

Short Story Nature Idiom Activity

Instructions: Hanami means “flower viewing” in Japanese and refers to the traditional custom of holding festivals to celebrate the blooming of the cherry trees each year. Read the following short story about a Hanami, and replace the bolded word/phrase with one of the nature idioms that has the same meaning. (Note: all idioms are included in the book [Fresh as a Daisy: Nature Idioms](#).)

“Sakura Sees the Sakura”

“Look at this, you will be **so excited** _____!” Sakura’s mother said, passing the morning newspaper to her daughter. They are predicting that the cherry trees will begin to blossom in two weeks!”

Sakura jumped for joy! She remembered last year when the cherry trees had bloomed and her family had gone to a Hanami at a nearby park and seen the beautiful pink flowers. It had been **something that brought her a lot of happiness** _____.

Sakura also had an extra special connection with the Hanamis because her name, Sakura, meant cherry blossom. Her parents had named her Sakura because just like the sakura is a symbol of hope and happiness in Japan, she had brought hope and happiness to her family.

“I don’t know why you are so excited,” said Sakura’s brother, Riku, “the cherry blossoms only last for two weeks before they fall off the trees.”

“Riku, you are always so **practical** _____.” replied Sakura. “I know the festivals may only last for two weeks but those two weeks are such a **refreshing change** _____, that they are worth being excited about! All of us are usually so busy with work and school but the festival is an opportunity to **pause, relax, and enjoy ourselves** _____. I just hope that I am not **sick** _____ on the day of the festival,” said Sakura, “that would be terrible!”

“Well, if you want to stay healthy for the festival, you better finish eating your *tamago kake gohan*,” replied her mother, smiling at Sakura and pushing the bowl of steamed rice and egg closer to her daughter.



Tamago kake gohan is a common Japanese breakfast dish consisting of steamed rice topped with egg and soy sauce.

One day at school Sakura heard **through gossip** _____ that they would be able to see the first cherry blossoms in Yoyogi park that weekend.



Yoyogi park is a popular park in Tokyo. Each spring during hanami thousands of people visit to see the cherry blossoms.

When she came home from school she asked her mother if they could start preparing desserts to take to the Hanami. Every year during Hanami they would have a picnic under the cherry blossom trees and eat special desserts like cherry blossom cookies in honor of the festival.

“Don’t you have homework to do?” said her brother Riku.

“Riku! Why do you have to **stop the excitement when it is just beginning** _____?” complained Sakura.

“Your brother is right,” said her mother. “Focus on your homework for now. We will have plenty of time to make preparations for the festival.”

Sakura woke up the morning of the festival **full of energy and enthusiasm** _____. After breakfast, she and Riku helped her parents pack the food for their picnic: cherry blossom rice balls, temari sushi, and some delicious cherry blossom cookies for dessert. When they finally reached Yoyogi park it was already crowded with visitors. The grass was so filled with picnic blankets and groups of friends and families that an open spot was **very difficult to find** _____. When they finally found somewhere to sit down, Riku accidentally elbowed Sakura while they were sitting down.

“Don’t worry,” Sakura told Riku before he could even apologize. “I am way too excited about being here to **overreact to something small**

_____. I just want to enjoy the beautiful cherry blossoms,” she said, lying on her back and staring up at the pretty pink flowers.

“And I want to enjoy my beautiful cherry blossom, Sakura,” said her father, wrapping her in a tight hug.

The family spent the day at the park enjoying the festival. They even bought special sakura flavored tea to drink along with their delicious meal. As they left the park that evening, Sakura said, “I know it would be **trying for something impossible** _____ but I really do wish I could stop the cherry blossoms from falling off the trees so soon.”



“I understand what you mean, Sakura,” said her mother. “But if the cherry blossoms were always here, do you think we would get as excited about them as we do? There would probably be no such thing as a Hanami!”

Answer Key:

1. Over the moon
2. A ray of sunshine
3. Down to Earth
4. Breath of fresh air
5. Stop and smell the roses
6. Under the weather
7. Through the grapevine
8. Nip it in the bud
9. Fresh as a daisy
10. (Like finding) a needle in a haystack
11. Make a mountain out of a molehill
12. Chasing rainbows