

【論文】

“Don’t Mention the War!”

Visiting the Year 1950 in an English Language Writing Class

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「戦争を話題にするな！」

英作文の授業で一年生が昭和 25 年に「出かける」

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**Abstract:** This paper argues for a more multidisciplinary approach to teaching English in Japan’s secondary education. In large part the writing skills of incoming college freshmen are the best honed of the four, even approaching native level in some rare cases. On the college end every effort should be made to elicit and encourage the expression of content learned in other disciplines, particularly modern Japanese history and modern world history. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to compartmentalize English as a subject isolated from the scope of those subjects, particularly where it pertains to World War II and its aftermath. English functions mainly as a vehicle for expressing personal feelings and opinions of the immediate present, lacking spontaneous and informed references to a broader context. A lack of historical thinking in this regard was revealed sharply in a particular writing exercise described herein.

**Key words:** Japanese history education, Japanese English education, American educational films, the Occupation era, Julien Bryan

The title bears references to two great British quotes, one well-known and the other somewhat less so. The reader may recognize “Don’t mention the war!”

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as the most memorable line from a classic episode in the BBC television sitcom *Fawlty Towers* entitled “The Germans” (1975). The eccentric and irascible Basil Fawlty played by John Cleese (b. 1939) runs a hotel in the resort city of Torquay with his long-suffering wife Sybil, played by Prunella Scales (b.1932). Basil’s already quirky personality is severely impacted by an unhealed head injury. He leaves his hospital bed without permission to return to work where he finds himself waiting on the table of the much anticipated German guests. Basil loudly cautions his staff about bringing up the war, yet violates his own admonition time and again by interpreting every item ordered by the German diners as having some connection to the Third Reich. This brazenness, presumably due to his injury, reaches a point where a woman diner bursts into tears as Basil lapses into a hilarious Hitler impersonation with an acrobatic “silly walk” goosestep.

The other line is about the past being a foreign country: “they do things differently there.” It is the famous opening to the novel *The Go-Between* by L. P. Hartley (1895-1972). I have scrawled this on the blackboard many times in my teaching career, either as an introduction or a conclusion to the lesson of the day.

This paper is about not “mentioning the war” in a more serious context, particularly during a classroom “visit” to Occupation era Japan where absence of historical awareness was so sorely conspicuous I felt it merited reporting in a paper with an accompanying argument. There is generally not a very keen feeling for history among Bunkyo University freshmen. As I have stated in previous papers, even those students majoring in English do not have a solid grip on the reason it is English and not some other foreign language that they are devoting time, energy and money toward “mastering.” My favorite question of interviewees seeking admission into the English department is why English, a language originally spoken by an island people in a small country a little over half the size of Honshu, has become the world’s most studied and an actual required school subject here in Japan. Seldom, if ever, does anyone mention the British Empire’s “sun” never setting,

or the U.S. dollar being the world’s reserve currency. An informed answer to this easy question always asked in English is all too rare.

Spontaneous reference to recent history hardly ever spills into English class, perceived as an entirely separate discipline requiring an entirely different set of mental tools. This paper describes the result of a recent exercise involving a Bunkyo University writing class for students fresh out of high school and their response to a 1950 documentary made for American school children entitled *Japanese Family* from the International Film Foundation. It should be noted that this was not a survey-style assignment aiming for a specific result, but rather an ordinary seasonal assignment that unexpectedly became a new window through which to view an old problem.

### **Enter Fuji Television**

I obtained the Japanese-language dubbed version of *Japanese Family* through working my video machine back when the technology was cutting edge. It was aired in the fourth installment of *Fushiginokuni Nippon (Strange country Japan)*, a television variety special, which showed a compilation of newsreels and other documentary film made by Americans in Japan since the dawn of motion pictures. (The oldest was an 1898 Edison movie of a train coming into Tokyo Station.) The program was broadcast on a weekend afternoon sometime in the early 1990s. The hosts were veteran announcer Tsuyuki Shigeru (b. 1940) and the late Ariga Satsuki (1965-2018). Guest panelists were the late director of cinema Oshima Nagisa (1932-2013) and the now-retired actress Nakamura Azusa (b. 1966).

Much of the content came from old Movietone newsreels that in their original form featured legendary broadcaster and world traveler Lowell Thomas (1892-1991). When the topic wasn’t directly related to subjects requiring tones of solemnity such as the Imperial Family, the Japanese language voiceover was

cheery and at times even flippant, much in the style of the old *katsudou benshi* whose witty commentary provided the sound in Japan's era of "silent movies." (The theme song of the variety show was Wanda Jackson's 1957 hit "Fujiyama Mama" – a sassy rockabilly tune superficially about explosions, whether atom bombs or volcanos, surprisingly well received by the Japanese public.) Unusual scenes included film of the young adult Crown Prince Akihito casually holding a drink in his hand, something Japanese cameramen would be reluctant if not fearful to film, and a seemingly infinite symmetry of uniformed schoolgirls lined up in concentric circles doing "routine exercise." There were geishas featured more than once, with their Shimada *mage* tidy and in place, whether wearing western-style bathing suits or baseball "kimonos." Ominously, a Tokyo air raid drill was filmed early in the 1930s when what was to come in the not-so-distant future was still unthinkable to the casual observer of world events. The Fuji Television narrator chirped away at this segment in admiration of citizen cooperation.

The editors of the show made a point of showcasing war-era anti-Japanese propaganda, about which the younger Ariga and Nakamura perhaps feigned for effect their surprise of sadness and dismay. A cartoon was shown where the otherwise familiar and much loved Popeye pummels buck-toothed and squinting Japanese sailors, then sinks their jerry-built battleship. A U.S. Treasury Department propaganda movie entitled *My Japan* from 1945 featured a faux Japanese announcer into whose mouth were placed words the U.S. government needed the enemy to say, that no amount of (conventional) bombs could destroy Japan (and thus the atomic bombs were needed): "London was bombed. Did England die?"

There was no time for discussing the creative minds behind the production of the movie *Japanese Family*, though viewers could see that it was a Julien Bryan production directed by a William James. Bryan and James were both cinematographers who made movies for schools about countries of the world、Bryan, in particular, was legendary for his work in filming Germany in the pre-war days of the

Third Reich and, in the war years, movies about Latin American countries (“Julien Bryan”).

In hindsight it makes sense that for scheduling purposes documentaries such as *My Japan* and *Japanese Family* with much longer running times in their original form would be whittled down to the nub of what they were about. For the television business this is fair enough, though more naïve audience members may not have made such assumptions, believing they were watching very short movies that were nevertheless complete.

I have to admit that I was among those trusting believers until only recently.

### **The exercise**

Almost immediately I found a use for *Japanese Family* in classes where I taught writing. There was just enough of the original English narration audible in the background that I could make a transcript upon which to extract certain vocabulary words and sentence patterns for student reference while having the “answers” to the exercise should anyone be interested. The assignment was given as a “winter project” in December with the idea that they would read aloud their full narration of the four-minute documentary when they returned in January. I played *Japanese Family* for the class on the video machine two or three times with the sound turned off, of course, so that they could clearly see what it was they were supposed to write about. I offered recommended word count as well. The plan was that they read their narration as the video was playing, being careful to keep the relevant narrated content in synch with what was being shown on the screen.

I also laid down three basic rules for the exercise. The first was to keep in mind that the documentary was made by Americans for American children, therefore it was important to use the third person voice when referring to Japanese people and Japanese ways. It is no surprise that this is hard to do for some who cannot

disable the formatting that their early English language education planted in their heads, that English is learned in part for the purpose of explaining to foreigners how “we Japanese” do things. The second rule was to avoid writing about “the old days.” The point was not to describe the scenes as showing how Japan used to be, but rather to imagine what the actual narration sounded like in real time. The third important rule of thumb was to keep Japanese words to a minimum or - better yet - not use them at all. While *tatami* and *futon* could be found in the English dictionary of the time, such words may still be unfamiliar to American children who know nothing about Japanese traditional life. A word like *mochi* most definitely would be meaningless without an explanation. Invariably, the rules get broken by the few who do not understand, do not bother to listen or simply do not care.

### **The original (and presumably) uncut *Japanese Family***

It so happened that out of curiosity I searched the expansive Internet Archive website in December 2020 to see if *Japanese Family* was there; Internet Archive has existed since 1996, and is now a database boasting nearly 9 million movies in its collection. I found that *Japanese Family* was uploaded to the site in February 2017 and that it was originally much longer than four minutes.

Due to the ongoing precautions involved with the Covid-19 pandemic where ordinary class could not be held – at least in my case – there was no breaking into teams as usual for reading narrations in pace with the video. All narrations were submitted in writing online through *manaba*. However, now knowing the original movie was easily accessible, I assigned students an extra task, requesting a comparative essay of 400 words or more where they would consider impressions of the Fuji Television edited version in its four meager minutes and how they stood up to impressions from the 23-minute 38-second uncut original.

Why did Fuji Television choose the scenes that it did to show on its variety

program? That was the full extent of my instructions. Students already knew the film was made in 1950 and I made no point of framing that year in any kind of historical context for them. I only stressed that the essay would be graded as an exam and urged them, therefore, to do their absolute best in avoiding spelling errors, sloppy formatting, blocky paragraphs without indentation, erratic capitalization, too few words, etc.

No Japanese person has any explanatory speaking role in *Japanese Family*. The male narrator’s voiceover in Standard American English is virtually all there is, plus the occasional accompanying koto music and some singing. The underlined parts indicate what Fuji Television’s editors chose to include in their version for *Fushiginokuni Nippon*.

1:01 Narration begins and the kamishibai in front of a Shinto shrine with children dispersing as the performance ends.

1:24 Yone and Mitsu are shown walking home down a narrow street.

1:48 Yone throws a rock in the slough that runs between houses.

1:50 The narrator notes that many features of Japanese family life are no different from American family life, but that the differences may prove interesting.

2:04 War is mentioned for the first time. “Kyoto was not greatly damaged.”

2:35 Children meet parents in the family workplace, a silk-weaving shop.

3:05 War is mentioned for the second time. “Since the war, times have been hard.”

3:29 War is mentioned for the third time. “Even before the war” textile and clothing industry employed the most people, mostly in small shops like this one.

4:25 The mechanism of a loom is explained.

4:41 War is mentioned for the fourth time. It is explained that in “prewar Japan” the Kawai family would have had servants. Meal preparation is explained.

5:15 War is mentioned for the fifth time. Gas stoves, “particularly since the war,” are expensive.

- 5:54 Fish is described as a main source of protein.
- 6:01 “And now the family sits down to supper” The scene is relatively lengthy, with family members eating quietly, using their chopsticks. (Koto music)
- 7:03 Homework starts. The children have more homework than American children because of the difficulty of the written language. Characters are difficult to “draw” and remember.
- 7:53 The father is shown conducting business “in an atmosphere of politeness and ceremony.”
- 8:29 The abacus is introduced.
- 8:39 Grandmother begins to repair the sliding screens with “strong tissue paper.”
- 9:38 Mrs. Kawai gets the children’s futon out of the closet.
- 10:04 Futon are described.
- 10:25 Nara, the destination for tomorrow’s trip, is mentioned.
- 11:14 Religion in Japan is described, with mention of the few Japanese Christians.
- 11:43 The park is described as very beautiful; Yone and Mitsu feed the deer.
- 12:20 Highlighting Todaiji and the Daibutsu, “cast over 1,200 years ago”
- 13:00 New Year’s house décor is explained: “as important ... as the Christmas tree is to us at Christmas time.”
- 14:09 The children with mother and aunt see Bunraku performed in Osaka as “a special holiday treat.”
- 15:10 The Bunraku reader is explained as “an actor who plays all the roles.”
- 16:57 The children go backstage for a visit with the performers.
- 17:27 The shamisen is described as being “like our banjo.”
- 17:35 The chief puppeteer shows Yone and Mitsu how the puppets work.
- 18:47 Yone imitates the motion of the puppets for a laugh.
- 19:11 Stilts, kites and battledore are displayed as traditional New Year’s toys.
- 19:51 Mr and Mrs Kawai “receive their first New Year’s callers.”

20:14 The holiday is described as a time of “great friendliness.”

21:06 *Otoso* is sipped in a polite manner as the koto background music is suddenly accompanied with singing.

21:30 Yone and Mitsu are shown playing with a new simple pinball game (and Yone wins an orange from his father).

21:59 *Uta-garuta* is introduced as a game for the whole family enjoyed at New Year’s.

22:43 The baby in the family crawls across the floor and makes a mess of things, but everyone smiles.

22:56 Conclusion, with father embracing Yone and mother embracing Mitsu: “Now they can look forward to another year of peace when their innate love of family life can find a happy expression - and to that New Year’s somewhere in the future where they will once again take their place in the family of nations.”

### **What the essays lacked**

The reader will infer at this point that no student essay said anything about the war. “War” was uttered five times in the narration, with a sixth time at the very last bearing a more read-between-the-lines implication that the majority of students would miss. The Occupation still had two more years to go in 1950. Despite that year being a front-and-center reference point, students seem to have been more carried away by the visuals and not by what the narrator was actually saying, even when the word “war” is concentrated in the first six minutes. Would that not be when the students are most alert? There is not much that is everyday “Japanese” in this 1950 documentary which college students in Saitama would identify as part of their lives in 2021. It is long ago and Kyoto a far 490 kilometers away. The students tackled the assignment strictly as an English exercise “about Japan” without taking into account the original purpose of the film. No attempt was made to seri-

ously imagine how American children might have responded to *Japanese Family* when it was new.

Simple arithmetic is a good starting point. A school child who was 12 years old in 1950 would have been seven the year the war ended. He or she would have heard that the war's conclusion was hastened by the dropping of two extraordinarily powerful bombs on Japanese cities. A small child might not respond in any meaningful way to the loss of 405,399 lives and the wounding and disfigurement of over a million others, but some sensitivity to surrounding adult anxiety seems perfectly plausible. Adults may have tried to protect children from hearing war stories or the ugly rhetoric of racism, but it is hard to comprehend any American child getting through all four years by fixating exclusively on jacks, marbles and other children's diversions of the era. There were, after all, cap guns, too.

American children did not have to contend with evacuation or other major dishevelment in their lives as was the case with their counterparts in Europe and East Asia. At worst it was fear of another "surprise attack" and the types of nightmares such paranoia would generate. The older ones might collect scrap metal or save up what money they could to purchase war bonds thinking that somehow they were helping out ("The Ready Ones"). As previously mentioned, Popeye and other animated entertainments, most notably Disney Studios, were geared toward generating the necessary propaganda for securing unity needed for winning the war. A child may have seen Donald Duck, for example, in his heroic role as Commando Duck, jumping into enemy territory and by lucky accident obliterating a Japanese airbase – or perhaps the Warner Brothers string of gags entitled "Tokio Jokio," thick with cringe worthy stereotypes so over-the-top that the funny-talking Japanese looked more rodent-like than human. Indeed, for many children it may have been due to the context of "enemy country" that they even knew Japan existed in the first place.

Then there were the Japanese-Americans who were relocated into the interior

for fear of their possibly sabotaging the war effort on the West Coast where they had lived peacefully in significant numbers since the beginning of the century. As many as 120,000 were denied their citizen’s rights in a travesty of justice that at the time was regarded as a “military necessity” (“Facts”). Of course, to a small child this meant very little if the child was not Asian-looking in appearance. A famous photo of the time shows what some Japanese Americans, once released from the camps, returned to: a white woman pointing to a giant sign dangling from her rooftop declaring “Japs keep moving. This is a white man’s neighborhood.” Another photo frequently available for driving home the point of anti-Japanese-American hatred is that of a balding white barber grinning as he too points at a sign, this one atop his cash register: “We don’t want any Japs back here ... ever! (“Shirakawa”).” (The sign was issued by the mayor of Kent, Washington, to local businesses.) One can easily imagine this man in the starring role of some Rockwellesque scene as the small town barber about to administer the first haircut to some fidgety toddler whose father couldn’t be present. He would be off fighting “Japs” in the Pacific.

What, then, of war’s end? If what happened to some of the Japanese Americans is any indication, resentments and hatreds do not automatically recede into oblivion. On a geopolitical level the healing process was much speedier than that on the ground where ordinary citizens were restarting lives without certain loved ones in them any longer. The Japanese were clearly in the same situation with the added burdens of repairing or replacing damaged infrastructure. Newsreels such as those created by British Pathé (1948) mentioned how Allied soldiers in the streets of Tokyo were now “walking in peace” with the locals; they singled out the Japanese people’s rekindled fondness for British movies and American baseball. Japan’s children are also described, tritely but truthfully, as being the hope for the future, but there are still lingering issues to deal with in regard to the recent dark past (“Tokyo Today 1948”). There is no way of watching any newsreel of this time

that was made about Japan and ignore the nagging background noise of devastation and defeat.

Nor did students show any inclination to identify meaningfully with the hungry looking children in the opening scene of *Japanese Family*. Food is the one feature about which there is some obvious common ground as not all students would necessarily be living in an old or traditional style house. No history textbook would skip the food crisis of this time (*shokuryounan no jidai*). 1950 was the final year of rationing, but already miso and soy sauce were being purchased with relative freedom. Imported wheat from the United States was put to use in rekindling the national taste for Chinese noodles (ramen). In the large cities school lunch programs were implemented in elementary schools. In universities such as Ochanomizu food became the subject of a variety of practical studies, including nutrition (Shiromi). I would not expect students to know any of this in detail, but do find it odd that no mind is paid to the very real possibility that Yone and Mitsuo may have been traumatized by the scarcities that immediately followed the war.

*Japanese Family* can be viewed as a form of journalism, but a closer look suggests it is more than that. It is a movie with a mission. The content is infused with unambiguous good will. There is no wisecracking about cheap flimsy toys or pushy commuters on crowded trams. The point, essentially, is to “deprogram” American children who may have lasting negative impressions of Japan or doubts about the potentials of Japan as a genuine “friend” of the United States. American children emerged from World War II without the scrapes, scratches and burns that Japanese children incurred, but their minds were equally susceptible to war propaganda, some of it specifically geared their way. The damage was deepest among those children who had never even met or seen a Japanese or Japanese-American person. Basil Beyea, the scriptwriter of *Japanese Family*, was quick to note in the very beginning that there were similarities as well as differences between the children of Japan and the United States, perhaps mindful of how ignoring this simple

truth could lead to another war someday.



“Although some Japanese customs would seem odd to us, there are just as many which are not so different from our own.” (Screenshot from *Japanese Family*.)

### What the essays revealed

We know what the students did *not* mention, so what observations did the seventeen comparative essays present regarding Fuji Television’s editorial choices?

Several rightly acknowledge that Fuji Television had no time to show the original and the trips to Nara and Osaka were well worth removing if the point was to show family life as promised in the title. Kyoto, it is noted, is a very special place in Japan even for Japanese people and does not really represent the whole as well as other cities might. (Note, however, that the narrator said Kyoto was a good choice for filming because it had not been *bombed*.) Some students said there is much about Japan in the original that is not especially interesting for a Japanese television audience who do not need to hear details about traditional New Year’s decorations. The scene of Yone throwing a rock and being naughty was cut so that

children viewing the show would not imitate him. The food that was shown was boring, said another. Why not sukiyaki or something special? One student suggested the section of the documentary explaining the loom mechanism was cut by Fuji Television in order to help protect a trade secret. Traditional games, suggested another, are old and not worth mentioning. Certainly, another claimed, the subject of religion was cut to avoid offending Japanese Christians.

Some students could not fathom why the film has any kind of life anymore given how old it is, perhaps under the mistaken impression it is still being used to show “today’s Japan.” Such a misunderstanding may have been due to a failure on the instructor’s part to explain more emphatically what the point of the exercise was. Still, it has never been easy to get students to watch anything in black-and-white, the assumption being that somehow everything new is necessarily an improvement over everything old. Movie-watching as a form of personal enrichment seems to require a semblance of familiarity and fashionableness. An “old movie” might be deemed a worthy risk, for example, if it has a Disney connection.

In December 2019 the last feature of a modest on-campus international film festival held in Building 11 was scheduled to be *To Kill a Mockingbird* – the classic 1962 movie based on Harper Lee’s novel about race and familial love in Depression-era Alabama. Among the works was the North Korean movie *A Schoolgirl’s Diary* (2007) and American Michael Moore’s *Where to Invade Next?* (2015). As the last movie scheduled there was even the hint planted that the “best” was being saved for last – the climax of the series as it were; the movie had been widely promoted in posters and online. I plugged it heavily in my class on the American Civil War making use of more than one PowerPoint slide in hopes some students might show up to watch. And, no less significantly, it was stressed there was no admission charge. Yet despite the aggressive advertising, not a soul came to see it; perhaps because it was in black-and-white. A charitable explanation for the abysmal result was the awkward timing of the event when students were

studying for exams, but the fact stands that exactly nobody showed up.

### **A Control Group**

I requested my fourth-year seminar students also watch the two versions and compare. As third-year students they had had a full semester of topics relating to the memory of World War II, with a focus not only on the way the war was remembered in Japan, but in Germany, the United States and China as well. There was not a single lesson that did not deal with some lingering point of contention about war behavior and the appearance of lacking proper contrition, whether it was Holocaust denial, defense of the atomic bombings, or claims that the Rape of Nanking was a hoax. Two movies were watched in their entirety, including *The Nasty Girl* (1990), a West German film directed by Michael Verhoeven based on the true story of Anna Rosmus, a young woman with an interest in local history who makes a school project out of unlocking embarrassing secrets concerning her home town’s Nazi past. I asked them to compare the girl with the protagonist in another movie, *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On* (*Yuki Yukite Shingun*), a documentary directed by Hara Kazuo made just three years earlier that depicts the efforts of one bitter and iconoclastic war veteran, Okuzaki Kenzo, to get to the bottom of executions for alleged desertions that occurred in New Guinea at war’s end.

Having this learning experience supposedly fresh in mind, would their sensitivity to what was revealed and explained in *Japanese Family* be any different from that of the freshmen?

Eight out of ten responded. All but three of the commentaries made no mention of war. Students viewed the two versions with their own experience as the main frame of reference, which is to be expected. What I suspected against my hopes was that they would not use much imagination in their answers, touching

upon only the superficial aspects: clothing, tourism to Osaka and Kyoto, toys, traditional arts and customs.

Of the three exceptions, one stood out for not only mentioning the war, but placing some emphasis on it. It expressed an awareness of the proximity of 1950 to the war years and that the Fuji Television truncated version omitted mention of how Kyoto was spared bombing and any talk of the war at all. This was the type of response I had been hoping for.

The other two mentioned the war in a more casual manner, simply stating that 1950 was post-war. Still, the word “war” at least appeared in their answers, more than amply demonstrating an awareness that there was one.

The data are sparse, so no firm conclusions are possible as to how one gender might answer this question differently than another, but it bears noting that all three respondents who acknowledged there was a war were women. Six of the ten in the seminar are men.

### **Conclusion: Why History?**

The ability to think historically, to possess “historical literacy,” is hailed insofar as it promotes the active use of history as a tool for understanding the present, for seeing through conspiracy theories and appreciating historical realism in movies. While such a skill may enhance a citizen’s worldview, not having it isn’t going to result in personal starvation, homelessness, bankruptcy, divorce or other devastating misfortune. It may not even, as is sometimes argued, “doom democracy.” Those with an interest in history can find a panoply of sources in the library without having to suffer the torture of cramming seemingly meaningless names and dates for an examination. The stark reality of the matter is plain to see: that countless young people cannot be made to care about why the world is the way it is. On the surface, the history discipline appears to be even more “useless” than art

and music, the first curriculum cuts in a budget pinch. Why not use the time spent for “teaching” history to develop more “practical” abilities?

Where history class fails to engage the imagination, popular culture as packaged by television could fill the void should there exist some spark of interest. Over the years I have asked numerous students about how they have learned about the Japanese Constitution and whether or not they knew the story of multi-lingual Beate Sirota Gordon (1923-2012). Few know. She was the young Jewish American interpreter present when the Japanese Constitution was being written, having learned fluent Japanese in the ten years she was educated in Tokyo prior to attending the prestigious Mills College in the United States in 1939. She tearfully pled that provisions guaranteeing that Japanese women have equal legal standing with Japanese men be written into the Constitution. That display of emotion and heartfelt concern led to her active participation in drafting Articles 14 and 24 (Gordon). Beate Sirota-Gordon is legendary among Japanese feminists, and became the subject of an Asahi Broadcasting Corporation documentary plus a stage play to name a few distinctions. But with SNS, part-time jobs, extra-curricular activities and a host of other endeavors to occupy their time, college students do not exactly swarm to television as a source of personal enlightenment or entertainment (“Imadoki”).

Of course, history class is in no real danger of ever disappearing and it is futile to advocate for its demise. In an ideal world, however, “historical literacy” should be a tool for students exploring topics both inside and outside the history classroom, an aptitude that cannot be quantified for levels of proficiency. Someone of stellar influence needs to step forth and show the nation’s youth there is genuine value - something “sexy” - in understanding one’s own place on the timeline of world events, and that history, like literature, mathematics, science, English and every other school subject, did not evolve for the purpose of generating jobs for teachers, publishers and exam-makers. These subjects do not exist wholly inde-

pendent of one another, and the ways they overlap ache for a more rigorous focus.

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