



An Old Sound, Spread by New Technology

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

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1 Many Japanese people assume that the 108 strokes of the New Year's Eve bell are an unbroken tradition stretching back centuries. The custom did begin long ago in Zen temples, but according to historian Hirayama Noboru, it had largely faded by the Meiji era. What brought it back was radio. From 1927, broadcasts carried the sound of temple bells into living rooms across the country, turning a local practice into a shared national experience.



2 Historians sometimes call such customs invented traditions: practices that feel ancient but took their modern shape quite recently. This does not make them fake. It shows that media can give old rituals new life.

3 Today the bell faces a new challenge. Some neighbors complain about the noise late at night, and some temples lack people to ring it, so a number of temples now ring their bells in the afternoon. Supporters of the change point out that if radio could reshape the custom once, it can surely adapt again. Others reply that the deep sound only feels special in the dark, in the final minutes of the old year. The debate itself shows how much people still care about this sound.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- (A) The New Year's Eve bell is a recent custom that has no connection to the past.
- (B) Radio should stop broadcasting temple bells.
- (C) The New Year's Eve bell feels ancient, but radio shaped it into a national custom, and it is still changing today.
- (D) All temples in Japan now ring their bells in the afternoon.

2. According to Hirayama Noboru, what had happened to the custom by the Meiji era?

- (A) It had largely faded.
- (B) It had spread to every home.
- (C) It had moved to the afternoon.
- (D) It had become a radio program.

3. Why do some temples now ring their bells in the afternoon?

- (A) Because radio stations asked them to.
- (B) Because some neighbors complain about the noise and some temples lack people to ring the bell.
- (C) Because the bell sounds better in daylight.
- (D) Because the law changed the time of New Year's Eve.

4. What can be inferred from the last sentence, "The debate itself shows how much people still care about this sound"?

- (A) The writer thinks the debate is a waste of time.
- (B) Most people want to stop the custom completely.
- (C) The writer believes the temples should stop ringing the bell.
- (D) The writer sees the disagreement as a sign that the custom is still meaningful to many people.

5. In paragraph 1, the word "unbroken" in "an unbroken tradition" is closest in meaning to

- (A) not damaged
- (B) continuing without stopping
- (C) very famous
- (D) not allowed

6. Why does the writer say "This does not make them fake" in paragraph 2?

- (A) To prevent readers from thinking that invented traditions have no value.
- (B) To prove that the bell custom is thousands of years old.
- (C) To criticize historians for using the term invented traditions.
- (D) To explain how radio works.



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

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

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| 1. assume | a. continuing without being stopped or interrupted |
| 2. unbroken | b. to slowly become weaker and then disappear |
| 3. fade | c. a program that is sent out on radio or television |
| 4. broadcast | d. made or created by people, not natural or very old |
| 5. invented | e. to say that you are unhappy or not satisfied with something |
| 6. complain | f. to not have enough of something that you need |
| 7. lack | g. to change in order to fit a new situation |
| 8. adapt | h. to believe that something is true without checking it |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “From 1927, broadcasts carried the sound of temple bells into living rooms across the country, turning a local practice into a shared national experience.”

Hint: Split it into two sentences. Use "people all over Japan could hear" and "became something everyone shared".

2. “Historians sometimes call such customs invented traditions: practices that feel ancient but took their modern shape quite recently.”

Hint: Use "seem very old" and "actually".

3. “Supporters of the change point out that if radio could reshape the custom once, it can surely adapt again.”

Hint: Start with "People who support the change say" and use "changed before" and "can change again".

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

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

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Motion: Temples should be allowed to ring the New Year's Eve bell in the daytime.

FOR 賛成

- Some neighbors complain about noise late at night, and ringing in the daytime lets temples keep the custom without trouble.
- Some temples lack people to ring the bell. A daytime event is safer and easier for older priests and visitors.
- The custom has already changed once because of radio. Traditions survive because people adapt them to new times.

Add your own reason:

AGAINST 反対

- The deep sound only feels special in the dark, in the final minutes of the old year, so a daytime bell loses its meaning.
- The custom is to ring 107 times in the old year and the last time in the new year, which is impossible in the afternoon.
- Once temples move the time for convenience, other customs may also be changed easily, and the tradition will slowly disappear.

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>