

Dictation Contest (PRJr, 初級) No. 196

Hello, guys!

Let's see what happens to Stink at school...

"I'm not Elizabeth anymore," she told Stink. "From now on, call me Sophie of the Elves."

"Okay! I have a new name, too: The Incredible Shrinking Stink."

"But Stink, you look taller today!" said Elizabeth.

"It's just the hair," said Stink. "I'm still short."

"Not to an elf! To an Elf, you'd be a giant! To an elf, you would be the Elf King!"

"Thanks, Sophie of the Elves!"

Let's see what happens next time! Bye-bye!

Dictation Contest (PR1, 中級) No. 196

Hi there, everyone! How are you?

Welcome to PR1. Let me read the next part of my favourite story, *Momotaro*...

Thanks to the old couple's loving care, the peach boy grew up healthy and strong. Even when he was little, Momotaro was the best sumo wrestler in the village. By the time he was twelve, no man in all of Japan could [throw] him. And yet, he was the sweetest, kindest boy in the land. Momotaro was only fourteen when he went before the old man and woman and bowed deeply.

"Grandmother, grandfather," he said. "I must leave you for a while."

"What?" said the old woman.

Let's see what happens to him next! See you!

Dictation Contest (PR2 上級) No. 196

Hey, guys! How are you doing?

Hope you're all still staying healthy and safe.

I have a news story that's related to your favourite topic, school! Yayyy- here we go:

A growing number of Japanese prefectural high schools are relaxing or scrapping gender codes for uniforms to meet the needs of transgender and other sexual-minority students, with around a third of prefectures taking such steps in response to an Education Ministry request five years ago. Kyodo News surveys of education boards found that more than 600 prefecture-run schools in at least 19 of Japan's 47 prefectures have relaxed restrictions regarding uniform dress codes, such as permitting girls to wear trousers instead of skirts.

Ah! I'm a little surprised by this news, actually – but in a good way. The issue of gender identity often comes up when discussing the possible downsides of having to wear a school uniform and so I'm glad that students in Japan are being granted a little bit more freedom. Unlike in America, students in England have to wear a pretty strict school uniform, even at public schools. However, even when I was at school (roughly one million years ago), girls could still choose between wearing trousers or a skirt. So, Japan is definitely a little bit slow on this matter, but better late than never, I suppose! Alright, guys, well, until next time – and as always – study hard, stay safe, and I'll see you soon.