THE STUDENT Outlook

2
The Cherry Blossom Phenomenon

5
A Guide to Different Types of Music (with Artists)

10
The Blueprint of a Changing Planet

15
The Life and Work of Taylor Swift: Part 1

23
How to Breed Egg-Laying Snakes

28
The Ultimate Guide to Building a Sandwich

32
Books You Need to Read This Year

43
What to Add to Your Christmas Wishlist

48
Squishies: The Pros and Cons

52
Kanji Trivia

November 2026

The Middle School Newspaper

The Cherry Blossom Phenomenon

by Isabelle and Miki



Do cherry blossoms bloom in October? If you know anything about cherry blossoms in Japan, that may be the silliest question you have heard of. But does it? Most of us know that cherry blossoms bloom in April. It is so common that Hanami, a Japanese picnic under the cherry blossoms, has been common since the Nara period. However, we saw the school cherry blossoms blooming from our classroom window during October. After some research, we discovered that all over Japan the cherry blossoms are blooming out of season. Read this article to find out the answer to this brain-twisting question.

Let's first understand how cherry blossoms usually bloom. According to the *Smithsonian Magazine*, in Japan, cherry blossoms usually begin to flower around March to April, though it varies depending on the place and the weather conditions. During these spring months, we can enjoy their beautiful pink and white flowers, which usually last for around one to two weeks. After the flowers fall, leaves start to grow. As fall approaches, the trees start to lose their leaves little by little to prepare for winter, and this cycle continues year after year.

However, Japan has recently experienced cherry blossoms blooming in October. Surprisingly, this is not the first time Japan has experienced this unusual event. In previous years, similar cases have been reported. According to articles from *Time* in 2018, these cherry blossom trees had to endure strong winds from typhoons, which blew off all their leaves too early. That signaled a hormone in the tree to reproduce and make new leaves and flowers. There were also NHK reports that hundreds of people have spotted trees blooming in October from Kyushu in the south of Japan to Hokkaido, which is in the north. The trees are acting like it's spring, but winter is just knocking on our door. Luckily, this is not expected to affect the beautiful cherry blossom viewing season next spring. This rare sight reminds us that nature doesn't always follow its calendar.

With the next cherry blossom season to look forward to, have you ever wondered how scientists predict the cherry blossom blooming dates? When spring rolls around, we hear these predictions updated almost every day on the news. However,

Japan Travel Insights states that in the past, there were no cherry blossom blooming forecasts at all. People simply enjoyed the beauty of the mysterious flower that blooms once a year, for a brief moment. However, after some studies, scientists discovered that cherry blossoms are incredibly sensitive to temperatures. “Even a slightly warmer February and March pushes the bloom date earlier by days or weeks.” - The Median, Yuki. Temperature change plays a big role in the flowering dates. This critical information was exactly what scientists needed to foretell the dates. Because the flowering only lasts for a short period of time, researchers could find the exact time for the blooming. We may not realize how much work was put into the casual morning forecast we see every year.

All in all, one thing we can all agree on is that spring or fall, the cherry blossoms are truly something magical. Beyond their beauty, they remind us of the changing seasons and the unexpected wonders of nature. Perhaps that is what makes this so miraculous. Sometimes, not knowing what’s going to happen is the best surprise.

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Back to the Table of Contents

A Guide to Different Types of Music (with Artists)

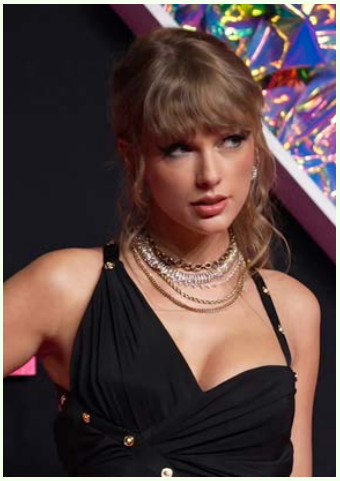
by Emine



Image from Canva

There are so many types of music in the world, and people have different tastes and interests in them. Some of the most recognizable and famous types of music are Pop, K-pop, J-pop, and Classical Music. There are even more genres too, like Rock, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Electronic, Rap, and Country. These types of music are loved by many people from different periods of time. In this article, I would like to introduce the most famous and recognizable genres and types of music, with a small explanation of artists from each genre.

As I mentioned before, **Pop** is one of the most recognizable genres of music. Pop is a genre of music with catchy melodies, beats, and lyrics that are very memorable to many people. There are many Pop artists from all around the world, too. For example, you've probably heard of Taylor Swift. She is one of the most recognizable pop stars who has won over 14 Grammy Awards. She started her career when she was 16, and has continued being a Pop artist for over 20 years.



Another pop artist that is known by many people is Ariana Grande. She is an American singer, songwriter, and actress who started her career at just 15 years old. She is best known for her four-octave vocal range, which extends into the whistle register, according to Wikipedia.



Another famous genre of music that is popular around the world is **K-Pop**. K-Pop has existed for a few decades since 1990, according to Wikipedia. One famous K-pop group in 2026 is BLACKPINK, with the members Jennie, Lisa, Rosé, and Jisoo. They are the first artists in the world to reach 100 million subscribers on YouTube surpassing many other artists, according to Wikipedia. BLACKPINK has won over 300 awards as a group, and the members also have solo careers as well, winning even more awards individually. On August 8th, BLACKPINK celebrated their 10-year anniversary and is still active as a group.



BTS is also another famous K-pop group and has won over 400 global awards as a group, and has 25 verified Guinness World Records! (according to Wikipedia.) One of their records is having the most-viewed music video on YouTube in under 24 hours. This is when their song “Butter” broke YouTube’s record by having over 108.2 million views in under 24 hours.



Another genre that many people enjoy listening to is **Jazz**. Jazz is different from Pop or K-pop, and it has more relaxing, calmer melodies with softer instrumental sounds in the background. Jazz is great to listen to when you’re trying to relax or having your personal time, since it calms you down. A famous artist from this genre is Laufey. Laufey is a Jazz-Pop artist who has won 14 major awards throughout her career. She has also won 2 Grammy Awards. She has a very vintage jazz sound with a little hint of Bossa-Nova and classical instruments.

Another genre of music that is often listened to is **Classical music**. Classical music is different from the types of music mentioned above because it has a more formal structure whose origins can be traced back over a thousand years. Even though Classical music is one single genre, there are still many types of classical music. For example, there is the orchestra, which is a big group of people playing one piece with classical instruments such as violin, piano, cello, and trumpet, conducted by one person called the conductor. Then there is the opera, which is a very dramatic theater performance where people act by singing

in a very powerful way. Men and women can both perform in an opera, and the voices are separated into groups like soprano, alto, and bass. The opera singers use their whole entire body to sing very powerfully, and they don't use a microphone. Their voices are projected to reach the whole entire theater/hall without any aid from tools or instruments. Classical piano is also another type of classical music. There are many famous classical pianists around this world who have won many awards at competitions. There are also many different composers. Two very famous composers are Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Frédéric François Chopin. Mozart is a very famous and unique Austrian composer born in 1756, who is widely recognized as one of the greatest musical geniuses and composers in Western history, according to Wikipedia. He has written/composed over 800 works before his unexpected death at the age of 35. His music is one of the most recognizable and loved sounds in Classical music even today. Chopin is another great composer, born in Poland in 1810. His creations were mostly piano pieces (but he also wrote a few orchestra pieces) in the Romantic era. His songs were very deep, and had a technical nuance that completely transformed the possibilities of classical piano and music, according to Wikipedia. Chopin wrote about 240 songs throughout his life before he died at 39 because of a severe illness. However, his music is also still loved around the world today.





There are many more types of music that people enjoy today, but the ones I introduced right now are among the most recognizable. Without music, life would be very different for us. Music improves our emotional well-being, helps with physical health, and creates social and cultural connections. Music isn't just for entertainment, even though a lot of people think that way. Music can also help with studying, exercising, sleeping, waking up your body and brain, and lots more. But people have their own ways of listening to music and have different unique tastes too, so it doesn't mean people will always like the same music as you.

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Back to the Table of Contents

The Blueprint of a Changing Planet

by Isabelle

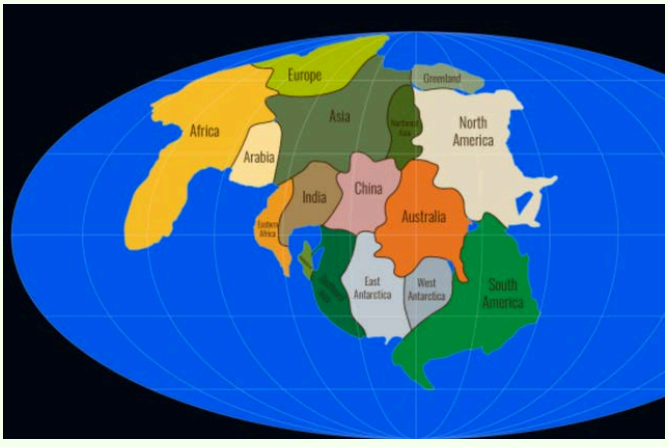


Image from Canva

Did you know that there used to be a supercontinent? According to Britannica, a supercontinent is a united landmass, with a single continent. In the words of Britannica, the last supercontinent existed from 299 to 273 million years ago. The world then slowly shifted into what we know today. But scientists have been wondering: will there ever be a supercontinent again? According to NASA, scientists Hannah Sophia Davies, Michael Way, and their team used supercomputers and discovered that there is a strong possibility of another supercontinent. Lots of other universities and scientists have also stated the same thing. They have made four varieties of what it could look like. In this article, you will get a better understanding of what the world might look like in 200 to 250 million years.



First of all, let's take a look back to 299 to 273 million years ago. **Pangea** was the name of the supercontinent. The word came from the Greek word that means "all land". According to Britannica, Pangea was C-shaped. It was spread across the Mediterranean and Caribbean Sea. In the northern part of this supercontinent, today's Eurasia and North America were connected into one. In the south were Africa, South America, India, Antarctica, and Australia. As you can imagine, the climate of these areas was completely different to today's. On the inside of the continent was a hot desert. As there were barely any rivers and the rain from the coast never reached the inner part, temperatures could easily have gone up to 50 degrees celsius during the summer. Then it would suddenly drop to -25 degrees or even lower in winter. As claimed by Brown University, Pangea was inhabited by synapsids, which were ancient ancestors of mammals. All the animals that lived on Pangea had evolved to survive these harsh conditions. For example, the Lystrosaurus was a synapsid that dug tunnels to stay away from the sun. They also had huge bodies, enabling them to store water.



Now, what is the world going to look like in 200 to 250 million years? This map is from Big Think. Columbia University states that the most likely way the world is going to be is to be a **Novopangea**.

The Atlantic Ocean would expand, and form one ocean surrounding the continent. On the east would be the Americas, Australia, and Antarctica. On the west there would be Africa, Europe, Asia, India, and China. Bristol University reports that the interior of the continent would be 40 to 50 degrees celsius, while the coast has around 25 degrees. Additionally, the sun is going to be old by then and emit 2.5% more radiation. Because it would be extremely difficult for humans to live in such conditions, only 40% percent of the world would be habitable for humans. At the coast where we have access to water humans could still live. Additionally, in the inner areas of the continent there would be many volcanoes that would erupt constantly. Volcanoes emit CO_2 which makes the atmosphere thicker and trap even more heat in the Earth's atmosphere.



Furthermore, as another possibility we have **Pangea Ultima**, a ring-shaped supercontinent. It is less likely to occur but still possible. In the view of Bristol University, on the east side of Pangea Ultima would be Europe, Russia, India, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. On the west side would be Africa, North and South America, and Antarctica. Most of it would be on the Indian Sea. According to Columbia University, because the continent is a ring shape all the heat would be trapped inside. That would cause immense heat across the continent, with more deserts. We could probably only live on 8 to 16% of the continent.



Next, we have another scenario where the entire world shifts towards the equator. The map is from Big Think. This supercontinent is called **Aurica**. According to Columbia University on the east side would be North, and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Arabia. On the west side would be India, China, Southeast Asia, Antarctica, and Australia. There would be no seasons, and along the coast there would be constant rainfall. At the coast temperatures would be 25 degrees celsius, while on the inside there would be desert as the rain wouldn't reach the inner lands. There would also be no snow and no ice. We would be living in a constant tropical climate. But still, most of the continent wouldn't be habitable, as there are volcanoes in the middle, and the sun is older. Additionally, the rain would never reach the inner parts of the continent. According to NASA models 99.8% of the continent would be the right temperature for water to exist. But, realistically only 40% of the continent would be habitable for humans.



Lastly, we have **Amasia**. It is entirely centered around the North Pole. The map is from Big Think. In the east we would have Europe, Africa, Arabia, Asia, India, and China. In the west we would have North, South America, Greenland, and

Australia. In the view of Bristol University, the entire continent would be covered in ice. The world would be freezing cold, and trapped in a long ice age. The interior of Amasia would experience months of darkness where you don't see the sun. It could get to -30 to -40 degrees celsius. There would be extremely short summers where the temperature would only go up to 5 to 10 degrees celsius. On the coast, it would normally be 10 to 15 degrees. There would still be volcanoes. Humans could live on approximately 10 to 15% of the continent.

In conclusion, the world is changing constantly. Even though we are not quite sure what the future will be, I hope this article gave you a few ideas of how the world could transform, where the Earth could be going through anything from a complete ice age to desertification.

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Back to the Table of Contents

The Life and Work of Taylor Swift: Part 1

by Catalina



Image from Canva

Many of you have heard of Taylor Swift, and with the release of her extended version of *The Life of a Show Girl: The Life of a Show Girl Encore*, she is more famous than ever. So, I thought it would make sense to write an article about her. I'll be writing about many things, including her albums and history. I hope you can learn something new in the article, or even be inspired to listen to her music.

Taylor Swift was born on December 13th 1989, in West Reading, Pennsylvania, according to Britannica. She grew up on a Christmas tree farm. Her parents made her work on that farm, and when she was 5 her job was to pick praying mantis eggs off

the trees. She stayed there till she was 14 years old, when she moved to Nashville. She moved there as she wanted to become a country music star, and Nashville is the home of country music. You might be thinking, how did she discover her love of music and performing? At age 9 she started participating in children's theatre, and that's when she realised she loved being on stage and being an entertainer. Soon her love of theatre turned into a love of karaoke, and that led to her wanting to become a country star.



Some of her albums after her debut have something called "Taylor's Version." You might be wondering what that means, and I will explain the basics of the situation. In 2005, when she was 15 years old, she signed with Big Machine Records. She was under a contract with them for 13 years, and during that period of time she released six albums: *Taylor Swift*, *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *Red*, *1989*, and *Reputation*. Though she owned the publishing rights, the record company owned her masters. When the contract was expiring, the company suggested selling the masters to her, but only if she stayed with Big Machine Records for another 10 years. Taylor was not happy with that deal, especially with her mistrust of the new owner of Big Machine Records. She then decided to rerecord the albums for which she does not own the masters. She has completed all except for two albums: Reputation and her debut album. But she announced on her official website in a letter that she owns all of her masters, music videos, and concert footage. You do not



need to listen to Taylor's Version. But I would recommend that you do, because Taylor's Versions have something called "From the Vault" which are songs that she wrote at the time the album was released but never included in the album. So, usually the "Taylor's Version" has more songs than the original albums.

Her first album that was released in 2006 is commonly called *Debut* but is officially called *Taylor Swift*. She released it when she was only 16. It had a total of 11 songs, and she co-wrote 7 of the songs with Liz Rose. Liz was an experienced songwriter who helped her. The single on the album is called "Tim McGraw," though "Our Song" and "Tear Drops on My Guitar" are just as famous. She was still in high school when she was working on this album, so during an ACM (Academy of Countryv Music) award ceremony she had to leave early as she had a math exam. She has not yet released a Taylor's Version for this album, but she has been hinting at *Debut (Taylor's Version)* for a while.



From the "Picture to Burn" music video in *Debut* to the Eras Tour, her band The Agency has always been there. They are called "The Agency" as during the "Picture to Burn" video they were giving off spy vibes and so decided to call themselves "The Agency". Not only that, but in Speak Now she included a song she wrote about them called "Long Live".

Two years after her debut her next album was released, and it is

called *Fearless*. She released it when she was 18. It has 20 songs. This album has a Taylor's Version, which has 26 songs, including 6 from the Vault. The first single from this album was "Love Story" and sold more than 8.1 million copies worldwide (according to the IFPI), and was once the best-selling country song of all time. Then she followed that hit single with 4 other hit singles: "You Belong with Me," "White Horse," "15," and "Fearless." Fearless became the best-selling album of 2009. Due to the album's success, she then went on the Fearless world tour. Many guests performed on this tour, such as Justin Bieber, Kellie Pickler, Katy Perry, and John Mayer. One of the most iconic things about this tour was how she performed no matter the weather, according to The Boston Globe. She would perform in the rain or sunlight, while most artists would cancel due to rain.



Her third album is *Speak Now*, which has 14 songs. Taylor's Version has 22 songs. This was her first entirely self-written album, and it is fitting that the first song on it is called "Mine." The title hints at the fact that each song is a letter of words she did not say to the person when she was right in front of them. She won two Grammys for her song "Mean": Best Country Solo Performance and Best Country Song. The album itself was nominated for Album of the Year, but did not win. She went on her second world tour with this album, visiting 76 cities, in 17 countries. Each concert was sold out, according to Taylor





Swift Wiki.

Her next album was *Red*, and it originally had 16 songs but Taylor's Version has 30 songs. It includes "All Too Well (Taylor's Version) (From the Vault) (10 minute version)." It is her longest song to date, and the longest song to be No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, taking that record from "American Pie." Red has 7 singles, but the most popular singles are "We Are Never Getting Back Together," "I Knew You Were Trouble," "22," and "Red." She also worked with Ed Sheeran to make a song called "Everything Has Changed." On The Red Tour she visited 12 countries and over 50 cities.

Her 5th album was called *1989*, named after the year she was born. As this was her first pop album, many fans speculated that the title represented her being reborn as an artist, changing from country to pop music. The original album has 13 songs (her lucky number), but Taylor's Version has 22 songs. One of her most popular songs, "Shake it Off," comes from that album. It also has 2 other majorly popular songs "Welcome to New York" and "Blank Space." Sadly during this era she had an eating disorder due to people commenting on her body, according to Variety. In the documentary *Miss Americana* she opened up about it and said how she would see photos of herself or people saying she looks pregnant. Then, she would sadly starve herself, or if she felt she ate too much she would work out a lot. Thankfully she has recovered from the eating disorder and



is a lot better now. The 1989 world tour went to over 50 cities and earned over 300 million dollars, making it one of the highest-grossing tours that year.



Her next album is called *Reputation*. It is a completely new style with edgy music and dark aesthetics. Instead of being ashamed of people calling her "a snake" she leaned into it, making a snake the symbol of the album. According to Netflix's *Miss Americana*, before Reputation she was very private about her opinions regarding social issues, unwilling to cause controversy. However with this album she announces where she stands on various issues, including rights for women and the LGBTQ+ community. She also went on a tour with this album, but it was her first stadium tour. This tour had big visual effects, such as a giant snake statue on stage during some songs, dramatic lighting, and more dancing than what was seen in her previous concerts. Furthermore, this led to her first concert film to be streamed on Netflix (sadly Reputation Stadium Tour has been taken off Netflix now). This tour has won numerous awards such as The American Music Awards Tour of the Year, and iHeart Radio Tour of the Year.

<This is the end for this issue of *The Student Outlook*. A Part 2 of this article will be published in the next issue, so stay tuned!>

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Back to the Table of Contents

How to Breed Egg-Laying Snakes

by Iris



Image from Canva

Have you ever wanted to know how to breed snakes? If you have ever wanted to breed a snake, then you are reading the right article. Before you start reading, you should be aware that this is just the basics of snake breeding, and if you want to breed your own snakes, you should do your own research on the particular species you would like to breed. That being said, are you ready to learn about how to introduce a pair of snakes, how to look after the eggs, and how to take care of the baby snakes?

Introducing a Pair

According to *Swell Reptiles,* to breed snakes, you need to start by introducing the pair of snakes to each other. To do this, you first need to make sure that the two snakes you would like to breed are at an optimum breeding weight and size. The weight

and size will vary depending on the species, so you should definitely do your research on the species you would like to breed. After you have selected your snakes, you should get them ready for breeding. A snake's desire to breed is activated by seasonal change, so it is recommended to lower the temperature of your snake's enclosure by a few degrees, but make sure to not lower the temperature too low or too fast. Again, you should also research the ideal temperature for the particular species you would like to breed. After you have done this you should wait a full shed cycle, and then you can introduce your snakes to each other. Make sure that you monitor the snakes' behavior to make sure that they are not being aggressive; otherwise the snakes could get hurt. If they are being aggressive, you should stop the breeding attempt, as the snakes may not be ready yet. If the snakes are not being aggressive towards each other, but breeding is still taking a while, you can try misting the enclosure to simulate rain. After the snakes have successfully mated, give them some time, then separate them. It is a good idea to repeat the process multiple times. If the female is starting to lose interest in the male, she is likely developing eggs, and you can stop getting the snakes to mate and start getting ready to look after the eggs.

Taking Care of the Eggs:

According to *Snake Discovery*, after the female has laid her eggs, you need to check to make sure she doesn't have eggs left in her body, as they could get stuck, which is very dangerous. If this happens, take your snake to a vet as soon as possible. Once you have all of the eggs, you should lay them carefully on the

substrate in a tray. You should research the best type of substrate for your snake breed. After you have placed the eggs carefully on the tray, make sure that they don't move, because if they rotate while the umbilical cord is attached to the egg, the baby snake might drown in its own fluids. A simple way to make sure the eggs don't rotate is to put a small mark like an X or a star on the top of the egg, and if the egg rotates, just put it back in its original position. Then put the lid back on the tray and write down the date when the eggs were laid and the expected hatching date. The hatching date varies depending on the species. After the tray is ready, put the eggs in an incubator. The ideal temperature of the incubator also varies depending on the species. Make sure to check on the eggs regularly. Some of the eggs might go bad, but it is fine to leave the bad eggs with the other eggs because they won't affect them.



Taking Care of the Baby Snakes



According to *Snake Discovery*, after the first baby pips, which means it has created a small slit in the egg using its "egg tooth," a small scale on its nose that they use to cut open its egg, you should wait 24 hours for the other eggs to pip. After 24 hours, carefully cut open the rest of the eggs. It is possible that the snake has lost its egg tooth in the egg and is unable to leave the egg. If you see blood coming out of the egg, do not panic. The eggs have blood vessels running on the inside,

so you most likely just cut one of these. This isn't a problem, as the vessels get cut anyway when the snake leaves the egg. After you have carefully cut open the egg, gently poke the baby with a blunt object to see if the snake responds. If it doesn't, it is probably dead. You should avoid pulling the snake out of the egg, and instead let them come out at their own pace. Come back in about a day, and by then, all of the snakes have hopefully left the egg. If they haven't left the egg yet, check if they are alive as it is possible that they died.





According to *Snake Discovery*, after all of the eggs have hatched, you need to prepare enclosures for the baby snakes. The enclosures don't need to be very big, but they need to be big enough so that the snakes can fully spread out. In the enclosure, you will need to add a bowl of water so that the snakes can stay hydrated, a small hideout so that the snakes can hide, some things for the snakes' entertainment such as leaves and flowers, and something rough for them to brush up against when they are shedding, like a stick or a rock. If you are using things from outside, make sure that they are disinfected so that the snakes don't get illnesses from outside. You should put two or three snakes in one enclosure for them to socialize. You should also wait for them to shed once before you feed them. For most snakes, their first meal should be a small rodent, but different species eat different things, so make sure to do your research. The rodent you feed to your snake should only be a tad thicker

than the snake.

In conclusion, there are many steps in snake breeding, and if you plan on breeding snakes, you should definitely do your own research. But even if you don't plan on breeding snakes, I hope you learned something.

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Back to the Table of Contents

The Ultimate Guide to Building a Sandwich

by Yixuan



Image from Canva

Sandwiches: the easy breakfast, lunch, and even dinner that is cheap and convenient to make. A lot of people would just slap some leftover food from the fridge and call it a day. But no, lo and behold, you have stumbled across “The Ultimate Guide to Building a Sandwich.” In this fabulous article, I will teach you and give you ideas on how to make the “perfect” sandwich and also share many other interesting and random facts!



First and foremost, bread. The most basic types of bread would be whole wheat bread, white bread, and multigrain, but that's boring! As stated in “WebsturantStore”, there is brioche, English muffin, Hokkaido milk bread (easier if you’re in Japan), potato

bread, ciabatta, rye bread, sourdough, or other types from the wide range of options out there. For softer textures, choose Hokkaido milk bread, English muffin, brioche, challah, or bagel. On the other hand, breads with harder textures include potato bread, ciabatta, rye bread, and sourdough. But of course, you could always pick the cheapest and easiest to find, which includes multigrain, white, and whole wheat bread. For a healthier option, you can choose multigrain or whole-wheat bread.

Following bread, you would need to choose **the perfect fillings!** This is the step that is more important, as it determines whether or not your sandwich can satisfy your growling stomach. But be careful because the contents inside your "perfect" sandwich have to fit and go well with your bread. Let's have a look at the classics: tuna salad, egg salad, and finally, my absolute favorite, cheesy, melty grilled cheese.



Firstly, egg salad. According to "divas CAN COOK", the best bread to go with it is the challah bread. What is it, you ask? Great question! It's a traditional, egg-rich Jewish bread that is typically braided and eaten on major Jewish holidays. The egg salad filling includes egg, dill, lots of mayonnaise, salt, and pepper. You can also add additional ingredients such as garlic/onion powder, smoked paprika, celery seed, and fresh herbs. Make sure to add the amount of condiments *you like* and

to test if you like it or not. A tip is to refrigerate the filling for about 30 minutes before putting it in the sandwich, as it's best served cold and it lets the egg salad get its flavour.

Next, tuna salad. The best bread that goes with this is the sourdough bread. It's a great bread considering it's crispy and hard, going well with the creamy texture of the tuna salad. However, if you don't like this bread, other breads like croissants (for fancy cafe sandwiches), whole wheat bread (for a healthier option), rye bread (for a stronger flavour), and brioche buns (for a fluffier, buttery texture) work just as well. The tuna salad filling includes mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, canned tuna, and dill. This is definitely your next best option if you don't like eggs (like me).



Third, grilled cheese. My favourite and probably the greatest sandwich type in the world. Personally for me, I like white bread as it tastes crispy and scrumptious when fried with cheddar cheese and lots and lots of salted butter spread evenly onto the . bread. After you finish frying both sides, I would recommend adding fresh spinach leaves as it evens out the taste and lessens the oily taste you would get afterward, but you can also put it to the side and eat it after a few nibbles of the



sandwich. The best bite is when you're hungry and it's still warm and gooey, and as you slowly chew into the sandwich, the cheese stretches and makes you wanting more.

In conclusion, making sandwiches isn't just a lazy lunch but a challenge to piece all your ingredients together to make a harmonious sandwich. Pick better ingredients, experiment with unique breads, and choose your favourite combinations to make your one and only sandwich. So don't waste your days eating fast-food burgers or some trending item, but make the most of your privilege of being able to eat.

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Back to the Table of Contents

Books You Need to Read This Year

by Mira and Momoka



Image from Canva

Hi everyone, we are Mira and Momoka, and we are here today to recommend some of our favorite books and book series! The following are some of the ones we truly enjoyed and hope that you, as our fellow bookworms, would love, too! We have books from many different genres and authors, such as fantasy, mystery, dystopian, and romance. We hope you enjoy the following books!

Warning: A lot of these books contain mature content and may not be suitable for some readers, so please keep this in mind.



The first book series we would recommend to you is the *Once Upon A Broken Heart* series. There are four books in the series, and the genre is romance and fantasy. The book follows Evangeline Fox as she learns that the love of her life will marry another. Desperate, Evangeline decides to stop the wedding by striking a deal with the Immortal Prince of Hearts. Evangeline soon realises that making a bargain with the Prince is a dangerous gamble and his plans for her could end in tragedy or happiness.



The *Once Upon A Broken Heart* series is also in the same universe as the *Caraval* series, and is written by the same author. *Caraval* follows the story of Scarlett and Donatella, two sisters who receive an invitation to Caraval. Caraval is a magical performance and carnival run by Legend, the mysterious organizer. However, Donatella disappears and is revealed to be the key to obtaining the prize of Caraval—one wish. The wish is magic and the winner of the Caraval is the only one allowed to choose a singular wish. Donatella this year works with Legend to help her sister obtain the wish. The series continues with *Legendary* and *Finale*, the next two books, and concludes with *Spectacular*, a novella.

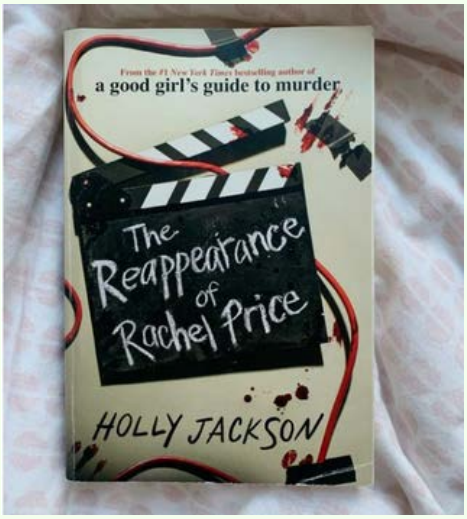


And, speaking of fantasy, in the world of Fae, survival is a game and kindness is gambling your life away. This book, The *Cruel Prince*, is a part of a four-book series. Jude, Taryn and Vivienne lived in the mortal world until their mother's ex-fiance came to kidnap them into the Faerie world. In the Faerie world there are different courts: The High Court of Elfhame, the Undersea, the Court of Teeth, Seelie and Unseelie Courts, the Court of Termites, and the Court of Moths. The story mostly takes place in the High Court of Elfhame, and follows Jude in her journey to rise to power. Right before this, Jude learns glamour, which is an illusion cast to force someone to obey, and the cruelty of this world. So now every day she is always fighting in order to survive. Then one day she meets Cardan, who is the son of the king of Elfhame and the cruelest of all the princes. He despises Jude, and Jude despises him too. But when something unexpected happens, they are forced to work together. So do yourself a favour and let this book steal a spot on your bookshelf.



Another author who wrote many books that we both enjoyed is Holly Jackson. She wrote the *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* series, along with the *Reappearance of Rachael Price, Five Survive,* and *Not Quite Dead Yet. A Good Girl's*

Guide to Murder centers around Pip, a sharp-minded high school student who, later on, becomes an amateur detective. She is determined to solve the disappearance of Andie Bell, a case that happened years earlier that left everyone thinking Andie's boyfriend, Sal, killed her. However, Pip isn't so sure. With the help of Ravi, Sal's brother, she sets out to solve the mystery. Later on, two different cases come up in *Good Girl, Bad Blood,* and *As Good As Dead*. In *Kill Joy*, a novella, Pip's past and how she got into solving murder cases is revealed.



Holly Jackson's other books are suspenseful and a stay-up-all-night read too! *The Reappearance of Rachael Price* is about an 18-year-old girl named Annabel Price, nicknamed Bel. Her mother had been missing for sixteen years so her father had raised her by himself, and now Bel and her entire family were going to be interviewed about her mother's disappearance. Then one day, Rachel Price reappears in front of Bel again, and they return back to normal life as if nothing had happened. But Bel knows that her mother is hiding something, something dark.



Moving onto a more dystopian feel, we have the *Shatter Me* series, a series with six main books (and a seventh one coming out soon!), and five novellas. If you're looking for a series to read long-term, then *Shatter Me* is for you. The main character is Juliette Ferrars, a girl

with a strange touch that kills anything she comes in contact with. She lives in a dystopian world that is run by the Reestablishment, a cruel and ruthless government. Juliette had lived in an asylum for 264 days. She thinks she might stay there forever, until The Reestablishment realizes she can be used as a weapon, and takes her into the Reestablishment's laboratory. There, she meets two boys, Adam Kent and Aaron Warner. This forms a bit of a love triangle (okay, a lot of a love triangle), but eventually, Juliette realizes who her one true love is. Many characters join her side as she wages a revolution against The Reestablishment, such as Kenji Kishimoto and James Kent. Many of these supporting characters have unique abilities, like Juliette, and are part of a rebel group that resides at a place called Omega Point. It's full of twists and romance, and is a series to be on your to-be-read list! (And not the kind that just stays there, collecting dust. Go read that book immediately!)



Are you looking for a romance book that gives you a delicious thrill? The book is called *Powerless*. There are about 3 books in the series: *Powerless*, *Reckless*, and *Fearless*. The story follows Paedyn Gray, an ordinary girl in a world full of Elites. It takes place in Ilya, a kingdom of Elites. In this world the Elites have magical powers from the plague (a sickness), while the Ordinary are people who survived the plague but did not obtain any powers. Ordinaries, if found, are to be executed or sent to the Scorches, which is a harsh desert with a low chance of survival, and so they must hide in the Elite world. Paedyn is an orphan who lives with her best

friend Adena. Adena loves to create clothing and can walk through walls. Paedyn steals food for both of them. But one day she accidentally stumbles upon a prince. Prince Kai who is a wielder, able to wield anyone's power if he is close enough. When Paedyn steals his coins, Kai tries to sense Paedyn's power as he is an enforcer that hunts down Ordinaries, but finds that he can't. So he makes himself think that it's just a hallucination or that he is mistaken. Later someone tries to kill Kai and he is in trouble since they smother his ability, but Paedyn comes to the rescue and saves him. Kai tells the king about this and they decide to put Paedyn into the Purging Trials, where if you win you gain honor, but losing means certain death. For all you *Hunger Games* and *Red Queen* lovers, you should definitely add this to your TBR (To Be Read) list.



Speaking of dystopian, another popular (and understandably so) book series is *The Hunger Games*. This book is set in a post-apocalyptic North America, where 12 districts are ruled over by a cruel Capitol. After a failed rebellion by the districts, the Capitol has forced district children from ages 12 to 18 to participate in an event called The Hunger Games, where one girl and one boy from every district have to fight to the death, while the Capitol people watch as entertainment. In District 12, Katniss Everdeen, our heroine, is praying with all her heart that she wouldn't be selected this year. After all, her grief-stricken mother and younger sister need her to survive. So of course, she

must be so happy when she isn't selected, right? Well, it turns out, it's Prim, said younger sister, who is selected, and Katniss has no choice but to volunteer on Prim's behalf to save her. Now, Katniss must brave the Hunger Games, along with the other tribute of District 12, Peeta Mallark. But it isn't the first time Katniss and Peeta have met, and if they have to survive in the Hunger Games, they soon realize they have to work together. So, please enjoy, and may the odds ever be in your favor!

Before we continue our book recommendations, we would like to inform you that all books from this point have even more mature themes in them, and may not be suitable for all readers. Take caution when reading the following books.

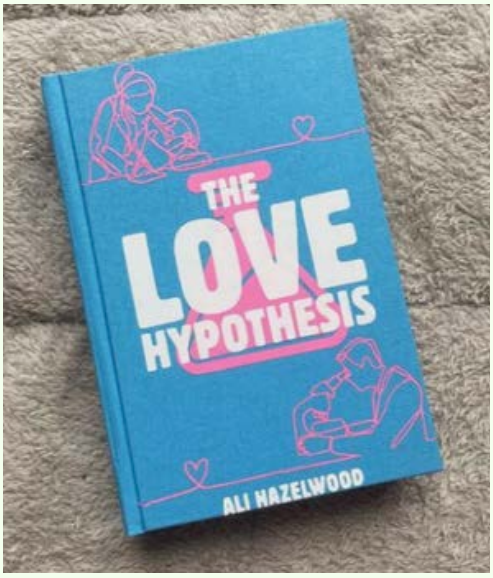


For the readers out there who love a book packed with fantasy, romance, and action, *Fourth Wing* is the perfect book for you! F*ourth Wing* is about a physically fragile girl named Violet Sorrengail (her joints will pop off from small movements), and it's time for her to join the quadrants. There are 4 different quadrants: The Rider's Quadrant, Infantry Quadrant, Healer's Quadrant, and the Scribe Quadrant. The Rider's Quadrant is where you ride dragons and join the Basgiath Military College, where killing is okay. At first Violet wants to join the Scribe Quadrant, especially since her father was from that quadrant and she loves reading in general. Unfortunately for her, her mother is the general of the Rider's Quadrant, and due to her

expectations Violet is inevitably forced into it. It does not help that the dragons usually like someone who is physically strong, which is the exact opposite of what Violet is. If the dragons do not accept you as their rider, they will burn you to death. In addition, there are a lot of other obstacles in the way of Violet's survival and graduation from the military college. To top it all off, there are plenty of her mother's enemies that would gladly see Violet dead. If you're into this, definitely put it in your TBR list.



Are you feeling like you want to cry over a book right now? Because that's exactly what I'm feeling right now. If *He Had Been With Me* is a perfectly curated tragic love story that will make you throw the book in anger at 2 in the morning. The book follows Autumn Davis and her best friend Phineas Smith, also known as Finny. *If He Had Been With Me* is a duology, so you get both the character's point of view and the aftermath of book one, *If Only I Had Told Her*. The first book is in Autumn's point of view, and the second is in Finny's point of view in the second book. Autumn and Finny used to be best friends until they fell apart in middle school. Now they are both in the same high school, and Finny is friends with Autumn's former friends and is dating Sylvie, who is another former friend. Despite their separation and the fact that they are dating different people, Autumn and Finny seem to always find their way to each other. This story is a dramatic, heart-wrenching book about lovers that will become your new library obsession.



What happens when fake dating ends up in genuine love? *The Love Hypothesis* is a story about Olive Smith, a young scientist researching cancer at Stanford, and Adam Carlsen, a strict professor. Olive emails several successful professors to fund her research so that she can make advancements in her research. However, most of the professors haven't replied to her yet or have not found her research very interesting. Olive also ends up lying to her friend about having a boyfriend since they are pressuring her to get one, and one day, while her friend is watching, she kisses the first guy she sees. This happens to be Adam. She ends up asking Adam to be her "boyfriend" for a little while to convince her friend. So, if you like a slow-burn romance, add this to your TBR list.



Another book that you might be interested in reading is *Lightlark*. It follows Isla Crown as she navigates the cruel world she lives in as a ruler of the Wilding Realm. There are six realms in Lightlark called Wildling, Nightshade, Sunling, Moonling, Starling, and Skyling. Every realm ruler has a power. For example, Wildlings can control nature and the wild, while Nightshades can control shadows. But each of the realms has a curse on it. The Nightshades cannot go out during the night, every full moon the sea becomes dangerous for Moonlings, Starlings can only live to be twenty-five years old,

Sunlings cannot go out during the day, Skylings cannot fly, and Wildlings are forced to eat the hearts of their lovers. Once every one hundred years, the island of Lightlark appears and all rulers of the six realms gather there to kill one ruler in an attempt to end the curse. Unfortunately, killing a ruler means destroying a realm. Isla must survive as a powerless ruler during this event without getting killed. If you love the vibe of *The Hunger Games* but also a romantasy lover, this book is definitely for you!



Speaking of life-or-death situations, the book *These Violent Delights* includes a lot of these. A duology, the books are about two rival gangs, the Scarlet Gang and the White Lotus gang. It is set in Shanghai, China, and the Scarlet Gang is more Chinese while the White Lotus gang is more Russian. Juliette Cai is the heir to the Scarlet Gang while Roma Montagov is the heir to the White Lotus Gang, and they have had a romantic history. But now they are against each other with Juliette hating him with her whole being. But then, a mysterious monster appears that threatens everyone's lives. Now the two of them are forced to work with each other, but at the same time they are fighting feelings for the other.

Are you craving war, politics, romance, and fantasy? Well, good for you because the *Red Queen* is all of these, but in one book. There are 5 books in the whole series: *Red Queen, Glass Sword, King's Cage, War Storm,* and *Broken Throne*. In this world, there

are people with different colored blood: silver and red. The Silvers are like living gods on earth and can manipulate elements, while the Reds have no such ability. But Mare Barrow, who is a Red living in a village, finds out about her ability to manipulate and create lightning. Now she is forced into the royal family, posing as a lost princess.



So, to summarize, go to your nearest bookstore and buy all of these books, RIGHT NOW. These are some of our favorites, and whether you just finished a book and need a new one, or you're bored and want to do something, or just want to cry and scream and throw books against the wall, we have books from every genre! Please enjoy, and this is it for now!

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Back to the Table of Contents

What to Add to Your Christmas Wishlist

by Eva and Suri



Image from Canva

If you're wondering if it's too early to make a Christmas Wishlist, it is never too early! For many of us Christmas is a very exciting time of the year, and it gives you a chance to get the things that you've been wanting for a long time. So, here's some inspiration for your list.

🗄️Skincare Fridge:



A skincare fridge is a practical item to keep your skincare cold and nice for when you use it. For example, you can put face masks, face rollers and eye creams in it, chilled and perfect for depuffing in the morning. Another name for this could be a mini fridge, so instead of skincare products you can put cans of Coke or any other drink you like.

💿Vinyls:



Vinyls are a perfect addition to your wishlist if you own a record player. And even if you don't, it is a good object to collect or to use as decoration. You can get a variety of different records at Tower Records in Shibuya. On the 6th floor you can find a collection of Western, rock, pop, indie vinyls, and much more. Overall, this is an amazing item to ask for if you are into music, and also a great gift to get for a friend or family member.

🎶Record Player:

If you want to purchase vinyl, then you also want a record player. During the holidays, playing music on one of these gives a warm atmosphere. Instead of skipping songs on your phone, you actually get the chance to physically change a record. Record players are also perfect for when you are enjoying a song with your family and friends.



🛏️Silk Pillowcase:

A silk pillowcase is a perfect addition to your wish list because it is a luxurious upgrade for your night routine. It keeps your hair smooth despite all the moving you do while you sleep, and also keeps your skin



hydrated by not absorbing the skincare products on your skin. It also stays cool all night, and has a very big impact for such a small item.

📺Mini Projector

Instead of asking for a TV, which is not only pricey but also takes up a lot of room, you can get a mini projector. A projector is an affordable way to watch movies and shows on a bigger screen. Transporting it is very easy, and you can take it anywhere. With it you can easily display a screen on a bedroom wall, living room, or on an outdoor sheet for the full outdoor experience.



Christmas PJs:



Sometimes getting into the Christmas spirit is hard. One thing that will immediately make your Christmas photos festive is Christmas pyjamas. Having these makes your Christmas cozy and fun, especially if you get matching ones with your family or friends. Sometimes having a simple, cute pair of PJs can become a long-lasting family tradition. Additionally, warm, cozy Christmas PJs are perfect for the cold winter, keeping everyone cozy.

👝Brandy Melville Makeup Bags:



Brandy Melville is known for their everyday, aesthetic clothes. But they are not just about that. The makeup bags from Brandy Melville are very practical and cute, and a good addition to your wishlist. They come in various patterns and colors like stripes and polka dots. Plus, they have a built-in mirror, which is handy for quick touch-ups. Overall, it is a stylish item and is the perfect choice when you want a simple and useful makeup bag.

🍼HydroJugs:

I think many of us agree that HydroJugs are the new Stanley's tumblers. No leaks, a fold-down straw to keep dust out of the straw, and a rubber bottom to stop it from sliding. This water bottle comes in many colors and designs, including pink, cream, back and sage green. This would be a wonderful gift to receive, and it makes drinking water feel so much better.



🧦Nike Socks:

Offering socks is a perfect stocking gift for literally anyone. Nike socks are perfect for athleticism, and you can get different sizes and styles. Nike socks also prevent odor. If you prefer long socks you can get those, but if you prefer short socks



then they also have that style. Nike socks can be paired with streetwear, casual, or even classy clothes. During the winter season these are perfect as they provide a snug, warm feeling.

In conclusion, you can start adding things to Christmas now, and hopefully this list has helped you. All of these provide a warm, cozy environment during the winter time. Enjoy your holidays!

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Back to the Table of Contents

Squishies: The Pros and Cons

by Aria and Misa



Image from Canva

What if you were told that one of the most trending toys right now may have harmful chemicals or potentially explosive materials in it? Would you still buy them? Or will you throw out all the squishies you have in your collection right now? You might want to read through this article before you make your final decision.

NeeDoh Squishies

You've probably heard of NeeDohs by now. It's all over the internet, and you and your friends may even own some. So let's dive into the pros and cons of this beloved toy.

Since earlier this year, Schylling's NeeDohs have become very

popular among teens. Through this trend, some people have begun to wonder: what is this stuff actually made out of? According to Schylling, NeeDohs are made out of thermoplastic rubber and are filled with polyvinyl alcohol, maltose, and occasionally water-soluble dye. None of these





materials pose any health risks. However, there can still be some danger to these toys if they are not used correctly. Robert Bartholomew from Psychology Today states that there have been several accounts of children freezing and microwaving these squishies. This causes them to blow up and burn your skin very severely. It is easy to see that children would be led to do these things because of viral trends, and this is an example of how dangerous the internet can truly be.



On the brighter side, NeeDohs have real mental benefits. Jenny Maenpaa from the New York City Psychotherapy Collective says that the soft tactile feel of the squishy is excellent for grounding and calming the mind. This is not just for children but also for adults. It may also help people with ASD, anxiety, ADHD, and ADD focus and learn better in classes. In fact, according to Psychology Today, the notion that handling small objects to comfort anxious minds dates back centuries.



Dumpling Squishies

Are Dumpling Squishies really worth all the hype? And is it really true that some of those squishies have harmful chemicals in them? Well, let's find out!

To answer the first question, yes, in my opinion, I would say that these dumpling squishies are worth all the hype. They are relatively reasonably priced, and it is pretty easy to get them now, even in Japan. The mystery blind packaging makes it even more exciting to buy. This mystery part has made this squishy very popular with kids and teens.



Another reason why dumpling squishies are worth your allowance is because you can collect them in different colors, and again, enjoy opening the mystery squishy to discover which color you got. Similar to the Needohs it is also said that these squishies help soothe and relieve anxiety.

So, are there harmful chemicals in these dumpling squishies? According to BBC News, there have been reports of some counterfeit or fake versions of these squishies having toxic chemicals in them, and that in England about 1000 of them have been pulled from the shelves after the discovery of benzene in them. Benzene is a colourless liquid containing flammable and toxic chemicals. It has been said that this chemical can cause nose, eye, throat, and skin irritation, along with a burning sensation in the gastrointestinal tract.

In conclusion, squishies are very fun to play with, but people should be careful which brands they buy from to prevent any health risks. Furthermore, these seemingly simple toys can become quite dangerous if misused. Finally, please keep in mind that although these squishies might help you calm your anxiety before a test or presentation, ground your mind, or make you feel better, squishies are not allowed in our school's classrooms without a doctor's recommendation. Stay safe and have fun!



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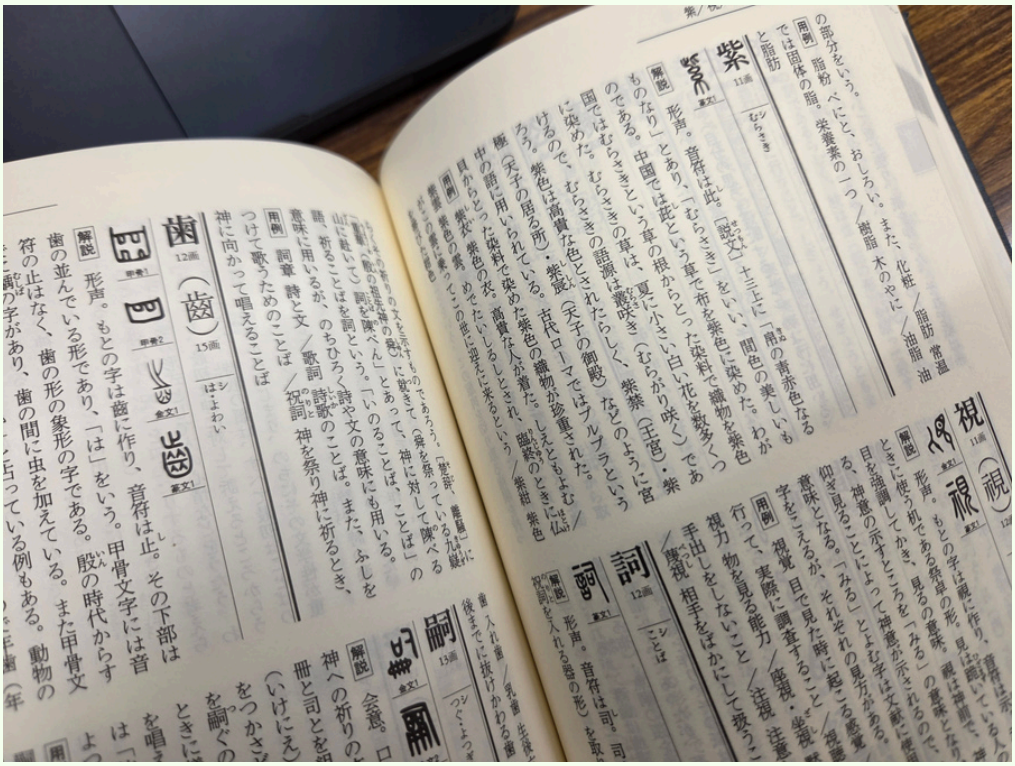
Back to the Table of Contents

Kanji Trivia

by Ayaka



Many people, especially foreigners learning Japanese, despise Kanji. But Kanji isn't as horrible as you think. It has a rich history, and the characters have interesting etymologies and hidden meanings. So today, I would like to take you into the world of Kanji through the many intriguing facts I have learned over the years, and hopefully you'll find these logograms less torturous and dejecting!

The History of Kanji

Kanji developed in China during the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Back then, people relied on oracle bones. They applied heat and pressure to animal bones or shells until they cracked. Then a bu ren (卜人/fortune teller) would scrutinise the cracks and read out prophecies about the emperor's health, the Yellow River's next flood, etc. After the bu ren had inspected, they would engrave

the results into the heated bone to remember it using symbols called jia gu wen. Later on, those symbols evolved into proper characters that eventually came to be used as the official alphabet for Chinese. And in the first century AD, these Chinese characters were brought into Japan and eventually came to be used to write Japanese as 'Kanji' (Chinese symbols).

Kokuji (国字)/Wasei Kanji (和製漢字)

Now that you know the history of Kanji, you might be thinking that all of the Kanji we use today in Japan come from Chinese. That's not entirely correct. Since the introduction of the characters, Japan has also created its own characters that only exist in Japan, called Kokuji or Wasei Kanji (国字/和製漢字). Examples include 畑 (farmland), 働 (to work), 枠 (frame), 圦 (sluice gate), 俤 (resemblance), 鰯 (iwashi/sardine), etc.

Shinjitai (新字体)/Kyuujitai (旧字体)

Some people believe that China was the only country that simplified the characters, and nothing happened to the characters in Japan after the creation of Kokuji. But no, Japan made changes to these logograms, other than creating a Japan-limited edition of them. In 1949, to stop people from using difficult Kanji that no one could read, the Japanese government created the '当用漢字字体表' (touyou kanji jittai hyou)--a guidebook for Kanji that should be used in daily life. And in the guidebook, commonly used or difficult Kanji were simplified so people could write and remember them more easily. The simplified characters are called shin ji tai (新字体/new character bodies), and the characters before they were simplified are called the kyuu ji tai (旧字体).

Examples of shin ji tai vs kyuu ji tai include 鹽 to 塩, 澤 to 沢, 聲 to 声, 國 to 国, 體 to 体, etc. There are 364 kyuu ji tai characters. Although those traditional characters are not for daily use, there are exceptions such as their use in surnames (長澤, 國母, 濱中, 斎藤, etc.), titles for artistic creations (聲の形, 鬼の戀) or names for places (e.g. 慶應大学).
*Editor's note: The list '当用漢字字体表' (touyou kanji jittai hyou) was replaced by '常用漢字表 (jyouyou kanji hyou) in 1981.

Colours in Japanese

Have you ever wondered why we call green apples '青リンゴ (ao ringo/blue apples)', a white flower 'ムラサキ (murasaki/purple)', describe a duplicitous person as being '腹黒い (haraguroi/black-stomached)' and young silky hair '緑髪 (ryokuhatsu/green hair)'? Well, there are simple, logical explanations for those seemingly random words. First, let's look at the Kanji 青. Nowadays, this character means 'blue', but in earlier times, it signified cold colours in general, such as green, blue, purple and black, and it also meant 'young'. This is the reason why green caterpillars in Japanese are ao mushi (青虫/blue insect) and green apples are ao ringo (青リンゴ/blue apple). They are green and not mature.

Which do you think came first, the plant (ムラサキ/murasaki) or the word for purple (紫/murasaki)? You may have guessed right, but it's the plant. The word for this beautiful colour originated from the plant because when you simmer the root, you can extract a brilliant purple dye. And since they did not have a word that specifically defined the colour, they decided to directly use the name of the plant to call this hue 紫 (murasaki).

If you know Japanese and you came across the word ryokuhatsu (緑髪), you probably would be bemused. 'Why would we have a word meaning "green hair"?' That was exactly what I thought when I first saw this word as well. But actually, it means 'black, young, silky hair'. How could that be? To explain this, you have to go back in history. Until the 800s, the Kanji '緑' meant youth, purity or freshness. But around the 900s to the 1000s, the character's meaning shifted from its original meaning to what we know today:'green'.

Many people on the internet say the etymology of the expression hara guro i (腹黒い/black entrails) is from the fish sayori, since they look sleek and beautiful on the outside but jet black on the inside (= hiding the dark parts). But actually, it originates from the ancient belief in Japan that what Western cultures would call 'soul' or 'heart' was located in the stomach. They thought emotions and thoughts were produced inside the abdomen, so if someone was scheming but looked innocent on the outside, they thought the insides of their gut were sordid and had blackened.

By reading this article, you've learnt that Kanji aren't used as torture weapons and have interesting .

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Back to the Table of Contents

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Iris

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