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Japan's Koizumi reelected in landslide win

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12 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Japan's Koizumi reelected in landslide win

BNE: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been reelected in a surprise landslide victory after calling a snap election last month. The maverick politician took a calculated gamble aimed at pushing through reforms that were being blocked by members of his own party and opposition politicians in the Japanese Lower House. His victory represents a resounding vote of confidence from a reform-hungry electorate. He is now set to push through his long-stated intention to privatize the post office, the world's richest financial institution and a slush fund used by greedy politicians who cling to power by bankrolling dubious infrastructure projects. Opposition to privatization was the catalyst for the election and the rallying cry for Mr. Koizumi's party.

Mr. Koizumi's comprehensive trouncing of the opposition gives his party its first absolute majority for the first time in 15 years. Opposition leader Katsuya Okada called it a day and quit after his party's crushing defeat. He was expected to give Mr. Koizumi a run for his money but failed to inspire the Japanese public. He faced tough opposition as Mr. Koizumi cast aside several party stalwarts and made effective use of "assassin" candidates. These high profile, largely female characters targeted those opposing the prime minister. They included a former beauty queen, a pastry chef and the 32-year-old CEO of an Internet portal. Mr. Koizumi says his "Madonnas of reform" will help shake up Japanese politics.

WARM-UPS

1. VOTE FOR ME: You are a politician in an election. Spend a minute writing down a few things you would do if you were prime minister or president. Walk around the class and talk to the other “candidates” Convince them why you are the best person for the job.

2. POLITICIANS: Write down the names of four politicians from your country. In pairs / groups, talk about these politicians. Have they done good things? Are they good politicians? Do you like them?

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Japan / Junichiro Koizumi / elections / gambles / reforms / post offices / greedy politicians / calling it a day / beauty queens / pastry chefs

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. CANDIDATES: What makes a good election candidate? In pairs / groups, rank the following “virtues” in order of most important:

- ___ Nice smile
- ___ Skillful speaker
- ___ Experience
- ___ Ideas
- ___ Kisses many babies
- ___ Promises enormous change
- ___ Is good friends with George W. Bush
- ___ Promises taxes will be lowered
- ___ Stylish clothes

5. POLITICS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “politics”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. MR. KOIZUMI: Look at the international politicians below. Do you know which countries they lead? With your partner(s), find five similarities and five differences between them. Change partners. Share and talk about your similarities and differences.

Junichiro Koizumi / George W. Bush / Fidel Castro / Robert Mugabe / Tony Blair / Pervez Musharraf / Jacques Chirac / Hugo Chavez / Hosni Mubarak / Hu Jintao / Manmohan Singh / Vladimir Putin / Thabo Mbeki / Other

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Japan's prime minister will spend more money to prevent landslides. T / F
- b. The size of the election victory was not a surprise. T / F
- c. The Japanese public are tired of reforms. T / F
- d. The main issue in the election was privatization of the post office. T / F
- e. Mr. Koizumi narrowly missed achieving a majority in government. T / F
- f. The main opposition leader vowed to fight on until the next election. T / F
- g. Mr. Koizumi faced an assassination attempt by opposition candidates. T / F
- h. The pop singer Madonna helped Mr. Koizumi in his election campaign. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| a. landslide | quit |
| b. snap | fishy |
| c. resounding | revolutionize |
| d. dubious | disposed of |
| e. catalyst | defeat |
| f. trouncing | overwhelming |
| g. called it a day | loyalists |
| h. cast aside | sudden |
| i. stalwarts | emphatic |
| j. shake up | stimulus |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. The maverick politician took | dubious infrastructure projects |
| b. a resounding | used by greedy politicians |
| c. a slush fund | Japanese politics |
| d. cling to power by bankrolling | and quit |
| e. the rallying | a calculated gamble |
| f. comprehensive trouncing | opposing the prime minister |
| g. called it a day | of the opposition |
| h. Mr. Koizumi cast aside several | cry for Mr. Koizumi's party |
| i. female characters targeted those | party stalwarts |
| j. help shake up | vote of confidence |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

ODD WORD OUT: Strike through the incorrect choice in each group of three *italicized* words.

Japan's Koizumi reelected in landslide win

BNE: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been reelected in a surprise *landslide / overwhelming / landlocked* victory after calling a snap election last month. The *radical / maverick / mauve* politician took a *deliberate / debilitating / calculated* gamble aimed at pushing through reforms that were being blocked by members of his own party and opposition politicians in the Japanese Lower House. His victory represents a *resounding / emphatic / loud* vote of confidence from a reform-hungry electorate. He is now set to push through his long-stated intention to privatize the post office, the world's richest financial institution and a slush fund used by greedy politicians who cling to power by bankrolling *fishy / salty / dubious* infrastructure projects. Opposition to privatization was the catalyst for the election and the rallying *call / whimper / cry* for Mr. Koizumi's party.

Mr. Koizumi's comprehensive *trouncing / trawling / defeat* of the opposition gives his party its first absolute majority for the first time in 15 years. Opposition leader Katsuya Okada called it a day and quit after his party's *crushing / cruising / bruising* defeat. He was expected to give Mr. Koizumi a run for his money but failed to *invigorate / install / inspire* the Japanese public. He faced tough opposition as Mr. Koizumi cast aside several party *stalwarts / warts / loyalists* and made effective use of "assassin" candidates. These high profile, *large / largely / predominantly* female characters targeted those opposing the prime minister. They included a former beauty queen, a pastry chef and the 32-year-old CEO of an Internet portal. Mr. Koizumi says his "Madonnas of reform" will help *shake up / shake off / revolutionize* Japanese politics.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'post' and 'office'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. ODD WORD OUT: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ELECTION" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about elections, Japan and Mr. Koizumi's victory.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| • landslide | • trouncing |
| • gamble | • day |
| • hungry | • inspire |
| • privatize | • stalwarts |
| • slush | • former |
| • rallying | • Madonnas |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What do you think of Junichiro Koizumi?
- d. What do you think of Japanese politics and politicians?
- e. Do lots of things change after elections in your country?
- f. Do you like the politicians in your country?
- g. Who is your favorite world leader and why?
- h. What's your opinion of Japan?
- i. What are the main issues in elections in your country?
- j. Are there many greedy or corrupt politicians in your country?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. If a snap election was called in your country, who would win and why?
- d. What kind of reforms would you like to see pushed through in your country?
- e. Do you think post office privatization is a strange issue to fight an election on?
- f. What do you think of the idea of celebrity candidates?
- g. Who do you think is the best leader in the world?
- h. What kinds of things need shaking up in your country?
- i. Have you ever wanted to call it a day?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

WORLD PRESIDENT: You must decide who should be world president. In pairs / groups, decide which world leader should get this position (the person could be from politics, business, entertainment, etc.). Think of all the reasons why you think your choice would be good at the job. The following words might help you:

- Popularity
- Experience
- Trust
- Qualifications
- Global appeal
- Leadership
- Chances of success
- Past mistakes
- Ideas
- Controversial / Non-controversial
- Compassionate

After you have decided on your world leader, change partners frequently and try to convince the class that your idea is best.

The teacher will write the "candidates" on the board. In pairs / groups, decide on the best person.

Take a class vote to see who is the new world leader. In pairs / groups, talk about the winner.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Japan's Koizumi reelected in landslide win

BNE: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been reelected in a surprise landslide victory after calling a _____ election last month. The _____ politician took a calculated gamble aimed at pushing through reforms that were being _____ by members of his own party and opposition politicians in the Japanese Lower House. His victory represents a _____ vote of confidence from a reform-hungry electorate. He is now set to push through his long-stated _____ to privatize the post office, the world's richest financial institution and a slush fund used by _____ politicians who cling to power by bankrolling _____ infrastructure projects. Opposition to privatization was the _____ for the election and the rallying cry for Mr. Koizumi's party.

Mr. Koizumi's comprehensive _____ of the opposition gives his party its first absolute majority for the first time in 15 years. Opposition leader Katsuya Okada _____ and quit after his party's crushing defeat. He was expected to give Mr. Koizumi a run for his money but failed to _____ the Japanese public. He faced tough opposition as Mr. Koizumi _____ several party stalwarts and made effective use of "assassin" candidates. These high profile, largely female characters targeted those _____ the prime minister. They included a former beauty queen, a pastry chef and the 32-year-old CEO of an Internet portal. Mr. Koizumi says his "Madonnas of reform" will help _____ Japanese politics.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Junichiro Koizumi. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. SHAKE UP: Make a poster showing some of the things that need to be shaken up in your country. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all include similar things? Talk about why these things need to be shaken up.

4. CELEBRITY CANDIDATE: Choose a celebrity candidate who you think would do well in an election. Write a profile for them and why you think they would do well. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. F d. T e. F f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| a. landslide | overwhelming |
| b. snap | sudden |
| c. resounding | emphatic |
| d. dubious | fishy |
| e. catalyst | stimulus |
| f. trouncing | defeat |
| g. called it a day | quit |
| h. cast aside | disposed of |
| i. stalwarts | loyalists |
| j. shake up | revolutionize |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. The maverick politician took | a calculated gamble |
| b. a resounding | vote of confidence |
| c. a slush fund | used by greedy politicians |
| d. cling to power by bankrolling | dubious infrastructure projects |
| e. the rallying | cry for Mr. Koizumi's party |
| f. comprehensive trouncing | of the opposition |
| g. called it a day | and quit |
| h. Mr. Koizumi cast aside several | party stalwarts |
| i. female characters targeted those | opposing the prime minister |
| j. help shake up | Japanese politics |

ODD WORD OUT:

Japan's Koizumi reelected in landslide win

BNE: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been reelected in a surprise *landslide* / *overwhelming* / ~~landlocked~~ victory after calling a snap election last month. The *radical* / *maverick* / ~~mauve~~ politician took a *deliberate* / ~~debilitating~~ / *calculated* gamble aimed at pushing through reforms that were being blocked by members of his own party and opposition politicians in the Japanese Lower House. His victory represents a *resounding* / *emphatic* / ~~loud~~ vote of confidence from a reform-hungry electorate. He is now set to push through his long-stated intention to privatize the post office, the world's richest financial institution and a slush fund used by greedy politicians who cling to power by bankrolling *fishy* / ~~salty~~ / *dubious* infrastructure projects. Opposition to privatization was the catalyst for the election and the rallying *call* / ~~whimper~~ / *cry* for Mr. Koizumi's party.

Mr. Koizumi's comprehensive *trouncing* / ~~trawling~~ / *defeat* of the opposition gives his party its first absolute majority for the first time in 15 years. Opposition leader Katsuya Okada called it a day and quit after his party's *crushing* / ~~cruising~~ / *bruising* defeat. He was expected to give Mr. Koizumi a run for his money but failed to *invigorate* / ~~install~~ / *inspire* the Japanese public. He faced tough opposition as Mr. Koizumi cast aside several party *stalwarts* / ~~warts~~ / *loyalists* and made effective use of "assassin" candidates. These high profile, ~~large~~ / *largely* / *predominantly* female characters targeted those opposing the prime minister. They included a former beauty queen, a pastry chef and the 32-year-old CEO of an Internet portal. Mr. Koizumi says his "Madonnas of reform" will help *shake up* / ~~shake-off~~ / *revolutionize* Japanese politics.