any More

From about that time, I couldn't find anything enjoyable about going to school. Getting praise from a teacher for a good test score had always been my source of energy and my reward for playing the good girl at school, but my fifth-year homeroom teacher, unlike my previous teachers, was not the type to give out praise. No longer rewarded for acting the good little girl, I felt no incentive to continue my performance and stopped going to school entirely in the third and last term of my sixth year. At first I lied, saying I had an upset stomach, but the lie was soon exposed and countless times it looked as though I would forcibly be taken to school. Once, my father even smacked me. "Why won't you go?!" they asked, but I had no answer.

Although I promised I would go to school again

when junior high school began, I snuck out at half past five on the morning of the day of the junior high entrance ceremony and fled to the sanctuary of my grandmother's house. I cannot remember the details now, but somehow I got my parents to consent to my absence from junior high school, and thereafter they stopped mentioning it to me. As I had nothing to do during the day, I often went out to see movies. I did not attend school even once during my three years of junior high school, going in only to pick up my diploma. My mother said to me, "You should at least go to high school—to be qualified for certain things in life, you must show that you've graduated from high school. I want you to attend for at least a week. If you still don't like it, you can quit." So, I got an application to a part-time high school.

Joining the Photography Club

I entered this part-time high school fully intending to quit after a week, but the atmosphere at the entrance ceremony felt different from that of any school I had attended in the past. People from all generations were gathered there: fifteen-year-olds who had refused to go to school⁸ like me, former misfits in their twenties, and even a very vigorous seventy-year-old. When school clubs⁹ were introduced to us, the teacher who acted as advisor to the photography club showed enlargements of photos done by club members, and told us how even students who had not attended school were active in the club. It made me feel that this was a place where I could be accepted, even as a student who had refused to attend school. After joining the photography club, my urge to quit high school faded away and I began to enjoy going to school again. I truly enjoyed the short forty-five minutes of after-school club activities and was in the dark room developing photos almost every day. In the photography club, I found a place where I belonged; whenever I was in the club meeting room I naturally began to relax. I had never had such a place before.



Photo: Sato Kaori

Normally, I can't relax while talking with someone unless I put a certain amount of distance between us. But when I have my camera in hand, taking photographs, I completely forget that tension. Maybe I wanted to get closer to people. I wanted them to recognize I exist, but I was always afraid that they would reject me. So I kept my distance rather than get too close and get hurt. The photographs I take reveal these emotions. When I photographed Erina, another member of the photography club, for the TJF contest "The Lives of Japanese High School Students: Photo and Message Contest,"¹⁰ I gradually came in closer and closer until I was finally taking nothing but close-up shots of her.

In addition to taking photos of her working, developing photos in the dark room, and so on, I also lay in wait to snap photos of her with her boyfriend on her way home from school. In all, I think I took nearly 1,000 photos. Never having imagined that the results of the screening would yield an Outstanding Achievement Prize for my entry, as I heard the news I felt for the first time in my life like crying tears of joy.

As my subject for next year's contest, I have selected a classmate who has been on my mind since I first entered high school. When we were out together on one of our days off from school, she started goofing around in a children's play area on the roof of a department store as though she were a five-year-old. As I took photos of her, I felt like I, too, had become five years old again. That's when I



Photo: Nakasai Chiya



Photo: Nakasai Chiya

understood why she has always fascinated me—she has the ability to express her feelings openly. I, who have always tried to be the "good girl," have been unable to express myself so candidly. Again, it was through my photographs of a friend that I was able to see the real me I had kept hidden.

A New Endeavor

Until recently, I'd only taken photographs of girls; cute girls who are just the opposite of me. Back in preschool I was often mistaken for a boy, and before long I had grown accustomed to my boyish look. I realized that I had been wearing another mask when the teacher who advises the photography club pointed out that I acted more feminine in front of an older boy who had been in the club. I think I limited myself to photos of girls out of my own weakness—assuming a boyish manner and fleeing from who I am—and because I envied their femininity.

Now I have begun a new endeavor: to remove this mask I've worn for so long bit by bit. As the first step in this experiment to seek out my ideal image of masculinity, I am photographing my father.

Here is a memory of my father that stands out. I once got into an argument with my homeroom teacher, who rejected what I had to say out of hand, without making any effort to understand my position. I went home and cried as I told my parents what had happened. The next day, my father came to school and stood up for me, telling the teacher, "How can I leave the education of my daughter up to you?" That single statement made me so happy. I remember how fond I was of my father when I was little, even though I thought I hated him during the years I stayed out of school. I want to reexamine through photographs what sort of person he is to me. Then I want to firmly acknowledge the masks I wear and learn to accept myself for who I am.

In the days when I stayed out of school, I couldn't accept my own reluctance to go to school and felt ashamed of myself. I also felt sorry for my parents, who must have been embarrassed that their daughter was not going to school like everyone else. Unable to do anything about the situation on my own, the future seemed bleak indeed. Only after I entered high school and discovered my interest in photography, did I finally begin to find my way out of what had been a long, dark tunnel. I haven't made it out yet, but at least I can see the exit. In the future, I dream of becoming a professional photographer and expressing what is inside myself through my photographs.



Photo: Nakasai Chiya

Class Ideas

Class Objectives, Class Ideas Cooperative Writing: Kawamoto Mayumi, Lecturer, Waseda University

Questions

- ❖ When did Chiya stop going to school?
- ❖ What did Chiya's parents do when she stopped going to school?
- ❖ Chiya thought about entering a part-time high school after listening to her mother. What did Chiya's mother tell her?
- ❖ When Chiya first entered high school, did she plan to continue attending?

Discussion Points

- ❖ Have you ever had after-school lessons? If so, did you ever feel like quitting?
- ❖ Have you ever disliked being compared to a brother or sister? If so, in what way?
- ❖ Have you ever not wanted to go to school? If so, why?
- ❖ Chiya says that the photography club is her niche, a place that suits her. Do you think it difficult to find a place where you fit right in and can relax?
- ❖ Chiya says, "My future seemed really bleak. Only after I entered high school and encountered photography, did I finally begin to find my way out of what had been a long, dark tunnel." What do you suppose photography means to Chiya?

True-or-False Questions

次の日本語の文を読んで、本文の内容と合っているものに○、違っているものに×をつけましょう。

Basic

- ① 知弥は お姉さんと 妹が います。〔 〕
- ② 知弥は 小学校と 中学校には 行きましたが、高校には 行きませんでした。〔 〕
- ③ 高校で 写真部に 入りました。〔 〕
- ④ エリナは 写真部の 男の先輩です。〔 〕
- ⑤ 知弥は エリナの写真を たくさん とりました。〔 〕
- ⑥ 知弥は 最近、お母さんの写真を たくさん とっています。〔 〕
- ⑦ 知弥は 将来 カメラマンに なりたいです。〔 〕

Advanced

- ① 知弥のお父さんとお母さんは、いつも知弥をほめてくれました。〔 〕
- ② 5年生の時の先生は、知弥をあまりほめてくれませんでした。〔 〕
- ③ 知弥は6年生の時、おなかの病気で学校に行けなくなりました。〔 〕
- ④ 中学の3年間は、一度だけ学校の授業に出席しました。〔 〕
- ⑤ 定時制高校に入って、いろいろな友だちに会いました。年が違いう友だちもいました。〔 〕
- ⑥ 写真部の先生の話聞いて、「不登校でもいいんだ」と思いました。〔 〕
- ⑦ 写真部に入って、学校へ行くのが楽しくなりました。〔 〕
- ⑧ 知弥は人に近づくのがこわいので、アップの写真は1枚もとりません。〔 〕
- ⑨ エリナという友だちの写真をとって、コンテストで入賞して、とてもうれしかったです。〔 〕
- ⑩ 知弥は写真をとりながら、自分のことがよくわかるようになりました。〔 〕

Vocabulary List

写真部	photography club
先輩	senior student
将来	(in the) future
ほめてくれる	ほめる(to praise) + Vてくれる
行けなくなる	行けない(cannot go) + ~くなる(to become)
1枚も	even one photo
定時制高校	part-time high school; night high school
不登校	refusal to attend school
アップ	close-up shot
コンテスト	contest
入賞する	to win a prize
わかる	to understand



Ask Chiya

Is there anything you want to ask Chiya? Try thinking up a question for her in Japanese. If your class sends in a list of questions to TJF, we will ask Chiya to answer them for you.

☞ See p. 15 for answers to True-or-False Questions.

Notes & Reference

*1. part-time high school 定時制高校

http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/teacher/mini_en/html/zennichi.html

*2. after-school lessons 習い事

http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/teacher/mini_en/html/yobiko.html
<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/stat/stats/16EDUA2.html>

*3. calligraphy 習字: Learning to write characters with a brush. Calligraphy lessons also form a part of Japanese language education in elementary and junior high school.

*4. cram school 塾

http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/teacher/mini_en/html/yobiko.html
<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/stat/stats/16EDUA1.html>

*5. school system 日本の学校制度

http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/teacher/mini_en/html/gakkoseido.html

*6. junior high school entrance exams 中学入試

Compulsory education in Japan continues through junior high school. Students can automatically enter their local public junior high school, but students aiming to enter a private junior high or one affiliated with a national university have to take entrance exams.

*7. mock exam 模擬試験: Taken in preparation for entrance exams, these exams have the same layout and questions of the same difficulty as real exams.

*8. refusal to attend school 不登校

http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/teacher/mini_en/html/futoko.html
<http://jin.jcic.or.jp/stat/stats/16EDU91.html>

*9. clubs クラブ

http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/teacher/mini_en/html/club.html

*10. The Lives of Japanese High School Students: Photo and Message Contest

<http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/ee/eeindex0.htm>