

学校名	氏名	学年	性別	演題
秋田県湯沢市立 湯沢北中学校	みなみ かのん 南 花音	3	女	Don't Be Afraid of Being Different 自分らしくある勇気を

Everybody wants to live in harmony. To live in harmony, many Japanese people think it is important 'to read between the lines' or 'to read the situation' which means 'to understand someone's feelings or intentions from a few words, posture, tone of voice, facial expressions, and so on.' By reading between the lines and doing something suitable to the situation, you can make the people around you feel good. I think this is one of the greatest things about Japanese culture. But sometimes when you get caught up in reading the situation too much, you may run into trouble. I'd like to consider why those troubles happen and how we can solve them.

The first story is about me. My friends often say to me, "You're a bit different." I guess there are several reasons for this. The biggest reason would be my personality. From my childhood, I did what I wanted to do. In elementary school I was the only girl who was in the baseball team. And when I started playing volleyball two years ago, I was the only player as a first grader. Many people would often say, "I don't understand why you do these things." I would feel sad whenever I heard that. But did I ever do anything wrong? I think Japanese people are often concerned about how they appear to others, and try not to do anything different. A person doing unusual things is often considered to be someone who can't read between the lines.

The second story is about my friend. I have a friend who is a big fan of a female singer 'S'. One day when my classmates, my friend, and I were talking about our favorite singers, one girl said, "I don't like 'S' because her songs are not good, and she's not cute." Some girls agreed with her. Then my friend said, "Oh, I think so, too. I don't like her." I was surprised. Why did she say that? I guess she was afraid that she might be left out by her classmates for having a different opinion. She read between the lines too much.

The last story is about me again. Three years ago, I visited Canada to stay at my uncle's house. One day, he took me to his friend's house. There were some Canadian boys and girls there, talking happily. I tried to read the situation and thought I should not interrupt them, so I stood there without saying anything. In Japan, if I did that, I might be left alone, but in Canada I wasn't. They started asking me questions. Though my English was poor, they tried to understand me, and I tried to answer as much as I could. I had a great time with them. I found that just saying nothing doesn't do any good for us. Without words, you can never really know other people's feelings.

From my experience, I learned two important things. First is having your own opinion and saying it clearly even if it's different from others'. Being different is difficult for Japanese people and often requires a lot of courage, but you can't have real communication if you are afraid of it. Second is expressing your ideas with words, not by having other people read the situation. Japanese people value harmony. But the harmony will never be made by just reading between the lines. I would like to make my world a better place where we can say what we really think or feel. Let's not be afraid of being different. I'm different, but that's OK, because I believe being aware of ourselves as different people is the start of creating beautiful harmony in the world.