



When Myth Becomes a National Holiday

Read the passage and answer the questions. (CEFR B1–B2)

Class _____ No. _____ Name _____

1 Most national days mark events that are well documented, such as a declaration of independence or the proclamation of a new republic. Japan's National Foundation Day is unusual because it is based on a story in the Nihon Shoki, a chronicle compiled more than a thousand years after the events it describes. Historians generally agree that the date of Emperor Jimmu's enthronement cannot be confirmed.



2 Yet Japan is not alone. South Korea celebrates National Foundation Day on October 3, honoring the legendary king Dangun, who is said to have founded the first Korean kingdom in 2333 BC. The city of Rome still celebrates its birthday on April 21, the date given by legend for its founding in 753 BC. In both places, few people treat these dates as proven facts, yet many still enjoy them as part of a shared identity.

3 What makes the Japanese case especially sensitive is its modern history. Before 1945, the holiday was closely tied to state ideology, which is why its revival in 1966 required years of debate and a carefully chosen name. The holiday therefore invites a broader question: can a society honor its founding stories while also examining how those stories were used?

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- (A) Japan's National Foundation Day is based on a well-documented event. (B) Only Japan celebrates a national day based on a legend.
- (C) South Korea and Rome have stopped celebrating their founding days. (D) Japan's holiday is based on a story that cannot be proven, and its modern history makes it a sensitive question.

2. According to the passage, what does South Korea celebrate on October 3?

- (A) The day its republic was proclaimed in 1948. (B) The legendary king Dangun, who is said to have founded the first Korean kingdom.
- (C) The birthday of the city of Seoul. (D) The end of a war in 2333 BC.

3. Why did the revival of the holiday in 1966 require years of debate?

- (A) Because before 1945 the holiday was closely tied to state ideology. (B) Because nobody remembered the old holiday.
- (C) Because South Korea asked Japan to choose another date. (D) Because the Nihon Shoki was lost during the war.

4. What can we infer from the sentence about Korea and Rome: "few people treat these dates as proven facts, yet many still enjoy them"?

- (A) People in Korea and Rome do not know their own history. (B) Historians have proven that the legends are true.
- (C) People can value a founding story as part of their identity without believing it is a fact. (D) These celebrations will soon disappear.

5. In paragraph 1, the word "compiled" in "a chronicle compiled more than a thousand years after the events" is closest in meaning to

- (A) put together from different sources (B) translated into another language
- (C) hidden from the public (D) destroyed by fire

6. Why does the writer mention South Korea and Rome in paragraph 2?

- (A) To show that their founding stories are more reliable than Japan's. (B) To suggest that Japan should change its holiday to October 3.
- (C) To show that Japan is not the only place that celebrates a legendary founding date. (D) To explain why Japan has no official ceremony.



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

Match the words with the definitions. Then rewrite and summarize.

Class _____ No. _____ Name _____

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. document | a. the act of bringing something back after it stopped or disappeared |
| 2. declaration | b. to look at or think about something very carefully |
| 3. compile | c. to record information about something in writing, photos, or other forms |
| 4. confirm | d. an official statement that tells people about a decision or a plan |
| 5. legendary | e. to collect information from different places and put it together in a book or list |
| 6. sensitive | f. to show or say that something is true |
| 7. revival | g. told about in old stories, which may or may not be true |
| 8. examine | h. likely to make people upset or angry, so it needs to be handled carefully |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “Historians generally agree that the date of Emperor Jimmu's enthronement cannot be confirmed.”

Hint: Start with "Most historians think" and change "cannot be confirmed" to "there is no way to prove".

2. “In both places, few people treat these dates as proven facts, yet many still enjoy them as part of a shared identity.”

Hint: Use "Not many people believe" and "but". Change "shared identity" to "something that brings them together".

3. “The holiday therefore invites a broader question: can a society honor its founding stories while also examining how those stories were used?”

Hint: Start with "So the holiday makes us ask a bigger question:" and use "respect" and "look carefully at".

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

Prepare for a debate. Then write your opinion (100–150 words).

Class _____ No. _____ Name _____

Motion: A country should celebrate a founding story even if it may be a myth.

FOR 賛成

- Korea and Rome celebrate legendary founding dates, and people enjoy them as part of a shared identity, not as proven facts.
- A founding story gives people a reason to think about their country's beginning, which is the purpose of the holiday.
- In 1966, the largest group of people chose February 11, so many people feel close to this date.

Add your own reason:

AGAINST 反対

- Historians agree that the date of Emperor Jimmu's enthronement cannot be confirmed, so a national holiday should not be based on it.
- Before 1945, the holiday was tied to state ideology, so celebrating it again can remind people of that history.
- A country could choose a well-documented event, like the day its constitution started, to celebrate its beginning instead.

Add your own reason:

Opinion	<i>I believe / I think that ...</i>
Reason 1	<i>First, ... For example, ...</i>
Reason 2	<i>Second, ... In fact, ...</i>
Counter	<i>Some people say ... However, ...</i>
Conclusion	<i>In conclusion, ...</i>