

A Summer Holiday Teaching resources

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A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 1: Departure and Arrival

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 1. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 1 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 2.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

Three Aston University students — Julien Renault, Damiano La Rocca, and Daniel Watson — are due to travel to Japan with a fourth friend, Patrick Parsons, through their university Travel Society. Patrick is seriously injured in a cycling accident just before departure (a broken tibia and fibula) and, after an initial silence that worries his friends, insists from his hospital bed that the trip go ahead without him. The three visit him again at the flat before leaving. The chapter then follows their journey: a layover in Taipei, where they eat braised pork rice and half-jokingly plan a future Taiwan trip, and their arrival in Tokyo, where jet lag and hunger lead them to a conveyor-belt sushi restaurant for their first meal in Japan. Damiano gives the food a lukewarm review; Julien is shown quietly noting something on his phone that he doesn’t share with the others. The chapter closes with an Instagram post announcing their arrival, and a characteristically needling comment from Patrick.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 1. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Plans and Setbacks

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever planned something with friends — a trip, an event, a project — that had to change at the last minute because of an accident or emergency?
- If you were badly injured right before a trip you had been looking forward to, would you want your friends to go without you, or to postpone it? Why?
- What does it mean to be a supportive friend when something unfair has happened to you personally?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — The Language of Travelling Together

With a partner, brainstorm words and phrases connected to each topic below. You will meet some of this vocabulary in the chapter.

Topic	Words / phrases you already know
Hospitals and injuries	
Airports and layovers	
Eating out in a group	
Posting about a trip on social media	

Activity 3 — Japan, Taiwan: What Do You Know?

Before reading, make a quick list. Work alone, then compare with a partner.

Things I know	Things I'm curious about

Can you find Tokyo and Taipei on a map? Do you know anything about either city already?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 1, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

bloke — noun (informal, British)

An informal word for ‘man’ or ‘guy’.

“Some bloke didn’t see me pulling out of a junction.”

cast — noun

A hard, protective covering — usually made of plaster or fibreglass — fitted around a broken bone to keep it still while it heals.

“...one leg in a cast from just above the ankle to halfway up his thigh...”

conveyor-belt sushi — noun phrase

A style of restaurant (originally Japanese) in which small plates of sushi travel past customers on a moving belt, so people can take whatever they like as it passes.

“...plates rattling past on a conveyor belt each under a little plastic dome...”

crutches — noun (plural)

A pair of sticks, usually with a support for the armpit or forearm, used to help someone walk when they cannot put weight on a leg.

“The crutches were leaning against the arm of the sofa within reach...”

to damn (something) with faint praise — idiom

To criticise something indirectly by praising it in a weak, unenthusiastic way.

“Damning with faint praise.”

departure board — noun

A large screen or board, typically in an airport or station, that lists departing flights or trains and their times, gates, or platforms.

“...a departure board full of cities none of them were going to...”

to flicker — verb

To appear briefly on someone’s face or in their expression and then disappear quickly.

“Something in Patrick’s face flickered, there and gone before anyone could really call it out.”

to grimace — verb

To twist your face to show pain, discomfort, or displeasure.

“...he tried a small smile, and winced instead.” (see also: to wince)

junction — noun (British English)

A place where two or more roads meet or cross.

“Some bloke didn’t see me pulling out of a junction.”

physio — noun (informal, short for physiotherapy)

Treatment that uses physical methods — such as exercise and movement — to help someone recover strength and mobility after an injury.

“How’s the physio going?” “Slowly. Painfully.”

propped up — adjective phrase (past participle)

Supported in a raised or leaning position, often with cushions or pillows.

"Patrick was propped up against two pillows that had clearly been fought over with a nurse..."

to sell a kidney — idiom (informal)

A humorous exaggeration meaning to go to extreme financial lengths to afford something very expensive.

"...cheap enough that nobody has to sell a kidney."

shoulder season — noun (travel term)

The period of travel between a destination's busiest (high) season and its quietest (low) season — often cheaper and less crowded than either.

"Taiwan, two weeks, shoulder season."

strap-hanger — noun

A standing passenger on a crowded train, bus, or tram, often holding an overhead strap or rail for balance.

"...three strap-hangers deep in a carriage that still somehow felt more orderly..."

tib and fib — noun (informal, medical shorthand)

An informal short form of 'tibia and fibula', the two bones of the lower leg.

"Tib and fib, both of them. Surgeon says six weeks in the cast..."

to wince — verb

To make a brief facial expression of pain, discomfort, or distaste.

"He tried a small smile, and winced instead."

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. After the accident, the doctors put his whole leg in a _____ for six weeks.
2. She didn't say anything, but a look of worry _____ across her face for just a second.
3. We stood the whole way home, _____ in a completely packed carriage.
4. "It was fine, I suppose" is a good example of _____ — he clearly wasn't impressed.
5. He needs _____ twice a week to get full movement back in his knee.
6. Flying in April instead of August is cheaper because it's _____.

COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Patrick is injured in a car accident. | T / F / NM |
| 2. Patrick breaks two bones in his lower leg. | T / F / NM |
| 3. Julien, Damiano, and Daniel visit Patrick in hospital the same day he finally replies to their messages. | T / F / NM |
| 4. Patrick asks his friends to cancel the trip because of his injury. | T / F / NM |
| 5. The friends fly directly from the UK to Tokyo, with no stopover. | T / F / NM |
| 6. The friends eat conveyor-belt sushi on their first night in Tokyo. | T / F / NM |
| 7. Damiano thinks the sushi restaurant serves the best sushi he has ever had. | T / F / NM |
| 8. Patrick's mother has been hiding the biscuits in a different place. | T / F / NM |
| 9. The friends are members of a university travel society. | T / F / NM |
| 10. The group has already booked a future trip to Taiwan. | T / F / NM |

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once: Julien · Damiano · Daniel · Patrick

Description	Character
A. Quietly notes something down that the others can't see, without explaining why.	
B. Recovering from a serious injury, but insists his friends travel without him.	
C. Works out how the restaurant's ordering system works almost immediately.	
D. Seems anxious about missing an important family occasion back home.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why can't Patrick travel to Japan with his friends?
- How does Patrick react when Julien tries to suggest cancelling the trip? What does his reaction tell us about him?
- What does the moment 'Something in Patrick's face flickered, there and gone' suggest about how he really feels, underneath what he says out loud?
- Why do the friends stop in Taipei on the way to Tokyo, and what do they do there?
- How is the group's first meal in Tokyo different from what a 'perfect first night in Japan' might look like in your imagination?

 LANGUAGE FOCUS
A — British Dry Humour and Understatement

British English often uses understatement and dry, low-key humour instead of stating feelings directly. Look at these examples from the chapter:

"It's good," Damiano said, carefully. "It's — it's fine. It's exactly what it says on the tin." "Damning with faint praise." "There it is," Patrick said, pointing weakly at him. "That's the spirit."

- Find one more example of understatement or dry humour in the chapter.
- Why might a character use humour instead of talking directly about how upset or worried they are?
- Does your own language or culture use understatement in a similar way, or is directness more common? Give an example.

B — Idioms of Effort, Money, and Value

The chapter uses several informal idioms connected to cost, effort, and worth:

"...cheap enough that nobody has to sell a kidney." "It's not excessive," Damiano said. "It's thorough. There's a difference and you're on the wrong side of it." "...it's exactly what it says on the tin."

1. Match each idiom above to its meaning: (a) to be wrong about something, (b) to be extremely expensive, (c) to be exactly as simple or basic as it appears.
2. Rewrite each idiom in plain, literal English.
3. With a partner, use two of these idioms in sentences about your own life.

C — Showing Character Through Action

The author often reveals something about a character through a small, specific action, rather than stating it directly. For example:

"Julien looked at the other two... and did, in fact, note it — a short line added to a document on his phone that none of the others could see yet."

This tells us something about Julien without stating it outright.

- What does this detail suggest about Julien's role in the group, or about something that might matter to him?
- Find one more moment in the chapter where an action (not a direct statement) tells us something about a character's feelings.
- Write one original sentence showing (not telling) that a character is nervous, without using the word 'nervous'.

CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 1. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

University Travel Societies in the UK

At many British universities, student-run clubs known as ‘societies’ organise trips, events, and social activities around a shared interest. A Travel Society typically plans group trips abroad, often at a discounted price arranged through a travel agent, and shares updates on social media so members who are not travelling can follow along.

For discussion: Does your country or university have similar student-run clubs or societies? What kinds of trips or events do they organise?

‘Every Little Helps’ and British Supermarket Culture

“Every Little Helps” is the long-running advertising slogan of Tesco, one of the UK’s largest supermarket chains. It is so well known in Britain that people often quote it jokingly in everyday conversation, completely unrelated to shopping — as Daniel does here, to mean roughly ‘any saving is better than none.’

For discussion: Is there an advertising slogan from your own country that people quote jokingly in everyday life? What does it mean, and when do people use it?

Kaiten-zushi: Conveyor-Belt Sushi in Japan

Kaiten-zushi (回転寿司, literally ‘rotation sushi’) restaurants serve small plates of sushi that travel past diners on a conveyor belt, allowing customers to take what they like as it passes, often alongside a touchscreen for ordering specific dishes. Chains such as Kura Zushi are affordable, fast, and popular with families and tourists, but are generally considered a casual, budget-friendly version of sushi rather than a fine-dining experience.

For discussion: Damiano calls it ‘the fast food version’ of sushi. Is there an equivalent in your own country — a fast, casual version of a dish that also exists in a more formal, expensive form?

Taipei Taoyuan and the Culture of the Layover

Taipei Taoyuan International Airport is one of Asia’s major transit hubs, meaning many long-haul flights between Europe and East Asia stop there to connect passengers onward, rather than as a final destination. Passengers on long layovers sometimes leave the airport briefly, or explore its food courts — the friends’ braised pork rice (滷肉飯, lǔròu fàn) is one of Taiwan’s most famous everyday dishes, minced pork stewed in soy sauce and spices, served over rice.

For discussion: Have you ever had a long layover in an airport? What did you do to pass the time?

Studying and Travelling Away from Family

Damiano briefly worries about missing his mother’s birthday while he is abroad — a small moment that reflects a wider experience shared by many international and long-distance students: balancing personal opportunities like travel or study abroad against family expectations and important occasions back home.

For discussion: How important is it, in your own family or culture, to be physically present for occasions like birthdays? Would missing one be a big deal, or easily forgiven?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — ‘Don’t You Dare Cancel This Because of Me’

- Why do you think Patrick reacts so strongly against the idea of cancelling the trip?
- Is it always right to respect someone’s wishes in a situation like this, even if you’re not sure it’s really what they want?
- Daniel says: “It’d be three tickets either way. You’re not exactly coming through customs with that.” Why might this blunt, joking comment actually be the right thing to say in this moment?

Discussion 2 — Friendship Under Pressure

- By the end of the chapter, we’ve seen the four friends interact in a hospital, in a flat, and only through messages. What does each setting reveal about their relationship?
- Patrick asks for ‘photographic evidence’ and posts teasing comments online even while recovering. Why might staying involved from a distance matter to him?
- “Nobody mentioned the leg again.” Why do you think the friends avoid the topic for the rest of the evening? Is this a kind or an unhelpful choice?

Discussion 3 — Arriving Somewhere New

- The chapter says Tokyo “arrived in the wrong order” — sounds and impressions before proper sights. Have you ever arrived somewhere and had a similar experience?
- Why do you think the group chooses conveyor-belt sushi — a fast, casual option — for their first meal, rather than something more special?
- If you were writing the story, what do you imagine the friends might do or see next? (There’s no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 1. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — The Hospital Visit (Groups of 3-4)

Re-enact a version of the hospital scene. One student plays a friend who has just had an accident before an important trip or event; the others are visiting friends who don't yet know if the trip should go ahead.

Language to use: 'Don't you dare...', 'Are you sure?', 'We were going to talk to you about...', 'I mean it.'

Role Play 2 — Convincing Your Friends to Go Without You (Pairs or Groups of 3)

Student A cannot take part in a planned group activity (a trip, a match, a performance — choose your own scenario) for a reason outside their control. Student(s) B feel uncomfortable continuing without them. Student A must convince the group to go ahead anyway.

Focus on: insisting without sounding upset, using humour to lighten the mood, showing you really mean it.

Role Play 3 — Ordering at a Conveyor-Belt Restaurant (Groups of 3-4)

One student plays a member of staff or explains the ordering tablet; the others are customers eating together for the first time, choosing dishes, reacting to what passes by, and giving each other opinions on the food.

Focus on: giving an honest but polite opinion of food, agreeing and disagreeing, functional restaurant language.

Role Play 4 — Bad News, Delivered with Humour (Pairs)

Student A has to tell Student B some disappointing news (a cancelled event, an injury, a missed opportunity — choose your own). Student A tries to stay upbeat and use humour rather than sounding upset. Student B responds naturally.

Debrief question: Did the humour make the news easier or harder to take seriously? Would you use the same approach in your own language?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Patrick's Evening

Write a diary entry (100–150 words) from Patrick's point of view, for the evening after his three friends leave the flat to catch their flight. Use the first person.

Writing 2 — The Note on Julien's Phone

At the sushi restaurant, Julien secretly adds 'a short line' to a document on his phone after Damiano's comment about the sushi. Invent what you think he wrote, and explain in a short paragraph (80–120 words) why you think he's keeping this document, and why he doesn't share it with his friends yet. You do not need to know what actually happens later in the story — this is your own idea.

Writing 3 — The Next Instagram Post

Write the group's next Instagram post (30–50 words) for the Aston Uni Travel Soc account, describing an imagined event on their second day in Tokyo, plus two short comments underneath — one from Patrick, in character, and one from another follower.

Writing 4 — A Message Home

Write a short message (80–120 words) from Damiano to his mother, in English, explaining that he will be away for her birthday. Try to balance honesty about his excitement for the trip with sensitivity about missing an important family occasion.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 2: The Golden Route

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

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- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 2 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 3.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

The three friends spend their first full day sightseeing in Tokyo, moving through a well-known tourist circuit sometimes nicknamed the ‘golden route’. Daniel becomes fixated on the variety of train designs on the metro. At Senso-ji in Asakusa, Damiano is mildly disappointed to learn that his goshuin (temple stamp) is pre-made rather than hand-calligraphed, and Julien’s attempt at a joke about this falls flat with the group. After a quick, unremarkable lunch at Yoshinoya, they experience the crowd choreography of Shibuya Crossing and visit the Hachiko statue, then wander Takeshita-dori in Harajuku, buying oversized crepes. The day ends at the calmer, forested Meiji Jingu shrine in Yoyogi Park, where Julien has a rare unguarded moment of simply appreciating something without a joke to undercut it. The chapter closes with all three friends physically exhausted but satisfied, and an Instagram update with a teasing comment from Patrick.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 2. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — A Full Day of Sightseeing

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Describe the most tiring but rewarding day of sightseeing you've ever had. What did you see, and how did you feel by the evening?
- When you visit somewhere very crowded and famous, do you enjoy the crowd, or do you try to avoid it?
- Have you ever bought a souvenir that turned out to be different from what you expected? What happened?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Tokyo Landmarks: Match the Clues

Before reading, look at these short clues. Can you guess what kind of place each one describes? Don't worry if you don't know — just guess and discuss.

Clue	My guess
A famous ancient temple with a huge red lantern at its entrance gate.	
A road crossing so busy it's said to be one of the world's most crowded.	
A narrow shopping street popular with teenagers, full of fashion and street food.	
A forested shrine reached by a long tree-lined avenue, in the middle of a big city.	

Activity 3 — Trains, Crowds, and Comparisons

Complete the sentence with your own ideas, then compare with a partner:

- 'In my country, public transport is usually _____, but I imagine in Tokyo it might be _____.'
- What differences would you expect to notice between public transport at home and in a very large foreign city?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 2, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

brisk trade — noun phrase (idiom)

A high, active level of buying and selling; if a shop is ‘doing a brisk trade’, it is selling a lot, quickly.

“A shop two doors down was doing a brisk trade in second-hand denim jackets...”

to dissolve into (something) — verb phrase (figurative)

To change suddenly and completely into a different, often less organised, state.

“...the whole junction simply dissolved into motion...”

donburi — noun (Japanese loanword)

A Japanese dish consisting of rice in a bowl topped with meat, fish, or vegetables — a common, quick, everyday meal.

“...simple beef donburi that arrived within about ninety seconds of ordering it.”

to file (something) away — verb phrase (figurative)

To mentally note or store something for later, often without an immediate visible reaction.

“...it was clear he meant it as agreement rather than his usual dry filing-away.”

goshuin — noun (Japanese loanword)

A hand-stamped and inscribed seal, usually including calligraphy, given as proof of a visit to a Japanese shrine or temple.

“...produced a ready-made goshuin, stamped the date on it...”

goshuincho — noun (Japanese loanword)

A stamp book used to collect goshuin from different shrines and temples over time.

“I want one of the stamp books,” Damiano said, “the goshuincho.”

incense — noun

A substance that is burned to produce a sweet or spicy smell, often used in religious or spiritual settings.

“...incense smoke drifting sideways in the heat from a great bronze burner out front...”

to queue — verb (British English)

To stand in a line, waiting for your turn.

“‘We’re getting one,’ Daniel said, already queuing for the crepes.”

rolling stock — noun (railway term)

The vehicles used on a railway, including locomotives and carriages — used here loosely to mean ‘trains’.

“The train out to Shibuya gave Daniel another two lines’ worth of rolling stock to admire.”

to slap (something) on — verb phrase (informal)

To add or attach something quickly and without much care or thought.

“...rather than just slapping a number on the side.”

torii gate — noun (Japanese loanword)

A traditional gate, usually of two upright posts and one or two crossbars, marking the entrance to a Shinto shrine.

“...torii gate rising dark and plain against the trees...”

to undercut (a mood or comment) — verb (figurative)

To reduce or weaken the seriousness or sincerity of a statement, often with a joke or qualification straight afterwards.

“‘This is nice,’ Julien said, and for once didn’t undercut it with anything.”

unremarkable — adjective

Not unusual, interesting, or special in any way; completely ordinary.

“...it was also, by any reasonable local standard, entirely unremarkable.”

to waft — verb

To move gently through the air, or to move something gently through the air, especially a smell or smoke.

“...the habit... of wafting the smoke toward themselves before going any further.”

to wedge — verb

To force or push something tightly into a narrow space.

“...an entire slice of cheesecake wedged into the fold.”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The little stall by the station was doing a _____ selling cold drinks in the heat.
2. As soon as the doors opened, the calm platform _____ chaos.
3. For lunch we just had a quick bowl of _____ — rice with chicken on top.
4. He didn’t say anything about my comment, just seemed to _____ it for later.
5. We had to _____ for almost forty minutes to get into the museum.
6. The smell of fresh bread _____ out of the bakery door and down the street.

COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Daniel is fascinated by the different designs of the trains they take. | T / F / NM |
| 2. The friends skip lunch to save time for sightseeing. | T / F / NM |
| 3. Damiano's goshuin is written by hand while he waits. | T / F / NM |
| 4. Julien's joke about the goshuin gets a big laugh from his friends. | T / F / NM |
| 5. Shibuya Crossing is described as calm and mostly empty. | T / F / NM |
| 6. The friends visit the statue of Hachiko after crossing at Shibuya. | T / F / NM |
| 7. The friends buy a pair of socks in Harajuku. | T / F / NM |
| 8. Eating the crepes while walking turns out to be a bit messy. | T / F / NM |
| 9. Meiji Jingu features both sake barrels and wine barrels on display. | T / F / NM |
| 10. The friends decide to go out again that evening after returning to the hotel. | T / F / NM |

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Notices and comments on train design almost obsessively all day.	
B. Wants a goshuincho because of a family connection to the idea of a pilgrimage.	
C. Makes a dry joke that falls completely flat with the group.	
D. Compares the crowd crossing safely to 'traffic that's agreed to be polite.'	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why is Damiano a little disappointed by how his goshuin is produced?
- What does Julien's failed joke, and his friends' reaction to it, suggest about how humour works within this group?
- How does the author make Shibuya Crossing sound impressive, rather than just describing it as 'busy'?
- Why might the author have included the detail of the French wine barrels standing next to the Japanese sake barrels at Meiji Jingu?
- What does the final line of the chapter — 'Nobody had anything to say to that, which in itself was probably worth noting' — suggest about how the friends are feeling?

abc LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Comparing Home and Abroad

Daniel repeatedly compares what he sees in Tokyo to what he knows from home. Look at this example:

“Back home the whole Tube is basically the same eight trains painted slightly different reds depending which line you're on.”

- Find one more moment in the chapter where a character compares Japan to something familiar from home.
- Practise the structure: ‘Back home, ___, whereas here, ___.’ Write two sentences comparing something in your own country to somewhere you have visited or would like to visit.
- Why might travellers naturally compare new places to home, even when they don’t mean to?

B — When a Joke Doesn’t Land

Sometimes humour fails, and English has natural ways of responding when it does. Look at this exchange:

“It’s a joke,” Julien said, after a pause just long enough to make it worse rather than better. “We know,” Daniel said. “It just wasn’t a very good one.”

- What does explaining a joke usually do to how funny it seems? Why do you think this is?
- With a partner, practise a short exchange where one person makes a joke that fails, and the other responds honestly but kindly.
- Compare this to Chapter 1’s Language Focus on dry humour. What’s different about how humour is being used here?

C — Describing Atmosphere with Figurative Language

The author often describes places using figurative comparisons rather than plain description. For example:

“Senso-ji... was a river of people with a temple somewhere inside it.” “Shibuya Crossing... was less a road junction than a held breath.”

- What effect do these comparisons have, compared to simply writing ‘Senso-ji was very crowded’?
- Find one more example of figurative language used to describe a place in the chapter.
- Write your own one-sentence figurative description of a crowded or busy place you know.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 2. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Senso-ji and Asakusa

Senso-ji is Tokyo's oldest and one of its most visited Buddhist temples, founded in the 7th century. Visitors approach through the outer Kaminarimon ('Thunder Gate'), famous for its giant red lantern, and walk along Nakamise-dori, a shopping street selling traditional snacks and souvenirs, before reaching the main hall. Wafting incense smoke toward oneself at the large burner in front of the hall is a common, informal custom many visitors follow, associated with good fortune or wellbeing, though practices vary and are not strictly required.

For discussion: Are there customs at religious or historic sites in your own country that visitors are expected to follow, even casually?

Goshuin and Goshuincho

A goshuincho is a stamp book used to collect goshuin — inscribed seals given at shrines and temples as a record of a visit. Traditionally, goshuin were written by hand with brush calligraphy on the spot, and this is still the case at many quieter sites. At extremely high-traffic locations like Senso-ji, however, staff often use pre-prepared or stamped versions to manage the volume of visitors, which can feel less personal than the tradition originally suggests.

For discussion: Do you know of similar traditions elsewhere — a stamp, seal, or token collected to mark visiting different places?

Shibuya Crossing and Hachiko

Shibuya Crossing is often cited as one of the busiest pedestrian crossings in the world, with all directions of traffic stopping at once so that pedestrians cross from every side simultaneously. Nearby stands a small statue of Hachiko, a dog who, according to a well-known story, continued to wait at Shibuya Station for his owner for many years after the owner's death, and who has since become a national symbol of loyalty. The statue is now a famous meeting point.

For discussion: Is there a well-known statue or landmark in your city that people use as a meeting point? Does it have a story behind it?

Harajuku and Takeshita-dori

Harajuku is closely associated with youth fashion and street style in Japan, and Takeshita-dori is its best-known pedestrian shopping street — narrow, crowded, and lined with fashion boutiques, second-hand clothing shops, and stalls selling elaborate crepes, a popular street food particularly associated with this area.

For discussion: Is there a neighbourhood or street in your own city known for a particular youth culture or style?

Meiji Jingu and Yoyogi Park

Meiji Jingu is a Shinto shrine set within a large forested park in the middle of Tokyo, dedicated to Emperor Meiji and Empress Shoken. Visitors traditionally wash their hands (and sometimes rinse their mouth) at a purification fountain before approaching the shrine, a Shinto custom called temizu. The avenue leading to the shrine is lined with barrels of sake (kazaridaru), donated by breweries as offerings — a wall of wine barrels from a French producer, visible nearby, reflects a long-standing diplomatic gift exchange.

For discussion: Have you visited a religious site that combines quiet, natural surroundings with the busy city around it? What was that contrast like?

DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Tourist Eyes, Local Eyes

- The chapter says the friends' lunch was 'entirely unremarkable' by local standards, even though they loved it. Can you think of something ordinary in your own country that visitors find exciting?
- Is it possible to 'see' a place the way a local sees it when you're only there for a short time? Why or why not?

Discussion 2 — When Humour Misfires

- Julien's joke doesn't land, and he makes it worse by explaining it. Have you ever had a joke fail in a similar way? What happened next?
- Do you think it's harder to make jokes in a foreign language? What could go wrong?

Discussion 3 — Crowds and Quiet

- The chapter moves from the crowded intensity of Shibuya to the calm of Yoyogi Park and Meiji Jingu. Why might the author choose to end the sightseeing day on a quiet note rather than a busy one?
- Do you prefer travelling somewhere busy and energetic, or somewhere calm and quiet? Does it depend on your mood?
- If you were writing what happens on Day 2 of their trip, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 2. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Explaining a Tradition (Pairs)

Student A explains a tradition, custom, or souvenir from their own country or family to Student B, a curious visitor who has never heard of it — similar to how Damiano explains the goshuincho. Student B asks follow-up questions.

Language to use: 'Apparently it's meant to be...', 'My [relative]'s friend did...', 'I thought they did it...', 'That's fair, but a bit of a shame.'

Role Play 2 — The Joke That Doesn't Land (Groups of 3)

Recreate a version of Julien's failed joke moment: one student attempts a joke, the others respond honestly (but kindly) that it didn't work, and the first student has to recover from the awkward silence.

Focus on: soft, honest feedback ('it just wasn't a very good one'), recovering gracefully from an awkward moment.

Role Play 3 — Comparing Notes on Public Transport (Small Groups)

Imagine your group has just arrived in a new city. Take turns comparing its public transport, food, or crowds to what you're used to at home — in the enthusiastic, slightly obsessive style of Daniel and the trains.

Focus on: comparative language, showing genuine enthusiasm, gently teasing an over-enthusiastic friend.

Role Play 4 — Guiding a Nervous Friend Through a Crowd (Pairs)

Student A is nervous about crossing somewhere as busy as Shibuya Crossing for the first time. Student B, more confident, reassures them and explains what to expect.

Debrief question: What kind of language is most reassuring when someone is nervous about something unfamiliar?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — A Postcard Home

Write a postcard (60–80 words) from one of the three friends to someone back home, describing their favourite moment of the day described in this chapter.

Writing 2 — Describing a Place Figuratively

Choose a real place you know well — a street, a station, a square. Write a short description (60–90 words) of it using at least one figurative comparison, in the style of 'a river of people with a temple somewhere inside it.'

Writing 3 — Damiano's Goshuincho, One Year Later

Imagine Damiano's goshuincho a year after this trip, with stamps from several more places. Write a short diary entry (100–150 words) from Damiano's point of view, looking back at the book and what each stamp reminds him of. You do not need to know what actually happens later in the story — this is your own idea.

Writing 4 — The Next Instagram Post

Write the group's next Instagram post (30–50 words) for the Aston Uni Travel Soc account, describing an imagined event on Day 2 of the trip, plus two short comments underneath — one from Patrick, in character, and one from another follower.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 3: Too Much for One Day

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 3. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 3 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 4.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

Julien plans an ambitious day around Ueno Park and Ryogoku — the park itself, the Edo-Tokyo Museum, the Sword Museum, the Sumo Museum, and an old garden — while quietly holding back a sixth item, Kappabashi-dori, that he raises later almost as an afterthought. The group skips the zoo and other museums to save time, but still rushes both the Edo-Tokyo Museum and the Sword Museum, arriving too late for both the Sumo Museum and the garden, which are already closed. Frustrated and exhausted, they stop for yakitori and beer, where Julien openly admits he planned an unrealistic day, and the three of them renegotiate the rest of the week's itinerary together, calmly and without much drama. The chapter ends with Daniel needling Julien about secretly still wanting to fit in Kappabashi-dori — and Julien's silence confirming that he probably does. An Instagram update reflects on the day's overambition, drawing a comment from Patrick and, for the first time, from an outside follower.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 3. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Fitting Too Much In

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever planned a day — a trip, a list of errands, a study schedule — that turned out to be far too ambitious? What happened?
- When a group of friends disagrees about how much to try to do in one day, how is that usually resolved?
- Is it better to see a few things properly, or many things quickly? Does your answer change depending on the situation?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Planning Vocabulary

With a partner, discuss what each of these expressions might mean when talking about a schedule or a plan. Guess before reading — you'll check your ideas against the glossary and the chapter.

Expression	My guess at the meaning
to prioritise something	
to strike something off a list	
a miscalculation	
to be footsore	

Activity 3 — Museums and Markets

Before reading, make a quick list. Work alone, then compare with a partner.

Kinds of museums or markets I enjoy	Kinds I tend to avoid

If you had only one afternoon in a city with several excellent museums, how would you decide which one(s) to visit?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 3, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to appoint oneself — verb phrase

To take on a role or responsibility without being officially asked or given it.

“...Daniel, who had appointed himself, without being asked, the group's designated keeper of momentum.”

to be sitting on (something) — idiom (figurative)

To keep a plan, idea, or piece of information private for a while before revealing it.

“...with the studied casualness of someone raising something he'd been sitting on since the itinerary was first drafted.”

to circle (something) — verb

To draw a circle around a word or item on paper, usually to mark or highlight it as important.

“The old garden behind it, which Julien had circled twice on the printed itinerary in his bag, was closed outright.”

to eye (something) — verb (informal)

To look at something with visible interest, often suggesting you want it or want to do it.

“...a museum of nature and science that Daniel eyed with real interest before being talked out of it.”

footsore — adjective

Having sore or painful feet, especially from a lot of walking.

“...hot, footsore, thirsty in the specific way that comes from spending a whole day half-hurrying and half-running.”

to glaze — verb (cooking)

To coat food in a shiny, often sweet or savoury sauce, before or during cooking.

“...chicken meatballs glazed dark...”

mercifully — adverb

Fortunately; in a way that brings welcome relief from something unpleasant or difficult.

“...and, mercifully, air conditioning strong enough to feel like walking into a different climate entirely.”

miscalculation — noun

A mistake made when judging, planning, or calculating something, especially one with real consequences.

“...to have been a catastrophic miscalculation.”

onigiri — noun (Japanese loanword)

A snack of rice, often triangular or ball-shaped, sometimes wrapped in seaweed and filled with something such as fish or pickled plum — widely sold in Japanese convenience stores.

“...reciting it off his phone between mouthfuls of convenience-store onigiri.”

to prioritise — verb

To decide that something is more important than other things and deal with it first.

““That's not deleting, that's prioritising.””

restraint — noun

Self-control; the quality of holding back from doing more than is necessary or wise (often used ironically, as here).

““Five things is restraint, considering what's actually here.””

shutters — noun (plural)

Coverings, often metal, that are pulled down over a shop or building's windows or entrance, usually to close it for the day.

"...had its shutters half down already, a member of staff visibly locking the second door..."

skewer — noun

A thin stick, often bamboo or metal, used to hold pieces of food — typically meat — together for grilling.

"...for a few minutes nobody discussed anything more complicated than which skewer to try next."

to strike (something) out — phrasal verb

To cross out or remove an item, especially from a list or plan.

"...a few names quietly struck out, nothing dramatic, just less."

to tow (someone) onward — verb (figurative)

To pull or guide someone forward, often gently and against their own preference to stay.

"...only to be gently towed onward each time by Daniel..."

yakitori — noun (Japanese loanword)

Bite-sized pieces of chicken (or other ingredients) grilled on a skewer over charcoal — a popular, casual Japanese dish.

"They bought yakitori from a stall near the museum quarter..."

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. After ten hours of walking, we were completely _____ and just wanted to sit down.
2. The shop had already pulled its _____ down by the time we arrived.
3. Forgetting how far the station was turned out to be a real _____.
4. Nobody asked him to lead the group, but he just _____ and started giving directions.
5. The chef likes to _____ the chicken in a sweet soy sauce before grilling it.
6. We had to _____ two stops from our itinerary to make the train on time.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Julien originally plans five separate things to do in one day. | T / F / NM |
| 2. The friends visit the Ueno Park zoo and see the pandas. | T / F / NM |
| 3. The group eats yakitori for lunch near Ueno Park. | T / F / NM |
| 4. At the Edo-Tokyo Museum, the friends take their time and read every sign. | T / F / NM |
| 5. The Sumo Museum is already closed by the time the friends arrive. | T / F / NM |
| 6. The old garden behind the Sumo Museum stays open late for visitors. | T / F / NM |
| 7. At the second yakitori restaurant, the friends decide to change their plans for the rest of the week. | T / F / NM |
| 8. Julien admits, out loud, that he planned the day unrealistically. | T / F / NM |
| 9. Daniel is convinced that Julien has truly given up on visiting Kappabashi-dori. | T / F / NM |
| 10. A stranger comments on the group's Instagram post about the Sword Museum. | T / F / NM |

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Unofficially takes charge of keeping the group moving on schedule.	
B. Wants to properly read every information card in a museum, not just glance at it.	
C. Is the first to openly admit that the day's planning went wrong.	
D. Notices something in a friend's expression that suggests he hasn't really given up on an idea.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why do the friends end up seeing only 'about sixty percent' of both the Edo-Tokyo Museum and the Sword Museum?
- How does Julien react when he sees the chained gate of the closed garden, and what does this reaction suggest about how he's feeling?
- Why does Daniel's suggestion to 'get something to eat and a cold beer' mark a turning point in the chapter?
- How is the mood at the second yakitori restaurant different from the mood earlier in the day? What causes the change?
- What does the final exchange about Kappabashi-dori suggest about Julien, after he insists 'I wasn't going to'?

 LANGUAGE FOCUS
A — Talking About Overloaded Plans

The chapter uses several natural expressions for discussing schedules and cutting plans down. Look at these examples:

“That's not deleting, that's prioritising.” “a few names quietly struck out, nothing dramatic, just less.” “the plan for the rest of the week trimmed back...”

- What's the difference in tone between ‘deleting’ something and ‘prioritising’ it? Why might Julien prefer one word over the other?
- With a partner, imagine a busy weekend schedule with six activities. Practise ‘trimming it back’ together, using at least three expressions from this section.

B — Indirect, Understated Apologies

Julien doesn't apologise with a simple ‘I'm sorry’ — he explains himself with a touch of dry humour. Look at this moment:

“Sorry guys, I think I planned that day for a version of us that doesn't get tired.” “I'm allowed one bad day of planning.” — “You're allowed several. I'm just noting that today was one of them.”

- What effect does phrasing an apology this way — slightly indirect, slightly funny — have, compared to a plain ‘I'm sorry, that was my fault’?
- With a partner, write and perform a short exchange where one person apologises for a planning mistake using a similar indirect, humorous style.
- Is this style of apologising common in your own language or culture? What would be different?

C — Showing Exhaustion Through Physical Detail

Instead of writing ‘they were very tired’, the author shows tiredness through small physical details and dialogue. For example:

“All three of them sat down harder than strictly necessary.” ““I can't feel my feet,” Damiano said, to nobody in particular...” ““Don't take your shoes off, you might not be able to get them back on,” Damiano said.”

- Find one more physical detail in the chapter that shows tiredness without stating it directly.
- Write two original sentences showing that a character is exhausted, without using the words ‘tired’ or ‘exhausted’.

CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 3. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Ueno Park

Ueno Park, in central Tokyo, is one of the city's largest and most historic public parks, home to a zoo, several major museums (including the Tokyo National Museum), a large lake, and thousands of cherry (sakura) trees that make it one of Tokyo's most popular spots for hanami, or cherry-blossom viewing, in spring.

For discussion: Is there a large public park in your own city that combines green space with museums or other attractions? How do people typically use it?

Ameyoko Market

Ameyoko is a narrow, busy market street running along the railway tracks near Ueno Station. It's said to have begun as a black market in the aftermath of the Second World War, when goods were scarce, and has since grown into a everyday shopping street selling a wide mix of food, clothing, and imported goods at competitive prices.

For discussion: Do you know of a market or street in your own country with a similarly interesting history behind its current, ordinary use?

The Edo-Tokyo Museum and the Sword Museum

The Edo-Tokyo Museum, in the Ryogoku district, recreates life in the city during the Edo period (1603–1868) through full-scale reconstructions and detailed models. Nearby, the Sword Museum (Token Hakubutsukan) is dedicated to nihonto, traditional Japanese swords, which are regarded not simply as weapons but as significant works of craftsmanship and art, each one attributable to a particular smith, school, and period.

For discussion: Is there an object or craft from your own culture that is similarly treated as an art form rather than just a tool?

Yakitori and Izakaya Culture

Yakitori restaurants — casual, often smoky spots serving skewers of grilled chicken and vegetables — are a common type of izakaya, a relaxed Japanese establishment for eating and drinking with friends after work or during an evening out. They're typically informal, affordable, and social, with food arriving in a steady stream of small dishes rather than one large meal.

For discussion: Is there an equivalent kind of casual, social eating-and-drinking spot in your own country? What's it usually like?

Kappabashi-dori

Kappabashi-dori, also called 'Kitchen Town', is a street in Tokyo lined with shops selling professional kitchen equipment: knives, crockery, and the famously realistic plastic food models (shokuhin sample) often displayed in Japanese restaurant windows. It's popular with both restaurant professionals and tourists looking for souvenirs or high-quality kitchen knives.

For discussion: If you had a free afternoon on a trip, would a street like this — full of specialist, practical goods rather than typical tourist sights — appeal to you?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — The Cost of Over-Planning

- Julien's itinerary looks reasonable on paper but fails in practice. Why do plans that look fine on paper sometimes fall apart in reality?
- Is it better to plan loosely and adapt, or plan in detail and try to stick to it? Does it depend on the type of trip?

Discussion 2 — Rushing vs. Really Seeing

- Damiano wants to stop and read every sign properly; Daniel keeps the group moving. Which approach do you naturally lean towards when visiting somewhere new?
- Is it possible to really appreciate something — a museum, a piece of art, a place — in twenty minutes? What determines whether it's enough?

Discussion 3 — Owning a Mistake

- Julien admits his planning mistake fairly openly, with humour rather than defensiveness. Why might this make it easier for the group to move forward together?
- Damiano says: 'There is no version of us that doesn't get tired.' What does this suggest about how well the three friends know each other?
- If you were writing what the group does differently for the rest of the week, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 3. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Renegotiating an Overloaded Schedule (Groups of 3)

Recreate a version of the yakitori-counter scene: a group has just had an exhausting, overplanned day and now needs to calmly decide what to cut from the rest of the week.

Language to use: 'So what do we actually cut?', 'I'm allowed one bad day of...', 'Agreed.', 'For the record...'

Role Play 2 — Admitting You Got It Wrong (Pairs)

Student A has made a planning mistake (choose your own scenario — a trip, a group project, an event). Student A apologises using indirect, slightly humorous language, in the style of Julien. Student B responds naturally.

Focus on: soft, self-aware apologies; responding graciously without letting the other person off too easily.

Role Play 3 — Deciding What's Worth Rushing For (Small Groups)

Your group has one hour left and two remaining places to visit, but only enough time to properly see one. Discuss and decide together which to prioritise, and why.

Focus on: giving reasons, weighing up options, reaching agreement as a group.

Role Play 4 — The Running Joke (Pairs)

Student A has supposedly given up on an idea (a plan, a purchase, a place to visit). Student B doesn't quite believe them and teases them gently about it, in the style of Daniel and Julien's exchange about Kappabashi-dori.

Debrief question: How do you tell, in real life, when a friend has really given up on something versus when they're just waiting for the right moment?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Damiano and the Sword Museum

Imagine Damiano gets to go back to the Sword Museum alone, with no time pressure. Write a diary entry (100–150 words) from his point of view, describing what he notices this time that he missed while rushing.

Writing 2 — Rewriting the Day

Write a more realistic version of Julien's itinerary (80–120 words) for the day described in this chapter — what would you cut, keep, or reorder, and why?

Writing 3 — A Message to Patrick

Patrick predicted, from home, that the day's itinerary was too ambitious. Write a short message (80–120 words) from Julien to Patrick, admitting he was right, in a tone that fits Julien's character — a little proud, a little dry, but honest.

Writing 4 — Replying to a New Follower

A stranger, yukionna22, comments that the Sword Museum once made her cry. Write a short reply (30–50 words) from the Aston Uni Travel Soc account, continuing the exchange naturally and asking her a follow-up question.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 4: Steel and Neon

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

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Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 4 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 5.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

With no fixed plan, the friends spend the morning wandering Akihabara — electronics stores, gachapon machines, retro games — and unanimously agree, almost without discussing it, to skip a maid cafe. In the afternoon they attend a booked iaido (sword-drawing) experience: after watching a brief but visibly expert demonstration from the instructor, they spend forty imperfect minutes learning to draw and resheathe a blunt practice sword, with Daniel repeatedly failing to resheathe his cleanly. Damiano films one failed attempt but waits until later to send it to Patrick, alongside a short, understated message. In the evening they try to explore Golden Gai, Shinjuku's famous cluster of tiny bars, but find it unwelcoming to outsiders and retreat to a conventional izakaya instead. The chapter closes with the group carefully drafting an honest, balanced Instagram review of the iaido experience, and an exchange of comments with Patrick that references his own hopes for the trip's dojo visit, first mentioned back in Chapter 1.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 4. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — A Day With No Plan

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- After a very busy, tightly scheduled day, would you prefer the next day to be carefully planned, or completely open? Why?
- Have you ever tried a short 'taster' experience of a skill or sport — a one-off class or session? How did it compare to what you expected?
- Do you enjoy places that feel exclusive or hard to access, or do they make you uncomfortable? Give an example if you can.

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Guessing from Context

With a partner, guess what each of these might be, based only on the short clues below. You'll find out if you were right when you read the chapter.

Clue	My guess
A vending machine that dispenses a small toy inside a plastic capsule.	
A traditional wide-legged garment worn over clothing in some martial arts.	
A Japanese martial art built entirely around drawing and re-sheathing a sword.	
A narrow cluster of tiny, old-fashioned bars, each seating only a handful of people.	

Activity 3 — Trying Something New

Before reading, make a quick list. Work alone, then compare with a partner.

A skill or activity I'd love to try once	One I'd rather just watch

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 4, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

askew — adjective

Not straight; tilted to one side; at an odd angle.

“...hakama slightly askew, swords held at the angle the assistant kept gently correcting...”

to bunch — verb

(Of fabric) to gather or fold together untidily, rather than lying flat.

“...jeans, in Daniel's case, visibly bunching under the fabric...”

buzzer — noun

A small electronic device that makes a buzzing sound, often pressed to request entry through a locked door.

“...a plain door, a small sign, a buzzer.”

curt — adjective

Brief in a way that seems slightly rude or unfriendly.

“...produced nothing but a curt shake of the head from someone inside...”

to draw (a sword) — verb

To pull a sword or blade out of its sheath or case.

“They were taught... how to draw, one basic cut, and how to resheathe...”

fluency — noun

Smoothness and skill in performing an action, moving, or speaking, without hesitation or effort.

“...none of them managed with anything like the instructor's earlier fluency.”

gachapon — noun (Japanese loanword)

Capsule-toy vending machines that dispense small collectible toys inside plastic capsules, common in Japan.

“...entire floors of gachapon machines, walls of little plastic globes stacked from floor to ceiling.”

hakama — noun (Japanese loanword)

A traditional wide-legged garment worn over other clothing, especially in Japanese martial arts.

“They were each handed a hakama to put on over their own clothes...”

iaido — noun (Japanese loanword)

A Japanese martial art centred on the smooth, controlled drawing, cutting, and re-sheathing of a sword in a single fluid motion.

“The iaido experience was booked for four that afternoon...”

to resheathe — verb

To put a blade back into its sheath or case after drawing it.

“...how to resheathe without looking down at the scabbard, which took Julien four attempts...”

scabbard — noun

A sheath or case designed to hold the blade of a sword or dagger.

“...how to resheathe without looking down at the scabbard...”

tacky — adjective (informal)

Cheap, tasteless, or lacking style; sometimes describing something that feels artificial or exploitative, especially

aimed at tourists.

"Feels a bit — I don't know. Tacky, for the sake of tacky."

to undo (an effect) — verb (figurative)

To spoil or cancel out an impression or effect that had been carefully created.

"...in a way that undid a good deal of the effect before anyone had even picked up a sword."

warren — noun (figurative)

A confusing network of narrow passages or streets, originally referring to a network of rabbit burrows.

"...a warren of narrow alleys barely wide enough for two people to pass..."

watchful — adjective

Paying close, careful attention; alert and observant.

"...every doorway leading into a bar with room for perhaps five customers and a single, watchful proprietor."

to wander — verb

To walk around in a relaxed way, without a fixed direction or purpose.

"...wandered up through a floor of retro consoles which Daniel spent a suspicious amount of time in front of..."

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. He pressed the _____ and waited for someone to open the door.
2. Even after ten lessons, she still didn't move with the instructor's natural _____.
3. We got lost in a _____ of tiny backstreets behind the market.
4. The waiter gave us a rather _____ reply and walked off without another word.
5. My scarf kept _____ up strangely under my coat, no matter how I adjusted it.
6. We spent an hour just _____ around the old town with no particular destination.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. The friends visit Akihabara with a detailed, planned list of things to do. | T / F / NM |
| 2. All three friends agree, without much discussion, not to try a maid cafe. | T / F / NM |
| 3. Daniel spends a long time looking at retro video game consoles. | T / F / NM |
| 4. The iaido instructor's opening demonstration takes several minutes to complete. | T / F / NM |
| 5. The practice swords used in the class are sharp enough to cut properly. | T / F / NM |
| 6. Daniel manages to resheathe his sword smoothly on his very first attempt. | T / F / NM |
| 7. Damiano sends the video of Daniel to Patrick immediately, during the class itself. | T / F / NM |
| 8. Golden Gai turns out to be easy and welcoming for first-time tourist visitors. | T / F / NM |
| 9. The group ends up eating at a regular izakaya instead of staying in Golden Gai. | T / F / NM |
| 10. The Instagram post recommends the iaido experience highly for serious martial artists. | T / F / NM |

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Suggests something already fairly sure his friends will say no to.	
B. Waits until he has the right words before sharing something with Patrick.	
C. Struggles more than once with a physical task, in a way that becomes a running joke.	
D. Suggests giving up on one plan in favour of somewhere more comfortable.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why do the friends decide not to try a maid cafe, and what does their short exchange about it suggest about how well they know each other?
- How does the author show that the instructor's skill is very different from the tourists' skill, without simply stating that he is much better?
- Why does Damiano wait until later that evening to send Patrick the video, rather than sending it straight away?
- What makes Golden Gai feel so different from the izakaya the friends end up in, and why do they prefer the second place?
- How would you describe the tone of the group's Instagram post about the iaido experience — purely positive, purely negative, or something else? Support your answer with a detail from the text.

A — Understanding Without Explaining

Sometimes friends communicate agreement or understanding without needing to explain themselves fully. Look at this moment:

“‘Anyone up for trying a maid cafe?’ Julien said, at one point, in a tone that made it very clear he already knew the answer...” “‘Right. Yes. My thinking exactly.’ Julien put his phone away without any further discussion...”

- How does tone of voice, rather than the words themselves, communicate meaning in this example?
- Find one more moment in the chapter where a character's short response says more than the words alone.
- With a partner, practise a short exchange where one person suggests something, already expecting a certain answer, and the tone carries most of the meaning.

B — Writing a Balanced, Honest Review

The Instagram post at the end of the chapter is a good example of a balanced review — honest, not simply positive or negative. Look at the structure:

“Honest verdict: great fun if you just want the costume and the photos. If you're actually serious about martial arts, probably give this one a miss and find a real dojo instead.”

- Notice the structure: ‘great fun if...’ followed by ‘but if you want X, probably...’. What does this structure allow the writer to do?
- Think of a real activity, place, or product you have mixed feelings about. Write a two-sentence review using a similar ‘good for X, not for Y’ structure.

C — Contrasting Atmospheres

The chapter contrasts two very different evening atmospheres — Golden Gai and the izakaya — through descriptive detail rather than simply saying one was ‘nicer’ than the other:

“...a warren of narrow alleys barely wide enough for two people to pass, strung with lanterns...” “...a wide, brightly lit room, a laminated picture menu, a waiter who greeted them without hesitation...”

- List three descriptive details from each quotation. What feeling does each set of details create?
- Write a short paragraph (40–60 words) contrasting two real places you know — one atmospheric but slightly uncomfortable, one plain but welcoming — using descriptive detail rather than simply saying which one is better.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 4. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Akihabara

Akihabara, in central Tokyo, developed after the Second World War as a district for electronics retailers, and has since become closely associated with anime, manga, video games, and broader otaku (enthusiast) culture. It's known for its multi-storey electronics and games stores, gachapon capsule-toy machines, and themed cafes — including maid cafes, where staff in maid costumes serve customers in a highly stylised, performative way. These cafes are a well-known tourist curiosity, though opinions on them — among both visitors and Japanese people — vary considerably, ranging from enthusiastic to indifferent to uncomfortable.

For discussion: Is there a district in a city you know that's strongly associated with one particular interest or subculture, the way Akihabara is with otaku culture?

Iaido and the Tourist 'Experience' Class

Iaido is a genuine, disciplined Japanese martial art, traditionally practised over many years, focused on the smooth, controlled drawing and re-sheathing of a sword. In recent years, short 'experience' classes aimed at tourists have become popular in Japan, offering a simplified taste of practices like iaido, tea ceremony, or calligraphy within an hour or two. These sessions are generally presented honestly as introductory and recreational, distinct from serious, long-term training — as the instructor's own brief demonstration in this chapter makes clear.

For discussion: Have you ever taken a short 'taster' class in a skill that normally takes years to master — a sport, an instrument, a craft? How did it compare to the real thing?

Golden Gai

Golden Gai is a small, historic district in Shinjuku made up of narrow alleys packed with tiny, independently run bars, many seating only a handful of customers. It developed from the postwar black-market area and later became associated with writers, artists, and film-makers. Many of its bars cater to small groups of regulars and can feel unwelcoming to unfamiliar visitors — a 'regulars only' atmosphere that exists in small, intimate bars and pubs in many countries, not only in Japan.

For discussion: Is there a bar, cafe, or shop you know of that has a strong 'regulars only' feeling? How does that atmosphere affect newcomers?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Deciding Together, Without Discussing Much

- The friends decide against the maid cafe almost instantly, with very few words. What does this suggest about how long they've known each other?
- Do you have friends or family members you can communicate with in a similarly quick, unspoken way? Give an example.

Discussion 2 — The Real Thing vs. The Tourist Version

- The group's iaido class is honestly described as 'theatre' rather than real martial arts training. Is there value in a short, imperfect taste of something serious, even if it's not the 'real' experience?
- The Instagram post is careful to recommend the class to some people and not others. Why might this kind of honesty matter, especially when sharing something publicly?

Discussion 3 — Access and Exclusion

- The friends feel unwelcome in Golden Gai but comfortable in the izakaya. What makes a place feel welcoming or unwelcoming to an outsider?
- Is it reasonable for a small bar to prefer regular customers over first-time visitors? Consider both perspectives.
- If you were writing what the group tries next in Tokyo, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)



ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 4. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Suggesting Something You Expect to Be Rejected (Groups of 3)

One student suggests an activity to the group, already fairly sure the answer will be no (in the style of Julien and the maid cafe). The others react naturally and the group quickly moves on.

Language to use: 'Anyone up for...?', 'Not really.', 'Feels a bit...', 'Right. Yes. My thinking exactly.'

Role Play 2 — A Beginner's Class (Groups of 3-4)

One student plays an instructor teaching a short skill (choose one: calligraphy, a dance step, a card trick, a knot). The others are enthusiastic but imperfect beginners, learning and making small, good-natured mistakes.

Focus on: giving simple instructions, encouraging without mocking, reacting to your own mistakes with humour.

Role Play 3 — Turned Away at the Door (Pairs or Groups of 3)

Two or three friends approach a small, exclusive-feeling shop, bar, or club. One member of staff politely (or curtly) makes it clear they're not really welcome. The friends decide, in the moment, how to react and what to do next.

Focus on: reading an unwelcoming signal, deciding whether to push back or move on gracefully.

Role Play 4 — Writing the Review Together (Groups of 3)

Recreate the scene of the group drafting their Instagram post: three friends who all did the same activity negotiate the wording of a single, honest, shared review, each contributing a detail or opinion.

Debrief question: Was it easy to agree on a single shared opinion? What did you do when you disagreed?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Daniel's Fourth Attempt

Write a short, humorous diary entry (80–120 words) from Daniel's point of view, describing his repeated failed attempts to resheathe the sword, in a self-aware, good-humoured tone.

Writing 2 — The Message to Patrick

Before sending the video, Damiano 'couldn't think of anything better' than 'You didn't miss much.' Write a short paragraph (60–80 words) imagining what Damiano was thinking as he tried to decide what to say, and why he chose those particular words.

Writing 3 — A Balanced Review

Write a short, honest review (60–90 words) of a real activity, place, or experience you've had, using a similar structure to the group's Instagram post: what's good about it, and who it might not suit.

Writing 4 — A Different Golden Gai

Imagine that, this time, one of the tiny bars in Golden Gai does let the three friends in. Write a short scene (100–150 words) describing what might happen inside. You do not need to know what actually happens later in the story — this is your own idea.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document · Chapter 5: Dr Yellow

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) · All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 5. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 5 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 6.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

Despite Damiano's wariness after previous overambitious days, Julien insists on a same-day detour to Nagoya's SCMaglev and Railway Park on their way to Kyoto. The museum ends up absorbing all three friends, not just train-obsessed Daniel: Julien lingers over engineering displays, Damiano is drawn into the history behind the original Shinkansen, and Daniel has a quietly moving moment in front of the retired Dr Yellow inspection train. Running slightly behind schedule, the group boards what they believe is their connecting train, only to realise mid-journey it doesn't stop at Kyoto. A rushed, confused recovery leads them to board a second wrong train, the Shimakaze, which takes them to Ise instead. A sympathetic station attendant waves off their mistaken tickets, and after a scramble to find last-minute accommodation, Damiano finds a homestay willing to take them in for the night. The chapter ends with the exhausted friends falling asleep within minutes, and an Instagram post that teases the mishap without yet explaining it, prompting a flurry of curious comments from Patrick.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 5. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Travel Plans and Travel Mistakes

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever taken the wrong train, bus, or flight by mistake? What happened, and how did you fix it?
- When you're travelling with friends and something goes wrong, does your group tend to panic, laugh it off, or something else?
- Have you ever visited somewhere you weren't especially interested in, only to find you enjoyed it much more than expected?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Railway Vocabulary

With a partner, discuss what each of these might mean in the context of trains and travel. Guess before reading.

Expression	My guess at the meaning
a connection window	
an inspection train	
to jump on the wrong train	
a last-minute booking	

Activity 3 — A Change of Plan

Before reading, make a quick list. Work alone, then compare with a partner.

Things I'd do if my travel plans suddenly fell apart	Things that would stress me out most

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 5, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to brace (for something) — verb

To prepare yourself mentally for something difficult, demanding, or unexpected.

“...considerably more absorbing than any of them, Daniel included, had quite braced for.”

briskness — noun

Quickness and directness of manner, sometimes suggesting someone wants to end a conversation or task efficiently.

“...with the particular briskness of someone closing a subject rather than actually settling it.”

connection window — noun phrase (travel term)

The amount of time available between arriving on one train or flight and departing on the next.

“This is one thing, on a travel day, with a proper connection window either side.”

to creep — verb (figurative)

(Of a feeling or expression) to appear slowly and gradually, almost without being noticed at first.

“...a slow, creeping delight replacing whatever alarm should probably have been there instead.”

to deflate / deflating — verb / adjective

To suddenly lose energy, confidence, or enthusiasm, like air leaving a balloon.

“...slumped back in his seat, a full-body, deflating sort of slump.”

duly — adverb (slightly formal)

In a proper, appropriate, or expected way — here used with light irony to close down a discussion politely.

“Noted. Duly considered.”

to glide — verb

To move smoothly, quietly, and without obvious effort.

“The train silently glided in and when it stopped they boarded and found their seats.”

hangar-like — adjective

Resembling a hangar — a very large, open building typically used to store aircraft.

“...a long, hangar-like building that from the outside gave very little away...”

homestay — noun

A form of accommodation in which a visitor stays as a guest in a local family's home, rather than in a hotel.

“‘I might have something,’ he said. ‘It’s a homestay.’”

inspection train — noun phrase

A train used to check and monitor railway infrastructure — such as tracks and overhead wires — rather than to carry ordinary passengers.

“...this was the JR Central inspection train specifically, the one that used to run the Tokaido line checking the tracks and the overhead wires...”

last-minute — adjective

Done, arranged, or decided at the latest possible time, with little advance planning.

“...not just the one or two you’d expect from somewhere this last-minute.”

placard — noun

A printed sign or notice displayed publicly, for example in a museum, to give information.

“...reading the English placard twice.”

to scramble — verb / noun

To move quickly and with difficulty or urgency, often in a disorganised or hurried way.

“They came off the train in something closer to a scramble than a plan.”

to slump — verb

To sit, lean, or fall in a heavy, drooping way, especially from tiredness, disappointment, or defeat.

“Julien did a quick search on his phone and slumped back in his seat...”

unbothered — adjective

Calm and untroubled by something that would normally cause worry, stress, or upset.

“Daniel put his phone away, unbothered, still looking at the retired one in front of them...”

to usher (someone) — verb

To politely guide or show someone somewhere, often with a welcoming gesture.

“...already ushering them out of the night air before any of them had managed a proper greeting...”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. We had to _____ to catch the last bus before it left without us.
2. After hearing the bad news, he just _____ in his chair and said nothing.
3. The staff member _____ us to our table with a warm smile.
4. I wasn't _____ for how emotional the ending of the film would be.
5. We found a lovely little _____ near the coast, staying with a local family instead of a hotel.
6. Even after missing his flight, he seemed completely _____ about it.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

1. Damiano is fully convinced from the start that the Nagoya detour is a good idea. T / F / NM
2. The SCMaglev and Railway Park turns out to be smaller and less interesting than the friends expected. T / F / NM
3. Daniel is the only one of the three who ends up genuinely interested in the museum. T / F / NM
4. The retired Dr Yellow the ys see at the museum is still actively running on the network. T / F / NM
5. The first train the friends board turns out not to stop at Kyoto. T / F / NM
6. After realising their mistake, the friends calmly wait at the platform for the correct train. T / F / NM
7. The second train the friends board by mistake is called the Shimakaze. T / F / NM
8. The Shimakaze takes the friends to Ise instead of Kyoto. T / F / NM
9. The station attendant is angry and unhelpful about the mixed-up tickets. T / F / NM
10. The friends end up finding a place to sleep for the night at a family homestay. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Insists on the Nagoya detour, brushing off a friend's concerns.	
B. Becomes quietly absorbed in the museum's history rather than its trains.	
C. Reacts to boarding the wrong train with surprising calm, even delight.	
D. Finds the emergency accommodation that saves the group's night.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why is Damiano cautious about the Nagoya day trip at the start of the chapter, and what past events does he refer to?
2. How does the author show that Julien and Damiano become unexpectedly absorbed by the museum, even though the visit was really 'Daniel's thing'?
3. Why does Daniel say the retired Dr Yellow is 'enough, honestly', even though a different one is still actively running elsewhere?
4. In your own words, describe the sequence of mistakes that leads the friends to Ise instead of Kyoto.
5. How does the station attendant's reaction, and later the homestay host's welcome, change the mood of the chapter after the stressful train mix-up?

 LANGUAGE FOCUS
A — Narrating a Travel Mishap

English has many natural expressions for describing things going wrong while travelling, and for recovering from them. Look at these examples:

“They came off the train in something closer to a scramble than a plan.” “They jumped that one instead.” “‘It’s ok,’ Daniel said... ‘I’m not a hundred percent sure, but I think this is the Shimakaze.’”

- Retell the sequence of the friends' train mix-up in your own words, using at least four expressions from the chapter or the glossary.
- With a partner, take turns telling a real (or invented) story about a travel mishap of your own, using similar narrating language.

B — Reassurance That Doesn't Quite Reassure

Sometimes characters say something is ‘fine’ in a tone that suggests the opposite. Compare these two moments:

“‘This is fine, isn’t it,’ Damiano said, checking the time against their connection, in a tone that wanted agreement rather than information.” “Daniel put his phone away, unbothered...”

- What's the difference between saying ‘this is fine’ to seek reassurance, and genuinely being unbothered? How can you tell the difference in real conversation?
- Write two short exchanges: one where a character says ‘it’s fine’ but clearly isn’t, and one where a character genuinely means it.

C — Short Sentences and Rising Tension

Notice how sentence length changes at the tense moment when Julien realises their mistake:

“The stops. Read me the stops on this thing.” “It doesn’t stop at Kyoto,” Julien said. “It’s Osaka-bound. Kyoto’s a different Kintetsu line entirely.”

- How do these short, clipped sentences feel different from the longer, more relaxed sentences describing the museum earlier in the chapter?
- Find one more short, tense sentence or exchange elsewhere in the chapter.
- Write a short paragraph (40–60 words) describing a moment of sudden realisation, using short sentences to build tension.

CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 5. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

The Shinkansen and Japan's Rail Network

The Shinkansen ('bullet train') network began with the 0 series train, which entered service in 1964, timed to coincide with the Tokyo Olympics that year. Japan's railways today are operated by a mix of companies: the JR (Japan Railways) group runs most long-distance and regional lines, while private railways such as Kintetsu operate their own separate networks — which is why, in this chapter, a Kintetsu train and a JR line to Kyoto are not simply interchangeable.

For discussion: Is your country's railway network run by one national operator, or by several different companies? Does this ever cause confusion for travellers?

Dr Yellow

Dr Yellow is the nickname for Japan's Shinkansen inspection trains — distinctive bright yellow trains, operated by JR Central and JR West, that run diagnostic checks on the tracks and overhead power lines. Because they run on no fixed public timetable and are relatively rare, spotting one is considered lucky by railway enthusiasts, and sightings are often shared excitedly online.

For discussion: Is there a rare vehicle, animal, or event in your own country that people consider lucky to see or experience?

The SCMaglev and Railway Park

The SCMaglev and Railway Park, in Nagoya, is a museum dedicated to Japan's railway history, displaying retired Shinkansen trains from different eras alongside maglev (magnetic levitation) technology, which uses magnets rather than wheels to allow trains to travel at extremely high speeds.

For discussion: Is there a transport or technology museum in your own country that you'd recommend to a visitor, even one who isn't especially interested in the subject?

Homestays and Everyday Hospitality

A homestay — sometimes called a minshuku in Japan — offers travellers a room in a private home rather than a hotel, often at a lower cost and with a more personal welcome. The concept connects to *omotenashi*, a Japanese term describing wholehearted, anticipatory hospitality. The station attendant's calm, practical response to the friends' ticket mix-up in this chapter — focused on solving the problem rather than assigning blame — reflects a broader, everyday version of the same spirit.

For discussion: Have you ever stayed with a local family while travelling, rather than in a hotel? How was the experience different?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — When Someone Else's Interest Becomes Yours

- Julien and Damiano end up genuinely absorbed by a museum they only agreed to for Daniel's sake. Has this ever happened to you — becoming interested in something because of someone else's enthusiasm?
- What does it say about a friendship when people are willing to try something they don't expect to enjoy?

Discussion 2 — Facing a Travel Disaster Together

- The chapter shows the group's mood shift from panic to something 'closer to a shared, slightly manic project.' Why might sharing a problem make it feel more manageable?
- Is there a difference between how you'd want to handle a travel emergency with close friends versus with strangers or new acquaintances?

Discussion 3 — Planning, Trust, and Letting Go

- Compare this chapter to Chapter 3, where the group agreed to plan more carefully after a rushed day. Did that lesson help here, or was this a different kind of problem?
- Damiano trusted Julien's reassurance at the start of the chapter, even while doubting it. Was that trust rewarded, in the end?
- If you were writing what happens the next morning, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 5. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Talking a Friend Into a Plan (Pairs)

Student A wants to add an extra stop to a trip; Student B is cautious, remembering a past mistake. Student A tries to reassure them without fully addressing the concern (in the style of Julien's 'Noted. Duly considered.').

Language to use: 'We've done the maths.', 'It's well connected.', 'Noted. Duly considered.', 'I'm just saying...'

Role Play 2 — Realising You're on the Wrong Train (Groups of 3)

Recreate the moment of realisation on the train: one student notices something is wrong, the others react with a mix of denial, panic, and problem-solving.

Focus on: short, urgent sentences; talking over one another realistically; moving quickly from panic to a plan.

Role Play 3 — Explaining a Mistake to Staff (Pairs)

Student A is a member of staff at a ticket gate; Student B (or a small group) has ended up somewhere unexpected due to an honest travel mistake. Practise explaining the situation politely and clearly.

Focus on: staying calm and polite under stress; a staff member choosing kindness and efficiency over strict rules.

Role Play 4 — Finding Somewhere to Sleep, Fast (Groups of 3)

Your group has just arrived, unplanned, in an unfamiliar town late at night, with limited accommodation options. Split the search, compare what you find, and decide together, quickly, what to book.

Debrief question: How did your group make a fast decision together? Did everyone agree easily, or did someone have to make the final call?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Daniel and Dr Yellow

Write a short diary entry (100–150 words) from Daniel's point of view, describing what it felt like to finally see the retired Dr Yellow up close, in his own words.

Writing 2 — The Missed Connection

Write a short 'travel disaster' story (100–150 words), either retelling the friends' mix-up in your own words or inventing a similar one of your own, using narrating language from this chapter's Language Focus section.

Writing 3 — A Thank-You Note

Write a short thank-you note (60–80 words) from the three friends to their homestay host in Ise, in English, for taking them in at such short notice.

Writing 4 — Answering Patrick

Patrick has commented 'I need answers and I need them now' in response to the group's vague Instagram update. Write the group's reply (40–60 words), finally explaining, briefly and in their usual tone, what actually happened.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 6: Ise

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

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- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 7.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

A note on this chapter's open thread

This chapter deliberately leaves an unanswered question hanging: how does Damiano seem to know, or half-know, about several excellent local spots in and around Ise? The text itself raises this as a mystery through Daniel's growing suspicion — it is not something the teacher resource is adding or hinting at. The Discussion and Writing sections below invite students to speculate freely, which is entirely appropriate here, since the novel itself poses the question openly rather than answering it in this chapter.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

The morning after their unplanned detour, the friends find an excellent small cafe and, later, an excellent small restaurant near Ise Jingu — both suspiciously good for places they claim to have simply stumbled upon, and Damiano's reactions suggest he may know more than he says. At Ise Jingu itself, the friends experience one of Shinto's most sacred and deliberately unadorned sites, performing a purification ritual at the river before a quiet, unhurried visit to the shrine buildings. A poster in the lunch restaurant leads them, by chance, to a regional karate tournament at a local school — unpolished, unperformed, and entirely genuine, prompting Damiano to remark that this is what Patrick would have wanted to see. On the train onward, Daniel openly challenges Damiano about his repeated ‘lucky’ local knowledge, including a tip about a ramen shop near Kintetsu Nara station, but Damiano deflects without explaining. The friends arrive in Kyoto a day later than planned, greeted by a hotel receptionist who already knows about their detour, and post an Instagram update reflecting warmly on how the mishap led them somewhere unexpectedly special.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 6. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Unplanned Discoveries

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever found a wonderful small restaurant, cafe, or place completely by chance? What made it special?
- Do you believe some people have ‘beginner's luck’ at finding good places, or is there usually a hidden explanation?
- Have you ever stumbled across a local event — a festival, a match, a market — that you didn't know was happening?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Sacred and Simple

With a partner, discuss: what words or images come to mind when you think of a religious or spiritual site that is very plain and unadorned, rather than grand and decorated? Note down a few ideas before reading.

Activity 3 — Reading a Friend

Before reading, make a quick list. Work alone, then compare with a partner.

Signs that a friend is hiding something	Signs that a friend is being completely honest

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 6, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

arcade — noun

A covered passage or street, often lined with small shops, especially near a train station in Japan.

"The ramen, when they finally sat down to eat it in a narrow shop tucked into the covered arcade, was very good..."

bout — noun (sports term)

A contest or match between two competitors, especially in martial arts, boxing, or wrestling.

"...a single clean point sometimes deciding the whole bout..."

to confer — verb

To discuss something with someone else in order to exchange opinions or reach a decision.

"...judged by a panel of three older men who conferred after every point with a seriousness that made the whole room go quiet..."

crema — noun (Italian loanword)

The reddish-brown foam on top of a well-made espresso, generally considered a sign of quality.

"...a real crema, the cup warmed..."

crooked — adjective

Not straight; bent or set at an angle.

"...taped up slightly crooked beside a calendar from a fishmonger..."

gi — noun (Japanese loanword)

A traditional uniform worn in Japanese martial arts such as karate or judo, typically a jacket and trousers tied with a belt.

"...competitors in crisp white gi lined against the far wall waiting their turn."

gilding — noun

A thin decorative layer or coating of gold applied to a surface, often associated with wealth or grandeur.

"...no gilding anywhere, no colour beyond what the wood and thatch already were."

to overrule — verb

To take priority over, or cancel out, a feeling, objection, or decision.

"...left the grounds only when hunger finally overruled the reluctance to leave."

to press (a point) — verb (figurative)

To continue pushing a topic or question, even when the other person seems reluctant to discuss it further.

"'It is a lucky find, though,' Damiano pressed, not quite letting it go."

reluctance — noun

Unwillingness to do something; hesitation before acting.

"...hunger finally overruled the reluctance to leave."

severity — noun

The quality of being plain, strict, or without decoration — here used to describe stark simplicity, not harshness.

"...plain almost to the point of severity..."

to silver — verb (figurative)

(Of wood or hair) to turn a soft grey colour over time, especially through age or weathering.

“...bare wood silvered by age and weather...”

to spear — verb (informal)

To pierce a piece of food with a fork, chopstick, or similar utensil in order to pick it up.

“‘Twice in one morning,’ Julien added, half to himself, spearing another oyster.”

to stumble on / across (something) — phrasal verb

To find or discover something completely by chance, without having looked for it.

“‘You stumbled on it once. That’s the whole definition of stumbling.’”

thatched — adjective

(Of a roof) covered with dried straw, reeds, or similar plant material, used as a traditional building material.

“...thatched roofs cut in clean, heavy lines...”

unhurried — adjective

Calm and relaxed; not rushed.

“A steady, unhurried stream of visitors moved through the courtyard ahead of the main hall...”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. We _____ this little bakery completely by accident and it turned out to be the best one in town.
 2. The judges had to _____ for a few minutes before announcing the winner.
 3. The old wooden fence had _____ to a soft grey over the years.
 4. Please don't _____ me on this, I've already told you everything I know.
 5. The shelf was hanging slightly _____, so we straightened it before adding the books.
 6. In the end, my curiosity _____ my _____ to ask, and I went over and introduced myself.
-

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. The friends have breakfast at a well-known chain cafe. | T / F / NM |
| 2. Ise Jingu requires visitors to buy an entrance ticket. | T / F / NM |
| 3. The friends perform a purification ritual at a river before entering the shrine. | T / F / NM |
| 4. Daniel has a lot of detailed, clever observations to make about the shrine. | T / F / NM |
| 5. The friends discover a local karate tournament completely by chance. | T / F / NM |
| 6. The karate tournament features announcers and music for the audience. | T / F / NM |
| 7. Damiano openly explains, at lunch, exactly how he knew about the good food. | T / F / NM |
| 8. The friends miss the tournament's final results because they need to catch a train. | T / F / NM |
| 9. The Kyoto hotel receptionist has no idea about the group's change of plans. | T / F / NM |
| 10. By the end of the chapter, Daniel has completely dropped the subject of Damiano's local knowledge. | T / F / NM |

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Notices and questions a pattern the others haven't fully registered yet.	
B. Tells a friend not to say anything clever, for once.	
C. Seems to know more than he's willing to admit about places in and around Ise.	
D. Imagines what a friend back home would have said about the tournament.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why might Damiano's reaction to the coffee, and his comment about 'the whole definition of stumbling', suggest there's more to the story than he's saying?
- What does the purification ritual at Ise Jingu suggest about how the friends approach unfamiliar customs by this point in the trip?
- The author writes that the tournament was 'real, in a way the studio in Tokyo... had never quite managed to be.' What earlier experience is this comparing the tournament to, and why?
- Why does Daniel say 'apparently' twice, in italics almost, when quoting Damiano about the ramen place?
- What does the hotel receptionist's comment — 'You are the group who went to Ise' — suggest about the local hospitality network?



A — What Silence Communicates

Sometimes what a character doesn't say communicates as much as what they do say. Look at this example:

"Damiano didn't answer immediately, which was, in its own way, an answer."

- What does this sentence structure ('X, which was, in its own way, Y') allow the writer to suggest without stating it directly?
- Find one more moment in the chapter where a character's silence or hesitation seems to say more than their words.
- With a partner, act out a short exchange where one person's silence clearly communicates something they're not saying aloud.

B — Describing Simplicity as a Positive Quality

The author describes Ise Jingu's plainness in a way that makes it feel powerful, not boring. Compare:

"bare wood silvered by age and weather, thatched roofs cut in clean, heavy lines, no gilding anywhere, no colour beyond what the wood and thatch already were."

- List the specific details used here. How do they create a feeling of quiet dignity, rather than simply 'plainness'?
- Write a short description (40–60 words) of somewhere plain or simple that you find beautiful — a room, a building, an object — using specific detail rather than adjectives like 'nice' or 'plain' alone.

C — Comparing Two Experiences

The chapter compares the karate tournament to an earlier experience using a concessive structure — 'for all its X, it never quite Y':

"It was simply, unmistakably, real, in a way the studio in Tokyo, for all its politeness, had never quite managed to be."

- Practise this structure with your own example: 'For all its [positive quality], [thing] never quite [what it lacked].'
- Why might a writer use this structure instead of simply saying 'the tournament was better than the iaido class'?

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 6. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Ise Jingu

Ise Jingu is widely considered the most sacred shrine in Shinto, dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu. Unlike many famous shrines, it charges no admission and deliberately avoids ornamentation, reflecting a Shinto aesthetic that associates purity and sacredness with plainness and natural materials rather than decoration. Remarkably, its main buildings are traditionally rebuilt from scratch every twenty years in a ceremony called shikinen sengu, a practice intended to renew the shrine's purity rather than preserve a single physical structure indefinitely. The handwashing and mouth-rinsing ritual performed at the river, called temizu, is a purification custom also seen in Chapter 2 at Meiji Jingu, though here it takes place at a natural river rather than a built fountain.

For discussion: Does simplicity or plainness carry a sense of importance or sacredness in places you know? Or is grandeur usually associated with significance in your own culture?

Coffee Culture Outside Japan's Big Cities

While Japan is well known internationally for specialty coffee in its major cities, small, old-fashioned cafes called kissaten exist throughout the country, including in smaller towns, often run by a single dedicated owner for decades. Excellent coffee in an unassuming, four-table cafe — as Damiano finds in Ise — is a genuine and fairly common possibility, not simply a novelist's convenience.

For discussion: Have you ever assumed a small, out-of-the-way place couldn't be very good, only to be proven wrong?

Community Karate Tournaments

Regional karate tournaments, often organised by local dojos and school sports associations, are common throughout Japan, particularly at the junior level. These events are typically low-key, community-oriented, and judged by a panel who confer and raise flags to indicate their decision — quite different from the more polished, spectator-focused presentation of televised or professional martial arts competitions.

For discussion: Is there a local, grassroots sporting event in your own community — amateur, low-key, mainly attended by families — that visitors might not know to look for?

Set Meals and Coastal Cuisine

The friends' lunch is a teishoku, a set meal typically combining a main dish, rice, miso soup, and a side, common at small restaurants throughout Japan. Ise and the surrounding coastline are particularly known for fried oysters (kaki furai) and other fresh seafood, reflecting the region's fishing industry.

For discussion: Is there a coastal region in your own country known for a particular seafood dish? What makes it special?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — The Mystery of Damiano's Knowledge

- The chapter deliberately doesn't explain how Damiano seems to know about these places. What are some possible explanations you can imagine? There's no right answer here — this is your own prediction.
- Why might an author choose to leave a small mystery like this unresolved within a single chapter?

Discussion 2 — Sacred Simplicity

- Ise Jingu is described as asking 'nothing from anyone.' What do you think makes a place feel meaningful without grandeur or decoration?
- Daniel says he doesn't have 'anything clever to say' about the shrine, and Damiano tells him not to try. Why might silence sometimes be the most respectful response to a powerful place?

Discussion 3 — Real Versus Performed

- Compare the karate tournament in this chapter to the iaido experience in Chapter 4. What specifically makes one feel 'performed' and the other feel 'real'?
- Is it fair to prefer an authentic, unpolished experience over a well-produced one? Or do both have their place?
- If you were writing what Damiano finally tells Daniel about his local knowledge, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 6. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Pressing a Friend Who's Hiding Something (Pairs)

Student A suspects Student B knows more about something than they're admitting (in the style of Daniel and Damiano). Student A presses gently but persistently; Student B deflects without lying outright.

Language to use: 'That's not luck twice in one day.', 'Out with it.', 'That's all I said.', 'We're finishing this conversation later.'

Role Play 2 — Explaining an Unfamiliar Custom (Pairs)

Student A is visiting a religious or cultural site for the first time and isn't sure what to do. Student B, more familiar with the custom, quietly explains what to do and why, without making Student A feel awkward.

Focus on: giving gentle, clear instructions; reassuring someone who's worried about doing something wrong.

Role Play 3 — Describing a Live Event (Pairs)

Student A has just watched something exciting happen live (a match, a performance, a competition) and describes it enthusiastically to Student B, who wasn't there and wants all the details.

Focus on: vivid description, responding to a listener's questions, conveying atmosphere as well as facts.

Role Play 4 — The Receptionist Who Already Knows (Pairs)

Student A is a hotel receptionist who has heard, through a colleague, about a guest's unusual travel mishap. Student B is the guest, checking in a day late. Recreate the moment of quiet, knowing recognition.

Debrief question: How did it feel to be 'known about' by a stranger before you'd even explained yourself?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — What Damiano Knows

Invent your own explanation for how Damiano seems to know about these places in Ise. Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) from Damiano's point of view, explaining privately (to the reader, not to his friends) why he hasn't told them yet. You do not need to know what actually happens later in the story — this is entirely your own idea.

Writing 2 — A Postcard from Ise Jingu

Write a postcard (60–80 words) from one of the three friends to someone back home, describing the feeling of visiting Ise Jingu, without simply saying 'it was beautiful.'

Writing 3 — Telling Patrick About the Tournament

Write a message (80–120 words) from Daniel to Patrick, describing the karate tournament in enough detail that Patrick can really picture it, knowing how much Patrick would have wanted to see it himself.

Writing 4 — The Kyoto Arrival

Write a short scene (100–150 words) describing the friends' first evening in Kyoto, after the receptionist's comment, from the point of view of whichever character interests you most.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 7: Gold and Moss

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 7. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 7 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 8.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

The friends visit three very different sites in one day. Kinkaku-ji, the famous Golden Pavilion, turns out to be a rushed, crowd-managed experience — beautiful but over in minutes, viewed from a single roped path. Tofuku-ji, by contrast, is quiet and largely unvisited, and the friends sit undisturbed for twenty minutes admiring its moss and dry-landscape gardens, with Damiano declaring it his real recommendation of the trip. At Fushimi Inari, the crowd that overwhelms the base of the mountain thins dramatically the higher they climb, and Damiano explains this as a matter of scale — the mountain has enough space to absorb its own popularity, unlike Kinkaku-ji's single path. That evening, Daniel spots a small teppanyaki restaurant by chance, which turns out to be excellent; Damiano insists, rather emphatically, that this too was pure luck, echoing (and slightly overplaying) the same claim from Chapter 6. The restaurant owner offers a balanced, non-bitter reflection on tourism and mentions a monthly flea market at Tōji. The chapter closes with an Instagram post and a public disagreement in the comments about whether Kinkaku-ji is overrated.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 7. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Famous Places, Crowded Places

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever visited somewhere world-famous and felt disappointed because of the crowds? What happened?
- Have you ever discovered a quiet, lesser-known place that turned out to be more memorable than a famous one nearby?
- Do you think a place can be 'too popular for its own good'? What might that mean?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Describing Crowds

With a partner, discuss what each of these expressions might mean when describing a crowd of people. Guess before reading.

Expression	My guess at the meaning
the press of people	
to file in	
to funnel people somewhere	
the crowd thinned out	

Activity 3 — Tourism: Both Sides

Before reading, make a quick list. Work alone, then compare with a partner.

What tourism brings to a place	What can make tourism difficult for locals

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 7, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

afterthought — noun

Something added or mentioned only after the main part of a conversation or decision, as if it had just been remembered.

“...he mentioned, almost as an afterthought while wrapping their leftover vegetables to take away, that... there was a flea market at Tōji worth seeing.”

checkerboard — adjective / noun

A pattern of squares in two alternating colours, like a chessboard.

“...checkerboard squares of deep green moss set against pale raked gravel...”

demanding — adjective

Expecting a lot of attention, effort, or perfect service from others; hard to satisfy.

“...rude, not understanding, demanding — I think I would get annoyed too.”

economy (of movement) — noun (figurative)

Efficiency; doing something with the least possible wasted effort or movement.

“...flipping and turning everything with the easy economy of someone who'd been doing exactly this for decades.”

to file in — verb phrase

To enter a place in a line, one after another, in an orderly way.

“...far fewer people filing in through the gate...”

flea market — noun

An outdoor or informal market selling second-hand goods, antiques, and a wide mix of miscellaneous items.

“...there was a flea market at Tōji worth seeing — old and famous, monthly...”

to funnel — verb

To guide or direct people (or things) into a narrow path or space, as if through a funnel.

“...no roped path funnelling anyone anywhere in particular.”

gilt (leaf) — adjective / noun

A thin decorative layer of gold applied to a surface.

“...three storeys of gilt leaf standing over its own still pond...”

to linger — verb

To stay somewhere longer than necessary or expected, often because you don't want to leave.

“...no lingering, no crossing to the other side...”

to peel off — phrasal verb

To separate or move away gradually from a larger group.

“...the tour groups peeling off one by one toward the main shrine buildings near the base...”

press (of people) — noun

A large, tightly packed crowd, or the pushing pressure created by one.

“...already being nudged forward by the press of people behind him.”

raked gravel — noun phrase

Gravel or sand that has been combed into deliberate patterns, especially in traditional Japanese gardens.

“...checkerboard squares of deep green moss set against pale raked gravel...”

switchback — noun

A path or road that zigzags sharply back and forth, typically climbing a hill or mountain.

“...the crowd thinned with every switchback, noticeably, gate by gate...”

teppan / teppanyaki — noun (Japanese loanword)

A style of Japanese cooking using a large, flat iron griddle, often performed in front of diners at the counter.

“...a small teppan restaurant two streets from the hotel...”

unbroken — adjective

Continuous, without any interruption, gap, or pause.

“...a single, unbroken river of people...”

vermilion — adjective / noun

A bright red or reddish-orange colour.

“...the first stretch of vermilion torii gates packed shoulder to shoulder with visitors...”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. We stood in a long line, _____ slowly through the narrow gate.
2. The queue was _____ into a single lane by metal barriers.
3. I didn't plan to mention it, but as an _____, I should say the shop closes early on Sundays.
4. Some customers can be quite _____, expecting everything to be perfect immediately.
5. One by one, the slower walkers _____ from the group and took a shorter path.
6. The chef worked with real _____, never wasting a single movement.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- Visitors to Kinkaku-ji can view the building from several different angles at their own pace. T / F / NM
- According to the Instagram post, the friends spend about four minutes actually viewing Kinkaku-ji. T / F / NM
- At Tofuku-ji, staff encourage visitors to keep moving quickly through the garden. T / F / NM
- Fushimi Inari stays equally crowded from the base all the way to the top of the mountain. T / F / NM
- According to Damiano, Fushimi Inari copes with crowds better because it has more space to spread them across. T / F / NM
- The friends have a disappointing, forgettable dinner that evening. T / F / NM
- The restaurant owner is short-tempered and unfriendly towards the friends. T / F / NM
- The restaurant owner mentions a monthly flea market at Tōji. T / F / NM
- A commenter called ShakerMaker82 agrees with the group's criticism of Kinkaku-ji. T / F / NM
- Damiano calmly agrees that finding the restaurant may not have been pure luck. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Argues that a place's size, not its popularity, determines how well it handles crowds.	
B. Notices, with quiet amusement, a friend overexplaining how lucky something really was.	
C. Spots the evening's restaurant simply by noticing it on the way back to the hotel.	
D. Describes a famous site as 'a very beautiful conveyor belt.'	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why does Julien call Kinkaku-ji 'a very beautiful conveyor belt'? What does this comparison suggest about the visit?
- How does Tofuku-ji's atmosphere differ from Kinkaku-ji's? Support your answer with details from the text.
- According to Damiano, why is Fushimi Inari able to 'survive its own popularity' in a way Kinkaku-ji cannot?
- What does the restaurant owner's comment — 'It's not really about the visitors. It's about how many, and how they behave' — suggest about his view of tourism?
- How does Damiano's insistence that the restaurant was 'lucky' connect to what happened in Chapter 6, and why might Daniel find it funny?



LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Describing Crowds and Space

The chapter uses a rich set of vocabulary for describing how crowds move, and how space feels. Look at these examples:

“a single, unbroken river of people” “the crowd thinned with every switchback” “the tour groups peeling off one by one”

- Using at least four expressions from this chapter or its glossary, describe a crowded place you have personally experienced (a concert, a market, public transport at rush hour).
- Now describe the same kind of place when it's empty or nearly empty, using different vocabulary.

B — Expressing a Balanced Opinion

The restaurant owner shares a nuanced view of tourism without sounding bitter or one-sided. Look at his structure:

“It's not really about the visitors. It's about how many, and how they behave.”

- What does the structure ‘It's not really about X. It's about Y’ allow a speaker to do?
- Practise this structure with your own opinion on a topic with two sides — for example, social media, tourism, or homework.

C — When Someone Protests Too Much

Sometimes a character insisting too strongly on something makes it seem less believable, not more. Compare Damiano's reaction here to Daniel's earlier suspicion in Chapter 6:

“‘Lucky find,’ Damiano said, around a mouthful, with slightly too much emphasis. ‘See? Lucky. Nothing suspicious about it.’”

- What effect does the phrase ‘with slightly too much emphasis’ have on how we read Damiano's words?
- Find a moment in an earlier chapter where a character stayed genuinely calm and unbothered, rather than over-explaining. What's the difference in how each is written?

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 7. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Kinkaku-ji (the Golden Pavilion)

Kinkaku-ji, officially Rokuon-ji, was originally built as a retirement villa for a shogun in the late 14th century and later converted into a Zen Buddhist temple. Its top two storeys are covered in genuine gold leaf, and it is one of Kyoto's most photographed sites. Because of the layout of its grounds, visitors follow a single one-way path around the reflecting pond, which — especially at peak times — can make a visit feel brief and tightly managed.

For discussion: Is there a famous landmark you know of that's managed in a similarly structured, one-way way because of its popularity?

Tofuku-ji and the Hassō-tei Garden

Tofuku-ji is a large Zen temple complex known for its gardens, including the Hassō-tei, a set of gardens on four sides of the abbot's hall designed in the 20th century, combining traditional elements like moss and raked gravel (a style called karesansui, or dry landscape) with a more modern, geometric design. It is far less visited than Kinkaku-ji, particularly outside the autumn foliage season.

For discussion: Why might a well-designed garden feel meaningful specifically because you're allowed to sit and stay a while, rather than simply walk past it?

Fushimi Inari Taisha

Fushimi Inari is famous for its thousands of vermilion torii gates, which wind up the wooded slopes of Mount Inari. Each gate is donated by an individual or business as an offering to Inari, the Shinto deity associated with rice, prosperity, and business success — the donor's name is typically inscribed on the back of the gate. Most visitors only walk through the lower, most crowded sections, meaning the upper paths are often significantly quieter.

For discussion: Would you be motivated to climb further at a site like this, even without knowing exactly what's at the top?

Teppanyaki

Teppanyaki refers to a style of Japanese cooking on a large, flat iron griddle (teppan), often performed by the chef directly in front of diners seated at a counter. It differs from the more theatrical, chef-performance style sometimes marketed as 'hibachi' outside Japan, which tends to be less common in Japan itself.

For discussion: Is there a style of cooking or dining in your own country where watching the food being prepared is part of the experience?

Overtourism and Local Perspectives

In recent years, Kyoto has experienced significant tourism pressure, with certain neighbourhoods and sites becoming very crowded at peak times, prompting discussion locally and internationally about how to balance tourism with residents' daily lives. The restaurant owner's calm, specific distinction — that the issue is less about visitors existing and more about numbers and behaviour — reflects a view expressed by many in heavily visited destinations worldwide, not only in Japan.

For discussion: Is there a place in your own country that experiences similar pressure from high visitor numbers? How do locals and visitors typically get along there?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Fame Versus Experience

- Is a 'must-see' landmark always worth the crowds and rush? What factors would make you decide it's worth it, or not?
- Damiano says Tofuku-ji is 'the one I'd actually recommend,' even though it's less famous. Would you trust a recommendation like this from a friend over a guidebook's top pick?

Discussion 2 — A Local's View

- The restaurant owner shares his honest opinion about tourism without seeming bitter or unwelcoming. What makes his comment feel balanced rather than one-sided?
- How do you think tourists should think about their own impact on a place they're visiting?

Discussion 3 — Two Lucky Finds

- This is the second time in two chapters that a 'lucky find' has been mentioned with unusual emphasis. What do you make of this pattern so far?
- If you were writing what's really going on, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 7. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — A Rushed Visit to a Famous Site (Groups of 3-4)

Recreate the Kinkaku-ji experience: one student plays a member of staff politely moving a queue along; the others are visitors trying, and failing, to properly appreciate what they're seeing.

Language to use: 'Keep moving, please.', 'I've had about four seconds to appreciate that...', 'To be fair...'

Role Play 2 — Recommending the Underrated Option (Pairs)

Student A is enthusiastically recommending a famous, popular option (a restaurant, film, destination). Student B makes the case, calmly and specifically, for a lesser-known alternative they personally prefer.

Focus on: giving specific reasons, not just 'it's better'; respecting the other person's opinion while disagreeing.

Role Play 3 — A Local Business Owner's Perspective (Groups of 3)

One student plays a local shop or restaurant owner in a heavily touristed area; the others are visitors who ask, respectfully, what it's like dealing with so many tourists. The owner responds honestly but without bitterness.

Focus on: balanced, specific opinions rather than generalisations; respectful curiosity from the visitors.

Role Play 4 — Disagreeing Politely Online (Pairs)

Student A has posted a mildly critical opinion about a famous place online. Student B disagrees in the comments. Both try to make their point clearly and politely, in the style of the Instagram exchange with ShakerMaker82.

Debrief question: What's the difference between disagreeing politely online and disagreeing rudely? What made this exchange (from the book) stay polite?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Two Temples, Two Feelings

Write a short comparison (100–150 words) of Kinkaku-ji and Tofuku-ji, focusing on how each one made the friends feel, rather than simply what each one looked like.

Writing 2 — A Balanced Opinion

Choose a topic with two reasonable sides (tourism, social media, homework, or one of your own choosing). Write a short paragraph (60–90 words) expressing a balanced opinion, using a structure similar to the restaurant owner's: 'It's not really about X. It's about Y.'

Writing 3 — Damiano's Streak

This is the second unusually 'lucky' find in two chapters. Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) giving your own theory for what might really be going on with Damiano — this is entirely your own invention, not something the book has confirmed.

Writing 4 — Replying to ShakerMaker82

Write a longer, more thoughtful reply (40–60 words) than the one in the chapter, responding to ShakerMaker82's comment that 'you just don't appreciate' Kinkaku-ji, explaining the group's actual experience more fully.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 8: The Soba Place

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 8. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 8 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 9.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

A note on this chapter's sensitive moment

Toward the end of the chapter, the hotel manager relocates the group because another guest has complained about ‘foreign guests’ on their floor. The manager is explicit that he doesn’t believe the friends did anything wrong and that the situation is unfair — the emphasis of the scene is on his careful, honest handling of a difficult situation, not on assigning blame to any individual, nationality, or culture. The Discussion and Cultural Notes sections below address this directly but keep the framing universal: unfair treatment linked to being a visible outsider can happen to travellers anywhere, and the more useful discussion is usually about how people and institutions respond to it. Teachers should feel free to adjust the depth of this discussion to suit their class.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

A day in Nara brings the friends face to face with Kofuku-ji’s pagoda, the park’s famously bold (and food-motivated) deer, and the overwhelming scale of Todai-ji’s bronze Buddha. Over a soba lunch at a restaurant so obscure it doesn’t even appear in English map searches, Daniel finally presses Damiano into admitting the truth behind his string of excellent recommendations since Chapter 6: a private Facebook group for Italians who travel seriously in Japan. Damiano also reveals, almost shyly, that he has been quietly keeping a goshuincho since Chapter 2, filling it with stamps from nearly every site they’ve visited, including one obtained live, by hand, at Kasuga Taisha. After a quiet final stop at an overlooked shrine, the day ends abruptly back at the Kyoto hotel: the manager, visibly uncomfortable, explains that another guest has complained about noise from the friends’ floor in terms that reference their being foreign, and offers to move them, free of charge, to a sister hotel in Osaka for the rest of their stay. He is careful and explicit that he does not believe they’ve done anything wrong. The friends accept, subdued, and leave early the next morning.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 8. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Sights That Announce Themselves

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever visited a place where impressive sights seemed to appear everywhere, almost casually, without much build-up?
- Have you ever had a close encounter with a wild or semi-wild animal used to human visitors (feeding pigeons, monkeys, deer, etc.)? What was it like?
- Have you ever kept a quiet, personal project going during a trip — photos, souvenirs, a journal — without telling the people you were travelling with?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Finding the Hidden Gem

With a partner, discuss: what makes a restaurant or shop genuinely hard for tourists to find, even today, with smartphones and maps? Brainstorm a few reasons before reading.

Activity 3 — Being Treated Unfairly Away From Home

Before reading, think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you, or has someone you know, ever been treated unfairly while travelling, simply for being a visitor or an outsider? You don't need to share personal details if you'd rather not.
- If a business had to respond to an unfair complaint about a customer, what would you want them to do?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 8, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to converge — verb

To come together toward one point from different directions.

“...three deer converging on him at once...”

to crane (one's neck) — verb phrase

To stretch your neck to see something better, especially something high up or far away.

“‘We haven't even started and there's already a national treasure just sitting there,’ Daniel said, craning his neck at it.”

dashi — noun (Japanese loanword)

A basic Japanese soup stock, typically made from fish flakes and kelp, used as the base for many dishes including soba broth.

“...the smell of dashi thick in the small room.”

to dwarf — verb

To make something seem very small by comparison, because of being much larger.

“...dwarfing even the crowd gathered at its feet into something approaching genuine quiet.”

to elaborate — verb

To give more details or information about something already mentioned.

“...the manager didn't elaborate further than that.”

to have some standing — idiom

To hold a certain level of social respect, importance, or influence within a community.

“...someone with some standing locally...”

inkstone — noun

A stone or stone-like block used to hold and grind ink, especially in traditional East Asian calligraphy.

“...a shrine attendant sat with stamps, brush and inkstone properly laid out...”

to mob — verb (informal, figurative)

To crowd around someone or something eagerly, sometimes overwhelmingly.

“Julien bought a stack of the crackers... and was mobbed within seconds...”

noren — noun (Japanese loanword)

A traditional Japanese fabric curtain, often hung in a doorway of a restaurant or shop to indicate it is open.

“...a plain noren curtain over the door with a single character on it that none of them could read.”

to nose at (something) — verb phrase (figurative)

To push or touch something gently and repeatedly with the nose, especially said of an animal.

“...nosing at pockets and bags with the easy confidence of animals...”

renewable — adjective

Able to be continually replaced or replenished — used here with light humour about an endless supply.

“...tourists were, functionally, a renewable source of biscuits.”

to romanise — verb

To write or transliterate a language that normally uses a different writing system into the Latin (Roman)

alphabet.

“...a listing on Google Maps written entirely in hiragana rather than romanised script...”

sentinel — noun / adjective (figurative)

A person or thing that stands guard or watches over something, often used in a poetic or descriptive sense.

“...standing sentinel through the trees on both sides.”

to stack up — verb (figurative)

(Of problems, apologies, tasks) to build up or accumulate, one after another.

“...many apologies already stacking up before he'd even finished the sentence.”

tucked away — adjective phrase

Hidden or placed in a quiet, hard-to-find location.

“‘There's a soba place near here, tucked away a bit. Worth a look.’”

unassuming — adjective

Modest; not attracting attention; not showy or grand.

“...a small, unassuming shrine with almost nobody in it...”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. As soon as the doors opened, fans _____ on the singer from every side.
2. The huge statue seemed to _____ everyone standing near it.
3. He asked a question but she didn't _____ any further, so we were left guessing.
4. The little shop was _____ down a side street we'd never have found alone.
5. Foreign menus in Japan sometimes give the _____ spelling next to the original characters.
6. The dog kept _____ our bags, hoping for a snack.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

1. The deer in Nara Park are shy and avoid contact with tourists. T / F / NM
2. One of the deer appears to bow before receiving a cracker. T / F / NM
3. The bronze Buddha at Todai-ji is small enough to walk around in a few seconds. T / F / NM
4. The soba restaurant is easy to find using an English-language map search. T / F / NM
5. Damiano finally admits that his local knowledge comes from a private Facebook group. T / F / NM
6. Damiano has been keeping a goshuincho throughout the trip without mentioning it T / F / NM
7. At Kasuga Taisha, Damiano's goshuin is stamped using a ready-made, pre-printed method, just like at Senso-ji. T / F / NM
8. The hotel manager believes the friends have genuinely done something wrong. T / F / NM
9. The friends refuse the manager's offer to move to another hotel. T / F / NM
10. The friends leave for Osaka early the following morning. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien • Damiano • Daniel

Description	Character
A. Finally confronts a friend directly, refusing to accept vague answers any longer.	
B. Reveals a private, ongoing project he's been keeping quietly to himself.	
C. Asks the hotel manager a direct, clarifying question about what's happening.	
D. Notices that a hidden restaurant and an overlooked shrine share the same basic explanation for being so quiet.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why does Daniel say the bowing deer might be 'the most Japanese thing' he's heard, or 'the least'? What do you think he means?
2. Why has Damiano kept both his Facebook group and his goshuincho a secret until now? What does he say motivated this?
3. How does getting a goshuin at Kasuga Taisha differ from the process at Senso-ji in Chapter 2, and why does this difference matter to Damiano?
4. How does the hotel manager balance honesty with the difficulty of his situation? Quote one specific phrase he uses that shows this.
5. Why do you think the author includes a quiet, unremarkable stop at Isagawa-jinja right after the conversation about Damiano's secret source?

abc LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Finally 'Getting It Out'

Across several chapters, Daniel's suspicion about Damiano's 'lucky finds' has been building. Here it finally comes to a head:

"Right. Out with it. Actually out with it, this time." "Ok, fair." "I wasn't hiding it to be sneaky."

- Look back at Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. How does the language of confrontation change here compared to those earlier, lighter exchanges?
- With a partner, practise a short exchange where one person finally admits something after being gently pressed over time. Use at least one expression from this section.

B — Careful, Formal Apology Language

The hotel manager chooses his words with visible care in a difficult conversation. Look at his phrasing:

"I want to be very clear... We do not believe you have done anything wrong. Nothing at all." "I am sorry. It is not right, and I know it is not right."

- What effect does repeating a phrase ('It is not right, and I know it is not right') have, compared to saying it only once?
- With a partner, write a short, careful apology for a difficult situation (your own invented scenario), using formal, precise language similar to the manager's.

C — Describing Scale Through Effect, Not Just Size

The chapter shows the Buddha's size through its effect on the visitors, rather than only giving a measurement:

"...fifteen metres of seated calm, dwarfing even the crowd gathered at its feet into something approaching genuine quiet... the enormous scale of the thing doing more to keep them silent than any posted sign asking for quiet ever could have."

- What does showing the visitors going quiet add, compared to simply stating the Buddha's height?
- Write two or three sentences describing something very large or impressive you've seen, focusing on how it made people around you behave or feel, rather than on numbers.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 8. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Nara Park and Its Deer

The deer of Nara Park are considered messengers of the gods in local Shinto tradition and have long been protected; today they roam freely throughout the park and are accustomed to being fed special 'deer crackers' (shika senbei) sold by vendors. Some deer have learned to bow their heads before receiving food — a behaviour they've picked up through repeated interaction with visitors, rather than a taught trick.

For discussion: Is there an animal in your country that has become closely associated with tourists in a similar way?

Todai-ji and the Great Buddha

Todai-ji's Great Buddha Hall houses one of Japan's largest bronze Buddha statues (the Daibutsu), first cast in the 8th century, and remains one of the largest wooden buildings in the world despite being smaller than its original historical footprint. The site is part of a UNESCO World Heritage designation covering several of Nara's monuments.

For discussion: Have you visited a place where sheer physical scale affected your mood or behaviour?

Goshuin, Revisited

This chapter revisits the goshuin tradition first introduced in Chapter 2, this time showing the traditional live process — brush, ink, and a hand-carved stamp — rather than the pre-printed version the friends first encountered at the much busier Senso-ji. Quieter sites are generally more likely to offer this fuller, slower version of the custom.

For discussion: Is there a similar souvenir or keepsake tradition in your own country that varies depending on how busy or well-known a place is?

Kasuga Taisha's Lantern Paths

Kasuga Taisha is famous for its thousands of stone and bronze lanterns, donated by worshippers over centuries and lining the approach paths through the surrounding forest. Twice a year, during the Setsubun and Obon festivals, all of the lanterns are lit simultaneously in a striking ceremonial event, though on an ordinary day they stand unlit.

For discussion: Do you know of a similar tradition elsewhere involving donated objects (lanterns, tiles, bricks, plaques) accumulating at a site over a long period of time?

Online Communities for Travellers

Private online groups — on platforms like Facebook — built around a shared nationality's interest in a particular country are a common and increasingly influential source of travel recommendations, often surfacing far more specific, up-to-date, and personal advice than public guidebooks or review sites. Damiano's group, for Italians who travel seriously in Japan, reflects a very real and widespread type of online community.

For discussion: Do you belong to, or know of, an online group built around a shared interest in travel or a particular destination? How useful have you found this kind of advice?

When Travellers Face Unfair Treatment

Unfair complaints or assumptions directed at visitors, particularly when their being foreign is mentioned as though it were the issue, can happen in many countries, not only Japan, and usually reflect an individual's prejudice rather than a national trait. What the chapter foregrounds is not the complaint itself but the hotel manager's response: honest about the unfairness, transparent about his limited options that night, and focused on protecting the friends' experience without pretending the situation was acceptable. Hospitality businesses in many countries face similar pressures in balancing one difficult guest against others.

For discussion: What did you think of the way the manager handled the situation? Was there anything he could have done differently, given the constraints he described?

DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Wanting to Be the One Who Knows

- Damiano explains that keeping his source secret 'was nice, for once, being the one who seemed to know things.' Why might this matter to him specifically, within this friend group?
- Have you ever wanted to be seen as the expert on something, even in a small way, within a group of friends or family?

Discussion 2 — Awe and Silence

- The Great Buddha makes the friends fall quiet without any sign asking them to. What kinds of things make you go quiet out of respect or awe, rather than because you're told to?

Discussion 3 — Facing Something Unfair Together

- The manager is honest that the situation is unfair, rather than pretending everything is fine. Why might this honesty matter to the friends, even though it doesn't fix the unfairness itself?
- Julien says 'Early as possible, then. No point dragging it out.' What does this reaction suggest about how he chooses to handle a situation he can't control?
- If you were writing what happens once the friends reach Osaka, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 8. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Finally Confronting a Friend (Pairs)

Student A has suspected, over several separate moments, that Student B has been hiding something small but meaningful. Student A finally presses for a real answer; Student B eventually admits the truth, explaining their reasons.

Language to use: 'Out with it.', 'That's not luck.', 'Ok, fair.', 'I wasn't hiding it to be sneaky.'

Role Play 2 — A Difficult Conversation at the Front Desk (Groups of 3-4)

One student plays a hotel or business manager who has to deliver difficult, unfair news to guests or customers through no fault of their own. The others react and ask questions.

Focus on: careful, precise language; taking responsibility for a decision without pretending it's fair.

Role Play 3 — Admitting a Quiet Project (Pairs)

Student A has been keeping a small, personal project or habit secret from a close friend (a collection, a journal, a hobby). Student B notices and asks about it gently. Student A explains why they kept it quiet.

Focus on: vulnerability without embarrassment; a supportive, curious response from the listener.

Role Play 4 — Feeding the Deer (Pairs or Small Groups)

Recreate a light-hearted scene of tourists interacting with Nara's deer — negotiating, politely and with amusement, over crackers, personal space, and unexpected animal behaviour.

Debrief question: How does humour help a group process something surprising or slightly overwhelming, like being 'mobbed' by deer?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Damiano's Post to the Group

Write the message (60–80 words) Damiano might post to his Facebook group that evening, thanking them for the soba recommendation and perhaps mentioning that his friends have finally found out about the group's existence.

Writing 2 — The Manager's Evening

Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) from the hotel manager's point of view, describing how he felt making the decision to move the friends, and why he chose honesty over simply following the complaint quietly.

Writing 3 — A Page in the Goshuincho

Write a short descriptive paragraph (60–90 words) capturing the moment the shrine attendant at Kasuga Taisha creates Damiano's goshuin by hand, from Daniel's point of view, who is watching it happen for the first time.

Writing 4 — Explaining 'The Source' to Patrick

Patrick has demanded to know what 'the source' is. Write the group's reply (60–90 words), finally explaining Damiano's Facebook group in their usual tone — teasing, but affectionate.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 9: Starting Over

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

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Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 9 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 10.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

Settled smoothly into their new Osaka hotel, the friends have breakfast and, almost without deciding to, drop their original itinerary altogether in favour of a loose, unplanned day. Over tea, Damiano proposes something bigger: abandoning the rest of the planned route entirely in favour of the San'in coast — Kinosaki, Tottori, Matsue, Izumo — recommended by a contact in his Facebook group, an Italian named Leonardo who has settled locally with his Japanese wife. Julien, for the first time in the trip, doesn't defend the plan, and simply closes it without deleting it. The day itself is a relaxed, satisfying tour of Osaka: a modernised castle with a lift inside its traditional shell, scalding-hot takoyaki, unhurried shopping in Dotonbori and Shinsaibashi, a long, quiet moment watching a whale shark at the Kaiyukan aquarium, and Osaka-style okonomiyaki for dinner. The chapter ends with an Instagram post teasing ‘big changes’ to the route, and the group playfully declining to give Patrick any real details yet.

Trivia for the teacher: attentive readers of the wider Ponte Aperto series may recognise ‘Leonardo’ as the protagonist of the imprint's other novel *My Time in Tottori* — a light crossover that adds nothing essential to this chapter and isn't necessary for students to know.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 9. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Days With No Plan

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Do you prefer a trip with a detailed plan, or one where you decide things as you go? Has your preference ever changed over the course of a single trip?
- Have you ever abandoned a plan completely, rather than just adjusting it? What made you decide to start over instead of tweaking what you had?
- Would you trust a travel recommendation from someone you'd never met in person, but knew through an online group? Why or why not?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — A Day in a New City

With a partner, imagine you have one day, no plan, and no bookings in a big city you've never visited. Brainstorm the kinds of things you'd want to include.

Kind of activity	Would I prioritise this?
A famous historic landmark	
Shopping, even without buying much	
An aquarium, zoo, or museum	
Trying a famous local food	

Activity 3 — Big Animals, Small Words

Before reading, think about: if you saw a very large sea creature (a whale, a shark, a giant ray) moving slowly through the water in front of you, how do you imagine you'd react? Would you talk, or go quiet? Why?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 9, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to bang on about (something) — phrasal verb (informal, British)

To talk about something repeatedly and at length, often to the point of being a little tiresome.

“He’s been banging on about that whole stretch of coast for ages...”

deliberation — noun

Careful thought or discussion before making a decision.

“Julien, after some deliberation, bought a small, sturdy travel wallet...”

to fan — verb

To move air toward yourself or something else, often with your hand, to cool it down.

“‘Hot,’ Damiano said, fanning his mouth, eyes watering slightly.”

griddle — noun

A flat metal surface used for cooking food by grilling or frying, often at high heat.

“...batter crisp outside and molten within... straight off the griddle...”

lull — noun

A period of calm or quiet between periods of activity or conversation.

“It was somewhere in the comfortable lull after that, second cups of tea going cold...”

moat — noun

A deep, wide ditch, typically filled with water, surrounding a castle as a defensive barrier.

“Osaka Castle rose white and stark over its own moat...”

molten — adjective

Melted; extremely hot and soft or liquid inside, even if solid on the outside.

“...batter crisp outside and molten within...”

non-negotiable — adjective

Not open to discussion or compromise; something that must happen.

“‘The Castle,’ Daniel said, immediately. ‘Non-negotiable.’”

observation deck — noun phrase

A platform, usually near the top of a tall building or tower, from which visitors can view the surrounding area.

“The observation deck at the top gave the whole city out flat and hazy in the summer heat...”

to put (something) on the table — idiom

To formally raise or suggest something for a group to consider and discuss.

“‘Can I put something else on the table,’ he said.”

to scrap — verb (informal)

To abandon or completely get rid of a plan, rather than simply adjusting it.

“‘You’re saying scrap it,’ he said. ‘Properly scrap it. Not adjust it. Scrap it.’”

to spiral — verb

To move in a continuous curve that winds around a central point, gradually moving further from or closer to it.

“...eight storeys of walkway spiralling down around it...”

to sprawl — verb

To spread out over a large, often irregular, area.

“...old maps of the castle town as it used to sprawl beneath the walls.”

stark — adjective

Severe, bare, or standing out sharply and starkly against a background.

“Osaka Castle rose white and stark over its own moat...”

tout — noun

A person who tries persistently to attract customers to a business, often standing outside bars, restaurants, or shows.

“...touts calling out half-heartedly to nobody in particular...”

unglamorous — adjective

Not impressive, exciting, or elegant; plain and ordinary.

“...cheap, unglamorous, sold from a cart, and better than half the sit-down meals they'd had.”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. After a long _____ of deep discussion, the room went quiet for a moment.
2. The pancake was crisp on the outside but completely _____ in the middle.
3. We're happy to compromise on the hotel, but the flight dates are _____.
4. I'd like to _____ a new idea _____: what if we changed the whole route?
5. The old castle _____ upward over a wide, still _____.
6. In the end, they decided to _____ the entire plan and start fresh.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned in the chapter). For false statements, write the correction.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. The friends arrive at the Osaka hotel to a difficult, awkward check-in process. | T / F / NM |
| 2. Julien is the one who first suggests abandoning the original itinerary completely. | T / F / NM |
| 3. Damiano mentions a contact from his Facebook group who lives on the San'in coast. | T / F / NM |
| 4. Osaka Castle's interior is entirely traditional, with no modern additions. | T / F / NM |
| 5. The friends find the takoyaki mild and not very hot. | T / F / NM |
| 6. The friends spend a large amount of money shopping in Dotonbori and Shinsaibashi. | T / F / NM |
| 7. The whale shark at the aquarium moves quickly and unpredictably. | T / F / NM |
| 8. The friends fall silent for several minutes while watching the whale shark. | T / F / NM |
| 9. According to Damiano, Osaka-style and Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki are prepared in exactly the same way. | T / F / NM |
| 10. The Instagram post promises that 'big changes' are coming to the group's route. | T / F / NM |

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Insists that visiting the castle is non-negotiable.	
B. Finally says out loud what everyone seems to have been sensing about the trip's plan.	
C. Buys something useful after careful thought, rather than something impulsive.	
D. Makes a joke connecting the castle's rebuilding to an earlier chapter's disappointment.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why does Julien decide, for the first time in the trip, not to defend the original itinerary?
- What reason does Damiano give for wanting to follow Leonardo's advice 'on purpose' rather than stumbling into good experiences by accident, as they have been?
- How does the author use the whale shark to create a moment of shared quiet among the three friends? Mention at least one specific detail.
- Why might Daniel say the castle 'feels a bit like cheating', and how does Damiano's response change how we might see that reaction?
- What does Patrick's comment — and the group's reply, 'Are you sure you want us to spoil the surprise?' — suggest about how the friends are managing what they share with him?



LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Proposing a Big Change Carefully

Damiano introduces a significant suggestion gently, giving his friends room to react. Look at how he opens the topic:

“Can I put something else on the table,” he said. ‘Not for today. For after Kyoto.’”

- Why might Damiano choose to separate this from ‘today’s plans’ so clearly before introducing it?
- With a partner, practise proposing a significant change to a group plan (a holiday, a project, a shared decision), using a similarly careful opening.

B — Letting Go, Shown Through Small Actions

Instead of stating that Julien accepts the change, the author shows it through a small physical detail:

“Julien closed the itinerary on his phone — didn’t delete it, just closed it — and reached for the last of his tea.”

- What’s the difference in meaning between ‘closing’ something and ‘deleting’ it? What does this specific choice suggest about how Julien feels?
- Find an earlier chapter where Julien defends the itinerary strongly. How does his behaviour here contrast with that?
- Write one original sentence showing a character reluctantly giving up on a plan, through a small action rather than by stating their feelings directly.

C — Callback Humour

By Chapter 9, the friends (and Patrick, commenting from home) increasingly joke by referring back to earlier events in the trip. Look at this example:

“So it’s the Kinkaku-ji of castles.’ ‘That’s a bit harsh. You’re not entirely wrong though.’”

- Why is this joke funnier if you remember Chapter 7, rather than reading Chapter 9 alone?
- Find one more moment in this chapter where a character (or Patrick, in the comments) makes a joke that refers back to an earlier chapter.
- Write your own short callback joke that a character in the book might make, referring to an event from any earlier chapter you’ve read.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 9. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Osaka Castle

Osaka Castle's original structure dates to the 16th century, but the building has been destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries due to fire, warfare, and natural disasters. The current main keep dates largely from a 1931 reconstruction, with further restoration in the 1990s, and houses a modern museum, complete with elevators, inside a historically styled exterior — a common approach for major reconstructed heritage sites in Japan, prioritising public access alongside historical appearance.

For discussion: Is there a historic building in your own country that has been rebuilt or heavily restored? Does knowing this change how you feel about visiting it?

Takoyaki

Takoyaki — ball-shaped snacks of wheat-flour batter filled with diced octopus — originated in Osaka and are cooked in a special moulded pan, turned constantly until crisp outside and molten hot inside. They're considered one of Osaka's defining street foods and are traditionally eaten immediately, hot off the griddle, standing up.

For discussion: Is there a street food in your own country famous for being eaten immediately, while still hot, standing up rather than sitting down?

Dotonbori and the Glico Running Man

Dotonbori is Osaka's best-known entertainment and dining district, running along a canal lined with restaurants and enormous illuminated signs, including animated 3D models such as a giant mechanical crab. Its most iconic image is the Glico 'running man' sign, first installed in 1935 and updated several times since, which has become an unofficial symbol of the city itself.

For discussion: Is there a sign, statue, or landmark in a city you know that has become an unofficial symbol of the whole place?

Kaiyukan Aquarium

The Osaka Aquarium Kaiyukan is built around a single enormous central tank representing the Pacific Ocean, with a spiralling walkway that takes visitors past different depths and habitats as they descend. It is well known internationally for housing whale sharks, the largest living fish species, which despite their size are filter feeders and pose no threat to other tank inhabitants or visitors.

For discussion: Have you ever visited an aquarium or zoo with an animal so large or impressive that it changed the mood of everyone watching?

Okonomiyaki: Osaka Versus Hiroshima Style

Okonomiyaki ('grilled as you like it') is a savoury pancake found in different regional variations across Japan. In the Osaka style, ingredients such as cabbage and pork are mixed directly into the batter before cooking; in the Hiroshima style, the ingredients — often including noodles — are layered rather than mixed, resulting in a noticeably different texture and structure. Each region tends to consider its own version the definitive one.

For discussion: Is there a dish in your own country that has strong regional variations, with each region convinced its version is best?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Letting Go of a Plan

- Julien has defended the itinerary carefully throughout the trip. What do you think makes this moment different, allowing him to finally let it go?
- Is there a difference between giving up on a plan reluctantly and giving up on it happily? Which one seems closer to what Julien experiences here?

Discussion 2 — Trusting a Recommendation

- Damiano is suggesting the group build the rest of their trip around advice from someone none of them has met in person. What makes this feel reasonable, or risky, to you?
- How is trusting an online stranger's advice different from trusting a guidebook, or trusting a close friend's opinion?

Discussion 3 — Being Struck Silent

- This is not the first time in the book that the friends have gone quiet in front of something impressive — compare this moment to Todai-ji's Buddha in Chapter 8, or Meiji Jingu in Chapter 2. What do these moments have in common?
- If you were writing what the friends decide to do once they reach the San'in coast, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 9. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Proposing a Big Change (Groups of 3)

Recreate the breakfast-table scene: one student carefully proposes abandoning a group's existing plan in favour of something completely different; the others react with a mix of surprise, resistance, and eventual agreement.

Language to use: 'Can I put something on the table?', 'Go on.', 'You're saying...', 'I'm just the one saying it out loud.'

Role Play 2 — Deciding a Day With No Plan (Groups of 3–4)

Your group has one day and no bookings in an imagined city. Negotiate together, loosely, what to prioritise, in the relaxed style of the friends' breakfast conversation.

Focus on: suggesting options without demanding them; reaching agreement without a strict plan.

Role Play 3 — The Hot Food Warning (Pairs)

Student A warns Student B that a food is very hot; Student B doesn't fully believe it and finds out the hard way. Recreate the comic exchange in the style of Damiano and the takoyaki.

Focus on: exaggeration for comic effect; good-natured teasing after a small mistake.

Role Play 4 — Teasing Someone Who Isn't There (Small Groups)

Recreate the Instagram-style exchange: some students play the travelling group, posting a deliberately vague update; one plays Patrick, demanding details in the comments. The group enjoys withholding the full story a little longer.

Debrief question: What's the difference between teasing someone kindly and simply being unhelpful? How did your group make sure it stayed kind?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Damiano's Message to Leonardo

Write the message (60–80 words) Damiano might send to Leonardo in the Facebook group, asking for more specific advice about Kinosaki, Tottori, Matsue, and Izumo, now that the group has decided to go.

Writing 2 — The Whale Shark

Write a short descriptive paragraph (80–120 words) capturing the five minutes the friends spend in silence watching the whale shark, from the point of view of one of the three characters.

Writing 3 — Julien's Closed Itinerary

Write a short reflective paragraph (80–120 words) from Julien's point of view, describing what closing (but not deleting) the itinerary means to him, and why he isn't ready to get rid of it completely.

Writing 4 — The Big Reveal

Write the group's next Instagram post (40–60 words), finally explaining the new San'in coast plan to their followers. You do not need to know what actually happens on the San'in coast — this is your own invention, based only on what Damiano has said so far.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 10: Crossing Over

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 10. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 10 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 11.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

With the flea market tip from Chapter 7's restaurant owner finally falling on the right date, the friends spend an unhurried morning at Tōji's Kobo-san market, browsing far more than buying and noting how thoroughly local, not just touristic, the crowd is. In DenDen Town that afternoon, Damiano picks a practical souvenir for his mother, Julien quietly pockets a small Shinkansen keyring without explanation, the group buys their traditional Travel Soc figure (this time a Goku), and Daniel impulsively buys a model of the Hinotori train — the very one he never got to ride back in Chapter 5. As they leave Osaka the next morning, the hotel manager offers a careful, anxious apology echoing the Kyoto manager's from Chapter 8, visibly worried about a bad review; Julien reassures him simply. On the train to Kinokuniya, the three friends loosely piece together plans for the onsen town and the wider San'in coast — yukata-clad bathhouse hopping, Tajima beef, a quiet beach, and a sand sculpture museum in Tottori — based entirely on the Facebook group's advice, arriving with nothing fixed and considerable anticipation.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 10. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — The Pleasure of Browsing

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever spent time browsing a market, shop, or bookshop and left without buying anything, but still felt it was worthwhile? What made it worthwhile?
- Is there a difference between shopping for something you need and browsing just to look? What's enjoyable about each?
- Do you have a tradition of bringing back a particular type of souvenir from your travels? What is it?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Flea Market Vocabulary

With a partner, discuss what you might expect to find at a flea market. Brainstorm a few items or categories before reading.

Activity 3 — Planning on the Move

Before reading, think about: have you ever planned part of a trip while already travelling — on a train, bus, or plane — rather than in advance? How did it compare to planning ahead of time?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 10, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

audit — noun / verb

A formal, thorough check or review of something, especially records or a collection of items.

“...the cupboard souvenir count must be approaching double figures by now, someone needs to do an audit.”

bolt (of fabric) — noun

A large roll of cloth, as typically sold in a fabric or clothing shop.

“...holding bolts of fabric up against each other and conferring in low voices.”

capacitor — noun

A small electronic component that stores an electrical charge, commonly used in electronic devices.

“...individual capacitors sold by the packet...”

flimsy — adjective

Light and thin; not sturdy; easily bent, damaged, or broken.

“...eaten standing up out of paper trays with the flimsy bamboo chopsticks that came with them.”

to haggle — verb

To negotiate over the price of something, often in a friendly, spirited, or drawn-out way.

“An elderly man haggling hard over a stack of old postcards...”

intent — noun

Seriousness of purpose or determination in doing something.

“...a small, serious crowd of young women picking through patterns with real intent...”

livery — noun

The particular colours and design used to identify a vehicle — such as a train, bus, or plane — as belonging to a specific company or service.

“Tomix. Hinotori. Exact livery.”

mismatched — adjective

Not matching; not forming a coordinated or harmonious set.

“...boxes of mismatched crockery sat beside trays of rusted tools nobody could identify...”

onsen — noun (Japanese loanword)

A hot spring, or a bathing facility using naturally heated water, common throughout Japan.

“Kinosaki. Onsen town, seven public bathhouses...”

run (of shops) — noun

A series or sequence of similar things, one after another.

“...working their way through a run of small souvenir shops for things to bring home.”

sagging — adjective / verb

Bending, sinking, or hanging down under weight; losing firmness.

“...folding tables sagging under the weight of whatever each vendor had decided the world needed that morning.”

shrink-wrapped — adjective

Tightly wrapped in thin plastic film that has been heated to fit closely around an object, especially for packaging.

“...boxed and shrink-wrapped, sitting on a shelf alongside a dozen other characters...”

tarpaulin — noun

A large, waterproof sheet of material, often used to cover or shelter things outdoors.

“...tarpaulins strung between poles, folding tables sagging under the weight...”

till — noun (British English)

A cash register or checkout counter in a shop.

“...he... carried it straight to the till.”

to turn toward (something) — verb phrase (figurative)

To begin thinking about or anticipating something, especially used of hunger and food.

“They stepped out onto the platform, stomachs already turning toward lunch...”

yukata — noun (Japanese loanword)

A light, informal cotton kimono, often worn in summer or at hot spring resorts.

“...you're meant to do the whole circuit in a yukata, wandering between them.”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The shelves were _____ under the weight of all the old books.
2. She spent twenty minutes trying to _____ the price down, just for fun.
3. The umbrella was so _____ it broke on its first proper use.
4. We wandered through a whole _____ of tiny shops without buying a thing.
5. The new figure came _____, still sealed in its original packaging.
6. By the time we reached the platform, our stomachs were already _____ dinner.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

1. The flea market at Tōji takes place on a date the friends knew about before the trip. T / F / NM
2. The friends buy a large number of things at the flea market. T / F / NM
3. According to Julien's observation, locals as well as tourists visit the Tōji flea market. T / F / NM
4. DenDen Town is described as a different kind of shopping district from the flea market. T / F / NM
5. Damiano chooses the more expensive, elaborate set of chopsticks for his mother. T / F / NM
6. Julien buys a keyring and explains exactly who it's for. T / F / NM
7. Buying a figure for the Travel Soc cupboard is described as a long-standing tradition. T / F / NM
8. Daniel buys a model train despite knowing he can't actually ride the real one. T / F / NM
9. The Osaka hotel manager seems casual and unconcerned when saying goodbyes. T / F / NM
10. On the train to Kinosaki, the friends have every detail of their visit planned and booked. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Notices something a friend buys but chooses not to comment on it.	
B. Picks a souvenir based on practicality rather than appearance.	
C. Buys something on impulse, connected to an earlier travel mishap.	
D. Reassures a nervous hotel manager without making a big deal of the apology.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why does the flea market feel worthwhile to the friends, even though, as Daniel says, there's 'nothing here I'd actually take home'?
2. What does Julien's comment about the man haggling over postcards, and Damiano's reply, suggest about what haggling is really about in that moment?
3. Why might Julien choose not to explain what the Shinkansen keyring is for? What do you think Damiano's decision not to ask about it says about their friendship?
4. How does the Osaka hotel manager's goodbye echo events from Chapter 8, and what does his worry about a 'bad review' reveal about how much the situation has weighed on him?
5. How does the author build anticipation for the San'in coast during the train journey, without describing anywhere the friends haven't actually visited yet?

abc LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Browsing Without Buying

Daniel expresses a particular kind of pleasure in looking at something without wanting to own it. Look at this example:

“I don't need this. I don't even want this. I just like to look at it.”

- What's the difference between 'needing', 'wanting', and simply 'liking to look at' something? Can you think of an example of your own for each?
- With a partner, describe an object you've enjoyed looking at without ever wanting to buy or own it.

B — Things Left Unsaid

The chapter includes a small moment that's never explained — and the narration draws attention to the fact that it's deliberately left alone:

“...a keyring shaped like a tiny Shinkansen that he pocketed without comment, which Damiano noted but chose, for once, not to mention.”

- This connects to a similar idea explored in Chapter 6's Language Focus, about what silence can communicate. What's different about this example — who is staying silent, and why might that matter?
- Write one or two sentences describing a small object a character buys or keeps, without explaining why — let the detail suggest something rather than stating it.

C — Careful, Repeated Apology Language

Compare the Osaka manager's goodbye to the Kyoto manager's apology in Chapter 8:

“I want to say again, I am very sorry for how your stay began... This was not right, what happened to you, and I hope you will still think well of us.”

- What phrases here are similar to the Kyoto manager's language in Chapter 8? What effect does this repetition, across two different characters, have on the reader?
- Why might the Osaka manager also mention his worry about a bad review? What does this add to his apology, compared to a simple 'I'm sorry'?

CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 10. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

The Kobo-san Flea Market

The Kobo-san market is held on the 21st of every month at Tōji temple in Kyoto, the date connected to the death anniversary of the Buddhist monk Kūkai (also known as Kōbō Daishi). It's one of Japan's largest and most famous flea markets, drawing both dedicated local antique collectors and curious visitors, with everything from genuine antiques to ordinary secondhand goods on sale side by side.

For discussion: Is there a market in your own country tied to a specific date or tradition, rather than simply being open every week?

DenDen Town

DenDen Town is Osaka's equivalent of Tokyo's Akihabara (first introduced in Chapter 4) — a district known for electronics retailers, hobby shops, and otaku (enthusiast) culture, including manga, anime merchandise, model kits, and trading cards. It developed, like Akihabara, from a postwar concentration of electronics businesses.

For discussion: Compare this to Akihabara in Chapter 4 — do you think two very similar districts in different cities usually feel identical, or does each tend to develop its own character?

Travel Society Souvenir Traditions

Many clubs, societies, and friend groups develop their own private traditions around souvenirs — a specific type of object that members are expected to bring back from any trip, regardless of destination, which accumulates meaning (and often humour) over time. The friends' tradition of bringing back a boxed action figure for the 'Soc cupboard' is a small example of this widespread, informal kind of group culture.

For discussion: Does a club, team, or friend group you belong to have a similar shared tradition or in-joke around objects, food, or photos?

Kinosaki Onsen

Kinosaki is a hot spring (onsen) town on the San'in coast built around seven distinct public bathhouses (sotouyu), each with its own character and legend. Visitors traditionally stay in a ryokan (a Japanese inn) that provides a yukata to wear, then explore the town and move between the different bathhouses over the course of their stay — a custom often described as the main appeal of visiting.

For discussion: Is there a town in your own country built specifically around one shared activity or tradition, the way Kinosaki is built around its bathhouses?

Tajima Beef and Kobe Beef

Tajima beef refers to a breed of cattle raised in the Tajima region of Hyogo Prefecture, which includes Kinosaki. Kobe beef is, in fact, a specific, strictly certified subset of Tajima beef that meets particular quality standards — so rather than being two separate rival products, the friendly rivalry mentioned in the chapter is really between a well-known, heavily marketed brand name and the wider regional product it comes from.

For discussion: Is there a food or product from your own country where a specific, branded version is much more famous internationally than the broader regional product it comes from?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Looking Without Buying

- Why might spending two hours browsing without buying anything feel satisfying, rather than like wasted time?
- Is there a difference between how you browse when you're travelling versus when you're at home?

Discussion 2 — Small, Unexplained Kindnesses

- The keyring moment is never explained in this chapter. What do you make of it? There's no right answer here — this is your own reading of a deliberately open moment.
- Why might a friend choose not to ask about something they've noticed, the way Damiano doesn't ask Julien?

Discussion 3 — Two Apologies

- Compare the Osaka manager's goodbye to the Kyoto manager's apology back in Chapter 8. What's similar, and what's different about how each situation is handled?
- Julien's response — 'It is what it is. Don't worry about it.' — is brief. What effect might a short, calm response have on someone who's clearly anxious?
- If you were writing what the friends find when they actually reach Kinosaki, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 10. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Browsing a Market Together (Groups of 3–4)

Recreate a relaxed morning browsing an imagined flea market: describe unusual objects to each other, decide together what (if anything) is worth buying, and enjoy looking without pressure to purchase.

Language to use: 'I don't need this, I just like to look at it.', 'That's basically the whole market.', 'Look at this.'

Role Play 2 — Haggling as Greeting (Pairs)

Student A is a market stallholder who has known Student B (a regular customer) for years. Recreate a haggling exchange that's really more about friendly conversation than about the price itself.

Focus on: warmth and humour underneath apparent disagreement; a small, familiar routine between two people.

Role Play 3 — A Manager's Careful Goodbye (Pairs)

Student A is a hotel manager saying goodbye to guests after a difficult stay, worried about how they'll remember the experience. Student B is a guest, reassuring them briefly and sincerely.

Focus on: careful, repeated apology language; a short, calming response that doesn't dismiss the apology.

Role Play 4 — Planning on the Train (Groups of 3)

Recreate the loose, half-planning conversation on the train: each student has found something different (an activity, a food, a place) via phone, and the group builds a rough plan together, out loud, with nothing fixed yet.

Debrief question: How does planning out loud, together, feel different from one person planning alone and presenting it to the group?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — The Compass

Write a short reflective paragraph (60–90 words) about Daniel and the brass compass — why might someone enjoy looking at an object they have no intention of buying? Use his exact situation as your starting point.

Writing 2 — The Keyring

Invent your own idea of who the Shinkansen keyring might be for, and why Julien chose not to mention it. Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) explaining your theory. This is entirely your own invention — the book doesn't confirm or deny it.

Writing 3 — The Manager's Relief

Write a short paragraph (60–90 words) from the Osaka manager's point of view, describing how he felt after Julien's brief, calm response to his apology.

Writing 4 — Kinosaki, Before Arriving

Based only on what the friends have heard so far — the yukata circuit, Tajima beef, the beach, the sand museum — write a short paragraph (80–120 words) imagining what you think Kinosaki and the San'in coast might be like. This is your own prediction, not a summary of what actually happens.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 11: *Better Than Kobe*

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

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Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 11 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 12.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

With their ryokan already booked at a lucky last-minute price, the friends finally get an easy, unhurried arrival in Kinosaki: an excellent Tajima beef gyudon lunch (prompting Julien to overclaim it's ‘better than Kobe’ before catching himself), a beautiful traditional room, and their first proper onsen. A throwaway remark from Damiano about whoever cancelled the room draws a quiet, serious correction from Julien, who reminds him that Patrick didn't choose his own accident either — a brief moment that lands and passes without further comment. Over an unhurried in-room dinner, they properly plan the days ahead for the first time since abandoning their itinerary, agreeing (after some gentle negotiation echoing Chapter 5's Nagoya detour) to give a full day to Higashihama beach at Kugami. Damiano privately messages Leonardo to arrange meeting for coffee. At the beach the next day, the friends notice that local beachgoers are dressed for sun protection rather than sunbathing, prompting an open, hedged conversation about differing cultural attitudes to tanning. The chapter ends with an unglamorous but perfectly pleasant budget hotel in Tottori city.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 11. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Overclaiming and Correcting Yourself

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever said something was 'the best' you'd ever had, then realised you hadn't actually tried the thing you were comparing it to?
- Have you ever made a joke or comment that came out more unkind than you meant it to, and had to correct yourself quickly?
- How do you feel about hot baths or hot springs on a hot day? Does the idea appeal to you, or sound unpleasant?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Group Compromise

With a partner, discuss: when a group of friends disagrees about how to spend a day, what usually helps them reach a compromise? Brainstorm a few strategies before reading.

Activity 3 — Sun, Skin, and Culture

Before reading, think about (or discuss with a partner): what's considered an attractive skin tone in your own country or culture — tanned, pale, or something else? Has this changed over time, as far as you know?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 11, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to bake — verb (informal, figurative)

To lie in the sun for a long time, especially in order to get a tan or feel warm.

“...rather than lying still to bake the way any beach back home would have looked...”

broth — noun

A thin, savoury liquid made by cooking meat, fish, or vegetables in water, often used as a cooking base.

“...cooked barely a moment in a sweet, dark broth before it was ladled over the bowl...”

carried away — adjective phrase (idiom)

Too excited or enthusiastic about something, to the point of losing accuracy or a sense of proportion.

“‘Fair,’ Julien said. ‘Sorry. I got carried away.’”

catch — noun (informal)

A hidden problem, disadvantage, or condition attached to something that otherwise seems surprisingly good.

“...certain there had to be a catch somewhere that never actually materialised.”

to dwell on (something) — verb phrase

To think or talk about something for longer than necessary, especially something puzzling or negative.

“Nobody could quite work out what kind of guest cancels a room like this... and nobody dwelled on it for long.”

to ease in — verb phrase

To enter or settle into something gradually and carefully, especially something intense like very hot water.

“...all three of them hiss on first contact before easing in properly, shoulder-deep...”

to humour (someone) — verb

To agree to do something mainly to please someone else, even if you don't particularly want to.

“‘We humoured you at Nagoya... Your turn to humour us.’”

to ladle — verb

To serve or pour a liquid using a large, long-handled spoon.

“...before it was ladled over the bowl still faintly pink at the edges.”

rash guard — noun

A tight-fitting garment worn to protect the skin from sunburn and irritation while swimming or doing water sports.

“...mostly under wide-brimmed hats and long-sleeved rash guards...”

to reckon — verb (informal, British)

To think or believe something, often used to introduce a personal opinion.

“‘Different relationship with the sun, I reckon,’ Damiano said.”

shout — noun (informal, British)

A decision, idea, or suggestion — often described as good or bad.

“‘Alright,’ Daniel admitted... ‘This was a good shout.’”

to stalk — verb

To move slowly and carefully, especially while hunting, searching, or observing something closely.

“...children stalking the rocks with nets...”

tan / to tan — noun / verb

A darker skin colour that develops from exposure to sunlight; to develop this colour.

“Nobody’s even trying to tan.”

uncalled for — adjective phrase

Inappropriate or unnecessary, especially describing an unkind or unfair remark.

“‘Yeah. Sorry. That was uncalled for.’”

veranda — noun

A roofed, open-sided platform attached to the outside of a building, often at ground level.

“...Damiano quietly stepped out onto the room’s small veranda, phone in hand...”

to wade — verb

To walk through water, especially when it is fairly shallow.

“...watching a woman wade out fully clothed, sun hat and all.”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The price seemed too good to be true, so I kept looking for the _____.
2. I got a bit _____ and said it was the best meal of my life — it wasn’t, really.
3. We slowly _____ the cold pool instead of jumping straight in.
4. That comment about her cooking was completely _____; there was no need for it.
5. We sat on the _____ in the evening, watching the sun go down.
6. The children _____ into the shallow water to look for crabs.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

1. The friends have to spend time finding accommodation once they arrive in Kinosaki. T / F / NM
2. Julien admits he can't really compare the gyudon to Kobe beef, since he's never tried it. T / F / NM
3. Daniel says the gyudon they had in Tokyo, back in Chapter 2, was actually bad. T / F / NM
4. Julien gently corrects Damiano for making an unkind comment about whoever cancelled the ryokan. T / F / NM
5. The friends discuss their plans for the days ahead over dinner. T / F / NM
6. Daniel agrees enthusiastically and immediately to spending a full day at the beach. T / F / NM
7. Damiano privately messages Leonardo to arrange meeting for coffee. T / F / NM
8. At Higashihama beach, local beachgoers are seen sunbathing for hours, like the friends. T / F / NM
9. The friends end up disliking their hotel in Tottori. T / F / NM
10. According to the Instagram post, the friends paid full price for the ryokan. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien • Damiano • Daniel

Description	Character
A. Gets carried away with an enthusiastic claim, then quickly admits he overstated it.	
B. Makes an unkind remark without thinking, then apologises once reminded of a friend's situation.	
C. Reluctantly agrees to a full day at the beach after being reminded of a past compromise.	
D. Quietly reaches out to a contact to arrange a future meeting, without telling the others yet.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why does Julien immediately correct himself after claiming the Kinosaki gyudon is 'better than Kobe'? What does this small moment suggest about his character?
2. What does Julien's comment about Patrick ('Patrick didn't plan to break a leg. Think of that.') reveal about how he thinks about fairness toward other people?
3. Why does Julien use the Nagoya day trip from Chapter 5 as his main argument for why Daniel should agree to the beach day?
4. According to Damiano and Daniel's conversation, what possible explanations do they consider for why so few people at Higashihama beach seem to be trying to tan?
5. Why might the author choose to end this eventful, emotionally rich day with something as ordinary as checking into a basic 'Super Hotel'?

 LANGUAGE FOCUS
A — Overclaiming and Correcting Yourself

Julien makes a confident claim, is challenged, and corrects himself gracefully and quickly. Look at the full exchange:

“‘It really is better than Kobe.’ ‘We haven’t tried Kobe,’ Damiano said. [...] ‘Fair,’ Julien said. ‘Sorry. I got carried away.’”

- How many words does it take Julien to fully accept he was wrong? What does this economy suggest about the friendship?
- With a partner, practise a short exchange where one person makes an overconfident claim and quickly, gracefully corrects it when challenged.

B — A Gentle but Serious Correction

Julien corrects Damiano's careless remark without turning it into a bigger conflict. Look at the structure of the exchange:

“‘You can’t know what happened to them,’ Julien said, quietly. ‘Patrick didn’t plan to break a leg. Think of that.’ Damiano went still for a second. ‘Yeah. Sorry. That was uncalled for.’”

- Why might Julien speak ‘quietly’ here, rather than sharply or angrily?
- How does Damiano's short, direct apology help the moment pass quickly, rather than becoming an argument?
- With a partner, write and perform a short exchange where one friend gently but seriously corrects another's careless comment.

C — Observing Before Interpreting

Before offering an explanation, the characters first describe specific things they notice. Look at the order of this passage:

“...mostly under wide-brimmed hats and long-sleeved rash guards, some even wading into the water in leggings and full-length swim shirts... ‘Different relationship with the sun, I reckon,’ Damiano said.”

- Why might it be more convincing to list specific observed details before offering an explanation, rather than starting with the explanation?
- Notice the hedging language — ‘I reckon’, ‘maybe here too’. Why might the characters avoid stating their explanation as a certain fact?
- Choose an unfamiliar custom or habit you've noticed while travelling or meeting people from elsewhere. Write two or three sentences: first the specific detail you noticed, then a tentative, hedged explanation.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 11. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Ryokan and Onsen Culture, Continued

Following on from Chapter 10's introduction to Kinosaki, this chapter shows the traditional ryokan experience in more detail: tatami rooms, a multi-course dinner served directly in the room, and a private or shared onsen bath. Ryokan stays are generally priced per person, including dinner and breakfast, and are considered a distinct kind of hospitality experience from a standard hotel stay, built around slowing down rather than simply providing a place to sleep.

For discussion: Is there a traditional style of accommodation in your own country that includes meals and a particular ritual or custom as part of the stay, rather than just a room?

Gyudon: From Fast Food to Regional Specialty

Gyudon (beef bowl) is a common, inexpensive fast-food dish across Japan, widely available at chains like Yoshinoya — first mentioned back in Chapter 1. This chapter shows the same basic dish made with a specific regional beef, Tajima beef, at a small local restaurant, highlighting the difference between a quick, affordable everyday version of a dish and a more specialised regional version of the same basic idea.

For discussion: Is there a simple, everyday dish in your own country that also has a much more special, regional version using higher-quality ingredients?

Sun Protection and Skin Norms

In Japan, as in several other East Asian countries, many people — particularly women — actively avoid direct sun exposure, using wide-brimmed hats, UV-protective clothing, and sun umbrellas even in summer. This reflects a combination of factors: a long-standing cultural association between pale skin and refinement in parts of East Asia, alongside a widespread, practical concern about sun damage and skin ageing. As with any broad cultural pattern, individual attitudes vary considerably, and sun-avoidance for health or aesthetic reasons exists in many cultures for different historical reasons — including, historically, in parts of Europe.

For discussion: How would you describe your own culture's general relationship with sun exposure and tanning? Has it changed over time, or across generations?

Business Hotel Chains in Japan

Chains like Super Hotel are extremely common throughout Japan, offering small, efficient, no-frills rooms at a low fixed price, often with automated check-in and a shared bath area. They're popular with both domestic business travellers and budget-conscious tourists, and — despite their unglamorous branding — are generally clean, reliable, and well-run.

For discussion: Is there an equivalent budget hotel chain in your own country, known for being reliable even though it isn't glamorous?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Correcting Yourself Gracefully

- Julien corrects his own overclaim within a few words, without embarrassment or defensiveness. Why might this kind of quick self-correction be a useful social skill?
- Is it always necessary to correct an exaggeration, or are some harmless? How do you decide?

Discussion 2 — Judging Without Knowing

- Julien's reminder to Damiano — that they don't know why the ryokan guest cancelled — connects to Patrick's accident earlier in the book. Why might this specific comparison affect Damiano so quickly?
- How often do we judge strangers' choices without knowing their reasons? Can you think of an example from your own life?

Discussion 3 — Different Approaches to the Same Afternoon

- Damiano and Daniel notice a real difference in how people spend a day at the beach. Do you think it's more useful to notice a cultural difference like this without judging it, or is some comparison unavoidable?
- If you were writing what Damiano and Leonardo talk about over coffee, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 11. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Getting Carried Away (Pairs)

Student A makes an enthusiastic, slightly overconfident claim about something (food, a film, a place). Student B gently challenges it. Student A corrects themselves quickly and gracefully.

Language to use: 'It really is...', 'We haven't actually tried...', 'Fair. Sorry. I got carried away.'

Role Play 2 — A Gentle Reminder (Pairs)

Student A makes a careless, unkind comment about a stranger's choices. Student B gently reminds them they don't know the full story, referencing something they both know about (a shared friend's situation, an earlier event). Student A apologises briefly and sincerely.

Focus on: correcting without escalating; a short, genuine apology that lets the moment pass.

Role Play 3 — Negotiating a Group Compromise (Groups of 3)

Recreate the beach-day negotiation: one student is reluctant about an activity the others want to do; the group uses a past compromise ('we did X for you, now you do Y for us') to reach an agreement.

Focus on: fair, good-humoured negotiation; accepting a compromise without losing face.

Role Play 4 — Explaining an Observed Custom (Pairs)

Student A has noticed an unfamiliar habit or custom while travelling and describes the specific details to Student B, before offering a tentative, hedged explanation. Student B asks follow-up questions.

Debrief question: How did hedging your explanation ('I reckon', 'maybe') change how confident or pushy your explanation sounded?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Damiano's Message to Leonardo

Write the short message (40–60 words) Damiano might send to Leonardo, asking if he has time to meet for coffee while the friends are passing through the San'in coast.

Writing 2 — The Onsen at Night

Write a short descriptive paragraph (80–120 words) capturing the feeling of the onsen scene — the heat, the cool air, the sound of the sea — focusing on physical sensation rather than simply saying the friends felt relaxed.

Writing 3 — A Letter of Compromise

Write a short, persuasive paragraph (60–90 words) in which one friend convinces another to agree to something they're reluctant about, using a 'we did this for you, now it's your turn' structure, in the style of Julien's argument about the beach.

Writing 4 — The Sun and Us

Write a short reflective paragraph (80–120 words) comparing your own country's general relationship with sun exposure and tanning to what the friends observe at Higashihama beach.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 12: Sand and Coffee

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 12. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 12 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 13.

A note on dialogue — and one exception in this chapter

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is normally rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking. This chapter contains a deliberate exception: Leonardo's phone call with his wife is left in Japanese, untranslated, because the point of the moment is that the three friends — and the reader, alongside them — don't understand it. The warmth of the exchange still comes through in his tone and posture, without a word of it being decoded. This is a nice, discussable craft choice in its own right, addressed directly in Language Focus B below; students do not need to be able to read the Japanese to answer any of the questions in this document.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

A day at the Tottori Sand Dunes brings a small disappointment (fully booked sandboarding), a very ordinary tour-bus lunch, and then a genuine surprise: an enormous, unexpectedly moving exhibition at the Sand Museum, where towering scenes are carved entirely from sand. That afternoon, the friends finally meet Leonardo — Damiano's long-distance Facebook contact — in person, and the meeting is immediately warm and easy. Leonardo shares a little of his own story (a working holiday visa that, unlike theirs, never really ended) before taking a brief phone call from his wife, conducted entirely in Japanese and left untranslated on the page. In Yonago that evening, Damiano — quietly homesick, after scrolling reviews on the train — finds an unassuming Italian restaurant, Villa Bardini, expecting a tourist-trap version of his own cuisine and instead finding the real thing, cooked by someone they never see. The chapter ends with an Instagram post promising Patrick two stories he's desperate to hear.

Trivia for the teacher: like Leonardo in Chapter 9, 'Villa Bardini' is a light crossover with another Ponte Aperto title — nothing in this chapter depends on knowing that, and it isn't necessary for students.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 12. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Expecting Little, Finding More

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Have you ever gone somewhere expecting very little, only to be genuinely amazed?
- Have you ever met someone in person for the first time, after only knowing them online or by message? What was it like?
- Have you ever travelled somewhere and unexpectedly found a taste of home — food, a language, a familiar object? How did it feel?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — What Can Sand Become?

Before reading, discuss with a partner: sandcastles are usually small and simple. What's the most impressive thing you can imagine being made out of sand alone, with no other materials?

Activity 3 — A Conversation You Can't Understand

Think about (or discuss with a partner): have you ever been present while someone had a conversation in a language you don't speak? Could you tell anything about how they were feeling, even without understanding the words? How?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 12, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to announce oneself — verb phrase (figurative)

To become obviously, dramatically visible or apparent, almost as if declaring one's own presence.

"The dunes announced themselves before anything else did..."

armature — noun

A framework or supporting structure, especially one used in sculpture to hold materials in shape.

"...no armature, no visible support, figures and buildings and whole crowds of people rendered in such fine... detail..."

to carve — verb

To cut or shape something — wood, stone, sand, and so on — using a blade or precise, controlled movements.

"...sand sculptures... carved from nothing but compacted sand and water..."

concession — noun

A right or business granted to operate within a particular area, especially a stall or service at a tourist site.

"...a sandboarding concession set up near the base, boards racked and waiting..."

to defy — verb

To resist or go against what would normally be expected or thought possible.

"...it seemed to defy what sand should reasonably be able to do."

to grin — verb

To smile broadly, showing teeth, especially with pleasure or excitement.

"...a small queue of people already strapped in and grinning..."

mediocre — adjective

Of only average or not very good quality; not particularly impressive.

"'I'd rather have mediocre carbonara than none at all.'"

the pass — noun (restaurant term)

The counter in a professional kitchen where completed dishes are placed before being served — often used loosely to mean 'the kitchen'.

"...without ever seeing who'd actually been behind the pass."

to plod — verb

To walk slowly, heavily, and steadily, especially with effort.

"...watching one plod past with a delighted toddler on its back."

to rear — verb

(Of an animal, especially a horse) to rise up on its hind legs.

"...horses rearing mid-charge, riders frozen in the act of falling."

roped — adjective (past participle)

Tied with rope, especially to mark a boundary or keep something or someone contained.

"A cluster of camels stood roped near a lower slope, saddled for photographs..."

shrug — noun

A small gesture made by briefly raising the shoulders, usually to show indifference or a lack of strong opinion.

"...nobody had much to say about it beyond a general shrug."

to soar — verb

To rise or extend very high — here describing an impressively tall structure.

"Inside, under a soaring open roof, sand sculptures rose two and three storeys high..."

to strap in — verb phrase

To fasten someone securely with straps, especially before an activity involving speed or risk.

"...a small queue of people already strapped in and grinning..."

trade — noun (business sense)

A particular type of customer or business — for example, 'the tourist trade'.

"...a restaurant... clearly built for the tour bus trade..."

unforced — adjective

Natural and relaxed; not forced, artificial, or effortful.

"...the conversation ran easy and unforced from there..."

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The horse suddenly _____ up on its back legs, startling everyone nearby.
2. The artist managed to _____ an entire face out of a single block of ice.
3. The restaurant was clearly aimed at the tourist _____, with menus in five languages.
4. The result was so impressive it seemed to _____ belief.
5. She gave a small _____ and said she didn't really mind either way.
6. The tower seemed to _____ above everything else in the old town.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

- The friends manage to book sandboarding on the same day they arrive at the dunes. T / F / NM
- The friends end up riding a camel at the sand dunes. T / F / NM
- Lunch near the sand dunes turns out to be one of the best meals of the whole trip. T / F / NM
- The Sand Museum turns out to be far more impressive than the friends expected. T / F / NM
- Leonardo, when they finally meet him, turns out to be cold and formal. T / F / NM
- Leonardo says he managed to resist the country's pull on his plans for three weeks before it happened to him too. T / F / NM
- During Leonardo's phone call, the friends can understand what he's saying because he translates as he goes. T / F / NM
- Leonardo reveals that the phone call was with his wife. T / F / NM
- Villa Bardini serves a fairly typical, unremarkable 'tourist' version of Italian food. T / F / NM
- The friends see and speak with whoever is cooking at Villa Bardini. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Damiano · Leonardo · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Recognises an Italian name among the sand sculptors' list, without expecting to.	
B. Compares the trip's already-derailed plans to his own early experience of Japan.	
C. Finds Villa Bardini through his own phone research, without saying much to the others first.	
D. Admits he expected only simple sandcastles, not sculptures on this scale.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why does the sandboarding disappointment feel lighter, less frustrating, than earlier disappointments in the trip, such as the closed Sumo Museum in Chapter 3?
- How does the ordinary, 'fine' lunch make the Sand Museum feel even more impressive by contrast?
- What does Leonardo mean by 'the plan lasts about four days, and then the country just takes over'? How does this connect to what's already happened to the three friends?
- Why might the author choose to leave Leonardo's phone call untranslated, rather than rendering it in English like the rest of the book's dialogue?
- What does Damiano's comment about the food at Villa Bardini — 'Not "good for Japan." Good.' — suggest about his own relationship to being away from Italy?



LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Undersold Expectations, Then a Reveal

The author deliberately lowers expectations before a big reveal, making the actual experience feel more powerful. Look at this pattern:

“...none of them had gone in expecting much beyond a mildly interesting way to fill twenty minutes out of the sun.” “It took considerably longer than twenty minutes.”

- Why might undercutting expectations first make the actual experience land harder for the reader?
- Find one more example in the chapter where low expectations are set up before something turns out to be impressive.
- Write two sentences describing a place or experience using this same structure: first, low expectations; then, a short sentence that overturns them.

B — When Dialogue Isn't Translated

Unlike the rest of the book, Leonardo's phone call is left in Japanese. Look at how the narration still conveys meaning:

“Another pause, longer this time, and something in his posture softened slightly, unmistakably.” “...the shape of it — reassurance, some small domestic logistics, an easy familiarity worn smooth by repetition — needed no translation at all.”

- What specific clues (not words) does the narration use to tell us how Leonardo is feeling during the call?
- Why might this moment be more powerful left untranslated than if the author had simply written it in English like everything else?
- Write two or three sentences describing someone having a conversation you can't understand, using only tone, posture, and pacing to suggest what's being said — no actual words.

C — ‘The Idea of a Thing’ Versus the Real Thing

Damiano expects a stereotyped, tourist-friendly version of Italian food and instead finds something authentic. Look at this distinction:

“...nothing aimed squarely at an idea of Italy rather than the thing itself...”

- What's the difference between ‘an idea of Italy’ and ‘the thing itself’? Can you think of a food, custom, or place you've encountered that felt like ‘an idea of X’ rather than the real X?
- Write two or three sentences describing a genuine, authentic version of something from your own culture that outsiders sometimes get wrong.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 12. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

The Tottori Sand Dunes

The Tottori Sand Dunes are the largest sand dune system in Japan, stretching along the coast and rising in places to over 40 metres. Activities on offer include sandboarding and camel rides, both aimed primarily at visitors, alongside the simple experience of climbing the dunes themselves for the view over the Sea of Japan.

For discussion: Is there a striking natural landscape near a town or city in your own country that feels surprising precisely because of how close it is to ordinary, everyday surroundings?

The Tottori Sand Museum

The Tottori Sand Museum is dedicated entirely to sand sculpture as an art form, featuring large-scale works built without any internal supporting frame, made only from compacted local sand and water. Sculptors are invited from around the world each year, and the exhibition's theme changes annually, meaning the museum's centrepiece sculptures are temporary and rebuilt from scratch each season.

For discussion: Does knowing that the sculptures are temporary — that they won't exist in a year's time — change how impressive or meaningful they feel to you?

Working Holiday Visas, Revisited

This chapter offers a real-life example of the working holiday visa scheme first explained in Chapter 1's cultural notes of “My time in Tottori: Leonardo describes coming to Japan on a one-year working holiday visa that, in his words, ‘kind of stretches things out more than a holiday’.

For discussion: Do you know anyone whose short-term trip or work placement abroad turned into a much longer, permanent stay? What do you think makes the difference between a trip that ends and one that doesn't?

Named Limited Express Trains

The Super Matsukaze, which the friends catch on to Yonago, is another of Japan's named limited express services, similar in spirit to the Hinotori and Shimakaze encountered in Chapter 5. Regional railway companies often give their flagship trains distinct names, liveries, and onboard features, turning ordinary journeys into something of a minor event for rail enthusiasts — and, by this point in the story, for Daniel in particular.

For discussion: Is there a well-known named train, bus, or ferry route in your own country that has its own reputation or fan following?

Finding ‘The Real Thing’ Abroad

Restaurants serving a home cuisine abroad vary enormously in authenticity — from versions deliberately simplified or adapted for a general audience's expectations, to others run by people cooking food genuinely close to what they grew up with. Villa Bardini, run by someone the friends never actually see, represents this second, rarer kind: food that isn't trying to represent a country to outsiders, just cooked properly, for its own sake.

For discussion: Have you ever eaten your own country's food abroad and found it either disappointingly simplified, or surprisingly authentic? What made the difference?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — The Value of Low Expectations

- Is it better to go into an experience with low expectations and risk being pleasantly surprised, or to research carefully and know roughly what to expect? Which do you prefer, and why?

Discussion 2 — Present, But Not Understanding

- What do you think it felt like for the three friends to sit through Leonardo's phone call, sensing warmth and familiarity without understanding a single word?
- Is there value in witnessing a moment like this, even without understanding the language? What can you still learn about a person?

Discussion 3 — Meeting Someone You Only Knew Online

- Leonardo turns out to be warmer and more easy-going in person than a Facebook contact might suggest. Has meeting someone in person ever changed your impression of them, for better or worse?
- If you were writing what Damiano and Leonardo talk about the next time they're in touch, what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 12. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Low Expectations, Big Reveal (Groups of 3-4)

Recreate the Sand Museum moment: a group enters somewhere expecting very little and is genuinely amazed. Describe what you're seeing, reacting in real time as your expectations are overturned.

Language to use: 'I was expecting...', 'Not... this.', 'This might be the best thing we've seen all...'

Role Play 2 — Meeting an Online Friend for the First Time (Pairs or Groups of 3)

Recreate a first meeting between people who've only known each other online. Practise the mix of familiarity and slight awkwardness before it settles into an easy conversation.

Focus on: natural small talk, referencing shared online history, warmth building gradually.

Role Play 3 — Watching a Conversation You Can't Understand (Groups of 3)

Two students have a short conversation in a language the rest of the class doesn't speak (or an invented 'language' of gestures and tone). The others watch and afterward try to guess the emotional content — friendly, tense, urgent, affectionate — based only on tone and body language.

Debrief question: How much could you guess correctly? What specific clues did you rely on?

Role Play 4 — Finding 'The Real Thing' (Pairs)

Student A is sceptical about trying a restaurant claiming to serve their own national cuisine, expecting a simplified tourist version. Student B convinces them to try it anyway. Recreate the moment of pleasant surprise.

Focus on: describing food specifically rather than just saying 'it was nice'; genuine, growing enthusiasm.



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Inside the Sand Museum

Choose one sand sculpture described or implied in the chapter (or invent your own). Write a short descriptive paragraph (80–120 words) capturing what makes it so unexpectedly impressive.

Writing 2 — Leonardo's Life Now

Write a short paragraph (80–120 words), from Leonardo's own point of view, imagining what led him to stay in Japan rather than returning home after his working holiday year. Base your ideas only on what he says in this chapter — this is your own reasonable invention, not confirmed by the book.

Writing 3 — The Phone Call, Imagined

Write your own imagined English version (60–90 words) of what Leonardo and his wife might actually have said to each other on the phone, based only on the tone and shape of the exchange described in the chapter.

Writing 4 — Explaining 'The Real Thing' to Patrick

Patrick has demanded the full story of both the Facebook friend and the surprising Italian restaurant. Write the group's reply (60–80 words), explaining both in their usual warm, teasing tone.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document · Chapter 13: Kitaro Detour

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) · All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

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Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 13 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 14.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

A tourist leaflet spotted by chance sends the friends on an unplanned morning detour to Sakaiminato's Kitaro Road, a street of bronze statues honouring manga artist Mizuki Shigeru's yokai characters. To Daniel's surprise, Damiano recognises many of the figures from a dubbed cartoon he watched as a child in Italy, a half-forgotten memory that resurfaces gradually as they walk the street. Time pressure rules out the museum, and in that small disappointment Julien lets slip ‘I guess next time’ — an unplanned admission that they might return to Japan one day, which lands quietly with all three of them without being fully addressed. Daniel's train enthusiasm escalates further on the specially decorated train back, now fixating on one specific carriage rather than trains in general. In Matsue that afternoon, the friends visit one of Japan's few original, never-rebuilt castle keeps — a deliberate contrast with the reconstructed Osaka Castle from Chapter 9 — and stumble, entirely by accident, on Kounkaku, a Western-style building built for an imperial visit that never happened as planned.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 13. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Unexpected Childhood Connections

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- Has something from your own childhood — a cartoon, a song, a game — ever surprised you by turning up again somewhere unexpected, years later?
- Do you remember something fully, or only in hazy fragments — a shape, a feeling, a sound — without the full details?
- Have you ever visited an old building where you could tell, just by looking, that it was genuinely old rather than a modern reconstruction? What gave it away?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Folklore Creatures

With a partner, discuss: what folklore creatures, monsters, or spirits (real or invented) do you know from your own country or culture? Name two or three before reading.

Activity 3 — Wandering Without a Plan

Before reading, think about: have you ever discovered something completely by accident while travelling, with no research or plan involved? What was it?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 13, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

to be at odds with (something) — idiom

To be very different from, or in obvious contrast with, something nearby.

“...entirely at odds with the dark wood and stone around it...”

beam — noun

A long, sturdy piece of wood or metal used as a structural support, especially overhead.

“‘This one feels like the real thing,’ Daniel said, ducking under a low beam on the way up.”

to duck — verb

To lower your head or body quickly, especially to avoid hitting something above you.

“...ducking under a low beam on the way up.”

horned — adjective

Having horns, or horn-like projections.

“...grinning, horned, one-eyed, every conceivable shape a folk monster could take.”

keep — noun (castle term)

The strongest, most central tower or structure of a castle, historically used as a final stronghold.

“‘Original keep. One of only a handful left in the whole country that never burned down or got knocked down and redone.’”

nostalgia — noun

A sentimental longing or affectionate memory for the past, especially a period from one's own life.

“...something between nostalgia and mild alarm crossing his face.”

plaque — noun

A flat, inscribed panel — often fixed to a wall — serving as a memorial, marker, or piece of information.

“...already reading the plaque beside the entrance.”

relapse — noun / verb (informal, humorous here)

A return to a previous unwanted behaviour or state — usually serious, but used jokingly here about a harmless hobby.

“‘You were already hooked on model trains,’ Julien said. ‘This is just a relapse.’”

scared stiff — idiom

Extremely frightened, almost to the point of being unable to move.

“‘Scared me stiff, half the episodes, but I watched every single one anyway.’”

sinister — adjective

Giving an impression that something evil, harmful, or unsettling is intended.

“...some grinning, some faintly sinister, souvenir shops between them...”

to sink (into a seat) — verb (figurative)

To lower yourself down into a seat or position, often to express a mood such as embarrassment or mock despair.

“‘Oh no,’ Daniel said, sinking slightly in his seat, mock-devastated.”

something between X and Y — structure

A way of describing an emotion or reaction as a mixture of two different, sometimes contrasting, feelings.

“...something between nostalgia and mild alarm crossing his face.”

standard — noun (historical term)

A flag or emblem, especially one historically carried into battle to represent a group, army, or leader.

“...rooms still hung with old armour and faded battle standards...”

to supply (information) — verb

To provide or contribute something needed — here, a detail or piece of knowledge.

“...Damiano occasionally supplying a half-remembered scrap of context...”

weathered — adjective

Showing the effects of long exposure to weather — worn, faded, or changed over time.

“...black wood weathered by centuries rather than polished for photographs.”

yokai — noun (Japanese loanword)

A broad category of supernatural beings, spirits, or monsters in Japanese folklore.

“...the whole town's given over to some manga artist — Mizuki Shigeru, GeGeGe no Kitaro, all his yokai characters.”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The old bridge, _____ by decades of storms, still stood firm.
2. I only _____ half-remembered the story, so I let her fill in the rest.
3. He had to _____ to avoid hitting his head on the low doorway.
4. The bright modern extension looked completely _____ the historic building beside it.
5. That music always fills me with _____ for my school days.
6. ‘Don't worry,’ she said, ‘it's not a real problem — just a small _____ into old habits.’

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

1. The friends already know about Sakaiminato and Kitaro Road before they find the leaflet. T / F / NM
2. Damiano recognises many of the yokai statues from a cartoon he watched as a child in Italy. T / F / NM
3. The friends visit the Mizuki Shigeru Museum in detail. T / F / NM
4. Julien says, seemingly without quite meaning to, that they might come back to Sakaiminato another time. T / F / NM
5. Daniel decides he wants a generic model train, rather than one specific carriage. T / F / NM
6. Matsue Castle is a modern reconstruction with a lift inside, similar to Osaka Castle. T / F / NM
7. From the top of Matsue Castle, the friends can see Lake Shinji. T / F / NM
8. Kounkaku was originally built to host a formal visit from an emperor who never actually came as planned. T / F / NM
9. The friends had researched and planned their visit to Kounkaku in advance. T / F / NM
10. According to the Instagram comments, an online group of train enthusiasts jokingly invites Daniel to join them. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel

Description	Character
A. Recognises a childhood cultural connection that surprises both his friends.	
B. Says something about a possible return trip almost before deciding to say it.	
C. Playfully exaggerates his own growing hobby as an 'addiction.'	
D. Makes a joke comparing an old building's history to the group's own way of doing things.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why does Damiano's recognition of the yokai statues surprise Daniel and Julien so much?
2. What does Julien's throwaway comment 'I guess next time' reveal, and how do the others react to it?
3. How does the specially decorated Sakai Line train build on Daniel's already-established interest in trains from earlier chapters?
4. Why does Daniel say Matsue Castle 'feels like the real thing'? How does this connect to what the friends saw at Osaka Castle in Chapter 9?
5. Why might the author choose to end this chapter with a stop at Kounkaku, right after the old castle keep?



LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Describing a Half-Remembered Memory

Damiano's memory of the yokai characters returns gradually and incompletely. Look at how the author shows this:

"I know that one. Can't remember his name, but I know the shape of him." "Turns out I only remembered about a third of what I thought I did."

- What's the difference between knowing something fully and knowing 'the shape' of it? Can you think of your own example of a hazy, partial memory like this?
- With a partner, describe something you remember only partially from childhood — a song, a face, a place — using similarly hedged, incomplete language.

B — Words Said Before Deciding to Say Them

The author shows Julien revealing something almost by accident, through his own words rather than an action or silence this time:

"I guess next time," Julien said, and the words were out before he seemed to have quite decided to say them."

- This connects to earlier moments in the book where silence or a small action revealed something a character wasn't fully saying (Chapter 6, Chapter 9, Chapter 10). What's different about this example, where it's actual words that slip out?
- Write one or two sentences in which a character says something true almost by accident, surprising even themselves.

C — Mock-Serious Exaggeration

Daniel and his friends use exaggerated, semi-serious language for comic effect around a harmless hobby. Look at this exchange:

"Oh no," Daniel said, sinking slightly in his seat, mock-devastated. 'I'm ruined. I'm properly ruined. I'm hooked on Japanese model trains and there's no going back from it now.'"

- What words here ('ruined', 'hooked', 'relapse') are normally used for much more serious situations? What effect does borrowing this serious language for something trivial create?
- Write a short, mock-serious passage (2–3 sentences) about your own harmless hobby or interest, using exaggerated, overly dramatic language for comic effect.

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 13. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Mizuki Shigeru and GeGeGe no Kitaro

Mizuki Shigeru (1922–2015) was a Japanese manga artist born in Sakaiminato, best known for GeGeGe no Kitaro, a long-running manga and anime series following Kitaro, a young yokai boy, and a cast of folklore creatures. Sakaiminato has embraced this connection wholeheartedly, with Mizuki Shigeru Road lined with bronze statues of his characters and a dedicated museum in the artist's honour.

For discussion: Is there a town or city in your own country strongly associated with a particular artist, writer, or fictional character, the way Sakaiminato is associated with Mizuki Shigeru?

Yokai in Japanese Folklore

Yokai are a broad category of supernatural beings in Japanese folklore — spirits, monsters, and strange phenomena with roots going back centuries, long before Mizuki Shigeru's manga. His work is widely credited with popularising and preserving many yokai traditions for a modern audience, blending traditional folklore with his own artistic invention.

For discussion: What folklore creatures from your own culture would you compare to yokai — similarly varied, sometimes frightening, sometimes comic?

Anime's International Reach

From the 1970s through the 1990s, a great deal of Japanese anime was dubbed and broadcast on children's television across many countries, including Italy, often without much of the original cultural context explained — which is why Damiano can recognise character designs vividly while having forgotten almost everything else about the show. This period significantly shaped how several generations internationally were first introduced to Japanese pop culture, frequently without realising, at the time, where it had come from.

For discussion: Did you watch anime as a child, whether or not you knew it was Japanese at the time? What do you remember about it now?

Themed Local Train Lines

The Sakai Line's Kitaro-decorated carriages are one example of a common practice among Japan's regional railway lines: wrapping trains in character branding or local themes to promote tourism and support smaller, financially struggling lines. This connects to the named trains encountered in Chapter 5 and Chapter 12, though themed local lines like this one are usually aimed at family day-trippers and enthusiasts than long-distance travellers.

For discussion: Is there a public transport route in your own country decorated or themed around a local character, artist, or story?

Matsue Castle and Kounkaku

Matsue Castle is one of only twelve castles in Japan with an original keep still standing — meaning it was never destroyed by fire, war, or demolition and subsequently rebuilt, unlike the great majority of Japan's castles, including Osaka Castle from Chapter 9. Nearby, within the castle grounds, Kounkaku is a Western-style building constructed in 1903 to host a planned visit from Emperor Meiji, who ultimately never made the trip; his son visited as Crown Prince some years later instead.

For discussion: Compare Matsue Castle to Osaka Castle in Chapter 9. Does knowing a building is original, rather than rebuilt, change how you feel about visiting it?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Rediscovering Childhood Media

- What do you think it felt like for Damiano to suddenly reconnect with something he hadn't thought about in years?
- Why might a half-remembered childhood connection feel more emotional than something you remember clearly and completely?

Discussion 2 — Original Versus Rebuilt

- Compare Matsue Castle in this chapter to Osaka Castle in Chapter 9. Which would you rather visit, and why?
- Is a rebuilt version of something historic less valuable than an original that has survived by chance? Why or why not?

Discussion 3 — A Slip of the Tongue

- Julien's 'I guess next time' seems to surprise even him. What do you think this reveals about how he's feeling about the trip so far?
- If you were writing what happens with this idea of 'coming back', what do you imagine? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 13. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — An Unexpected Childhood Connection (Groups of 3)

Recreate the Kitaro Road moment: one student recognises something from childhood that surprises the others, who didn't know this about their friend. The group reacts with curiosity and gentle teasing.

Language to use: 'I know that one.', 'Since when?', 'I haven't thought about this in years.'

Role Play 2 — A Slip of the Tongue (Pairs or Groups of 3)

Student A says something true almost by accident — a hope, a plan, a feeling — that surprises even themselves. The others notice and react, without pushing too hard for an explanation.

Focus on: a natural pause after the accidental reveal; a gentle, curious reaction rather than a demand for clarification.

Role Play 3 — Mock-Serious About a Hobby (Pairs)

Student A jokes, in exaggerated, overly dramatic language, about being 'addicted' to a harmless hobby or interest. Student B plays along, teasing them gently.

Focus on: exaggerated, borrowed 'serious' language used for comic effect; a light, affectionate tone throughout.

Role Play 4 — Stumbling Onto Something Unplanned (Groups of 3–4)

Recreate the Kounkaku moment: a group with no particular plan notices something unexpected nearby and decides, with no real discussion needed, to go and see it.

Debrief question: How does deciding something with almost no discussion feel different from a more deliberate group decision?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — My Own Kitaro Road

Write a short reflective paragraph (80–120 words) about a piece of media — a cartoon, a song, a game — from your own childhood that you'd half-forgotten until something reminded you of it.

Writing 2 — What Julien Really Meant

Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) imagining what's going through Julien's mind after he says 'I guess next time' — what does he think he means by it, and does it surprise him as much as it surprises his friends? This is your own invention, not confirmed by the book.

Writing 3 — Original Versus Rebuilt

Write a short comparison (100–150 words) of Matsue Castle and Osaka Castle, focusing on how each one made the friends feel, rather than simply listing facts about each.

Writing 4 — The Kounkaku Cafe

Write a short descriptive scene (80–120 words) set in the small cafe inside Kounkaku, capturing the contrast between the building's pale, Western-style rooms and everything else the friends have seen in the castle grounds.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document · Chapter 14: Small and Quiet

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) · All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 14. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 14 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 15.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is 'really' being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

A note on this chapter's serious content

The second half of this chapter covers a visit to Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and the Atomic Bomb Dome, commemorating the atomic bombing of 6 August 1945. The novel treats this with visible restraint — no jokes, minimal description, short dialogue — and this document follows that lead: the Cultural Notes section gives only the essential, factual context needed to understand the chapter, framed around remembrance and peace rather than graphic detail, in keeping with how the memorial itself is presented. The Comprehension and Discussion questions stay at this same respectful distance. Teachers know their own students and context best, particularly given the international spread of this series' readership, and should feel free to adjust the depth of this section — or skip it entirely — to suit their class.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

An unhurried morning is interrupted when Julien discovers there's no direct train to Hiroshima — and, briefly, his old planning instincts resurface, before the guesthouse staff simply point them to a direct highway bus instead. On the way, they stop at Izumo Taisha, one of Japan's most significant shrines, where Damiano gets what may be the last stamp in his goshuincho. The bus ride itself, climbing through the Chugoku mountains, gives the friends their first real mountain views of the whole trip, having spent every previous long journey in train tunnels. In Hiroshima, Julien recognises their hotel as the one from the group's original, long-abandoned itinerary, and dinner is Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki, sparking a good-natured, ultimately unresolved rivalry with the Osaka version from Chapter 9. The following morning, the friends visit the Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Dome. The chapter, and the book's treatment of the visit, is deliberately brief, quiet, and free of the humour that runs through the rest of the novel.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 14. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — A Slower Morning

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- After a busy stretch of travel, what does a genuinely relaxed, unhurried morning look like to you?
- Have you ever taken a bus or coach through mountains, rather than a train? How was the experience different from travelling by train?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — What Do You Know About Hiroshima?

This chapter includes a visit to a significant historical site in Hiroshima. Before reading, discuss with a partner: what do you already know about Hiroshima's history? Share what you know — this is simply background knowledge, not a preview of the story itself.

Activity 3 — Regional Food Rivalries

Before reading, think about: is there a dish in your own country that has two (or more) regional versions, with people arguing over which is better? Describe the rivalry to a partner if you can.

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 14, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

deflated — adjective (figurative)

Feeling suddenly less confident, excited, or important, often when something turns out to be simpler than expected.

“‘A bus,’ Julien repeated, faintly deflated at how simple the solution had turned out to be.”

diplomatic — adjective (figurative)

Careful and tactful in what you say, especially to avoid causing offence or appearing to take sides.

“‘That’s a very diplomatic non-answer.’”

gable — noun

The triangular upper part of a wall at the end of a pitched roof.

“...thick thatched roofs and massive crossed beams rising at the gable ends...”

good fortune — noun phrase

Luck, especially good luck.

“‘If they stick, it’s meant to be good fortune.’”

to huddle — verb

To crowd together closely, often for warmth, protection, or shared focus on something.

“...who noticed the three of them huddled and tense over a phone...”

lie-in — noun (informal, British)

An occasion of staying in bed later than usual in the morning.

“They allowed themselves a proper lie-in for once...”

pylon — noun

A tall steel tower used to carry overhead electrical power lines.

“...no clearing, no pylon, no sign of anything built by anyone.”

register (of tone) — noun

The particular tone, style, or level of formality and seriousness used or felt in a specific situation.

“...the day changed register the moment they stepped into the park.”

to relay — verb

To pass a message or piece of information on from one person to another.

“...went back to relay this to the owner in a few quick words...”

ridge — noun

A long, narrow raised strip of land, especially along the top of a hill or mountain range.

“Every so often the road broke out along a ridge and the whole valley opened up beneath them...”

shimenawa — noun (Japanese loanword)

A thick, twisted rope made of rice straw, used in Shinto tradition to mark sacred spaces or objects.

“...a shimenawa rope so enormous — thick as a tree trunk, coiled and tapering over several metres...”

silvered — adjective

Having a shining, silver-like appearance, especially from light reflecting off a surface.

“...terraced rice fields catching the afternoon light in uneven, silvered patches...”

subdued — adjective

Quiet and without much energy or expression, often because of sadness or seriousness.

“They walked out sometime past midday, quiet, subdued, none of them quite ready yet to talk...”

to swallow — verb (figurative)

To completely absorb, hide, or block something — such as a view — within something larger.

“...tunnel after tunnel... swallowing whatever view there might have been...”

to taper — verb

To gradually become narrower or thinner toward one end.

“...coiled and tapering over several metres...”

terraced — adjective

Arranged in a series of flat, raised levels, especially cut into a hillside for farming.

“...terraced rice fields catching the afternoon light in uneven, silvered patches...”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. We stopped at a _____ and looked down over the whole valley.
2. The candle slowly _____ toward the top, ending almost in a point.
3. After the sad news, the whole room felt _____ for the rest of the evening.
4. She gave a very _____ answer, careful not to upset anyone on either side.
5. The thick fog completely _____ the view of the mountains.
6. He felt strangely _____ once he realised the problem had such a simple solution.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

- The friends find a direct train from their guesthouse to Hiroshima. T / F / NM
- The guesthouse staff suggest taking a highway bus instead of the train. T / F / NM
- Izumo Taisha's shimenawa rope is described as small and easy to overlook. T / F / NM
- The bus journey to Hiroshima gives the friends one of the best views of the whole trip, according to Julien. T / F / NM
- The Hiroshima hotel turns out to be one they had originally booked before their plans changed. T / F / NM
- The friends quickly and easily agree on which style of okonomiyaki is better. T / F / NM
- The Atomic Bomb Dome has been rebuilt to look exactly as it did before the war. T / F / NM
- The friends make their usual jokes throughout the visit to the memorial park. T / F / NM
- A commenter mentions that they regret skipping Hiroshima on their own trip. T / F / NM
- Damiano's goshuincho is completely full by the time they reach Izumo Taisha. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien • Damiano • Daniel

Description	Character
A. Initially reacts to a travel problem with the old, familiar instinct to solve it through careful planning.	
B. Quietly notices the significance of reaching what might be the trip's last goshuin.	
C. Makes a sharp, concise observation about the difference between trains and buses through mountains.	
D. Recognises the Hiroshima hotel as the one from the group's original, abandoned itinerary.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

- Why does Julien's reaction to the train problem feel notable, given how the group has been travelling since Chapter 9?
- Why might the author describe Damiano's goshuin at Izumo Taisha as 'probably the last one' rather than making a bigger moment of it?
- What does Julien mean when he says the bus gave them 'the best view of the whole trip', and how does this connect to the way the group has been travelling until now?
- How does the author show that 'the day changed register' once the friends enter the Peace Memorial Park, without describing anything graphic?
- Why do you think the chapter ends with such short, quiet dialogue rather than a longer reflection?



LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — Old Habits Returning

The author signals Julien briefly slipping back into an earlier way of being, before he's caught himself:

"...the old, familiar edge of a planning problem creeping back into his voice for the first time in days."

- Why might the phrase 'for the first time in days' matter here, if you think back to how Julien behaved in the first few chapters of the book?
- Write one or two sentences describing a character briefly slipping back into an old habit they'd mostly grown out of.

B — A Compact, Insightful Comparison

Damiano sums up a real difference between two types of journey in very few words:

"'Trains go through,' Damiano said. 'Buses go over. Turns out that's a fairly significant difference.'"

- What makes this comparison effective, despite being so short?
- Write your own compact comparison (one or two sentences) between two ways of experiencing the same thing — for example, flying versus driving, or reading a book versus watching its film adaptation.

C — Restraint in Writing About Something Serious

Rather than describing the Peace Memorial Park in detail, the author uses very plain, minimal language and lets the silence do the work:

"Nobody made a single joke all morning. Nobody reached for one."

- This book usually uses humour and detailed description throughout. What effect does removing both, just for this section, have on the reader?
- Look at the short exchange at the very end of the chapter ('Move on?' / 'Move on, we don't have much time now.'). Why might very short, plain dialogue sometimes communicate more than a longer, more detailed passage would?

 CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 14. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Izumo Taisha

Izumo Taisha is one of Japan's oldest and most significant Shinto shrines, dedicated to Okuninushi, a deity traditionally associated with relationships and good fortune, which makes it a particularly popular shrine for those hoping for good luck in marriage or partnership. Its main hall features one of the largest shimenawa (sacred straw ropes) in the country, and visitors traditionally clap four times when praying here, rather than the usual two, reflecting the shrine's distinct customs.

For discussion: Is there a particularly old or significant religious site in your own country associated with a specific kind of luck or blessing?

Highway Buses in Japan

While the Shinkansen dominates most visitors' image of Japanese long-distance travel, highway buses are a widely used, often cheaper alternative for routes not well served by direct trains, particularly across mountainous regions. They're heavily used by domestic travellers and typically far less crowded with tourists than the major train lines.

For discussion: When choosing how to travel somewhere, how do you personally weigh speed against cost, comfort, or the view along the way?

Hiroshima-Style Okonomiyaki

Following on from Chapter 9's introduction of the Osaka/Hiroshima okonomiyaki rivalry, this chapter shows the Hiroshima version in detail: ingredients are layered rather than mixed into the batter, typically including a distinct layer of noodles, giving each bite a different texture and structure compared to the more uniformly mixed Osaka style.

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Atomic Bomb Dome

On 6 August 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, killing tens of thousands of people immediately and many more in the months and years that followed. The Atomic Bomb Dome — originally the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, one of the few structures left standing near the blast's centre — has been deliberately preserved in its damaged state as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Both the Dome and the surrounding Peace Memorial Park are presented, by the city and by the site itself, not as a war memorial but explicitly as a peace memorial: a place dedicated to remembrance and to the hope that nuclear weapons will never be used again.

For discussion: The site describes itself as being about peace rather than blame. Why might that distinction matter for a memorial like this one?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Old Habits Under Pressure

- Why do you think a small travel problem is enough to briefly bring back Julien's old planning instincts, even after everything that's changed since Chapter 9?
- Do you think old habits ever fully disappear, or do they mostly stay ready to reappear under the right pressure?

Discussion 2 — Seeing the Journey, Not Just the Destination

- The friends realise they've missed most of the mountain scenery all trip by travelling through tunnels. Is it possible to have a wonderful trip and still miss things simply because of how you travelled?

Discussion 3 — Visiting a Place of Historical Memory

This discussion touches on a serious historical topic. Please read the earlier 'note on this chapter's serious content' and adjust these questions, or skip them, as appropriate for your class.

- Why do you think the friends stop joking entirely during this visit, when humour has been such a constant part of how they cope with everything else on the trip?
- Have you ever visited a memorial, museum, or historical site connected to a difficult period of history — in your own country or elsewhere? What was that experience like?
- Why might a memorial choose to present itself around a message of peace, rather than focusing only on what happened?



ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 14. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — Solving a Travel Problem Together (Groups of 3–4)

Recreate the breakfast-table scene: a group faces an unexpected travel problem, and a member of staff calmly offers a much simpler solution than they'd been imagining.

Language to use: 'That can't be right.', 'Is everything alright?', 'Much easier.', 'I really thought I was going to have to...'

Role Play 2 — Throwing Coins for Luck (Pairs or Small Groups)

Recreate a light, good-humoured scene of friends trying (and mostly failing) at a luck-based tradition together, in the style of the coin-throwing at Izumo Taisha.

Focus on: friendly teasing, good-natured disappointment, appreciating a tradition even when it doesn't 'work'.

Role Play 3 — A Diplomatic Food Debate (Groups of 3)

Recreate the okonomiyaki debate: each student argues gently for a different regional version of the same dish (real or invented), without anyone needing to fully win the argument.

Focus on: giving specific reasons for a preference; disagreeing warmly, without needing to reach a final verdict.

Role Play 4 — Sitting With a Quiet Moment (Pairs)

Student A and Student B have just experienced something serious or moving together (choose an appropriate scenario of your own — a museum, a piece of difficult news, a quiet moment at a memorial). Practise the kind of short, minimal, supportive dialogue friends might use afterward, without needing to fully discuss or resolve the feeling straight away.

Debrief question: Why might saying very little sometimes be more supportive than trying to talk a feeling through immediately?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Old Habits

Write a short reflective paragraph (60–90 words) about a habit of your own that you thought you'd grown out of, but that still occasionally resurfaces under pressure.

Writing 2 — The View From the Bus

Write a short descriptive paragraph (80–120 words) capturing the mountain scenery the friends see from the bus, focusing on specific visual detail rather than simply saying it was 'beautiful.'

Writing 3 — Osaka or Hiroshima?

Write a short persuasive paragraph (60–90 words) arguing for one style of okonomiyaki over the other, using specific, sensory detail to support your opinion.

Writing 4 — A Quiet Paragraph

In the same restrained, quiet style as the end of this chapter, write a short paragraph (60–90 words) describing how you imagine the three friends feel on the bus or train leaving Hiroshima. Focus on small, specific details rather than directly naming their emotions.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document · Chapter 15: Fukuoka

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) · All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 15. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 15 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- End of that lesson: Pre-Reading and Glossary for Chapter 16, if continuing the series.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is ‘really’ being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

This chapter closes out the Japan leg of the trip and carries the friends all the way home. A direct, uneventful Shinkansen to Fukuoka leaves them mildly unsettled by how smoothly it goes, and with more free time than expected. Daniel's suggestion of a Nagasaki day trip is set aside with a calm, settled ‘next time’ — a striking contrast to the unplanned slip of the same phrase back in Chapter 13. An unhurried day follows: Canal City's musical fountains, gentle browsing, and a properly idle hour by the river, before the famous local tonkotsu ramen at a yatai stall that evening, which Damiano assesses thoughtfully rather than rating as the trip's highlight — concluding that no single thing was, on its own, what made the trip worth it. The journey home closes the loop structurally: the same Taipei restaurant counter from Chapter 1, and Damiano repeating, almost word for word, his line about doing Taiwan properly one day. The chapter, and with it the Japan trip itself, ends simply, on landing back in Britain: ‘We're home.’

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 15. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — When Nothing Goes Wrong

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- After a trip full of small mishaps and surprises, how do you think it would feel if, suddenly, everything went exactly to plan?
- Have you ever finished a long trip and felt that no single moment was the best part — that it was really the whole experience together that mattered?
- What's the strangest feeling you've had on returning home after a long time away?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Famous Local Food

With a partner, discuss: is there a food so strongly associated with one city or region in your own country that people travel specifically to try it? What is it?

Activity 3 — Coming Full Circle

Before reading, think about: have you ever returned to the exact same place — a cafe, a station, a corner of a city — at the very end of a trip that you'd also visited right at the beginning? What did that feel like?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 15, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

bleary — adjective

Tired, especially with eyes that feel unfocused or unclear from lack of sleep.

“...stiff and bleary and thoroughly exhausted.”

idle — adjective

Not active or occupied; doing nothing in particular.

“...possibly the first properly idle hour of the entire trip.”

to jinx (something) — verb (informal)

To bring bad luck to something by talking about it too confidently or too soon.

“‘Don’t jinx it,’ Julien said. ‘We’ve still got a flight to catch.’”

looming — adjective

Approaching in a way that feels close, significant, or slightly ominous.

“‘We really don’t have the time. Not with the flight looming.’”

novelty — noun

The quality of being new, unusual, or interesting because of that newness.

“...all three of them had more or less relaxed into the novelty of a journey going precisely to plan.”

orchestral — adjective

Performed by, or relating to, an orchestra — a large group of musicians playing different instruments together.

“...jets of water climbing and falling in time with something orchestral...”

radical — adjective (here used ironically)

Extreme or very different from the usual — used humorously here for something actually quite mild.

“‘Radical,’ said Daniel.”

ritual — noun

A regularly repeated action or set of actions, often carried out in a fixed, almost ceremonial way.

“...a small ritual he’d kept up since Tokyo without ever quite deciding to.”

to settle (over something) — verb (figurative)

(Of a feeling, mood, or realisation) to gradually spread over and take hold of a place, person, or moment.

“The realisation settled over the morning slowly, pleasantly, like a held breath finally let out.”

slack — noun (here meaning spare time)

Extra time, space, or freedom beyond what is strictly needed; leeway.

“...they found they had rather more slack than any of them had realised...”

stiff — adjective (physical)

Unable to move or bend easily, especially from tiredness or a long period without movement.

“...stiff and bleary and thoroughly exhausted.”

tier — noun

One of a series of levels or layers, arranged one above another.

“...glass and steel rising in bright, looping tiers on either side...”

tonkotsu — noun (Japanese loanword)

A style of ramen made with a rich, opaque broth simmered for a long time from pork bones.

“...they... ordered the city's famous tonkotsu ramen...”

unfinished — adjective

Not complete — used here figuratively about a feeling rather than a physical task.

“It feels... unfinished.”

unwound — verb (past tense of ‘to unwind’, figurative)

(Of an event or process) happened or developed gradually and smoothly, without tension.

“...the journey home... unwound itself with none of the drama the outbound leg had managed...”

yatai — noun (Japanese loanword)

A small, open-sided mobile food stall or cart, especially associated with Fukuoka's street food culture.

“The yatai stalls set up as the light went down...”

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. Don't say it'll be easy — you'll _____ it!
2. After the overnight flight, we were all _____ and could barely keep our eyes open.
3. We had a bit of _____ in the schedule, so we didn't need to rush.
4. Buying a coffee at the same cafe every morning has become a bit of a _____ for me.
5. A quiet sadness seemed to _____ the room once the news was shared.
6. The tower had five _____, each one narrower than the one below it.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

1. The Shinkansen to Fukuoka experiences a mix-up similar to Chapter 5's train confusion. T / F / NM
2. The friends discover they have less free time before their flight than they expected. T / F / NM
3. Daniel suggests a day trip to Nagasaki, and the group decides to go. T / F / NM
4. Canal City features a musical fountain display that the friends watch from start to finish. T / F / NM
5. Julien has been buying postcards as a small ongoing habit since Tokyo. T / F / NM
6. The friends spend the whole afternoon buying gifts and souvenirs. T / F / NM
7. Damiano says the tonkotsu ramen is disappointing and not worth trying. T / F / NM
8. On the way home, the friends eat again at the same restaurant counter in Taipei T / F / NM
9. Damiano repeats, almost word for word, something he said about Taiwan at the very start of the trip. T / F / NM
10. The friends land back in the UK to bright, sunny weather. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien • Damiano • Daniel

Description	Character
A. Points out how strange it feels that nothing has gone wrong on this train journey.	
B. Suggests a spontaneous day trip that ends up postponed rather than cancelled outright.	
C. Reflects that no single experience was really 'the one thing' that made the whole trip worth it.	
D. Admits that having nothing left to plan or sort out feels oddly unfinished.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why does Daniel say the smooth train journey to Fukuoka 'feels wrong, somehow'? What does this reveal about how used to chaos the group has become?
2. How does the group's response to Daniel's Nagasaki suggestion differ in tone from the similar moment about Sakaiminato back in Chapter 13?
3. What does Damiano mean when he says of the ramen, 'Nothing was, really. Not on its own'? How does this reflect a bigger idea about the whole trip?
4. Why might the author choose to have Damiano repeat his comment about Taiwan from Chapter 1?
5. Why do you think the chapter ends so simply, with just 'We're home,' rather than a longer, more reflective final passage?



LANGUAGE FOCUS

A — The Strangeness of Things Going Right

After a trip full of mishaps, a smooth journey feels almost unsettling. Look at this reaction:

“Feels wrong, somehow,” Daniel said, as the train slowed. ‘Nothing went sideways. I don’t know what to do with myself.’”

- Why might a character feel unsettled by something going smoothly, after weeks of small disasters?
- Write one or two sentences describing the odd feeling of something going unexpectedly, almost suspiciously, well.

B — From Slip to Certainty

Compare this moment to a very similar one in Chapter 13:

Chapter 13: “‘I guess next time,’ Julien said, and the words were out before he seemed to have quite decided to say them.” Chapter 15: “‘Next time,’ Damiano said. It wasn’t a question anymore, and nobody treated it like one.”

- What’s changed between these two moments? Track the shift from an accidental slip to something calmly accepted.
- Why might the author choose to echo the exact same phrase (‘next time’) rather than using different words each time?

C — Circular Structure: Coming Full Circle

The chapter deliberately returns to details from very early in the book. Look at these two examples:

“...a final meal at the same counter they’d eaten at three weeks earlier...” “‘We should do Taiwan properly, one of these years,’ Damiano said again, exactly as he had the first time...”

- Find the original versions of both these moments back in Chapter 1. What’s different about how each line lands the second time?
- Why might an author deliberately repeat earlier details near the end of a story, rather than introducing entirely new ones?

CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 15. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

Canal City Hakata

Canal City Hakata is a large shopping, dining, and entertainment complex in central Fukuoka, built around an artificial canal running through the building. Its choreographed fountain shows, timed to music, run at regular intervals throughout the day and are a well-known free attraction in their own right, separate from the shopping itself.

For discussion: Is there a shopping centre or public space in your own city known for a free show or attraction, rather than just for shopping?

Yatai Food Stalls

Yatai are small, open-air food stalls that set up each evening, particularly concentrated around Fukuoka's Nakasu and Tenjin districts, and are considered one of the city's defining cultural features. Seating is typically limited to a handful of stools at a narrow counter, encouraging close, informal interaction between strangers, regulars, and staff alike — a very different atmosphere from a conventional restaurant.

For discussion: Is there an equivalent style of casual, communal street dining in your own country, where sitting close to strangers is part of the appeal?

Tonkotsu Ramen

Fukuoka (historically the Hakata district in particular) is widely credited as the birthplace of tonkotsu ramen, made with a rich, cloudy broth simmered for many hours from pork bones, traditionally served with thin, straight noodles. Many shops offer kae-dama, an optional refill of noodles added to your remaining broth once the first serving is finished, allowing customers to keep the same bowl of soup going.

Taipei Taoyuan as a Return Waypoint

The friends pass back through Taipei Taoyuan — first introduced in Chapter 1 as their outbound layover — on the way home, eating at the same food counter where the trip essentially began. Long-haul journeys between Europe and East Asia very often connect through the same major Asian transit hubs in both directions, meaning a layover airport can end up bookending a trip almost by coincidence, purely due to flight scheduling.

For discussion: If you've ever passed through the same airport, station, or stopover point at both the start and end of a trip, what did revisiting it feel like?



DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — When Nothing Goes Wrong

- Why might a group that's grown used to constant small disasters find it strange, even slightly disappointing, when a journey goes perfectly?
- Do you think you'd miss the chaos of a trip like this, once it was over?

Discussion 2 — Nothing Being 'The One Thing'

- Damiano suggests that no single experience made the whole trip worth it — that it was the accumulation of everything together. Do you agree that trips (or other big experiences) usually work this way, rather than being defined by one peak moment?
- Thinking back over the earlier chapters, is there a moment you personally would have expected the friends to call 'the best part of the trip'? Why do you think Damiano avoids naming one?

Discussion 3 — Coming Full Circle

- What's the effect of ending a story by returning to its very first setting and repeating one of its very first lines?
- If you were writing what happens when the friends finally see Patrick again, what do you imagine that reunion looks like? (There's no right answer — this is your own prediction.)



ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 15. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — When Everything Goes Right (Pairs or Groups of 3)

Recreate the group's slightly bewildered reaction to a journey or plan going perfectly, after a run of small mishaps. Play with the idea that going smoothly feels almost suspicious.

Language to use: 'Feels wrong, somehow.', 'Don't jinx it.', 'I don't know what to do with myself.'

Role Play 2 — Postponing, Not Cancelling (Pairs)

Student A suggests a spontaneous extra plan; Student B points out there isn't really time. Rather than dropping the idea, the two of them settle calmly on 'next time', treating a future return as a given rather than a question.

Focus on: calm acceptance rather than disappointment; treating a future plan as already decided.

Role Play 3 — A Thoughtful Verdict on Famous Food (Groups of 3)

Recreate the ramen-verdict scene: one student gives a nuanced, honest opinion about something famous and well-regarded, praising it genuinely while explaining why it isn't, for them, the single best part of the experience.

Focus on: giving a fair, detailed opinion rather than a simple 'good' or 'bad'; avoiding exaggeration in either direction.

Role Play 4 — Telling the Whole Story (Pairs or Small Groups)

Imagine the friends finally sitting down with Patrick to tell him everything, properly, in person. Recreate the start of that conversation — where do they even begin, after everything that's happened?

Debrief question: When you've had a long, eventful experience, how do you usually decide where to start telling someone about it?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — The Idle Hour by the River

Write a short descriptive paragraph (80–120 words) capturing the friends' idle hour by the river at Canal City, focusing on small sensory details rather than simply saying it was relaxing.

Writing 2 — Damiano's Ramen Philosophy

Damiano says that nothing on the trip was, on its own, the one thing that made it worth it. Write a short reflective paragraph (80–120 words) applying this idea to a trip, project, or experience of your own — was it one great moment, or the accumulation of many smaller ones?

Writing 3 — Full Circle

Write a short paragraph (60–90 words) noticing and describing at least two moments in this chapter that deliberately echo something from Chapter 1. What effect does this repetition have on you as a reader?

Writing 4 — The Reunion With Patrick

Write the opening of the scene (100–150 words) where the friends finally sit down with Patrick to tell him the whole story in person. You do not need to know what actually happens — this is entirely your own idea, based only on what you know of the characters so far.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Teacher Resource Document • Chapter 16: Best Holiday Ever

Level: B1+ (classroom-supported) / B2 (independent reading) • All material in English



TEACHER NOTES

How this document is organised

This document contains all the support material for Chapter 16, the final chapter of A Summer Holiday. It is designed to be self-contained — you choose what to use, when, and in what order. A suggested flow is outlined below, but treat it as a starting point, not a prescription.

Suggested lesson flow:

- End of previous lesson: Pre-Reading Activities + Glossary preview → students read Chapter 16 before the next lesson.
- Next lesson: Comprehension, Language Focus, Discussion, Role Play, and Writing Activities.
- As this is the final chapter, Discussion 4 and Writing 5 are designed as optional whole-book wrap-up activities, if you'd like a closing lesson for the novel as a whole.

A note on dialogue

As with every book in this series, all dialogue in the novel is rendered in English, regardless of the language the characters are actually speaking at that point in the story. Students do not need to track which language is 'really' being spoken unless the text itself draws attention to it.

Chapter Summary (for teacher reference)

An exhausted coach ride and several days of jet lag separate the friends from finally seeing Patrick again. When they do, at his local pub, he's visibly more mobile than before, though still on crutches. Once he finally asks how the trip went, Julien's answer — 'Best holiday ever' — meets open disbelief, given everything that went wrong. Rather than argue, the three of them simply retell the whole trip, start to finish, interrupting each other to fill in details, until Patrick is convinced. Damiano articulates something close to the book's central idea: that after three weeks like this, he's no longer sure there's a real difference between the trip succeeding 'after' all the disasters and 'because of' them. Patrick declares he's coming next time, and Damiano proposes a specific evolution in how they'll travel in future — reaching out to contacts in advance rather than relying purely on luck, while keeping everything else loose. The book ends on an ordinary, warm note: a toast, and Daniel asking who's getting the next round.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Use these activities before students read Chapter 16. They activate relevant knowledge and vocabulary without revealing anything about the story.

Activity 1 — Coming Home

Think about (or discuss with a partner):

- What's the first day back home after a long trip usually like for you — tired, strange, relieved, or something else?
- Have you ever told someone the story of a trip and had them not quite believe how good it was, given everything that went wrong along the way?
- Do you think a difficult experience can become a good memory specifically because it was difficult? Or are the two always separate?

Note to teacher: This works well as a brief think-pair-share. No feedback required at this stage — just get students talking.

Activity 2 — Telling the Whole Story

With a partner: if you had three weeks of travel stories to tell someone in one sitting, how would you decide where to start and what to leave out?

Activity 3 — Planning Versus Winging It

Before reading, think back over the book so far: has this group of friends generally preferred careful planning or improvising as they go? Can you remember a specific chapter where this changed?

GLOSSARY

These words and expressions appear in Chapter 16, in alphabetical order. Review them before reading so you can focus on the story.

ceremony — noun

A formal act or set of actions performed on a special occasion; here, a sense of formal fuss.

“They said their goodbyes... with none of the ceremony the moment probably deserved.”

to come off it — idiom (informal)

An expression used to tell someone you don't believe what they've just said, or that they're exaggerating.

“Come off it. You ended up in Ise by accident.”

to compress — verb

To press or squeeze something into a smaller space, time, or form than it would normally take.

“...three weeks compressed into a tired hug apiece...”

cutlery — noun (British English)

Knives, forks, and spoons used for eating.

“Right,” he said, setting his cutlery down properly...”

disoriented — adjective

Confused about where you are, or unsure of the time, direction, or your surroundings.

“Julien surfaced sometime past four the following afternoon, thoroughly disoriented about which meal he was supposed to be having...”

fitful — adjective

Happening in irregular short spells rather than continuously — especially used of sleep.

“...none of them managed more than fitful, uncomfortable pockets of sleep the whole way...”

gingerly — adverb

In a careful, cautious way, especially to avoid pain, damage, or injury.

“...a careful hug that Patrick accepted a little more gingerly than he probably wanted to admit to.”

to grind (out / away) — verb (figurative)

To progress slowly and with effort, especially describing something unpleasant gradually wearing off.

“...jet lag grinding slowly out of all three of them...”

to have (someone) on — idiom (British, informal)

To tease or deceive someone playfully, not seriously.

“You're all having me on.”

to loll — verb

(Of a head or body part) to hang or rest in a lazy, heavy, uncontrolled way, especially from tiredness.

“...heads lolling against seatbacks and each other in turn...”

round (of drinks) — noun (British English, pub culture)

A set of drinks bought for everyone in a group, with the understanding that others will buy the next one in turn.

“Who's getting the next round?”

to steer (a conversation) — verb (figurative)

To guide a conversation or situation in a particular direction.

"...it was Patrick... who finally steered it where everyone had known it was going to go eventually."

to test (words) out — verb phrase (figurative)

To say something aloud in order to see how it sounds or feels, often to check whether you believe it yourself.

"'Best holiday ever,' Patrick repeated, testing the words out loud himself now, turning them over."

to weld — verb (figurative)

To join or fuse things together very strongly, as if by melting metal together — used here about friendship.

"...three weeks of near-constant company had welded something a bit more solid than it had been before."

wing it — idiom (informal)

To do something without preparation or a plan, improvising as you go.

"'Still get to wing it, just wing it with better contacts.'"

wistful — adjective

Having or showing a feeling of vague, gentle longing, often tinged with nostalgia.

"...something closer to genuine, slightly wistful surprise."

Quick Check

Use a word or phrase from the glossary to complete each sentence. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. He picked up his crutches _____, still favouring his injured leg.
2. After the long flight, I felt completely _____ and had no idea what time it was.
3. '_____', she laughed, 'there's no way that story is true!'
4. It's my turn to get the next _____ — same again for everyone?
5. We spent the whole evening trying to _____ the conversation back to the real topic.
6. I don't have a plan for the presentation, I'm just going to _____.

✓ COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 — True, False, or Not Mentioned?

Mark each statement T (True), F (False), or NM (Not Mentioned). For false statements, write the correction.

1. The coach journey from Heathrow to Birmingham goes smoothly and arrives on time. T / F / NM
2. The friends say a long, emotional goodbye at the coach station. T / F / NM
3. All three friends recover fully from jet lag within a few hours of arriving home. T / F / NM
4. When they finally meet Patrick, his cast has already come off completely. T / F / NM
5. Patrick immediately believes the friends when they say it was 'the best holiday ever.' T / F / NM
6. The friends retell the whole trip to Patrick, interrupting each other to add details. T / F / NM
7. Damiano suggests he can no longer separate the trip's disasters from its success. T / F / NM
8. Patrick decides he wants to join the group on their next trip. T / F / NM
9. Damiano proposes being completely spontaneous next time, with no advance contact with anyone. T / F / NM
10. The chapter ends with a serious, tearful toast and no further conversation. T / F / NM

Activity 2 — Character Matching

Match each description to the character. Use each name once where possible — one character may match more than one description: Julien · Damiano · Daniel · Patrick

Description	Character
A. Is the first to actually say 'best holiday ever' out loud.	
B. Suggests that after everything that went wrong, he's no longer sure the disasters and the trip's success can be separated.	
C. Breaks a quiet, sentimental moment with a very ordinary question.	
D. Finally asks the question everyone had known was coming, giving it real weight.	

Activity 3 — Short Answer Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. Why does the author describe the friends' goodbye at the coach station as having 'none of the ceremony the moment probably deserved'?
2. Why is Patrick's disbelief at 'best holiday ever' an important moment in the chapter? What does it lead the friends to do?
3. What does Damiano mean when he says he's 'not sure there's a difference anymore' between the trip working out after the disasters and because of them?
4. How does Damiano's proposal for future trips build on — rather than reject — the group's loose, unplanned way of travelling since Chapter 9?
5. Why might the author end the whole book with such an ordinary line as 'Who's getting the next round?' rather than something more dramatic?

 LANGUAGE FOCUS
A — Describing Exhaustion Without Overstatement

The author continues a technique used throughout the book — showing tiredness through specific detail rather than simply saying ‘they were tired’:

“...fitful, uncomfortable pockets of sleep the whole way — the kind that leaves you more tired than not sleeping at all, heads lolling against seatbacks...”

- Compare this to a similar moment in Chapter 3 (the yakitori counter) or Chapter 11 (arriving in Tottori). What's different about how exhaustion is shown here?
- Write one or two original sentences showing exhaustion through physical detail, without using the words ‘tired’ or ‘exhausted.’

B — A Question That Finally Gets Asked

The author signals the seriousness of a simple question through a small physical action beforehand:

“‘Right,’ he said, setting his cutlery down properly, giving the question the weight it apparently deserved. ‘So. How did it go?’”

- This book uses small physical actions to carry emotional weight throughout — Julien closing (not deleting) the itinerary in Chapter 9, the keyring in Chapter 10, words slipping out before a character decides to say them in Chapter 13. Can you find at least one more example from earlier chapters of this same technique?
- Write one or two sentences in which a character signals that a question or moment matters through a small physical action, rather than by stating it directly.

C — One Small Word Changes Everything

Look closely at the difference between these two phrases:

“‘After all that.’ ‘Maybe because of all that. I’m honestly not sure there’s a difference anymore.’”

- What exactly changes in meaning between ‘after’ and ‘because of’ here? Why might this tiny shift matter so much to Damiano?
- Write your own pair of sentences that change meaning significantly by swapping just one small word or preposition, in the style of this example.

CULTURAL NOTES

These notes provide context for cultural references in Chapter 16. They are not targeted at any particular student background — wherever you are from, some of this will be familiar and some will be new.

British Pub Culture and the Sunday Roast

A Sunday roast — typically roasted meat, potatoes, vegetables, gravy, and Yorkshire pudding (a savoury batter side dish) — is a long-standing British tradition, widely served in pubs on Sundays and often treated as a relaxed, unhurried social occasion rather than just a meal. Meeting friends at a favourite local pub, as the friends do here, remains a common, informal way of catching up in the UK.

For discussion: Is there an equivalent weekly meal tradition in your own country, associated with a particular day and a relaxed, social atmosphere?

‘Getting a Round In’

In British and Irish pub culture, it's customary for one person in a group to buy a ‘round’ — a drink for everyone present — with the understanding that others will take turns buying the next round in turn. Daniel's closing question, ‘Who's getting the next round?’, invokes this small, familiar social ritual as a deliberately ordinary, grounding way to end the book.

Long-Distance Coach Travel in the UK

National coach networks connect UK airports to cities across the country, offering a cheaper, if slower and less glamorous, alternative to trains or domestic flights. This mirrors, in a much less scenic way, the bus-versus-train contrast the friends discovered in Chapter 14 travelling through Japan's Chugoku mountains — though here, the coach offers grey motorway rather than mountain views.

For discussion: How does long-distance coach travel in your own country compare to trains or domestic flights, in terms of cost, comfort, and how people feel about choosing it?

Jet Lag

Jet lag results from the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm) being out of sync with the new time zone after long-distance travel, causing disrupted sleep, tiredness, and disorientation. Recovery time varies, but travelling across many time zones — as the friends have, between Japan and the UK — often takes several days to fully adjust to, exactly as depicted here.

DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are suitable for pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussion. Choose the ones most appropriate for your class.

Discussion 1 — Believing the Unbelievable

- Why does Patrick need to hear the whole story, in detail, before he can accept 'best holiday ever'? Would a short summary have convinced him?
- Have you ever had to tell someone a long, detailed story before they'd believe your conclusion about it?

Discussion 2 — Disasters and Good Memories

- Damiano suggests the trip's problems and its success might not really be separate things. Do you agree that some of your own best memories involve things that, at the time, felt like problems?

Discussion 3 — Combining Planning and Spontaneity

- Damiano's proposal — reaching out to contacts in advance while keeping everything else loose — sits between the careful planning of the trip's early chapters and the pure improvisation of the middle chapters. Do you think this is a genuine compromise, or does it lean more one way?

Discussion 4 — Looking Back at the Whole Trip (Whole-Book Wrap-Up)

Optional: this discussion works well as a closing activity once students have finished the whole novel.

- Looking back across all sixteen chapters, which single event would you say changed the direction of the trip the most, and why?
- How does Julien change as a character between Chapter 1 and Chapter 16? Support your answer with specific moments.
- If you were choosing one chapter to recommend to a friend as a taste of the whole book, which would you choose, and why?

ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES

These scenarios are based on situations and characters from Chapter 16. Students should aim to stay in character and use natural, conversational English.

Role Play 1 — The Long Journey Home (Pairs or Groups of 3)

Recreate the exhausted, half-awake small talk of a long journey home after a big trip — short, tired exchanges, nobody with much energy for a real conversation.

Language to use: 'I've forgotten what... looks like.', short pauses, minimal responses.

Role Play 2 — Convincing a Skeptic (Groups of 4)

Recreate the pub scene: three students try to convince a fourth, skeptical friend that a chaotic experience was genuinely the best one they've had, without simply repeating the claim louder.

Focus on: patient, detailed persuasion rather than insistence; the skeptic slowly coming around.

Role Play 3 — Retelling an Entire Trip (Whole Class or Large Groups)

As a group, retell the whole novel's events from memory, in order, taking turns adding one detail each and correcting each other where needed — in the style of the friends telling Patrick the story.

Focus on: fluency over accuracy; helping each other remember and fill in gaps, the way the three friends do for Patrick.

Role Play 4 — Planning the Next Trip (Groups of 4)

Recreate the closing negotiation: a group deciding how to balance planning and spontaneity for a future trip together, building on lessons learned from a previous, more chaotic experience.

Debrief question: Was it easy to agree on the right balance between planning and improvising? What did your group decide, and why?



WRITING ACTIVITIES

Writing 1 — Patrick's Verdict

Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) from Patrick's point of view, describing what finally convinces him that it really was 'the best holiday ever,' despite everything that went wrong.

Writing 2 — Best [Something] Ever

Write a short personal paragraph (80–120 words) about a trip, project, or experience of your own that was full of problems but that you'd still, honestly, call one of the best things you've done. Use specific detail, not just the word 'best.'

Writing 3 — The Next Trip

Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) imagining what the group's next trip — this time with Patrick, and with Damiano's 'plan the unplanned bits' approach — might actually look like. This is your own invention, not confirmed by the book.

Writing 4 — A Toast

Write a short toast (40–60 words) that one of the four friends might give at this table, summing up what the trip — and their friendship — has meant, in a tone that fits the book's usual mix of warmth and understatement.

Writing 5 — The Whole Story in Miniature (Whole-Book Wrap-Up)

Optional: a good closing task once students have finished the whole novel.

In no more than 100 words, write the story of the entire trip the way Julien, Damiano, or Daniel might summarise it to a stranger at a party — hitting only the essential beats, in the group's own understated, slightly self-deprecating tone.