

The Big Picture

Aims:

- To introduce students to key vocabulary from the story.
- To develop the skill of listening for specific information.
- To stimulate students to read the book.

1 Tell students that they are going to read a story called *The Big Picture*. Elicit the meanings of 'picture' (painting, photo) and ask them what the story could be about.

2 Ask them to read the list of characters in the story (next page). Is it the kind of story they predicted? What kind of story is it? Where is it set?

Possible answers: police story, detective story, thriller, murder mystery; in Japan, in Tokyo

3 Ask students which words helped them to work out the kind of story and context.

Answers: Tokyo Police, sumo (elicit or explain Japanese wrestler), yakuza (Japanese gangsters), gunman

4 Tell students that they are going to do a listening activity. Read out the first few lines of the story, told by Ken.

'It started with a telephone call. Just like any other day. I'm Kenji, Kenji Harada. Everyone calls me Ken. I take photos. It's my job. I take photos for newspapers, for anybody who wants to buy them. I take photos of famous people.'

Establish that Ken's a photographer and ask students to find it on the list below. (You can put these on a handout or on the board/overhead and provide pictures or explanations for unknown words.)

Nikon	camera
teacher	Shinjuku
lens	coffee shop
darkroom	photographer
London	millions of yen
actress	hotel

5 Explain that students are going to listen to the rest of the first chapter. Before listening, ask students to tick (✓) the words or phrases they think they will hear from the list above.

6 Ask students to share their ideas in pairs, then with the whole class.

7 Read at normal speed (or play if you have the CD) the rest of the first chapter. Ask students to check their answers as they listen.

8 Take feedback and check with the whole class.

Answers

Nikon	Shinjuku
lens	coffee shop
darkroom	photographer
actress	millions of yen
camera	hotel

are all found in Chapter 1.

Alternatives

A fun way of doing this listening exercise is to get students to raise their hand each time they hear one of the words. This is a particularly good training exercise for listening for specific information.

Yet another way of doing it is for students simply to put the words in the order that they hear them.

Note: This can also be done simply as a reading exercise. In this case, do the word task as a way of getting students to read quickly.

9 Ask students to review what they have learned about Ken Harada in this first chapter. This can be done just orally, or in writing first.

For example:

He's a photographer.
He's got a Nikon camera.
He takes photos for agencies.
He needs money.

10 Ask students why Ken is so happy at the end of the chapter. Establish that he had the only photo of Takahanada and Kumiko Okada and that he could sell it for a lot of money.

11 Draw the students' attention to the last lines of the chapter:

'I was very happy. But I almost died because of that photo.'

Ask students why they think Ken almost died because of the photo. One way of doing this is to get students into small groups. Give a small prize for the best (not necessarily correct) idea. Don't tell them the reason, as this will spoil their reading!

12 If you have the books, hand them out and start reading so that they can find out.

The Big Picture

People in the story

Ken Harada: a photographer

Kenzaburo Yoshimoto: the boss of Tokai Photo Agency

Takahanada: a famous sumo star

Kumiko Okada: Takahanada's girlfriend

Sachiko Harada: Ken's wife

Tetsuro: Ken's son

Hiromitsu Shioiri: a Yakuza gunman

Chief Inspector Uchikawa of the Tokyo Police

Extract 1

(Chapter 1)

It started with a telephone call. Just like any other day.

I'm Kenji, Kenji Harada. Everyone calls me Ken. I take photos. It's my job. I take photos for newspapers, for anybody who wants to buy them. I take photos of famous people.

I have a Nikon camera and a darkroom in my flat.

Sometimes work is good, sometimes it's bad.

Like I said, every day starts with a telephone call from Tokai Photo Agency. They buy my photos and sell them around the world. Sometimes they give me a lot of money for my photos but sometimes they give me very little.

It was Thursday, 8.30 in the morning. Work was bad. It was often bad in January, February and March. It was April now, but it was also bad. My wife wasn't happy. She wanted money. She always wanted money.

I answered the telephone. It was the boss of Tokai Photo Agency. His name's Kenzaburo Yoshimoto. It's a big name for a small man. A very small man.

'Go to the Tokyo Garden Hotel at 10.30,' Yoshimoto said. He never said 'good morning' and he never said 'please'.

'Takahanada is going to the Tokyo Garden Hotel with his new girlfriend,' Yoshimoto said.

Takahanada! He was a famous sumo star in Japan.

'And be quick,' Yoshimoto said. 'Every photographer in Tokyo is going to be there.'

Takahanada was very good-looking and very rich, and his new girlfriend, Kumiko Okada, was a beautiful actress. People said Takahanada wanted her to be his wife. Wow! I could sell a good photo of them for millions of yen. I dressed quickly, putting on my new black suit. I took my camera. I didn't have time for breakfast. I thought about the money.

Twenty minutes later I was on the streets of Tokyo. There was a lot of noise and there were a lot of people. I love Tokyo. It's a very beautiful city and it's mine!

I took a taxi. I didn't have much money, but I didn't want to be late. At 9.45 I was at the Tokyo Garden Hotel in Shinjuku. Shinjuku has a lot of expensive hotels and restaurants. There were about twenty-five photographers near the hotel.

'Hey, move!' said one photographer to another photographer, and then pushed him. Everyone wanted to get the photograph. Everyone wanted to be near Takahanada and the beautiful Kumiko Okada. Every photographer had an expensive camera and a very big lens. I saw my friend, Jun. He was a photographer too.

'Hey, Jun!' I called. 'They're coming in this door, right?'

'Sure,' called Jun, smiling.

I looked around. Where could I wait? I didn't know. There were a lot of photographers by the door of the hotel. It wasn't easy to take a good photograph from there. I walked down the street and looked around.

Next to the hotel was a coffee shop. I looked in the window. It looked nice, with white tables and flowers, and I was hungry and thirsty – I wanted a coffee and some breakfast.

A taxi stopped at the coffee shop. It was just a Tokyo taxi, but then I saw them. Takahanada and Kumiko Okada! They got out of the taxi and went to the door of the coffee shop. From the coffee shop, you could get into the hotel.

I quickly took my camera and my big lens, and looked at them. I moved the lens so that I could see their faces. I could only see their faces.

Takahanada smiled at Kumiko and I took the photo. It was a very, very good photo. And it was mine, just mine.

Takahanada and Kumiko went into the hotel. I looked around. There were no photographers, just me. I walked quickly away from the hotel and called a taxi. I smiled. I had the only photo of Takahanada and Kumiko Okada. I was rich.

I was very happy. But I almost died because of that photo