

# Final Exam I

Directions: Read each essay and on the last page (Essay Page) answer the questions.

## Reading 1. Will Japanese inertia never be the same again?

By ROGER PULVERS

Why hasn't Japan been a economic and political power for the past ten years? There may be many people to blame, from the big businessman who is too greedy, or politicians, but change is coming. Japanese universities reforming their curricula, their admissions policies, and the content of their entrance exams in order to produce outstanding students. Conforming and trying to fit in with the crowd is no longer a good option. For example, Shuji Nakamura, the brilliant inventor of the blue light-emitting diode, or LED, made Nichia into an international powerhouse. The company however only gave him an insulting 20,000 yen for his achievements. Nakamura sued the company and was eventually awarded 843 million yen. Such people may soon be graduating from Japanese universities. They will no longer be silent, no longer accept insulting wages, bonuses, and benefits, and no longer willing to share their ideas. They may be the one thing that saves Japan from itself.

## Reading 2. Better left on the shelf than a downtrodden wife?

By KAORI SHOJI

Before unmarried, single women over the age of 25 were worried and uncomfortable. The phrase "hari no mushiro (sitting on needles)" is applicable. In Japan, woman graduated from college, went to work for a couple of years and then got married at 24. After this age, they might become known as kurisumasu keki (Christmas cake), referring to how bakeries would reduce the price of Christmas cakes after December 25. In addition to this, women felt that their skin 'turned,' (shomikigen-gire) and they would then be (past the sell-by date). So what could women do but to hunt down men, sometimes any man, and get married. They would then disappear into their homes and become housewives. However, times are changing. The average age for getting married has climbed up to 33 for men, and 30 for women, and in some larger cities, it is higher. Women realize that they are still young at 30, and they really have many options, and dating choices. Also, they realize they have much more freedom than an average housewife.

## Reading 3. Japan's convenience stores waste tons of food

Mainichi Daily News Report

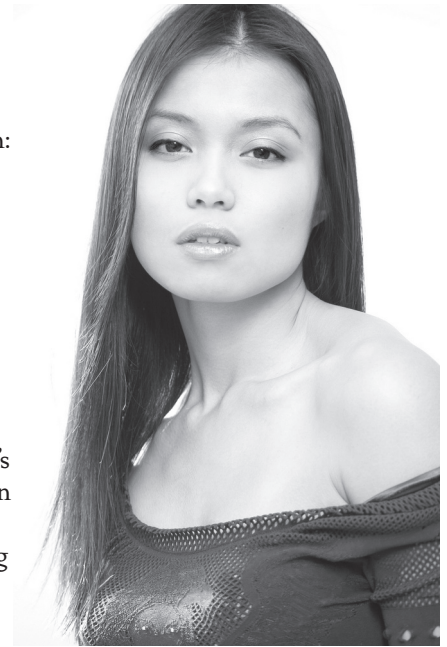
Japan is a leader—in throwing away food. In fact 20 million tons of food "waste" is thrown out each year, averaging about 150 kilograms per person in Japan. One of the issues is overproduction, especially in convenience stores. In some stores, checks for expiry dates are done three times a day, and food is thrown out within two hours of their use-by limit. Bread, rice balls, and sandwiches are thrown out one day before their expiry date. Milk is disposed of four days before the expiry date. Convenience stores are not allowed to discount food approaching their expiry date unlike supermarkets. Last year, 4.5 million yen worth of prepared food was thrown out. This is about 8 percent of all prepared food sales.



## Reading 4. Beauty: Japanese women's never-ending quest

Japan Times

While many women throughout the world are concerned about a variety of issues, (environmental, poverty, child-care, education, politics), there is only one issue of importance for Japanese women: beauty. The pressure to be *utsukushii* (beautiful) and *kirei* (pretty) is a 24 hour and 7 day routine! Nowadays, Japanese believe that their beauty is the most important thing in their lives, with some even thinking it is a solution for all of their problems. This has led to a manic-obsessive drive to be and to stay beautiful. Thus, Japan itself needs to see a psychologist to cure this cultural illness and to have collective therapy. Now, there are some of us here that do believe that this relentless pursuit of *bi* is too strange. In fact, recently my own brother said, “*Meku wo shitenai onna wo mitsukerunowa kiyoi seijika wo mitsukerukotoyori muzukashii* (It's more difficult to find a woman without makeup than it is to find an honest politician.)” He's probably right. When I go into any public restroom at any large station, I see rows of women of all ages, fixing their makeup with a studied dedication worthy of Marie Curie.



## Reading 5. Making ends meet with less

Japan Times Editorial

The fiscal 2005 “Annual Report on the Japanese Economy and Public Finances” focuses on pays demographic changes: the expected shrinkage of the population and the retirement in large numbers of baby boomers. While the report says that the economy will improve, the retirement of the baby boomers will be a problem. One issue is that when older workers leave, they take with them their experience, standards, ideas, and skills. It takes a long time for younger workers to be as skilled as these workers. The report also states that Japan needs to increase productivity, and have new technologies. Management needs to be able to put these skills to effective use. The retirement of baby boomers will also decrease corporate profits as they have to pay more in pensions and retirement allowances.



# Final Exam Essay Page

## Reading 1. Will Japanese inertia never be the same again?

1. Are Japanese universities really changing?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Has Japanese culture changed so that model students are really rewarded and recognized?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Is this topic important for most Japanese? Why or why not?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What did you learn from this reading?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Reading 2. Better left on the shelf than a downtrodden wife?

5. Are Japanese women still worried about getting married before 25?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Is getting married a good option for women who are getting older?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Is this topic important for most Japanese? Why or why not?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What did you learn from this reading?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Reading 3. Japan's convenience stores waste tons of food

9. Are most Japanese worried about how much food is being wasted in Japan? Why or why not?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What are some ways to prevent so much food from being wasted?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Is this topic important for most Japanese? Why or why not?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What did you learn from this reading?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

