

Explaining Cultural Artifacts and Practices

For your second letter to your Cambodian partner, you will have to choose a Japanese cultural practice (e.g. festival) and describe it to your partner.

Cultural Practices:

When you describe a cultural practice, use these steps:

1. Give the Japanese word for the practice.

e.g. One popular New Year's Eve practice is called *jōya no kane*.

2. Give a translation for the practice.

e.g. This means the "Tolling Bell Ceremony."

3. Explain what people do during the practice.

e.g. Big temple bells are rung 108 times about 15 minutes before midnight throughout Japan on New Year's Eve.

4. Explain cultural artifacts that people use for the practice.

e.g. One of the most famous bells is at Chion-in in Kyoto. This bell was made in 1636, is 3.3 meters tall and weighs 70 tons. The bell is so big that a team of 17 monks is needed to ring the bell on New Year's Eve.

5. Explain symbolism or rules connected to the practice.

e.g. The 108 rings represent the 108 "earthly desires" of men. This is done to free believers from the 108 "earthly desires".



Cultural Artifacts:

When you describe a cultural artifact, use these steps:

1. Give the Japanese word for the artifact.

e.g. This is an *omamori*.

2. Give a translation of the word.

e.g. It means “amulet” in English. The word “mamori” means “protection.” *Omamori* is the honorific form of the word “to protect.”

3. Explain what it is or what it is made from.

e.g. It’s made of cloth that encloses a piece of paper or wood with prayers written on them. Japanese buy them at Buddhist temples and/or Shinto shrines.

4. Explain what people do with it or how they use it.

e.g. *Omamori* provide people with blessings or protection. Many Japanese attached them to their bags, use them as cell phone straps, or hang them in their cars.

5. Explain any symbolism or rules connected to the artifact.

e.g. *Omamori* should never be opened or they can no longer protect you. You should also replace an *omamori* after one year. When you want to discard an *omamori*, you should never through it in the trash. Instead, you should bring it to the temple or shrine to get burned.

