

早稲田法学部 **THEME 16 秋**  
**P.A.C. O'CONNOR**

- **30 Minutes over Tokyo [1999]**
- **Questionnaire**

**THE IDEA OF JAPAN [II]**

**Week 12 Japan in the Simpsons**

### **Reading 1: The Simpsons do Japan**



**IN JAPAN, THE SIMPSONS CARTOON SERIES IS SHOWN ON THE FOX CHANNEL ON CABLE TV, IN THE ORIGINAL AND IN TRANSLATION.**

However, the episode we are going to watch this week has not been broadcast in Japan, probably because it was made before Fox began broadcasting the Simpsons here and is out of date. This episode is not flattering to the Japanese, but neither is it likely to cause too much offense. The Simpsons regularly makes forays into the world outside America but most viewers see the funny side. Here's a TV summary

After attending a seminar on how to live beyond your means, Homer and his clan jet off to Japan. Unfortunately, trouble ensues when they squander all their money and must resort to desperate measures in order to afford the flight home.

**NEEDLESS TO SAY** all the Japanese people in the show speak English (with a Japanese accent). It's the same wherever The Simpsons goes (go). Everybody speaks English with an accent. The programme is full of 1990s Japan references – Nintendo, the Hello Kitty factory, Pokemon (the battling seizure robots that apparently caused many Japanese children to suffer epileptic attacks), the Kabuki play *Chushingura*, the film *Rashomon*, a Japanese TV game show called “Electric Irritating Stick” in which contestants receive powerful electric shocks, (motto: “**We don't reward knowledge; we punish ignorance**”), square watermelons, various monster movies including Godzilla. This is the sort of Japan where the Hotel sign says: **Royal Tokyo NOW WITH 20% MORE BOWING**. There is a place called ‘Americatown’ featuring robots of Marilyn Monroe, E.T., Abe Lincoln and the Statue of Liberty. A waiter wears a T-shirt with the words “UCLA YANKEE COLA”.



Another sign **PRICE OF A TOKYO GOLF MEMBERSHIP \$3.85475** Outside a sumo match: **SAKATUMI VS NAKADOWNA** **The Happy Smile Super Family challenge Show** (above)

In the end, Homer and family get on the Happy Smile Super Family Challenge Show (above) and get completely humiliated (the purpose of the show). The show manages to spoof Japanese ‘cruelty’ without really making any serious points. Homer Simpson seems to be slower and more bemused on this episode than usual. But ultimately *Thirty Minutes over Tokyo* probably says far more about the skewed American view of the world than it says about Japan.

早稲田法学部 THEME 16 秋 Week 12 <b>P.A.C. O'Connor: QUESTIONNAIRE:</b> <b>THIRTY MINUTES OVER TOKYO (MAY 1999)</b>	<b>Name</b> <b>No.</b>  <b>Date</b>
1. What is <i>Thirty Minutes over Tokyo</i> about?	2. Do you think the Japanese characters were like real Japanese people?
3. Do you think the Simpson family understand Japan?	4. Are Japanese TV game shows really so cruel? Give some examples.
5. Is <i>Thirty Minutes over Tokyo</i> just entertainment or can we learn something from it?	6. Why do the Simpsons go to Japan?
7. <i>Thirty Minutes over Tokyo</i> has never been shown in Japan. Why do you think this is?	8. The Simpsons series has about 75 million regular TV viewers around the world. Why is it so popular?
9. Any other comments on <i>Thirty Minutes over Tokyo</i> ?	