

Resources for Teaching and Learning Classical Japanese

This list of resources is split into two categories: 1. Grammar & vocabulary resources; 2. Paleography & orthography resources. Each category is split into print, online, and app resources. See also Timothy Wixted's "[Studies Related to Classical Japanese \(*Bungo*\) in Western Languages](#)" for a comprehensive list of bungo-related scholarship.

1. Grammar & Vocabulary Resources

Print Textbooks

Ikeda Tadashi. *Classical Japanese Grammar Illustrated with Texts* (Institute of Eastern Culture, 1975/1980).

*Five chapters organized more by grammar and style than parts of speech. Four example texts for practice in Japanese and Romanization (both heavily annotated ruby style and more lightly annotated texts). Index included. Terminology and examples in Japanese and Romanization. Examples translated into English but not modern Japanese. Some elements of presentation similar to bungo textbooks in Japanese, such as conjugation tables. Out of print, but available in many libraries. [Table of contents and sample](#).

Katsuki-Pestemer, Noriko. *A Grammar of Classical Japanese* (Lincom Europa, 2009).

*Seven chapters, reference list, and index. Very organized and systematic approach to classical Japanese as a language; a linguistic and analytical approach. Terminology and examples in Japanese as well as Romanization. Examples translated into English, but not modern Japanese. [Table of contents and sample](#).

Komai, Akira & Thomas Rohlich. *An Introduction to Classical Japanese* (Bonjinsha, 1991).

*Four chapters organized by parts of speech, tables and indexes (in Japanese and Romanization) included. Exercises are integrated into the text. Terminology in both Japanese and Romanization. Example sentences in Japanese. Examples are translated into modern Japanese and English. Some examples (sentences/paragraphs) are from koten texts, many simple words and phrases examples are fabricated. Out of print, but available at many libraries. [Table of contents and sample](#).

McCullough, Helen Craig. *Bungo Manual: Selected Reference Materials for Students of Classical Japanese* (Cornell University East Asia Papers, no. 48, 1988/2010).

*One of this textbook's greatest virtues is its brevity. Several chapters explaining parts of speech and grammar patterns followed by tables. All Japanese terminology and examples are Romanized. Examples are translated into English but not modern Japanese. Some textbooks concentrate almost exclusively on prose examples. McCullough uses poems liberally. [Table of contents and sample](#).

O'Neill, P. G. *A Programmed Introduction to Literary-style Japanese*. (School of Oriental and African Studies, 1968/1975).

*Twelve chapters organized by parts of speech followed by tables. Extensive examples from four dozen different texts of the Heian through Edo periods. Almost all prose, but some *Kokinshū* poems. Terminology and examples Romanized. Examples translated into English but not modern Japanese. Exercises integrated into chapters, with “fill in the blank” style completion of English translations of examples, or completion of Romanized classical phrases/sentences. Out of print, but available in many libraries. [Table of contents and sample](#).

Shirane, Haruo. *Classical Japanese: A Grammar* (Columbia UP, 2005).

*Exercises are in a separate appendix. Example sentences included in Japanese and Romanization. Examples translated into English, but not modern Japanese. “Historical Notes” and “Advanced Study and Reference” sections included in each chapter alongside grammar explanations. Companion volume *Classical Japanese Reader and Essential Dictionary* includes seventeen heavily annotated literary excerpts for study and practice. Dictionary translates terms into English only. [Table of contents and sample](#).

Wixted, John Timothy. *A Handbook to Classical Japanese* (Cornell UP, 2010).

*Meticulously cited, annotated, and cross-indexed examples. Terminology and examples in Japanese and Romanization. Examples with English translation, but not modern Japanese translation. Appendices include citations for other translations of each example and thorough lists of translations of major kobun titles into English, French, German, and Spanish. [Table of contents and sample](#).

Print Dictionaries

*Classical dictionaries are widely available from multiple publishers and competitively priced because of their usefulness in studying for college exams in Japan. This list will include just a few of the most common dictionaries. Bear in mind that each dictionary often comes in multiple editions and configurations (for example, some have compact editions, “visual” editions with illustrations, and so forth). They are all comparable in their utility and the extent of materials available within the dictionaries. In addition to vocabulary translated into modern Japanese, most dictionaries also include example sentences in the original classical Japanese and modern Japanese translation. Most dictionaries also include study aids such as visuals of cultural artifacts, maps, grammar tables, author biographies, reign and emperor lists, and more.

Hayashi Ōki 林巨樹 and Andō Chizuko 安藤千鶴子, Eds. *Kogorin* [古語林](#) (Taishūkan, 1998). [Sample page](#).

Kindaichi Haruhiko 金田一春彦, Ed. *Gakushū yōrei kogo jiten* [学習用例古語辞典](#) (Gakken, 2015). [Sample page](#).

Kitahara Yasuo 北原保雄, Ed. *Zenbun zen'yaku kogo jiten* [全文全訳古語辞典](#) (Shōgakusan, 2003). [Sample page](#).

Koike Seiji 小池清治, Ed. *Zen'yaku dokkai kogo jiten* [全訳読解古語辞典](#) (Sanseidō, 2017).

*This dictionary also has a [web version](#) available for purchase or rental (the web version is free with the purchase of a paper dictionary), and an [app version for iOS](#). [Sample page](#).

Miyakoshi Masaru 宮腰賢, et al, Eds. *Gakushū yōrei kogo jiten* [学習用例古語辞典](#) (Ōbunsha, 2015). [Sample page](#).

Nakamura Yukihiro 中村幸弘, Ed. *Zen'yaku kogo jiten: kaiteiban* [全訳古語辞典・改訂版](#) (Benesse, 2007). [Sample page](#).

Ōno Susumu 大野晋, et al, Eds. *Kogo jiten: hoteiban* [古語辞典・補訂版](#) (Iwanami, 1990). [Sample page](#).

Online Resources

Bryant, Anthony J. [文語入門 An Introduction to Classical Japanese](#).

*Online introductory textbook for a general audience. Chapters include: Introduction, Speaking Issues, Vocabulary Problems, Orthography, Stem Elements, Adjectives, Verbs, Paradigms Chart, Copulas, Useful Particles, Expressing Concepts, Bibliography.

[Classical Japanese](#).

*Blog-style site with brief introductions to bungo using mainly poetry as examples.

De Cooman, David & Michael Schiltz. [OpenCourseWare Classical Japanese Grammar](#).

*Open source textbook available as a pdf download; aimed at students with intermediate to advanced modern Japanese skills.

Frellesvig, Bjarke; Horn, Stephen Wright; Russel, Kerri L; and Sells, Peter. [The Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese](#).

*Texts in old Japanese presented in their original orthography and in Romanized transcription, both searchable. Access is free.

Frellesvig, Bjarke, et al. [Oxford NINJAL Corpus of Old Japanese \(ONCOJ\)](#).

*The Oxford-NINJAL Corpus of Old Japanese is a long-term project which is developing a lemmatized, parsed and comprehensively annotated corpus of all texts in Japanese from the Old Japanese period (mainly the Asuka and Nara periods of Japanese history). In this corpus, the texts are presented in a phonemic transcription, showing also the original script, and with extensive linguistic annotation for mode of writing (phonographic or logographic), morphology and syntactic parsing, displayed in the form of constituency trees. Access is free.

Itō Michiko. [Guide to Study Japanese Classical Literature and Classical Japanese Language](#).

*Library guide at the University of Kansas that includes lists of print textbooks and dictionaries. Also lists online resources related to Classical Japanese as well as paleography.

Koike Seiji 小池清治, Ed. *Zen'yaku dokkai kogo jiten* [全訳読解古語辞典](#).

*Online version of Sanseidō's dictionary.

Moriyama Tsuyoshi 森山剛志. *Moriyama no kanarazu dekiru koten bunpō* [森山の必ずできる古典文法](#).

*YouTube lectures by Moriyama Tsuyoshi, who appears to be a cram school instructor. In Japanese. Useful for advanced students who want to increase their understanding of textbook learning by receiving instruction from a Japanese sensei in Japanese, or students who would like to skip the textbook and receive direct instruction by video. Seventeen "chapters" as well as videos dedicated to individual topics such as waka poetry, certain jodōshi, and kakari-musubi.

National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL). Chūnagon corpora search application [中納言コーパス検索アプリケーション](#).

*Extensive set of corpora which include more than just classical Japanese texts, but can be delimited by [period and genre](#). Useful for finding usage examples. Login is required but access is free.

PPMZ. *Kobun jodōshi manyuaru* [古文助動詞マニュアル](#).

*Online manual of auxiliary verbs. In Japanese.

Quinn, Charles. [Classical Japanese Portal](#).

*Online interactive multimedia learning platform. So far, four texts are employed: *Taketori monogatari*, *Ise monogatari*, *Kokinshū kanajo*, *Tosa monogatari*. Texts have vocabulary and grammar explanations integrated and also feature English translations and recitation audio. Vocabulary and grammar are text-driven in that their introduction generally follows their appearance in the passages. Incorporates recent research; for example, CJP introduces the evidential dimension in distinguishing amongst the six *kako*, *kanryō* 過去・完了 auxiliaries. Access is free.

Satō Sekiko 佐藤勢紀子, et al. [BUNGO-bun GO!](#)

*Classical Japanese learning site in two parts.

1. テキスト: 16 fully annotated literary texts of various genres. Includes *kaisetsu*, vocabulary lists, and quizzes. Modern Japanese translations of phrases and sentences are available, but hidden until clicked. Furigana can be enabled or disabled, and switched between 新仮名遣い and 旧仮名遣い. In addition, each text includes a recorded recitation (朗読).

2. 参考資料: Both online grammar explanations by part of speech and pdf tables of parts of speech. Vocabulary and grammar explanations include 用例 that come from the annotated texts on the site, and so correlation is tight. In Japanese, but aimed at L2 Japanese language learners. Access is free.

Tofugu. [Kobun: Classical Japanese](#).

*Series of six articles introducing the basics of classical grammar and orthography for a general audience. Articles include: 1. An Introduction to Kobun and How to Read It, 2. Verbs, 3. Jodoushi, 4. Adjectives & Musubi, 5. Honorifics, 6. Old Kana.

Weblio. [古語辞典](#).

*Online version of the *Gakken zen'yaku kogo jiten* 学研全訳古語辞典 dictionary. Lacks the visual components and cultural information of the many versions of print classical dictionaries by Gakken and others, but is very serviceable.

Apps

Gakkō Netto 学校ネット. *Kobun, Kanbun* 古文・漢文.

*[Android](#) and [iOS](#). Aimed at junior high and high school students studying for exams. Focuses on vocabulary terms which are leveled. Free.

Sanseidō and CodeDynamix. [全訳読解古語辞典](#).

*iOS version of the Sanseidō dictionary.

Weblio. Weblio [古語辞典](#).

*Android only. App version of the online Weblio classical dictionary, using data from Gakken's print dictionary. Free.

2. Paleography & Orthography Resources

*See also the excellent lists of resources by [Laura Moretti](#) and [Tarin Clanuwat](#).

Print Resources

Ijichi Tetsuo 伊地知鉄男. *Kana hentaishū* [仮名変体集](#) (Shintensha, 1998).

*Concise dictionary of hentaigana. Brief and easy to use. As with most hentaigana dictionaries, kana are listed first with the standard modern kana, then listed by frequency of appearance in premodern texts.

Kanechiku Nobuyuki 兼築信行. *Isshūkan de yomeru kuzushiji: Kokinshū, Shinkokinshū* [一週間で読めるくずし字一古今集・新古今集](#) (Tankōsha, 2006).

*Though I'm not sure it would take only a week to learn kuzushiji, this book is useful for learning kuzushiji in a manuscript context, as Professor Kanechiku uses *kohitsugire* 古筆切 and poetry as learning materials. Many kuzushiji resources concentrate on print examples from the Edo period, mostly prose, whereas Professor Kanechiku uses manuscript poetry examples.

Kodama Kōta 児玉幸多. *Kuzushi yōrei jiten, fukyūban* [くずし字用例辞典・普及版](#) (Tokyodo Shuppan, 1993).

Kodama Kōta 児玉幸多. *Kuzushi dokkai jiten, fukyūban* [くずし字読解辞典・普及版](#) (Tokyodo Shuppan, 1993).

*Kodama Kōta's kuzushiji set appears in a number of different configurations as print dictionaries. Above are the two most useful. The first is the largest of the Kodama dictionaries. The second is the most compact.

Nagoya Akira 名児耶明. *Kana o yomu: hentaigana dokkai to kohitsu kanshō* [かなを読む一変体仮名解説と古筆の鑑賞](#) (Tankōsha, 1993).

*Unlike most paleography resources, this book uses manuscript *kohitsugire* examples.

Nakano Kōichi 中野幸一. *Hentaigana no tebiki* [変体仮名の手引](#) (Musashino Shoin, 2001).

*Functions as a dictionary similar to Ijichi's *Kana hentaishū*, but includes several extra features (and thus not as concise as Ijichi's dictionary). Yōrei are identified by text and (when known) calligrapher. Yōrei include snippets of lines so that kana can be seen in context. Includes odoriji 踊り字 and common renji 連字. Also includes several facsimiles of premodern texts (print and manuscript) for practice.

Ōishi Manabu 大石学. *Komonjo kaidoku jiten: Monjokan e ikō, kaitei shinpan* [古文書解説辞典 文書館へ行こう・改訂新版](#) (Tokyodo Shuppan, 2000).

*Useful dictionary for reading old documents. Includes thematic chapters and mini dictionaries based upon specific contexts and types of information.

Saitō Hitoshi and Yamamoto Akira 齋藤均監修・山本明著. *Yōkai ezōshi to kaidan de tanoshiku manabu! Kuzushiji dokkai no pointo* [妖怪絵草紙と怪談で楽しく学ぶ！「くずし字」読解のポイント](#) (Mates Publishing, 2020).

—, *Komonjo o tanoshiku yomu! Yoku wakarū kuzushiji miwake no pointo* [古文書を楽しく読む！よくわかる「くずし字」見分け方のポイント](#) (Mates Publishing, 2022).

*Both of the Saitō/Yamamoto books are aimed at a Japanese audience, but could be used by advanced L2 learners. Both include extensive explanations and annotations, with exercises. Study materials include both print and manuscript, illustrated books and woodblock prints.

Online Resources

[AI 手書きくずし字検索](#).

*This is often the best place to start if you're stumped and have no guesses. It will offer several possibilities, which you can then plug into a character database (such as the Multi-database Search System below) to see if they match with the kuzushiji you're trying to decipher.

Center for Open Data in the Humanities. Nihon kotenseki kuzushiji data set [日本古典籍くずし字データセット](#).

*Character search engine utilizing multiple data sets. Mostly print materials, but some manuscript as well. Useful if you have an idea of what the character might be that you are attempting to decipher.

Center for Open Data in the Humanities. Hondo jun mojishu risuto [頻度順文字種リスト](#).

*List of characters (kana and kanji) in order of frequency within the CODH kuzushiji dataset. Useful for understanding the most frequently appearing characters (at least within the mostly print Edo-period resources in the CODH dataset).

Clanuwat, Tarin. "[Kuzushiji: Learning Resources & Artificial Intelligence Initiatives](#)."

*Video presentation at the University of British Columbia by Dr. Clanuwat, who developed the KuroNet and Miwo kuzushiji AI recognition system.

Center for Open Data in the Humanities 人文学オープンデータ共同利用センター. [KuroNet kuzushiji ninshiki service](#) くずし字認識サービス.

*Online transcription platform. [Click here](#) for a tutorial by the Digital Orientalist.

Hashimoto Yūta 橋本雄太. Minna de honkoku [みんなで翻刻](#).

*Collaborative crowd-sourced transcription of Edo-period printed materials with AI and very useful tools.

Kyūshū University Library 九州大学附属図書館. Kyūkore de manabu kuzushiji no sekai [九コレで学ぶ「くずし字」の世界](#).

*Set of online learning modules in Japanese. Also includes a library guide to print resources.

National Museum of Japanese History 国立歴史民俗博物館. Nihon no chūsei monjo Web [日本の中世文書Web](#).

*Transcription platform concentrating on medieval manuscripts. In Japanese.

Nara National Research Institution for Cultural Properties (Nabunken) 奈良文化財研究所. [Multi-database Search System for Historical Chinese Characters](#).

*One-stop kuzushiji search that draws upon multiple datasets. You must have a guess as to what character you're deciphering. You can confirm your guess by inputting that character and seeing examples from multiple databases. Interface available in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and English.

Rokumei Bunko 鹿鳴文庫. Komonjo nabi [古文書なび](#).

*Website for komonjo learning resources. Includes learning modules, both online and pdfs. Focuses on documents, but also some materials related to Edo printed books. In Japanese.

Shizuoka Prefectural Central Library 静岡県立中央図書館. *Kuzushiji kaidoku kōza* [くずし字解説講座](#).

*Series of pdfs, fifty in all, for learning to read *komonjo* 古文書. Very "bite size" learning modules. The library retains copyright of the materials, so they cannot be reproduced or repurposed, but are available for free download as pdfs. In Japanese.

Tokyo Metropolitan Archives 東京都公文書館. Komonjo kaidoku challenge kōza [古文書解説チャレンジ講座](#).

*Series of 5 one-page pdfs highlighting often difficult-to-decipher aspects of manuscript documents. In Japanese.

University of Pennsylvania Libraries. [Japanese Digital Resources: Kuzushiji](#).

*Online library guide to digital resources for kuzushiji learning. In English.

Uno Aiko 宇野藍子. Komonjo Net [古文書ネット](#).

*Website with extensive resources related to not only Edo-period manuscript documents, but also woodblock prints, kwaraban, calendars, and printed texts. Though the learning modules focus on documents, there are extensive learning helps related to a variety of genres and topics. In Japanese.

Apps

[The Hentaigana App](#).

*Useful primer developed by Waseda and UCLA funded by the Yanai Initiative. Flashcard-style learning as well as a dictionary. Available for iOS or Android. English interface.

[Kuzushiji gakushū shien apuri KuLA](#) くずし字学習支援アプリKuLA.

*App developed by Hashimoto Yūta 橋本雄太 of the National Museum of Japanese History (who also helped develop the Minna de Honkoku platform). Includes a primer and dictionary. Available for iOS or Android. Japanese or English interface.

[MiWo](#) みを.

*Transcription AI app developed by Tarin Clanuwat of the Center for Open Data in the Humanities. Easy to use tool: simply point, shoot, AI honkoku. Or, upload photos of texts and the AI will transcribe for you. Available for iOS or Android. Japanese interface.