

# *Writing New Crown*

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I am one of a team of writers of *New Crown*. During the writing process, one constant concern was how to reconcile goals that were seemingly at odds with each other. Writing the texts was a constant balancing act. How to engage students while at the same time entertaining them? How to have students encounter English in familiar situations while enlightening them about other aspects of English as a global language? During the writing process, I came to think of the goals as the six 'en-'s.

One basic goal was to engage students. One way to do this was through topics that interest them and are part of their lives. The idea, based on long experience teaching and the research of a number of scholars, is, that if the content of the books interests students, then they have an easier time learning English as a foreign language. Hence the chapters on school in the USA, and explaining aspects of everyday Japanese life and culture.

We also wrote so students could encounter the uses of English in familiar and realistic situations to help them learn basic functional skills. For example, this is behind the idea to link numbers and everyday life skills.

A third basic goal was to entertain students. It is widely recognized that students learn more and retain more when the materials and learning process itself is fun. So, we attempted to entertain through both the form and style of materials presented. For example, we selected a variety of games and toys for lesson topics. (See also the lessons on *Alice in Wonderland*; and the tie-in with a movie.) In another manner, we include music, incorporated into the text and as supplementary activities at the ends of the texts. The idea is for students to have a good time learning. They will then look forward to English classes and become better and more enthusiastic learners.

We also wished to enlighten students. The goal here was to introduce students to social issues that are shaping their lives in Japan and around the world. It was to provide a variety of role models for children to aspire to, and to break stereotypes. For example, this kind of thinking was behind the writing of the lessons on people with special physical challenges, the lessons on minority languages and cultures both in Japan and in other parts of the world and the lesson on Martin Luther King, Jr.

Another goal was to encourage students to learn English by having the book be doable. It is widely recognized that some students learn through linking physical activity with mental processes, an insight which is the basis of an entire school of EFL education, Total Physical Response (TPR). Acknowledging these insights, we have included units where students can build their own family tree, practice gestures, and perform tricks.

Lastly, we wanted to help student learn to enquire, help them to develop their critical thinking skills regarding a variety of issues, in English and in Japanese. These are issues that concern them now, in their immediate lives, and that will concern them in the future as they become citizens of Japan and the world. This impulse lead to the lessons about partner dogs and the importance of creating a barrier free environment, to the lessons in which a character in the text gives a speech about her dream, and a lesson in which a very real ethical dilemma is laid out in the reading on *A Vulture and a Child*.

Thought the six 'en-'s were not the only considerations that went into the writing of *New Crown*, they were certainly there. Explicitly or implicitly, they underlay most of the discussions and decisions made by the entire team of writers.