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Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

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I went to the **sushi** restaurant near my house last night. Recently, I have been able to order various kinds of **sushi** because I've learned the names of some of the fish. It's still hard for me to remember some of the names, so I order by looking at a menu posted on a wall, which is written in **hiragana**. Last night, a Japanese man who was sitting next to me told me that it would be interesting to know what **kanji** are used for what fish and why. Ms. Hirayama, can you help?

■■■ I also love **sushi**. In some **sushi** restaurants, they use an interesting green-tea cup with the names of many fish on it. Many Japanese find it hard to read the names of fish in **kanji**. If you remember them, your Japanese friends will be impressed. Why not try to surprise them? I may be making an unnecessary comment here, but, recently, it seems more and more fish are cut into slices and sold in packages at supermarkets. So, there is little opportunity to see a whole fish, and the number of children and young adults who cannot recognize different kinds of fish is increasing.

From the meaning of kanji:

魚 + 平 → 鱈
(flat) ひらめ
hirame



魚 + 弱 → 鰯
(weak) いわし
iwashi



魚 + 占 → 鮎
(fortune) あゆ
ayu



魚 + 雪 → 鱒
(snow) たら
tara



魚 + 青 → 鯖
(blue) さば
saba



魚 + 春 → 鯖
(spring) さわら
sawara



魚 + 堅 → 鰹
(hard) かつお
katsuo



魚 + 葉 → 鰯
(leaf) かれい
karē



● flatfish : **hirame**
It has a flat shape.
(best grilled or boiled or for **sashimi**)

● sardine : **iwashi**
It is a weak fish that goes bad right after being caught.
(best grilled or for **sashimi**)

● sweetfish : **ayu**
In ancient times, its scales were used to tell fortunes.
(best grilled fish with salt)

● codfish : **tara**
It is delicious to eat the fish when it is still snowing in winter.
(best in cooked in a hot pot)

● mackerel : **saba**
Its body looks blue.
(best grilled)

● spanish mackerel : **sawara**
It is delicious to eat this fish in spring.

● bonito : **katsuo**
Its body becomes hard when it is dried in the sun.
(good for **sashimi**)

● flounder : **karē**
Its shape resembles that of a leaf.
(best grilled or boiled)

Proverbs that relate to fish

Using the clues provided, complete the proverbs.

1. Being suddenly awakened to the truth (literal meaning: the scales fall from one's eyes). It refers to being able to understand clearly and being awakened to the real truth.

目から 
me kara
scales

2. Cheating on counting (literal meaning: counting mackerel). It means to cheat when counting to benefit oneself. For example, a woman pretends she is younger or weighs less than she really does.

 を読む
o yomu


● mackerel

3. Throwing a sprat to catch a mackerel (literal meaning: catching a sea bream by using a shrimp). It refers to using a small investment as bait to gain a huge profit.

海老で  を釣る
ebi de
o tsuru

● bream
(about 25~100 cm)

4. Increasing at an unbelievable rate (literal meaning: rising eel). It is about prices, positions, temperature, stock prices, etc., rising at an unbelievable rate.

 上り
nobori

● eel
(about 50~90 cm)

5. One is apt to think that the fish that got away was very big. When something isn't achieved at the last minute, one often thinks the loss is larger than it actually is.

逃がした  は大きい
nigashita
fish
wa ōki

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. 目から鱗
me kara uroko | 2. 鯖を読む
saba o yomu | 3. 海老で鯛を釣る
ebi de tai o tsuru |
| 4. 鰻上り
unagi nobori | 5. 逃がした魚は大きい
nigashita sakana wa ōki | |