

Your Japanese Counterparts

Every day, students in Japan attend school just like you do. In some ways, their experiences are similar. But there are also great differences. Probably the most **obvious**¹ example is the school week. Students in Japan attend school six days a week, from Monday to Saturday. In the U.S., the school week is five days long. It starts on Monday and ends on Friday. Getting to school is also quite different. In America, students ride yellow school buses to school. In Japan, most students – even those of kindergarten age – travel to school on their own. They take public buses or subways to school if they are available.

Japanese schools have some different rules than those in America. Most Japanese schools separate the boys from the girls. Schools aren't **coeducational**² like in the U.S. The dress code in Japanese schools is also stricter. Most students in Japan must wear uniforms. Boys wear pants and jackets with stand-up collars. Girls wear blazers and skirts.

Like in America, Japanese students study subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies. But the alphabet they use to read is quite different. English speakers have 26 letters in their alphabet. In order to read a newspaper, Japanese students must master 2,000 Japanese characters! Traditional Japanese arts like *shodo* and *haiku* are also an important part of the classroom. *Shodo* is a form of **calligraphy**³ where students use a brush and ink to form special characters. *Haiku* is a short **traditional**⁴ Japanese poem made up of 17 syllables.

Japanese students love to play sports. They play baseball, soccer, basketball and tennis on club teams after school. Judo is also popular with boys and girls. However, Japanese learning doesn't end with **academics**⁵ and sports. Students in school are also taught to serve others. Every day classes are broken up into small teams. These teams clean the classrooms, halls, and yards of their school. In many elementary schools, students eat lunch together in their classrooms. The small teams take turns serving lunch to their classmates. It's no wonder Japanese schools have an extra day. The students are certainly very busy!

¹ **obvious** – easy to see and understand

² **coeducational** – educating boys and girls or men and women in the same school or classes

³ **calligraphy** – the art of beautiful handwriting, particularly in Japanese, Chinese or Persian

⁴ **traditional** – belonging to earlier styles or customs

⁵ **academics** – having to do with study or learning

Questions: Japan – Your Japanese Counterparts

1. Students in Japan go to school _____ than students in America.
 - a. earlier

- b. less
- c. more
- d. later

2. The language the author uses in this passage is

- a. 2000 letters long.
- b. casual.
- c. Japanese.
- d. proper.

3. The author's purpose in writing this passage is

- a. to inform the reader.
- b. to get the reader to visit Japan.
- c. to change the way American schools are run.
- d. to scare the reader.

4. In some ways, Japanese schools are _____ than American schools.

- a. more demanding
- b. less demanding
- c. friendlier
- d. more interested in sports

5. How are Japanese schools and American schools similar?

- a. Students attend school 6 days a week.
- b. All students attend coeducational schools.
- c. Teams of students clean the classrooms and yards of their schools.
- d. Students study mathematics, science, and social studies.

6. A *haiku* is a Japanese poem that consists of 17 syllables in three lines. The first line has 5 syllables, the second 7, and the third 5. Using this formula, try to write a *haiku* poem that describes a difference between Japanese and American schools.

Write your answer here.

7. What does the description of their schools tell you about the values of Japanese people?

Write your answer here.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence. Every day classes are broken up into small teams _____ take turns serving lunch to their classmates.

- a. but
- b. and
- c. yet
- d. or

9. Answer the following question based on the sentence below.

Japanese students learn traditional arts like *shodo* and *haiku* in the classroom.

In the sentence, the phrase Japanese students best answers which question?

- a. What?
- b. Why?
- c. Where?
- d. Who?

10. **Vocabulary Word:** obvious: easy to see and understand.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence:

Write your answer here.