

My Name

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English 3C

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In the year 1988, the weather was exceptionally warm, almost at the level of being hot. It made the watermelons ripen early to such a sweet and juicy fruit. However, the rainy season came early, and the weather was far from being calm and peaceful. Finally on one morning, the sun smiled down after a long rainy period, and at 5:40 A.M., a girl named Nozomi was born. Since then, I have carried the name Nozomi Tanaka with me through my life, almost reaching 19 years. It is, in a way, a symbolic part of me. The name carries a special significance, both in its meaning and its *kanji* characters. At the same time, the *kanji* characters distinguish me as an original individual, even among people with the same name. In our recognition, it is nothing special to have our own name, but it is not just a label to recognize each person; it is part of that person's identity.

Like many Japanese names, my name has a meaning in Japanese. "Nozomi" is a word for "hope" or "dream", and the origin of it is quite straightforward. According to my mother, she wished very much for a daughter and that she reflected on my name. It is a question what she would have named me if I had been a boy, but my mother seem never to have doubted she would have a baby girl. However, the reality was that the echo tests during checkups did not clearly show my gender. Therefore, although she had already decided on my name, she called me "Dora-chan" until I was born. "Dora" is

from “dragon”, since my mother researched about dragons in her college years, and by coincidence, the year I was born was in the dragon year of the Chinese Zodiac. “Chan” is a popular Japanese title which shows a close relationship and affection. Perhaps I could say that I had two first names until I was born, both very special in their meanings.

When she decided what my name should be, my mother has already made up her mind about the *kanji* characters as well, considering the meaning she would put within it. The character for “hope” is 望, and also this being her favorite character, it was chosen for my name. However, with this one character, it could be read both “Nozomi” and “Nozomu”, the latter being a boy’s name. To add a taste of originality and a way to distinguish it as a girl’s name, the character 美, meaning “beautiful”, was added at the end. This character was passed down from my grandmother. In Japan, taking a *kanji* character from an ancestor, a relative, or a close friend of a family is considered as a gift to the child, as well as displaying acceptance of the new life as a part of the family. Carrying the wish for my spirit to grow beautifully, my *kanji* were decided to be 望美. With many meanings behind my name’s creation and so much love that was put in it, I really feel proud and happy to have this name.

One surprising thing that I was reminded of during my high school years was that

different *kanji* characters could express the same name. Although I considered the name Nozomi one of the most popular girl's names in Japanese, I had never met anyone else with the same name. For that reason, it was a shock when I met two more of "me" all of a sudden on entering high school. What was more surprising, all of us had different *kanji* to represent our name. Mine is written 望美, and the other two were written 望 and 希美. 希美 is another way to write "hope" or "desire" in Japanese, and it is one of the popular characters for Nozomi, along with 望美. Having friends with the same name bothered me for a while, for I was too used to being the "one and only Nozomi" in my small world and never dreamed it could be so easily disrupted. However, I slowly came to feel a type of bond with them. Having the same name is a coincidental event, and it felt special for the three of us to be together in the same grade and school. Besides, the three different *kanji* representations seemed to show that we are original in our own way: each of us living a different life, feeling different things, and having our own, different characters.

A name is something that we all have without exception, but at the same time, no two have an identical story behind them. As in my case, I was named Nozomi because my mother wished for a baby girl. My *kanji* characters were applied accordingly to it, and to add some originality and good luck from my grandmother, the character 美

was added to complete my name, 望美. All those dreams, hopes, wishes, and considerations that my mother put in my name came to signify my originality even when I met other people with the same name. In addition, it could not be forgotten that the name carries another special story—my life. As I live through my days, every new experience and encounter with new views form and reform who I am. My name represents my whole being, in other words, the life which I have been through. A name is not something that we consider deeply in our everyday life, but it is, perhaps, one of the most valuable things we have.