

# Classroom VIDEO

Teacher's Notes

## GROWING UP IN MODERN JAPAN



Duration: 24

Years: 5-7

### Timing Information

Min	Topic
00:53	Opening Titles
01:52	Family Life
06:38	City & Country
11:36	School
17:13	After School
23:32	End Credits

### Program Summary

This video is a cultural study of life in modern Japan. It compares life, for the viewer, between Australia and this leading Asian country and then investigates the lifestyles of a country and city family on the island of Honshu.

### Background

The country of Japan is only one twentieth the size of Australia but has approximately six times as many people .

The nation is actually a group of islands with the four main islands being Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikaku, from north to south geographically.

### Questions for students

- 1) How small is Japan compared to Australia ?
- 2) How many more people live in Japan than Australia?
- 3) What does the population per land tells us about Australia and Japan ?
- 4) Name the four largest islands of Japan from north to south.

### Family Life

Family life is very important to Japanese families. Their history and traditions very much relate to their strong beliefs in honour and respect.

In this video, the Takami family demonstrates their life on a country village farm.

The family are a tight knit group and all contribute to the family's growing of rice. The parents cultivate the rice in paddies on their land and the children all help in the harvesting.

The harvesting includes the cutting of rice every day after school and the process of binding, drying for a fortnight and the taking off of the husk with a manual, foot-pedalled thrasher.

The Takami family enjoy working together and this continues on to their jovial mealtimes. They all help with meal preparation and a typical meal may consist of egg, raw fish, vegetables wrapped in seaweed to make a popular Japanese delicacy, sushi. The family may also have nuato which is made from fermented soya beans.

The Yoshida family live in the main city of Obara. Their life is different to the Takami family.

The father in the house is an advertising photographer and has his own studio. The mother looks after the children and realises that the father is busy and she has to respect that in him. She is the children's primary carer and takes care of the cooking, cleaning and taking the girls and their friends to attractions such as the mall , the park and the zoo.

The zoo is a particular favourite and the family love to visit the exhibits of 22,000 animals , including koalas , which have special Eucalyptus trees grown for them all over Japan.

### **Questions for Students**

- 1)Name the two families involved in the video.
- 2)Where do the Takami family live?
- 3) Describe the processes that the family use to harvest their rice.
- 4)What is a typical meal for a modern country family in Japan?
- 5)What does Mr. Yoshika do for a job ?
- 6)Why do you think that the mother is always looking after the children ?
- 7) What is one of the most famous attractions on Obara?
- 8) Give one important fact about the zoo in Obara.

### **City and Country**

The city and country of Japan are diverse just like those in Australia.

The cities, like that of Obara with a population of two million, are suburbs of industry and the many apartments and the tall multi-storey buildings reflect the advances of Japan in the 20th century .

City life reflects this surge of industrialisation and technology in the surroundings of the city. The young people of Japan display western influence and “Americanisation” through the clothes they wear and the fast foods they enjoy on their outings.

The country is a little more sprawling although , due to the limited land, small parcels of arable areas near villages make up the farms.

Country life in modern Japan is not as fast pace as that in the city. The young people in the farming areas play outside much more and interact with their environment , through such activities as fishing, as part of their recreation. They also are significantly involved in cultural development with kite-making, calligraphy and paper art being popular past-times.

Festivals are important in both city and country life. The traditional celebrations of the Emperor's Birthday, New Year's Day and Children's Day .

### **Questions for Students**

- 1) What kind of buildings are in the main city?
- 2) Why are there so many apartments and multi- storey buildings?

3)Name two things that show a “western “ influence on young people in the city .

4)Describe the land in the country.

5) What do the children do in the country for recreation?

6)Make a list of the cultural activities children can be involved in.

7) Name all the festivals mentioned in the program.

### **School Life**

School in Japan follows the same principles of education as other parts of the world. The children of Japan are taught the skills needed to be literate and numerate in a functioning society and are enriched in learning through a variety of other curriculum areas.

In the city the schools are often close and the older children help walk the younger ones to school every day. Once at school they play climbing or ball games and have fun in the playground of almost 1000 children. In class the children have one teacher for the whole year and the lessons include Japanese , maths , music, science and geography.

Japanese children in primary school have to learn between 700 and 800 symbols called Kunji that represent words and phrases in their country.

In the higher classes the children start to move from class to class and begin to learn English in Year Seven.

Similarly, in the country the schooling works much the same way. Although the country children may have

to walk longer to school and may have as little as 100 in their whole school they follow the set curriculum.

In both schools, tradition continues to play a large role. The children have to remove their outside shoes and wear inside “slippers” at home and elsewhere, they help serve and clean up at lunch. This practise stems from after the Second World War when the Japanese government started supplying lunches to hungry children.

Japanese children do not have recess and are their own cleaners. After classes they clean everything from their desks to the toilets.

### **Question for Students.**

- 1) What is a typical Japanese school day include?
- 2) What is the name of the Japanese symbols the children have to learn ?
- 3) Outline three tasks Japanese children do as part of their day that are different to Australia.

### **After School**

After school in modern Japan has many different facets.

Japan is a very learning centred country with education and being one’s best is of utmost importance.

Due to this many parents send their sons and daughters to “cram schools” or Chuko.

Here the students revise and add to their learning so as to best meet their own potential.

However, some families such as the Yoshika and the Takimas feel the strain on young people and prefer for their children to learn through socialisation with their friends by playing games, talking, reading and learning origami.

### **Questions for Students**

- 1) What is a “cram -school”?
- 2) Why do students go to “cram-schools”?
- 3) What other ways do Japanese parents help their children become richer learners?

### **Follow Up ideas**

This section provides some ideas for the teachers and students on life in Modern Japan.

\*Label the map of Modern Japan and identify the areas that the Takami and the Yoshida families came from. Look at the surrounding geography and locate Japan in reference to Australia.

\*Reproduce scale maps of Japan and Australia. Use the templates to find out how many Japans would fit into Australia’s land mass.

\*Brainstorm a mind map for each family directly relating their life experiences to where they live? Have children make a comparative list between similarities and differences of city and country children. Extend the activity by including a third column for Australian children.

\*Research and write a procedure on rice harvesting. Publish and label the steps.

\*Make sushi following an oral procedure given by the teacher.

\*Discuss the significance of the mother’s thoughts on her husband as a primary care-giver. Debate if this is a fair comment, acknowledge that all cultures have varying beliefs.

\*On the internet explore the Japanese zoos. Write a brief blurb advertising the zoo.

\* Explore Japan’s main industries and their vast technological inventions and interests. Choose one particular invention and give a brief report on its making and the successes that have come to the country due to this.

\*Write an exposition on why you think that so many people live in apartments and buildings. Conclude with your view on this type of living for young people in a modern world.

\*Develop interest centres in your classroom and have rotating groups working on kite building, Origami and calligraphy.

\*Research a Japanese festival and design and make a diorama displaying the unique attributes associated with the celebration.

\*Create a matrix for school in Japan and in Australia. Read and comprehend the ideas and fill in table.

\*Research an aspect of the Second World War. In pairs, report to class on topic. Class reports work in a jigsaw to give the class a more complete view of war.

\*Read Sadako and the Thousand Cranes. Discuss what significance that this would have on modern children.

\*Teach some popular Japanese symbols. Use as an art lesson with interesting black on bright paper.

\*Debate on the idea of serving lunches and cleaning at school. Should the children have to do it ?

\*Discuss “cram-schools”. Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of such tuition.

## Credits

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