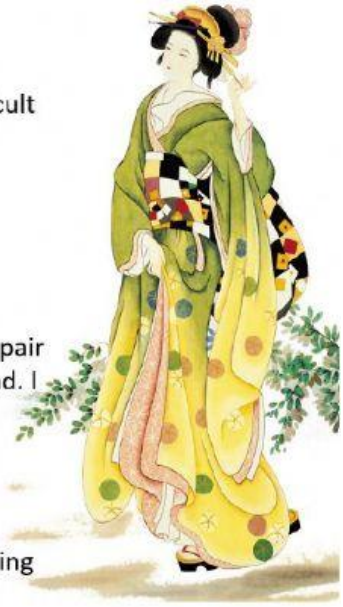
The white face, the dark eyes and hair, the blood red lips- both the Japanese and foreigners are fascinated by these beautiful and mysterious geishas in Japan today. Makiko's parents wanted her to go to university, study medicine and become a doctor. But Makiko's grandfather paid for her training and bought the kimonos she needed. It's very expensive to become a geisha. You have to have a different kimono for each month of the year, and today a kimono can cost three million yen, that's about $25,000.



It's a hard life for a trainee geisha. She has to leave her family and move into a special boarding house called a 'maiko house'. Here, she has to learn traditional Japanese arts such as playing instruments, the tea ceremony, flower arranging, singing and dancing. She has to take a lot of difficult tests and exams. Only the best will pass all the tests and become geishas many years later.

We asked Makiko to describe exactly what a geisha does.

'A geisha has to serve customers and also entertain them. She has to sing and dance, and make conversation.

'Does she enjoy her life as a trainee geisha?

'I love it, but it's hard work. Sometimes I get tired of wearing the kimonos and I want to put on a pair of jeans and go to high school like a normal teenager. But I can't have anormal life now. I don't mind. I feel very lucky.

'And what about later- can she have a family?

'Of course. A geisha can have relationships like anybody else and she can get married when she chooses.'

In Japan today there are fewer than a thousand geishas, but they play an important role in preserving Japanese culture and history.

New Inside Out Pre-Intermediate, Kay & Jones, 2008, Macmillan p68

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Read the text again and decide if the statements are true or false.

1. A lot of women in Japan today want to become geishas.
2. A geisha has to have a different kimono for every month of the year.
3. To become a geisha you have to study for many years.
4. A geisha has to sing and dance for her customers.
5. A geisha can't speak to her customers.
6. A trainee geisha can go to high school.
7. A geisha doesn't have to stay single

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LIVEWORKSHEETS