

# Sample Reading Materials for Advanced-level Senior High School Students—

Starting with the Comprehension of the Rhetorical Organizations of the  
Text

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The following materials are intended for advanced-level senior high school students in Japan who have acquired a basic knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but have not mastered the skills of advanced reading comprehension. Traditionally, reading lessons in Japanese high schools have tended to be focused on the decoding of each word and sentence, and not on the general understanding of the text. The following materials incorporate some tasks which have the students understand the rhetorical organizations of the text, which helps them to grasp the general meaning of the text. After having a general understanding of the text, the students are required to analyze smaller units such as paragraphs and sentences. Finally they are asked to relate the text to their own interest, knowledge or view. The following materials consist of three texts of expository writing which have three different rhetorical organizations.

1. The teaching materials

Unit 1: Comparison

Task 1: Read through the text and answer the following questions.

1. What is the chief difference between life on the two sides of the Pacific?
2. Which side of the ocean is the busy one?
3. What keeps a Japanese so busy?

"A Busy Country and a Less Busy Country"

Living half the year in Japan and half the year in the United States, I am always being asked, and I am always asking myself, what the chief differences are between life on the two sides of the Pacific.

One important thing, certainly is a difference in the pace of life. It is much faster and busier on one side of the ocean than on the other. Largely because of this difference, I am content with my yearly migrations, giving me half the year on each side, and would not wish to have them changed. After about six months with the calmer pace on one side of the ocean, I begin to feel a little bored and restless, and life on the other side begins to look attractive; and after about six months with the faster, more urgent pace, I begin to grow weary and nervous, and find myself ready for the return to the other. The moves back and forth across the ocean come at just about the right time, and the periods of uneasiness or dissatisfaction with its two shores are not long.

I wonder if the reader has asked and answered for himself the significant question: which of the two shores is which?

I wonder if he will be surprised to learn the answer. For me the Japanese side of the ocean is the busy one. In the United States I plan my time in one way, and in Japan another way. In the United States, stretches of unoccupied time seem to lie ahead, and I have to think how to fill them, so that they will not be wasted and there will not be great boredom.

And when I come to Japan, the future suddenly looks occupied, and the problem is to fit everything in, and leave time for the things which would have had to be done even if there had not been a sudden piling up of new engagements.

In the one case the problem is to keep the immediate future from having an empty look. In the other it is to keep the days and weeks ahead from having too crowded a look.

Japan is the busier of the two countries, I do strongly believe, and this fact has to do with important differences between Japan and the United States.

Japan is a crowded country, and people are almost always in among other people. They are constantly bumping up against one another, and the bumping takes up time, and so does seeing to the complications which arise from it. When people live farther apart, there are not so many encounters.

To some extent, then the fact that Japan is a busier country than America has to do with population density. Yet I suspect that if the two populations were suddenly to change countries, if the Japanese were suddenly to find themselves spread out over the great spaces of America, and Americans to find themselves confined within the narrow spaces of Japan—I suspect that the wider space occupied by the Japanese would suddenly be the busier, and the narrow space occupied by the Americans the more leisurely.

Many of the things which keep a person so busy in Japan might be described as rituals. Japanese are much more concerned with rituals than are Americans. I am constantly being struck by the fact that people come to see me, and indeed insist upon coming to see me, in matters which could just as well be taken care of by telephone or letter. Convention holds that a telephone call or a letter is a less elaborate ritual than a personal interview, and unless there is a personal interview there is a risk of rudeness.

Task 2: Complete the following diagram. Work in pairs.

Question 1 -----

Answer 1 -----

Descriptions of the two  
shores of the Pacific -----

Question 2 -----

Answer 2 -----

Two reasons for -----

Answer 2 -----

Task 3: Answer the following questions. Work in pairs.

1. Why does the author live half the year in Japan and half the year in the United States?
2. If the Japanese were to live in the United States, would the wider spaces occupied by them become busier?

3. Give one example that shows that the Japanese are much more concerned with rituals than are Americans.

Task 4: Answer the following questions. Work in groups.

10. What do you think about the author's view that Japanese are more concerned with rituals than Americans?

## Unit 2: Argument

Task 1: Read the following paragraphs and put them into the right order.

(a) On the surface, the comments made by men about women's abilities seem light-hearted. The same tired jokes about women drivers are repeated day in, and day out. This apparent light-heartedness does not conceal the real contempt that men feel for women. However much men sneer at women, their claims to superiority are not borne out by statistics. Let's consider the matter of driving, for instance. We all know that women cause far fewer accidents than men. They are too conscientious and responsible to drive like maniacs. But this is a minor quibble. Women have succeeded in any job you care to name. As politicians, soldiers, doctors, factory-hands, university professors, farmers, company directors, lawyers, bus-conductors, scientists and presidents of countries they have often put men to shame. And we must remember that they frequently succeed brilliantly in all these fields in addition to bearing and rearing children.

(b) The truth is that men cling to their supremacy because of their basic inferiority complex. They shun real competition. They know in their hearts that women are superior and they are afraid of being beaten at their own game. One of the most important tasks in the world is to achieve peace between the nations. You can be sure that if women were allowed to sit round the conference table, they would succeed brilliantly, as they always do, where men have failed for centuries. Some things are too important to be left to men!

(c) This is supposed to be an enlightened age, but you wouldn't think so if you could hear what the average man thinks of the average woman. Women won their independence years ago. After a long, bitter struggle, they now enjoy the educational opportunities as men in most parts of the world. They have proved repeatedly that

they are equal and often superior to men in almost every field. The hard-fought battle for recognition has been won, but it is by no means over. It is men, not women who still carry on the sex war because their attitude remains basically hostile. Even in the most progressive societies, women continue to be regarded as second-rate citizens. To hear some men talk, you'd think that women belonged to a different species!

(d) Yet men go on maintaining the fiction that there are many jobs women can't do. Top-level political negotiation between countries, business and banking are almost entirely controlled by men, who jealously guard their so-called 'rights.' Even in otherwise enlightened places like Switzerland women haven't been given the vote. This situation is preposterous! The arguments that men put forward to exclude women from these fields are all too familiar. Women, they say, are unreliable and irrational. They depend too little on cool reasoning and too much on intuition and instinct to arrive at decisions. They are not even capable of thinking clearly. Yet when women prove their abilities, men refuse to acknowledge them and give them their due. So much for a man's ability to think clearly!

Task 2: Complete the following diagrams. Work in pairs.

Men's view about women -----

An example of men's view  
about women -----

Counterargument to men's  
view about women -----

Men's view about women -----

Reasons for men's view  
about women -----

Counterargument to men's  
view about women -----

Reasons why men stick to their superiority

Conclusion

Task 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Why does the author say "The hard-fought battle for recognition has been won, but it is by no means over." in paragraph (c)?
2. Why does the author use the word "the fiction" in the first sentence in paragraph (d)?

Task 4: Discuss the following questions in groups and report the results to the rest of the class.

1. Do you agree to men's view about women and the reasons for supporting their view in paragraph (d)?
2. Do you agree to the conclusion?
3. What do you think about women's position in Japan?

### Unit 3: Classification

Task 1: Read the following text, paying attention to rules of good manners and social patterns.

#### "Introductions and Greetings"

Except on official occasions such as formal receptions for distinguished guests, American society has a certain amount of informality. This informality is seen in customs of introductions and greetings. On most occasions one need not be particularly conscious of social status. Americans generally ignore it. In spite of the informality, however, there are rules of good manners and social patterns that are followed.

There are rules for introducing people to each other. A younger person is generally introduced to an older one, a man is introduced to a woman, a guest to the host or hostess, and a person to the group. For instance, one would say, "Mrs. Gray, this is my younger sister Janet." Or "Margaret, may I present Mr. Bradley?" And then one adds, "Mr. Bradley, this is my friend Margaret Hoskins from Chicago." One could phrase the introduction like this: "Miss Hoskins, do you know Mr. Bradley?" One must be sure that each one knows the family name of the other. The usual reply to an introduction is, "How do you do?" or "How do you do? I'm pleased to meet you." Adding the name of the person just introduced is also common: "How do you do, Mr. Bradley?"

In many European countries handshaking is a social courtesy whenever people meet. The custom of shaking hands in the United States varies in different parts of the country and among different groups of people. It is somewhat difficult to make a set rule. Shaking hands is more likely to be reserved for formal occasions. When men are introduced, they generally shake hands. Women shake hands less frequently. Two women who meet for the first time often do not shake hands unless one is an especially honored guest. If a man and a woman are being introduced, they may or may not shake hands. Usually the woman extends her hand first. If an American does not shake hands when meeting an old acquaintance, he is not being impolite. He may be paying him the compliment of considering him one of the group.

When a person meets an acquaintance on the street, the most common form of greeting in America is "Hello." It is said on most informal occasions and often on quite formal ones. More formal greetings are "Good morning," "Good afternoon," and "Good evening." (Oddly enough, "Good night" and "Good-bye" are said only on parting.) The formal "How do you do?" is generally used when one is introduced to a stranger.

Quite often any greeting (except "How do you do?") is followed by the question "How are you?" Only occasionally does the questioner really want to stop and learn about your health. He simply asks the question to show friendly concern about you and to keep the "Hello" or "Good morning" from seeming too short. If a person does have time to explain how he is, he is not supposed to do so. An individual may be going through great mental or physical pain and still reply to the question "How are you?" by saying "Just fine. How are things with you?" or "Fine, thank you. Isn't it a beautiful day?" This habit can result in a rather ridiculous situation. When a patient comes to see a doctor, the receptionist may ask, "How are you?" The patient may reply, "Just fine," when it is quite obvious that if this were true, he would not be at the doctor's office.



On parting, one says, "Good-bye. It's been nice seeing you," or "I hope to see you again," or something of the sort. "Good night" is a farewell used late in the evening. "Good-bye" is suitable at any time.

Task 2: Complete the following chart.

### Rules of Good Manners and Social Patterns

Cases	Rules and Examples
When two persons are introduced to each other	
People shake hands in these cases	
When a person meets an acquaintance on the street	
When a person uses "How are you"	
When two persons part	

Task 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Do Americans generally care about social status in most cases of introductions and greetings?
2. Compare the custom of shaking hands in the United States with that in many European countries.

Task 4: Work in groups.

1. Read the second paragraph and discuss the formality of the expressions used there. Give some other expressions for introduction.

2. Read the last paragraph and give other expressions for parting. Discuss situations where they are used.

## 2. Rationale for the materials

The teaching materials have the following aims. The first one is to develop the students' ability to understand the rhetorical structures of the text, which leads to the general understanding of the text. The second one is to have the students focus on smaller units such as paragraphs and sentences and interpret them. The third one is to have the students relate the text to their own experiences, knowledge or ideas.

A number of teaching strategies have been devised to have the students aware of the rhetorical structures of the text. Carrel(1989) refers to text-mapping strategies. "Generally speaking, text mapping involves selecting key content from an expository passage and representing it in some sort of visual display(boxes, circles, connecting lines, tree diagrams, etc.) in which the relationships among the key ideas are made explicit."(p.249)

I used "functional boxes" advocated by Williams(1984) for the tasks in Unit 1 and Unit 2. He explains the strategy as follows. "In this type of exercise the 'skelton' of the text is represented by a diagram, consisting of a number of boxes. Each box has a label indicating the function, or purpose, of the various pieces of the text. The reader fills the box with notes from the appropriate pieces."(p.86) I used the chart for the task in Unit 3. I found that charts and tree diagrams are effective strategies for describing the text based on classification. In Task 1 in Unit 2, the students are presented with four paragraphs in a jumbled order and are asked to rearrange them into a coherent order. Reassembling sentences or paragraphs are exercises to have the students perceive the rhetorical structures of the text.

After understanding the general structure of the text, the students are asked to interpret some specific paragraphs or sentences. The reason for this procedure is that larger units give contexts or clues for understanding smaller units.

Finally the students are asked to express their knowledge or views about some passages or the whole text. This activity encourages them to interact with the text more deeply and helps them to develop their own thinking and perspective. The students usually do this task in pairs or in groups.

The text in Unit 1 is a first half of the first chapter 'A Busy Country and a Less Busy Country' in "A Personal View of Two Cultures" written by E. G. Seidensticker, published by Asahi Shuppan in 1983. The text in Unit 2 is a full text of the first chapter 'It's high time men ceased to regard women as second-class citizens of "For and Against" written by L. G. Alexander, published by Eichosha Shinsha and Longman in 1986. This is a text for advanced-level learners whose native language is not English. The text in Unit 3 is an extract from "Life in the U.S.A." (Revised Edition) written by G. G. Doty and J. Ross, published by Seibido, in 1976. This text, written in standard American English, is for foreign students who are interested in American life, culture, and thought. I selected these texts because the levels and styles of the languages and the topics are appropriate for advanced-level Japanese senior high school students.

### 3. A brief lesson plan

#### Unit 1: Comparison

For Task 1 the teacher gives the students three questions before they read the text and asks them to focus on them as they read through it. This is an exercise for extensive reading, which prepares the students for Task 2. The students do Task 2 in pairs and report the results to the rest of the class. The first lesson covers Task 1 and Task 2. The students do Task 3 in pairs. They are asked to read some paragraphs more intensively to answer the questions. Task 4 requires the students to discuss the question in groups. If they have trouble in discussing it, the teacher helps them by asking such questions as "What rituals do the Japanese observe in their language?", "What rituals do Americans follow in their daily lives?" and so forth. The second lesson covers Task 3 and Task 4.

#### Unit 2: Argument

The teacher tells the students to do Task 1, paying attention to the logical relationships between the paragraphs and the cohesive ties such as conjunctions and pronouns. The teacher asks the students to focus on the main ideas and supporting examples in each paragraph in doing Task 2. It may take about two lessons to do Task 1 and Task 2. The students do both tasks in pairs. The teacher asks the students to

work on Task 3 individually, which focuses on more specific details. For Task 4 the teacher asks the students to participate actively in the discussion. The teacher encourages them to talk about their own experiences and views about the subject. The teacher may divide the class into two groups, one for men's view about women and the other against it. Task 3 and Task 4 may take one lesson to finish.

### Unit 3: Classification

Task 1 asks the students to focus on rules rather than examples of good manners and social patterns, which will give them a general idea of the text. In Task 2, the teacher asks them to read each paragraph carefully in order to extract necessary information. The students do Task 1 and Task 2 in pairs, which may take them two lessons to finish. The students do Task 3 also in pairs. In Task 4 the students, who work in groups, are asked to evaluate the expressions for introduction in the text, to give other expressions, and to discuss situations where expressions for parting are used. The teacher may help them by telling them expressions which do not appear in the text. It may take them a lesson to do Task 3 and Task 4.

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