

In my time as an ALT in Japan, there have been many ups and downs. There have been times when I really loved Japan and thought that I never wanted to go home. At the same time, there have been days when I really would have liked to spend some time in America with my friends. In the same way, while I usually love and enjoy Japanese food, there have been moments when I really want to eat something from home. Lately, I have been enjoying the fall foods that are readily available in Japan now: sweet potatoes, chestnuts, pumpkin, etc. But still I think fondly back on sweet potatoes at home, which are orange and taste much different from Japanese satsumaimo, and part of me wishes I was there to eat that instead.

In the past few years, I have been very enthusiastic about celebrating Halloween. Halloween is a holiday that is coming up next Wednesday, when people in America often dress in costumes and children go trick-or-treating, going to houses in their neighborhood to collect candy. It is a fun holiday and each year since I came to Japan I have looked forward to making a costume, having a party with my students at school and celebrating together with my friends on the weekend. I don't know what it is this year, but I don't have any enthusiasm for celebrating this holiday this time. It is starting to seem like I have gotten into a yearly rut and this year I want to get out of it! Luckily, Halloween is on a Wednesday this year, so I don't have to make a decision about whether or not to wear a costume at school that day or not. In the time that I have been in Japan, my ideas not only about Halloween but about what is fun or important to me has changed.

One of the "ups" this year has been the growth of the knitting group in Mie. You may not know that my favorite hobby is knitting. I try to knit at least a little bit each day, even if I only have a chance to knit a few rows. Over the past 3 years I have taught many ALTs to knit, and started meetings of a knitting group from time to time. For some reason this year knitting has been far more popular than ever before, and each month we have at least 10 or 15 ALT members attending our knitting group. It's a big success and I am proud to know that I started something so big. It was a disappointment in the past when the group was not so popular, but now I am even happier to know that so many people share my interests this year. Things change for the good, too!

The point of my journal is that in the time since I have come to Japan it seems like many things have changed for me. Most people go through different phases in their life, but to be in Japan and have so many of my ideas and interests change from year to year has affected the way that I see my time here. Instead of living the same life for 4 years, I have had the opportunity to have many different experiences, all that have taught me something unique. Today is my 100th journal. I can't believe that I have written 100 already, but I am getting a little bit worried that I won't have enough ideas to continue writing until the end of next year. It's one good reason for me to continue trying new things and having new experiences that will give me things to write about before I leave.