

# Happy New Year!

## Classroom at a Glance

<b>Teacher:</b>	Leslie Birkland
<b>Language:</b>	Japanese II
<b>Grades:</b>	9–11
<b>School:</b>	Lake Washington High School, Kirkland, Washington
<b>Lesson Date:</b>	January 10
<b>Class Size:</b>	32
<b>Schedule:</b>	55 minutes daily

## Video Summary

In this lesson, students learn about the products and practices of the Japanese New Year's celebration. First, half of the class participates in authentic Japanese New Year's games and activities. The other half of the class breaks into four groups to discuss cultural aspects of the New Year's celebration, then jigsaws into four new groups to share their knowledge with each other. Then the two halves of the class switch, so that all students have an opportunity to participate in each activity and discussion. The lesson concludes with a discussion in English in which students compare the customs of their own cultural backgrounds with Japanese New Year's customs.

## Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Comparisons: Cultural

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

## Key Terms

- heritage speaker
- kanji
- negotiation of meaning

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

# Class Profile

“I really believe that having student-centered learning is so much more powerful than the teacher standing in front of the class giving information in a lecture form. It’s a lot more meaningful for students to figure it out on their own and for the teacher just to be a facilitator—to be there as a resource and to direct their learning.”  
—Leslie Birkland

## School Profile

Leslie Birkland teaches Japanese I–VI at Lake Washington High School in Kirkland, Washington, located one mile east of Seattle. The city of Kirkland is home to a largely professional community, with an increasing number of new residents moving to the area for its high-tech industries. It is also a very stable community—most students attend school in the district from kindergarten through 12th grade. Lake Washington serves students in grades 10–12. The school’s 1,400 students can elect to take French, German, Japanese, or Spanish. Due to the state’s strong Pacific Rim economic ties, and to the fact that Ms. Birkland teaches Japanese in one of the junior high schools, Japanese is Lake Washington’s fastest growing language program.

## Lesson Design

When designing her lessons, Ms. Birkland refers to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning and the Lake Washington School District Curriculum Frameworks (see Resources), and considers the thematic sequence established by her textbook series. She also tries to include in every lesson opportunities for interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication, as well as cultural understanding. Because her class includes students from different cultural backgrounds, she regularly encourages students to make comparisons between Japanese, American, and other cultures during lessons.

## The Lesson

Every year Ms. Birkland schedules the Japanese New Year’s unit to coincide with the celebration of this culturally important holiday. In this lesson, students moved between different stations where they learned about Japanese New Year’s customs and tried several traditional activities, such as making cards and playing New Year’s games. In previous years, Ms. Birkland had the assistance of volunteers who gave instructions for the activity at each station. However, because volunteers were not available for this lesson, Ms. Birkland gave instructions for each activity herself in a prior lesson. She also organized the discussion of cultural aspects in a jigsaw, giving every student an opportunity to learn about each of the products and practices. The jigsaw also ensured every student would have a chance to speak during the lesson.

## Year at a Glance

### Yesterday

- Talking about the past
- Culture: Bathrooms, weekends, chores, and after school

### School

- Where things are located
- Culture: Toilet, uniforms

### School Subjects

- Expressing needs; Descriptions
- Culture: Sports, college entrance, homeroom teachers, foreign language education in Japan, holidays and annual events, *kanji* (month, day, year)

### Sickness

- Finding out what happened; Wanting or not wanting to do something; Making suggestions
- Culture: Japanese medical care, spring/summer/winter vacations, high school and college sports in Japan, why the Japanese don’t use *tai* and *hoshii* when inviting

### Shopping

- Asking and telling the cost of items
- Culture: Service in U.S. and Japanese stores, Japanese currency, accepting praise or compliments

### New Year’s Lesson

#### Lunch Time

- Expressing hunger; Eating with utensils (chopsticks)
- Culture: *kanji* (numbers 6–10), fast food in Japan, typical lunch in Japan, eating noodles, phrases associated with eating in Japan, soy sauce and miso paste

#### Birthday Parties

- Receiving and giving
- Culture: *kanji* (days of the week), why so many forms of *to give*, who eats first at a Japanese party, Japanese addresses and dates

#### Self-Introduction

- Actions describing a state/condition
- Culture: Part-time jobs in Japan, first names, *kanji* for birthday, swimming in Japan, proverbs

#### School Rules

- Verbs of *wearing*; Asking, granting, and denying permission; Statement of purpose; Negative questions
- Culture: Japanese uniforms, Japanese school regulations, *kanji* (libraries and schools)

#### Driving

- Informal speech; Asking someone not to do something
- Culture: police, buses in Japan, driver’s licenses in Japan, traffic sounds

# Class Profile, cont'd.

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## Key Teaching Strategies

- **Creating Cultural Experiences:** The teacher designs activities in which students can see, hear, or touch a cultural artifact, create their own cultural artifact, and/or observe or engage in cultural practices in or beyond the classroom. These direct or simulated experiences lead students to discover the perspectives of the culture being studied.
- **Jigsaw:** In this cooperative-learning technique, the teacher designs group tasks in two successive stages. In the first stage, the members of each group become experts in a specific content area. In the second stage, the students reorganize into new groups made up of experts from each of the former groups. The experts then share their information. In the end, every student has had a chance to learn about each content area.

## Analyze the Video

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As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

### Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- How do you coordinate your curriculum with timely events, such as holidays, from the target culture?
- How have you incorporated current events into your teaching? Which events fit in with the focus of your lessons, and which events interrupted your lesson plans (for example, breaking news)?
- What are the challenges and benefits of doing group work with large classes?
- How do you get the heritage speakers in your class to contribute their cultural expertise?

### Watch the Video

As you watch “Happy New Year!,” take notes on Ms. Birkland’s instructional strategies, particularly how she organizes the group activities and integrates multiple cultural perspectives into discussions. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

### Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How do the opening and closing routines contribute to the classroom environment?
- How does Ms. Birkland acknowledge the cultural diversity of her students in the lesson?
- After exploring cultural practices and products in their respective groups, what cultural perspectives do students begin to explore in the class discussion? What additional perspectives might they begin to appreciate as they reflect further on these activities?

# Analyze the Video, cont'd.

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## Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Birkland's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



### Video Segment: Becoming an Expert

You'll find this segment approximately 13 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

Half of the class works in groups to acquire new information about four Japanese New Year's customs. They look at a photo, read a description, and discuss the similarities and differences between the Japanese customs and those of the U.S. and other countries.

- How do the students in this group balance reading the new material and interacting with one another? What role does each student take?
- What content have the students acquired in the group setting?
- What kind of assistance does Ms. Birkland offer?



### Video Segment: Sharing Information

You'll find this segment approximately 17 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 5 minutes.

Students jigsaw into new groups, each of whose members are knowledgeable about a different aspect of the New Year's celebration, and share their expertise with one another.

- In the first group, how are the students communicating as they share information? When are they negotiating meaning?
- How would you judge the success of this group's information exchange? Have the students learned something new about the four topics?
- Compare the second group's interactions to those of the first group. What assistance does Ms. Birkland provide to the second group?

# Analyze the Video, cont'd.

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## Video Segment: Gaining Cultural Perspectives

You'll find this segment approximately 22 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

Several students share the products of their cultural activities, such as New Year's cards. Then the class discusses in English the cultural aspects of the Japanese New Year, and compares them with New Year's customs in other cultures represented by the backgrounds of the students in the class.

- How do the cultural activities provide experiential cultural learning?
- How does the response of the first student (in the gray and black sweater) show that he is gaining a cultural perspective?
- How is the student who talks about *mochi* beginning to develop a cultural perspective?
- When Ms. Birkland asks about the significance of black beans and rice in Cuba, what does the student response indicate?

# Connect to Your Teaching

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## Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- What routines and materials do you use in your classroom to create an atmosphere that reflects the target language culture?
- What are the benefits and challenges of using the jigsaw and other cooperative-learning techniques for group work in your classes?
- When organizing student group work, what is your role before, during, and after the activity?
- How do you build and maintain your own understanding of the target culture? How do you build and maintain your understanding of U.S. culture and other cultures represented by your students, so that you can help students make comparisons?
- If you teach a language spoken by people from different cultures, such as Spanish, how do you build and maintain your students' understanding of those cultures?

# Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

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## Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you've just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

"Politics of Art" (Spanish) features students debating political and cultural issues in multiple group arrangements, and "Holidays and Seasons" (German) illustrates students making cultural comparisons at the elementary level.

## Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Create opportunities for students to explore the practices and products of your target language culture, then lead them to think about the perspectives the products and practices reflect. It takes time to establish the perspectives (the values and attitudes) of a culture, but they become clearer the more you explore them. For example, Ms. Birkland's students first looked at the products (food, cards, songs, etc.) and practices (eating a special meal, giving money, etc.) associated with the Japanese New Year's celebration. At the end of the lesson, Ms. Birkland led a discussion about the perspectives reflected by these customs. Student responses showed that they were beginning to see that structure was a value of Japanese culture. When planning a cultural lesson around the "three Ps," begin by listing the possible products and practices. Then consider how you might lead students to hypothesize about the perspectives, making sure you avoid generalities or conclusions not supported by the evidence.
- Try using a jigsaw technique for group activities that involve the exchange of information. Ms. Birkland designed activities to teach students about four aspects of the Japanese New Year's celebration: food, cards, decorations, and money. First, members of each group became experts in that group's content area (see Chart 1). Next, the students in each group were assigned a number 1, 2, 3, or 4 (see Chart 2). The students then formed four new groups according to their assigned number and shared their expert knowledge with their new group members (see Chart 3).

### Chart 1

**Group A: Food**

4 students

**Group B: Cards**

4 students

**Group C: Decorations**

4 students

**Group D: Money**

4 students

### Chart 2

**Group A: Food**

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

Student 4

**Group B: Cards**

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

Student 4

**Group C: Decorations**

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

Student 4

**Group D: Money**

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

Student 4

### Chart 3

**Group 1**

Student 1: Food

Student 1: Cards

Student 1: Decorations

Student 1: Money

**Group 2**

Student 2: Food

Student 2: Cards

Student 2: Decorations

Student 2: Money

**Group 3**

Student 3: Food

Student 3: Cards

Student 3: Decorations

Student 3: Money

**Group 4**

Student 4: Food

Student 4: Cards

Student 4: Decorations

Student 4: Money

# Resources

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## Lesson Materials

Jigsaw Readings\*

Worksheets that students used to learn about Japanese New Year's food and cards for the jigsaw activity (includes English translation)

\* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

## Curriculum References

Lake Washington School District Curriculum Frameworks

<http://www.lkwash.wednet.edu/lwsd/html/programs/curriculum.asp>

## Leslie Birkland's Recommendations

### Web Resources:

The Japan Forum

<http://www.tjf.or.jp/eng/indexe/indexe.htm>

Promotes language education and intercultural understanding among elementary and secondary school students; note: Ms. Birkland uses the Deai resource, which shows the lives of seven Japanese high school students

The Japan Foundation

<http://www.jpf.go.jp/>

An organization for international cultural exchange in Japan, including information on Japanese studies and Japanese language education (available in English and Japanese); note: Ms. Birkland acquired the large photographs (Shashin Paneru Banku) for this lesson from this source

### Print Resources:

*Japanese Writing Practice Through Pictures and Topics*. Nihongo Kyoiku Kyozaï Kenkyukai (Japanese Educational Materials Research). Compiled by Sumiko Tomioka and Saku Takaoka. Tokyo, Japan: Senmon Kyoiku Shuppan, 1992.

Shitsu, Sanno Tanki Daigaku Nihongo Kyoiku. *Enjoyable Task Reading in Japanese: Intermediate*. Tokyo, Japan: Bonjin-sha, 1992.

*Super Kit 2—Volume 2: A New Selection of Materials—Teaching Aids for Japanese Language Learning*. Tokyo, Japan: ALC Press, Inc., 2000. [www.alc.co.jp](http://www.alc.co.jp)

# Standards

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## **National Standards for Foreign Language Learning**

*Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* defines what students should know and be able to do in foreign language education. This lesson correlates to the following standards:

### **Communication:** Communicate in Languages Other Than English

#### Standard 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

#### Standard 1.2: Interpretive Communication

Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

#### Standard 1.3: Presentational Communication

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

### **Cultures:** Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

#### Standard 2.1: Practices of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

#### Standard 2.2: Products of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

### **Comparisons:** Develop Insight Into the Nature of Language and Culture

#### Standard 4.2: Cultural Comparisons

Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.