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# TEACHING TUESDAY

## OMIYAGE

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Travelling to Japan, you will immediately notice that nearly every airport, local train station, or tourist shop, has boxes of enticing sweets packaged and wrapped for gifting. These are omiyage (お土産): small trinkets or foods, unique to local areas in Japan.

Omiyage literally translates to “local” (土) “product” (産). One example from Tokyo is “Tokyo Banana,” a banana-shaped morsel of sponge cake filled with cream and banana puree. Other examples include “Nama Yatsushashi” (plush mochi triangles) from Kyoto, and “Shiroi Koibito” (white chocolate cookies) from Hokkaido.

In the Western world, people often bring back souvenirs as a way of remembering their travels. In Japan, when you travel (whether it be within Japan, to a foreign country, or to Japan from a foreign country) it is customary to bring back omiyage for family, friends, and coworkers. This custom traces back to ancient times when people embarking on pilgrimages to Shinto shrines would bring back small gifts for their families. Today, omiyage is a way to share someone’s travel experience and show others you were thinking of them