

LESSON NOTES

Japanese Children's Songs #5 Sakura Sakura

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KANJI

1. さくら さくら、
2. やよいの空(そら)は 見(み)わたす限(かぎ)り
3. かすみか雲(くも)か 匂(にお)いぞ出(い)する
4. いざやいざや 見(み)にゆかん

KANA

1. さくら さくら、
2. やよいのそらは みわたすかぎり
3. かすみかくもか においぞいする
4. いざやいざや みにゆかん

ROMANIZATION

1. Sakura sakura,
2. Yayoi no sora wa miwatasu kagiri
3. Kasumika kumo ka nioi zo izuru
4. izaya izaya mi ni yukan

ENGLISH

CONT'D OVER

1. Sakura, the cherry blossoms
2. As far as I can see in the spring sky
3. It looks like mist or clouds and it smells of the sweet scent of cherry blossoms
4. Let's go see them

VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
さくら	さくら	sakura	cherry blossom
やよい	やよい	yayoi	March
見渡す	みわたす	miwatasu	to look out over, to survey (a scene)
かすみ	かすみ	kasumi	mist, haze
匂い	におい	nioi	odour, scent, smell, aroma
いざ	いざ	iza	now

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>友達とさくらの下で花見をしました。 <i>Sakura no shita de hanami o shimashita.</i></p> <p>I had a blossom-viewing party under the cherry blossom trees with my friends.</p>	<p>もうやよいの月なので、暖かいですね。 <i>Mō yayoi no tsuki na node, atatakai desu ne.</i></p> <p>It's already March, so it's warm, isn't it?</p>
<p>山頂まで上って、周りを見渡した。 <i>Sanchō made agatte mawari o miwatashita.</i></p> <p>I climbed up to the top of the mountain, and looked out over the area.</p>	<p>富士山がかすみがかかって、よく見えな い。 <i>Fujisan ga kasumi ga kakatte, yoku mienai.</i></p> <p>Mt. Fuji is clouded in mist, so you can't see it well.</p>

カレーの良い匂いがする。

Karē no ii nioi ga suru.

I can smell the lovely smell of curry.

いざ、日本へ！

Iza, nihon e!

Now, to Japan!

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is the Japanese Children's Song *Sakura Sakura* ("Cherry Blossoms").

Sakura ("cherry blossoms") is the flower most loved by the Japanese, and this song is the most popular song about *sakura*. It's said that the Japanese used this song as a practice song for children learning to play the *koto* (a thirteen-stringed Japanese instrument) in the Edo Period. The lyrics of the song change slightly depending on the time period, but in this lesson we will introduce the most common version. The lyrics of this song contain a lot of archaic Japanese.

Sakura symbolizes spring in Japan, and it is also called the national flower. It's said that the reason Japanese love *sakura* so much is because of the sorrow felt at the short life they live: right after full bloom, the blossoms quickly fall to the ground. Another reason is the way they seem to strongly come to life all at once when they bloom after a long period of preparation during the winter months.

さくら さくら、

This song starts out by saying *sakura, sakura*.

やよいの空は 見わたす限り

Yayoi (やよい) is another name for March, and *yayoi no sora* means "the sky in March." *Miwatasu* (見わたす) is a compound verb made up of *miru* (見る), meaning "to see," and *watasu* (渡す), meaning "to cross," and it means "to see all around." *Kagiri* (限り) is a word that means "as long as one does something" or "as far as one does something" when it is used with a verb, like *shiru kagiri* (知る限り), which means "as far as I know." In this case, *miwatasu kagiri* (見わたす限り) means "as far as one can see." So, this line literally means "the sky in March, as far as you can see..." but it doesn't end here and instead continues into the next line.

かすみか雲(くも)か 匂(にお)いぞ出(い)する

Kasumi (かすみ) means "haze" and *kumo* (くも) means "cloud." The particle *ka* in *Kasumi ka kumo ka* means "or." So altogether, *Kasumi ka kumo ka* means "haze or clouds." This line continues from the previous line, so it's talking about the sky in March and it literally says that "the sky in March" is "haze or clouds." In this case, "the sky" doesn't necessarily indicate the sky, but a view of the distance. It is saying that the view seems to be veiled in a haze or covered with clouds when the cherry blossoms are fully blooming.

The next phrase, *nioi zo izuru*, means "fragrance is coming out." *Nioi* (匂い) means "fragrance" and *izuru* (いずる) is the archaic form of the verb *deru*, meaning "to come out." *Zo* (ぞ) is also an old Japanese particle that emphasizes its preceding noun.

いざやいざや 見(み)にゆかん

Izaya (いざや) is a compound phrase made up of *iza* (いざ) and *ya* (や). *Iza* (いざ) is a phrase you would call out to encourage someone to do something together with you, but it is an old expression. *Ya* is an archaic sentence-ending particle used to create rhythm. You can hear *iza* used in old samurai movies, as in *iza mairō* (いざ参ろう) which means "let's go," with *mairō* being the volitional form of the verb *mairu* (参る), which is a humble verb meaning "to go."

Mini yukan (見(こ)ゆかん) is also archaic Japanese, and it means "let's go and see." *Yukan* (ゆかん) is the old style of Japanese, which is the volitional form of *iku* meaning "to go." We occasionally pronounce *iku* (いく) as *yuku* (ゆく). *Yukan* (ゆかん) is a variation on the word *yukamu* (ゆかむ), with *mu* (む) as an auxiliary verb that expresses the speaker's intention to do something.

We can translate this line in modern Japanese as さあ、見に行こう！