

Hyakunin Isshu Cards



Besides *hanafuda*, there are two main types of Japanese *karuta*, *Iroha Karuta* (see p.48) and *Utagaruta*. The latter is composed of the word *uta* (meaning "sung poem") and *karuta*, although it is now quite common to call them *Hyakunin Isshu* (or *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*).

While the game's rules are the same as for *Iroha Karuta*, playing *Hyakunin Isshu* requires some literary knowledge. In fact, this game & poetry variant is derived from a famous book of classic Japanese poems, *Hyakunin Isshu* (literally meaning "one hundred people, one poem [each]") assembled in the Middle-Ages by Fujiwara no Sadaie (he lived in the Ogura mountain in Kyōto from 1162 to 1241).

Originally, only Aristocrats had access to education and could play this very expensive game, but the progress made in printing techniques and improvements in the standard

of living during the Edo era made it accessible to most people. This game is therefore not about finding proverbs or names of animals, but ancient poems. These 100 poems are written on *yomifuda* cards. The "reader" picks a card and reads the poem aloud, while the other players have to find the *torifuda* card containing the last verses of the poem. Being able to win implies a good visual memory, good reflexes and knowing the 100 *waka* (Japanese poems including 5 verse of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables) by heart.

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