

REMEMBERING THE KANJI

VOL. 1

*A Complete Course on How Not to Forget
the Meaning and Writing
of Japanese Characters*

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SIXTH EDITION

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HONOLULU

the quaint book to its *one* and only **page**, on which you find a single, radiant *drop of wisdom*, one of the masterpiece poems of nature. [9]

一 一 一 百 百 百 百 頁 頁

* As a primitive, this kanji takes the unrelated meaning of a *head* (preferably one detached from its body), derived from the character for *head* (FRAME 1549).

65

stubborn

頑

This character refers to the *blockheaded*, persistent **stubbornness** of one who sticks to an idea or a plan just the way it was at the *beginning*, without letting anything that comes up along the way alter things in the least. The explanation makes “sense,” but is hard to remember because the word “*beginning*” is too abstract. Back up to the image we used two frames ago—Adam and Eve in their Eden—and try again: The root of all **stubbornness** goes back to the *beginning*, with two brothers each **stubbornly** defending his own way of life and asking their God to bless it favorably. **Cain** stuck to agriculture, **Abel** to animal-raising. Picture these two with their giant, swelled *heads*, each vying for the favors of heaven, a **stubborn** grimace on their faces. No wonder something unfortunate happened! [13]

元 頑

66

mediocre

凡

While we refer to something insignificant as a “*drop in the bucket*,” the kanji for **mediocre** suggests the image of a “*drop in the wind*.” [3]

丿 几 凡

67

defeat

負

Above we have the condensed form of *bound up*, and below the familiar *shellfish*. Now imagine two *oysters* engaged in *shell-to-shell* combat, the one who is **defeated** being *bound and gagged*

have been the height of **separation**-anxiety for a samurai: to be *bound up with a rope* and unable to get at his *saber* leaning only a few feet away from him. Look at that *mouth* bellowing out for shame and sorrow!

Note the order in which the element for *tied up* is written—just as it had been with the character for *ten thousand*. [7]

口 弓 另 別

95

street

丁

The picture here is of a **street** sign on a long pole: Hollywood and Vine, if you please, or any *street* that immediately conjures up the image of a **street** sign to you. [2]

一 丁

* Used as a primitive, we change the meaning of the key word and take the shape to signify a *nail* or a *spike*. Should it happen, on reviewing, that you find the pictographs get jumbled, then think of jerking a *street* sign out of the ground and using it as a *nail* to repair your garage roof.

96

town

町

Street signs standing at the corner of the *rice fields* depict the **town** limits. (Remember what was said earlier: when used as a primitive, a kanji may either take its primitive meaning or revert to the original meaning of its key word.) [7]

丨 冂 𠂇 𠂈 田 𠂉 町

97

can

可

Remember the story about the “Little Engine that **Could**” when you hear this key word, and the rest is simple. See the determined little locomotive huffing and puffing up the mountain—”I think I **can**, I think I **can**...”—spitting railroad *spikes* out of its *mouth* as it chews up the line to the top. [5]

一 丨 冂 口 可

木 枯

220

crude

朴

As all magicians who have passed their apprenticeship know, one makes one's *wand* out of a hazel branch and is careful not to alter the natural form of the *wood*. For the magic of the *wand* derives its power from its association with the hidden laws of nature, and needs therefore to be kept in its **crude**, natural state. [6]

木 朴

221

village

村

The character for *town* was associated with *rice fields* (FRAME 96). That for **village**, a **step lower** on the evolutionary path to cities, shows a circle of *trees glued together* to measure off the confines of a **village**. [7]

木 村

222

inter-

相

The prefix **inter-** stirs up associations of cooperation among people. From there we read off the elements: *tree . . . eye*. With only a slight leap of the imagination, those two words call to mind the scriptural proverb about first taking the block of timber out of one's own *eye* before helping your neighbors remove the splinters in their eyes. What more useful rule for **inter-**human relationships, and what more useful tool for remembering this kanji! [9]

木 相

223

desk

机

We need to fix imagination here on two things to learn the kanji for **desk**: the wonderful rough *wood* of which it has been hewn and the *wind* that blows across it, sending your papers flying all

* As a primitive, either <i>muscle</i> or <i>power</i> can be used.	
923 男	man <i>Rice fields . . . muscle.</i> This character is the gender-specific man , not the generic human <i>person</i> of FRAME 1023. [7]
924 劳	labor <i>Schoolhouse . . . muscle.</i> [7]
925 募	recruit <i>Graveyard . . . muscle.</i> [12]
926 劣	inferiority <i>Few . . . muscles.</i> [6]
927 功	achievement <i>Craft . . . muscle.</i> [5]
928 勸	persuade <i>Pegasus . . . muscle.</i> [13]
929 努	toil <i>Guy . . . muscle.</i> [7]
930 勃	uprising If you think of the <i>ten</i> as a little “cross” sitting atop the root of a <i>house</i> where we are used to seeing the “chimney” (<i>drop</i>), then you have the image of a <i>chapel</i> . (This combination will appear once more in this book: FRAME 1465.) To complete the picture for uprising , add: <i>child . . . muscles.</i> [9]
931 励	encourage <i>Cliff . . . ten thousand . . . muscle.</i> [7]

tongue wagging
in mouth 19
too much 余 1786
tool 45
tool 具 78
tooth 齒 1255
top hat 330
top hat and
scarf 156
topic 題 415
tortoise 龜 573
torture 拷 1344
touch 接 725
towel 巾 432
tower 閣 1752
town 町 221
toy 玩 276
tracks 1883
tracks, animal 406
trade 貿 1529
traffic 通 1511
trail 踪 1382
training 稽 983
tranquilize 鎮 294
transcend 超 411
transit 渡 1279
transition 遷 1737
translate 訳 1154
transmit 伝 1036
transparent 透 981
transport 輸 307
tray 盤 2017
tread 踐 1380
treasure 宝 273
tree 木 207
tree trunk 幹 1783
treetops 梢 213
tremendously 甚 1905
tribe 族 1307
tribute 貢 85
triceps 248
trifle 僅 1699
trip 旅 1127
trouble 惱 2085
true 真 79
trunk 胴 194
trunk, tree 幹 1783

truss 縛 1476
trust 頼 1794
tub, oaken 383
tucked under
the arm 222
tumor 腫 1807
tune 調 373
turf 芝 1301
turkey 200
turkey house/coop 202
turn 番 2058
turn into 成 386
turtle 104
tusk 牙 2053
twenty 廿 1274
twig 条 319
twist 糾 1627
two 二 2
two hands 219
two-mat area 坪 1598
tyrannize 虐 2153

U

ugly 醜 2176
umbrella 109
umbrella 傘 1103
un- 非 1760
uncle 叔 775
unclear 曖 797
uncommon 異 1936
undefiled 潔 1668
undertake 企 401
undress 脱 537
uneasiness 虞 2150
unfold 展 2075
United States 255
universal 普 1925
unlucky 厄 1519
unravel 解 1955
unusual 變 1882
upbraid 嚇 2182
upright 貞 58
uprising 勃 930
upside down
in a row 386
upstream, go 遡 2111
urge 迫 300

urine 尿 1132
use 使 1065
usual 常 862
utensil 器 127
utilize 用 1265
utmost 最 884

V

vague 漠 245
valentine 209
valley 谷 851
value 価 1729
valve 弁 803
vapor 汽 2031
various 諸 1351
vase 165
vast 弘 1320
vat 槽 1260
vegetable 菜 793
vehicle 124
vein 脈 2000
venerable old
man 翁 849
verification 驗 2134
vermilion 朱 235
versify 吟 1714
vertical 縦 1436
vessels 隻 755
vicarious 撰 1876
vice- 副 93
victory 勝 1294
vie 競 465
villa 莊 344
village 村 96
villain 凶 1603
vine 蔦 2095
vinegar 酢 1542
violent 激 536
V.I.P. 賓 550
virtuous 善 1112
vis-à-vis 对 1862
visit 参 1856
visit a shrine 詣 495
voice 声 2044
voiced 濁 898
void 虚 2148
volume 積 1663