

Villa Bardini

Teacher Resources

Copyright © 2026 Andrea Passante

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 9798188736057

CONTENTS

Chapter 1		Chapter 7	
Pre-reading	1	Pre-reading	43
Glossary	2	Glossary	44
Comprehension	3	Comprehension	45
Language focus	4	Language focus	46
Discussion	5	Discussion	47
Role Play	6	Role Play	47
Writing Task	6	Writing Task	48
Cultural Notes	7	Cultural Notes	49
Chapter 2		Chapter 8	
Pre-reading	8	Pre-reading	50
Glossary	9	Glossary	51
Comprehension	10	Comprehension	52
Language focus	11	Language focus	53
Discussion	12	Discussion	54
Role Play	13	Role Play	54
Writing Task	13	Writing Task	55
Cultural Notes	14	Cultural Notes	56
Chapter 3		Chapter 9	
Pre-reading	15	Pre-reading	57
Glossary	16	Glossary	58
Comprehension	17	Comprehension	59
Language focus	18	Language focus	60
Discussion	19	Discussion	61
Role Play	20	Role Play	61
Writing Task	20	Writing Task	62
Cultural Notes	21	Cultural Notes	63
Chapter 4		Chapter 10	
Pre-reading	22	Pre-reading	64
Glossary	23	Glossary	65
Comprehension	24	Comprehension	66
Language focus	25	Language focus	67
Discussion	26	Discussion	68
Role Play	26	Role Play	68
Writing Task	27	Writing Task	69
Cultural Notes	28	Cultural Notes	70
Chapter 5		Chapter 11	
Pre-reading	29	Pre-reading	71
Glossary	30	Glossary	72
Comprehension	31	Comprehension	73
Language focus	32	Language focus	74
Discussion	33	Discussion	75
Role Play	33	Role Play	75
Writing Task	34	Writing Task	76
Cultural Notes	35	Cultural Notes	77
Chapter 6		Chapter 12	
Pre-reading	36	Pre-reading	78
Glossary	37	Glossary	79
Comprehension	38	Comprehension	80
Language focus	39	Language focus	81
Discussion	40	Discussion	82
Role Play	40	Role Play	82
Writing Task	41	Writing Task	83
Cultural Notes	42	Cultural Notes	84

Chapter 13		Chapter 19	
Pre-reading	85	Pre-reading	127
Glossary	86	Glossary	128
Comprehension	87	Comprehension	129
Language focus	88	Language focus	130
Discussion	89	Discussion	131
Role Play	89	Role Play	131
Writing Task	90	Writing Task	132
Cultural Notes	91	Cultural Notes	133
Chapter 14		Chapter 20	
Pre-reading	92	Pre-reading	134
Glossary	93	Glossary	135
Comprehension	94	Comprehension	136
Language focus	95	Language focus	137
Discussion	96	Discussion	138
Role Play	96	Role Play	138
Writing Task	97	Writing Task	139
Cultural Notes	98	Cultural Notes	140
Chapter 15		Chapter 21	
Pre-reading	99	Pre-reading	141
Glossary	100	Glossary	142
Comprehension	101	Comprehension	143
Language focus	102	Language focus	144
Discussion	103	Discussion	145
Role Play	103	Role Play	145
Writing Task	104	Writing Task	146
Cultural Notes	105	Cultural Notes	147
Chapter 16		Chapter 22	
Pre-reading	106	Pre-reading	148
Glossary	107	Glossary	149
Comprehension	108	Comprehension	150
Language focus	109	Language focus	151
Discussion	110	Discussion	152
Role Play	110	Role Play	152
Writing Task	111	Writing Task	153
Cultural Notes	112	Cultural Notes	154
Chapter 17		Chapter 23	
Pre-reading	113	Pre-reading	155
Glossary	114	Glossary	156
Comprehension	115	Comprehension	157
Language focus	116	Language focus	158
Discussion	117	Discussion	159
Role Play	117	Role Play	159
Writing Task	118	Writing Task	160
Cultural Notes	119	Cultural Notes	161
Chapter 18			
Pre-reading	120		
Glossary	121		
Comprehension	122		
Language focus	123		
Discussion	124		
Role Play	124		
Writing Task	125		
Cultural Notes	126		

Chapter 1: Perfectly Italian

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They are designed to activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. In Japan, many restaurants serve "Italian" or "Western" food that has been changed to suit Japanese tastes (for example, spaghetti with cod roe, or rice gratin dishes). Have you ever eaten food in another country that was a local version of a "foreign" dish? What was it like?
2. Imagine working at the same job for four years. What might make someone want to leave a job they are good at, even if it is comfortable and familiar?
3. The chapter title is "Perfectly Italian". Before you read, discuss: what do you think makes food, or a place, "perfectly" Italian? Is it possible for food to be Italian and not Italian at the same time?
4. Look at these words before you read: gratin, doria, inheritance, sensible, descent. Can you guess any of their meanings from the way they sound or from a similar word in your own language?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Do not worry about getting every answer right — you will check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. inheritance	A. showing good, practical judgement
2. sensible	B. money or property received from someone who has died
3. reliable	C. the movement of an aircraft down towards the ground
4. descent	D. able to be trusted to be the same every time
5. affordable	E. not expensive

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 1. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

affordable (adj.) — *not expensive; a price that most people can pay*

connection (n., travel) — *a flight or train that you must catch to continue your journey*

considered (v., past of "consider") — *thought carefully about something before responding*

corridor (n.) — *a long, narrow passage inside a building, such as an airport*

descent (n.) — *the movement of an aircraft down towards the ground*

doria (n.) — *a Japanese baked rice dish with white sauce and cheese, inspired by Western cooking*

glamorous (adj.) — *exciting and attractive in a special or luxurious way*

gratin (n.) — *a dish with a browned, often cheesy, top layer*

grill (n., kitchen) — *the part of a kitchen where food is cooked over direct heat*

honest (adj., used of things/places) — *true to what it really is, without pretending to be something else*

inheritance (n.) — *money or property received from someone after they die*

pavement (n., British English) — *the path for walking beside a road; "sidewalk" in American English*

register (n., shop/restaurant) — *the machine or desk where customers pay*

reliable (adj.) — *able to be trusted to be the same every time*

sensible (adj.) — *showing good, practical judgement*

terminal (n., airport) — *the building where passengers arrive and depart*

visa (n.) — *official permission, usually a stamp or document, to enter and stay in another country*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. Where does Ichirō work at the start of the chapter, and what is his job like?
2. According to the chapter, what is "doria", and where does it actually come from?
3. Why does Ichirō want to travel to Italy? What does he say he is looking for?
4. How did Ichirō save the money for his trip? Mention both sources.
5. Why does he choose Florence rather than Rome or a small town?
6. What does Kenji ask Ichirō during his last shift? Summarise their short conversation.
7. What gifts does Ichirō receive from his colleagues? What is written on the card from Tanaka-san?
8. What gift does Mika give him, and why does she say it will be useful?
9. Describe Ichirō's journey to Florence. What happens during his stopover?
10. What are the first things Ichirō notices when he arrives at the airport in Florence?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō had worked at Saizeriya for four years. **T / F**
2. Doria is a traditional dish that was invented in Italy. **T / F**
3. Ichirō paid for his trip only with his own wages. **T / F**
4. Ichirō chose Florence because it is Italy's biggest city. **T / F**
5. Kenji works on the register at Saizeriya. **T / F**
6. Tanaka-san wrote a message on Ichirō's farewell card. **T / F**
7. Mika gave Ichirō a pocket dictionary as a leaving gift. **T / F**
8. Ichirō's flight to Florence had a stopover in Frankfurt. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Past Simple for narrating a sequence of events

The chapter is written almost entirely in the past simple tense to tell the story of Ichirō's last day and his journey. Complete each sentence with the past simple form of the verb in brackets.

1. Ichirō _____ (work) at Saizeriya for four years.
2. He _____ (save) his wages and a small inheritance.
3. He _____ (choose) Florence instead of Rome.
4. Mika _____ (give) him a pocket dictionary.
5. He _____ (fall) asleep again after the connecting flight took off.
6. The plane _____ (begin) its descent as the light changed.

B. Comparatives and contrast: "not X, exactly — just Y"

The chapter uses the pattern "Not better, exactly — just real" to make a careful comparison. Complete these sentences using the same pattern, then write two more sentences of your own about food, places, or people.

1. It's not bigger, exactly — just _____.
2. She's not stricter, exactly — just _____.
3. (your own sentence) _____
4. (your own sentence) _____

C. Time expressions

These time expressions appear in the chapter, but not in the correct order. Number them 1–6 in the order they happen in the story, then use three of them in new sentences about your own week.

at some point • after the shift • his last Friday • when he woke • after four years • the flight took most of a day

D. Adjective order

Put the adjectives in the correct order to complete each phrase, as in the chapter (e.g. "a small wrapped gift").

1. a _____ corridor (grey / large)
2. a _____ dictionary (small / pocket)
3. a _____ sandwich (expensive / small)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. Question 5 invites students to predict the story in their own words — any speculation about what happens next should come from the students, not from prepared "hints".

1. Do you think it was a good decision for Ichirō to leave a stable job to pursue something uncertain? Why or why not?
2. Saizeriya's food is described as "not pretending" to be real Italian food, but "its own kind of honest". Do you agree that a dish can be honest even if it is not authentic?
3. Have you, or has someone you know, ever moved to another country or city to learn something? What was that experience like?
4. Ichirō's colleagues give him small, thoughtful gifts rather than something expensive. What do these gifts tell us about his relationships with them?
5. Ichirō describes Florence, before he even lands, as a city that is the "right size" — not too big, not too small. What do you look for in a place before you decide to live or study there?
6. Do you think Ichirō's four years at Saizeriya were "wasted" time, or valuable experience for what he wants to do next? Explain your view.
7. If you had two years to save money and plan a big change in your life, what would you choose to do, and how would you prepare?
8. Based only on what you have read so far, what do you predict will happen to Ichirō in Florence? Share your prediction with a partner and compare.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Farewell Party

Setting: The Saizeriya staff room, after closing, on Ichirō's last night.

Roles: Ichirō (leaving to study cooking in Florence) and one or two colleagues (Kenji, Mika, or Tanaka-san).

Task: Act out the farewell conversation. Colleagues should ask Ichirō questions about his plans, and offer him advice or good wishes. Ichirō should explain, in simple language, why he is going and what he hopes to learn.

Scenario B: One Year Later

Setting: Saizeriya, exactly one year after Ichirō left, during a quiet afternoon.

Roles: Ichirō, visiting briefly while back in Japan, and Kenji (or another former colleague).

Task: Act out the reunion. Kenji should ask what Ichirō has learned so far and whether Italy matched his expectations. Ichirō should describe his first impressions honestly, using only what a real first year abroad might involve — this is an open, imaginative scene, not a summary of a specific plot.

Extension: perform Scenario A for the class, then vote on the most convincing farewell speech.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the night before he leaves for Florence.
2. Write a short postcard (50–80 words) from Ichirō to his former colleagues at Saizeriya, describing his first impressions of arriving in Florence.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you left something familiar (a job, a school, a home) to try something new. What did it feel like?
4. Describe, in your own words, what you think "perfectly Italian" food or a "perfectly Italian" place would be like.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used the past simple tense correctly throughout?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Yōshoku and the family restaurant chain

Yōshoku refers to Western-style dishes that have been adapted in Japan since the late 19th century, often changed significantly to suit local tastes and ingredients — dishes such as doria (a baked rice gratin), omurice, and Japanese-style "spaghetti napolitan" are well-known examples. Large family restaurant chains across Japan serve this kind of food at affordable prices, and for many people they are a normal, everyday part of life rather than an attempt to reproduce authentic European cooking.

Japan: Farewells and small, symbolic gifts in the workplace

In many Japanese workplaces, when a colleague leaves — for a new job, a move, or study abroad — it is common for co-workers to mark the occasion with a small gathering, a signed card or message book, and a modest, thoughtful gift rather than an expensive one. The gift is often chosen for its personal relevance to where the person is going, rather than its monetary value.

Japan: Convenience stores (konbini)

The cake Ichirō's colleagues buy for his farewell comes from "the convenience store next door" — in Japan, convenience stores (konbini) such as those found on almost every city street sell a surprisingly wide range of freshly made food, including cakes, sandwiches, and hot meals, and are often used for small workplace celebrations rather than being seen as a last resort.

Italy: Florence as a working city

Florence (Firenze), the capital of the Tuscany region, is often known internationally for its art and architecture, but it also functions as a mid-sized working city with a strong tradition of skilled trades and hospitality. Compared to much larger Italian cities such as Rome or Milan, Florence is sometimes chosen by newcomers precisely because of its manageable size, while still offering opportunities to train and work in fields such as cooking, crafts, and tourism.

Chapter 2: I Tre Briganti

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Imagine moving to a new city where people speak the same language as you learned at school, but with a very different local accent or dialect. What problems might you have understanding people at first?
2. If you wanted to learn to cook a country's food properly, would you rather learn in a famous, well-known restaurant, or in a small, ordinary family restaurant that local people go to? Why?
3. Think about starting a new job where the person training you doesn't explain everything in words — they mostly show you and expect you to watch closely. How would you feel about that style of learning?
4. Look at these words before you read: landlady, bearings, front of house, precise, accumulated. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. landlady	A. a district or area within a town or city
2. neighbourhood	B. a woman who rents rooms or property to tenants
3. precise	C. damaged or smoothed by long use
4. worn	D. exact and accurate in detail
5. hesitating	E. pausing before doing something because you are unsure

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 2. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

accumulated (v., past of "accumulate") — *gradually collected or built up over time*

bearings (n., "get your bearings") — *a general understanding of where you are or how a place is organised*

broad-shouldered (adj.) — *having wide, strong-looking shoulders*

front of house (n. phrase, restaurant) — *the part of a restaurant's work that deals with customers, as opposed to the kitchen*

guidebook (n.) — *a book written for tourists, describing places to visit*

handwritten (adj.) — *written by hand rather than printed*

hesitating (v., -ing form of "hesitate") — *pausing before doing something because you are unsure*

landlady (n.) — *a woman who rents rooms or property to tenants*

laundry (n.) — *a shop or business where clothes are washed; also the clothes themselves*

neighbourhood (n., British spelling) — *a district or area within a town or city*

paperwork (n.) — *written documents or admin tasks*

precise (adj.) — *exact and accurate in detail*

ragù (n., Italian) — *a slow-cooked Italian meat sauce, typically served with pasta*

soffritto / battuto (n., Italian) — *the finely chopped base of vegetables (such as onion, carrot, celery) used to start many Italian dishes; a battuto is the raw chopped mixture, a soffritto is the same mixture once it has been slowly cooked in fat*

stock (n., cooking) — *a flavoured liquid, made by simmering meat, bones or vegetables, used as a base for soups and sauces*

virtue (n.) — *a good or useful quality*

worn (adj., past participle of "wear") — *damaged or smoothed by long use*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. Where does Ichirō find a room, and what is it like?
2. Why does Ichirō struggle to understand his landlady, Signora Ferretti?
3. What kind of restaurant was Ichirō looking for in Florence, and why?
4. Describe the restaurant I tre briganti and the first time Ichirō visits it.
5. What questions does Felice Brigante ask Ichirō, and what does he tell him to do?
6. Who are Vanni and Sabrina Brigante, and what does each of them do at the restaurant?
7. What does Sabrina tell Ichirō about watching the clock? Why do you think she says this?
8. How does Sabrina respond when Ichirō asks "why" the wine is added before the stock? What does Ichirō learn from this?
9. What happens when Felice tastes Ichirō's sauce on the fifth day?
10. How does Ichirō feel about his situation by the end of the chapter?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Signora Ferretti speaks to Ichirō in standard textbook Italian. **T / F**
2. Ichirō's room is above a laundry. **T / F**
3. I tre briganti is a famous restaurant in the centre of Florence. **T / F**
4. Felice Brigante asks Ichirō about soffritto and ragù before giving him a trial. **T / F**
5. Vanni Brigante runs the kitchen. **T / F**
6. Sabrina tells Ichirō to watch the clock carefully. **T / F**
7. Sabrina explains in detail why the wine is added before the stock. **T / F**
8. Felice tells Ichirō to add more pepper without measuring anything. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Direct speech and reporting verbs

The chapter uses short exchanges of direct speech. Rewrite each line as reported (indirect) speech.

1. "What do you cook?" he said. → He asked _____.
2. "Come back Monday," Felice said. → Felice told him _____.
3. "You're watching the clock," she said. → She said _____.

B. Imperatives for instructions

Sabrina gives instructions using the imperative form: "Don't watch the clock. Watch the pan. And smell it." Write four imperative sentences (two positive, two negative with "Don't") that a chef might give a new kitchen worker.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____ (negative)
4. _____ (negative)

C. Giving reasons with "because" — and refusing to give reasons

When Ichirō asks why, Sabrina answers simply, "Because that's how it's done." Complete the exchanges below: first with a real reason, then with a non-answer like Sabrina's.

1. "Why do we rest the dough before rolling it?" — "Because _____." (a real reason)
2. "Why do we always taste before we serve?" — "_____." (a non-answer, like Sabrina's)

D. Descriptive relative clauses

Join each pair of sentences using "that" or "which", following the chapter's style (e.g. "a face that had been still for a long time").

1. Vanni had a button. The button had come loose. → Vanni had a button
_____.
2. Felice had a face. The face had been still for a long time. → Felice had a face
_____.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. Question 5 invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Sabrina teaches by showing rather than explaining, and discourages Ichirō from asking "why". Do you think this is a good way to teach a practical skill? Why or why not?
2. Felice adds more pepper to the sauce "without measuring, without checking anything". What kind of knowledge do you think this is, and how do you think someone gains it?
3. Have you ever had to adjust to a very different way of doing something you thought you already knew well? What happened?
4. The Brigante family run their restaurant together — father, son, and daughter. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of working with your own family?
5. Ichirō stops asking "why" and starts asking "what" and "when" instead. Do you think this was the right decision on his part? What might he lose by not asking why?
6. Signora Ferretti, Felice, and Sabrina all communicate with Ichirō in quite indirect or minimal ways. Which of these interactions would you find easiest, and which hardest, to deal with as a newcomer?
7. Ichirō says the equipment at I tre briganti is "worn in the way that things become worn when they have been used properly for a long time". What do you think this tells us about the restaurant and the people who work there?
8. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Ichirō's relationship with Sabrina and Felice will develop? Discuss with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Asking for Work

Setting: The quiet dining room of *I tre briganti*, on a slow afternoon.

Roles: A newcomer looking for kitchen work, and the restaurant's owner.

Task: Act out the conversation. The newcomer should explain their experience and why they want to work there, using simple, polite language. The owner should ask two or three testing questions before deciding whether to give them a trial.

Scenario B: Explaining the Rules

Setting: The kitchen of *I tre briganti*, during a quiet moment of prep work.

Roles: An experienced cook (like Sabrina) and a new trainee (like Ichirō).

Task: The trainee asks "why" about three different kitchen habits or rules. The experienced cook answers at least once with a real explanation, and at least once with a short non-answer such as "because that's how it's done". Discuss afterwards, as a class, how each kind of answer felt to give and to receive.

Extension: swap roles and repeat Scenario A, this time with the owner deciding to say no — practise polite ways to decline and to respond to being turned down.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a short paragraph (80–120 words) describing Ichirō's new room above the laundry, using at least five adjectives.
2. Write the conversation between Ichirō and Signora Ferretti as Ichirō might imagine it later, filling in what she was probably trying to tell him.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time someone taught you something by showing you rather than explaining it in words.
4. Write a short description (50–80 words) of a kitchen, workshop, or workplace you know well, focusing on how it looks and feels rather than what happens there.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used direct or reported speech correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: Regional dialects and "Florentine" Italian

Standard Italian, as usually taught in language schools, is based on the Tuscan dialect but is not identical to how Tuscans, including Florentines, actually speak day to day. Florentine speech has its own distinctive pronunciation (for example, softening the hard "c" sound) and local vocabulary. Across Italy, regional dialects and accents remain strong, and a learner with textbook Italian can still find certain regions genuinely difficult to understand at first.

Italy: The family-run trattoria

Many neighbourhood restaurants in Italy, often called trattorie, are small, family-owned businesses passed down through generations, with parents, children, and sometimes grandchildren each taking on a different role — cooking, serving, or managing the business side. These restaurants are typically less concerned with impressing tourists or critics than with feeding regular local customers well, and recipes and techniques are frequently passed on through direct demonstration rather than written down.

Italy: The Oltrarno district of Florence

The Oltrarno ("beyond the Arno") is the area of Florence on the south side of the River Arno, historically home to artisan workshops — leatherworkers, framers, and furniture restorers — rather than the grander buildings on the opposite bank. It remains known today for its narrow streets, small workshops, and a more everyday, residential character compared to the busier tourist centre across the river.

Japan: Learning a craft by watching (minarai)

In traditional Japanese craft and culinary training, a well-known approach is minarai, sometimes translated as "learning by watching" — a junior person observes a senior craftsperson closely over a long period, gradually absorbing technique through repetition and attention rather than verbal explanation. Questioning "why" too directly is sometimes considered less useful than patient observation, since the goal is to develop a feel for the work that cannot easily be put into words.

Chapter 3: Front of House

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. In many countries, young people study at a specialist school before starting work in restaurants or hotels. Do you know of any schools like this in your own country? What do students learn there?
2. Think about starting a new job alongside a colleague who has been there much longer than you. What questions might you want to ask them, and what might feel awkward?
3. When people from another country ask you questions about food from your own culture, what do they usually want to know? Are the questions ever based on a mistaken idea?
4. Look at these words before you read: alberghiero, hovering, assumption, cornetto, recalibrating. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. alberghiero	A. a small, sweet Italian breakfast pastry
2. hovering	B. an Italian vocational hospitality school
3. cornetto	C. staying close to someone in a way that can feel unwanted
4. assumption	D. something believed to be true without checking it
5. urgency	E. a feeling that something must be dealt with quickly

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 3. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

alberghiero (n., Italian) — *a vocational secondary school in Italy that trains students for work in hotels, restaurants, and catering*

assumption (n.) — *something you believe is true without checking it*

breadbasket (n.) — *a basket used to serve bread at a table*

cornetto (n., Italian) — *a small, sweet, crescent-shaped pastry, typically eaten for breakfast in Italy*

finding their feet (v. phrase) — *becoming confident and comfortable in a new situation*

hovering (v., -ing form of "hover") — *staying close to someone, often in a way that feels unnecessary or unwanted*

mildly (adv.) — *to a small degree; not strongly*

recalibrating (v., -ing form of "recalibrate") — *adjusting your understanding or expectations after new information*

rhythm (n.) — *a regular, repeated pattern of movement or activity*

ritual (n.) — *a fixed, regularly repeated action or set of actions*

staff meal (n. phrase) — *a meal eaten by restaurant employees, usually before or after service*

taking in (v. phrase, "take in") — *noticing and absorbing details about surroundings*

urgency (n.) — *the feeling that something needs attention or action very soon*

vocational (adj.) — *relating to practical skills and training for a particular job or career*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. Who are Alberto and Filippo, and where did they train before arriving at I tre briganti?
2. How does Vanni train the two new members of staff?
3. Where do the different characters usually eat their staff meals?
4. What is the first thing Alberto says to Ichirō, and how does Ichirō respond?
5. How did Filippo become interested in Japan, according to the chapter?
6. According to Ichirō, what is the biggest difference between Japanese and Italian food?
7. What does Alberto suggest they could do for each other, regarding Japanese and Italian culture?
8. What does Ichirō say he usually eats for breakfast, and how does Alberto react?
9. What does Ichirō say he misses most about Japan?
10. What does Filippo ask Ichirō near the end of the chapter, and how does Ichirō answer?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Alberto and Filippo arrived at the restaurant separately, several weeks apart. **T / F**
2. Felice always eats with the rest of the staff in the kitchen. **T / F**
3. Filippo became curious about Japan partly because of anime. **T / F**
4. Ichirō says Japanese food is about strong, bold flavours. **T / F**
5. Alberto says he could easily eat rice and miso soup every morning. **T / F**
6. Filippo once tried ramen in Rome, but was not sure if it was authentic. **T / F**
7. Ichirō tells Filippo and Alberto that he does not plan to return to Japan. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō feels Florence is beginning to feel like somewhere real to him. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Present Perfect (experience) vs Past Simple (specific time)

The chapter mixes Present Perfect for general life experience ("I've always wanted to go to Japan") with Past Simple for one specific occasion ("I had it once in Rome"). Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. "_____ you ever _____ (try) real ramen?" Filippo asked.
2. "I _____ (have) it once in Rome," Filippo said.
3. Alberto _____ (want, always) to visit Japan.
4. Ichirō _____ (live) in Tokyo before he _____ (move) to Florence.

B. "The way + clause" comparisons

The chapter compares things using "the way" (e.g. "the rhythm settled around him... the way rhythms do"; "the way young people say things about the future"). Complete these sentences using your own ideas.

1. He answered slowly, the way _____.
2. She smiled, the way _____.

C. Indirect (reported) questions

Rewrite each direct question from the chapter as an indirect question, e.g. "How long have you been in Florence?" → He asked how long he had been in Florence.

1. "Is the food really that different?" Alberto asked. → Alberto asked _____.
2. "What's the biggest difference?" he asked. → He asked _____.
3. "Do you think you'll go back?" Filippo asked. → Filippo asked _____.

D. Adverbs of manner

Choose the correct adverb from the box to complete each sentence: carefully / casually / honestly / slowly.

carefully • casually • honestly • slowly

1. Ichirō answered their questions _____ and _____.
2. Filippo said he'd like to try real ramen someday, _____, as one of many possibilities.
3. Alberto shook his head _____, recalibrating a long-held assumption.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Alberto and Filippo ask Ichirō a lot of questions about Japanese food, some based on stereotypes (like eating raw fish for breakfast). Have you ever been asked a question about your own culture that was based on a misunderstanding? How did you respond?
2. Ichirō says Japanese food "is about balance" while Italian food is "kind of the opposite". Do you agree with this kind of broad comparison between food cultures? What are the risks of generalising this way?
3. Filippo says he'd like to try real ramen "someday" — casually, without urgency. Do you think this kind of casual curiosity about another culture is common? Can it turn into something more serious?
4. Ichirō says the thing he misses most is rice "cooked the way I'm used to". Is there a food from home that you would miss if you moved abroad? Why that food in particular?
5. Alberto and Filippo "do not pretend to understand things they don't understand" — they simply move on to the next question. What do you think of this as a way of learning about another culture?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict the friendship between Ichirō, Alberto, and Filippo will develop over the rest of the book? Discuss with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: First Day Training

Setting: The dining room of I tre briganti, on Alberto and Filippo's first morning.

Roles: An experienced front-of-house trainer (like Vanni) and one or two new trainees.

Task: Act out the training session. The trainer should explain three or four basic rules or techniques (e.g. how to set a table, how to greet customers, how to carry plates) using clear, simple instructions. The trainees should ask at least two clarifying questions.

Scenario B: Questions Over Staff Meal

Setting: The kitchen at I tre briganti, during a staff meal after lunch service.

Roles: A cook from abroad (like Ichirō) and one or two curious colleagues.

Task: The colleagues ask the cook questions about food and daily life in their home country, including at least one question based on a common assumption. The cook answers honestly, correcting any misunderstanding politely.

Extension: perform Scenario B twice, swapping which country's food and customs are being discussed, so every student gets to answer as the "visitor" at least once.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write the dialogue (100–150 words) of a staff meal conversation between two colleagues from different countries, each asking the other about a food custom.
2. Write a paragraph (80–120 words) about a food from home that you would miss most if you moved to another country, and why.
3. Write a short diary entry (80–120 words) from Alberto or Filippo's point of view, describing their first week working alongside Ichirō.
4. Describe, in your own words, an assumption someone once made about your country or culture that turned out to be wrong.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used Present Perfect and Past Simple correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: The alberghiero (hospitality school)

In Italy, an istituto alberghiero is a state secondary school that combines general education with practical training in cooking, restaurant service, and hospitality management, often including work placements in real restaurants and hotels. Graduates commonly go straight into kitchen or front-of-house roles, and the alberghiero system is one of the main routes into professional hospitality careers in Italy.

Italy: The cornetto and the Italian breakfast bar

A typical Italian breakfast, eaten standing at a bar counter, is often light and sweet: a cornetto (a croissant-like pastry, sometimes filled with cream, chocolate, or jam) with a cappuccino or espresso. This is quite different from the larger, savoury breakfasts found in some other countries, and Italians generally consider cappuccino to be a morning drink rather than something to order after a meal.

Japan: A traditional Japanese breakfast

A traditional Japanese breakfast (asagohan) typically includes steamed rice, miso soup, and a small side such as grilled fish, pickles, or a rolled omelette, rather than bread or cereal. In modern households the format has diversified considerably, with bread and coffee now common as well, but the rice-and-miso-soup combination remains a widely recognised cultural reference point.

Japan: Anime as a cultural bridge

Japanese animation, or anime, has become one of Japan's most widely recognised cultural exports, watched by audiences of all ages around the world. For many people outside Japan, anime is a first point of contact with Japanese language, food, and everyday life shown on screen, and it often sparks a broader curiosity about the country long before someone has the chance to visit.

Chapter 4: Low Expectations

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Imagine you have to cook a dish from your own country for people who know that country's "real" food much better than you do. How might you feel before they taste it?
2. Sometimes, food that is popular in one country is actually a local invention, not the "authentic" version of a dish from somewhere else. Can you think of any examples of this?
3. When someone tastes your cooking and says something like "this really isn't bad," how would you feel — flattered, insulted, or something in between? Does it depend on tone or culture?
4. Look at these words before you read: verdict, braced, revising, nutmeg, prep work. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. verdict	A. prepared for something difficult or unpleasant
2. braced	B. a final judgement or decision about something
3. fuss	C. unnecessary excitement or attention over something small
4. identify	D. to recognise or name what something is
5. firmness	E. behaving in a way that shows you will not change your mind

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 4. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

adjusted (v., past of "adjust") — *changed slightly to fit new circumstances or tastes*

braced (v., past of "brace") — *prepared yourself, mentally, for something difficult*

eyebrow (n., "raise an eyebrow") — *to lift one eyebrow to show surprise or doubt without speaking*

firmness (n.) — *the quality of being clear and definite, not easily persuaded*

fuss (n., "without any fuss") — *unnecessary excitement, worry, or attention*

gaps (n., "in the gaps between") — *short periods of free time between other activities*

golden (adj., of food) — *cooked to a rich yellow-brown colour*

identify (v.) — *to recognise or correctly name something*

in passing (adv. phrase) — *briefly, without giving something your full attention*

nutmeg (n.) — *a spice made from the seed of a tropical tree, often used in small amounts in sauces and baking*

prep work (n. phrase) — *preparation tasks done before cooking or service, such as chopping ingredients*

revising (v., -ing form of "revise") — *changing an opinion or plan because of new information*

verdict (n.) — *a final judgement or decision, especially after considering something carefully*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How does the idea of Ichirō cooking for the Brigante family come about?
2. Why does Ichirō feel nervous about the idea once he has agreed to it?
3. What does Ichirō explain to everyone before they eat, and why does he feel the need to explain it?
4. What does Vanni say to Ichirō before he cooks? What does this tell us about Vanni?
5. What three dishes does Ichirō prepare, and how does each person react to them?
6. What does Vanni's comment, "this really isn't bad," mean in context? Why is it actually a compliment?
7. What does Sabrina want to do with the doria after the meal, and how does she describe it to Ichirō?
8. How does Sabrina change the doria over the following week?
9. What does Felice ask Sabrina to do with her new dish, and how does she respond?
10. What advice does Felice give Sabrina at the end of the chapter?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. It was Alberto's idea, not Ichirō's, that Ichirō should cook for everyone. **T / F**
2. Ichirō explains several times, before anyone eats, that the food is not "real" Italian food. **T / F**
3. Ichirō cooks the meal on a Sunday evening after service. **T / F**
4. Everyone at the table praises the food enthusiastically and without hesitation. **T / F**
5. Sabrina asks Ichirō to help her develop the new dish. **T / F**
6. Sabrina adds nutmeg to her version of the doria. **T / F**
7. Felice immediately agrees that the dish should be frozen and prepared in advance. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Sabrina decides to start with a simpler version of her dish. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Past Perfect for events before the main story time

The chapter opens with a chain of Past Perfect verbs ("Alberto had asked... Ichirō had said...") to show what happened before the main scene. Complete each sentence with the Past Perfect form of the verb in brackets.

1. Alberto _____ (ask) whether Japanese food was difficult to make.
2. Ichirō _____ (say) that it depended on the dish.
3. He _____ (regret) saying it almost immediately.
4. Sabrina _____ (decide) already that it was her project.

B. Descriptive verbs for reactions

The chapter uses precise verbs instead of simple ones to show reactions (e.g. "braced for the worst", "revising his expectations"). Match each descriptive phrase to the plainer meaning, then use two of the phrases in your own sentences.

1. braced for the worst	A. changing your mind because of new information
2. revising his expectations	B. prepared yourself for something bad

C. Idiomatic expressions with the body

Complete each sentence with the correct idiom: raised an eyebrow / put his fork down / stood still.

1. Felice tasted it. He _____.
2. Felice _____ and looked at the table.
3. Felice _____. "The specific look," Ichirō thought.

D. Parenthetical clauses: "It was, X understood, ..."

The chapter inserts a short clause into the middle of a sentence for emphasis (e.g. "It was, Ichirō understood, the best possible verdict"). Rewrite each plain sentence below using this pattern.

1. Plain: This was a difficult decision for Sabrina. → Parenthetical: It was, _____, a difficult decision.
2. Plain: This was a fair piece of advice. → Parenthetical: It was, _____, a fair piece of advice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Ichirō feels he must explain and apologise for his food before anyone tastes it. Have you ever done something similar — explained or lowered expectations before sharing your own work? Why do we do this?
2. Vanni's comment "this really isn't bad" is described as "the best possible verdict." Do you think restrained, understated praise can sometimes mean more than enthusiastic praise? Why or why not?
3. Sabrina says clearly, "this is my project," when Ichirō offers to help. Why do you think it might be important to her to develop the dish on her own?
4. Felice tells Sabrina to "start simple" rather than attempt something complicated and impressive straight away. Do you agree this is usually good advice, in cooking or in other areas of life?
5. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict will happen to Sabrina's new dish later in the story? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Presenting Your Dish

Setting: A kitchen table, after a home-cooked meal.

Roles: A cook presenting a dish from their own country to friends who know that cuisine well, and two or three friends tasting it.

Task: The cook should introduce the dish, including any explanation or apology they feel is necessary. The friends should react honestly — not necessarily negatively, but realistically — and give their verdict in their own words.

Scenario B: Pitching an Idea to the Boss

Setting: A restaurant kitchen, near the end of service.

Roles: A cook (like Sabrina) with an ambitious new idea, and the head chef or owner (like Felice).

Task: The cook should explain their idea enthusiastically. The owner should ask one or two practical questions about whether it is realistic, and suggest starting with a simpler version.

Extension: perform Scenario A again, this time with the friends reacting far more critically than in the first version — practise giving honest but constructive feedback.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a short scene (100–150 words) in which a character cooks something for people who might judge it, and describe how they feel while waiting for a reaction.
2. Write Sabrina's notebook entry (80–120 words) describing her plans for the new version of the doria, and what she wants to change next.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you tried to improve something you had already made (a dish, a piece of writing, a project) and what you changed.
4. Describe, in your own words, a piece of advice you once received that turned out to be more useful than it first seemed.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used Past Perfect correctly where it is needed, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: Sunday lunch as a family institution (il pranzo della domenica)

In many Italian families, Sunday lunch is a long, unhurried meal that brings together several generations, often lasting for hours across multiple courses. It is one of the main occasions where family recipes are cooked, shared, and sometimes passed down, and skipping it without a good reason can be seen as slightly unusual in more traditional households.

Italy: Directness in Italian food culture

Italians are often known for being very direct when discussing food quality, even with people they like and respect — blunt feedback about a dish is generally understood as a sign that the person cares about food and is taking the meal seriously, not as an insult. A guarded or lukewarm comment, as in this chapter, can carry as much weight as an enthusiastic one.

Japan: Understatement and indirect communication

In Japanese communication, restraint and understatement are often valued over open enthusiasm, and genuine approval can be expressed through calm, measured language rather than strong praise. Reading the real meaning behind a modest comment — sometimes referred to as reading the air (*kūki wo yomu*) — is an important social skill, and a mild response can quietly signal strong approval.

Japan: Kaizen — continuous small improvement

Kaizen is a Japanese term, widely used in manufacturing and business but also relevant to craft and cooking, referring to a philosophy of continuous, incremental improvement through small, repeated changes rather than one large transformation. A dish, like a process, is refined gradually — one adjustment at a time — with each version tested before the next change is made.

Chapter 5: Angela

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Some people in a family business do a different job every day, depending on what needs doing, rather than having one fixed role. Do you know anyone like this? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
2. Have you ever studied a language for a personal reason — for someone, or because of a particular interest — rather than for school or work? What happened to that language later?
3. Think about a small, ordinary bar or café near your home that has "no particular name and no particular ambition" beyond being a nice place to sit. Describe it, or describe the kind of place you imagine.
4. Look at these words before you read: modest, haltingly, intrusive, articulated, sharper. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. modest	A. speaking slowly and with difficulty, often while learning
2. haltingly	B. not large in amount or size
3. intrusive	C. put into clear words
4. articulated	D. quick to notice or understand things
5. sharper (perceptive)	E. entering somewhere without invitation or welcome

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 5. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

ambition (n.) — *a strong desire to achieve something, or to become something more than you currently are*

articulated (v., past of "articulate") — *expressed clearly in words*

ceremony (n., "without ceremony") — *a formal or special way of marking an event; "without ceremony" means plainly, with no special fuss*

estate (n., legal) — *all the money and property that belonged to someone who has died*

filing (something) away (v. phrase) — *mentally noting information to remember or consider later*

haltingly (adv.) — *speaking slowly and with pauses, often while learning a language*

intrusive (adj.) — *entering into someone's private space or business without being welcome*

modest (adj., of an amount) — *fairly small; not large or impressive*

notification (n.) — *a message or alert, often on a phone, informing you of something*

poking (v., -ing form of "poke", figurative) — *checking on or pushing someone gently to make sure something gets done*

sharper (adj., comparative of "sharp", of a person) — *quicker to notice, understand, or judge things accurately*

supplier (n.) — *a business or person that provides goods to another business, such as a restaurant*

till (n., British English) — *the machine or drawer where a shop or restaurant keeps and counts money; "cash register" in American English*

weight (n., figurative, "without any particular weight") — *importance or seriousness given to something said or felt*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. What news does Ichirō receive at the start of the chapter, and how does it change how he thinks about his plan?
2. What has Ichirō noticed about Angela before he gets to know her better? Give two examples of what he sees her doing.
3. How does Sabrina answer Ichirō's question about Angela's role? What does this answer suggest about the Brigante family?
4. How and why did Angela learn some Japanese?
5. Where do Ichirō and Angela go after work, and what kind of place is it?
6. According to Ichirō, why did he choose Florence, and specifically Rifredi? How does Angela react to this?
7. What does Ichirō tell Angela about his plan that he had not told anyone else in Florence?
8. How does Angela already know about Ichirō's inheritance, and how does she explain this?
9. What does Angela ask Ichirō to describe, and how does he respond?
10. How does Ichirō feel about Angela by the end of the chapter?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. The news about the inheritance arrives by letter. **T / F**
2. Angela does the same job every day at the restaurant. **T / F**
3. Angela learned some Japanese because of a former boyfriend. **T / F**
4. Angela and Ichirō go to a well-known, popular restaurant after work. **T / F**
5. Ichirō says he chose Florence because it is a major tourist destination. **T / F**
6. Ichirō tells Angela his full plan, including returning to Yonago and opening his own restaurant. **T / F**
7. Angela already knew that Ichirō had received money from Japan before he told her. **T / F**
8. By the end of the evening, Ichirō regrets telling Angela about his plans. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Second Conditional (hypothetical present)

Angela asks, "Tell me what you'd cook, if it were your restaurant" — a Second Conditional used to imagine a hypothetical present situation. Complete each sentence with the correct form.

1. If it _____ (be) my restaurant, I _____ (cook) simple, seasonal food.
2. If Ichirō _____ (not receive) the inheritance, his plan _____ (be) much harder.
3. What _____ you _____ (do) if you _____ (have) enough money to start your own business?

B. "Adjective without being adjective"

The chapter describes Angela as "direct without being blunt, curious without being intrusive." Complete these sentences using the same pattern.

1. He was confident _____ being _____.
2. She was friendly _____ being _____.
3. (your own sentence) _____

C. Contrast structure: "not the X of..., but Y"

The chapter contrasts two kinds of attention: "not the casual curiosity of someone collecting facts, but genuine interest in how things actually worked." Complete the pattern below with your own ideas.

1. It was not the nervousness of _____, but _____.
2. It was not the politeness of _____, but _____.

D. Turning adjectives into abstract nouns

Complete the table by writing the noun form of each adjective, as used in the chapter (e.g. curious → curiosity).

curious	_____
ambitious	_____
intrusive	_____
precise	_____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Angela's role at the restaurant is simply "whatever needs doing." Do you think this kind of flexible role would suit you, or would you prefer a fixed job description? Why?
2. Angela learned some Japanese for a past relationship, and "it didn't last, but the language stayed." Do you think learning a language for a personal reason like this is more or less likely to succeed than learning it for school or work?
3. Ichirō tells Angela his full plan before telling anyone else in Florence. Why do you think he chooses to open up to her specifically?
4. Angela already knew about the inheritance because "it's my job to know things." How do you feel about someone in a small community or workplace generally knowing a lot about everyone's business?
5. When asked to describe the food he'd cook in his own restaurant, Ichirō finds he can finally put his ideas into words. Why do you think talking to the right person can help us understand our own thoughts and plans better?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict the relationship between Ichirō and Angela will develop over the rest of the story? Discuss with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: What Do You Actually Do Here?

Setting: A family-run business (a restaurant, shop, or farm).

Roles: A newcomer or visitor, and a family member whose role changes from day to day.

Task: The newcomer asks what the family member's job actually is. The family member explains, giving at least three different examples of tasks they might do on different days.

Scenario B: Telling Someone Your Real Plan

Setting: A quiet bar or café, after work, in the evening.

Roles: Two colleagues who are becoming friends.

Task: One colleague shares a personal plan or ambition they have not told anyone else about. The other listens carefully, asks two or three thoughtful questions, and responds honestly at the end.

Extension: perform Scenario B a second time, but this time the listener should respond with polite scepticism rather than support — practise handling a less encouraging reaction.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a paragraph (80–120 words) describing what you would cook, or what you would create, if you had your own restaurant, shop, or studio.
2. Write the continuation of Ichirō and Angela's conversation (100–150 words), imagining what she says after "You know what you want."
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a language you tried to learn for a personal reason, and what happened to it afterwards.
4. Describe, in your own words, a small, ordinary place (a bar, café, shop) that you know well and feel comfortable in.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used the Second Conditional correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: The flexible role in family-run businesses

In many small Italian family businesses, it is common for family members not to have one fixed job title but instead to move between tasks as needed — covering the till, dealing with suppliers, managing schedules, or stepping in wherever there is a gap. This flexibility is often seen as a practical strength of family-run enterprises rather than a sign of disorganisation.

Italy: The neighbourhood wine bar

Small, informal wine bars (sometimes called an enoteca or simply a local bar) are a common feature of Italian towns and cities, often unmarked by any sign and known mainly to local residents. These places typically prioritise a relaxed atmosphere and a decent, honestly priced glass of wine over decor or reputation, and regulars are often recognised by name by the person behind the counter.

Japan: The San'in region and Yonago

San'in is the name given to the region along Japan's western coast, facing the Sea of Japan, covering Tottori and Shimane prefectures. It is generally quieter and less internationally known than Japan's Pacific coast cities, with a landscape of coastline, mountains, and rural towns. Yonago, in Tottori Prefecture, is one of the region's larger cities, known locally for its access to Mount Daisen and the San'in coastline.

Japan: Regional food identity

Japan places a strong cultural value on regional and local specialities (meibutsu), with almost every prefecture and city associated with particular dishes, ingredients, or products that residents take pride in. This means that a Japanese chef's sense of "home cooking" is often tied closely to a specific region rather than a single, uniform national cuisine.

Chapter 6: The Garden

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever tried to cook a dish from home using ingredients that weren't quite right, because the real ones weren't available? What happened?
2. Think of a time you tried to improve something you had already made — a recipe, a piece of writing, a drawing — and it became more complicated but somehow worse. Why do you think this happens?
3. Sometimes the simplest version of something is the best one, even though it takes real skill to know when to stop adding to it. Can you think of an example of this, in food or in another area?
4. Look at these words before you read: wisteria, pergola, elaborate, refinement, accomplished. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. wisteria	A. a structure covered in climbing plants, giving shade
2. pergola	B. a climbing plant with hanging clusters of flowers
3. elaborate	C. very detailed or complicated
4. accomplished	D. skilfully done; showing high ability
5. reduction (cooking)	E. a sauce made thicker and stronger by boiling off liquid

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 6. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

accomplished (adj.) — *skilfully done; showing a high level of ability*

arborio (n., Italian) — *a short-grain Italian rice used mainly for making risotto*

braise (n./v., cooking) — *a dish cooked slowly in a small amount of liquid; to cook something this way*

collision (n., figurative) — *a forceful meeting of two different things, ideas, or styles*

dashi (n., Japanese) — *a basic Japanese soup and cooking stock, usually made from kelp and dried fish flakes*

earthier (adj., comparative of "earthy") — *having a deeper, more natural or rustic flavour*

elaborate (adj.) — *very detailed, complicated, or highly developed*

mirin (n., Japanese) — *a sweet Japanese rice wine used in cooking*

oyakodon (n., Japanese) — *a Japanese rice bowl dish with chicken and egg simmered together, literally "parent-and-child bowl"*

pergola (n.) — *a garden structure with an open frame, often covered by climbing plants, that provides shade*

portable (adj.) — *able to be carried or moved easily*

refinement (n.) — *the process of making something more precise, elegant, or polished*

rind (n.) — *the tough outer layer of certain cheeses (or fruits), sometimes used for flavour*

terrace (n.) — *a flat outdoor area, often with a view, used for sitting or walking*

wisteria (n.) — *a climbing plant with long hanging clusters of purple, pink, or white flowers*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. Where does Ichirō go on his free Sunday afternoon, and why does he choose this kind of place rather than a famous sight?
2. What ingredients does Ichirō bring for his picnic, and what is he trying to make?
3. Which ingredients does he want but cannot find, and what does he use instead?
4. How does the finished dish compare to real oyakodon? What does Ichirō decide it actually is?
5. What does Ichirō try to do with the dish once he is back in the restaurant kitchen?
6. Describe what happens across his first four attempts to recreate the dish in the kitchen.
7. What does Felice do when he finds Ichirō with the fifth attempt?
8. What exact words does Felice use to give Ichirō feedback on the dish?
9. What does Ichirō realise about what he has been doing, not just with this dish but for the past several months?
10. How does the chapter end? What has changed for Ichirō by the final lines?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō visits the Villa Bardini gardens because Angela had mentioned them. **T / F**
2. Ichirō is able to find dashi and mirin at a shop near his room. **T / F**
3. The finished picnic dish tastes exactly like real oyakodon. **T / F**
4. Each time Ichirō tries to recreate the dish in the kitchen, it becomes simpler. **T / F**
5. Felice tastes the fifth attempt and says nothing at all. **T / F**
6. Felice tells Ichirō that the dish doesn't have to "taste of Florence," just of itself. **T / F**
7. Ichirō decides to taste the dish again after Felice leaves the kitchen. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō feels he understands what he is working toward. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. "The more..., the more..." (double comparatives)

The chapter shows Ichirō's dish becoming "more accomplished with each version," while also moving "further from what he was trying to reach." Complete these double comparative sentences.

1. The _____ (much) he practised, the _____ (confident) he became.
2. The _____ (complicated) the dish became, the _____ (far) it moved from its original idea.
3. (your own sentence) The more _____, the more _____.

B. Sequencing language for describing a process

Retell Ichirō's five attempts at the dish using sequencing words: first / then / after that / next / finally. Complete the summary.

1. _____, he added a soffritto base and white wine, but the result was too busy.
2. _____, he kept the soffritto but simplified the sauce and refined the egg timing.
3. _____, he changed the cheese, the rice, and the seasoning.
4. _____, he made the dish more elaborate, with a reduction and an extra element.
5. _____, Felice tasted the fifth version and told him to simplify.

C. "Too + adjective" vs "not + adjective + enough"

Complete each sentence with either a "too + adjective" or "not + adjective + enough" structure.

1. The sauce was _____ — there were too many flavours competing with each other.
2. The first attempt wasn't _____ — it needed more time to develop.
3. Write one true sentence about a dish, drink, or piece of work using "too + adjective":

D. Describing taste and smell: "something between X and Y"

The chapter describes a smell as "something between sweet and green and old." Use this pattern to describe the following, in your own words.

1. The smell of rain on a hot pavement is something between _____ and _____.
2. The taste of a food you like is something between _____ and _____.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Ichirō realises he has been "asking the food to prove something" instead of just letting it be what it is. Have you ever caught yourself doing something similar — trying to prove something through your work, rather than simply doing it well?
2. Felice's feedback is very short: "You're putting too much effort in it... It doesn't have to taste of Florence. Just of itself." Why do you think such a short comment could be more useful than a long explanation?
3. Ichirō's picnic dish is "not a Japanese dish made badly in Italy" but "something different that had come from the collision." Can you think of other examples — in food, music, or elsewhere — of something new created from two different traditions meeting?
4. Why do you think Ichirō chooses to cook alone in a public garden, rather than in the restaurant kitchen, when he is feeling homesick?
5. Each version of Ichirō's dish becomes more technically impressive but further from what he wanted. Is there a risk in always trying to make something more sophisticated or complicated?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what kind of dish do you predict Ichirō will eventually create for his own restaurant? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Honest Mentor

Setting: A workshop, kitchen, or studio, where someone has been working on the same project for days.

Roles: A mentor or experienced colleague (like Felice) and a person who has been overworking a project (like Ichirō).

Task: The mentor looks at the work and gives brief, honest feedback in no more than two or three short sentences. The other person responds, explaining what they now understand.

Scenario B: Describing a Discovery

Setting: A restaurant kitchen, the day after a personal cooking experiment.

Roles: A cook describing an idea they had while cooking alone, and a curious colleague.

Task: The cook describes the new dish they invented by accident, including what it tastes like and where the idea might have come from. The colleague asks questions and suggests a name for the dish.

Extension: as a class, vote on the best invented name for Ichirō's new dish, based on the descriptions written in Scenario B.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a description (80–120 words) of a quiet, peaceful outdoor place you know, using at least three senses (sight, smell, sound, touch, taste).
2. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you made something too complicated when a simpler version would have been better.
3. Invent your own "collision" dish — a food that combines two different culinary traditions. Describe it (80–120 words): what's in it, what it tastes like, and what inspired it.
4. Write Felice's thoughts (80–120 words) as he tastes Ichirō's fifth attempt, before he decides what to say.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used comparative structures correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: The Bardini Gardens and their wisteria tunnel

The Giardino Bardini (Bardini Gardens) is a historic garden on the hillside of the Oltrarno in Florence, known for its baroque staircase, panoramic views over the city, and a famous wisteria-covered pergola that draws visitors especially in late April and early May, when the flowers are in full bloom. The gardens are less visited by tourists than some of Florence's more famous sights, making them a popular spot for a quieter afternoon.

Italy: Risotto and Arborio rice

Risotto is a northern Italian rice dish made by slowly adding warm stock to rice while stirring continuously, releasing starch that gives the dish its characteristic creamy texture. Arborio, a short-grain rice grown mainly in the Po Valley, is one of the most widely used rice varieties for risotto, prized for its ability to absorb liquid while still holding a slightly firm centre.

Italy: Making the most of ingredients — using cheese rinds

In many Italian kitchens, especially traditional home cooking, very little is thrown away: the hard rind of Parmigiano-Reggiano, for example, is often saved and simmered in soups, stocks, or sauces to add depth of flavour, even though the rind itself is not eaten. This reflects a broader culinary culture that values using ingredients fully rather than wastefully.

Japan: Oyakodon — a comforting home dish

Oyakodon is a popular Japanese comfort food consisting of chicken and egg simmered together in a savoury-sweet broth and served over rice; its name literally means "parent-and-child bowl," referring to the chicken and egg. It belongs to a wider family of Japanese rice bowl dishes (donburi) and is commonly eaten at home or in casual restaurants rather than being considered a formal or refined dish.

Chapter 7: The Dish

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever been so close to solving a problem that you could barely sleep, thinking about it? What kind of problem was it?
2. Sometimes a simple, honest comment like "that's good" can feel more meaningful than lots of excited praise. Do you agree? Why might that be?
3. If you could design your own restaurant, café, or shop from nothing, what is one thing about the space itself (not the food or products) that would be important to you?
4. Look at these words before you read: stripped back, bite (of food), trembling, occurred to him, regular (customer). Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. stripped back	A. shaking very slightly
2. trembling	B. a customer who visits often
3. regular (n.)	C. reduced to only the simplest, most basic parts
4. occurred to him	D. came into his mind suddenly
5. bite (of food)	E. a firm texture that has not gone completely soft

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 7. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

bistecca fiorentina (n., Italian) — *a large, thick T-bone steak, a specialty of Florence, traditionally grilled rare*

bite (n., of food texture) — *a firm quality in food that has not become completely soft*

dissolve (v.) — *to gradually mix completely into a liquid and disappear as a solid*

exercise (n., figurative, "the point of the whole exercise") — *an activity or process undertaken with a particular purpose*

fashionable (adj.) — *currently popular or stylish*

flipped (v., past of "flip") — *turned something over quickly with a fast movement*

margins (n., of a page) — *the empty space at the edges of a page, sometimes used for extra notes*

occurred to him (v. phrase, "occur to") — *came into his mind, often suddenly*

porcini (n., Italian) — *a type of wild mushroom, highly valued in Italian cooking for its rich flavour*

regular (n., customer) — *a customer who visits a particular restaurant, shop, or bar often*

settled (v., past of "settle", figurative) — *became calm, quiet, or still after activity*

stripped back (v. phrase) — *reduced to only the simplest, most essential parts*

structure (n., of food) — *the way a dish's texture and physical form hold together*

trembling (adj., -ing form of "tremble") — *shaking very slightly*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. Why doesn't Ichirō sleep much the night before this chapter begins?
2. What does Ichirō do differently this time, compared to his earlier attempts in Chapter 6?
3. Describe the small changes Ichirō makes across his three new attempts.
4. How does the finished dish compare to oyakodon, according to the text?
5. How does Sabrina react when she tastes the new dish? What does the text say is significant about her reaction?
6. Where does the new dish appear on the I tre briganti menu, and how do customers react to it?
7. What does Ichirō begin to think about differently around this time?
8. What dishes does Ichirō imagine for his own future restaurant?
9. What does Ichirō say is different about the physical design of his imagined restaurant, compared to I tre briganti?
10. How do Alberto and Filippo each react to Ichirō's idea about the open kitchen?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō doesn't sleep well because he is worried the dish will fail again. **T / F**
2. In this chapter, Ichirō adds more techniques and ingredients to the dish than before. **T / F**
3. Sabrina tastes the new dish and says it is "good," without excessive enthusiasm. **T / F**
4. The new dish is placed on the menu between the pasta ai porcini and the bistecca fiorentina. **T / F**
5. Every customer who orders the dish finds it strange and unfamiliar. **T / F**
6. Ichirō starts making notes about future dishes in the margins of his prep lists. **T / F**
7. Ichirō wants his own restaurant to have a completely closed kitchen, hidden from guests. **T / F**
8. Filippo says Ichirō's restaurant idea sounds exactly like I tre briganti. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Short sentence fragments for dramatic effect

The chapter uses short, incomplete sentences to build tension ("Not right yet." "Closer. Not there." "There."). Rewrite the process below as short fragments, the way the chapter does, then try writing three fragments of your own describing a moment of gradual success.

1. Full sentence: The dish was not right, but he could tell he was getting closer. → Fragments:

_____.

2. (your own fragments, 3 short phrases) _____

B. "The difference between X and Y"

The chapter uses the pattern: "the difference between failing because he didn't know what he was doing and failing because he hadn't quite found it yet." Complete these sentences with your own ideas.

1. There is a difference between _____ and _____.

2. He understood the difference between _____ and _____.

C. "Would" for imagined future plans

Ichirō imagines his future restaurant using "would" ("There would be no wall between them"; "a technique he would do differently"). Complete each sentence about an imagined future plan.

1. In my own restaurant, I _____ (serve) _____.
2. There _____ (be) no _____ between the kitchen and the dining room.
3. (your own sentence with "would") _____

D. Describing texture and taste

Match each word or phrase to the quality it describes.

1. deep without being heavy	A. firm, not overcooked
2. bite	B. rich in flavour but not overwhelming
3. barely set	C. only just cooked, still soft and delicate

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Sabrina's reaction to the dish is described as "not enthusiastic. Accurate. Which was better." Do you agree that accurate feedback can be more valuable than enthusiastic feedback? Can you think of an example from your own life?
2. The menu description for the new dish "said very little because very little needed to be said." What do you think makes a good menu description — lots of detail, or very little?
3. Ichirō wants his future restaurant to have an open kitchen so he can "see the room" and the room can "see him." What do you think this reveals about the kind of restaurant, and the kind of relationship with customers, he wants to create?
4. Alberto assumes the open kitchen is about being "fashionable," but Ichirō says that's not the reason. Why do you think Ichirō doesn't explain his real reason further at this point?
5. Ichirō has "a list of dishes that do not yet exist anywhere except inside his head." Do you keep any kind of list, notebook, or file of ideas for the future? What is on it?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict Ichirō's restaurant in Yonago will actually look like and feel like? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Explaining the New Dish

Setting: The dining room of I tre briganti, during service.

Roles: A server and a curious customer (a "regular").

Task: The customer asks what is in the new dish and where the idea came from. The server explains simply and honestly, without over-selling it.

Scenario B: My Own Restaurant

Setting: Anywhere informal — a break room, a walk home, a kitchen after closing.

Roles: Two or three colleagues or friends.

Task: One person describes what their own restaurant, café, or shop would be like if they opened one — the menu, the design, the atmosphere. The others ask questions and react, the way Alberto and Filippo do in the chapter.

Extension: in Scenario B, ask the group to guess the single most important detail for the person describing their idea, before that person reveals it themselves.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write the short menu description (30–50 words) that might appear next to Ichirō's new dish on the *I tre briganti* menu.
2. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) describing what your own restaurant, café, or shop would look and feel like, if you opened one.
3. Write a short diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the night the dish finally worked.
4. Continue the conversation between Ichirō, Alberto, and Filippo (100–150 words), imagining what Alberto or Filippo says next about the open kitchen idea.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used "would" correctly for imagined future plans, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: Bistecca alla Fiorentina

Bistecca alla Fiorentina is a large, thick-cut T-bone steak that is a signature dish of Florence, traditionally from the local Chianina breed of cattle, grilled over a wood or charcoal fire and served very rare. It is usually large enough to share between two or more people and is normally served simply, with just olive oil, salt, and perhaps a wedge of lemon.

Italy: Porcini mushrooms in Italian cooking

Porcini are wild mushrooms highly prized in Italian cuisine for their rich, nutty flavour, used fresh in autumn or dried and reconstituted throughout the year in dishes such as risotto, pasta sauces, and soups. Because good porcini can be expensive and seasonal, a dish featuring them (such as pasta ai porcini) is often considered a small seasonal treat rather than an everyday option.

Japan: The counter-style kitchen

In many traditional Japanese restaurants — sushi bars, ramen shops, and teppanyaki grills among them — the kitchen or cooking surface is arranged as an open counter facing the customers, so diners can watch the chef work up close. This layout is not considered unusual or especially modern in Japan; it reflects a long-standing tradition of valuing visible craftsmanship and a direct, largely wordless connection between chef and guest.

Japan: Omakase — trusting the chef's choices

Omakase, meaning roughly "I leave it up to you," refers to a style of dining in which the customer does not choose individual dishes but instead trusts the chef to select and prepare a sequence of dishes based on what is freshest or best that day. The practice relies on a strong element of trust between chef and diner, and is closely associated with the open, visible kitchens described above.

Chapter 8: The Porcini Night

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Imagine a restaurant kitchen suddenly realises, in the middle of a busy evening, that it doesn't have enough of a key ingredient. What options do you think a kitchen has in that situation?
2. Think of a workplace rule that exists for a good reason, but that someone might want to break just once, in an unusual situation. What kind of rule might that be?
3. Have you ever had to trust your own judgement even though someone more experienced than you disagreed at first? What happened?
4. Look at these words before you read: improvise, persuaded, unhurried, gave nothing away, intercepted. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. improvise	A. moved in to take over from someone else
2. persuaded	B. calm and not rushed
3. unhurried	C. to make a plan quickly, without full preparation
4. intercepted	D. convinced to believe or agree with something
5. gave nothing away	E. did not show any emotion or reveal any information

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 8. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

cool cabinet (n. phrase) — *a refrigerated storage unit in a professional kitchen*

counter-argument (n.) — *a reason or argument given in response to oppose another argument*

gave nothing away (v. phrase) — *did not show any emotion or reveal any information through expression*

improvise (v.) — *to create or do something using what is available, without full preparation*

intercepted (v., past of "intercept") — *stopped or took over something before it reached its intended destination*

melanzane (n., Italian) — *aubergine / eggplant*

pappardelle (n., Italian) — *a wide, flat ribbon pasta*

the pass (n., kitchen term) — *the counter in a professional kitchen where finished dishes are placed before being taken to the dining room*

persuaded (v., past of "persuade") — *convinced someone to believe or agree with something*

portions (n.) — *individual servings of food, especially in a restaurant kitchen*

prataioli (n., Italian) — *common cultivated mushrooms, milder in flavour than porcini*

spike (n., kitchen term) — *a metal stand where paper food orders are kept in a professional kitchen*

tagliatelle (n., Italian) — *a long, flat ribbon pasta, narrower than pappardelle*

tension (n.) — *a feeling of unease or stress between people, or in a situation*

unhurried (adj.) — *calm and not rushed*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. What problem does Ichirō discover at the start of the chapter?
2. What solution do Sabrina and Ichirō come up with together?
3. How does Felice initially react to their plan? What reason does he give?
4. What does Ichirō say to Felice to try to persuade him?
5. What does Felice decide to do once he agrees to allow the substitution?
6. What exactly does Ichirō change in the dish, and in what order does he cook it?
7. What does Sabrina tell the server to say to the customer?
8. What can Ichirō and Sabrina see, and not see, while Felice serves the table?
9. What does Felice report back about the customer's reaction, once service is over?
10. What does Ichirō think about on the way home, at the end of the chapter?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. The restaurant runs completely out of porcini, with none left at all. **T / F**
2. Sabrina suggests using prataioli mushrooms and melanzane instead of porcini. **T / F**
3. Felice agrees immediately and enthusiastically to the substitution. **T / F**
4. Felice decides to serve the dish to the table himself. **T / F**
5. The customer complains loudly about the change to the dish. **T / F**
6. Felice tells Sabrina and Ichirō not to do this kind of substitution again. **T / F**
7. Ichirō feels certain, before Felice reports back, that everything went well. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō is thinking about the difference between knowing something himself and having it confirmed by someone he trusts. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Modals of obligation, prohibition, and permission

The chapter uses modal verbs to express workplace rules ("We don't improvise on a Friday service"). Complete each sentence with **must** / **mustn't** / **have to** / **can**.

1. In this kitchen, you _____ always check stock levels before service starts.
2. Felice says they _____ improvise on a normal Friday service — but this time, he allows it.
3. If something goes wrong, Felice says it _____ be on him, not on Sabrina or Ichirō.

B. Passive voice for describing a process

Rewrite each step of Ichirō's cooking process in the passive voice, as in: "The prataioli were browned first."

1. He put the prataioli into the hot oil first. → The prataioli _____.
2. He added the melanzane next. → The melanzane _____.
3. He added the cream last. → The cream _____.

C. "Would" for a past expectation about the future

The chapter describes Ichirō wondering, from a point in the past, what would happen next ("whether Felice would let it happen"). Complete each sentence.

1. He knew the substitution _____ (hold).
2. He wasn't sure if Felice _____ (agree) to it.
3. She wondered whether the customer _____ (notice) the difference.

D. Idiomatic expressions

Match each idiom to its meaning.

1. ran out of counter-argument	A. had no more valid reasons to disagree
2. gave nothing away	B. showed no emotion or information
3. arrived fully formed	C. appeared complete and ready, without needing development

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Felice decides to serve the substituted dish himself, saying, "If something is wrong, it's on me." Why do you think it was important to him to take personal responsibility, rather than letting the server simply deliver the plate as usual?
2. Ichirō says to Felice, "Trust me. I know what I'm doing... You taught me, after all." What do you think about this way of arguing for trust — using someone's own teaching as evidence that they should trust you?
3. Sabrina tells the server to say they "hope" the change is all right, rather than not mentioning the substitution at all. Do you think restaurants have a responsibility to tell customers when a dish has changed, even slightly? Why or why not?
4. At the end of the chapter, Ichirō reflects on "the space between knowing something yourself and having it confirmed by someone whose judgement you trusted more than your own." Can you think of a time in your own life when this difference mattered to you?
5. Felice says, "I don't think I can take this tension again," even though the substitution worked. What does this tell you about how he experienced the evening, compared to Sabrina and Ichirō?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict this evening will affect the working relationship between Ichirō, Sabrina, and Felice going forward? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Kitchen Crisis

Setting: A busy restaurant kitchen, mid-service, when a key ingredient runs short.

Roles: Two or three kitchen staff members, including one senior figure (like Felice) who is initially resistant to changing the plan.

Task: The team should identify the problem, propose a solution, and reach a decision together, with the senior figure raising at least one objection before agreeing.

Scenario B: Explaining the Change to the Customer

Setting: A restaurant dining room, at the customer's table.

Roles: A restaurant owner or senior server, and a customer who has ordered a dish that has been slightly changed.

Task: The server explains, politely and honestly, that a small substitution has been made and why. The customer asks a question or two and gives their reaction.

Extension: perform Scenario B again, but this time the customer should react with polite disappointment rather than acceptance — practise handling a less positive response.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write the conversation (100–150 words) between Felice and the customer at the table, imagining exactly what he said when he explained the substitution.
2. Write a short diary entry (80–120 words) from Felice's point of view, explaining why he decided to serve the table himself that night.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you had to trust your own judgement even though someone else was uncertain or disagreed.
4. Write a short set of kitchen guidelines (80–120 words) for what a restaurant should do if it runs short of a key ingredient during service.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used modal verbs or passive voice correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: Cucina povera — resourceful cooking with what's available

Cucina povera ("poor kitchen" or "cuisine of the poor") refers to a long Italian culinary tradition of making the most of simple, available, and often inexpensive ingredients, born of historical necessity rather than choice. Many now-celebrated Italian dishes have roots in this resourceful approach, where substitution and adaptation based on what was in season or in stock was simply normal, everyday cooking.

Italy: Pasta shapes and matching sauces

Italian cooking traditionally pairs specific pasta shapes with specific types of sauce: wide, flat ribbons like pappardelle are typically served with heartier, meat-based or rich sauces that cling well to a larger surface, while narrower ribbons like tagliatelle suit slightly lighter preparations. Changing the pasta shape, as in this chapter, is a recognised way of subtly signalling that a dish is a variation, without necessarily changing the description on the menu.

Japan: Omotenashi — hospitality and responsibility for the guest experience

Omotenashi is a Japanese concept of hospitality that goes beyond simple politeness, emphasising wholehearted, anticipatory care for a guest's experience and a sense of personal responsibility, on the part of the host, for how that experience unfolds. A host practising omotenashi does not merely serve a guest but takes ownership of making sure everything about the visit goes well, often without the guest ever being aware of the effort involved.

Japan: Trust between mentor and apprentice

In traditional Japanese craft training, the relationship between a senior craftsperson and a junior one is often built over years through repeated, small demonstrations of competence, gradually earning the trust required to be given more independence and responsibility. A senior figure publicly standing behind a junior's work — putting their own reputation behind someone else's decision — is a significant and meaningful gesture within this kind of mentor-apprentice relationship.

Chapter 9: The Investment

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Think about a time you realised, quite suddenly, that you had become good at something — a language, a skill, a job — without noticing the gradual progress along the way. What was the moment that made you realise it?
2. People show support for others in very different ways — some through words, some through practical help, some through blunt advice, some through spending time together. Which of these feels most meaningful to you personally?
3. If you were opening a restaurant serving food from another country, do you think customers would care whether the staff were from that country? Why might that matter to some people?
4. Look at these words before you read: proximity, entitled, strategic, satisfactory, gestured. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. proximity	A. legally or officially entitled to something
2. entitled	B. closeness to someone or something
3. strategic	C. good enough; acceptable
4. satisfactory	D. planned carefully with a long-term goal in mind
5. gestured	E. made a movement with the hand or body to indicate something

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 9. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

absorption (n.) — *the process of gradually taking in knowledge or skills without deliberate study*

administration (n.) — *the organisation and management of paperwork, records, and official processes*

bonus (n.) — *an extra sum of money paid to an employee in addition to their normal salary*

contract (n.) — *a formal written agreement, especially about employment*

entitled (adj., "entitled to") — *having an official or legal right to something*

envelope (n.) — *a paper covering used to hold and post or deliver a letter or document*

gestured (v., past of "gesture") — *made a movement with the hand or body to indicate something*

investment (n.) — *money put into a business or project with the expectation of a future benefit or return*

official (adj., "nothing official") — *formally agreed or recognised, as opposed to informal or undecided*

particular (adj., of a person) — *having high standards; careful and specific about preferences*

permanently (adv.) — *in a way that continues without changing; always*

preamble (n.) — *an introduction or opening remark before the main point*

proximity (n.) — *closeness in space or relationship to someone or something*

satisfactory (adj.) — *good enough; acceptable*

strategic (adj.) — *planned carefully with a longer-term goal in mind*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How does Ichirō come to realise how much time has passed and how much he has changed? Give two examples from the text.
2. How does Ichirō describe the way Dario learned about the restaurant, growing up?
3. What does Dario tell Ichirō about his own trip to Japan?
4. What has Beatrice done for Ichirō since he arrived, according to the text?
5. What does Beatrice's note in September tell Ichirō, and how does she react when he thanks her?
6. What problem does Vanni raise about Ichirō's future restaurant in Yonago?
7. How does Ichirō respond when Vanni asks what he plans to do about this problem?
8. What does Ichirō learn about Sabrina's time in Lyon?
9. What does Angela tell Ichirō about, on his way out one evening?
10. What does Angela ask Ichirō not to do, and why?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō notices all at once, in a single dramatic moment, how much he has changed. **T / F**
2. Dario visited Japan once, for about a week, after finishing high school. **T / F**
3. Beatrice asks Ichirō to fill out extra paperwork before she will help him. **T / F**
4. Beatrice's note tells Ichirō he is entitled to an end-of-year bonus. **T / F**
5. Vanni believes Japanese customers won't care whether an Italian restaurant has Italian staff. **T / F**
6. Sabrina was homesick for the entire year she spent in Lyon. **T / F**
7. The Brigante family offers Ichirō a gift of money with no strings attached. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō feels Florence has become somewhere he is only visiting. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Reduced time clauses ("The week he realised...")

The chapter lists small realisations using a reduced pattern, without "when": "The week he realised... The morning he gave directions..." Complete these sentences using the same pattern.

1. _____ he first cooked a whole service alone, he felt ready for the first time.
2. _____ she finally understood the joke in Italian, she knew she was making progress.
3. (your own sentence in this pattern) _____

B. Modals for advice and confident prediction

Vanni gives advice and makes a confident prediction using modal verbs ("You should know this... You've got time. You'll figure it out."). Complete each sentence with should / will / won't.

1. You _____ think carefully about how to earn customers' trust.
2. Don't worry — you _____ figure it out eventually.
3. Some customers _____ trust a foreign restaurant without staff from that country.

C. Hedging and softening language

The chapter softens statements carefully: "nothing official," "not much," "not large, but real." Complete the sentences below using similar hedging language.

1. It's _____ a promise, just an idea we're considering.
2. The amount isn't _____, but it will help.
3. (your own hedged sentence) _____

D. Present Perfect for change over time

Complete each sentence with the Present Perfect or Past Perfect form of the verb in brackets, to show change over a long period.

1. Ichirō _____ (be) at I tre briganti for well over a year.
2. He _____ (learn) to read Dario better than before.
3. Florence _____ (stop) being a place he was just visiting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Each member of the Brigante family and their circle supports Ichirō differently — Dario with quiet companionship, Beatrice with practical help, Vanni with blunt strategic advice, Sabrina with shared time, Angela with a financial offer. Which of these forms of support do you value most in your own life?
2. Vanni raises a real concern: that Japanese customers might not trust an Italian restaurant without Italian staff. Do you think this concern is fair or outdated? How might a restaurant address it?
3. Angela is very precise that the family's offer is "not a gift" but "an investment." Why do you think this distinction matters so much to both her and Ichirō?
4. Sabrina says about her time in Lyon, "You can't stay away from it forever," referring to home. Do you agree that people are eventually pulled back to where they're from? Is this true for everyone?
5. The chapter ends with Ichirō noticing that Florence has stopped feeling like somewhere he's visiting, even as he prepares to leave it. Have you ever felt attached to a place you knew you would eventually leave? How did you handle that feeling?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Ichirō will solve the "trust" problem Vanni raises about his future restaurant? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: An Unexpected Offer

Setting: Outside a workplace, at the end of a shift.

Roles: A colleague making a careful, precisely worded offer of financial help, and the person receiving it.

Task: The colleague should be clear that the offer is not charity but a genuine investment or loan, using careful, precise language. The other person should respond honestly, including at least one clarifying question.

Scenario B: The Difficult Question

Setting: A quiet moment at the end of a working day.

Roles: A blunt, practically-minded colleague (like Vanni), and someone with a long-term plan that has an unsolved problem.

Task: The colleague raises a real, difficult question about the plan, cheerfully but directly. The other person admits they don't have a full answer yet, and the colleague reassures them without dismissing the problem.

Extension: perform Scenario A again, this time with the person receiving the offer turning it down politely — practise declining an offer of help without causing offence.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a paragraph (80–120 words) describing a moment when you suddenly realised how much you had changed, grown, or improved at something over time.
2. Write Ichirō's reply to Vanni's question (100–150 words): "So what are you going to do about it?" — a first attempt at an answer, even an uncertain one.
3. Write a short letter or note (80–120 words) from Beatrice to Ichirō, explaining the bonus in her own words.
4. Describe, in your own words, a person in your life who shows they care through actions rather than words — like Dario or Beatrice in this chapter.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used Present Perfect or Past Perfect correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: Wholesale markets in the Italian food supply chain

Many Italian cities have a mercato generale (general wholesale market) where restaurants, shops, and other food businesses buy produce, meat, and other supplies directly, often very early in the morning, sometimes bypassing normal delivery schedules when needed. Building a personal relationship with market vendors is still common among smaller, independent restaurants.

Italy: Employment contracts and administrative diligence

In Italy, employment relationships — including for foreign workers — are typically governed by detailed written contracts covering pay, entitlements such as bonuses, and other conditions, with specific rules that can vary depending on the sector and type of business. Small businesses often rely on one trusted person to manage this administration carefully on behalf of the owner and staff, much as Beatrice does in this chapter.

Japan: Perceptions of "authenticity" in foreign restaurants

In Japan, restaurants serving foreign cuisine are sometimes judged partly on whether their staff, and particularly their chefs, are from the country the food originates from, with some customers associating this more closely with authenticity than the food itself. This expectation is not universal or fixed, and many successful foreign-cuisine restaurants in Japan are run entirely by Japanese staff, but it remains a real consideration that business owners sometimes plan around.

Japan: U-turn migration — returning to one's hometown

In Japan, the term U-turn (Uターン) describes a common pattern in which someone leaves their hometown, often a smaller regional city, to study or work elsewhere — sometimes in Tokyo or abroad — and later returns to settle back in that hometown, bringing new skills or experience with them. This pattern is widely recognised and even encouraged by some regional governments seeking to counter population decline outside major cities.

Chapter 10: Goodbyes

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Think about a time you had to say goodbye to a job, a school, or a group of people you had grown close to. What made that goodbye easy or difficult?
2. Different people say goodbye in different ways — some with words, some with a gift, some with a shared meal, some with practical help. Which of these feels most natural to you?
3. If you were about to leave a place you had lived for almost two years to start something new somewhere else, what would you feel most nervous about, and what would you feel most excited about?
4. Look at these words before you read: notice (at work), severance pay, arithmetic, accumulated, boasting. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. notice (at work)	A. proud or exaggerated talk about an achievement
2. severance pay	B. formal warning given before leaving a job
3. accumulated	C. money paid to an employee when their job ends
4. boasting	D. gathered gradually over time
5. arithmetic	E. basic mathematical calculation

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 10. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

accumulated (v., past of "accumulate") — *gathered gradually, in increasing amounts, over time*

arithmetic (n.) — *basic mathematical calculation, especially addition, subtraction, and similar operations*

boasting (v., -ing form of "boast") — *talking with excessive pride about an achievement*

consistent (adj.) — *always behaving or happening in the same way*

notice (n., employment, "give notice") — *formal advance warning given to an employer before leaving a job*

overcomplicate (v.) — *to make something more complicated than it needs to be*

pension (n.) — *a regular payment made to someone after they retire from work, often built up through contributions during their career*

producer (n., of food or drink) — *a person or company that grows, makes, or manufactures a product*

revision (n.) — *the act of reviewing and going over something again, often to reinforce or check it*

settled (adj., "as if this were settled") — *decided; no longer needing further discussion*

severance pay (n. phrase) — *money paid to an employee when their employment ends, often based on length of service*

summary (n.) — *a short statement giving the main points of something*

worth backing (adj. phrase) — *deserving of financial or personal support, especially in a venture or plan*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. What decision does Ichirō finally act on in December, and what has to be true financially for this to work?
2. How does Ichirō give his notice to Felice, and how does Felice respond?
3. What does Ichirō do quietly, in his final weeks, regarding the dishes he has learned?
4. What does Beatrice tell Ichirō about on his last Monday?
5. What does Dario say to Ichirō as they carry a box to the street, and how does Ichirō respond?
6. What gift does Vanni give Ichirō, and what does he say about it?
7. What does Sabrina give Ichirō, and what has she written in it?
8. What does Felice say to Ichirō on his final morning? Summarise his advice.
9. What does Angela say and do when she says goodbye to Ichirō?
10. How does the chapter end, and what is Ichirō thinking about as he waits for his flight?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō decides to leave suddenly, without thinking it through financially. **T / F**
2. Felice reacts with surprise and hesitation when Ichirō gives his notice. **T / F**
3. The Brigante family organises a large, formal farewell party for Ichirō. **T / F**
4. Vanni gives Ichirō a bottle of olive oil as a farewell gift. **T / F**
5. Sabrina's notebook contains a full recipe for Ichirō to follow. **T / F**
6. Felice tells Ichirō not to overcomplicate things once he is in Japan. **T / F**
7. Angela says goodbye to Ichirō by waving from a window. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō has boarded his flight to Yonago. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Farewell and leave-taking expressions

The chapter uses natural, understated English for saying goodbye ("I will", "Come back and eat", "Stay in touch", "Send me a photo", "Go on, then"). Match each farewell expression to its function.

1. "Stay in touch."	A. asking someone to keep in contact
2. "Send me a photo."	B. gently telling someone it's time to leave
3. "Go on, then."	C. requesting proof or news of a future event

B. First Conditional for real future arrangements

The chapter uses the First Conditional for realistic future plans ("End of January... If that works"). Complete each sentence with the correct form.

1. If the loan _____ (come through), Ichirō _____ (open) his restaurant in the spring.
2. If he _____ (need) help, the Brigante family _____ (invest) more.
3. (your own sentence) If _____, I _____.

C. Reporting promises and intentions

Rewrite each direct promise from the chapter as a reported sentence, e.g. "I will" (he said) → He promised that he would.

1. "I will," Ichirō said to Dario, about coming back to eat. → He promised _____.
2. "Actually stay in touch," Alberto said, and Ichirō agreed. → Ichirō promised _____.

D. Compound descriptive adjectives

The chapter describes the city as "winter-grey." Form your own compound adjectives by combining a noun or adjective with a colour or quality, following this pattern (e.g. ice-cold, sky-blue).

1. The sea was _____-blue.
2. Her hands were _____-cold after the walk.
3. (your own compound adjective) _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Each person says goodbye to Ichirō in a different way — a handshake, a gift, a notebook, a hug, a dinner. What do you think each gesture reveals about that person's relationship with him?
2. Sabrina gives Ichirō a notebook with a list of "twelve things worth remembering about Italian food," rather than a recipe. Why do you think she chooses to give him ideas rather than instructions?
3. Felice's final advice is short and practical: "Don't overcomplicate things... find someone to fix your groceries situation." What do you think this brief style of advice, after almost two years together, tells us about their relationship?
4. The Brigante family does not make a "formal occasion" of Ichirō's departure, and the text says he was "glad of it." Do you think quiet, low-key goodbyes are usually better than big, dramatic ones? Why or why not?
5. At the very end of the chapter, Ichirō thinks about the restaurant that exists only in "a notebook and in the list of dishes in his head and in a small investment." How do you feel about starting something important based only on preparation and belief, without any guarantee of success?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict will be the biggest challenge for Ichirō once he arrives back in Yonago? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Giving Your Notice

Setting: A workplace, before the start of a shift.

Roles: An employee who has decided to leave, and their employer.

Task: The employee explains they are leaving, gives a leaving date, and briefly explains why. The employer responds calmly and asks one or two practical questions about the handover.

Scenario B: The Understated Goodbye

Setting: Outside a workplace, on someone's last day.

Roles: Two colleagues who have worked closely together for a long time.

Task: Act out a short, natural goodbye — without excessive emotion — that still shows real warmth. Include at least one practical gift or piece of advice, and one promise to stay in touch.

Extension: perform Scenario B again as a much longer, more emotional farewell, and discuss as a class which version felt more genuine, and why.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Sabrina's "twelve things worth remembering about Italian food" — or as many as you can think of (at least five), in the style of short, memorable notes rather than full recipes.
2. Write a short diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view, on the flight from Florence to Yonago.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a meaningful goodbye you have experienced, and what made it memorable.
4. Write a short farewell card (50–80 words) from one colleague to another, in the understated style of the Brigante family rather than an overly emotional one.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used the First Conditional correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: TFR — severance pay in Italian employment

In Italy, employees are legally entitled to a payment known as TFR (trattamento di fine rapporto), a form of deferred severance pay that accumulates throughout someone's employment and is paid out when they leave a job, regardless of the reason for leaving. Beatrice's reference to a "final pay, severance pay and end-of-year calculation" reflects this standard, legally required part of Italian employment practice.

Italy: Single-estate Tuscan olive oil

Tuscany is well known for high-quality, often small-batch olive oil produced by individual estates or producers, sometimes sold in limited quantities and rarely exported at scale outside the region. Locals often develop a preference for oil from a specific, trusted small producer, treating it as a distinctive product with real regional character rather than an interchangeable pantry staple.

Japan: Small business loans and financing for entrepreneurs

In Japan, aspiring small business owners often seek financing through a combination of personal savings, family support, and loans from institutions such as the Japan Finance Corporation, which offers government-backed loans specifically designed to support new and small businesses. A clear business plan and demonstrated financial groundwork, such as Ichirō is shown preparing, are typically required before such loans are approved.

Japan: "Nishiki o kazaru" — returning home having succeeded

There is a well-known Japanese expression, nishiki o kazaru ("to return in brocade," i.e. dressed in fine silk), describing the idea of returning to one's hometown after having achieved success elsewhere. The phrase reflects a long-standing cultural value placed on bringing honour or achievement back to the community one came from, rather than simply moving on and leaving it behind.

Chapter 11: The Ando Restaurant

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. In many countries, small family shops and restaurants sometimes close permanently when the owner retires and no one in the family wants to take over. Have you seen this happen anywhere you know?
2. Imagine taking over a business space that someone else ran for forty years. How might you want to keep some things the same, and change others?
3. When applying for a bank loan to start a business, what kinds of questions do you think a bank might ask, and what documents might they want to see?
4. Look at these words before you read: renovation, collateral, entrepreneur, vacant, reconcile. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. vacant	A. empty; not currently occupied or in use
2. collateral	B. property or assets promised as security for a loan
3. entrepreneur	C. someone who starts and runs their own business
4. commitment	D. a serious promise or dedication to something
5. reconcile	E. to make two different things or ideas fit together

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 11. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

agenda (n., figurative, "no particular agenda") — *a hidden purpose or set of intentions behind an action*

aligned (v., past of "align") — *arranged in a straight, tidy line or order*

catastrophic (adj.) — *extremely bad or disastrous*

collateral (n., finance) — *property or assets promised to a lender as security for a loan*

commitment (n.) — *a serious promise or dedication to a course of action*

duly (adv.) — *in a proper or expected way, especially referring to a formal process*

entrepreneur (n.) — *a person who starts and runs their own business, especially one involving some risk*

prep counter (n. phrase, kitchen) — *the surface in a professional kitchen used for preparing ingredients before cooking*

reconcile (v.) — *to make two different things, ideas, or memories fit together without conflict*

renovation (n.) — *the process of repairing or improving a building*

revitalisation (n.) — *the process of bringing new energy, activity, or life back to something, such as an area or economy*

take on (v. phrase, a property or responsibility) — *to accept responsibility for something, such as a business or property*

vacant (adj.) — *empty; not currently occupied or in use*

variables (n.) — *factors that can change and affect a result or outcome*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How does Ichirō first hear about the vacant restaurant space?
2. Describe the atmosphere of the empty restaurant when Ichirō first sees it.
3. How does Suzune, Genzo's wife, react to Ichirō's plan for the space?
4. What is the "defining decision" Ichirō makes about the renovation, and how does it compare to I tre briganti's layout?
5. Who visits the restaurant during the renovation, and what does he say about the changes?
6. What documents does Ichirō bring to his bank appointment?
7. What problem does the bank manager, Harada, identify with Ichirō's loan request?
8. What alternative does Harada suggest, and what conditions come with it?
9. Why does Harada say Ichirō being "from here" helps his application?
10. What does Ichirō notice in his pocket as he puts the notepad away, and why might this detail matter?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Genzo Ando is retiring after forty years running the restaurant. **T / F**
2. Genzo's son plans to take over the restaurant himself. **T / F**
3. Suzune had tried Italian food many times before meeting Ichirō. **T / F**
4. Ichirō decides to keep the same closed kitchen layout as I tre briganti. **T / F**
5. Genzo Ando is upset and disapproving when he sees the renovated space. **T / F**
6. The bank immediately approves Ichirō's full loan request without any issues. **T / F**
7. Harada suggests Ichirō look into regional revitalisation programmes. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō believes the numbers could still work. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. "Would need/require" for conditional necessity

Harada explains a financial requirement using "would need" ("we would need significantly more collateral"). Complete each sentence with "would need" or "would require."

1. For that size of loan, the bank _____ more collateral.
2. To apply for the programme, Ichirō _____ to show a commitment to the area.
3. (your own sentence) _____

B. Degree modifiers with comparatives

The chapter uses adverbs to show the size of a difference ("significantly more," "smaller than," "not entirely unfamiliar"). Complete each sentence with a suitable degree modifier: significantly / slightly / considerably.

1. The loan he was offered was _____ smaller than the one he had requested.
2. Genzo was _____ smaller than Ichirō had expected.
3. The new kitchen layout was _____ different from the old one.

C. Listing three short qualities without "and"

The chapter often lists three short adjectives without joining them with "and" (e.g. "Cold, grey, familiar"). Practise this technique by describing the following in exactly three words each.

1. A place you know well: _____, _____, _____.
2. How you felt on a first day somewhere new: _____, _____, _____.

D. Business and finance vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with the correct word: collateral / grant / loan / commitment.

1. A _____ is money you borrow and must pay back, usually with interest.
2. A _____ is money given to support a project, which usually does not need to be paid back.
3. _____ is property or savings offered as a guarantee for a loan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Genzo Ando says, about the renovated space, "That's fine. Different is fine." Why do you think it might be difficult, or surprisingly easy, for a previous owner to see their old business changed by someone new?
2. Ichirō chooses an open kitchen with no wall at all, the opposite of I tre briganti's closed kitchen. Why do you think this decision matters so much to him, based on what you know from earlier chapters?
3. The bank manager Harada says that Ichirō being "from here" helps his loan application. Do you think local roots should matter in decisions like this? Can you think of situations where it helps, or where it might be unfair to outsiders?
4. Ichirō is bringing Italian food to his own hometown, rather than the reverse situation of being a foreigner bringing food to a new country (as in the earlier Florence chapters). How do you think being an "insider" opening something unfamiliar might be different from being an "outsider" doing the same thing?
5. When the loan turns out to be smaller than expected, Ichirō doesn't panic — he does the arithmetic again and looks for another way. How do you usually react when a plan doesn't work out exactly as expected?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict will be the biggest challenge Ichirō faces in opening and running his restaurant in Yonago? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Negotiating the Lease

Setting: A vacant shop or restaurant space, recently closed by its previous owner.

Roles: A person hoping to take over the space, and the previous owner (or their spouse/family member).

Task: The newcomer explains their plans for the space, respectfully acknowledging its history. The owner asks questions and eventually agrees on a fair arrangement.

Scenario B: The Bank Appointment

Setting: A bank manager's office.

Roles: An entrepreneur applying for a business loan, and a bank manager.

Task: The entrepreneur presents their plan and finances. The bank manager identifies a problem (such as insufficient collateral) and suggests an alternative option, such as a grant or a smaller loan, with conditions attached.

Extension: in Scenario B, the bank manager should ask at least one unexpected clarifying question before revealing the problem — practise handling a question you weren't fully prepared for.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a description (80–120 words) of an empty room or space that used to belong to someone else, using details that suggest its history.
2. Write Genzo Ando's thoughts (80–120 words) as he stands in his old restaurant, now renovated, for the first time.
3. Write a short paragraph (100–150 words) explaining, as if in a loan or grant application, why you are committed to a particular place, project, or community.
4. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the day he signs the lease for his new restaurant space.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used comparatives with degree modifiers correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Shōtengai — covered shopping streets

A shōtengai is a traditional Japanese shopping street, often covered with a roof or arcade, lined with small, independently owned shops and restaurants, many family-run for generations. Once the commercial heart of a neighbourhood, many shōtengai in smaller cities have seen shops close in recent decades as populations age and shopping habits shift toward larger stores and online retail.

Japan: Succession problems in small family businesses

Japan faces a well-documented issue often called "jigyō shōkei" (business succession) difficulty, in which the owners of small, often excellent family businesses retire with no family member or successor willing or available to continue running them, leading to closures even when the business itself was successful. This has become a significant policy concern in regional and rural areas in particular.

Japan: Regional revitalisation programmes

Under a broader national policy sometimes called chihō sōsei ("regional revitalisation"), Japanese national and local governments offer grants, subsidies, and support programmes specifically aimed at encouraging people to move to, or return to, smaller regional cities and towns to start businesses or take up local employment, in an effort to counter population decline outside major urban centres.

Japan: Collateral and lending practices for small businesses

Japanese banks have traditionally placed considerable emphasis on collateral and personal guarantees when lending to small business owners, which can make it harder for entrepreneurs without significant assets to secure large loans on their own. In recent years, government-backed loan schemes and revitalisation grants have been developed partly to address this gap for entrepreneurs in specific circumstances, such as returning to a home region.

Chapter 12: Villa Bardini

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. If you were decorating a restaurant, café, or shop to reflect a place or time that was important to you personally, what objects or colours might you choose?
2. Imagine opening a restaurant serving food from a country you lived in and loved, but deciding not to use any of the famous, well-known dish names from that country's cuisine. Why might someone make that choice?
3. Setting up a new restaurant means finding reliable suppliers for many different ingredients. What kinds of suppliers do you think a restaurant needs, beyond just food itself?
4. Look at these words before you read: sufficient, mounted, reliable, oversell, sourced. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. sufficient	A. fixed or attached to a wall or surface
2. mounted	B. enough for a particular purpose
3. reliable	C. able to be trusted to do what is expected, consistently
4. oversell	D. to describe something as better than it really is
5. sourced	E. obtained something from a particular supplier or place

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 12. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

bones (n., figurative, of a building) — *the basic structure or framework of something, before it is finished*

ceramics (n.) — *objects made from clay that has been shaped and hardened, such as tiles or pottery*

efficient (adj., of a person) — *able to do things quickly and without wasting time or effort*

inherited (v., past of "inherit", business context) — *received or took over from a previous owner, without actively seeking it out*

mounted (v., past of "mount") — *fixed or attached something to a wall or surface for display*

nosily (adv.) — *in a way that shows too much curious interest in other people's business*

oversell (v.) — *to describe something as better, larger, or more impressive than it really is*

rate sheet (n. phrase) — *a printed document showing the prices charged for different goods or services*

reliable (adj.) — *able to be trusted to do what is expected, consistently*

reproduction (n., of art) — *a printed copy of an original painting, photograph, or map*

reversed (adj., of text or image) — *shown backwards, as when viewed from the opposite side of a transparent surface*

settled (v., past of "settle", of a schedule) — *arranged and fixed, so it no longer needs to change*

solidly built (adj. phrase) — *physically strong and sturdy in build*

sourced (v., past of "source") — *obtained from a particular supplier or location*

sufficient (adj.) — *enough for a particular purpose*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How many tables does the finished dining room have, and how is the kitchen arranged?
2. What does the sign above the entrance say, and how is it designed?
3. What objects from Florence does Ichirō bring to decorate the restaurant?
4. What colour scheme does he choose, and why does he choose these particular colours?
5. What different suppliers does Ichirō arrange for the restaurant? List at least three.
6. Who is Matsumoto Makoto, and where does he travel from to make deliveries?
7. What does Ichirō ask Makoto, and how does Makoto respond?
8. Who arrives instead of Makoto on the Wednesday delivery, and what does she explain?
9. How does Ichirō describe his menu — how many courses, and what makes the dishes unusual?
10. How does Ichirō feel on the evening before opening, according to the final lines of the chapter?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. The restaurant's dining room has fifty tables. **T / F**
2. The restaurant's name is displayed in dark green letters on a cream background. **T / F**
3. Ichirō finds an Italian olive oil importer in Yonago whose prices fit easily within his budget. **T / F**
4. Matsumoto Makoto travels from Sakaiminato to deliver fish. **T / F**
5. Makoto recommends buying first-catch crab as soon as the season opens. **T / F**
6. The young woman who delivers fish on Wednesday is Makoto's daughter. **T / F**
7. Ichirō's menu includes well-known dishes such as carbonara and amatriciana. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō feels that both he and the restaurant are ready. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Past Perfect for background before a described moment

The chapter uses Past Perfect to explain what Ichirō had already done before the scene it describes ("He had brought things back from Florence..."). Complete each sentence with the Past Perfect form of the verb in brackets.

1. He _____ (spend) more time than expected on the details.
2. He _____ (find) an Italian ceramics supplier for the counter tiles.
3. He _____ (save), _____ (plan), and _____ (cook) his way toward this moment.

B. Parallel sentence structure for emphasis (anaphora)

The chapter repeats a sentence pattern for effect: "He had saved for it. He had planned for it. He had cooked his way toward it." Write three short sentences of your own using this repeated pattern, about something you have worked toward.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. Asking for and giving recommendations

Ichirō and Makoto use natural functional language to ask for and give professional advice ("What do you recommend?" / Makoto told him specifically). Complete the exchange below.

1. "What _____ you _____ (recommend) for a beginner?" Ichirō asked.
2. "I'd _____ starting with something simple," Makoto said.

D. Describing colours and materials

The chapter describes a colour scheme using precise, evocative language ("cream and dark warm green and a deep red"). Complete the descriptions below using similarly specific colour or material words.

1. The walls were painted a _____ colour, somewhere between _____ and _____.
2. The counter was made of _____, with _____ tiles along the edge.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Ichirō fills the restaurant with objects from Florence — prints, wine labels, a map of Tuscany. Why do you think physical objects like these can help make a place feel like somewhere else, or feel more personal?
2. Ichirō decides not to include famous, well-known Italian dish names like carbonara or amatriciana on his menu. What do you think are the risks and the benefits of this decision?
3. Matsumoto Makoto is described as specific, practical, and someone who "did not oversell anything." What do you think makes someone trustworthy in a business relationship, based on this description?
4. The brief appearance of Makoto's daughter is a small moment in the chapter. Why do you think an author might include such a short, seemingly unimportant scene in a story?
5. Ichirō reflects that he has "carried" this restaurant with him across Tuscany, through Frankfurt, and over the sea. What long-term goal have you carried with you through different times or places in your own life?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Yonago customers will react to Ichirō's unusual, non-traditional approach to Italian food? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Negotiating with a Supplier

Setting: A restaurant, before opening, at a table used for meetings.

Roles: A new restaurant owner, and a supplier (of fish, produce, or another ingredient).

Task: The owner asks about products, prices, and availability. The supplier gives specific, honest recommendations without overselling. They agree on terms by the end of the conversation.

Scenario B: Why Isn't This on the Menu?

Setting: The dining room of a newly opened restaurant.

Roles: A curious customer, and the restaurant owner or chef.

Task: The customer asks why the menu doesn't include a famous, expected dish from that cuisine. The owner explains their reasoning calmly and confidently, without being defensive.

Extension: in Scenario B, the customer should become gradually more convinced over the course of the conversation — practise showing a change of opinion through dialogue.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a short menu (80–120 words) for Villa Bardini, including three dishes with brief, simple descriptions, in Ichirō's non-traditional style.
2. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the night before opening, describing how the finished restaurant looks and how he feels.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) describing a room or space that reflects someone's personal history through its decoration, objects, or colours.
4. Continue the brief conversation between Ichirō and Makoto's daughter (80–120 words), imagining what might be said if she stayed a little longer.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used Past Perfect correctly where needed, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: JA — the Japan Agricultural Cooperatives system

JA (Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, or Nōkyō) is a nationwide network of farming cooperatives that plays a central role in distributing produce from local farmers to shops, restaurants, and markets across Japan. A restaurant sourcing vegetables through its local JA branch, as in this chapter, is a very typical and reliable way for a small business to access fresh, seasonal produce grown in the surrounding region.

Japan: Sakaiminato and the San'in fishing industry

Sakaiminato, a port town in Tottori Prefecture near Yonago, is one of Japan's most important fishing ports, especially well known for snow crab (particularly matsuba-gani) and bluefin tuna landed by its fleet. Restaurants throughout the San'in region often prize a direct relationship with local fish suppliers from Sakaiminato as a mark of freshness and regional authenticity.

Italy: Regional identity and "protected" dish names

Certain classic Italian dishes, such as carbonara and amatriciana, are strongly associated with specific regions (in these cases, Rome and Lazio) and are often defended fiercely by Italians against variations considered inauthentic. Because these dish names carry such strong, specific expectations, a chef choosing not to use them — even while cooking in a related style — can be a deliberate way of avoiding direct comparison to a fixed, well-known standard.

Italy: Wine labels and regional identity

Italian wine labels typically indicate the wine's region of origin and classification (such as DOC or DOCG, which guarantee certain standards of origin and production method) prominently alongside the producer's name. For many Italians working in food and hospitality, a wall of familiar wine labels can evoke a strong sense of specific regional identity, in the same way a map or a photograph might.

Chapter 13: Opening Night

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Imagine opening a new business in a space that used to belong to someone well known and respected in the local area. Do you think former customers or the previous owner might feel differently about visiting than completely new customers?
2. If a restaurant serves food that looks unfamiliar or unexpected to customers, what could staff do to help nervous or confused customers feel more comfortable?
3. Think about the difference between spending a long, relaxed time explaining something to one person, and having to explain the same thing quickly to many different people. What changes?
4. Look at these words before you read: word of mouth, consistently, recalibrating, decisive, rehearsed. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. word of mouth	A. information passed between people through conversation, not advertising
2. consistently	B. in the same reliable way every time
3. decisive	C. showing a clear, confident decision
4. rehearsed	D. practised and prepared in advance, rather than spontaneous
5. context	E. background information that helps something make sense

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 13. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

clarifying (adj., -ing form of "clarify") — *making something clearer or easier to understand*

consistently (adv.) — *in the same reliable way, on every occasion*

context (n.) — *background information that helps something make sense*

decisive (adj.) — *showing a clear, confident decision, without hesitation*

dissatisfaction (n.) — *a feeling of not being pleased or satisfied with something*

full review (n. phrase, figurative) — *a complete and meaningful judgement, even if expressed in very few words*

methodically (adv.) — *in an organised, careful, step-by-step way*

miscommunication (n.) — *a failure to understand or communicate something clearly between people*

on the house (adj. phrase) — *provided free of charge by the restaurant or business itself*

pressed (v., past of "press", of a hand) — *held or squeezed briefly, as a gesture of thanks or warmth*

protested (v., past of "protest") — *objected to something, especially politely or mildly*

recalibrating (v., -ing form of "recalibrate") — *adjusting your understanding or expectations after new information*

rehearsed (adj.) — *practised and prepared in advance, rather than spontaneous*

uncertain (adj.) — *not completely sure or confident*

word of mouth (n. phrase) — *information or reputation passed between people through conversation, not advertising*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How did Ichirō advertise the restaurant's opening?
2. How does the open kitchen affect the way Ichirō experiences the opening night service?
3. What small problems occur during opening night, and how does Ichirō handle them?
4. How does the restaurant perform in the weeks following opening night?
5. What does Ichirō notice about some customers' reactions to the menu?
6. What gift does Suzune bring when she and Genzo visit, and how does she present it?
7. What question does Suzune ask about the menu, and how does Ichirō respond?
8. How do Genzo and Suzune each react to the food, in their own way?
9. What happens at the end of Genzo and Suzune's meal, and what do they do afterwards?
10. What problem does Ichirō recognise after the busy Friday evening with the two women at table nine?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. The restaurant advertises mainly through a large newspaper campaign. **T / F**
2. Opening night goes perfectly, with no problems of any kind. **T / F**
3. Suzune brings a box of mochi from a shop that has been in Yonago for sixty years. **T / F**
4. Suzune asks why there is no carbonara on the menu. **T / F**
5. Genzo says nothing at all during or after the meal. **T / F**
6. Ichirō tells Genzo and Suzune their meal is on the house. **T / F**
7. Genzo and Suzune never return to the restaurant after that first visit. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō has already found a solution to the problem of explaining the menu during busy service. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Contrast connectors (whereas / while / unlike / in contrast)

Combine each pair of sentences about the two different customer experiences using a contrast connector.

1. Genzo and Suzune had time for a full explanation. The two women at table nine did not. → _____
2. Suzune asked questions and grew more comfortable. The two women stayed uncertain throughout. → _____

B. Modals of ability and limitation (could / couldn't)

Complete each sentence about what Ichirō could or couldn't do during a busy service.

1. He _____ give every table the same personal attention as Genzo and Suzune.
2. During a quiet Tuesday, he _____ take the time to explain each dish properly.
3. On a busy Friday, the kitchen _____ afford any delay.

C. "Not X, but Y" for describing imperfect success

The chapter describes the restaurant's early weeks as "Not perfectly, not yet, but consistently." Complete these sentences using a similar pattern.

1. The service was not _____, but it was _____.
2. His Italian was not _____, but it was _____.

D. Idiomatic expressions

Match each idiom to its meaning.

1. word of mouth	A. information passed between people, not advertising
2. on the house	B. free, provided by the restaurant itself
3. a full review	C. a complete judgement, even in very few words

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Ichirō finds "something clarifying about being seen" while cooking in the open kitchen. Why do you think being watched while you work might feel clarifying, rather than simply stressful?
2. Genzo says only "It's good," but the text explains that "from Genzo, this was a full review." How do you learn to read someone's true opinion when they don't express it directly?
3. Suzune needs time, explanation, and personal attention to feel comfortable with the unfamiliar menu, but the two women at table nine don't get this and leave "without any particular expression." Do you think first impressions of unfamiliar food are mostly about the food itself, or about how it's introduced?
4. Ichirō realises he "could not do that on a Friday evening" — give every customer the same personal explanation. Have you ever experienced, or worked in, a situation where something that works well in a small or slow setting becomes difficult at a larger scale?
5. Genzo and Suzune return "the following Tuesday. And the Tuesday after that." What do you think this pattern of repeat visits shows about their real opinion of the restaurant, beyond what they said in words?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Ichirō will solve the problem of explaining his menu to customers during busy service? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Former Owners Visit

Setting: A restaurant that has taken over a space from a long-established previous business.

Roles: The new owner, and the former owner (with a spouse or family member), visiting for the first time.

Task: The new owner explains the changes they have made, respectfully. The former owner asks questions and gives their honest, restrained reaction by the end of the meal.

Scenario B: Explaining the Menu Quickly

Setting: A busy restaurant during a fast-moving service.

Roles: A server, and two customers who are uncertain about an unfamiliar menu item.

Task: The server must explain the dish clearly and quickly, in only two or three sentences, without the luxury of a long conversation. The customers decide whether to order it.

Extension: perform Scenario B twice — once with a rushed, unclear explanation, and once with a short but effective one — and discuss as a class what made the difference.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a short restaurant review (80–120 words) from Suzune's point of view, after several visits to Villa Bardini.
2. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the night of the busy Friday service, reflecting on the problem he has noticed.
3. Write a short, clear menu explanation (40–60 words) for an unfamiliar dish, suitable for a server to say quickly during a busy service.
4. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time something that worked well on a small scale became more difficult once it had to work for more people at once.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used contrast connectors or modals of ability correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Mochi and long-established local speciality shops

Mochi, a soft rice cake often filled with sweet bean paste, is a traditional Japanese confection frequently given as a small gift, especially from a shop with a long, well-known local history — sixty years in one location, as in this chapter, would be considered a mark of genuine local heritage rather than simply age. Bringing a gift from such a shop is a common way of honouring an occasion or a person.

Japan: The value of the regular customer

In Japanese hospitality culture, a *jōren* (regular customer) who returns to the same restaurant repeatedly, often ordering without much discussion, is considered a particularly meaningful sign of approval — arguably more meaningful than an enthusiastic first-time review, since it reflects a sustained, considered choice rather than a single reaction.

Japan: Reading restrained reactions

As in earlier parts of this story, calm, minimal reactions in Japanese social and business settings often carry real meaning rather than indicating a lack of interest. Eating "methodically" and saying little, as Genzo does in this chapter, is a common and unremarkable way of showing quiet, genuine engagement, distinct from actual displeasure.

Italy: "Offerto dalla casa" — a meal on the house

In Italian restaurant culture, offering a dish or a small extra course *offerto dalla casa* ("offered by the house") is a well-established gesture of hospitality, often used to mark a special occasion, welcome a valued guest, or show appreciation to a loyal customer, rather than being seen as a purely commercial discount.

Chapter 14: The Review

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Think about the difference between a review that says something is "bad" and a review that says something is "unusual" or leaves the writer "uncertain." Which do you think would be more difficult for a business owner to respond to, and why?
2. Have you ever heard secondhand that someone had criticised something you made or did, without hearing it directly from that person? How did it feel to hear it this way?
3. Can food, music, or art be genuinely authentic to its tradition, but still feel unfamiliar or strange to people expecting something more traditional-looking? Can you think of an example?
4. Look at these words before you read: novelty, break even, unconventional, legible, recognition. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. novelty	A. the quality of being new and therefore interesting
2. break even	B. to earn exactly enough to cover costs, with no profit or loss
3. unconventional	C. not following the usual or expected style
4. legible	D. clear enough to be read or understood easily
5. recognition	E. the act of identifying something as familiar

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 14. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

alarmed (adj.) — *worried or frightened by something unexpected*

break even (v. phrase, business) — *to earn exactly enough money to cover costs, with no profit or loss*

fixed point (n. phrase, figurative) — *something reliable and unchanging that other things can be measured or planned around*

flatness (n., figurative, of writing) — *a lack of energy, feeling, or genuine engagement in a piece of writing*

footing (n., "find its footing") — *a stable, secure position, especially early in a new venture*

legible (adj., figurative) — *able to be read, understood, or interpreted clearly*

novelty (n.) — *the quality of being new and interesting, often temporarily*

recognition (n.) — *the act of identifying something as familiar or already known*

settled (adj., of an opinion or habit) — *fixed and confident, no longer changing or being questioned*

unconventional (adj.) — *not following the usual or expected approach or style*

went through the motions (v. phrase, idiom) — *did something without real feeling, energy, or genuine engagement*

well-appointed (adj.) — *furnished or equipped to a good, comfortable standard*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How does July compare to June for the restaurant, and how does Ichirō feel about this?
2. How have Genzo and Suzune's visits changed over the weeks? What does this suggest about their relationship with the restaurant?
3. What does Keiko tell Ichirō she heard, and how does he react?
4. What single word from Keiko's comment stays with Ichirō, and why does it bother him particularly?
5. How does the review describe the restaurant's atmosphere and service?
6. What does the review say about the food and menu, in the journalist's own words?
7. Why does Ichirō say the review is "not wrong, from the journalist's perspective"?
8. What is the difference Ichirō identifies between a "bad" review and this particular review?
9. What does Ichirō think about, remembering his evening with Suzune and the risotto?
10. What problem does Ichirō recognise by the end of the chapter, and what does he still not know?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō is alarmed and panicked by the quieter business in July. **T / F**
2. Genzo and Suzune now order without looking at the menu. **T / F**
3. Keiko tells Ichirō directly that she personally thinks the restaurant is fake. **T / F**
4. The magazine review describes the cooking or service as being of poor quality. **T / F**
5. The review says visitors expecting classic Italian dishes may find the menu surprising. **T / F**
6. Ichirō feels the review contains specific, correctable complaints, like a badly seasoned dish.
T / F
7. Ichirō concludes that his personal explanation and attention is something he could give to every table, every night. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō has already decided exactly what to change. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Reading between the lines: interpreting polite criticism

Reviews often use polite, indirect words instead of direct criticism. Match each polite review phrase to what it more directly suggests.

1. "an unusual interpretation"	A. this is not what most customers will expect
2. "visitors... will find the menu surprising"	B. I'm not sure this idea fully works
3. "left this writer uncertain"	C. this is different from the standard version

B. Forming abstract nouns for analytical writing

Complete the table with the correct noun form of each word, as used or implied in the chapter.

recognize	_____
flat	_____
legible	_____
appreciate	_____

C. "Was/were going to have to" — future obligation seen from the past

Complete each sentence with "was/were going to have to" plus the verb in brackets.

1. He understood that this _____ (think about) seriously.
2. She knew she _____ (tell) him eventually.
3. They realised they _____ (find) a new way to explain the menu.

D. Paraphrasing a quoted review

Rewrite each quoted sentence from the review in your own words, without copying the original phrasing.

1. "Visitors expecting the familiar comfort of classic dishes will find the menu a little surprising." → _____
2. "The overall experience left this writer uncertain about what, precisely, the restaurant is trying to be." → _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Ichirō says his food is "more authentically Italian than anything that person had probably encountered," but he also recognises that "his certainty and the customer's experience were not the same thing." Can something be authentic and still fail to be recognised as such? Discuss with examples if you can.
2. The review is polite and finds no specific fault, yet Ichirō feels it could "keep people from coming." Why do you think a review with no direct criticism can still be damaging to a business?
3. Keiko takes some time before deciding to tell Ichirō what she heard. Why do you think it can be difficult to pass on criticism to someone, even when you think they should know about it?
4. Ichirō says a "bad" review with specific complaints (overcooked, too slow) would actually be easier to deal with than this one. Do you agree that vague, polite criticism can be more difficult to respond to than direct, specific criticism?
5. Genzo and Suzune's loyalty is contrasted with the wider pattern of quieter weekday bookings. What do you think a business should do when its most loyal customers love it, but it isn't yet reaching a wider audience?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Ichirō will try to solve the problem of "recognition" — helping customers understand and connect with his food without him personally explaining every dish? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Passing On Difficult Feedback

Setting: A workplace, at the end of a shift.

Roles: An employee who has heard indirect criticism about the business, and the owner or manager.

Task: The employee tells the owner what they heard, carefully and respectfully. The owner responds calmly, asking clarifying questions rather than becoming defensive.

Scenario B: Discussing a Lukewarm Review

Setting: A restaurant kitchen, the morning after a review is published.

Roles: A restaurant owner or chef, and a trusted colleague or friend.

Task: The owner reads out a few lines of a polite but unenthusiastic review. Together, they try to identify what the review is really saying, and discuss whether or how to respond.

Extension: in Scenario B, the pair should end by agreeing on one concrete idea to try, even a small one, based on what the review revealed.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a short magazine review (80–120 words) of a restaurant, café, or shop, using polite, hedged language rather than direct criticism or direct praise.
2. Write Ichirō's notebook entry (80–120 words) the night after reading the review, working through what he thinks the real problem is.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you received feedback, direct or indirect, that was hard to act on because it wasn't specific.
4. Write a short conversation (100–150 words) between Ichirō and Keiko, continuing from the moment she tells him what she heard.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you paraphrased rather than copied any quoted language, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Regional listings magazines and small business exposure

Many Japanese cities and prefectures have local listings magazines covering restaurants, shops, and events, distinct from national publications, which can be an important source of exposure for small, independent businesses outside major cities. A feature or review in such a magazine, as in this chapter, is often one of the few pieces of media coverage a small regional restaurant will receive.

Japan: Politeness and indirectness in professional reviews

Japanese restaurant and cultural criticism often favours indirect, softened language even when a reviewer's overall impression is mixed or unenthusiastic, with words like "unusual" (kawatta) or "unconventional" doing the work that more direct negative language might do in other reviewing traditions. Recognising this kind of careful, hedged phrasing is often necessary to understand a review's real meaning.

Italy: Sprezzatura — the art of appearing effortless

Sprezzatura is a well-known Italian concept, originally describing a certain studied carelessness in manner or style — making something difficult look effortless and natural, rather than laboured or overly deliberate. It is sometimes discussed in relation to Italian cooking and hospitality as well, where the goal is often for careful preparation to feel relaxed and unforced to the person experiencing it.

Italy: The loyal regular in Italian dining culture

In Italy, a small trattoria or restaurant's *affezionati* ("loyal regulars") — customers who return again and again, sometimes ordering without consulting the menu — are considered a vital foundation for a small, independent business, often mattering more to its long-term survival than occasional visits from tourists or first-time diners.

Chapter 15: A Piece of Italy

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. If you walked into a restaurant serving food from a country you didn't expect, what would make you feel confident that the food was genuine — the decor, the staff, the smell, something else?
2. Have you ever asked a close friend for a very large favour — something that would require real sacrifice or a big life change on their part? How did you ask, and how did they respond?
3. Think about the difference between a polite compliment and one that feels completely genuine and sincere. What makes you believe someone really means what they're saying?
4. Look at these words before you read: diagnosis, favour, fortnight, genuine, functional. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. diagnosis	A. real; not fake or pretended
2. favour	B. an identification of the cause of a problem
3. fortnight	C. a period of two weeks
4. genuine	D. a kind act done for someone, often requiring effort
5. functional	E. working well enough for practical purposes, even if not perfect

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 15. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

adjustment (n.) — *a small change made to adapt to new circumstances*

barrier (n., train station) — *a gate or checkpoint that separates the platform area from the rest of the station*

concourse (n.) — *a large open area inside a station or public building where people walk and gather*

diagnosis (n.) — *an identification of the nature or cause of a problem*

dramatically (adv.) — *in a way that involves a big, sudden, noticeable change*

favour (n., British spelling) — *a kind act done for someone, especially one that requires effort or sacrifice*

fluency (n., figurative) — *smooth, confident skill in doing something, not only speaking a language*

fortnight (n., British English) — *a period of two weeks*

functional (adj., of a skill) — *good enough to work in practice, even if not perfect or advanced*

genuine (adj.) — *real, sincere; not fake or pretended*

modest (adj., of a home) — *simple and not large or luxurious*

prior (adj., "prior knowledge") — *existing or happening before something else*

signal (n., figurative) — *something that indicates or suggests a quality to an observer*

usable (adj.) — *able to be used in practice, especially for the first time*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. What two words has Ichirō been thinking about since the review, and what does he decide is really underneath them?
2. What specific problem does Ichirō identify about the "signals" the restaurant sends before customers even taste the food?
3. What favour does Ichirō ask Alberto for, and how does Alberto respond?
4. What have Alberto and Filippo been doing to prepare, even before Ichirō's call?
5. Describe Alberto and Filippo's arrival in Yonago — how do they each react to the new place?
6. What happens when Alberto and Filippo first see the finished restaurant?
7. Why does Alberto's reaction feel especially meaningful to Ichirō?
8. How does the staffing on the floor change after Alberto and Filippo join?
9. What changes does Ichirō notice in the restaurant's atmosphere and bookings after a fortnight?
10. By the end of the chapter, has the original problem been fully solved? What does Ichirō conclude?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Ichirō decides the whole problem is simply that his food isn't good enough. **T / F**
2. Alberto and Filippo had already been studying Japanese before Ichirō's call. **T / F**
3. Alberto and Filippo arrive in Yonago travelling through Osaka. **T / F**
4. Filippo's Japanese turns out to be worse than Alberto's. **T / F**
5. Alberto's reaction to the restaurant is described as polite rather than genuinely sincere. **T / F**
6. Ichirō lets go of Keiko when Alberto and Filippo join the restaurant. **T / F**
7. Bookings improve dramatically and completely solve the restaurant's problems. **T / F**
8. Ichirō notices that tables he personally attends to are still often the most satisfied. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Time expressions and duration phrases

Complete each sentence with a suitable time or duration expression from the chapter: at least... maybe more / within a fortnight / the following Monday.

1. "How long is a while?" Alberto asked. "_____, " Ichirō said.
2. _____, the service already had a different quality to it.
3. They started _____, giving them a few days to settle in first.

B. Genuine vs. polite/social language

The chapter distinguishes a polite social comment from something said with "genuine recognition." Decide whether each example is more likely genuine (G) or simply polite (P), then explain why in one sentence.

1. "Wow, it really looks like a piece of Italy," said by someone who grew up near restaurants like it.
→ _____ because _____
2. "It's lovely," said quickly by a stranger glancing briefly around the room. → _____ because _____

C. Reporting a phone conversation

Rewrite this short exchange as reported speech: "I need a favour," Ichirō said. "What kind of favour?" Alberto said.

1. _____

D. "The expression/manner of someone who..."

The chapter often describes people using this pattern (e.g. "the expression of someone who has been travelling for a long time"). Complete these sentences using the same pattern.

1. She smiled with the expression of someone who _____.
2. He walked in with the manner of someone who _____.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Ichirō concludes that having a "genuine Italian on the floor" sends a different kind of signal than decor alone. Do you think this is a fair or accurate observation about how people judge authenticity? Are there downsides to relying on this kind of signal?
2. Alberto agrees to move to Japan for at least a year almost immediately, after checking with Filippo. What do you think this decision shows about their friendship with Ichirō?
3. The text makes a clear distinction between a polite compliment and one said "with genuine recognition," based on Alberto's own experience and knowledge. How do you personally tell the difference between polite praise and praise someone truly means?
4. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō recognises he has "addressed a layer" of the problem, not solved it completely. How do you feel about accepting partial progress on a difficult problem, rather than a complete fix?
5. Filippo, more reserved than Alberto, still manages his first Japanese order without help, which Alberto doesn't seem to notice. What does this small detail suggest about the dynamic between the two friends?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what other layers of the "recognition" problem do you think Ichirō will still need to address? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Asking for a Big Favour

Setting: A phone call between two close friends.

Roles: One friend who needs to ask for a significant favour (requiring time, money, or a big life change), and the other friend deciding how to respond.

Task: The first friend explains the situation honestly and asks clearly. The second friend asks questions before giving their answer, whether it's yes, no, or "let me think about it."

Scenario B: First Impressions of a New Place

Setting: Someone visiting a place — a workplace, home, or city — for the very first time.

Roles: A visitor seeing the place for the first time, and someone showing them around.

Task: The visitor reacts naturally and specifically to details they notice, distinguishing between polite comments and moments of genuine surprise or admiration.

Extension: in Scenario B, the group should discuss afterwards which of the visitor's reactions felt most genuine, and why.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write a message (80–120 words) that Alberto might send to friends back in Prato, describing his first impressions of Yonago and the restaurant.
2. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the day Alberto and Filippo arrive, describing how it feels to see them again.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a big favour you once asked someone for, or one that was asked of you, and how it turned out.
4. Write Filippo's private thoughts (80–120 words) as he looks around Villa Bardini for the first time, in contrast to Alberto's more expressive reaction.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used time expressions or reported speech correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Reaching the San'in region through Osaka

Yonago and the wider San'in coastal region are typically reached from major hubs like Osaka by a combination of flights and connecting trains, rather than a single direct route, reflecting the region's relatively remote position compared to Japan's busier Pacific coast corridor. This journey, described in the chapter, is a familiar one for visitors and returning residents alike.

Japan: Staff visibility as a signal of authenticity

As suggested earlier in the story, some Japanese diners associate the presence of staff from a dish's country of origin with greater confidence in a foreign restaurant's authenticity, even when the food itself has not changed. This perception, while not universal, can meaningfully affect a small restaurant's reputation and bookings, independent of the actual quality of the cooking.

Italy: Hospitality-school friendships and working abroad

Graduates of Italian alberghiero hospitality schools sometimes go on to work abroad, whether through formal placements, personal connections, or opportunities like the one in this chapter, bringing Italian training and language into restaurants far from Italy itself. Such moves are often made possible by strong personal networks built during training and early career years.

Italy: Santa Maria Novella and Florence's historic print shops

The area around the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella in Florence is home to several long-established shops selling historic maps, prints, and stationery, some operating for generations, popular with visitors looking for reproductions of antique Tuscan or Florentine maps and artwork, of exactly the kind Ichirō brings to decorate his restaurant.

Chapter 16: The Wrong Face

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever noticed small changes in a colleague's behaviour or appearance and guessed there might be a reason behind it, without anyone saying anything directly? What kinds of small details make people notice things like this?
2. Think about a time you sensed something was "almost right, but not quite" about a piece of work, a plan, or a situation, without being able to say exactly what was wrong. How did you eventually figure it out, if you did?
3. In your own culture, is it common for colleagues to comment openly on a growing romantic interest between two people at work, or is it usually left unspoken? What do you think is better?
4. Look at these words before you read: unremarkable, involuntary, registered, obliquely, considered (as an adjective). Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. unremarkable	A. not deliberately controlled; automatic
2. involuntary	B. not unusual or noteworthy
3. registered (mentally)	C. indirectly; without stating something directly
4. obliquely	D. noticed and mentally noted something
5. considered (adj.)	E. done carefully and deliberately, not carelessly

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 16. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

attended to (v. phrase, "feel attended to") — *given careful, personal attention*

available (adj., figurative, "making a fact available") — *offered or shared with others, without insisting on a particular reaction*

considered (adj., of appearance) — *arranged carefully and deliberately, rather than carelessly*

damper (adj., of cold or weather) — *more humid or moist; less dry*

efficient (adj., of an exchange) — *done quickly and without wasted time or words*

involuntary (adj.) — *happening automatically, without conscious control*

obliquely (adv.) — *indirectly; without stating something plainly*

registered (v., past of "register", mental) — *noticed and mentally noted something*

reversed (v., past of "reverse", of a vehicle) — *moved backward into position*

settling (n./v., of an expression) — *a facial expression falling or becoming still, often showing a small emotional reaction*

steady (adj., of a period of time) — *calm and consistent, without major change*

unremarkable (adj.) — *not unusual or noteworthy; ordinary*

wardrobe (n., British English) — *a tall cupboard for storing clothes*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How is the November cold in Yonago described, and how do Alberto, Filippo, and Ichirō each react to it?
2. How has the restaurant's overall situation changed since September, according to the chapter?
3. What changes does Ichirō notice about Naoko's deliveries over the autumn?
4. What habit does Ichirō notice Filippo developing, without saying anything about it?
5. What happens on the Wednesday morning when Makoto, not Naoko, arrives with the delivery?
6. What does Ichirō observe about the exchange between Filippo and Naoko the following day?
7. What does Filippo announce to the kitchen afterwards, and how does he say it?
8. What does Ichirō notice about Filippo's Japanese by December, and what does he think explains this?
9. How does Alberto contribute to the dining room atmosphere, according to the chapter?
10. What problem is Ichirō still unable to solve by the end of the chapter, and how does he describe the feeling of not being able to name it?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. By November, the restaurant is doing significantly worse than it was in September. **T / F**
2. Naoko begins making deliveries more often than she used to. **T / F**
3. Makoto notices something about Filippo's reaction but chooses not to comment on it. **T / F**
4. Filippo openly announces to the whole kitchen that he likes Naoko before asking her out. **T / F**
5. Filippo asks Naoko to have coffee with him. **T / F**
6. Filippo's Japanese improves more slowly than Alberto's over these months. **T / F**
7. Genzo and Suzune stop visiting the restaurant during this period. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō has identified exactly what is still wrong with the restaurant. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Modals of deduction about the past (must have / might have / could have)

Complete each sentence with the correct modal of deduction, based on what Ichirō observes but is not told directly.

1. Filippo's face fell for a moment when Makoto got out of the truck — he _____ (hope) to see Naoko instead.
2. Naoko wasn't surprised by Filippo's question, so he _____ (ask) her something similar before.
3. Filippo's Japanese was improving quickly — he _____ (practise) outside the restaurant.

B. Past Perfect Continuous for ongoing recent actions

Complete each sentence with the Past Perfect Continuous form of the verb in brackets.

1. Naoko _____ (come) more often than before, without anyone remarking on it.
2. Filippo _____ (stand) near the service entrance for about ten minutes before the truck arrived.
3. Ichirō realised he _____ (return) to the same thought all morning.

C. "Without + -ing" for describing quiet or unspoken actions

Complete each sentence using "without" plus the -ing form, as the chapter often does (e.g. "without saying anything," "without knowing why").

1. He noticed the change _____ it at first.
2. Makoto looked at Filippo and left _____ about it.
3. (your own sentence) _____

D. Describing subtle, non-verbal cues

Match each description of body language or behaviour to what it most likely suggests.

1. a brief, involuntary settling of the face	A. mild disappointment, quickly hidden
2. taking longer than necessary to sign a note	B. wanting to prolong a small interaction
3. a look that shows no surprise	C. having half-expected the question already

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Nobody in the kitchen directly discusses what is clearly developing between Filippo and Naoko — not Ichirō, not Makoto, not Filippo himself, until he mentions the coffee plan casually. Do you think this kind of unspoken discretion around a colleague's personal life is generally a good thing, or does it sometimes go too far?
2. Makoto notices Filippo's reaction but "chooses not to say anything about it." What do you think this choice tells us about Makoto as a father and as a businessman?
3. Ichirō compares his unsolved restaurant problem to "feeling that a dish is almost right" without knowing which element is wrong. Have you ever had a similar experience, in cooking or in another kind of work, of sensing something is slightly off without being able to identify it?
4. Filippo's Japanese improves faster once he has "a reason to practise" outside of work. Do you think personal motivation like this is usually more effective than formal study alone, when learning a language?
5. The chapter notes that Alberto has "the ability to make a table feel attended to without being watched." What do you think this particular skill involves, and have you experienced good or bad versions of it yourself, as a customer somewhere?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict Ichirō will eventually realise is the missing piece of his restaurant's problem? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Noticing Without Saying

Setting: A workplace, during a normal working day.

Roles: Two colleagues, one of whom has noticed something personal developing between another colleague and a regular visitor or client.

Task: The two colleagues have a short, careful conversation about whether to say anything, without gossiping unkindly. They should reach a decision about how much (if anything) to mention.

Scenario B: Asking Someone for Coffee

Setting: A brief, low-pressure moment during a work interaction (a delivery, a meeting, a shared errand).

Roles: Two people who interact regularly through work but haven't spent time together outside it.

Task: One person asks the other, in a low-pressure, casual way, to have coffee together sometime. Practise both a confident version and a nervous version of the same request.

Extension: in Scenario B, perform the exchange once more from the point of view of an onlooker (like Ichirō), narrating what they notice about each person's body language without hearing the actual words.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Filippo's private thoughts (80–120 words) in the days before he finally asks Naoko to have coffee with him.
2. Write the actual conversation (100–150 words) between Filippo and Naoko at the service entrance, imagining what was said.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you noticed something was slightly wrong or slightly right about a situation, before you could explain exactly what it was.
4. Write a short diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view, describing what he has noticed about Filippo and Naoko without ever saying anything about it directly.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used modals of deduction correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: The San'in winter climate

The San'in coast, facing the Sea of Japan, experiences a distinctly damp, heavy cold in winter, quite different from the drier cold of inland or Pacific-facing regions such as Florence's more continental climate. This dampness, caused by moisture-laden winds off the sea, is a well-known feature of winter in Tottori and Shimane prefectures.

Japan: Quiet acknowledgment and discretion around personal matters

In many Japanese workplaces, colleagues' personal or romantic developments are often noticed but left deliberately unspoken out of a sense of discretion and respect for privacy, rather than being openly discussed or teased about, as might happen in some other cultural contexts. A quiet nod or a choice not to comment, as Makoto shows in this chapter, can itself be a recognised form of respectful acknowledgment.

Italy: Open teasing and commentary in Italian social life

In contrast, Italian social and family culture often involves much more open, good-natured teasing and commentary when a budding romantic interest between two people becomes apparent, with friends and family feeling comfortable making it a shared, spoken topic rather than something left unaddressed. This difference in approach can sometimes create friction — or comedy — when people from these different communication styles work closely together.

Italy: Coffee as a low-pressure social invitation

In Italian culture, suggesting a coffee together (un caffè) is a common, low-pressure way of proposing to spend time with someone, whether for a business chat, a catch-up between friends, or the early stages of romantic interest, without carrying the more formal weight that a "dinner date" invitation might in other cultural contexts.

Chapter 17: Getting There

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever recommended a restaurant, shop, or film to a friend very carefully, because you knew they trusted your opinion and you didn't want to let them down? How did you decide what to say?
2. Think about someone you know whose language skills, or another skill, improved noticeably faster once they had a personal reason to practise (like a relationship or friendship). Why do you think personal motivation makes such a difference?
3. What do you think makes a business worth travelling a long distance for, rather than just visiting somewhere convenient and nearby?
4. Look at these words before you read: insistent, ambiguity, unhurried, accelerating, thaw. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. insistent	A. continuing in a persistent, noticeable way
2. ambiguity	B. unclear or uncertain meaning
3. unhurried	C. calm and relaxed, without rushing
4. accelerating	D. becoming faster or more advanced quickly
5. thaw	E. a period when ice or cold weather begins to melt or ease

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 17. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

accelerating (v., -ing form of "accelerate") — *becoming faster or more advanced at an increasing rate*

ambiguity (n.) — *unclear or uncertain meaning; the quality of being open to more than one interpretation*

calculation (n., figurative, "a quiet calculation") — *careful mental reasoning or working-out, especially about a situation involving other people*

denying (v., -ing form of "deny") — *stating that something is not true*

extending (v., -ing form of "extend") — *growing or reaching further, especially in length or influence*

informational (adj., of tone) — *intended mainly to give facts or explanation, rather than emotion or opinion*

insistent (adj.) — *continuing in a persistent, noticeable way that is hard to ignore*

particles (n., grammar) — *small words in Japanese that show the grammatical function of other words in a sentence*

proximity (n.) — *closeness in space or distance*

scarf (n.) — *a piece of fabric worn around the neck for warmth or style*

thaw (n.) — *a period when ice or cold weather begins to melt or become milder*

triumphant (adj.) — *feeling or showing great success or victory*

unhurried (adj.) — *calm and relaxed, without rushing*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How is the winter weather in Yonago described at the start of the chapter?
2. How does the chapter describe the "rhythm" the restaurant has found by this point? Is it described as fully solved?
3. How do Genzo and Suzune bring new customers to the restaurant, and why do they do it carefully, "one table at a time"?
4. What does Suzune tell Ichirō about her sister's reaction to the risotto?
5. How does Ichirō describe the value of Suzune's sister finishing her meal and deciding to return?
6. What changes does Ichirō observe about Filippo's behaviour and Japanese ability by January?
7. What happens on the Thursday evening when Filippo takes a phone call at work?
8. What does Alberto say after Filippo's phone call, and how does Filippo respond?
9. What happens in February with a table of four from Tottori City, and why is this significant?
10. How does Ichirō describe the overall change by the end of the chapter — is it enough on its own?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. By this point in the story, Ichirō no longer worries about the restaurant's monthly finances. **T / F**
2. Genzo and Suzune bring several new tables of guests every single week. **T / F**
3. Suzune's sister says the risotto was exactly what she expected. **T / F**
4. Filippo's Japanese has become noticeably more fluent than Alberto's by January. **T / F**
5. Alberto directly and seriously criticises Filippo for improving his Japanese so quickly. **T / F**
6. The table of four from Tottori City found the restaurant purely by chance, without any recommendation. **T / F**
7. Suzune's sister returns to the restaurant a second time, with her husband. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō feels the restaurant's problem is now completely solved. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Present Perfect Continuous for recent ongoing change

Alberto and Filippo use Present Perfect Continuous to talk about recent, ongoing change ("I've been practising... You've been accelerating"). Complete each sentence with the correct form.

1. "I _____ (practise) my Japanese with Naoko," Filippo admitted.
2. "You _____ (improve) so fast," Alberto said.
3. The restaurant _____ (attract) a few new regulars since December.

B. "Worth + noun/gerund"

The chapter uses "worth" to measure the value of something ("probably worth three good reviews"). Complete each sentence using "worth" plus a noun or -ing form.

1. One loyal regular who keeps coming back is often worth _____.
2. A short, honest conversation with an unhappy customer is usually worth _____.

C. Result clauses with "to the point where..."

Combine each pair of sentences using "to the point where," as the chapter does ("the gap had opened to the point where it was noticeable").

1. Filippo's Japanese improved a lot. Everyone at the restaurant noticed. →

2. The restaurant became busier. Ichirō stopped worrying about costs every morning. →

D. Describing weather and atmosphere together

The chapter combines weather and mood in single descriptions ("grey and damp and insistent"). Write your own three-word weather-and-mood description for each season below.

1. Winter: _____, _____, _____
2. Summer: _____, _____, _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Genzo and Suzune bring new guests carefully, "one table at a time," because "a recommendation is a promise." What do you think this reveals about how they see their own reputation and relationships?
2. Ichirō believes that one loyal customer returning is "probably worth three good reviews." Do you agree that personal recommendation is generally more valuable than a formal review? Why might that be?
3. Alberto notices and comments on Filippo's improving Japanese with a joke ("I guess I need a Japanese girlfriend too") rather than a direct question. Why do you think friends often use humour to acknowledge something sensitive or personal, rather than addressing it directly?
4. The chapter describes progress as "movement," not yet a solution — "not enough. But the direction had changed." How do you personally stay motivated during a period of slow, partial progress, rather than sudden success?
5. A group of customers travels from Tottori City specifically because of something mentioned at a work meeting. What do you think makes a business "worth the trip" for people who don't live nearby?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict is still "missing" from Ichirō's restaurant, the piece he still hasn't found? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: A Careful Recommendation

Setting: A conversation between two friends or family members.

Roles: Someone who has discovered a restaurant, shop, or place they love, and a person deciding whether to trust the recommendation.

Task: The recommender describes the place carefully and honestly, aware that "a recommendation is a promise." The other person asks a few honest questions before deciding whether to go.

Scenario B: Noticing a Friend's Change

Setting: Anywhere two or three close friends might be relaxing together.

Roles: A group of friends, one of whom has changed noticeably (in a skill, a habit, or an attitude) because of a new relationship or interest.

Task: One friend gently points out the change, using humour rather than direct confrontation. The friend being noticed responds honestly, without denying it completely.

Extension: in Scenario B, try performing the same moment twice — once handled with warmth and humour, and once handled bluntly or awkwardly — and discuss which felt more natural.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Suzune's short recommendation (80–120 words) to her sister, persuading her to try Villa Bardini before the visit described in the chapter.
2. Write Alberto's diary entry (80–120 words) reflecting on noticing the growing gap between his and Filippo's Japanese ability.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time your own motivation to learn or improve at something changed because of a personal relationship or goal.
4. Write a short scene (100–150 words) describing the table of four who travelled from Tottori City, imagining their conversation on the drive there or their reaction on arrival.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used Present Perfect Continuous correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Kuchikomi — the culture and weight of word-of-mouth recommendation

Kuchikomi, literally "word of mouth," carries particular weight in Japanese consumer culture, where a personal recommendation from someone trusted is often considered far more reliable and influential than advertising or even professional reviews. Small, independent restaurants especially depend on kuchikomi spreading gradually through personal networks, exactly as it does for Villa Bardini in this chapter.

Japan: Mount Daisen and San'in winter scenery

Mount Daisen, the highest peak in the Chūgoku region and a prominent landmark visible from Yonago on clear days, is frequently obscured by winter cloud cover for long stretches, a familiar seasonal feature for local residents. The mountain holds cultural and religious significance in the region and is a well-known symbol of the San'in landscape.

Italy: Passaparola — the Italian equivalent of word of mouth

Passaparola (literally "pass the word") is the Italian term for word-of-mouth recommendation, and it functions similarly to kuchikomi in valuing trusted personal networks over formal advertising, particularly for small, family-run restaurants and businesses that rely on loyal customers to spread their reputation organically.

Italy: Language learning accelerated through relationships

It is a widely observed pattern, not limited to any one culture, that people often make faster progress in a new language when they have a personal relationship — a partner, a close friend, a housemate — who speaks it, since this provides frequent, motivated, real-world practice beyond formal study. Filippo's rapid progress in this chapter reflects this well-documented effect of immersion through relationship.

Chapter 18: Kitarō Road

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever shown a visitor around a famous place near your home that you yourself see as completely ordinary, because you've walked past it so many times? How did their reaction compare to yours?
2. Think about a decision in your life that "nobody ever said out loud" but that everyone around you seemed to expect anyway — like taking over a family responsibility or following a particular path. How did that expectation feel?
3. Do you think saying a decision out loud for the first time — even to just one other person — can make it feel more real or definite? Why might that be?
4. Look at these words before you read: benevolent, indifferent, matter-of-factly, remarkable, warehouse. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. benevolent	A. kind and well-meaning in appearance
2. indifferent	B. showing no particular interest or reaction
3. matter-of-factly	C. in a plain, practical way, without emotion
4. remarkable	D. worth noticing; unusual or impressive
5. warehouse	E. a large building used for storing goods

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 18. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

accumulated (v., past of "accumulate", of a room) — *gathered gradually over time, rather than arranged all at once*

agenda (n., figurative, "no particular agenda") — *a hidden purpose or set of intentions behind an action*

auction (n.) — *a public sale in which goods are sold to whoever offers the most money*

benevolent (adj.) — *kind and well-meaning in appearance or nature*

casting (v., -ing form of "cast", of a shadow) — *producing or throwing a shadow*

eyeless (adj.) — *having no eyes*

indifferent (adj.) — *showing no particular interest, concern, or reaction*

matter-of-factly (adv.) — *in a plain, practical way, without emotion or drama*

poked (v., past of "poke") — *prodded gently with a finger*

remarkable (adj.) — *worth noticing; unusual, impressive, or striking*

residential (adj.) — *consisting mainly of homes, rather than shops or businesses*

tidy (adj.) — *neat and well-organised*

warehouse (n.) — *a large building used for storing goods before distribution*

wreaths (n., plural of "wreath") — *circular arrangements of flowers, leaves, or decorations, often placed as a mark of respect or celebration*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. What is being marked or celebrated on the Kitarō Road on this particular day?
2. How does Naoko's experience of the Kitarō Road differ from a tourist's, according to the chapter?
3. What does Naoko explain to Filippo about the statue of Medama-oyaji?
4. What does Filippo learn about Naoko's father's fish business, and how it started?
5. What does Naoko say when Filippo asks if she will take over the business?
6. Why does Naoko clarify what she means by inviting Filippo for "coffee"?
7. What does Naoko explain about her plans (or lack of plans) to attend university?
8. What does Filippo tell Naoko about his own education, and how does she respond?
9. What does Naoko finally say out loud at the end of their conversation, and how does she feel saying it?
10. What does Filippo's comment about "April... May" suggest about his own plans, without stating them directly?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. The Kitarō Road is decorated because of a special occasion on this particular day. **T / F**
2. Naoko finds the yōkai statues remarkable and exciting every time she walks past them. **T / F**
3. Naoko's father took over the fish business from his own father. **T / F**
4. Naoko clearly states that she has decided never to take over the family business. **T / F**
5. Naoko has already attended university and finished her studies. **T / F**
6. Filippo attended a hospitality high school rather than university. **T / F**
7. Naoko says out loud, for the first time, that she is going to run the family business. **T / F**
8. Filippo's comment about April and May suggests he does not expect to still be in Yonago by then. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. "I thought I would... but..." for unfulfilled past intentions

Naoko describes an intention she never carried out ("I always thought I would go too... but I never got there"). Complete each sentence using this pattern.

1. I thought I would _____, but _____.
2. She thought she would _____, but there was always more work.
3. (your own sentence) _____

B. "Supposed to" for unstated social expectations

The chapter describes an expectation that "nobody has said" directly but that everyone understands. Complete each sentence with "supposed to."

1. Nobody told her directly, but she felt she was _____ take over the business eventually.
2. In some families, the eldest child is _____ continue the family trade.

C. Present Perfect Continuous for an ongoing internal realisation

Naoko says, "I think I've been waiting to want something different." Complete each sentence with the Present Perfect Continuous.

1. She _____ (wait) to feel differently about her future for a long time.
2. He _____ (think) about this decision for months before saying it out loud.

D. Descriptive adjectives for places and objects

Match each adjective to the object or place it could describe in the chapter.

1. benevolent	A. a round, eyeless statue with a kind expression
2. indifferent	B. statues that have stood in the same place for years, unmoved by anything around them
3. tidy	C. a small residential garden, carefully kept

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Naoko says about taking over the business, "Nobody has said: Naoko, you will do this. But the shape of it is there." Do you think unstated family expectations like this can be just as powerful as a direct instruction? Why or why not?
2. Naoko never worked out what she would study at university, and kept postponing the decision until it stopped feeling like an option. Have you, or has someone you know, experienced a plan slowly disappearing this way, through delay rather than a clear decision?
3. Filippo has "the particular quality... of knowing when not to answer." Why do you think knowing when to stay quiet can be just as valuable as knowing what to say, in a conversation like this one?
4. Naoko says that hearing herself say "I'm going to run the family business" out loud made it feel real, even though she had "already decided" before saying it. Why do you think putting a decision into words, even quietly, can change how real it feels?
5. Filippo compares his own vocational path (hospitality school) to Naoko's uncertain relationship with university. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of choosing a practical, specific training path early, compared to a more open-ended path like university?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Filippo and Naoko's relationship, and Naoko's decision about the family business, will develop later in the story? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Unspoken Expectation

Setting: A family kitchen or living room, during a quiet conversation.

Roles: A young person who feels an unspoken expectation to follow a certain path (a family business, a career, a tradition), and a close friend or partner asking honest questions.

Task: The friend asks gently whether this is really what the person wants. The young person works through their feelings out loud, arriving at some kind of honest answer, even an uncertain one.

Scenario B: Showing Someone Your Hometown

Setting: A well-known street, landmark, or attraction in someone's hometown.

Roles: A local resident, and a visitor seeing the place for the first time.

Task: The visitor reacts with curiosity and asks questions about the place's history or significance. The local explains, matter-of-factly, things they have never really thought to explain before.

Extension: in Scenario B, ask the "local" afterwards whether describing the place to a visitor changed how they personally saw it, even a little.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Naoko's diary entry (80–120 words) for that evening, reflecting on saying out loud, for the first time, that she will run the family business.
2. Write a description (80–120 words) of a famous local street, landmark, or attraction near your home, from the point of view of someone who has known it all their life.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a plan or intention you once had that you "thought you would" do, but that quietly disappeared through delay rather than a clear decision.
4. Write Filippo's message (80–120 words) to Alberto, describing the day on Kitarō Road and what he learned about Naoko's future plans, without revealing everything directly.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used "thought I would... but" or "supposed to" correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Kitarō Road and Shigeru Mizuki's yōkai

Mizuki Shigeru Road (commonly called Kitarō Road) in Sakaiminato is a real shopping street lined with over one hundred bronze statues of yōkai characters created by the manga artist Shigeru Mizuki, who was born in the area, most famously through his series *GeGeGe no Kitarō*. The street is one of the region's best-known tourist attractions, though for local residents like Naoko in this chapter, it is simply a familiar part of everyday life.

Japan: Yōkai in Japanese folklore

Yōkai are supernatural beings, spirits, or creatures from Japanese folklore, ranging from mischievous or frightening figures to gentle, comic, or protective ones, and they remain a rich and popular subject in Japanese literature, art, and media today. Medama-oyaji, the small, eyeless figure mentioned in this chapter, is one of the most recognisable yōkai characters thanks to Mizuki's work.

Japan: Implicit expectations around family business succession

In many Japanese family businesses, an expectation that a child will eventually take over is often never stated directly but understood gradually, through an increasing share of responsibilities handed over year by year, exactly as Naoko describes in this chapter. This gradual, largely unspoken process can make the decision feel both inevitable and, at the same time, genuinely one's own once it is finally acknowledged out loud.

Italy: Vocational secondary education versus university

In Italy, students choosing a vocational path such as the alberghiero (hospitality institute) after lower secondary school typically complete practical, career-focused training over five years, entering skilled work directly afterwards, as an alternative to the more academic route toward university that many of their peers follow. Both paths are recognised and valued, though they lead to quite different working lives, as the conversation between Filippo and Naoko in this chapter reflects.

Chapter 19: Cantuccini and Vin Santo

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Think of a business or restaurant that leans heavily into stereotypical decorations of its country of origin (flags, famous landmarks, clichéd images). Do you think this kind of decor makes a place feel more or less genuine to you?
2. Imagine a close friend, someone whose opinion you deeply trust, visits something you have worked hard on and tells you honestly that part of it isn't working. How do you think you would react in the moment, and afterwards?
3. If you had to choose between making something instantly recognisable and easy for people to understand, or making it exactly right in your own eyes even if fewer people understand it immediately, which would you choose, and why?
4. Look at these words before you read: extraordinary, apologetic, legible, dignity, performance (figurative). Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. extraordinary	A. very unusual or remarkable
2. apologetic	B. showing regret for something, even mildly
3. dignity	C. a calm, quiet sense of worth or respect
4. performance (figurative)	D. a display of something that isn't fully genuine
5. legible (figurative)	E. easy to read, understand, or recognise

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 19. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

apologetic (adj.) — *showing or expressing regret, even mildly*

desperate (adj., "so desperate to") — *feeling a very strong, urgent need to do something*

dignity (n.) — *a calm, quiet sense of worth or respect*

emphatic (adj., of colour or expression) — *very strong, forceful, or noticeable*

extraordinary (adj.) — *very unusual, remarkable, or exceptional*

gorillas (n., informal, "airport gorillas") — *an informal, humorous term for rough or careless baggage handlers*

intact (adj.) — *not damaged or broken; complete and whole*

laminated (adj.) — *covered with a thin protective plastic layer*

legible (adj., figurative) — *easy to read, recognise, or understand*

performance (n., figurative) — *a display of something that is not fully genuine or natural*

receiving (v., -ing form of "receive", figurative) — *taking in an experience openly, without judging or evaluating it*

steadily (adv., of a look or gaze) — *in a calm, unwavering, confident way*

strip back (v. phrase) — *to remove extra or unnecessary elements, leaving only the essential parts*

verdict (n.) — *a final judgement or decision, especially after careful consideration*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. Where has Angela travelled before arriving in Yonago, and what does she say about the food she's eaten?
2. What gifts does Angela bring, and who are they from?
3. How does Angela spend her first three days in Yonago, and what is she really doing during this time?
4. What does Angela tell Ichirō about the Italian restaurant near the station?
5. How does Angela choose to experience Villa Bardini, and why does she decline Ichirō's offer to cook for her separately?
6. What does Angela say about the food at the end of her meal?
7. What is Angela's main criticism of the restaurant, the next morning?
8. What two options does Angela say Ichirō genuinely has, regarding the restaurant's identity?
9. What does Ichirō realise about the decor he brought from Florence, and what does he connect this to?
10. What specific changes does Ichirō make to the restaurant over the following two days? What stays, and what goes?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Angela's trip to Japan included only Tokyo and Yonago. **T / F**
2. Sabrina asks Angela to remind Ichirō that he owes her a verdict on "the twelve things." **T / F**
3. Angela spends her first evenings in Yonago visiting only Japanese restaurants. **T / F**
4. The Italian restaurant near the station has a photograph of the Colosseum and serves carbonara. **T / F**
5. Angela asks Ichirō to cook a special, private meal for her at Villa Bardini. **T / F**
6. Angela's main criticism is that the food itself is not good enough. **T / F**
7. Angela believes the current, in-between approach — some authentic elements, some decorative performance — is working well. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Ichirō removes the hand-painted tiles because they no longer fit. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Presenting two alternatives formally ("You have a choice. You can... Or you...")

Complete this formal way of presenting two clear options, following Angela's pattern.

1. You have a choice. You can _____, or you can _____.
2. (your own two-option sentence about a real decision) _____

B. "I used to think... but now..." for changed understanding

Complete each sentence describing a change in understanding, as Ichirō experiences in this chapter.

1. He used to think that bringing objects from Florence _____, but now he understood _____.
2. (your own sentence) I used to think _____, but now _____.

C. "Should have" for hindsight and missed realisation

Complete each sentence with "should have" plus the past participle, expressing something the person now realises with hindsight.

1. He _____ (know) the difference between real Italy and a performance of it — Felice had told him this once, about a dish.
2. She _____ (say) something about the decor sooner, rather than waiting until her final visit.

D. Contrasting similar verbs: "reviewing" vs "receiving"

The chapter distinguishes "not reviewing, just receiving." Decide which verb better fits each situation, and explain your choice in one short sentence.

1. A food critic taking notes throughout a meal, checking each dish against expectations. →
_____ because _____
2. A guest simply enjoying a meal, without judging or comparing it to anything. →
_____ because _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Angela tells Ichirō something difficult to hear, but says clearly, "Please, that's why you're here, and be honest" is what he wanted from her. What do you think makes it possible to receive hard truths well from someone specific, when the same words from someone else might be harder to accept?
2. Angela presents Ichirō with only two "honest" options — become fully recognisable, or strip back to just the food — and says the middle ground isn't working. Do you agree that a business (or a person) sometimes has to choose clearly between two extremes, rather than trying to blend them? Can you think of a counter-example?
3. The Italian restaurant near the station is "not very good" but "full," because it is "legible." What do you think this suggests about the relationship between quality and immediate recognisability in a business's success?
4. Ichirō realises that what he built was "his idea of what Italy looked like from the outside" rather than Italy itself. Have you ever created or imagined something based on your idea of a place, culture, or person, only to realise later that it was more of a performance than the real thing?
5. By the end of the chapter, some things stay (the tiles, the map, the name, the open kitchen) and some things go (the wine labels, the print, some paint). What do you think determines which parts of an identity are "performance" and which are genuinely meaningful?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict customers and reviewers will respond to the newly stripped-back version of Villa Bardini? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Honest Friend

Setting: A quiet moment after visiting or experiencing someone's project, business, or creative work.

Roles: A trusted friend with genuinely useful, difficult feedback to give, and the person who made the thing being discussed.

Task: The friend delivers honest, specific feedback, being clear about what is working and what isn't. The other person listens without becoming defensive, and asks at least one clarifying question.

Scenario B: Choosing Between Two Paths

Setting: A planning meeting or informal discussion about a project's future direction.

Roles: Two colleagues or partners, one of whom presents two clear, contrasting options for the way forward.

Task: One person lays out the two options clearly and honestly, explaining the trade-offs of each. Together, they discuss and reach a decision.

Extension: in Scenario A, try performing the same feedback twice — once delivered too gently to be useful, and once delivered clearly and kindly — and discuss the difference as a class.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Ichirō's reply (80–120 words) to Sabrina, finally giving his verdict on her "twelve things worth remembering about Italian food," referred to earlier in the story.
2. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view on the night after Angela's honest feedback, processing what she said.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) comparing two contrasting approaches to representing a culture, place, or identity — the "recognisable, expected" version, and the "stripped-back, authentic" version — and explain which you personally find more appealing, and why.
4. Continue the conversation between Angela and Ichirō (100–150 words) at table six, imagining what Ichirō might have said in response to her observation about "the middle."

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used "should have" or "used to think... but now" correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Italy: Cantuccini and Vin Santo — a classic Tuscan pairing

Cantuccini (also called biscotti di Prato) are hard, twice-baked almond biscuits from Tuscany, traditionally served at the end of a meal to be dipped in vin santo, a sweet, amber-coloured Tuscan dessert wine. The pairing is a well-known, simple ritual of Tuscan hospitality, often the final gesture of a meal rather than a formal dessert.

Italy: "Italian sounding" — imitation Italian branding abroad

"Italian sounding" is a term used, including by Italian trade organisations, to describe food products and restaurants outside Italy that use Italian-sounding names, colours, and imagery — flags, famous landmarks, red-white-and-green colour schemes — without necessarily involving genuine Italian ingredients, recipes, or people. The phenomenon is widespread globally and is often more commercially successful, at least initially, than more understated, genuinely authentic alternatives, precisely because it is immediately recognisable.

Japan: The classic "Golden Route" for tourists

Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, sometimes together with nearby cities like Himeji, form what is often called Japan's "Golden Route" — the standard first-time visitor itinerary covering the country's most famous historical and modern sights. Travelling this route before heading to a quieter regional area, as Angela does in this chapter, is an extremely common pattern for visitors to Japan.

Japan: Himeji Castle

Himeji Castle, often nicknamed the "White Heron Castle" for its pale, elegant appearance, is one of Japan's best-preserved original feudal-era castles and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, widely considered one of the country's finest surviving examples of traditional castle architecture.

Chapter 20: Crab Season

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Some regions become much busier at certain times of year because of a specific seasonal event — a harvest, a festival, a particular food coming into season. Do you know of a place like this? What happens there during its busy season?
2. Imagine reading two very different reviews of the same restaurant, written several months apart. What kinds of things might have changed in between to explain the difference?
3. Have you ever noticed a compatriot (someone from your own country) unexpectedly, somewhere far from home? What was that experience like, and did you approach them or not?
4. Look at these words before you read: brisk, detour, sophisticated, transformation, gratifyingly. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. brisk	A. quick and energetic
2. detour	B. a route that goes out of the direct way to somewhere
3. sophisticated	C. showing refinement and skill; not simple or basic
4. transformation	D. a complete and dramatic change
5. gratifyingly	E. in a way that gives satisfaction or pleasure

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 20. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

amused (adj., "mildly amused") — *finding something a little funny or entertaining*

brisk (adj.) — *quick and energetic*

detour (n., "worth a detour") — *a route that leaves the direct way to somewhere, often to see or do something special*

emphasis (n., "without particular emphasis") — *special importance or stress given to something, especially in speech*

familiarity (n.) — *the quality of being well known or recognisable*

gratifyingly (adv.) — *in a way that brings satisfaction or pleasure*

haul (n., fishing) — *the amount of fish caught in one trip or catch*

intensity (n.) — *the quality of being very strong, focused, or concentrated*

quay (n.) — *a stone or concrete structure where boats load and unload beside water*

sophisticated (adj., of food or design) — *showing refinement, skill, or complexity, rather than simplicity*

stock index (n. phrase, figurative) — *a number tracking the combined value or performance of shares in a financial market, used here as a comparison for something closely and anxiously watched*

transformation (n.) — *a complete and often dramatic change in form or character*

walk-in (n., restaurant term) — *a customer who arrives without a reservation*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How does Naoko describe the start of crab season, and how does this affect Yonago?
2. Who visits the restaurant on a Wednesday in late October, and how does Ichirō find out who he really is?
3. How does Ichirō find out about the magazine review, and who brings it to him?
4. What does the journalist's review say about the food, the rice dish, and the open kitchen?
5. How does Ichirō compare this review to the one from August?
6. Who is seated at table four on a Friday evening in November, and what does Ichirō notice about them?
7. What does Alberto observe and later report about the man at table four?
8. What does the Italian customer say about the food, according to Alberto?
9. How does Ichirō react when he learns he didn't go out to greet the couple?
10. How does Filippo react at the very end of the chapter, and what does he ask about?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Crab season brings noticeably more visitors to the Yonago area. **T / F**
2. Ichirō immediately recognises the Tokyo visitor as a journalist while he is eating. **T / F**
3. Genzo brings Ichirō a copy of the magazine with the review in it. **T / F**
4. The new review recommends Villa Bardini as "worth a detour." **T / F**
5. Ichirō feels this new review is exactly the same, in tone and impact, as the one from August. **T / F**
6. The man at table four is Italian and happens to live in Tottori City. **T / F**
7. The Italian customer recognised the exact recipe used in the rice dish. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Filippo seems entirely indifferent to the story about the Florentine man. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Filler words and hesitation when reconstructing speech

Alberto uses natural hesitation when trying to remember exact words ("Said the food was... what was it he said..."). Complete the reconstructed quote below using natural hesitation devices.

1. "She said the sauce was... _____, what was it... _____, something like that."
2. "He asked about the wine, _____, I think it was whether we had anything local."

B. "Wish + Past Perfect" for regret

Complete each sentence expressing regret about something in the past, using "wish" plus the Past Perfect.

1. Ichirō _____ (go) out to greet the Italian couple at table four.
2. She _____ (say) something kinder about the review at the time.
3. (your own sentence) I wish I _____.

C. Idiomatic expressions for recommending a place

Match each expression to its approximate meaning.

1. "worth a detour"	A. worth changing your route to visit
2. "worth the trip"	B. worth travelling a distance for
3. "not to be missed"	C. something you should definitely experience

D. Reading between the lines: short, clipped dialogue

Filippo's final exchange with Ichirō is very short ("He lives here." "Apparently."). In one or two sentences, explain what you think Filippo might really be thinking about, based on his own situation in the story so far.

1. _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. The August review left the journalist "uncertain," while this new review is confident and direct. Based on what happened in the previous chapter, what do you think changed between the two visits?
2. The Italian customer says he "didn't recognise the recipe but it tasted very Italian." What do you think this comment suggests about how people judge whether food is "authentically" from a particular culture?
3. Ichirō regrets not going out to personally greet the Italian couple, even though the evening went well without it. Why do you think small missed moments like this can stay with us, even when nothing actually went wrong?
4. Alberto treats the story about the Florentine man "lightly," while Filippo seems more quietly thoughtful about it. Why might these two friends react so differently to the same piece of news?
5. The chapter ends with a short, ambiguous exchange between Filippo and Ichirō. What do you personally think Filippo is thinking about, and why do you think the author chooses not to state it directly?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict this encounter with the Florentine man might influence Filippo's own thinking about his future in Japan? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Missed Greeting

Setting: A restaurant, after a service in which the owner noticed a compatriot customer but didn't approach them.

Roles: The restaurant owner, and a colleague who witnessed the whole thing.

Task: Act out the moment first as it happened (the owner doesn't approach), then act it out a second way, with the owner going over to introduce themselves. Compare how each version feels.

Scenario B: Reconstructing What Someone Said

Setting: The end of a work shift, staff clearing up.

Roles: Two colleagues, one of whom is trying to remember and report an interesting conversation they had with a customer earlier.

Task: The colleague reconstructs the conversation from memory, using natural hesitation ("what was it... something like..."). The other person asks follow-up questions.

Extension: in Scenario A, discuss as a class whether it's usually better to approach a stranger who shares something in common with you, or to leave them to enjoy their own experience undisturbed.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write the actual conversation (100–150 words) between Alberto and the Italian customer at table four, imagining what was really said.
2. Write a diary entry (80–120 words) from Ichirō's point of view, reflecting on regretting not going out to greet the couple from table four.
3. Write a longer version (100–150 words) of the Tokyo journalist's magazine review, expanding on what he might have written about Villa Bardini.
4. Write Filippo's private thoughts (80–120 words) after hearing the story about the Florentine man who has settled in Tottori City.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used "wish + Past Perfect" correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Snow crab (matsuba-gani) season in Tottori

The opening of snow crab season in Tottori Prefecture, especially around Sakaiminato, is a major annual event, with the first catch of the season attracting intense media and buyer attention, sometimes even reported alongside financial news due to the high prices paid at auction. Hotels and restaurants throughout the region see a significant seasonal surge in visitors specifically drawn by the crab.

Japan: Specialty food journalism and magazines

Japan has a strong tradition of specialty food magazines and journalists who travel regionally to review restaurants, often combining coverage of a food event (such as an auction or harvest) with restaurant recommendations discovered along the way. A favourable mention in such a publication, even a brief one, can meaningfully raise a small regional restaurant's profile among a national audience.

Italy: Italians living abroad in Japan

A relatively small but established community of Italians live long-term in Japan, often through marriage, work, or a combination of both, settling in cities well beyond the more commonly visited Tokyo and Osaka. Encountering another Italian unexpectedly in a smaller regional city, as happens in this chapter, is a recognisable experience for many Italian expatriates living outside the largest urban centres.

Italy: Judging "Italian-ness" by technique, not just recipe

Many Italians judge whether a dish is genuinely Italian less by whether it matches an exact, named recipe and more by whether it reflects Italian culinary logic and technique — how ingredients are treated, balanced, and combined. This is why an Italian diner might say food "tasted very Italian" even while admitting they didn't recognise the specific dish, as happens in this chapter.

Chapter 21: Alberto's Bags

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Think about two people who each know a temporary arrangement (a job abroad, a course, a project) is coming to an end. Do you think everyone reacts to an ending like this in the same way, or do people handle it very differently?
2. Have you ever kept delaying a simple, practical task (booking something, replying to a message) because the real decision underneath it was much bigger and harder than the task itself? What was really going on?
3. If a close friend came to you clearly torn between two big life options, would you rather give them your honest opinion, or help them think it through without telling them what to do? Why?
4. Look at these words before you read: dismissive, disengaged, deflected, abstraction (figurative), covered ("you're covered"). Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. dismissive	A. showing that something is not considered important
2. disengaged	B. no longer emotionally involved or paying attention
3. deflected	C. avoided dealing with something directly
4. abstraction (figurative)	D. a state of being distracted or lost in thought
5. covered ("you're covered")	E. protected or taken care of regarding a practical matter

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 21. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

abstraction (n., figurative) — *a state of being distracted, distant, or lost in thought*

covered (adj., "you're covered") — *protected or already taken care of, regarding a practical or legal matter*

deadline (n.) — *a time or date by which something must be done*

decent (adj., of a price) — *reasonably good; acceptable*

deflected (v., past of "deflect") — *avoided dealing with something directly, often by changing the subject or giving a vague answer*

disconnect (v., figurative) — *to gradually stop being emotionally or mentally involved in something*

disengaged (adj.) — *no longer emotionally or actively involved or interested*

dismissive (adj.) — *showing that something is not considered important or worth attention*

facing the other way (v. phrase, figurative) — *mentally or emotionally oriented toward something else, rather than the present situation*

mild (adj., "mild concern") — *not strong or intense*

presence (n., figurative, "the presence of a person before the words") — *the noticeable, felt existence of someone in a space, even before they speak*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. When did Alberto book his return ticket, and how does he describe his reason for going home in February?
2. How does Ichirō describe the way Alberto has begun "disconnecting" from the restaurant?
3. Why hasn't Filippo booked his return flight, according to what Alberto tells Ichirō?
4. What does Ichirō notice about Filippo's behaviour and attention during December?
5. What does Ichirō observe about Filippo's conversation with Naoko on a Wednesday morning?
6. How does the conversation between Ichirō and Filippo begin, on the Thursday evening in late December?
7. What question does Filippo ask Ichirō about his own decision to return to Yonago?
8. What does Filippo finally admit about his flight and his feelings about going home?
9. What does Ichirō say about the visa, and what advice does he give Filippo?
10. How does the chapter end, and what does Ichirō think Filippo's real decision is actually about?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Alberto booked his return flight only a few days before this chapter takes place. **T / F**
2. Alberto's quality of work has become noticeably worse as his departure approaches. **T / F**
3. Filippo tells Alberto several times that he will book his flight, but doesn't. **T / F**
4. Naoko does not notice anything different about Filippo during their December meeting. **T / F**
5. Filippo asks Ichirō directly whether he should stay in Japan or go home. **T / F**
6. Filippo says his main worry is about his visa. **T / F**
7. Ichirō tells Filippo exactly what decision to make. **T / F**
8. By the end of the chapter, Filippo has already booked his flight home. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Distinguishing "refuse," "deflect," and "avoid"

These words describe subtly different ways of not dealing with something directly. Match each behaviour to the best word, then explain the difference in your own words.

1. Saying "no" clearly and directly	A. avoid
2. Changing the subject without answering	B. refuse
3. Simply never bringing the topic up yourself	C. deflect

B. "Should" (present, unfulfilled) vs "should have" (past regret)

Complete each sentence with the correct form: should + base verb, or should have + past participle.

1. "I _____ (book) my flight," Filippo said, "but I keep not doing it."
2. By now, he really _____ (already / book) it, according to Alberto.
3. You _____ (think) carefully before making a big decision like this — it's not too late.

C. "I thought I'd be ready to..."

Filippo says, "I thought I'd be ready to go home." Complete each sentence describing a past expectation about yourself that turned out to be wrong.

1. I thought I'd be ready to _____, but _____.
2. (your own sentence) _____

D. Short fragments for expressing mixed or uncertain feelings

The chapter uses short fragments to show uncertainty ("Yes. No. Not exactly."). Write a short fragment exchange (3–4 words total) showing mixed feelings about a decision of your own.

1. _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Alberto accepts the end of his time in Japan calmly and "without ceremony," while Filippo struggles visibly with the same kind of ending. Why do you think two people facing a similar situation can react so differently?
2. Ichirō says, "I can't really decide for you," but still offers Filippo some guidance, including the line "Don't forget who you have here, either." Do you think this was the right balance of support, or should he have said more, or less?
3. Filippo says his worry "isn't exactly" about the visa, suggesting the practical question is hiding a bigger, harder one. Why do you think people sometimes focus on a smaller, practical problem instead of naming the real, more difficult issue underneath it?
4. Naoko notices something is different in Filippo during their conversation, but neither of them mentions it. What do you think this small, unspoken moment of noticing suggests about their relationship?
5. Ichirō reflects that what Filippo has to figure out "was probably larger than whether or not to book a flight." What do you think this larger question actually is?
6. Based on what you have read so far, what do you predict Filippo will decide, and what do you think will influence his decision the most? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Late-Night Conversation

Setting: A quiet workplace, after everyone else has gone home.

Roles: Someone facing a big, unspoken decision about their future, and a trusted mentor or friend.

Task: The mentor listens carefully, asks a few open, non-judgemental questions, and avoids telling the other person exactly what to do — offering perspective instead of a direct answer.

Scenario B: Gently Raising a Delayed Decision

Setting: A casual moment during a normal working day.

Roles: Two colleagues, one of whom keeps saying they will do something (book a flight, make a call, send an email) but keeps delaying it.

Task: The first colleague gently raises the delay without being pushy. The second person responds honestly about what's really behind the delay.

Extension: in Scenario A, perform the same conversation twice — once with the mentor giving direct advice, and once with the mentor only asking questions — and discuss which felt more respectful of the other person's autonomy.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Filippo's diary entry (80–120 words) on the night of his conversation with Ichirō, describing what he is really feeling.
2. Write Alberto's message home (80–120 words) to his family in Prato, describing his feelings about returning in February.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you delayed a practical decision because a bigger, harder question was hiding underneath it.
4. Write the conversation (100–150 words) you imagine Filippo might eventually have with Naoko about whether he stays in Japan.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used "should" vs "should have" correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Work visas and sponsorship for foreign employees

Foreign nationals working in Japan typically require a specific work visa category tied to their employer or job type, and staying longer term, changing jobs, or shifting to a spouse-based visa all involve separate administrative processes. Ichirō's reassurance to Filippo that "you're covered" reflects a real and important practical concern for any foreign worker considering extending their stay in Japan.

Japan: When "home" shifts — long-term foreign residents in Japan

Many foreign nationals who originally planned only a short stay in Japan describe a gradual, often surprising shift in which Japan comes to feel like home, sometimes complicating an already-planned return abroad. This experience, of feeling less certain about leaving than expected, is a commonly described feature of long-term expatriate life rather than something unusual or unique to any one person.

Italy: Family expectations for those who move abroad

Young Italians who move abroad for work or opportunity, especially to less commonly chosen destinations, sometimes describe a quiet, ongoing expectation from family back home that the move is temporary and that they will eventually return, even when this is never stated as a firm demand. Deciding to extend a stay abroad indefinitely can therefore involve navigating both a personal decision and an unspoken family expectation.

Italy: Accepting change gracefully

A certain calm, pragmatic acceptance of life's transitions — summed up in everyday expressions like *così è la vita* ("that's life") — is a recognisable attitude in Italian culture, valuing moving forward steadily over dwelling on what cannot be changed. Alberto's calm, undramatic acceptance of his return home reflects this general cultural tendency, distinct from indifference.

Chapter 22: What She Heard

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever overheard part of a conversation, without the full context, and jumped to a worrying conclusion that later turned out to be wrong? What happened?
2. Sometimes people choose not to ask a direct question because they would rather not know a difficult answer. Do you think this is a wise strategy, or does it usually make things worse in the end?
3. Think about a moment when clearing up a simple misunderstanding brought a wave of relief, perhaps even tears. Why do you think misunderstandings we've been carrying quietly can feel so heavy once they're resolved?
4. Look at these words before you read: preferable, registered (mentally), immigration, renewal, account for. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. preferable	A. better or more desirable than an alternative
2. registered (mentally)	B. noticed and mentally noted something
3. immigration	C. the official process of entering and living in a country
4. renewal	D. the process of extending or continuing something official, like a visa
5. account for	E. to explain or make sense of something

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 22. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

account for (v. phrase) — *to explain or make sense of something*

carrying (v., figurative, "carrying it for three days") — *holding onto a worry or feeling without expressing it*

embarrassed (adj.) — *feeling awkward, ashamed, or self-conscious*

immigration (n.) — *the official process and administration relating to people entering and living in a country*

off (adj., informal, "he's been off") — *not behaving as usual; distracted or not quite themselves*

preferable (adj.) — *better or more desirable than an alternative*

registered (v., past of "register", mental) — *noticed and mentally noted something*

release (n., emotional) — *the sudden relief of a feeling or tension that had built up over time*

renewal (n.) — *the process of extending or continuing something official, such as a visa or contract*

steady (adj., of a voice or manner) — *calm and controlled, without shaking or wavering*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. What has Naoko been "carrying" for three days, and why hasn't she mentioned it to Filippo?
2. How did Naoko come to overhear Filippo and Ichirō's conversation?
3. What specific fragments of the conversation does Naoko remember hearing?
4. What is happening between Filippo and Naoko on the Saturday afternoon when the topic finally comes up?
5. What does Filippo mention that makes Naoko react strongly?
6. What does Naoko finally tell Filippo about the evening she overheard him and Ichirō?
7. What does Filippo explain about the actual reason for his airport visit?
8. How does Naoko react once she understands the misunderstanding, and how does Filippo respond?
9. What does Filippo tell Ichirō the following morning, and what reason does he give for staying?
10. How does Ichirō respond to Filippo's news, and what does this response suggest about their relationship?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Naoko immediately asks Filippo directly about what she overheard, the same evening. **T / F**
2. Naoko overhears Filippo and Ichirō talking about visas, flights, and ticket prices. **T / F**
3. Filippo's mention of the airport is about picking up a flight ticket. **T / F**
4. Naoko believes, before Filippo explains, that he might be planning to leave Japan. **T / F**
5. Filippo explains that his airport visit is actually for a visa renewal. **T / F**
6. Naoko does not react emotionally once the misunderstanding is cleared up. **T / F**
7. Filippo tells Ichirō that Naoko is the only reason he is staying. **T / F**
8. Ichirō reacts to Filippo's news with a joke about needing someone who can actually speak Japanese. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. Reporting an overheard conversation

Rewrite what Naoko overheard as full reported speech sentences, using reporting verbs like "said," "mentioned," or "asked."

1. "I keep looking at it and I don't book it." → Filippo said _____.
2. "What you have at home and what you have here." → Ichirō told him to think about _____.

B. Modals of speculation about someone else's silence (may / might / could have)

Complete each sentence with a modal of speculation about a reason that isn't stated directly.

1. Nobody had said anything to Naoko about Filippo's plans — there _____ nothing to say, or there _____ something nobody wanted to say.
2. Filippo hadn't mentioned it because he _____ (not / want) to worry her before he was sure himself.

C. Writing overheard fragments for tension

The chapter presents overheard phrases as a disconnected list for dramatic effect ("The visa. The flight. The price of tickets."). Write four short fragments someone might overhear from a conversation about a different big decision (e.g. moving house, changing jobs).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

D. "So...?" for confirming understanding

Ichirō confirms what he has just heard with a short "So...?" question ("So Naoko made you stay?"). Write a "So...?" question confirming each situation below.

1. A friend has just explained, in a long story, that they've decided to change careers. → "So _____?"
2. A colleague has just described a complicated plan to fix a problem. → "So _____?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to predict the story in their own words.

1. Naoko decides that "not knowing was preferable to getting an answer she didn't like." Do you think avoiding a difficult question is ever the right choice, even temporarily? When might it help, and when might it hurt?
2. Naoko hears real fragments of a real conversation, but without the context, she reaches a conclusion that turns out to be wrong. What do you think this shows about the risks of partial information, even when every word overheard is accurate?
3. Filippo tells Ichirō that part of his reason for staying is that "Yonago is starting to feel like home." How do you think a place gradually becomes "home," beyond simply living there for a certain amount of time?
4. Ichirō's response to Filippo's big personal news is a dry joke ("I need someone who can actually speak Japanese") rather than an emotional reaction. What do you think this response actually communicates, beneath the humour?
5. Naoko cries with relief once the misunderstanding is resolved, even though "it was not that kind of crying." Why do you think relief after a long period of quiet worry can bring out such a strong physical or emotional reaction?
6. Based on what you have read so far, how do you predict Filippo and Naoko's relationship, and Filippo's life in Yonago, will continue to develop for the rest of the story? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: Clearing Up a Misunderstanding

Setting: A quiet, private moment between two people who care about each other.

Roles: One person who has been quietly worried about something they partly overheard, and the other person, who has no idea there was ever a misunderstanding.

Task: The worried person finally explains what they heard and how it made them feel. The other person clarifies calmly what was actually meant, and they resolve the misunderstanding together.

Scenario B: Telling Your Boss Big News

Setting: A workplace, at the start or end of a shift.

Roles: An employee who has just made an important personal decision affecting their future at the job, and their employer.

Task: The employee explains their decision honestly, including their real reasons. The employer responds warmly, perhaps with a light joke, rather than a purely formal reaction.

Extension: in Scenario A, perform the same misunderstanding a second time, but this time have the worried person ask directly on the very first day, rather than waiting three days — discuss which approach felt healthier.

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Naoko's diary entry (80–120 words) during the three days she was quietly carrying her worry, before the conversation on Saturday.
2. Write Filippo's private thoughts (80–120 words) walking to Naoko's house that Saturday afternoon, not yet knowing what she has overheard.
3. Write a paragraph (100–150 words) about a time you misunderstood a conversation you overheard, and jumped to a conclusion that turned out to be wrong.
4. Write Alberto's reaction (80–120 words), imagining how he responds when he learns that Filippo has decided to stay in Japan.

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used reported speech or modals of speculation correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Visa renewal and immigration procedures for foreign residents

Foreign residents in Japan on a work visa must renew their status of residence periodically, a process that typically involves visiting an immigration office (sometimes located near airports, as in this chapter) with supporting documents from their employer. Renewal is a routine, recurring administrative task for long-term foreign residents, quite distinct from the process of leaving the country.

Japan: Enryo — restraint and hesitation to ask directly

Enryo refers to a Japanese cultural value of self-restraint and hesitation, particularly around imposing on others or asking a direct question that might create discomfort or force an unwanted answer. Naoko's choice to wait rather than ask Filippo directly reflects a recognisable pattern connected to this value, though it can create exactly the kind of prolonged, quiet worry seen in this chapter.

Italy: Directness in romantic relationships

Italian relationship culture often favours addressing concerns, jealousy, or worry directly and relatively quickly, rather than allowing an issue to remain unspoken for an extended period, which can be seen as avoidant rather than considerate. This cultural tendency contrasts with the more restrained pattern shown by Naoko in this chapter, highlighting one of many small differences that a Japanese-Italian couple might navigate.

Italy: Reassurance and commitment in Italian romantic language

Italian has several common, emotionally direct phrases used to reassure a partner of commitment, such as non ti lascio ("I won't leave you") or resta con me ("stay with me"), often delivered plainly and without excessive elaboration at emotionally significant moments. Filippo's simple, direct "I can't leave you" reflects this same economical, sincere style of reassurance.

Chapter 23: Work Tomorrow

CEFR Level: A2+ – B1

PRE-READING

Use these before students read the chapter. They activate background knowledge and support weaker readers — they do not reveal what happens in the chapter.

1. Have you ever said goodbye to someone at the end of a long stay abroad — a job, an exchange programme, a working holiday? What made that goodbye feel calm, or difficult, or both?
2. Think about someone who prepares for an ending gradually, in small stages, rather than all at once. Do you think this makes an ending easier or harder to face?
3. This is the final chapter of Villa Bardini. Before reading, think back over the story so far — how do you think Ichirō has changed since Chapter 1?
4. Look at these words before you read: rota, dry stores, embrace, observation area, toasted. Can you guess what any of them mean?

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the Word to the Meaning

Before reading, try to match each word to its meaning. Check your answers when you meet the words in the glossary and in the chapter.

1. rota	A. a schedule showing who works which shifts
2. dry stores	B. non-perishable food kept in a kitchen store cupboard
3. embrace	C. a hug, especially a meaningful or long one
4. observation area	D. a place, often at an airport, for watching planes
5. toasted	E. raised a glass to celebrate someone or something

GLOSSARY

Alphabetical list of vocabulary from Chapter 23. Simple English definitions are given; teachers may adapt these for lower-level classes.

catching (v., -ing form of "catch", figurative) — *noticing something, such as an expression on someone's face*

competitive (adj., "briefly competitive") — *wanting to do better than someone else, at least for a moment*

delighted (adj.) — *very pleased*

distraction (n., figurative) — *something that takes a person's attention away from what they are doing*

dry stores (n. phrase, kitchen) — *non-perishable food and ingredients kept in a kitchen storeroom*

embrace (n./v.) — *a hug, especially one that is warm or meaningful; to hug someone*

observation area (n. phrase) — *a public viewing area, often at an airport, for watching aircraft*

reduce (v., figurative, "would reduce it") — *to make something seem smaller or less significant than it really is*

rota (n., British English) — *a schedule showing who is working which shift*

runway (n.) — *the long, flat strip an aircraft uses to take off and land*

stages (n., "in stages") — *separate steps or phases, rather than all at once*

toasted (v., past of "toast") — *raised a glass and made a short speech to celebrate someone or something*

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

For use after the chapter has been read.

1. How does Alberto behave differently in his final weeks compared to the months before, according to the chapter?
2. Why does Alberto say he packs "in stages" and starts early?
3. Whose idea was the goodbye dinner, and what surprises everyone about it?
4. What happens when Keiko gives a toast in Japanese?
5. What does Alberto do on the morning of his flight, before anyone else arrives?
6. What does Alberto say about the restaurant, and how does Ichirō initially respond?
7. Who drives Alberto to the airport, and what does he do during the drive?
8. What does Alberto ask Filippo to do, just before going through the gate?
9. Where do Ichirō, Filippo, and Naoko go after Alberto leaves, and what do they watch?
10. What are the final words of the chapter, and what tone do they set for the ending?

True or False?

Circle T (true) or F (false) for each sentence.

1. Alberto becomes noticeably less engaged and more distracted in his final weeks. **T / F**
2. Alberto organises the goodbye dinner and cooks the meal himself. **T / F**
3. Keiko's Japanese toast is worse than Alberto's and Filippo's. **T / F**
4. Alberto visits the restaurant alone on the morning of his flight, before it opens. **T / F**
5. Alberto tells Ichirō the restaurant is only "getting there," not yet good. **T / F**
6. Alberto asks Filippo to make sure he has room for a guest, in case Alberto visits. **T / F**
7. Ichirō, Filippo, and Naoko leave the airport immediately after Alberto goes through the gate. **T / F**
8. The chapter ends with Ichirō telling Filippo they have work the next day. **T / F**

LANGUAGE FOCUS

A. "The kind of ___ that ___" — a recurring descriptive pattern

This pattern appears throughout Villa Bardini (e.g. "the kind of cooking that looks improvised but isn't"). Complete these examples, then write one of your own.

1. It was the kind of evening that _____.
2. He had the kind of calm that _____.
3. (your own sentence) It was the kind of _____ that _____.

B. "Before + Past Perfect" for quick succession of actions

The chapter describes the plane's takeoff using this structure ("was above the cloud before they had quite finished watching"). Complete each sentence.

1. The plane lifted off the ground _____ (they / realise) it was actually leaving.
2. He said goodbye and walked through the gate _____ (anyone / can / say) anything more.

C. Distinguishing similar emotions with qualifying clauses

Alberto says, "I'll miss this. Not in a sad way. I'll just miss it." Complete each sentence, distinguishing a feeling from a similar one it could be confused with.

1. I'm nervous about it. Not in a bad way, just _____.
2. She was quiet. Not because she was upset, just because _____.

D. Review: "will," "going to," and Present Continuous for the future

Complete each sentence with the most natural future form, based on what you have learned across the book.

1. "I _____ (miss) this place a bit," Alberto said, "but the adventure is over."
2. Filippo _____ (wait) for Alberto outside, so they had to hurry.
3. "Come on," Ichirō said. "We _____ (have) work tomorrow."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For pair or group discussion. The final question invites students to reflect on the whole book.

1. Alberto packs gradually and says he hasn't "found anything I'd regret leaving," which he calls "probably a good sign." What do you think this reveals about how he has experienced his year and a half in Japan?
2. The narrator says the goodbye dinner "does not need to be described in too much detail because describing it too much would reduce it." Why do you think some good experiences are better left slightly undescribed, rather than analysed in detail?
3. Alberto tells Ichirō directly and firmly that the restaurant is "a good restaurant," correcting Ichirō's more modest "it's getting there." Why do you think it can be hard to accept praise for something you have worked so hard on?
4. The final line of the book — "Come on. Let's get some rest. We have work tomorrow" — is quiet and ordinary rather than dramatic. Why do you think the author chooses to end the story this way, rather than with a big emotional statement?
5. Alberto describes his time in Japan as "the adventure," now over, while Filippo has decided to stay and build a life there. What do you think makes one person experience a period abroad as a bounded "adventure" and another person experience the same period as the beginning of a new home?
6. Looking back across the whole book, how do you think Ichirō has changed from the young cook we met in Chapter 1 to the restaurant owner we see in this final chapter? Discuss your ideas with a partner, using specific moments from the story to support your view.

ROLE PLAY

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Two scenarios are provided — use one, or both, depending on time.

Scenario A: The Goodbye Dinner

Setting: A small, informal dinner among close colleagues, marking someone's last night before leaving.

Roles: The person leaving, and two or three colleagues or friends.

Task: Take turns giving short, warm toasts — some serious, some light-hearted. The person leaving should respond with their own short toast at the end.

Scenario B: The Airport Goodbye

Setting: A departure gate at an airport.

Roles: Someone about to board a flight home after a long stay abroad, and the friends seeing them off.

Task: Act out the final few minutes before boarding — practical promises (staying in touch, visiting again), a warm but not overly long goodbye, and a final embrace or handshake.

Extension: compare Scenario B with the Florence farewell scene from Chapter 10 — what feels similar about saying goodbye in both places, and what feels different?

WRITING TASKS

Choose one or more tasks depending on class level and time available.

1. Write Alberto's first message (80–120 words) to Ichirō and Filippo after landing back in Italy.
2. Write Filippo's diary entry (80–120 words) for the evening after saying goodbye to Alberto at the airport.
3. Write a short toast or speech (80–120 words) you would give at a farewell dinner for a close friend or colleague leaving after a long time working together.
4. Write a reflective paragraph (120–180 words) looking back across the whole story of Villa Bardini: how has Ichirō changed from the first chapter to this final one, and what moment in the book do you think mattered most to that change?

Self-Check Before You Hand In

- Have you used at least three words from the glossary?
- Have you used future forms (will / going to / present continuous) correctly, if included?
- Does your writing stay within the suggested word count?
- Have you checked your spelling and punctuation?

CULTURAL NOTES

Japan: Regional airports in Japan

Yonago's airport, like many regional Japanese airports, is small and efficient, typically served by a limited number of domestic routes rather than international ones, and can usually be crossed from check-in to gate in a few minutes, quite unlike the much larger hub airports in Tokyo or Osaka. Many regional airports also include small observation decks, popular with local families and plane enthusiasts as well as travellers.

Italy: Toasting customs on special occasions

In Italian social culture, toasting (*fare un brindisi*) marks a wide range of occasions, and while toasting another person is standard, humorously toasting oneself, as Alberto does in this chapter, is generally understood as a light-hearted, self-aware joke rather than genuine self-congratulation, especially among close friends.

Japan: Farewell meals among colleagues

A farewell meal (*sōbetsukai*) for a departing colleague is a well-established custom in Japanese workplaces, usually organised by the group rather than the person leaving, though the informal, self-organised version shown in this chapter reflects the close, less hierarchical dynamic of a small, family-style restaurant team rather than a larger, more formal Japanese company.

Italy: "L'avventura" — framing a period abroad as an adventure

Many young Italians who spend a fixed period working or living abroad describe the experience using the word *avventura* ("adventure") — a term that frames the time as a bounded, memorable chapter with a clear beginning and end, rather than a permanent change of identity or home. Alberto's own words, "the adventure is over," reflect this common framing, distinct from Filippo's different experience of the same period.