



# BAMBOO

## —An Integral Part of Japanese Culture—



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### PURPOSE

This lesson uses the theme of bamboo to explore many aspects of Japanese culture. Bamboo appears in the landscape and building materials; in myths and proverbs; in cuisine and family and place names; in sports and arts and crafts; and as a popular decorative design motif. In this lesson, various activities, including listening to a fairy tale, vocabulary building and dictionary use, analyzing proverbs, learning the *kanji* for “bamboo” and some family names containing it, and an intriguing guessing game, cultivate the students’ imagination and skills of observation and guessing.

### POINTS TO BE STUDIED

#### LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES

##### TARGET FUNCTIONS

- ❖ Though not a main objective in this lesson, review of the use of passive verbs where naturally appropriate, e.g., どういうふうにかわれますか.

##### TARGET EXPRESSIONS

- ❖ ささにすずめ, 竹やぶにとら, 竹をわたような, やぶをつついてへびをだす

##### TARGET VOCABULARY

- ❖ 竹せい, 竹ざいく, 竹の子, 竹のかわ, たけがき, ざる, ふで, etc.

#### CULTURAL OBJECTIVES

- To develop overall appreciation for the importance and position of bamboo in Japanese culture
- To become familiar with a Japanese fairy tale related to bamboo
- To exhibit general knowledge of bamboo and discuss some common uses of it in Japan
- To explore some bamboo-related proverbs which provide insight into underlying ways of thinking, values, and beliefs
- To practice and extend calligraphy/*kanji* skills

#### OTHER OBJECTIVES

- To practice listening and note-taking skills
- To practice the important foreign language skill of guessing from contextual clues
- To practice using the dictionary to find the meanings of unfamiliar Japanese words
- To practice using a *kanji* dictionary

## SOURCE MATERIALS

*Kami-shibai*/book/tape of a fairy tale: “*Kaguyahime*” or “*Taketori monogatari*”  
 Work sheet (Handout #1\*)  
 Crossword puzzle (Handout #2\*)  
 Proverbs quiz (Handout #3\*)  
 Pictures and photographs (Handout #4\*)  
 Bamboo objects if available

## PROCEDURE

### 1. Sharing background information (10 mins.)

The teacher talks about various aspects of bamboo, including its importance and position in Japanese culture. The teacher may begin the lesson by saying, “Let’s begin exploring the theme of bamboo.”

### 2. Handout #1 and writing *kanji* (14 mins.)

The teacher distributes handout #1 and asks the students to use their dictionaries to fill it out. Then they practice writing *kanji* such as 竹 and 筆. After they finish the task, the teacher gives the answers.

### 3. Showing bamboo products (15 mins.)

The teacher has the students suggest different uses for bamboo and categorizes their suggestions on the blackboard, along with sample vocabulary. The students take notes. Alternatively, the teacher could begin by putting a list of categories and then ask the students for examples of uses in each category, adding the Japanese vocabulary later. The teacher shows relevant pictures and objects at the appropriate times.

How is bamboo used in Japan?	
landscape and gardening	takebayashi, takeyabu, sasa, takegaki
houses/building	tokonoma, tenjō, yuka
food, cooking, and kitchenware	takenoko, chimaki, takenokawa, zaru, kushi, shamoji, sumaki, hashi
household objects	kago, hako, takezao
sports and leisure	tako, taketonbo, kyūdō, kendō, shinai, tsurizao
arts and crafts	fude, sadō, shakuhachi, fue, takezaiku, karakasa, uchiwa, sensu
decorative motif	kadomatsu, kumade, kazari, shōchikubai

### 4. Handout #2 (7 mins.)

The students do a *hiragana* crossword puzzle. (I had a *shakuhachi* tape playing softly.)

### 5. Listening to a fairy tale (10 mins.)

The teacher tells a fairy tale using as much Japanese as the students can understand. The class takes a five-minute break after the story.

### 6. Handout #3 (15 mins.)

The class divides into groups. Each group discusses the proverbs in handout #3.

### 7. Bamboo in names (7 mins.)

The teacher writes Japanese family and place names containing the *kanji* for bamboo on the board, and has students read them aloud. The teacher can also distribute a handout with these names.

■ 竹田, 竹川, 竹本, 竹中, 竹内, 大竹, 竹下通り, etc.

### 8. Handout #4 (7 mins.)

The teacher shows photographs of products made from bamboo and has the students imagine what they are used for. The teacher may ask in Japanese *これはどういうふうにつかわれますか*.

### 9. Evaluation

No particular evaluation is made in this lesson, but future possibilities for evaluation would be an essay on bamboo and its role in Japanese culture, short answer questions, e.g., “Name five bamboo products in Japanese and give their use or function in English,” giving the *hiragana* readings of family names, and matching vocabulary items with meanings.

### Remarks

- Choosing a theme like this allows the lesson to be customized for different age groups and language levels, as well as provide various extension ideas and the possibility of integration with other subject areas. For example, I plan to use this in the winter term when the Studio Art 1 classes are doing *sumi-e* (ink painting) and the Global Affairs classes are studying Asia.

### From the committee

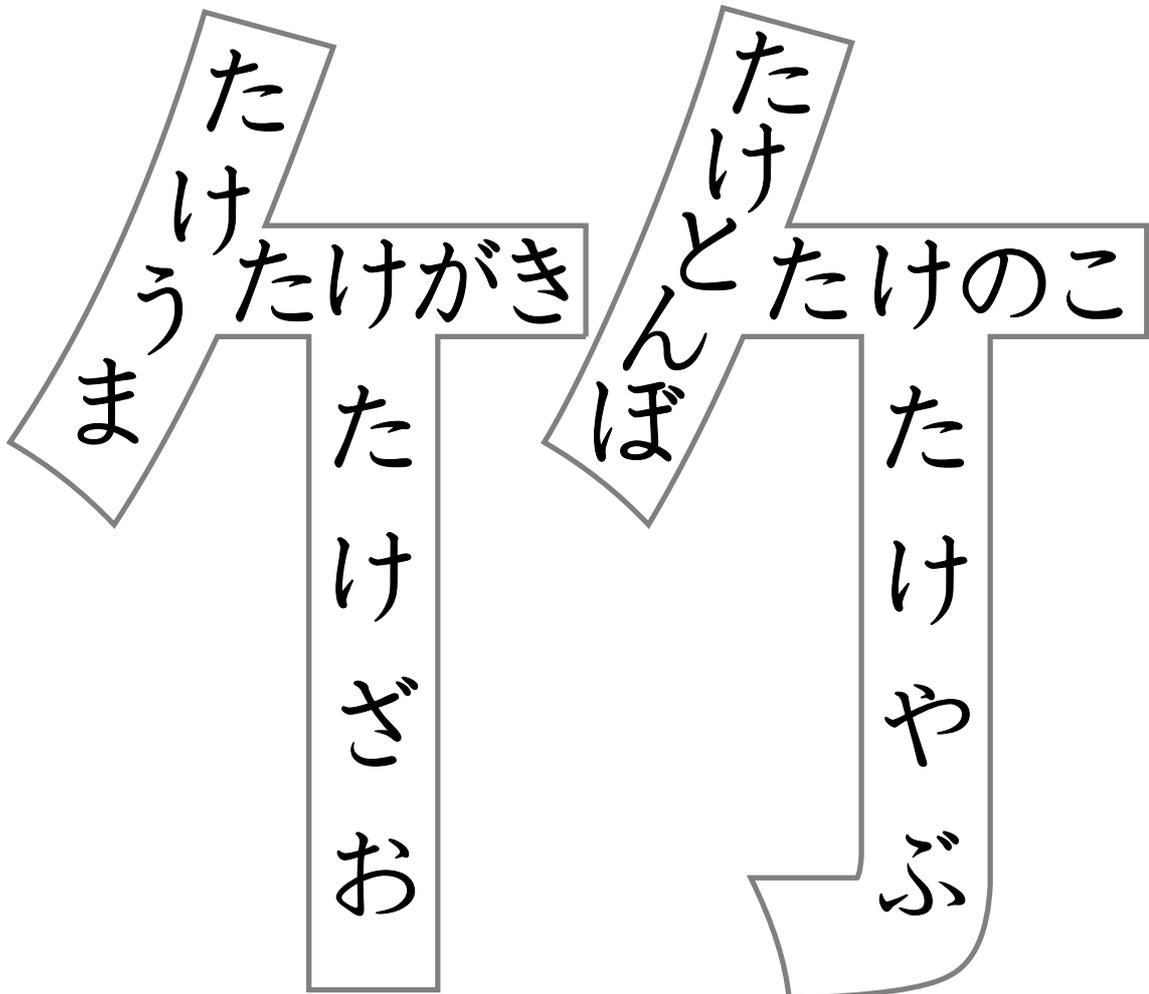
This lesson’s focus on bamboo, a material familiar to Japanese people, makes it an excellent framework for introducing aspects of Japanese language and culture. Because bamboo is a durable material, the teacher should get some actual bamboo objects to lend a greater sense of reality to the discussion. For example, with a *fumi-dake* (a simple bamboo foot-massage device used in many Japanese homes), one could develop an interesting lesson about Japanese medical treatments and health practices.

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## WORK SHEET

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1. Look carefully below.
2. There are six words all beginning with “take,” for bamboo, and arranged in a certain order. What is the order?  
(Hint: think of the order of the *hiragana* chart.)
3. Check the meanings of all these words in a dictionary and start your own list of new vocabulary items with them.



Answers on page 67.

# HIRAGANA CROSSWORD PUZZLE

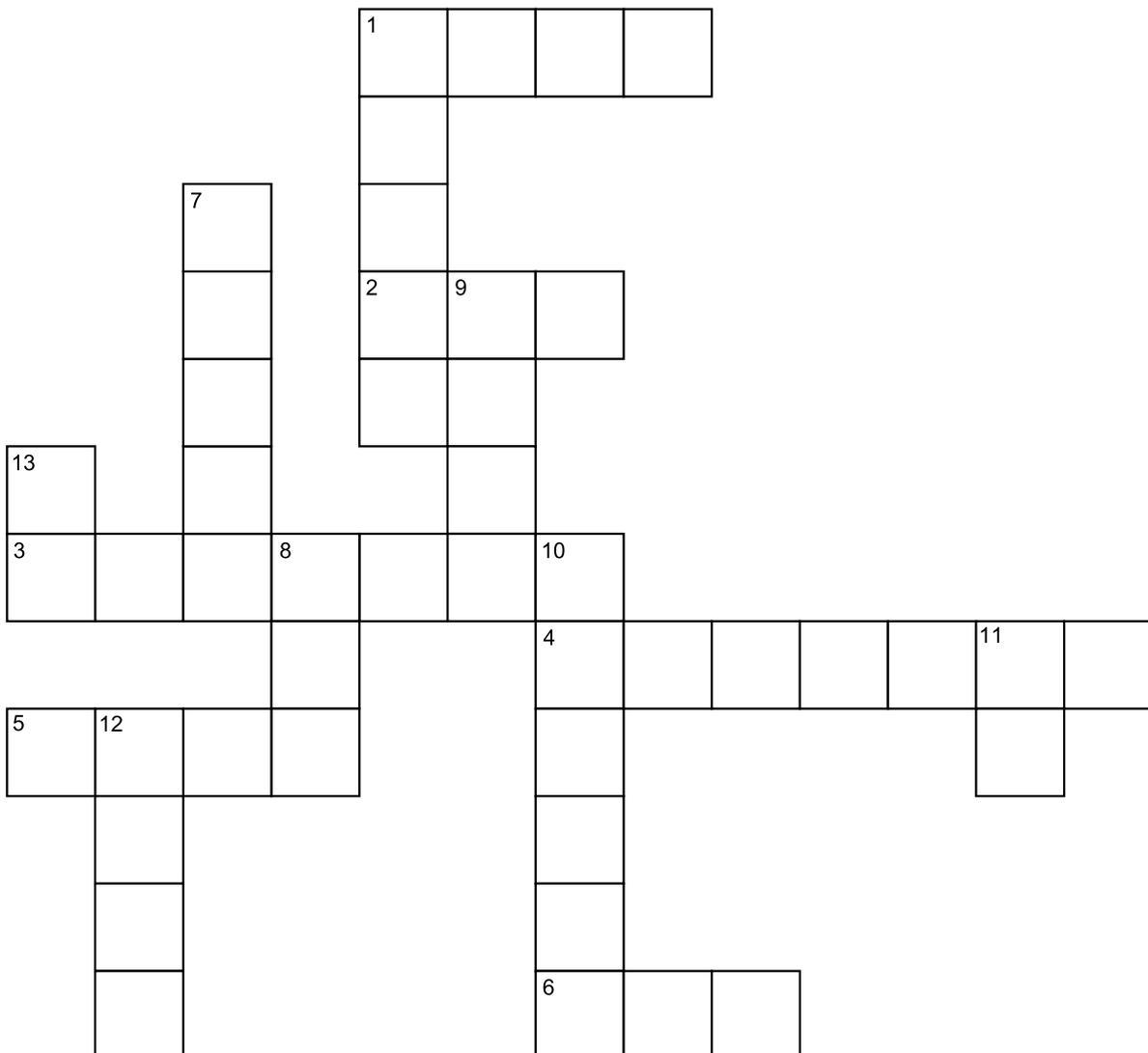
名前 \_\_\_\_\_

*Tate*

1. bamboo sheath/bark used for wrapping
7. box lunch
8. dumpling wrapped in bamboo
9. cold summer buckwheat noodles
10. expression used before eating
11. utensils for eating Japanese food
12. bamboo paddle for serving cooked rice
13. bamboo skewer

*Yoko*

1. bamboo shoot
2. decoration
3. poetic expression for 3 levels of the same dish (with different quality and prices)
4. steamed rice with bamboo
5. chopsticks rest
6. bamboo mats for making *norimakizushi*



Answers on page 67.

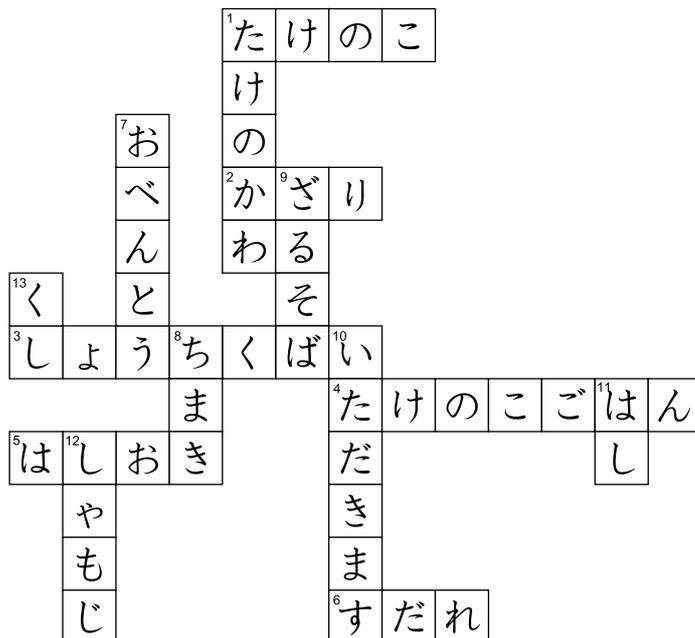
## WHAT DO THESE SAYINGS REALLY MEAN?

名前 \_\_\_\_\_

Discuss the following proverbs and expressions and compare them to their English equivalents. Try to think what values or beliefs underlie these sayings.

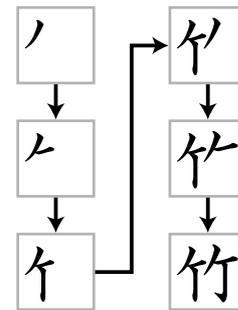
1. ささにすずめ
2. たけやぶにとら
3. たけをわたったような
4. やぶをつついて、へびをだす (やぶへび)
5. おちゃをにごす

### Answers to handout #2



### Answer to handout #1

stroke order



### Answers to handout #4

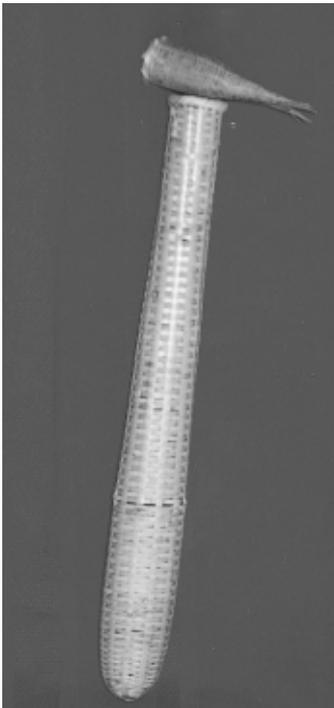
- (1) eel trap
- (2) spice dispenser
- (3) *oshibori* holder
- (4) tray for serving cold buckwheat noodles (*zarusoba*)

**HOW ARE THESE THINGS USED?**

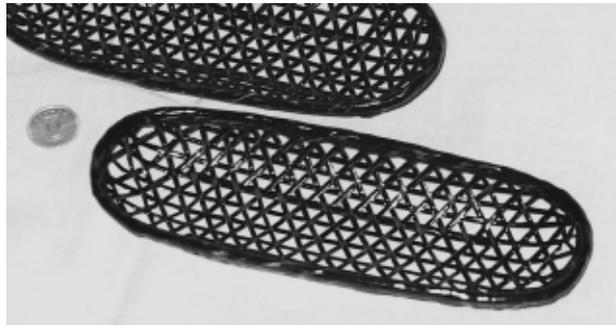
名前 \_\_\_\_\_

Look carefully at the photographs of bamboo objects, and try to guess the function or purpose of each. Write your answers in English.

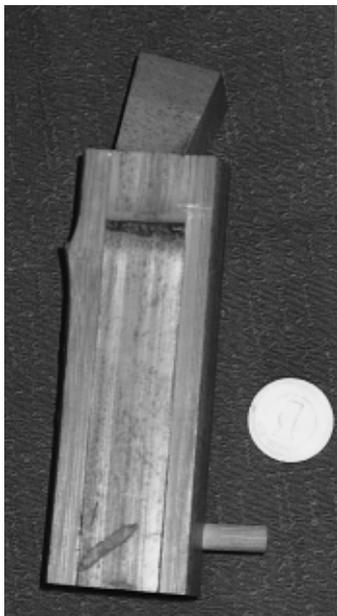
(1)



(3)



(2)



(4)



(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_