

Unit 2: Children

PRE-READING>

What was life like for children in your country in 1878?

What did children wear and what games did they play?

Were they well-behaved?

PREDICTING THE CONTENT>

Look at the titles the author gave to this letter. What do you expect to read about?

READING FOR GIST>

Skim-read the letter quickly. Answer true (T) or false (F):

1. The author thinks Japanese children are rude. (T/F)
2. The letter contains information about what children eat. (T/F)
3. The letter contains information about children's education. (T/F)

READING FOR DETAIL>

Scan the letter to find information about:

1. what children wear
2. when the school examination is
3. whether or not children are dependent on their parents for their amusement.

Japanese Children – Children’s Games – Ingenious Toys

I am very fond of Japanese children. I have never yet heard a baby cry, and I have never seen a child troublesome or disobedient. The arts and threats by which English mothers cajole or **frighten** children into unwilling obedience appear unknown. I admire the way in which children are taught to be **independent** in their amusements. Part of the home **education** is the learning of the rules of the different games, which are absolute, and when there is a doubt, instead of a quarrelsome suspension of the game, the fiat (1) of a senior child decides the matter. They play by themselves, and don't **bother** adults at every turn (2).

They have no **special** dress. This is so queer that I cannot repeat it too often. At three they put on the kimono and girdle, which are as inconvenient to them as to their parents, and childish play in this garb (3) is grotesque. I have, however, never seen what we call child's play - that general abandonment to miscellaneous impulses, which **consists** in struggling, slapping, rolling, jumping, kicking, shouting, laughing, and quarrelling!

The channels of swift water in the street turn a number of toy water-wheels, which set in motion most ingenious mechanical toys. The boys spend much time in devising and watching these, which are really very fascinating.

It is the holidays, but 'holiday tasks' are given, and in the evenings you hear the hum of lessons all along the street for about an hour. The school **examination** is at the re-opening of the school after the holidays, instead of at the end of the session - an arrangement which shows an honest desire to discern (4) the **permanent** gain made by the scholars.

There are twelve children in this *yadoya* (5), and after dark they **regularly** play at a game which Ito says 'is played in the winter in every house in Japan.' The children sit in a circle, and the adults look on eagerly, child-worship being more **common** in Japan than in America, and, to my thinking, the Japanese form is the best.

I.L.B

Letter XXVIII, Ikarigaseki, Aomori, August 2, 1878

Notes

- (1) fiat = decision (official), authorisation
- (2) at every turn = on each occasion, continually
- (1) garb = dress, clothes
- (2) discern = recognise, find out
- (3) *yadoya* = an inn

VOCABULARY – KEY WORDS>

CD

frighten	independent	education	bother	special
consist	examination	permanent	regularly	common

Listen to the key words then choose one from the box to complete the sentences below, changing them into the correct form where necessary.

- The I received in school did not prepare me for real life.
- My French teacher at school was always shouting at us. He me. He put me off the subject *permanently*.
- My parents weren't interested in my *educational* development. 'Don't me', they always said, when I wanted help with my homework.
- My school lunch of fish and rice, and nothing else.
- My parents died when I was 16. Living alone was *frightening* at first, but I quickly became
- The teachers took us on school trips at high school. They thought it was *educationally* beneficial.
- Children being driven to school is a sight in England.
- I won a prize for my painting in primary school.
- I work *regular* hours but it's only for the summer. After leaving university I will look for a job.
- I worked *especially* hard for my high school entrance

COMPREHENSION and ANALYSIS>

Read the five statements below about the letter. Answer:

- T (true) - there is clear evidence to support the statement
 - F (false) - there is clear evidence to refute the statement
 - T? - the statement is probably true
 - F? - the statement is probably false
 - ? - there is no evidence to support or refute the statement.
1. The author thinks English and Japanese mothers treat their children in the same way. (T - F - T? - F? - ?)
 2. The author thinks it is strange that children do not wear different clothes to their parents. (T - F - T? - F? - ?)
 3. Children in England wear different clothes to their parents. (T - F - T? - F? - ?)
 4. English children sometimes struggle, slap, roll, jump, kick, shout, laugh, and quarrel when they play. (T - F - T? - F? - ?)
 5. Examinations in England are at the end of the school session. (T - F - T? - F? - ?)

TASK>

Based on the information in this letter, summarise the ways in which you think Japanese babies and children were different to those in England at this time.

Unit 2: Children

GRAMMAR FOCUS – Relative Clauses

Consider this situation: two girls, Mary and Ann, reached the final of a chess tournament.

- a) The girl who won was called Mary.
- b) The girl [who] Mary beat was called Ann.
- c) Mary, who had beaten Ann twice before, won £100.

In (a) 'who won' is a clause (called a relative clause) giving information about the girl; it defines her as the girl who won, not the girl who lost, or any other girl. 'Who' (= the girl) is called the relative pronoun and this is the subject of the clause.

In (b) 'who Mary beat' is a clause giving information about the girl, but this time 'the girl' (= who) is the object of the clause; Mary is the subject. In this case, the relative pronoun can be omitted. (See note below.)

In (c) 'who had beaten Ann twice before' is a clause giving extra information about Mary. Note the commas before and after the extra information. The relative pronoun ('who') cannot be omitted.

The clauses in the first two examples have a defining function and are called 'defining relative clauses'. In (c), we know who Mary is; she does not need to be defined. This type of clause, giving extra information, is called a non-defining relative clause.

For things (including animals), use 'that' or 'which'; for people, 'that' or 'who'. However, in the 'extra information'-type clause (c) use only 'which' for things and 'who' for people. For places, use 'where': *This is the shop where I bought my hat.*

In formal or written English a preposition is sometimes used before the relative pronouns 'whom' (for people) and 'which' (for things):

- *Mary won £100, with which she wants to buy a mobile phone*
- *Mary's favourite book is Bobby Fischer's 'My 60 Memorable Games', from which she learnt many end-game strategies*
- *Mary's first chess teacher was her father, with whom she plays every day.*

In informal English, we usually put the preposition after the verb in the relative clause:

- *Mary's first chess teacher was her father, who she plays with every day.*

Note that 'who' rather than 'whom' is used in informal English.

In all the cases above the relative pronoun relates to a person or thing. Sometimes it can relate to a fact or situation:

- *Mary only won £100, which I find very surprising.*

In this example, 'which' = 'Mary only won £100', not '£100'. In cases like this, only 'which' is used, never 'that'.

Note:

Look again at example (b), above:

- *The girl [who] Mary beat was called Ann.*

'The girl' (=who) is the object of the clause, 'who Mary beat' – Mary (subject) beat the girl (object) – but the subject of the sentence. The relative pronoun (who) can only be omitted if it is the object of the clause, as in this case. If it is the object of the sentence but the subject of the clause, it cannot be dropped. For example:

- *Mary is looking for a teacher who can take her to the next level.*

Mary (the subject of the sentence) is looking for a teacher (the object). However, in the clause ('who can take her to the next level') Mary is the object and the teacher (=who) is the subject. Being the subject of the clause, the relative pronoun (who) cannot be omitted.

GRAMMAR>

1.

Identify any relative clauses you can find in the text.

- Use brackets [] to indicate relative pronouns that can be omitted (see example (b) in the Grammar Focus section for this unit).
- Indicate if these clauses are defining ('a' and 'b' in the Grammar Focus section) or non-defining ('c').

2.

Make one sentence, following the example. If the relative pronoun can be omitted, use brackets. Use commas where necessary (see example 'c' in the Grammar Focus section).

Example: *I **frightened** a girl with my Dracula mask. She was my sister's friend – The girl [that/who] I frightened with my Dracula mask was my sister's friend.*

- a. Five children live there. They are very **independent**.
- b. The present **education** system has remained unchanged for 100 years. It doesn't teach children the value of *independence*.
- c. There is a woman in my office. She is always **bothering** me. She is leaving.
- d. I won a prize. It **consisted** of a box of **special** Belgian chocolates. *There are two answers: in one, the relative pronoun is the subject of the clause; in the other, the object.*
- e. The **examination** is very difficult. It **consists** of reading, writing and listening sections.
- f. I want a **permanent** job in a company. I want to be able to work *independently* there.

- g. My brother is five years older than me. He *regularly frightens* me.
- h. Mathematics and English are subjects **common** to all. They are *examined* in June. Only a few students study **special** subjects. They are *examined* in July. [Use two relative clauses and a semi-colon (;) to make one sentence.]

3.

Indicate if these clauses (a-h, above) are defining or non-defining.

LISTENING>

CD

Listen to the audio and answer the questions.

1. How often were the **special examinations** set?
 - a. every 18 months
 - b. every two years
 - c. every three months

2. Why did the teacher set the **special examinations**?
 - a. he wanted his students to dislike English
 - b. he wanted his students to be **independent**
 - c. he wanted to **frighten** his students

3. What did the **special examination consist** of?
 - a. a speech
 - b. questions followed by a speech
 - c. a speech followed by questions