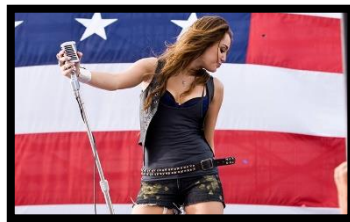


U.S.A. Independence Day

Party in the U.S.A. by Miley Cyrus

“So, I put my hands up
They're playin' my song, the butterflies fly away
I'm noddin' my head like, yeah
Movin' my hips like, yeah
I got my hands up, they're playing my song
They know I'm gonna be ok
Yeah, it's a party in the U.S.A.
Yeah, it's a party in the U.S.A.”



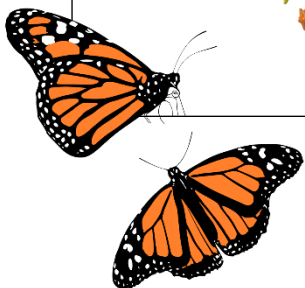
What is in this issue:

U.S.A. Independence Day

Tanabata Star Festival



In fact, **African Americans** were still in **slavery**, **Native Americans** were not **citizens**, **Latino Americans** were still in land **controlled** by Spain, and **Asian Americans** were not **allowed** to come to the country yet. Women didn't have many **rights** like **voting** yet either. So really, the U.S.A. was only a land of **opportunity** for rich, **white** (白人) men. If you want to learn more about this time in **history**, I recommend the famous **musical** called 'Hamilton' on Disney+. Thankfully, it has changed so now more types of people have a chance to **succeed**. That's the “**American Dream**.” Let's make a world where everyone has a chance!





So, what do we do to celebrate the Fourth of July? We watch **fireworks!** In Japan, you often have many summer festivals with fireworks, right? In the U.S., different **states** have different rules about fireworks and **sparklers** so the best and only time to see them is the night of Fourth of July. Many people have pool parties in the afternoon and delicious **BBQs** in the evening. Of course, hamburgers and hotdogs are popular, with soda pop on the side. You can hear the most famous songs of the season that year on the radio and dance along. I love 2012's summer hit song called "**Summertime Sadness.**" It's by my favorite singer-songwriter of all time, **Lana Del Rey.** She uses a lot of Americana **imagery** in her music and art. Many people wear red, white, and blue clothes because those are the colors of the American **flag.** They wear **stars & stripes** for that reason too.

In Japan, summer vacation is only August, right? Well in the U.S.A. our summer **vacation** is from around my birthday on June 13th to the end of August. Then, the new school year starts in September. So, our summer vacation is almost three months long! The Fourth of July always felt like the middle point of summer vacation to me when I was a child. Like maybe it was finally time for me to start my summer homework!

Every year my family had a big Fourth of July party for our **neighborhood.** We have a huge **backyard** right next to the high school where they set off fireworks for the area. So, it was the best spot! First, all the children would swim in our neighbors' backyard pool and play with all the pet dogs. Then, we would walk right over to my family's backyard and have a BBQ. Everyone would bring special food too. We would play outdoor games and sports like badminton and dance to the radio. We even had a **disco ball** in our **garage!** It was such a fun time. We got to taste the sweet **honeysuckle** flowers, touch the bright orange **tiger lily** flowers, and see the glittering **fireflies** in the dark sky. How **nostalgic!**



U.S.A. by Da Pump



As the Japanese band **Da Pump** says in their hit 2018 song "U.S.A.,"

"Love & Peace 誓うのさ
C'mon, baby アメリカ"



Tanabata

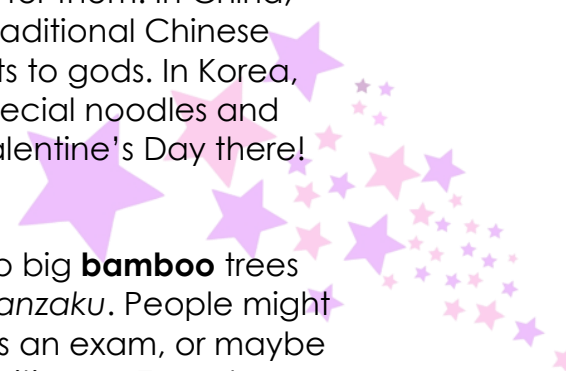
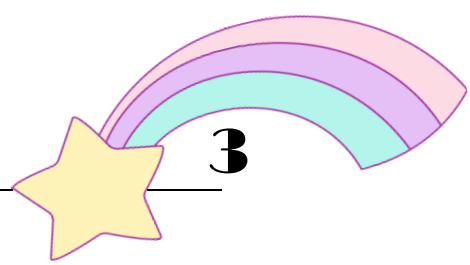
Tanabata is a fun summer holiday on July 7th. In the Japanese **calendar**, this is the 7th day of the 7th month. It is also called the 'Star Festival'. It is a special night where we make **wishes**, and look at the beautiful stars. You probably already know the *Tanabata* story, so I will write just a little.

Orihime was a **princess** who weaved beautiful **cloth**, and *Hikoboshi* was a cow herder prince. They fell in love at first sight and got married. They were so in love, that they **forgot** about everything else. *Orihime* stopped **weaving** cloth, and *Hikoboshi* let his cows run all over **Heaven**. *Orihime*'s father was so angry, he **separated** the lovers across the **Milky Way** so they could not see each other. Now, if they work hard all year, they can cross the Milky Way just once a year on *Tanabata* to see each other. They are so happy to meet, and want to make us happy too. That is why they grant our wishes!

Maybe you know the group of stars called the **summer triangle**; Deneb, Altair, & Vega. Vega represents *Orihime* and Altair represents *Hikoboshi*. I learned about them in a song by Supercell called '*Kimi no Shiranai Monogatari* (君の知らない物語)'. It is a famous song about romance and **stargazing**, I recommend it!

Actually, this story is **originally** from China! Their holiday is called 'Qixi Festival'. Korea also celebrates this holiday, but they call it *Chilseok*. China and Korea **celebrate** on the 22nd of August. They use a different calendar, so it is still the 7th day of the 7th month for them. In China, women can celebrate by dressing in *Hanfu* (traditional Chinese clothes) and **offering** tea, wine, flowers, and fruits to gods. In Korea, people take baths for **good health**, and eat special noodles and wheat cake. It is also known as the **traditional** Valentine's Day there!

In Japan we celebrate *Tanabata* by hanging up big **bamboo** trees and writing our wishes on **colourful** paper called *Tanzaku*. People might wish for things like good health, to get rich, to pass an exam, or maybe even to find a boyfriend or girlfriend. In the past, writing on *Tanzaku* was a way to practice your **calligraphy**. Places like shrines and shops will **often** have *Tanabata* displays from the start of July, so you have plenty of time to write a wish even if you are busy on *Tanabata* night.





Tanabata

We use bamboo trees because they grow **tall** and **straight**. Also, when their leaves move in the wind, they make a pretty sound. **Legend** says that all this helps to **invite** the gods to come down and visit. This is true outside of *Tanabata* as well. In **flower arranging**, bamboo can symbolize a guidepost for the gods. The *Tanabata* bamboo trees are a little bit like Christmas trees, because we hang lots of **decorations** on them! Making decorations out of colourful paper can be a great **arts and craft** activity.



In 2021, I had a big test on the 4th of July, so I **visited** a shrine the day before and wrote a wish to pass my exam. My wish came true, so I was very happy! Before I came to Japan, I was a teacher in Australia. I got to teach my class about *Tanabata* once, and we wrote wishes on a **mini** bamboo tree in our **classroom**. The students did their best to write their wishes in Japanese! They wished to get their **driving license**, to get a Nintendo switch, to remain happy, and more.

Sheila also enjoys celebrating *Tanabata*. She wants to tell you about Tohoku Kizuna Matsuri. It is held at different **prefecture** capitals (Morioka City, Sendai City, Aomori City, Akita City, Yamagata City, Fukushima City) in Tohoku every year. It **showcases** the famous summer festivals of the **region** while **supporting** the area after the 2011 **earthquake** and tsunami. 'Kizuna' means '**bond**', after all. Sheila went to the festival with her ALT friends when she lived in Morioka City, Iwate in 2018. She saw the beautiful **jellyfish**-like decorations from the Sendai *Tanabata* festival. Sheila recommends this in June if you want to see six mini festivals in one!



Those festivals are a bit **far away**, so what about something in Tokyo? The **Downtown Tanabata** Festival in Asakusa & Ueno is famous. Since *Tanabata* is on a Friday this year, the festival will be held on July 8th and 9th. But there will be pretty decorations all week. You can see **street performers**, Awa Odori dance groups, and Shamisen & Taiko music.

