



Crazy for Kanji: A Student's Guide to the Wonderful World of Japanese Characters

By Eve Kushner

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Memorizing kanji—Japanese written characters—and their thousands of shapes, sounds, and meanings—would drive anyone crazy. And here’s something crazier: a whole book about kanji—where they come from, why they look like they do, how to tell *husband* from *prisoner*, where to find kanji in Wales, and how to learn kanji faster. Scattered throughout are nearly one hundred large-type “exhibits” of kanji madness, including puzzles and even kanji sudoku. *Crazy for Kanji* is visually striking and loads of fun for students and language lovers.

Eve Kushner, based in Berkeley, California, is a student of Japanese and an incurable kanji-holic.

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Editorial Review

Review

Drawing on her sharp intellect, sense of humor, and tireless ability to ask all the right questions, ... Kushner seduces us from Page 1. -- "Kanji Clinic" by Mary Sisk Noguchi, Japan Times columnist

Kushner ... presents excellent learning strategies.... Her enthusiasm ... is infectious.... Kushner doesn't shy away from complexities.... She tackles them head on. --Asian Review of Books, by Todd Shimoda

Funny as well as educational, offering hundreds of games, lessons, and believe-it-or-nots.... Brilliantly merges the contemporary ... with the antique. --East Bay Express, by Anneli Rufus

Fun and informative read for people who are interested in the origins of language or simply want ... ways to make kanji easier. -- Nichi Bei Times, by Sarah Yuen

How I wish I had had Eve Kushner's brilliant Crazy for Kanji to begin my journey. --Choate Rosemary Hall Bulletin, by Katharine Jewett, the head of the languages department

From the Back Cover

Memorizing kanji--Japanese written characters--and their thousands of shapes, sounds, and meanings might drive anyone crazy. And here's something crazier: a whole book about kanji--where they come from, why they look the way they do, what they say about Japan, and how to learn them faster. The perfect book for students and teachers, Crazy for Kanji is filled with facts, examples, cultural clues, charts, dozens of photographs of kanji in action, and games and puzzles to challenge and entertain.

About the Author

Eve Kushner is a freelance writer in Berkeley, California. A longtime Japanophile, she started learning Japanese in 2001. When she encountered kanji in 2002, she became fascinated. She soon began spending hours in the garden with a pot of green tea and Mark Spahn and Wolfgang Hadamitzky's five-pound "Kanji Dictionary." While creating diagrams to map out the infinitely complicated system of kanji, she often laughed out loud over discoveries that filled her with joy. She started dreaming about kanji. She named her dog Kanji. Whenever she felt upset, she turned to kanji studies, which made her feel better in no time. Before long, kanji completely took over her life, even interfering with work.

There was no choice but to make the study of kanji her life's work. Now she writes about kanji full-time, trying to show that these characters can be charming, poetic, and witty, not the source of fear and loathing people often make them out to be. The "Japan Times" praised them as "informative and entertaining." In 2009, Stone Bridge Press published her "Crazy for Kanji: A Student's Guide to the Wonderful World of Japanese Characters," prompting a flurry of positive reviews and some NPR interviews. She also published an essay in the "East Bay Monthly" about kanji as her form of spirituality.

She has now begun Joy o' Kanji, a massive project to write one essay about each of the Joyo kanji (the characters used in daily life in Japan). When this project goes live (sometime in 2010), paying subscribers will be able to download these essays on PDFs. With comprehensive information about every aspect of a character, as well as photos of kanji, these essays will reveal the personalities of each kanji (that is, the character of the characters!) as nothing ever has.

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