

# ALICE IN KANJI LAND

ALL JLPT  
N5 KANJI

By Cure  
Dolly



## Learn kanji by magic!

Kanji as characters and adventures



# ALICE IN KANJI LAND

漢字の国のアリス  
Kanji no Kuni no Arisu

*by Cure Dolly*



The Sun Daughter Press

**Alice in Kanji Land by Cure Dolly**

© 2017 Sun Daughter Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

Published by Sun Daughter Press  
<http://sundaughterpress.com>

## CONTENTS

<a href="#"><i>Introduction: How to Use This Book</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#"><i>1. Follow That Rabbit</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<i>How Alice Came to Kanji Land</i>	
<a href="#"><i>2. Itchy-Knee-San Is a Japanese Count</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<i>Kanji:</i> 日, 月, 一, 二, 三, 四, 五	
<i>Concepts:</i> “Free Radicals”; Combining elements	
<i>Free Radicals:</i> 儿	
<a href="#"><i>3. The Rad Hatter</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<i>Kanji:</i> 八, 六, 七, 九, 十	
<i>Free Radicals:</i> 亠	
<a href="#"><i>4. The Tower of the Ancients</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<i>Kanji:</i> 白, 百, 千, 火, 人, 水, 木, 金, 王, 土	
<i>Concepts:</i> Adjective formation; “Glue-names” ( <i>on-yomi</i> )	
<a href="#"><i>5. The Five Ways and Ten Thousand Things</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<i>Kanji:</i> 上, 万, 下, 右, 左, 友, 工, 口, 中	
<i>Concepts:</i> Japanese directional expressions	
<a href="#"><i>6. The Middle Way</i> .....</a>	<a href="#">44</a>
<i>Kanji:</i> 大, 小, 入, 出, 山, 田, 力, 男, 女	
<i>Concepts:</i> Two-kanji word-building; “Ten-ten hooking” ( <i>rendaku</i> ); Class-marking <i>no</i>	

7. The Child with Six Fingers ..... 55

*Kanji:* 子, 目, 手, 耳, 足, 止

8. Kin-Kon-KAN-Kon ..... 61

*Kanji:* 赤, 刀, 青, 生, 学, 父, 母, 校, 先, 年

*Free Radicals:* 丩, 冫

*Concepts:* Three-kanji word-building; “Small-tsu hooking”

9. Down by the Riverside ..... 75

*Kanji:* 川, 花, 化, 雨, 石, 貝, 林, 森

*Free Radicals:* 艹, 亻, 匕

*Concepts:* Same-element combinations

10. The Owl That Went Pfam! ..... 85

*Kanji:* 休, 見, 立, 天, 氣, 气, 本, 犬, 虫, 早, 草

11. The Car That Drove Herself ..... 98

*Kanji:* 車, 来, 米, 夕, 名, 前, 正, 音, 竹, 村, 空, 町

*Free Radicals:* 阝, ㄣ

12. The Doll at the Crossroads ..... 111

*Kanji:* 円, 糸, 文, 字, 玉

*Interlude:* With Great Power...

13. The Man Behind the Hats ..... 118

*Kanji:* 食, 良, 飲, 長, 間

14. The Time Machine ..... 125  
*Kanji:* 分, 時, 寺, 週, 周, 半  
*Free Radicals:* 冂, 讠  
*Concepts:* Japanese time-expressions; Effects of kana on kanji pronunciation
15. Relativity ..... 135  
*Kanji:* 今, 午, 後  
*Free Radicals:* 亠, 彳, 久  
*Concepts:* Relative time-expressions
16. Inside the Treasure Cave ..... 143  
*Kanji:* 行, 聞, 外, 北, 南, 東, 西, 何, 可  
*Free Radicals:* 卜
17. The Road to Nowhere ..... 152  
*Kanji:* 道, 自, 首, 店, 占, 壳, 土, 買  
*Free Radicals:* 广, 冂  
*Concepts:* Japanese “one-word phrases”
18. No-Tea with the Baron ..... 162  
*Kanji:* 言, 舌, 話, 語, 書, 雷, 電, 馱, 馬, 会  
*Free Radicals:* 聿, 厶  
*Concepts:* Sound Sisters
19. The Train of Events ..... 174  
*Kanji:* 高, 魚, 新, 古, 多, 少, 社, 安  
*Free Radicals:* 宀, 斤, 耂

20. Was It a Dream? ..... 185

*Kanji:* 毎, 国

*Free Radicals:* □

*Afterword*

[How to Use the Alice in Kanji Land SRS Deck ..... 191](#)

Professor Isseki’s Geeky Notes ..... 197

[Glossary of Japanese Words ..... 199](#)



## *Introduction*

### **How to Use This Book**

*Alice in Kanji Land* is primarily intended for two kinds of reader.

#### **1. The new kanji-learner, adult or child**

This book will teach all the Japanese school first-year kanji plus all the additional kanji needed for the JLPT N5 exam. It will give you a solid foundation of the most basic kanji, their structure, meanings, and main pronunciations. You will also learn quite a lot of vocabulary and many of the basic concepts of Japanese words.

The book, together with the associated free Anki deck, is a complete course if you want it to be. It not only teaches the first-year and JLPT N5 kanji in the context of real words, not just as “raw kanji”, but also shows you how they are built and how they go on to build other words.

If you just want to enjoy the story and pick up some kanji as you go along—as well as the *idea* of how kanji work—that’s fine too. In fact, this is a third kind of reader who can benefit from the book—the “kanji-taster” who just wants to get the feel of kanji and of Japanese in general. This is not unimportant because we all went through this stage before deciding to jump in, and having good, assimilable information is crucial.

If you want to use the book to learn the kanji, I recommend using the *Alice in Kanji Land* Anki deck. It is free and you’ll find the link in the Afterword at the end of this book. A few minutes each day with this will fix the kanji firmly in your long-term memory by a scientific method that adapts to your personal learning. The app you need to run it is free too, and I explain how to set it up and use it in the Afterword (it’s not difficult).

## 2. The kanji consolidator

The second type of reader is the person who already knows some kanji—maybe quite a lot—but has learned them primarily by “facial recognition”, so that she is not quite sure how they are all made up. There is nothing wrong with learning this way, but it can make life increasingly difficult as we go along learning more and more. At some point we need to go back and firm up our understanding right from the beginning kanji.

I did the same myself, and this book partly came out of the techniques I used to consolidate my own kanji, as well as my experiences in helping new learners.

Alice’s friends sometimes introduce something that might look like a “grammar point”. In fact the line between “grammar” and “vocabulary” is somewhat arbitrary. To give an example, if someone tells you (and they do) that *shita* means under or down, you naturally assume that *shita* is a preposition, like “under” or “down”. But it isn’t. It is a noun, like “left” or “right”, and works the same way they do. So by learning how Japanese directional expressions *work*, we are learning what the words actually *mean*.

Since nobody likes long introductions and everybody wants to meet Alice, I won’t say any more here. If you want to learn more about the philosophy behind this book and other introduction-y things, you will need to go to the Afterword at the end.

Things are sometimes topsy-turvy in Kanji Land as you and Alice are about to discover...

# 1

## Follow That Rabbit

Once upon a time there was a girl called Alice. But if you call her Alice she will not answer you, because she likes to be called Arisu.

Now actually there is no difference between Alice and Arisu. Arisu is just Alice said the Japanese way. But you'd better get used to saying Arisu if you want to talk to Alice—I mean, to Arisu. Otherwise she won't answer you.

You see, Arisu likes Japanese things. Even though she is only eight, she has learned to write in Japanese. She can write her name like this:

ありす

So, when she finished learning all the Japanese letters, someone told her that there were even more to learn.

Arisu was a bit taken aback by knowing there was a whole 'nother set of letters, though it is really just the same as English.

*ABCD* is not the same as *abcd*, after all.

So Arisu shouted *ganbaru yo!* And in a few days she could write her name like this:

アリス

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“So now I’m done with learning letters,” said Arisu. “Now I want to go to Japan and have adventures with all the Magical Girls and Hello Kitties.”

But a Boring Person appeared. Just like a wild Pokemon really. Boring Persons appear all the time. Like Rattatas. I expect they appear every day where you live too.

And the Boring Person said, “You can’t get to Japan from here. And even if you did, you wouldn’t have adventures, because there are no Magical Girls or Hello Kitties in Real Japan.”

And Arisu said, “I don’t believe you! I know all my Japanese letters now and I’m going to Japan.”

Arisu put on her walking shoes and started walking. But the Boring Person said, “No matter how far you walk, you’ll never get to Japan.”

And Arisu said, “Just watch me.”

And the Boring Person said, “Now listen to me, Alice...”

But Arisu didn’t listen to another word, because the Boring Person had said the Forbidden Word. And once you say that, Arisu can’t hear another word you say.

The Boring Person shouted, “You haven’t even learned your Japanese letters yet. There are hundreds more! Hundreds and thousands! You’ll never do it! You’ll never learn them all. And you’ll never have adventures because there are no adventures in this world...”

Arisu didn’t say anything. She just kept on walking. Somehow she heard everything the Boring Person said, but she pretended not to. She just kept on walking to Japan. But there were tears running down her cheeks.

The Boring Person thought Arisu couldn’t hear because she just kept walking and said nothing.

“Alice, listen to me!” shouted the Boring Person.

But Arisu just kept walking toward Japan. Or at any rate in the direction she thought must be toward Japan. Which is east, I think. Or is it west from here?

Then the Boring Person got really angry and threw something at Arisu. It didn’t hit her though. It just lay on the ground in front of her. It was a book called

***2,136 Joyo Kanji***

## FOLLOW THAT RABBIT

Arisu looked at the title as she walked past. She wanted to pick the book up, but she didn't want to show that she had heard or seen anything done by a person who called her Alice. So she didn't. She just kept walking to Japan.

The Boring Person followed her shouting things, but Arisu just kept counting from one to ten in Japanese so she couldn't hear what was being said. She wondered how to count up to 2,136. Were there really that many letters in Japanese? Did she have to learn them all before she went to Japan? Would she ever have adventures?

In the end the Boring Person gave up. And Arisu shouted:

*"Yatta!"*

*"Ganbatta!"*

*"Katta!"*

which she thought meant "I did it! I tried hard! I won!" And so it did.

But by this time she was very tired and kind of cried out, because she had been crying all the time. But the Boring Person didn't know that, so

*BE~DA!* to the Boring Person.

Arisu pulled down her lower eyelid and stuck out her tongue just to show what she thought about Boring People.

Then she sat down under a tree and wanted to cry some more, but she couldn't because she was cried out.

So she went to sleep.

The last thing she thought before she went to sleep was, "I wish I'd picked up that book. But then the Boring Person would have known I was listening. Are there really 2,136 letters? Are there really no adventures? Should I go back to find the book? Should I keep walking to Japan?"

*"Japan... Adventures.... Will I ever..... That book..... zzzzz....."*

But it was all right about the book because it had followed her. It ran up on its little booky legs and snuggled up beside her. I wonder what the Boring Person would have thought about that. But of course Boring Persons can't see that kind of thing.

So Arisu slept under the tree with the book snuggled against her until she heard a voice calling her. It didn't call her Arisu, but it didn't call her Alice either, so she opened her eyes.

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“*Ojou-chan!*” said the voice.

Arisu rubbed her eyes and looked in the direction of the voice. She saw just what you thought she was going to see. A White Rabbit wearing a neat black waistcoat and a stovepipe hat, holding a pocket watch in its hand.

“*Osoku narimashita,*” said the White Rabbit.

“You’re... late?” said Arisu, who knew that little bit of Japanese. And then added “*desu*” to be polite. And “*Usagi-san*” to be politer.

“Yes, extremely late,” said the White Rabbit. It wasn’t talking English. Maybe it was Japanese. Maybe *Usagigo* (Rabbit language). Whatever it was, Arisu could understand it easily.

“*Sumimasen,*” said Arisu. “Am I blocking the way to your hole?”

“Hole?” said the White Rabbit. “What hole? It’s the Book I need to go into.”

“*Hon?*” said Arisu. She hadn’t noticed the book. But there it was. The kanji book the Boring Person had thrown at her. How did that get here? She picked it up.

“Open it please, *ojou-chan,*” said the White Rabbit impatiently.

Arisu opened the book. Immediately the White Rabbit jumped up and landed on the book’s open pages. At least, it looked as if it was about to land, but it didn’t. It disappeared down the book as if the book had been a hole.

Arisu heard the White Rabbit’s voice fading into the distance. It was shouting, “And whatever you do, don’t follow me. *Dame, dame.*”

“Well, how *would* I follow anyway?” said Arisu to herself. “Maybe if I poked my head right into the pages as if it were a hole and not a book...”

Arisu tried that, and the world seemed to spin around her. She had the sensation of falling down and down. But gently falling, like a *sakura* petal.

She fell down and down until she landed softly on what felt like grass.

“I suppose I must still be asleep,” she said. “If I open my eyes, I’ll see the tree and the grass and the sun and the book—the book—is that really here? Or was that part of the dream?”

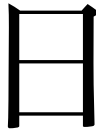
## FOLLOW THAT RABBIT

She opened her eyes. And sure enough there was no book. And there was the tree and the grass and the sun.

The only thing was that the tree looked rather like this:



And the sun... well, the sun looked much squarer than usual. It shone as brightly and happily as ever, but it looked like this:



“How curious,” said Arisu. “Wherever can I be?”

## Itchy-Knee-San Is a Japanese Count

“How curious,” said Arisu. “Wherever can I be?”

“Well, that’s a question, isn’t it?” said someone from behind her.

Arisu turned around to see the White Rabbit. But this time the White Rabbit was dressed in a kimono.

“You changed your clothes,” said Arisu.

“Changed my clothes?” said the White Rabbit. “Into what? Cabbage leaves? Of course I haven’t changed my clothes. They’re still clothes, aren’t they?”

“But you were wearing a waistcoat with a gold watch-chain and a stovepipe hat.”

The White Rabbit laughed. “Oh, that would be *Oniichan*—my brother Meiji. *Atashi wa Anji desu.*” Anji gave a little bow.

“*Hajimemashite, Anji-san. Yoroshiku onegaishimasu,*” said Arisu, bowing slowly and carefully. Then she said, “Would you mind telling me where I am?”

She said that part in—well, it might have been English or it might not. She didn’t know very much Japanese, but she had an idea that she might possibly be speaking and understanding something that was at least half way to Japanese.

“*Ee-to... doko, doko, doko,*” mused Anji. “How do I explain this? You aren’t in Kansas any more.”

“I never was in Kansas,” said Arisu.

“Really? Then you aren’t Doroshii-chan?”

“No, that’s quite another story. My name is Arisu.”

“*Sou desu ka.* Well, this is Kanji Land.”

“Kanji—you mean those other letters.”

“Letters?” said Anji indignantly. “Kanji aren’t letters. They are pictures. They are ideas. They are dreams. They are *adventures.*”

“*Adventures,*” repeated Arisu. “Then they do exist.”



## ITCHY-KNEE-SAN IS A JAPANESE COUNT

“Whoever said they didn’t?”

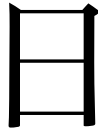
“No one that matters. So why is the sun like that? I mean, square and not round?”

“Well, that’s about as round as things get around here. Round things get squared off. That way you can fit every adventure in a square when you’re writing. You’ve seen the symbol for the sun that looks like this, I suppose.”



“Yes,” said Arisu.

“Well, the kanji is just the same...”



...except that the circle is square and the dot has turned into a line. We call the sun *Hi*. Or if you want to be polite (and you should be polite) *o-Hi-sama*.”

“I always think of the sun as she, not he, with a big happy smiley face.”

“*Hi* might be a she for anything I know, but her name is still *Hi*.”

“Is the moon square too?”

“Yes. She looks just like the sun. Except that she has long hair that hangs down from her face. That’s why her light seems less bright. Her long hair stops all her rays coming down to us.”



## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“That’s not what I learned in school.”

“Well, things are probably different in Kansas.”

“I’ve never been to Kansas, so I shouldn’t know.”

“Of course. I forgot. Her name is *Tsuki*. Isn’t that a pretty name? *O-Tsuki-sama*. And the thing is...”

Arisu never found out what the thing was, because at that moment lots of small kanji came running up to see the newcomer. They stared at Arisu and whispered loudly to each other.

“She’s rather *round*, isn’t she?” said one.

“She seems to have an awful lot of radicals,” said another.

“No personal remarks, please,” said Anji severely. “Now step up properly and introduce yourselves.”

“*Ha~i*,” they chimed.



“*Ichī desu.*”



“*Ni desu.*”



“*San desu.*”

“You can just call them Itchy-knee-san. They’re always together,” said one of the others and burst out laughing.

“Why, they’re like the Roman numbers I, II and III laid on their sides,” exclaimed Arisu.

“Now who’s making personal remarks?” said *Ichī*.

## ITCHY-KNEE-SAN IS A JAPANESE COUNT

“You mean Roman numbers are like us, stuck upright in the ground like sticks,” said *Ni*.

“*Gomen nasai*,” said Arisu, bowing and turning a little pink. She hoped something would happen to distract them from being annoyed with her, and it did.

Suddenly a pair of human-like legs came running past.

兀

“Quick, catch them and put them back in their box,” said Anji. *Ich*, *Ni* and *San* ran after the lively legs.

“Legs?” said Arisu. “Without a body?”

“They are a Free Radical, you see,” explained Anji.

“I am afraid I don’t see,” said Arisu.

“Radicals are *parts* of kanji. These legs don’t make a kanji on their own, only when they are part of another kanji. So when they run off like this, we call them Free Radicals. We have to catch them quickly and put them back in their proper place.”

“Don’t they mind?”

“Oh no. They’re lost, you see. Outside of a larger kanji they can’t do anything. Except run around blindly. Some kanji can act as radicals but they are still complete by themselves. But Free Radicals are just lost without a bigger kanji to be part of.”

“*Sou desu ka...*” said Arisu a little confusedly.

Anji smiled. “For example, *o-Hi-sama* and *o-Tsuki-sama* can be radicals. They can even get together and make another kanji between themselves. Like this:

明

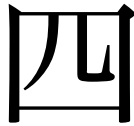
## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

This one means light. Of course, it would, wouldn't it? The Two Great Lights together. What could it mean but light? You don't need to learn this one yet. It is just to show you how it works.

"*Hi* and *Tsuki* are radicals in this kanji, but if you take them out of it, they aren't lost, are they? They are *o-Hi-sama* and *o-Tsuki-sama*."

"Those rascally legs, on the other hand..."

*San* and *Ich*i had put a box around the legs,



and *Ō* carried it back to where the others were.

"This is the number 4," explained Anji. "After all, there are two legs, so if you put them in a box that makes four, doesn't it?"

"Does it?" asked Arisu.

"Of course it does. We call her..."

"I know, I know," interrupted Arisu. "Her name is *Shi*."

"*Sh*," said Anji.

"*Sh*?" asked Arisu. "Not *Shi*?"

"I meant *Sh*. As in *Sshhh*. Be-quiet *sh*. We try not to say *Shi*. It means four but it also means death. So *Shi* is an Unlucky Number. Why do you think hotels often don't have a Room 4?"

"I didn't know they didn't."

"Kansas must be a strange place. We like to call poor *Shi* by another name. We call her *Yōn* most of the time."

"Because her legs are always running off into the wild blue *Yōnder*," said *San*.

"Always running hither and *Yōn*," said *Ō*.

"No personal remarks, please," said Anji. "Let me introduce the next number. This is little *Go*. She is number 5."

ITCHY-KNEE-SAN IS A JAPANESE COUNT



“She looks rather like a 4-sandwich standing on her head,” said Arisu and then hoped she hadn’t made another personal remark.

“Well, if you put 4 in a sandwich and turn it upside down, obviously you get 5,” said Anji.

“I... suppose so,” said Arisu doubtfully.

“Well, 4 plus one sandwich, if that makes you happier.”

“A sandwich always makes one happier, doesn’t it?” said Arisu.

“To remember the pronunciation, all you need to do is remember that it takes Japanese people a little longer to start a race.”

“Why is that?” asked Arisu.

“What do you say when you start a race?” asked Anji.

“One, two, three, GO!” said Arisu.

“Well, in Japanese we say:

One, two, three, four, GO—*Ichī ni san shi GO!*”

“Shouldn’t that have been *yon*?” asked Arisu.

Anji blushed slightly. “Not for races,” she said hastily. “Races are different. Now let’s get on to number 6.”

## The Tower of the Ancients

*Juu* led Arisu across the field to where she could see a great white stone tower rising into the clouds. Its pointed summit was of blazing gold, and flaming torches burned so brightly that they could be seen even against the bright blue summer sky. It stood on a small hill of deep, rich red earth in which grew the most lovely trees, and around it was a moat of the bluest, brightest water that Arisu had ever seen.

“What a beautiful tower,” cried Arisu.

“Beautiful indeed, Arisu-sama,” said *Juu*. “This is the Tower of the Ancients, and in it lie the foundations of all things.”

“The foundations of...”

“You’ll see when we get there. It is a very special place.”

“Are you sure it’s all right for me to...”

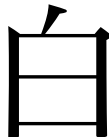
“Oh yes.” That wonderful smile again.

When they reached the moat Arisu realized that there was no bridge.

“How do we cross?” she asked.

“You’ll see,” said *Juu* and then shouted aloud in her melodious voice, “*Shiro-sama yo!*”

Arisu heard a rippling of the water. From the other side of the moat a boat was being rowed toward them. It was rowed by a lady standing upright using a long oar. She was dressed all in white. Her long hair was pure white, although she looked young—or perhaps rather, ageless. Her face was as white as snow.



## THE TOWER OF THE ANCIENTS

“This is *Shiro*, the Daughter of the Sun. As you see, she looks like *o-Hi-sama* except that there is a single drop above her. That is a drop of pure, pure light. All light comes from *Hi*, the sun, you know.”

“Yes, I know,” said Arisu.

“And if you have *pure* light in which all colors are perfectly contained, do you know what color that is?”

“Yes, yes!” cried Arisu. “It is white.”

“Exactly. And this is *Shiro*, the Sheer White Maiden, the single perfect drop of light.”

“Will *she* row us across the moat?”

“Of course. That is why she is called *Shiro*.”

“Because *she* rows—and she rules all the whiteness of the world?”

“She does.”

“So if I had a piece of white paper, would I call it *shiro*?”

“Well, it wouldn’t be *Shiro* herself, would it? It would just be *like Shiro*. If a place was full of sunshine, you wouldn’t call it a sun place, would you? You would call it *sunny*—sun-y—sun-like.”

“Hmm, yes. But in Japanese?”

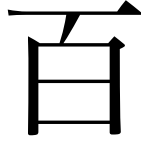
“Very similar. If something is white, it isn’t Whiteness itself—not *Shiro* herself. It is *Shiro-y*, *shiroi*.”

白い

“The same with many other words. *Aka* is red, so a red thing is *aka-i*. You’ll see a little later.”

They reached the tower shore and a white door opened. *Shiro* extended her long white beautiful hand to usher them in.

They entered a chamber where an old lady was sitting on a white throne. She looked rather like *Shiro*, except that she was wearing a crown that looked like *Ich*i.



“*Hyaku-sama*,” said *Juu*, bowing deeply.

“*Juu-chan*. How good to see you. How are the little ones?”

“They are all well, *senpai*. *Roku-kun* keeps losing his hat as usual.”

*Juu* turned to Arisu. “This is *Hyaku*. The first great multiple of 10. That is why her hat is a 1. If you look at her sideways you can see her as a 1 and a pair of 0s. She is 100.”

“That’s very old,” said Arisu.

“She isn’t 100 years old. She is 100.”

*Hyaku* laughed. “Don’t look so surprised, *ojou-chan*. You’ve met people who are numbers before. What do you think *Juu-chan* here is? She’s a very important number.”

*Juu* blushed. “*Sonna koto... Senpai*, you know that you make ten of me.”

“All numbers are important,” said *Hyaku*. “Numbers were before there were things to be numbered. Numbers are the foundation of all things. That is why you met all the little numbers before you did anything else, *ojou-chan*.”

“Very soon, you are going to meet the other foundations of all things. But I expect *Juu* will want to take you to see her brother *Sen* first.”

As *Juu* and Arisu went up the stairs to the next chamber, *Juu* said, “The First Multiple of 10 is very pure. That is why she is so white and so closely related to *Shiro*. In fact, *Shiro* is often called *haku*—which is nearly *hyaku*—when she combines with others.”

“She has two names?”

“Most kanji have two names. Some have more than two, though often only two are really important. One name is the regular name and the other is the glue-name.”

“Glue-name?”



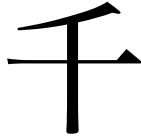
## THE TOWER OF THE ANCIENTS

“Well, the proper word is *on-yomi* or on-reading, but the little ones call it their glue-name. It is the name they use when they stick to something. For example, *haku-chou* means white bird—a swan. *Haku-shi* is white paper. *Shiro*’s glue-name is *haku* because she and *Hyaku* are so closely related.”

“My, that’s a lot to remember!”

“As we’re in Elementary right now, we’ll mostly only learn the regular names. But when it’s useful we’ll learn some glue-names too. Here’s *Sen-oniichan*’s room. *Sen* is 1000—but, uh, he doesn’t always act his magnitude.”

*Juu* knocked the door and a jaunty voice cried, “*Haitte!*” The two walked in.



*Sen* looked very like *Juu*, except that he was wearing a jaunty little hat tipped at a rakish angle.

*Sen*’s room was decorated in bright colors, which felt surprising after the pure whiteness of *Shiro* and *Hyaku*.

“How do you do, *chibi-chan*? I’m *Sen*. Not as pure as *Hyaku* or as grand as *Man*. Just plain ol’ *Sen*. But if you want a job done, sen’ it to me. Hi-hiii. You see what I did there? *Sen* it to me!

“You like the hat? It’s symbolic. I’m the highest multiple of 10 so I get capped off at the top. Don’t worry though, I have a nice line in fancy hats and I always tilt them at just the right angle.”

“The highest multiple of 10...?”

“Well, yes, *chibi-chan*—until you get to *Man*, of course. *Man*, that’s somethin’ else! Hi-hiii! See what I did there? *Man* is 10,000. *Man* has Special Significance. You’ll meet *Man* later. I’m just *Sen*. I’m only 1,000. You drew the short straw meeting me!”

“On the contrary, it is a great honor to meet you, *Sen-sama*,” said Arisu.

“The girl has manners! What’s your name, girl?”

“Arisu *desu*.”

“*Yoroshiku*, Arisu. I’m guessing you came to see the Five, did you?”

“The five what?” asked Arisu.

*Sen* burst out laughing. “And I thought I was funny. The five what?  
*The* Five, of course. The

# 五行

*Go-Gyou*. The five travelers, the five movers, the five changers. (Don’t worry, you’ll get to that second kanji later). If it wasn’t for those five there wouldn’t be anything. Well, maybe numbers, because ‘numbers were before there were things to be numbered’. I expect *Hyaku*-sama told you that.”

“Yes, she did.”

“Well, is that where you are going?”

Arisu looked at *Juu*, and *Juu* said, “Yes, it is. Would you do the honors, *Oniichan*?”

“But of course,” said *Sen*. He waved his arms and all at once there seemed like more than two arms. There were ten, there were twenty, there were hundreds maybe. So many Arisu had no hope of counting them all, but she guessed it must be a thousand.

And the room seemed to melt away, giving place to a great marble dance floor. A strange dance was taking place. A great flame danced, throwing red light over all the room, then the flame was overcome by blue, blue water, and out of the water grew a glorious green tree. Shining gold came out of the rich brown earth, and the gold was melted by the great flame that had returned. It seemed like the dance of all nature, constantly coming to birth, growing, and dying. It seemed unbelievably beautiful and ecstatically happy and unbearably sad, all at the same time.

“Are there kanji even here?” asked Arisu.

“Look carefully and you’ll see them,” said *Juu*.

“Oh oh! That red one...”

THE TOWER OF THE ANCIENTS

火

“That’s *Hi*, fire.”

“The same name as the sun?”

“Fire is a little sun on earth, and the sun a great fire in the sky,” said *Juu*.

“What about her shape?” asked Arisu.

“A human looks like this:

人

because a human is the upright being that walks on two legs. She is also the only being that can use fire, so fire shows a human with her arm extended, juggling a flame.

“Some say that humans have fire inside them, which is why they can use fire. Perhaps that is why a human is called *hito*. Fire is *hi* and humans are *hi too*!

“Can you see any other kanji?”

“The blue one!”

水

“That’s *Mizu*, water. She is also called *Sui*. Some people call her Ms. Suey,” —*Juu* pronounced Ms. as Mizu in the Japanese way— “but really her name is *Mizu*, and *Sui* is her glue-name.

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“Her kanji shows a great waterspout rising out of the sea with splashes coming out on both sides.”

“Oh, and that tree!”



“Isn’t it magnificent? You can see the sturdy tall trunk and the wide spreading branches—and also the branches that come downward to give us lovely fruit. It is a very kind tree. All trees are kind, you know.”

“What is its name?”

“Its name is *Ki*.”

“What a simple name.”

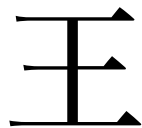
“Yes. *Ki* is one of the most basic things. *Ki* means tree, but as an element—one of the Great Five—*Ki* is all green and growing things. So you see, *Ki* is the *key* to all life.”

“Oh, and the gold one!”



“Gold is exactly what it is. It is said *Kane* or *Kin*. When we say *o-kane* we mean money because money used to be all gold.

“The kanji for a monarch is



## THE TOWER OF THE ANCIENTS

because traditionally a monarch is the person who stands at the Great Pillar between Earth and Heaven and brings Heavenly rule to Earth.”

“What is the monarch called?”

“*Ou*.”

“Just *ou*?”

“Really just *ou*.”

“*Ou*—I mean oh.”

“But we were talking about *kīn*, or *Kane*. If you look at her carefully



you can see the monarch in her house with two bars of gold.”

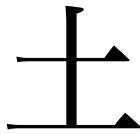
“*Ou* yes, so you can! I mean oh. *Ou* dear, I’ve caught the habit.”

“*Kīn* or *kane* means gold but also means metal. That is because gold is the Mother of Metals. Therefore all other metals are part of her family. If you want to say metal clearly, you have to say *kin-zoku*—that means gold-family or metal-family. That way everyone knows you mean metal in general and not gold.”

“So *Kīn* is gold and other metals are her kin?”

“Exactly so. Can you see the last of the Great Five?”

“The brown one.”



“Yes. That is *Tsuchi*, earth.”

“She might look like a cross or a shovel stuck into the earth.”

“Yes, or—well, I don’t like to sound boastful, but...” *Juu* blushed a little, “well, 10 is often seen as the number of completion, representing, well, *everything*. And the ground is what everything rests on.”

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“Of course, of course!” shouted Arisu. “It’s just like you, isn’t it, only with the ground underneath you!”

*Juu* still seemed rather embarrassed. “We’d better go now,” she said.

“Really?” said Arisu. “I feel as if I could watch the Dance of the Five for the rest of my life.”

“Oh, you will,” said *Juu*.

“What do you mean?”

“Here in Kanji Land or in the Human World or in any world at all, everything is the Dance of the Five. Without the Five there would be nothing.”

“Except numbers?” asked Arisu.

*Juu* only smiled.

## The Owl That Went *Pfam!*

The children ran off in different directions, and Arisu found herself alone. The great square shining sun was halfway down the western sky. It was still a glorious afternoon, but Arisu realized that evening would come and that, unlike the children and Mimi-sensei, she had no home to go to.

She had no idea how to leave Kanji Land, but she really had no place *in* Kanji Land. Should she go back the way she came and hope to meet *Juu* again? *Juu* was probably somewhere else by now.

Suddenly she felt tired. She saw a big, leafy, inviting tree and sat down under it.

“I think I’ll take a little rest,” she said to herself.

As she did there was a flash of light, and a kanji appeared with a loud *pfam!*

休

“Oh! What was that?” cried Arisu loudly, for she was very much startled.

No one answered.

“How curious,” said Arisu to herself. “I have the strangest feeling that I am being watched.”

There was another *pfam!* and another kanji appeared.

見

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

Arisu stood up in alarm. Yet another flash and another kanji *pfam!ed* into being.

立

“What is going on?” cried Arisu. “Why are these kanji appearing out of nowhere?”

There was silence. And then the sound of a drawn-out yawn.

“It isn’t nowhere,” said a voice.

“What isn’t nowhere?” asked Arisu.

“Where the kanji are coming from. They aren’t coming from nowhere. They’re coming from *you*.”

“From me?”

The voice yawned again. “This is Kanji Land,” it said.

“I know that,” said Arisu.

“In Kanji Land,” said the voice, as if it were explaining something to a very, very small child, “nothing can happen without a kanji. You keep doing things, so obviously you keep invoking kanji.”

“I haven’t been doing anything,” said Arisu.

“Of course you have. First you had a rest.

休

So naturally the *rest* kanji had to appear.”

“It’s a tree,” said Arisu.

“Not just a tree,” said the voice. “There is someone beside the tree.”



イ

“Someone? Who?”

“It could be anyone. But as it happens, it’s you.”

“You are speaking in riddles. What do you mean?”

The voice yawned again.

“The kanji is a person by a tree. Obviously a person by a tree is going to have a *rest*. In this case, the person was you.”

“I see. So how do you say ‘rest’ in Japanese?”

休み

“*Yasumi*. You might have heard people say *o-yasumi nasai*. That is a very polite way of saying ‘have a rest’.”

“*Yasumi*. What a curious word.”

“Legend has it that the first people just ran around all the time and never rested. Then finally one of them got tired and went and sat under a tree. The others said, ‘You can’t do that!’

“But the person under the tree just said, ‘*Yai Sue me!*’ and went on resting.

“A very unrefined person if you ask me. Probably a human.”

“What are you?”

“The wisest of the wise,” replied the voice. And a large white bird with huge eyes swooped down from the branches of the tree.

“My name is Hukurou.”

“Hook-a-row?” said Arisu. Looking closely, it *did* seem that the bird was crocheted.

ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“*Hu-KU-rou*.”

“Why, you’re an owl.”

“I have that honor.”

“If everything has a kanji, why can’t I see *your* kanji?”

“Elementary, my dear child.”

“It isn’t elementary to me.”

“No, but you are. First-year Elementary. So obviously you can’t see *my* kanji.”

“What were those other kanji? I admit I had a rest, but I didn’t do anything else.”

“Of course you did,” said Hukurou. “You said you had a feeling you were being watched. And you were. I was watching you. Wondering what noisy person had disturbed my sleep. Anyway, when you said that, naturally the *watching* kanji had to appear.

見

“Why, that’s a seashell.”

“No, it isn’t. A seashell is an eye with *animal legs*:

貝

“Watching or looking has *human legs*. The kind that run around all over the place staring at things. Like humans. Don’t mix them up and they won’t mix you up.”

“How do you say ‘look?’” asked Arisu.

見る

“*Miru*. As in ‘look in the *miru*’. You can put *mi(ru)* together with other kanji you know to make other words. For example:

花見

*Hana-mi.*”

“Flower-see?”

“Yes. *Hanami* is when the *sakura* (cherry blossom) comes in spring and everyone goes out into the park with food and drink to look at the lovely tree-flowers. Sitting under the trees, just as you were when I heard you.”

“Hmm. Well, I did rest, and I did say I was being watched. But that was all I did. I certainly didn’t do anything after that.”

“Yes, you did. You stood up.

立

This is the *standing-up* kanji.”

“It’s that top hat again.”

“It gets around, doesn’t it? This time it’s sitting on top of a vase to look as if it’s *standing up* all by itself.”

“How is ‘stand up’ said?”

立つ

“*Tatsu*.”

“Ah. The kanji *kind of* looks like a T and an A upside down, doesn’t it?” said Arisu. “And then the *tsu* makes it *tatsu*.”

“Hm,” said Hukurou unconvincedly. “The bar of the A has slipped to the top.”

“Of course. That’s because it’s upside down,” said Arisu.

“Are you sure you’re human?” asked Hukurou. “You talk just like a Kanji Lander sometimes.”

“Good heavens, I suppose I’m picking it up,” said Arisu.

“I suppose you are.” There was a *pfam!* and another kanji appeared.

天

“Oh, that startled me!” cried Arisu. “What is that?”

“Heaven,” said Hukurou.

“Heaven?”

“Yes. You said ‘good heavens’. So naturally heaven popped up.”

“Is that what heaven looks like?”

“From here, yes. It’s the *one big* thing above us.”

“Oh, I see. *Dai* with *Ich*i above. How is it said?”

“*Ten*,” said Hukurou.

“*Ten* eleven rhymes with heaven.”

“Just *Ten*. Not eleven,” said Hukurou pedantically.

“Well, you *can* see eleven in it if you stand it on its side,” said Arisu.

THE OWL THAT WENT *PFAM!*

“That settles it. You’re not human,” said Hukurou.  
Arisu held out her hand.  
“Hm. Five fingers. So I suppose... Well, your *spirit* isn’t human,  
that’s for sure.”  
*Pfam!*

気

“What’s *that?*” asked Arisu.  
“It’s complicated,” said Hukurou.  
“It certainly is,” said Arisu.  
“It’s spirit,” said Hukurou.  
“My spirit?” asked Arisu.  
“Anyone’s spirit. Not just people either. Let’s look at something  
simpler first.”  
“Oh yes, let’s,” said Arisu.

气

“This is steam or vapor. You can see it rising into the air and puff-  
puffing in three puffy-puffs.  
“Now with the X at the bottom—well, X marks the Spot, as you  
know. And in this case the Spot is you or me or anything, and the vapor  
is the invisible, untouchable essence of us. The spirit.”  
“I see...”  
“Both of them are pronounced *ki*.”  
“Like tree?”  
“Yes. Didn’t you ever hear of tree-spirits? And when you look at it,  
you see that it is a bit like the *ki* hiragana.”

き

“Oh yes, the open bit at the bottom and the lines at the top.”

“If we put *ki* together with the last kanji we get...”

天気

“*Ten-ki?*” asked Arisu.

“Yes, *tenki*.”

“*Heaven-Spirit?*”

“Exactly that. The spirit or mood of heaven. In other words, the weather.”

“So when heaven is in a good mood, it’s sunny?”

“Yes.”

“But where are all these kanji coming *from?*” asked Arisu.

*Pfam!*

本

“A tree?”

“Not a tree,” said Hukurou. “See the horizontal line toward the bottom?”

“Yes.”

“That represents the ground. What is important about this kanji is what comes below that line. The Root, the Source, the Origin.”

“So this is the Source of all the kanji?”

“The Source of everything. And since everything is a kanji in Kanji Land, certainly the source of the kanji.”

“The more I look at it, the more it looks like a book.”

“It is a book too, of course. And just to round things out—heh heh—it is the counter for long round things, like pencils or bottles or fingers.

“Whatever it is doing, it is generally pronounced *hon*.”

“So *hon* is a book...”

“Yes.”

“And the root or source of things...”

“Yes.”

“And the counter for long round things?”

“Yes. For example:

ビール二本

*bīru ni-hon* is two long round things of beer. That is to say, two bottles of beer.”

“How confusing. All those meanings.”

“If we start at the root, it all makes sense. Root is the *root* meaning. Do you understand that?”

“Yes.”

“The taproot of a tree is long and round. Hence the secondary meaning of long, round things.”

“But what about books?”

“They were long and round too. Originally books were scrolls. Only more recently did they become flat things with hinged pages.”

“I *see!*”

“Now if we put *hon* together with a kanji we already know, we can get

日本

*Nihon*. The place where the sun rises. Thus the origin of the sun. *Nihon*, Japan.”

“So *o-Hi-sama* can be *Ni*?”

“*Hi* can be *Nichi*. This shortening to *Ni* is a special case.”

“And it *does* look like a book now,” said Arisu. “I guess it’s the Book of all the kanji in the world.”

She peeped inside.

“Don’t open it!” cried Hukurou, but too late. Something shot barking out of the book, followed by something buzzing. Hukurou pushed the book shut quickly.

“If you open that, who knows what will come pouring out?”

“What did?” asked Arisu.

“This dog for a start.”

犬

“Why, that’s a person throwing a stick!” said Arisu.

“Not at all. It’s *Dai* with a *droplet*. I imagine the droplet is that potion that turns people into dogs. But the image of a person throwing a stick certainly makes it clearer that it is a dog.”

“What’s its name?”

“*Inu*.”

“Why *inu*?”



THE OWL THAT WENT *PFAM!*

“Because it lives *in you* house. Unlike, say, a horse or a cow, which lives in its own house.”

“And what’s it chasing?”

“A bug.”



“That looks like *Naka*.”

“It is *Naka*. With a hammer.”

“Why?”

“Because when an insect got *inside* the house back in the old days people would chase it with a hammer.”

“What’s it called?”

“*Mushi*. And before you say ‘why’ again, I’ll tell you. Because if they managed to hit it with the hammer it went mushy.”

But Arisu was already distracted. “Look at the *mushi* fly and the *inu* run after it. They are both so *fast!*”

*Pfam!*



“Why, it’s *Juu* with the sun on her head!”

“Or the great Flower of Morning.”

“What does it mean?”

“Early, or fast.”

“Is fast the same as early?”

“Of course. The faster you run the earlier you arrive.”

“And nothing rises *earlier* than the Great Flower of Morning.”

ALICE IN KANJI LAND

“Exactly. And have you ever seen the sun move so fast through the sky that there seem to be *ten* of it?”

“How is it said?”

“We usually say

早い

*hayai.*”

“*Hayai.* I wonder why?”

“When you move really fast you have to keep a *high eye* all the time. Look down for a second and you crash into something.”

“*Naruhodo,*” said Arisu.

“And now if you’ll excuse me, I will go back to my *yasumi.*”

“*O-yasumi nasai,*” said Arisu and sat down on the grass because there seemed nothing much else to do.

*Pfam!*

草

“And I’d appreciate it if you’d stop *pfam’ing.*” said Hukurou, a little testily.

“*I’m not pfam’ing,*” said Arisu. “And anyway why does the same kanji *pfam!* twice? We’ve already had *hayai.*”

“That isn’t *hayai,*” said Hukurou. “Can’t you see the plant Free Radical on the top? That tells us it’s some kind of plant.”

“A fast plant?”

“An early plant. The first and simplest plant in the world that grows before anything else.”

THE OWL THAT WENT *PEAM!*

“Grass?” asked Arisu.

“Grass,” said Hukurou. “Or *kusa* to give it its proper name. Because *kus* are always eating it.”

“*Kus?*”

“Cows. Scots or German. I’m tired. It’s the best I can do. *Oyasumi.*”

“What a grumpy owl,” thought Arisu. Hukurou disappeared and Arisu wondered what to do now.



## *Afterword*

### **How to Use the *Alice in Kanji Land* SRS Deck**

The *Alice in Kanji Land* SRS Deck is designed to cement the kanji, words and pronunciations (with audio) learned in this book into your long-term memory. It is available at no cost. The deck can be downloaded from <http://learnjapaneseonline.info/alice-deck/> See the instructions below.

#### **About SRS**

SRS (Spaced Repetition Software) works like conventional flash cards, only instead of being random, it exposes you to the cards at ever-lengthening intervals based on the way human memory works. So, essentially, it re-introduces a card a little *before* the time you would naturally be forgetting it, so that you strengthen your long-term memory of it.

If you successfully remember it, the next interval will be longer. However, the system also adapts to your memory and the particular words you personally find easier or more difficult. The whole thing is based on algorithms that replicate the way human memory works and passes knowledge from short-term to long-term memory.

#### **About the *Alice in Kanji Land* Deck**

The *Alice in Kanji Land* Deck is based on the idea that you will read one chapter of this book per day and use the deck every day (starting with Chapter 2).

If you get involved in the story and want to read ahead, that's fine. If you want to read the whole book in advance, that's fine too. The more you look at the stories and the information contained in them the better. But to use the deck you should make one chapter per day your focus-chapter.

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

Since the deck and your reading won't sync exactly, it is best to keep your focused reading a little bit ahead of the deck.

The cards all give chapter numbers and reminders of the relevant story incidents. If you find you have forgotten a word and the information on the card is insufficient, go back to the chapter and remind yourself of that part of the story. Note that the book's Table of Contents also lists the kanji introduced in each chapter, in order of appearance.

You don't need to know all the information on the back of a card. Just the word's *meaning* and *pronunciation*. The other notes are just there to help you if you forget something. Use them as much or little as you need.

And remember that this is *your* deck. You are free to personalize it if you want to. If you find yourself constantly forgetting a particular kanji or confusing two kanji, you can write a little reminder-note on the *back* (not the front—this is important) of the card to clarify things for yourself. Just hit the *Edit* button on the bottom left of the card.

You can even drag pictures onto the back of the card if you want to!

If the deck is introducing new cards too fast or too slow for you, go to *Options* → *New Cards* and change the *New cards/day* number up or down. If you want to slow down the pace or power through the deck, be my guest.

If you already know some of the kanji/words so well that you are *sure* you don't need them in the deck, just go ahead and delete the cards (Anki calls them *notes*). No point wasting review time on things you really don't need. You can also *suspend* a card if you want to stop reviewing it but think you might possibly want it back some time. You do both these things from Anki's *Browse* screen or from the top-right drop-down menu on your mobile device.

If any of this sounds confusing, don't worry. The deck will work fine right out of the box. You don't *need* to do anything except review it.

## HOW TO USE THE ALICE DECK

Please keep up reviews even after you have finished the book. At a normal pace it shouldn't take more than 15 minutes even on the biggest days (they do vary) and as the deck stops introducing new cards, the review time will gradually diminish to very little.

### About Anki

Anki is a free SRS system and probably the best and most sophisticated available at any price. It can be downloaded at no cost for Windows, Macintosh, Linux, Amazon Kindle and Android devices (the Android/Kindle version is called AnkiDroid). The iOS (iPhone/iPad) version is not free, presumably on the theory that iOS owners are rich and developers need to eat. The second proposition is undoubtedly true.

You can also set up a free AnkiWeb account and sync your deck and its current progress, together with any changes you make to it, across your devices.

You need to install Anki on your device, download the *Alice in Kanji Land Deck* (<http://learnjapaneseonline.info/alice-deck>) and open it in your Anki. In most cases you can just double-click the *Alice in Kanji Land Deck* file from your desktop to open it automatically in Anki. On future occasions you can just open Anki and it will be there.

Please note that the *Alice in Kanji Land Deck* should come as one .apkg file. If your computer tries to unpack it into a folder of sub-files (mostly only a problem with a few older Macs) please ignore the unpacked version and use the original file you downloaded.

### Kanji as Words

The Alice Method is not about learning kanji “in the raw”. Kanji in the deck come as words, and the pronunciation of each word is reinforced by an audio recording on the back of the card that plays automatically (unless you turn it off or turn your sound down). The pronunciation is also shown in hiragana, so you don't need to have the sound on.

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

If a kanji does not make a word on its own, one or more of its most basic word-forms will be in the deck. Two- and three-kanji words from the book are also included in the deck so that you can get used to on-readings (“glue-names”) and how words fit together.

### How to Review

This will be largely obvious as you actually use it.

1. Open Anki
  2. Click the *Alice in Kanji Land Deck* from Anki’s start screen.  
(It may ask if you want to study. If so, say yes.)
  3. Look at the kanji or word presented to you. Decide what it means and how it is said. Click *Show Answer*. (Or you can just hit the spacebar or swipe the screen of your mobile device.)
  4. The answer screen is the “back” of the card. It shows you the meaning and pronunciation and also reads the pronunciation aloud. The extra notes give extra information and relevant passages from the story. This is useful if you have forgotten something.  
It gives you *four options* (less on a first-time card).
- A.** If you didn’t remember correctly, hit the first button (Again or Fail). The card will return for another try in a very short time.
- B.** If you got it mostly right but found it difficult, hit the second button (Hard). This will bring the card back more quickly than normal.
- C. This is the one you will be using most of the time** and is the default if you simply hit the spacebar or swipe the screen of your mobile device. If you got the card right, hit the third button



## HOW TO USE THE ALICE DECK

(Good). This will keep the card coming back at lengthening intervals based on how human memory works.

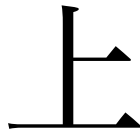
- D.** If the card was really easy, hit the fourth button (Easy). This will lengthen the time before the next review of the card. If you hit Easy on the same card a few times, it will start receding further and further into the future but it will still come back occasionally in case you should forget it.
5. Once you have selected your option for the card, the next card will appear. This continues until you have completed your reviews for the day.

And that's it. Most of this will be obvious just by following the on-screen interface.

### Note on Meanings and Definitions

If you look at dictionary definitions for some of the simpler words, they are very complex. This is necessary since, for example, someone reading a book will want to know what the word might mean in context.

However, on the cards these are cut down to the most basic meanings. To take a relatively uncomplicated example, the dictionary defines



ue as:

*above; up; over; elder (e.g. daughter); top; summit; surface; on; before; previous; superiority; one's superior (i.e. one's elder); on top of that; besides; what's more*

In the deck, the card simply gives the definitions *above*, *up* and *over*.

## ALICE IN KANJI LAND

These are the basic meanings of the word, and all the others are derivative of those concepts. The *before* meaning, for example, means higher up the page in a written text. The *on top of that* meaning is exactly the same metaphor as in English.

The best way to learn is to get the basic meaning firmly fixed, rather than try to memorize a sprawling and apparently chaotic list of meanings from the beginning. A little later, you will start to see how the extended and metaphorical meanings derive naturally from the basic meaning.

## **Glossary of Japanese Words Used by Characters in the Book**

The characters in Kanji Land speak a language closer to Japanese than English, but one that Arisu can mysteriously understand. For the purposes of this book, it is rendered mostly as English but with a little Japanese that readers may understand to help convey something of the flavor of what is being said.

I have tried to restrict those little bits of Japanese to words and phrases known to most people who have some interest in the language without having studied it seriously. However, since most beginners know a few things one doesn't expect and don't know a few things one does expect, here is a brief guide to those words and phrases not introduced in the kanji explanations or otherwise explained in the story. Plus a very few notes on English usage.

The words are listed roughly in order of appearance in the story.

### **Follow That Rabbit**

*Ganbaru*: “Try hard, do one's best”.

*Yo*: Emphasizer; marker for information not known to listener.

*BE~DA*: “Nyah!” Childish rude exclamation that is usually accompanied by the rude gesture described in the text (which is known as *akanbe*).

*(O)jou*: Polite way to address a girl; can be used with any of the following three honorific suffixes, which modify the tone of *o-jou*.

*Chan*: Cute suffix, not especially respectful; can be affectionate or may just emphasize that the person addressed is young.

*San*: Normal honorific.

*Sama*: Very respectful honorific.

*Osoku narimashita*: “(I) became (and therefore am) late”.

*Usagi*: “Rabbit”.

*Sumimasen*: “(I'm) sorry” or “Excuse me”; sometimes also “Thank you”.

*Hon*: “Book” (see Chapter 10 for the kanji).

*Dame*: As used here, “no-no, not allowed”.

*Sakura*: “Cherry blossom”.

## Itchy-Knee-San Is a Japanese Count

*Oniichan*: Familiar term for one’s own elder brother.

*Atashi*: Feminine form of *watashi*—“I”.

*Hajimemashite*: Cultural equivalent of “pleased to meet you”.

*Yoroshiku onegaishimasu*: Literally something like “Please be good to me”. Said on first meeting. Less formal variants are a simple *yoroshiku*, *yoroshiku ne* etc. The proper reply is also *yoroshiku* (*onegaishimasu*).

*Eeto*: Hesitation-word like “er”.

*Doko*: “Where”.

*Sou desu ka*: “Is that so?”

*Hai*: “Yes” (formal/respectful).

*Gomen nasai*: Polite form of “Forgive (me)”; often a child’s form of apology.

## The Rad Hatter

*Kun*: Honorific used for boys.

*Kochira koso*: Literally something like “this side especially”, often meaning “It is I who should be saying...” when returning a greeting.

## The Tower of the Ancients

*Sonna koto*: Literally “Such a thing”; a phrase modestly used to deflect praise, implying “such a thing is not the case”.

*Chibi*: “Small (person)”; can be affectionate or disparaging.

*Haitte*: Te-form of *hairu*, enter (see Chapter 6); short for a phrase such as *haitte kudasai*, therefore meaning “(please) come in”.

## The Middle Way

*Eigo wa baka ne*: “English is silly, isn’t it?”

*Pin-pon*: Sound made in Japanese quiz shows for a right answer.

*Sore de wa*: Common phrase meaning something like “Now then”.

## **Kin-Kon-KAN-Kon**

*Kin-kon-kan-kon*: Japanese school chime used in most schools. It is the Westminster Chime, based on the chime of Big Ben, the bell of Elizabeth Tower at the Palace of Westminster, London.

*Naruhodo*: “I see (now I understand)”.

*Sensei*: “Teacher”.

*Gaya-Gaya*: Murmuring or chattering of a group of people.

*Minasan*: *Minna* is “everybody” but when an honorific is appended it loses its first *n* sound.

*Shizuka ni*: Literally, “quietly” (adverbial form of *shizuka na*); short for *shizuka ni suru*—literally, “do quietly” or better “act quietly”, thus “be quiet”. Similar truncated forms are used in English, such as “Quiet, please” for “Be quiet, please”.

## **Down by the Riverside**

*Yoku ganbatta*: “(You) tried hard, worked well”.

## **The Car that Drove Herself**

*Daijoubu*: “All right, okay”; here short for “Are you all right?”

*Tadaima*: This is what Japanese people say when they return home. Literally “just now”: *tada*=just, *ima*=now. It is short for *tada ima kaerimashita*—“I have just now returned”.

## **The Man Behind the Hats**

*Ohayou gozaimasu*: Cultural equivalent of “good morning”. Literally, a very polite way of saying “It is early”; more informally, just *ohayou*.

## **The Time Machine**

*Mata ne*: Equivalent to “I’ll see you later”.

## **Relativity**

*Tarinai*: “Insufficient”.

## Inside the Treasure Cave

*Kara*: “From” or as here, “Because”, coming after rather than before the explanation.

## The Road to Nowhere

*Namaiki na*: The White Rabbit is talking to himself (indicated by *na*) about Arisu’s being impudent.

*Ano, sumimasen*: *Ano* is a hesitation word. Taken together, the phrase is a polite calling of someone’s attention, like “excuse me”.

*Irasshaimase*: Used in shops to welcome customers.

## No-Tea with the Baron

Tuxedo: What the Baron was actually wearing was morning dress, but since this might give a false or confusing impression, I used the slightly inaccurate term tuxedo (which means dinner jacket, though it is sometimes used to include more formal evening dress).

Silk hat: I have used both terms, silk hat and top hat, in the book for the hats made by Mr. Hatter. Top hat is more familiar and conjures up the correct hat. Silk hat is older and more formal, especially appropriate for the Baron. Japanese uses both terms: katakana SHIRUKU HATTO and TOPPU HATTO.

## The Train of Events

*Shitsurei*: “Rude”; literally “lacking politeness”.

*Arigatou gozaimasu*: “Thank you”; adding *doumo* intensifies it to the level of “Thank you very much”.

## Was It a Dream?

*Oneechan*: Familiar term for one’s own elder sister; cf. *Oniichan*.

*Oneesama*: Reverential term for an elder sister.

## **Also by Cure Dolly**

### ***Unlocking Japanese***

A ground-breaking book that sets out to demonstrate that Japanese is “simple, logical and beautiful” and that most of the apparently “arbitrary rules” that you “just have to learn” can be reduced to simple, easily intuitive patterns if you just understand how the language really works.

### ***An Alien Doll in Japan***

A unique look at Japan, covering the Doll’s first month in Aichi Prefecture. At the time of going to Japan, Cure Dolly had been learning Japanese for about a year, using the self-immersion methods she advocates. She put her theories into practice by adopting the challenge of using no language other than Japanese during the whole of her stay, even in emergencies (of which there were several).

### ***KawaJapa***

Cure Dolly founded and writes for the KawaJapa website and has a related channel on YouTube (KawaJapa CureDolly Channel).



## Kanji as Characters and Adventures!

**This book combines the cute and crazy world of *Alice in Wonderland* with a scientific method of learning (SRS) to introduce you to a wide range of basic kanji (all first-grade Japanese school kanji, all JLPT N5 kanji).**

You'll learn how kanji are constructed, how they fit together to make bigger words, how they are pronounced, and much more, in a form that makes them uniquely memorable—a story in which the kanji themselves are characters and adventures.

**Cure Dolly** is best known for her breakthrough work in making Japanese grammar “as simple as it really is”. Now she turns her hand to kanji.