

## How to Write About Japan

### Mimi Nakajima

some tips: salarymen and Geishas are good

Always use the word 'Tokyo' or 'Sushi' or 'Orient' in your title. Subtitles may include the words 'Osaka', 'Hiroshima', 'Kimono', 'Judo', 'Manga' or 'Lady Murasaki'. Some other words you can include are 'Sony', 'Honda', and 'Nissan'. Note that 'People' means *nihonjinn* or Japanese people, while 'Gaijin' means anyone that doesn't belong to the homogenous society of Japan.

Never have a picture of an enthusiastic salary-man on the cover of your book or in it, unless he has just had his first pay raise in twenty years. Science nerds, Geishas, survivors of the atomic bomb: use these. If you must include a Japanese, make sure she's dressed in a school uniform and walking around the streets of Harajuku (her skirt length cannot be longer than three inches).

In your text, treat Japan as a loving, harmonious, and accepting country. It is beautiful in the spring-time with cherry blossoms blooming everywhere and drunken people of all ages enjoying *Kirin* beer. Or it is hot and humid with people choosing to walk or ride the train, or even driving hybrid electrical vehicles –because they care about the environment. The train schedule is delayed at least once a week because of depressed salary-men committing suicide on the train tracks, but none of your readers know that, so keep your descriptions lively and exotic.

Make sure you mention that nobody in Japan steals; expand on your experience of losing a cell phone, an umbrella, or your wallet, and how the item was brought back to you intact. Do not mention homicides (especially of foreign English teachers), suicides, and other felonies; Japan is the safest country in the world. Make sure you mention being able to fall asleep on the train and how you feel yourself becoming a true Japanese.

Your Japanese characters may include Geishas, science nerds, and salary-men. Keep in mind that none of your characters can pronounce 'loyal' and 'royal' distinctively because it's English that they speak. Geishas are nothing more than a classy, euphemized term for prostitutes that can dance, sing, play the *koto* and *shamisen*, and seduce retired billionaires or politicians. If it's a mystery novel, she's your best bet as the culprit (no one really knows what's under all that makeup). The science nerds are always graduates or prospective students of either Tokyo University or Kyoto University and they all took calculus in middle school. At the heart of the Japanese economy are the salary-men – you just can't blame them for openly looking at pornography on the train when they work 100 hours a week with hardly any bonus or recognition. Everybody needs a little reward.

Establish early on that you live in a country with one of the highest life expectancy in the world and how you love Japan and you can't imagine living anywhere else. If you are a man, obsess over how obedient, petite and domestic Japanese women are. If you are a woman, obsess over the weekly shrine sales you attend and the great deals you get. Whichever angle you take, do not fail to mention how you introduced multiculturalism in the country.

Describe, in detail, sushi (raw salmon, raw squid, raw tuna, raw eel, raw shrimp) or udon noodles (always slurp), or okonomiyaki. And sour raw plums. Or, better, sticky fetid fermented soybean.

Nakajima Nozomi 9/6/08 12:52 PM

**Comment [1]:** Alliteration is used twice – “some” and “salarymen” as well as “Geishas” and “good”.

Canadian Academy 9/6/08 12:25 PM

**Comment [2]:** Listing is used to immediately bombard the readers with stereotypical images of Japan

Nakajima Nozomi 9/6/08 3:21 PM

**Comment [3]:** Instructional register. Although the audience is aimed at those that know the different perspectives of Japan, its imperative register satirizes the stereotypes that Western audiences have when they hear/read a book about Japan.

Canadian Academy 9/5/08 11:08 AM

**Comment [4]:** Black humor. A taboo subject like suicide is treated in a satirical manner.

Canadian Academy 9/6/08 12:13 PM

**Comment [5]:** Use of “local language”: English is misspelled deliberately to literally mimic and satirize the pronunciation of the stereotypical Japanese

Nakajima Nozomi 9/6/08 12:37 PM

**Comment [6]:** Sarcasm: Accepting the public viewing of pornography when it is in fact very inappropriate.

Nakajima Nozomi 9/6/08 12:35 PM

**Comment [7]:** Repetition of “raw” emphasizes the stereotype that all sushi are made of raw fish. It also captures the Western attitude that raw fish is “barbaric” food.

Nakajima Nozomi 9/6/08 12:50 PM

**Comment [8]:** Incomplete sentence. It creates a rhythm to the writing similar to Wainaina's piece, which uses a variety of short and long sentences.

Remember, anything foul smelling and unappetizing will be referred to as the ‘real Japan’, and that’s exactly what you want to capture.

If you want your book published or sold in Japan, do not offend the imperial family. Avoid mentioning them altogether. But feel free to condemn the so-called “Liberal” Democratic Party and how Japan went through two prime ministers in the last year.

Always end your book with your protagonist screaming “Yatta!” with his or her arms waving up in the air. Because you care.

Word Count: 654

Nakajima Nozomi 9/6/08 12:40 PM

**Comment [9]:** Quotations are used around the word “Liberal” to emphasize irony –the party’s policies are not liberal at all.

Canadian Academy 9/5/08 10:58 AM

**Comment [10]:** Allusion to Hiro Nakamura in “Heroes” played by Masi Oka –a stereotypical Japanese portrayed in Western television.