

# Youngsters learn new lesson in ecology

The Japanese school curriculum may be the envy of those abroad and the bane of those within, but many on both sides feel that the system lacks creativity and global relevance.

The Ministry of Education decides what books teachers can use and sets requirements on topics and hours taught. Many people believe that these requirements prevent instructors from teaching about the things that really matter, like environmental problems.

Well, the system is not changing quickly, but small curriculum changes are being made. Textbooks approved by the ministry last year contained environmental concerns and next year's texts will have expanded coverage. Fortunately, creative teachers around Japan are taking advantage of these changes and offering students broadened, global perspectives.

Take, for example, Aya Sato, a teacher at Hino-Minami Junior High School in Yokohama. Sato teaches English to ninth graders and uses a text published by Sanseido called the New Crown English Series 3.

Lesson 4, titled "Malaysia," has a short dialogue in which two young people are discussing a photo of forest destruction in Malaysia:

Jiro: Look at this photo. A lot of forests in Malaysia have gone.

May: So what?

Jiro: If tropical rain forests go, the earth will become hotter. Temperatures will go up. What will happen to the earth then?

May: What?

Jiro: The ice at the poles will melt, and much of the earth will go under water.

May: Really!?"

Ignoring for a moment some sweeping generaliza-

tions in the passage, this dialogue offers teachers an unusual chance to raise students' awareness. And that is what Sato has done.

After studying the passage and covering the key English structures, she gave the students a handout explaining the value of tropical rain forests, the causes of deforestation, and where losses are occurring.

Finally, Sato gave her 14- and 15-year-old students a writing assignment. She asked them to explain, in English, what they thought about the deforestation problem.

Their English was far from perfect and, as Sato pointed out, most of the students wanted to say the "right thing." But these considerations aside, with a bit of creativity this group of students has taken a step toward English, and global environment, literacy.

Below is a selection of the students' work, each complete and unedited. Some are serious, some humorous, a few almost undecipherable, but all are a delight to read.

It is very important. We must kind to the earth.

— Hideyuki Kinoshita

When the wood and the nature disappear it begin to fall. When the light and the wind disappear. And the earth and the water stagnate. All fall. Don't forget. Here is not only for us.

— Mai Murakumo

I think to kill forests in [is] bad. We need forests. So we have to keep nature. But, we need a lot of wods [wood] for alive. We cut a lot of wods.



## Our Planet Earth

STEPHEN HESSE

But destruction of nature is bat [bad]. This problem is very difficult.

— Asako Yoshikawa

We are given the earth by God! It is very precious. Let's take good care of the earth!

— Yasuko Endo

If the earth will go under water, we can not living thing. I think. Protect tropical rain forests.

— Yuji Yoshida

I think that human must take care of nature. I want to make earth which coexist live together nature and cities. In the earth we not only living.

— Sonoko Azeyanagi

I think that human must take care of nature. Don't forget, earth is not only for us.

— Daisuke Yamaguchi

This is very sad. Because people is very selfish. I want peace. But in Malaysia is not peace. I think Japan is very greedy. And Japanese a strong desire for money.

— Jun Higuchi

I think nature destruction will stop.

— Fumihiro Ohashi

There are many forest in the world. But, Japanese cut too much tree. Forest may nothing in the world. So we must save tree.

— Makoto Otsubo

Human being think their profit only. And human being destroy nature [for] their profit. So we must make them stop destroying nature and we must take care of all nature. I think such about *shizen-hakai* (nature distruction). I have heard about tropical rain forest and the other day I studied about it in English class. I can't do movement and other things. But I want to think seriously about it. And I want to do as my [I] can.

— Nobuhiro Katori

I think about forest sometimes. I not only think about forest but also animals and resources. I like books which C.W. Nichols wrote . . . Every book are essay or story. They tell me a lot of things.

— Takenobu Shimonishi

I think we break nature. I think bad. Some day we will be brought disaster by it.

otherwise we can't live in earth."

— Kaoru Tamai

I think it's very important. "Nature is our treasure, so don't break its [it]." I think. All over the world people must treasure the earth.

— Eisuke Otani

**ILLEGAL ANIMAL TRADE CONTINUING IN JAPAN** — Nine months after delegates from 120 nations met in Kyoto and pledged to strengthen international protection efforts, a Japanese NGO has found that the illegal wildlife trade is still booming in Japan.

Traffic Japan, the wildlife trade monitoring arm of the World Wide Fund for Nature Japan, announced last month that a survey of 30 pet shops in the Kanto and Kansai areas turned up 18 shops selling endangered species. Ninety-seven animals representing 11 different endangered species were discovered. Some of the animals had been legally registered with the Environment Agency.

All of the species found are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Appendix I applies to "species threatened with extinction" and states that "trade in specimens of these species must be subject to particularly strict regulation." CITES entered into force in Japan in November 1980.

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry handles border and customs enforcement of CITES, and the Wildlife Section of the Environment Agency covers domestic enforcement. The Wildlife Section, however, has only one full-time officer. On Dec. 17, Traffic officially requested that the agency improve its enforcement to comply with CITES requirements.

From April a new law will permit the agency to delegate responsibilities for enforcement to local governments. While this change may help crack down on illegal domestic trade, the agency remains severely underfunded and understaffed.

Wildlife and wetlands protection are two areas of global concern where Japan continues to lag behind other nations. Despite talk to the contrary, the government has yet to provide the Environment