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# Learning English Through Japan

## Tojinbo Cliffs – Legends and Suicide

**Focus**: Reading (Comprehension), Writing (Comparison, Free Writing, Opinion), Speaking (Reading Comprehension, Discussion)

## PART 1 - Reading and Writing

**Read two legends about Tojinbo Cliffs, then complete the activities.**

Tōjinbō is a series of cliffs on the Sea of Japan.

Legend has it that the name "Tojinbo" derives from a corrupt Buddhist monk from Heisen-ji, a local temple, so enraged the populace that they dragged him from the temple to the sea and, at Tōjinbō, threw him into the sea. His ghost is still said to haunt the area.

An alternate legend says that the name Tōjinbō comes from a dissolute Buddhist monk. According to the legend, a Buddhist monk named Tōjinbō, who was disliked by everyone, fell in love with a beautiful princess named Aya. Tōjinbō was tricked by another admirer of Princess Aya and was pushed off these cliffs. The legend says that ever after that time Tōjinbō's vengeful ghost would go on a rampage around the same time every year at this place, causing strong winds and rain. Some decades later, an itinerant priest took pity on Tōjinbō and

**1) Write the similarities and differences between the two legends.**

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**2) Which legend is your favorite? Why?**

**3) Tojinbo is known as one of the most famous suicide spots in Japan. Do you think it can be related to the legends? If so, why?**

## PART 2 – Reading, Writing and Speaking

**Although the famous of being a suicide spot, you can read some news about people trying to help. Read the text below.**

With about 70 suicides per day in 2015, Japan has one of the highest suicide rates in the developed world. At Tojinbo in Fukui Prefecture – notorious for its 'suicide cliffs', where numerous people have ended their lives – the retired policeman Yukio Shige has taken a hands-on approach to addressing the social issue.

Alongside volunteers at his Tojinbo Nonprofit Organisation Support Center, Shige patrols the cliffs for anyone who looks distraught, and invites them to his nearby café, where he offers food, an opportunity to talk over their problems and longer-term support if necessary. Over the past 12 years, Shige's organisation has been credited with saving some 550 lives, even as more and more people have flocked to the cliffs, which have become something of a morbid tourist attraction.

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**4) Based on the text, answer the following questions:**

a) How high is the Japanese suicide rate?

_____

b) What is Yukio Shige's profession?

_____

c) Does Shige help suicidal people alone?

_____

d) How does Shige help people?

_____

**5) Based on what you have learned about Tojinbo Cliffs and Yukio Shige, discuss the following questions.**

a) How would you describe Yukio Shige?

b) What do you think of these initiatives?

c) There are other initiatives that also contribute to the drop in the number of suicides at Tojinbo. Look them up on the internet and comment on them.

d) How would you help people at Tojinbo?

LIVEWORKSHEETS