

**高校生対象・英語エッセイコンテスト**  
**第10回 IIBC エッセイコンテストの受賞者が決定**  
～最優秀賞は攻玉社高等学校1年 正岡 優一さん～

日本で TOEIC® Program を実施・運営する、国際ビジネスコミュニケーション協会 (IIBC) (所在地: 東京都千代田区永田町、理事長: 室伏貴之) では、毎年、高校生を対象に「私を変えた身近な異文化体験」をテーマに英語エッセイコンテスト「IIBC エッセイコンテスト」を開催しています。10 回目を迎えた 2018 年は、本選に 119 校 181 作品、奨励賞に 25 校・1,508 作品のご応募をいただきました。このたび本選 181 作品の中から、審査を経て、最優秀賞(1名)、優秀賞(2名)\*、特別賞(5名)、日米協会会長賞(3名) 計 9 名(ダブル受賞者 2 名含む)の受賞者が決定いたしましたので、発表いたします。表彰式は 2018 年 11 月 10 日(土)13 時より、ホテルニューオータニ「シリアスの間」にて開催を予定しています。\*今年度は、2 名の点数が同じだったため優秀賞を 2 名とし、優良賞は該当者なしとしました。

■本選受賞者: 9 名(うち 2 名はダブル受賞) ※受賞者のエッセイ本文および内容は 2 ページ目以降でご覧いただけます。

<最優秀賞(1名)>



まさおか ゆういち 正岡 優一さん 攻玉社高等学校 1年  
タイトル: "The Little Ball Moves the Big Ball"

<優秀賞(2名)>



ほしみ ゆか 星見 友香さん 東京都立小石川中等教育学校 4年  
タイトル: The Invisible Wall



こん ゆりこ 近 由梨子さん 頌栄女子学院高等学校 1年  
タイトル: An Eye-Opener for Me

<特別賞(5名)>



シーマンズ ひまりさん 獨協埼玉中学高等学校 2年 タイトル: Discovering the Neighborhood  
さかい とうむ 酒井 道武さん 早稲田大学系属早稲田渋谷シンガポール校 2年 タイトル: Beyond Language  
やびく りん 屋比久 凛さん ラ・サール高等学校 1年 タイトル: What a Lady Taught Me  
ひらばやし しこう 平林 志康さん 聖光学院高等学校 2年 タイトル: Jyoudan  
たなか ゆうだい 田中 裕大さん 津田学園高等学校六年制コース 2年 タイトル: ATARIMAE is Not Normal

<日米協会会長賞(3名)>



シーマンズ ひまりさん 獨協埼玉中学高等学校 2年 タイトル: Discovering the Neighborhood (特別賞も受賞)  
たなか ゆうだい 田中 裕大さん 津田学園高等学校六年制コース 2年 タイトル: ATARIMAE is Not Normal (特別賞も受賞)  
こ ゆう 呉 悠さん 東京都立小石川中等教育学校 4年 タイトル: My Identity

【第10回 IIBC エッセイコンテスト概要】	
テーマ	『私を変えた身近な異文化体験』 家族や友人、先生など、身近な相手とのコミュニケーションにおいてどのような「異文化」に出会い、何を感じ、考え、どのように「異文化」を持つ相手とのコミュニケーションギャップを乗り越えたか、英語で表現する。
表彰内容	【本選】1校2名(2作品)までの応募、受賞者9名を決定。 【奨励賞】1校20名(20作品)以上の応募校へ贈られる賞。 【日米協会会長賞】一般社団法人 日米協会より本選応募作品の中から、国際理解や国際交流の観点で優れた作品3名に贈られる賞。

受賞 9 作品、奨励賞受賞校および同コンテストの応募要項につきましては、  
IIBC エッセイコンテスト <http://www.iibc-global.org/iibc/activity/essay.html> をご覧ください。

**本リリースに関するお問い合わせ先**

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## ■受賞 9 作品

### <最優秀賞>

まさおか ゆういち こうぎょくしゃ  
正岡 優一さん 攻玉社高等学校 1 年

エッセイ内容: スポーツは言語を超えたコミュニケーションである、という実感が共有出来たらと思い、エッセイにまとめました。オランダ語の壁でも、英語の壁でも、乗り越えることができるスポーツは、ときに大国同士を結び付ける力をも持ち得るのです。

#### “The Little Ball Moves the Big Ball”

The eastern sun broke the silence of darkness and announced the beginning of another winter day to the little town of Leuven, Belgium. It wasn't always a pleasant experience, to make my way, through the freezing dawn, to a Kindergarten where I had no one to talk to.

It was when I was 6 years old that my family moved to Belgium, where I had no choice but to go to a local kindergarten where everyone spoke Dutch, a language that I did not understand at all. Of course, I wasn't completely helpless, for I knew the two words: “toilet!” and “help!”, both of which are, needless to say, English. So it was, that I was on my way to another day at the Dutch kindergarten, not expecting to find out that I had a universal means of communication: football. As soon as I saw a crowd gathering around a football in the playground, I made my mind up to join them, and I scored! Occupied by excitement and joy, me and the Belgian boys rushed to each other and embraced one another. This is how my friendship started on that alien planet, and after ten years, it still remains in my mind as an unforgettable moment.

It is more than evident that this experience had taught me a universal and timeless law: sports are a universal language. Communication can be about conveying and sharing emotions without the use of language: which include, playing sports, dancing to music and sharing pieces of art. They are a universal means of communication that allows anyone to get closer to anyone from anywhere of the globe; and that is where I find the solution to overcoming cultural and language barriers, especially in an entangled world as today's.

As I moved onto primary school and joined a British school in Brussels, there no longer was a barrier for me, for I knew what to do. I was especially fortunate, because it was on my first year at the new British school that the 2010 Football World Cup was held. Every morning we would find ourselves high-fiving each other to share the excitements of last night's game, and every breaktime we would be laughing at our original goal performances. It has been a truly glorious time to be connected interculturally with one little ball.

To further expand on this, let us look into a historical example of a sport connecting, not just individuals, but also nations. In 1971, at the World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, a 19-year old American player hopped on to the bus of the Chinese national team. All the Chinese players on board directed an eye of suspicion at the unexpected guest, but the silence was soon broken when one of the Chinese players started talking to the American through an interpreter, which resulted in the exchanging of pictures and T-shirts, despite the Chinese government's prohibition on having contact with the players of the U.S. After this incident was reported worldwide, Chairman Mao Zedong perceived this as a chance, and invited the Americans to a Ping Pong competition in China, only 3 days after the event. With the Cold War at its height, this tiny connection through sport united political enemies, broke 22 years of diplomatic silence, and even lead to the visiting of China by U.S. president Nixon on the following year.

It must not go without saying that Japan is lucky to have the opportunity to play the same role it played in the ping pong diplomacy in the next two years: 2019 Rugby World Cup, and the 2020 Olympic Games. Now, I strongly feel that it is my job to make use of my experience and my linguistic abilities to be of some help in globally connecting our world in Japan again, like how I built friendship in Belgium and how Ping-Pong once formed international relationships.

Let me conclude with Mao Zedong's comment on Ping Pong diplomacy:

“The little ball moves the big ball.”

I firmly believe that the same goes with football, and every other sport, and that sports are always there for you to break and overcome any intercultural silence.

<優秀賞>

ほしみ ゆか  
星見 友香さん 東京都立小石川中等教育学校 4年

エッセイ内容:小さい頃のある友人との関わり方を思い出したことにより、文化や背景の違う他者との間に感じる「見えない壁」は、自分の心や知識が作り出してしまっていることに気づき、その取り除き方を学んだ。

### The Invisible Wall

This summer, I had my kindergarten class reunion and I was able to meet a lot of old friends. Although I had very good time, there was one thing that I couldn't stop thinking about, a girl I could not communicate with naturally. Her name is Sayaka and she is a girl with Down's Syndrome. When I talked with her, she could not keep up with my talking speed and I gave up in the middle of our conversation. The fact that I could not enjoy talking with her like I do with others discouraged me. On my way home, I thought that she might also have been disappointed with my attitude, and she must have been hurt.

However, I changed my mind and said to myself that it cannot be helped. She has a handicap and I do not. At the dinner table, I talked about my reunion and about my feeling toward what happened with Sayaka. My mother said "It is sad to hear that. I remember her well. You used to get along well with her. You looked so happy when you were with her." I was surprised to hear what my mother said, and suddenly I remembered the times we spent together. In those days, I loved chatting with her because she listened to me and always kept smiling. We also played hide- and- seek almost every day.

What changed me? I have not only gained a lot of knowledge, but also developed a biased attitude toward differences. Even without any particular bad intention, we unconsciously tend to separate the world we live in from the world we do not. Sometimes this separation is "abled" and "disabled." The distinction makes us feel that there is a wall between "us" and "them."

Who builds this wall? I thought that the wall has always been there, but it was not true. The wall is made by people who have prejudice. In this case I had built the wall.

When I met Sayaka again at the reunion, it changed me. When I was a little child, I did not think that Sayaka and I lived in different worlds. We were just friends, we went to the same kindergarten, we played in the same room and we laughed at the same time. There was no wall between us.

When I went to Australia, for a home stay last summer, I could not speak well with my host family. I spoke slowly and I could not understand what they told me, just like Sayaka could not understand me when we met again. However, they managed to communicate with me by speaking slowly with gestures. There was no wall between us even though we have different backgrounds. If I had tried to communicate with Sayaka like them, we could have had fun like we used to.

A prejudiced preconception makes an invisible wall, and the person who builds the wall is "ourselves". Discovering this fact made me recognize that anything is possible by removing the wall between others; between "abled" and "disabled", "a native" and "a foreigner" or "white" and "black". It can also be removed between religions, ways of thinking, and cultures. We must always remember the one who builds the wall is "ourselves". It is not always there, like when Sayaka and I were small children.

I think I will meet many people who have various backgrounds from now. Although I may be surprised with the differences, I should always remember this experience. By remembering this, my world will be infinitely extended. Taking advantage of my experience, if I can meet Sayaka again, I am sure I can communicate with her just like we used to. Now, I know how to remove the wall.

<優秀賞>

近 由梨子さん 頌栄女子学院高等学校 1年

エッセイ内容:文化の違いが日常的に見られるアメリカでユダヤ人のクラスメートと出会う。初めは違いに戸惑ったが、相手を受け入れ尊敬することで理解し合うことができた。この経験は現在の学校生活では勿論、将来にも役立つと確信している。

### An Eye-Opener for Me

I believe we all have experiences that completely change the way we see and think about the world around us. For me, the watershed was when I was in the 5th grade during Christmas season during an elementary school in New York when we decided to decorate our classroom with Christmas trees and to have a Secret Santa gift exchange. This was one of the critical moments where I became aware of a different culture when introduced to a Jewish girl, Rebecca, in our class. It was she who opened my eyes.

As a Jewish person, she celebrated not Christmas but Hanukkah. To address her religious beliefs, our teacher promptly decided to embellish our classroom with both Christmas and Hanukkah decorations, and to give her a present on the last day of Hanukkah instead of doing Secret Santa. While my classmates liked the mixture of the ornaments, I struggled to understand the reason why we couldn't celebrate Christmas as a whole class, and became somehow disinclined to talk to Rebecca because I felt she had altered the Christmas event towards an unfamiliar direction.

With my parents' advice, my struggle came to a sudden end with my basic research of the U.S. I learned that the U.S. is diverse in religions and cultures, as the country has accepted immigrants from all over the world. According to a recent Gallup poll, approximately three-quarters of Americans identify with a Christian faith, and about 6% with a non-Christian faith including Judaism, Islam, and others. Conversely, I had never noticed any religious or cultural differences at school, or within my local community while I lived in Japan. In my opinion, this is mainly because Japanese people in general don't have strong religious faith in Buddhism or Shintoism and are, in general, more ethnically and culturally homogeneous than other developed countries. From the research, I presumed that our teacher already knew how to handle the situation through her similar experiences in the past because of her time living in a multi-cultural environment like the U.S.

After the Christmas season, we had another small event in spring called "Passover", which is also a Jewish tradition. I did some research on Passover beforehand and decided, despite my anxiety, to talk to Rebecca about this. When speaking to her, she was first surprised at my knowledge about the event, then looked glad to be recognized for her faith, before finally providing me with detailed information about the occasion including what she ate at dinner and its importance for her family. In turn, she suddenly inquired about cultural events in Japan. I elaborated on my favorite events such as doing a gift exchange at Christmas and throwing Halloween parties with humorous costumes. She listened to my explanation with an interested look and then told me that I was so open to accept other cultures' events and love them as my own.

Rebecca's keen insights were definitely an eye-opener for me. As she accurately pointed out, I and probably most Japanese people already have a strong cultural foundation, so we can introduce new elements of different cultures into our own and treat them as if they were inherited from our own ancestors. After the Passover, Rebecca and I suddenly were closer and became good friends. On top of that, I now feel no fear in encountering differences not only between cultures and religions, but in the unique thoughts and ideas which I often find among my classmates, even after moving back to Japan, because I noticed that all I have to do is enjoy unfamiliar things around me.

Through these experiences, I realized the key to understanding and communicating with others is a solid foundation of tolerance and respect, which we all have the capacity to learn and foster. In the near future, I would like to study abroad and obtain a job at an international organization to make the most of my English skills and indulge my curiosity about the world. Although there may be a variety of conflicts when studying and working overseas, I am confident of overcoming them with an attitude of tolerance and respect, and of interacting with more people around me at the same time.

<特別賞/日米協会会長賞>

シーマンズ ひまりさん 獨協埼玉中学高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容:

自分の住んでいる地域の盆栽の文化と出会うことで、私の視野は大きく広がった。これは、伝統文化に対して無関心であった自分が、今こうしてローカルな視点から文化を学び、人と交流するようになったストーリー。

### Discovering the Neighborhood

How far away from home would you need to be to experience a new culture? Not a lot of people would say that an adventure could easily take place in their neighborhood. But for me, adventure is just around the corner. You might be guessing that I live in a multicultural community. Well, you've got me wrong. Actually, I live in Omiya, which is located in Saitama Prefecture of Japan. And my story is about what I discovered about myself and my local culture.

About a year ago, I was the typical example of how younger generations don't care much about traditional culture. Even after 15 years of living in Omiya, I didn't know anything about its bonsai culture. My first visit to the Omiya Bonsai Village was with my parents.

I felt a sudden strangeness while walking through the historic village after so many years of living nearby. After that my parents and I would go back once or twice a month to walk around. But since I had never paid attention to my local culture, I couldn't see what made it charismatic or special right away. My lack of cultural understanding bothered me a lot. So I began reading books and articles about bonsai and sometimes visited The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum. A couple of months passed and I had reached a very basic level of cultural awareness. Although I was still a beginner, it felt good when I could tell the differences between various bonsai styles or shapes. I started learning through actual experience when I started volunteering at The Omiya Bonsai Art Museum. My job was to assist professional bonsai gardeners in workshops. This was a really refreshing way to learn about bonsai and the village. Every workshop made me think about what I could do to make the most out of my experiences.

Suddenly my inner dialog was like, "wow, I've changed a lot." And I didn't want to miss this moment in which I was so prepared to take action. So then I wrote articles and reports about what I had learned through volunteer work and shared this information with my family and friends. And as you might expect, they were surprised by my enthusiasm for bonsai. More and more people read my articles and gave me feedback. Some even reached out to me through mutual friends.

Connecting with people came with questions that made me dive deeper into the bonsai community. And then I heard that inner dialog again, "How have I come this far?". I organized a bonsai workshop and interpreted for a foreign student. I put together bonsai starter kits for 20 international students. And I'm now organizing an event for exchange students in cooperation with members of my local Rotary International Club.

Pretty good story right? But it's not just a story. I've done more than just develop respect and understanding towards the bonsai community. I've become a part of my local culture and helped others take away the most from their experiences. I've made supportive and inspiring friends both inside and outside of the bonsai community. And last but not least, I've noticed my inner dialogue becoming more positive and self-encouraging.

I would've never thought that the culture in Omiya could take me from cultural apathy to activism. It was really incredible to notice how a small town I had grown up near had so much to offer to me and my community. My local culture helped me find a purpose to take action and make a difference. I learned that when we take action, we find people and people find us. And that's just what made me a better and happier person. For that, I love my traditional culture and local community for giving me an adventure. I'm happy to call this place my home.

## <特別賞>

酒井 道武さん 早稲田大学系属早稲田渋谷シンガポール校 2年

エッセイ内容:異なる文化や歴史を持つ人々とコミュニケーションをとるためには共通の言語を話さなければいけないと思いついて入っていたが、ロシアで行った和太鼓のパフォーマンスを通して、言語以外にも人々と心をつなぐ手段があることを学んだ。

### Beyond Language

I used to think that language was the only tool to communicate with people. There had been many instances where I witnessed people having trouble communicating with people from different countries. That's why I assumed that it would also be difficult for me to communicate with foreign people if we didn't speak the same language.

My view of communication changed when I was in secondary school. One day, I was given a chance to go to Russia to introduce *wadaiko* (Japanese traditional drums) to the local people. Even though I had given many *wadaiko* performances before, it was the first time that I had performed in a far-away country. I was quite nervous because I had never been to a place where I couldn't understand a single word. Therefore, I was worried that I would have difficulty communicating with people there. The moment I reached Khabarovsk airport, I realized that there wasn't much English used on signboards. I found it very strange to be in an environment filled with odd written characters which didn't make any sense to me. I felt all the more nervous because I had never experienced this feeling before. I was also not sure whether our performance would be appreciated by people from a completely different culture.

Our first performance was at an old folk's home where retired soldiers lived. Before the performance, I couldn't calm myself down because I wasn't confident about our performance. 'Will the audience like our music?' The more I thought about it, the faster my heart beat. Then, my tense feelings melted away when we went on stage. We were welcomed by a warm round of applause. My negative feelings disappeared, and I started to feel more confident. While we were performing, many people in the audience were clapping and getting into the rhythm. A lot of smiling faces in the audience gave me a good feeling about our performance, and before I knew it, I was enjoying the moment from the bottom of my heart. The performance ended with a big round of applause, and I was happy that the audience enjoyed our performance as much as I did.

After the performance, one of the retired soldiers came to talk to us. He was old but fit and looked a little intimidating. He tried to speak to us but unfortunately, he couldn't speak English so we had to ask an interpreter to help us. The man told us that he fought against Japan during the Russo Japanese war and didn't have a good feeling toward Japan. Hearing this, I became anxious because I had studied about this war and thought that he was angry with us. 'Maybe, he wants to tell us how upset he was because we came from a country he hates, and he wants us to leave immediately.' I felt panicked. Then, suddenly, the serious expression on the ex-soldier's face turned to a gentle smile. He told us that he was moved by the sound that the Japanese drums made, and he said that it is important to preserve and promote this amazing Japanese culture. I was surprised that just the beat of a drum could move a person and make him open his heart to us. I was also happy that music triggered a person to talk to us and accept our culture even though we didn't share a common language.

Before this experience, I always thought that music was just a form of entertainment. Now, I found out that it is a great communication tool, and it can express things that can't be explained by language. Moreover, it can move the audience's heart regardless of their history and culture. When we are suddenly put into a situation where we are surrounded by languages that we are unfamiliar with, it may be quite scary. Even if we can't use language to make ourselves understood in such a situation, we should try to communicate using a different method. We should never give up just because we don't speak the same language. After all, we have many other ways to communicate with people. My first trip to Russia truly changed my perspective on communication.

<特別賞>

やびくりん  
屋比久 凜さん ラ・サール高等学校 1年

エッセイ内容:飛行機で偶然乗り合わせたアメリカ人女性との会話を通して、私が気付かぬうちに作っている外国人との間の壁の存在を感じた。グローバル化が進む社会で外国の人々と円滑な関係を築くためにも我々は壁を取りはらわなければならない。

### What a Lady Taught Me

I was born in Okinawa, and now I go to high school in Kagoshima, and live in the school dormitory. When the summer vacation starts, I fly back to Okinawa. It takes me only an hour from Kagoshima to Okinawa by airplane. I often read comics during the flight, but this time was different. The woman sitting next to me was not Japanese. For the first 20 minutes I sat there not knowing what to say, but eventually, I got up the nerve, and talked to her. She was so friendly that we started chatting and I found out that she had lived in Kagoshima for almost ten years, and was traveling to Okinawa for the first time. I asked her various questions such as how well she could speak Japanese, and how well she could use chopsticks. She was so kind that she answered all my questions, but I noticed she began to look a little uncomfortable. Soon after the conversation finished, our plane arrived at Okinawa, and we parted. However, I was worried about the strained look on her face, and I suspected I might have offended her in some way. I wanted to apologize to her, but unfortunately there was no opportunity to meet her again. After I got back home, I began thinking about what had made her feel upset. It occurred to me that my questions had emphasized the gap between Japanese people and people from other countries, and I had made her feel alienated even though I hadn't intended to. She had lived in Japan for almost ten years, so she was not a foreign tourist, but a person who had decided to live in Japan. She may have felt that she was Japanese in a sense, and it made her feel she was being treated like a foreigner.

I should have spoken to her about what I talk about with my Japanese friends, instead of asking questions which made her feel like an outsider. This experience taught me that we sometimes draw a line between ourselves and foreigners, and make them feel alienated though we don't mean to. Instead we ought to treat them as we treat Japanese people especially if we find out that they have lived in Japan for a long time.

I had another opportunity to talk with an American the other day in Okinawa. He asked me the way to the monorail station, so I offered to guide him there. On our way, I talked with him, and found out that he had lived in Tokyo for more than fifteen years. Of course I remembered the conversation on the airplane, so I asked him what kind of music he liked. It turned out that we loved the same artist, and we got on well even though we were only together for a short time.

I didn't know how to treat people from other countries until recently, but through this experience, I realized that we should not draw lines. To be treated as a guest sometimes makes others feel uncomfortable, or even alienated. We should not divide ourselves by culture. Instead we ought to consider others as our fellow citizens on the earth. The world is now becoming more and more globalized, and there are greater opportunities to encounter people from abroad. In order to get to know and form friendships with them, we should keep in mind that we must not draw lines, and we are all part of humanity.

## <特別賞>

ひらばやし しこう

平林 志康さん 聖光学院高等学校 2年

エッセイ内容: 日本で冗談は軽視されがちだ。しかし、アメリカでは冗談を通して人と深い関係を築くのだ。そんなアメリカ文化を交換プログラムで出会ったルームメイトから学んだ私は、冗談の持っている力を知り、「笑い」に対する固定観念を捨てることができた。

### *Jyoudan*

Whenever someone told a joke, or “*Jyoudan*”, I would maintain a serious face and reply with one of these three words: “*Samui*”, “*Suberu*”, or “*Tsumaranai*”.

These are common expressions used in the Japanese language when people find a joke boring. When someone tells a joke, it’s typical for the listener to utter these words without a second thought. I would often use such expressions when a teacher or friend told a joke because that was the trend and what everyone else did. In Japan, laughing loudly is considered an anomaly, and humor is oftentimes frowned upon. This environment prevented me from laughing at other people’s humorous remarks or cracking my own jokes. This all changed when I met Marco, my roommate, during a three-week exchange program in the United States of America.

The first question Marco asked me was, “Shikoh, how do you say ‘funny’ in Japanese?” I was awestruck by his question. Before learning how to greet someone or start a simple conversation in Japanese, my new roommate was asking me how to say “funny”. “*Jyoudan*,” I answered, completely dumbfounded. Marco’s eyes lit up and instantly, he was using the word “*Jyoudan*” to spark a conversation with the other Japanese delegates. Before long, all the American delegates were using the term.

This unnatural situation did not end on the first day. “Shikoh, don’t wear that tie. Wear this Elvis Presley wig and costume for the Halloween event tonight! You’ve gotta do the Elvis moves too! I don’t care if you’re good or not. It’s going to be funny.” Marco was encouraging me to do something embarrassing that I knew no one would find humorous. This was not what I had expected to do at the program. I wanted to have serious discussions with no joking or laughter.

Aggravated, I retorted with a question of my own: “Why are you making me do this? I don’t think it’s going to be funny or entertaining.” Marco’s reply was simple, “People are going to laugh in America no matter what you do.” Surprised by what Marco said, I reluctantly agreed to wear the costume for Marco’s sake.

That night, I stepped outside of my dormitory with an Elvis wig, gold sunglasses, a gold necklace, and a white and black two-piece outfit. Mortified, I looked down, not wanting to meet people’s eyes. Nonetheless, remembering what Marco had told me, I decided to look up slowly to gauge the surely judgmental stares of my peers. What I saw in front of me, however, were not aghast looks of disapproval, but only laughing, happy faces. In that very moment, it dawned on me. *Am I the only one not laughing? If I always follow the Japanese trends in Japan, why don’t I follow the American trends when I am in America?*

With this thought, I laughed. I laughed my heart out. I laughed with my loudest voice.

When I laughed, I saw a whole new world. I recognized how humor was an essential part of American culture. Jokes didn’t have to be funny. Laughing at anything was just what everyone did. Why? Because it makes you feel upbeat. It makes other people feel joyful. Most importantly, humor creates strong connections between people because laughter is an international language. It was not the serious talks but the jokes and funny conversations that bonded Marco and me. The American delegates’ constant use of “*Jyoudan*” in their conversations let us break the language barrier and interact lightheartedly. Throughout my time with Marco, I was able to emerge from my shell and learn the power of humor. No matter where you are from, humor allows everyone to smile and come together.

On the last day, Marco told me, “You are a funny man, Shikoh! I’m going to miss you.” I would have taken that as an insult on the first day. Nevertheless, I knew then that Marco’s comment was the best compliment that I could ever receive. Now, it’s my turn to spread humor, the language of joy and understanding. Maybe I should inspire every Japanese student to wear an Elvis Presley Halloween costume. I’m sure this would eradicate negative views Japanese students have toward humor. *Maybe not. Jyoudan!*



## <特別賞/日米協会会長賞>

たなか ゆうだい  
田中 裕大さん 津田学園高等学校六年制コース 2年

エッセイ内容: 東日本大震災で被災した方から直接お話を聞くという「異文化体験」で、避難生活では「当たり前」な事すらろくに出来ない大変な生活だったことを痛感させられた。この「異文化体験」を通じ、普段「当たり前」と捉えられていることは実はとても貴重で恵まれているということに気付いた。これをきっかけに、私たちが日々「当たり前」と思っていることにも目を向け感謝していこうと思うようになった。

### ATARIMAE is Not Normal

'Things you have usually regarded as natural or *Atarimae* are not normal, they are precious,' said a man who actually experienced The Great East Japan Earthquake. These words really moved me and actually changed my way of thinking.

Five years ago, when I was an elementary school student, that man came to our school to tell us how terrible that disaster was. This disaster occurred on March 11th, 2011, and it was one of the biggest earthquakes in Japan. Many people were killed and thousands of people were injured in this calamity. Also, many people were forced to evacuate to shelters and he was among them. Luckily, I had an opportunity to learn it from him.

In the lecture, he insisted again and again that *Atarimae* is not normal. He said that the people in the Tohoku region lost everything because of the earthquake, even their normal lives. For example, they ran desperately to escape from the danger, Tsunami. Actually, they were so desperate that they did not have peace of mind; all they could do was defend themselves. Many people lost their houses, belongings, and even their family. He also said they were forced to live without the things they used to use, such as electricity, gas, tap water, and so on. Those are things which we regard as *Atarimae*, but without them, we cannot live comfortable and convenient lives. People cannot help feeling how lucky they were when they could do everything naturally. I found that things which we regarded as *Atarimae* are actually blessed and precious.

When I listened to his lecture, two points changed my view about my life. First, I got to understand what real happiness is for me. That is, I got to recognize that living a normal, ordinary life is lucky and happy. For instance, to live with my wonderful family, to have meals every day, to say "hi" to other people, and to live normally at this moment, all of these are pure happiness. This is also the point he told us. He said there were a lot of people who lost their family or friends, and they seemed to be at a loss and did not know what to do. There were people that had been chatting with a smile one second before the earthquake occurred, and passed away with the regret of not having done what they wanted to do. Taking it into consideration, I feel how precious *Atarimae* is. That is why I came to feel that I want to value the importance of *Atarimae*.

Second, I realized that it is important to help each other, which he also insisted. In other words, we owe what we are to the support of what other people do for us. To explain more concrete, without community, connections with others or a kindness of others, we cannot live a normal life since we do not have an ability to live all by ourselves, so I feel that I want to help people, not only been helped by other people.

Anyway, I have learned a lot of things from a person who actually experienced and felt the importance of *Atarimae*. It was a really nice and wonderful opportunity to look back on my life and have the chance to appreciate all the people that have done many things for me. I will never forget what I have learned from him and make my life better, by appreciating *Atarimae*.

## <日米協会会長賞>

呉 悠<sup>こ</sup>さん 東京都立小石川中等教育学校 4年

エッセイ内容: 日本と中国 2 つの異文化を持つ私は、自分のアイデンティティを見つけられずにいた。しかし、様々な異文化を持つ人が暮らすオーストラリアでの経験を通してそれを見つけ、自分の立場に誇りを持ちお互いに理解し合おうとすることが大切だと学んだ。

### My Identity

I did not know who in the world I was. It is because everyone says that different cultures are important, but in my case, I myself am what is called 'a different culture'.

I am Chinese who was born and raised in Japan. Since my parents are Chinese, we sometimes speak Chinese at home, but once I get outside I live just like other Japanese people using the Japanese language. Though I am almost the same as Japanese, I am sometimes criticized just because I am Chinese or I will not be able to go to vote even when I become 18 years old.

Who am I? Am I Chinese or Japanese? I could not find my identity.

However, one experience changed me. I went to Australia and stayed with a local family last summer. I took classes with local students on weekdays, and spent time with the family after school and on weekends. In this country, there are many people who come from other countries, so I talked a lot with students from 'different cultures' there. My host family was from India. My host mother usually made Australian food at home, but she sometimes cooked traditional Indian dishes.

One weekend, when I walked along the beach with my host mother, she said to me, "This country is very nice. It is good to live in for a family with children because everyone is relaxed in this city. She also told me about "flextime", a system where parents can finish their work early and pick up their children at school. "Australia has a lot of nature, so when my children were younger, we often went fishing on this beach and had lunch together." she said with a smile.

Listening to her talk, I thought that they are proud of both of the cultures they have, Indian culture and the Australian one.

Also, at the local school I had a chance to introduce Japanese culture to the students who live in Australia. I made a presentation and held a workshop about unique traditional games like origami and unique culture like hot springs. They were really interested in Japan, and knew a lot about our country. When I saw them asking happily about Japanese games and animation, I strongly felt that we got our hearts closer together.

Then, I noticed something. My host mother was proud of the position and culture that she had, and students in Australia were interested in other cultures as well as their own culture.

How about me? Am I proud of the cultures that I have? Am I interested in foreign cultures?

After this experience, my thoughts and actions changed. Every time I visited somewhere or saw someone from foreign countries, I researched the country to know about its culture and asked the local people about their life. I tried to talk to a Chinese mother holding a baby in her arms in Chinese on the train, or when I was asked for directions by foreign people, I tried to reply in English. I had been very passive in everything, especially with foreign people, but through the experience I decided to be more active. As a result, I have felt my heart filled with happiness and I have become able to see things from various aspects much more than before.

It does not matter if I am Japanese or Chinese.

The most important thing is to try to understand each other, even if they have different cultures or if one has more than two cultures like my host family and me. Therefore, I want to be proud of my position of having Japanese and Chinese cultures, and through both cultures I want to get along with people from all over the world. It may be difficult, but if we take the first step, I believe that the day will surely come when there will be no prejudice or discrimination and people all over the world will be able to live in peace.

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