

In adversity, people need to help one another. We need be more considerate and resourceful. Japan was able to show these qualities in the wake of a most horrific tragedy. I have never been more proud, happy, and truly thankful to be Japanese.

I have taught young American students about Japan, not just the language and products of its culture, but some of the priceless qualities that have been shared by people and handed down through generations in a long, rich history.

Japan still matters. There is so much to learn from Japan. This is the message I would like to give to my students by exercising the qualities that I admire, respect, and cherish. I am forever thankful to be in a position to share Japan with today's youth. ■

## Ganbare, Japan!

By Masumi Reade

**Editor's Note:** Masumi Reade informed us that the 2011 theme of *The Woodlands High School Japanese Club annual Haiku contest* was "Ganbare, Japan!" Although *Ganbare* is difficult to translate, its English meaning is a combination of perseverance and hard effort. Mrs. Reade was moved enough by her students to create her own Haiku about Japan's great disaster, which follows.

昨日まで ありし人生 語る写真

Life that existed until yesterday  
today the photos will tell its story

気仙沼 燃える画面に 独り泣く

Kesen'numa in flames  
continues to burn in the screen  
makes me cry

生きていた 犬の救助に ヘリ五人

A helicopter with five workers  
coming down to rescue a surviving dog in the ocean

列長し 動かぬ辛抱 見て涙

Long, quiet lines  
not moving and testing your patience  
makes me cry to watch

避難所に 跪き顔く 陛下かな

Emperor and Empress  
visiting the victim's shelters  
getting down on their knees

雪の道 珈琲一杯の 温かさ

Snowy road home  
— a cup of warm coffee  
supplied by a kind heart

老人の 笑顔肩揉み 小学生

Elementary school children  
going around the shelter to give shoulder massage to the elders  
Award of a big smile

救われし 老女の笑顔 背に揺れる

Faint smile on the face of the old lady  
just rescued (after ten days)  
on the back of the soldier ■

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## Why Japan Matters

By Patricia Burleson

There are many reasons that Japan still matters, most of them well founded in economic statistics and geopolitical analyses. For this commentary, I decided to bypass those and focus instead on my personal experiences and those of local high school students. Students quoted here were participants in one of eleven annual study tours I have led in Japan.

I think that Japan matters because there are many lessons about life that can best be learned from the Japanese. Students say:

*Signs in the US tell citizens what not to do and threaten punishment if rules are broken. Signs in Japan encourage good behavior. I learned that it is possible to appreciate religions other than my own. I admire the strong moral base that prevents Japanese from stealing or defacing public property.*

*The kindness I experienced from the Japanese has inspired me to be patient and compassionate to foreign tourists.*

I think the world needs to learn from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After visiting the Hiroshima Peace Museum, students say:

*The meaning of the museum was to educate, not to blame. I felt a universal compassion that I had not known before. I learned that humility is the key to ending war and violence. I now believe that the most pressing problem in our world is nuclear weapons. I have decided to regularly donate to "iCAN" and do all I can to ensure that something like that never happens again.*

I think Japan matters because there we find a shared sense of responsibility. Students say:

*It was interesting talking to one of the young teachers and realizing his hopes and aspirations were similar to mine in terms of world peace and helping others. ■*

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