

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HOMEWORK 11

NAME (FIRST AND LAST): _____ GRADE: _____

Read the following exchange and answer the questions that follow. (Web resource: <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/answerman/2016-02-08/98403>, adapted for educational purposes)

Julian asks:

*After watching a lot of anime, depending on the **demographic**, a good chunk of it tends to take place in a high school setting or the characters, while not always, range from the ages 14 to 17. This has led me to believe or assume writers of anime or Japanese fans think high school is the highlight of their lives and that they think they are already mature at that point in time. If this is true, why is that? High school here in America is arguably an important time in our lives, but things don't really happen for us until after high school when we go get careers and jobs, but the way anime portrays it feels like there is nothing but a boring behind-the-desk corporate job after high school with no time for anything fun. Could that be true or is anime, being all fiction, just exaggerating life after high school?*

Response:

You know, I wish I had a **definitive** answer for you. I've been trying to get to the bottom of this question for decades now, discussing it with friends both Japanese and Japan-obsessed. I've studied the country and the underlying psychology. I got nothin'. Well, I have a theory or two, but nothing I would call definitive.

First I should point out that Japan's obsession with teenagers and high school extends well beyond anime. A good percentage of TV dramas take place at high school and involve teens. Same with movies. The pop idols that absorb a significant portion of Japan's acting roles end up playing high schoolers well into their late 20s. This is a genre of entertainment known as "seishun" (青春) or "youth." That kanji literally means "green (with youthful **implications**) spring (season)" -- and that's basically how the culture views adolescence: a fleeting, beautiful time in which the foundation of one's life takes root, and things start to sprout. It's basically the life **trajectory** equivalent to cherry blossoms.

So many unexplainable Japanese quirks emerge from Japan's obsession with all things *seishun*. The deep, unshakable love of cute. The questionable high school uniform fetish. The middle-aged women in professional roles pitching their voices up high and dressing in a way that appeals to this particular phenomenon (so maybe a little young for their age). Teen idols, male and female, and the eerily provocative ways they're often photographed.

The thing is, if you ask someone who lives in Japan about these things, they tend to not notice them much at all. It's only when most of your knowledge about a country comes from the popular culture that it seems like a national obsession. Most people go about

their daily lives, consumed with the **minutiae** of their jobs and raising their kids. All the stuff we love over here from a distance is mostly just background noise that they partake in occasionally, much the same way as whatever's currently on rotation on a Top 40 radio station.

Personally, you couldn't pay me enough money to go back and live my teen years over again. They were a hormone and depression-fueled hell from which I could not escape. Life got way, way better afterwards. And while a good chunk of my favorite anime involve teenagers, I'm pretty tired of hearing the same stories about them over and over again. I'm pushing 36 over here, and can only marinate in that era of my life for so long. But the daily grind for a Japanese salaryman is pretty punishing, with long hours, next to no non-work-related fraternization, the stress of child rearing and all that. Many people do look back at those years fondly, when choices were simpler, when you didn't have to worry so much about losing your job or keeping food on the table. When you already looked cute without having to spend a fortune on cosmetic products and weight loss programs. When you had boundless energy, relative freedom, and an active social life. When you actually had time to hang out with friends. And the small things like your after-school club and the school festival were such fun times, in **retrospect**. The draw of nostalgia is strong if your daily life is stressful and your youth wasn't a **sodden**, miserable hellscape.

Ultimately, I like to compare Japan's obsession with *seishun* to America and our superheroes. If you look at the movies and TV shows we make, we're clearly obsessed with them, and that obsession is obviously pointing to something deeper. One wonders from the outside if we're all waiting for some **deus ex machina** figure to come along and save us all from our doom, or if we fantasize about becoming a normal person with deity-like abilities ourselves. And there's likely something to those theories. But as much as one might be able to infer about a culture from the myths it creates, it's very hard to apply those underlying theories to the daily lives of real people. Because to most of us, at the end of the day, it's all just entertainment. Or is it?

VOCABULARY/READING COMPREHENSION

The following sentences can be found in the reading selection that you have just read. Guess the meaning of the underlined words, or share your prior knowledge. Copy down a definition from any dictionary.

1. After watching a lot of anime, depending on the **demographic**, a good chunk of it tends to take place in a high school setting or the characters, while not always, range from the ages 14-17.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

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2. You know, I wish I had a **definitive** answer for you.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

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3. That kanji literally means "green (with youthful **implications**) spring (season)" -- and that's basically how the culture views adolescence: a fleeting, beautiful time in which the foundation of one's life takes root, and things start to sprout. It's basically the life **trajectory** equivalent to cherry blossoms.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

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4. Most people go about their daily lives, consumed with the **minutiae** of their jobs and raising their kids.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

5. And the small things like your after-school club and the school festival were such fun times, in **retrospect**.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

6. The draw of nostalgia is strong if your daily life is stressful and your youth wasn't a **sodden**, miserable hellscape.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

7. One wonders from the outside if we're all waiting for some **deus ex machina** figure to come along and save us all from our doom, or if we fantasize about becoming a normal person with deity-like abilities ourselves.

Your inference/prior knowledge: _____

Definition: _____

READING COMPREHENSION/REFLECTION

1. What is Julian's question, and why does he ask it? Is it a good question? Explain.

2. Summarize the response to Julian's inquiry.

3. What evidence or examples does the responder use to support his or her claim(s)? Does the writer discuss the evidence or examples in a persuasive way? Explain.

GRAMMAR

FOUR KINDS OF SENTENCES

Key Information

A **declarative sentence** is a statement. It usually ends with a period.

The eggs are in the refrigerator.

An **imperative sentence** is a command or request. The subject "you" is understood. An imperative sentence usually ends with a period.

Bring me the eggs from the refrigerator.

An **interrogative sentence** asks a question. It ends with a question mark.

Will you bring me the eggs?

An **exclamatory sentence** expresses strong emotion. It ends with an exclamation point.

Bring me the eggs now!

■ A. Identifying Sentence Types

In the space provided, indicate whether each sentence is *declarative*, *imperative*, *interrogative*, or *exclamatory*.

- _____ 1. Always make sure there are good batteries in your smoke detector.
- _____ 2. It's pizza day in the cafeteria!
- _____ 3. I would like to see your rough drafts by Monday.
- _____ 4. Read that again, but this time with feeling.
- _____ 5. Do you have a hall pass, young man?

■ B. Using the Various Sentence Types

Classify each of the following sentences according to the sentence type. Then rewrite the sentence to make it the type indicated in parentheses.

- _____ 1. Did you listen to that tape yet? (imperative)

- _____ 2. Do not turn on the television until your homework is finished. (declarative)

- _____ 3. Some people think *The Thin Man* is the funniest movie of all. (exclamatory)

- _____ 4. Watch out for the edge of that cliff! (interrogative)

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Key Information

A **sentence fragment** is an incomplete sentence punctuated as though it were a complete sentence.

A sentence fragment can often be corrected by joining it to a main clause. Sometimes it may be necessary to add missing words to make a complete sentence.

Following are samples of the three basic errors that cause sentence fragments, each followed by one possible correction.

NO SUBJECT: Hal drove that car last week. **Says it was fast.**

CORRECTED: Hal drove that car last week, and he says it was fast.

NO COMPLETE VERB: Its annoying bark going on for hours.

CORRECTED: Its annoying bark has been going on for hours.

NO MAIN CLAUSE: My mother was mad. **Because we were two hours late.**

CORRECTED: My mother was mad because we were two hours late.

■ A. Identifying Sentence Fragments

Write whether each of the following items contains a *fragment* or two complete *sentences*.

- _____ 1. He has become too interested in his personal statistics. Like so many other professional athletes these days.
- _____ 2. The dance will be held in the gym. Which is going to be decorated.
- _____ 3. The computer class that was going to be offered every Monday has been canceled. There apparently is a scheduling conflict.
- _____ 4. After staking out the old warehouse for two weeks. The detective arrested the smugglers.

■ B. Correcting Sentence Fragments

Choose any two of the items above that you identified as containing fragments and rewrite each so that the fragment is corrected.

THE END

