

Mr. Pole

Obaaaa-san

The other day, I saw a middle-aged lady drop a book in the street. I called “**obāsan!**” but she probably didn’t hear me and just kept walking. So, I ran after her and again shouted “**obāsan!**” This time she noticed me calling but looked very fierce. Then she grabbed her book from me and walked away without saying anything. I thought I was being nice, so I don’t understand why she didn’t thank me. What is her problem ?

Make sure you pronounce the vowels “**a, i, u, e, o**” correctly to avoid problems.

しゅじん shujin my husband	きて kite please come	とり tori bird	おじさん ojisan middle-aged man; uncle
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しゅうじん shūjin prisoner	きいて kīte please listen	とおり tōri street	おじいさん ojisan old man; grandfather
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敬老の日 (kērō no hi) — Respect for the Aged Day (Sept. 15)

The average span of life for Japanese men last year was 77.97 years and for women, 83.82 years. From age 65, people are treated as “old” by the system in Japan. But in this aging society, 65 is not exactly “old” and is rather considered “middle-aged.” Nowadays, people from 65 up to age 75 are often treated as “young-old,” and those above 75 are treated as the actual “old.” The oldest living Japanese twins are the 107-year-old twin sisters known as “**Kin-san**” and “**Gin-san**.”

Grammar notes

[someone did something for me: I benefited from someone’s action]
implying : “someone was kind enough to do something for me”

someone  は **wa** something  を **o** + verb (te-form) + **くれました。**
kuremashita

Can be replaced with politer “**kudasaimashita**”

I received someone’s action (implying someone was kind enough to do something for me)

e.g., Ms. Oda : May I carry your baggage?

Mr. Pole : Thank you. (That’s very kind of you.)

[Later, Mr. Pole is talking about this incident to someone else.]

Mr. Pole : Ms. Oda helped me to carry my baggage.

小田さんは私の荷物を持ってくれました。
Oda-san wa watashi no nimotsu o motte-kuremashita

Answers

- ① 持ってくれました。 **motte-kuremashita** ② 教えてくれました。 **oshiete-kuremashita** ③ 探してくれました。 **sagashite-kuremashita** ④ 来てくれました。 **kite-kuremashita**



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■ ■ ■ “**obāsan**” is a word for an old lady or one’s grandmother, whereas “**obasan**” means middle-aged lady or one’s aunt. You probably meant to say “**obasan**.” As you see, “**obāsan**” and “**obasan**” look almost the same. The difference is whether or not you stretch the letter “a” when pronouncing it. In Japanese, there are many other words like these two that share similar pronunciation but mean something completely different. The lady you mention was probably upset because you called her “old lady” even though she is still middle-aged. Next time you call someone you don’t know to draw his or her attention, just say “**sumimasen**” (Excuse me).

Mr. Pole’s grandmother came to visit Japan from the South Pole

Mr. Pole : You have a lot of baggage. How did you carry them?

Grandmother: I met a kind person at the train station.

He carried my bags.

その人は荷物を **①** carry
sono hito wa nimotsu o
that person baggage

He told me about many places in this town.

この街のいろいろな所を **②** teach (tell)
kono machi no iro-iro na tokoro o
this town various place

and he looked for the house with me.

そして一緒に家を **③** look for
soshite isshoni uchi o
and together house

He took the trouble to come all the way here.

わざわざここまで **④** come
waza waza koko made
take the trouble to do; see below

Mr. Pole : To the house? He really was a kind person, wasn’t he?

Grandmother: He was a police officer!

“**waza-waza**” is used in a sentence when showing the appreciation to someone for doing something. If you use this “**waza-waza**” for your own action, people may think you have a patronizing attitude. So, be careful.

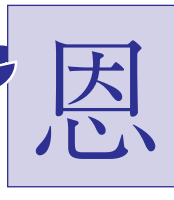
take the trouble to do -> **waza waza** + one’s action

e.g., Thank you for taking the trouble to do it.

わざわざありがとうございました。
waza waza arigatō-gozaïmashita

Thank you very much.
ありがとうございました。
arigatō-gozaïmashita

waza waza
arigatō-gozaïmashita



おん
on

kindness; obligation;
debt of gratitude

1. 遠くの親戚より近くの他人
tōku no shinseki yori chikaku no tanin
A neighbor is better than a relative living far away.
2. 恩に着ます
on ni kimasu
be profoundly grateful [casual style]
3. 板ばさみ
itabasami
be in a dilemma (be sandwiched between ~)

A

My wife asked me: “Which is more important, family or work?”
妻に『家庭と仕事どっちが大切?』と言われました。
tsuma ni 『katē to shigoto docchi ga taisetsu?』 to iwaremashita
my wife family or work which important

Family is (also) important...work is also important...

家庭も大切...仕事も大切...
katē mo taisetsu... shigoto mo taisetsu...
also

I’m in a dilemma **desu.**

B

Sometimes, my landlord looks after my child; he’s very helpful.
時々 大家さんは子供を預かってくれますので 助かります。
toki doki ōyasan wa kodomo o azukattekuremasu node tasukarimasu
sometimes landlord child look after so helpful

“A neighbor is better than a relative living far away” **desu ne**

C [casual style conversation]

Mr. Pole : Oh, I forgot to take money out (of the bank)!

ああ～ お金をおろすのを忘れた!

aa okane o orosu no o wasureta!
Oh money draw forgot

I will pay you back tomorrow, so can you lend me 30,000 yen?

明日返すから 3万円貸して。
ashita kaesu kara san-man en kashite
tomorrow pay back 30,000 yen please lend me

Friend : No problem.

Mr. Pole : I really appreciate it. (I’m profoundly grateful.)

Answers

- A ... 3 B ... 1 C ... 2

With cooperation from Akiko E. Yasukawa