

Questions students asked the author (Kathryn Lomer)

When you learn a second language why do you need to know a lot about the culture as well?

“Home is a slippery word”. It’s “still something I am working out”. Is it possible to feel ‘at home’ in another culture?

How is learning a language in the country different to learning in a classroom.

Akira was reading an in-flight magazine that was full of information about Japan that he never knew before. How is it that you learn about your own culture when you visit another?

How much of the book is based on direct experience and how much is imagination?

What made you decide to put the school girls on the bus incident in the book?

Is it possible to separate yourself from your own culture? Can you just take on another culture when you live in another country?

Akira said “having to use English all the time” made all the difference. You have experienced learning another language. Do you have any tips for us to make it easier?

On page 13, Akira spoke of his “brain freezing” and he “panicked” because he knew his English was poor. Why do you think that happens?

Akira wonders why it is that customs develop as they do. At what point in your life did you realise that we have customs of our own and that they are different to other countries?

What does Akira mean when he says” now that I’ve lived in another culture even movies have changed. I can get inside them more”?

Akira knows his mother better than his dad. His dad stayed unknown because he was often silent. Would you say this was a personality thing or a cultural issue?

Akira says, when trying out the names of his host family, “that it was like having very pointy and awkward sweets in my mouth instead of the usual smooth, round ones”. How did you come up with that description?

We have talked about ‘swearing’ in our Japanese lessons. Akira uses swear words later in your book. Swear words, slang and set expressions are a part of language. Why won’t Mrs Gardiner teach us some Japanese swear words?

Why can’t you ‘be yourself’ in a new language? Aren’t you always yourself?

What parts of our language do foreigners struggle with?

Akira and Chizuko talk about the thoughtlessness of your own language. You say language is like a 'second skin'. Can you tell us more about this?

You used many idioms in your book. Was this intentional on your part, or is it impossible to write without using them?

Do you think it is important to learn a second language? Why?

Why do you think Japanese is a popular language in Hobart?

English Questions

When you write a story how do you start?

Do you get paid to write books?

How do you get a book published?

How long does it take to write a book?

Do you get to say what goes on the front cover?

Do you edit your own writing?

Do you always write from personal experience?

Do you have to do any research?