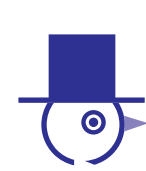




Design : Masako Ban

虫? mushi? むし?

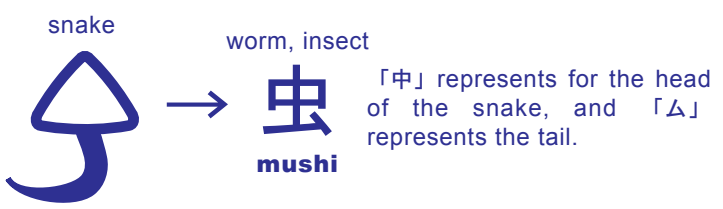


I was invited to Mr. Hayashi's birthday party and while we were eating together in the living room, Mr. Hayashi's father said to me, "**musume ni warui mushi ga tsuite ne, omakeni kanekui-mushi de dōmo mushi ga sukanain desu yo. Pole-san dattara ne.**" I thought the meaning of "**mushi**" was worm or insect, so I didn't understand the point of the remarks. So, I said "**e? watashi? mushi?**" and he left the living room laughing. Hirayama-san, what did he really mean?

■■■ He used the Japanese word "**mushi**," meaning insect, three times to describe his daughter's boyfriend. What he actually said was, "My daughter is dating a bad man who is a big spender. I don't like him at all. I wish he were a man like you, Mr. Pole." Mr. Hayashi's father was not literally talking about insects. Let's look at expressions related to "虫" (**mushi**) in today's column.

<Constitution of kanji>

The **kanji** for "insect" comes from the form of the viper. In old days, people recognized the beast, bird and fish. All the other creatures were regarded as types of insect.



<Expressions using the kanji 虫 >

- 虫がいい : **mushi ga i**
self-serving
- 虫の居所が悪い : **mushi no idokoro ga warui**
in a bad mood
- 腹の虫がおさまらない : **hara no mushi ga osamaranai**
feel aggravated
- 玉虫色 : **tamamushi-iro**
a vague situation that can be interpreted in various ways depending on the viewpoint
- 虫が好かない : **mushi ga sukanai**
have an aversion to
- ～の虫 : **...no mushi**
expression of a person getting absorbed in a certain thing figuratively
e.g., 本の虫 : **hon no mushi** 仕事の虫 : **shigoto no mushi**
a bookworm hard worker

<Exercise 1>

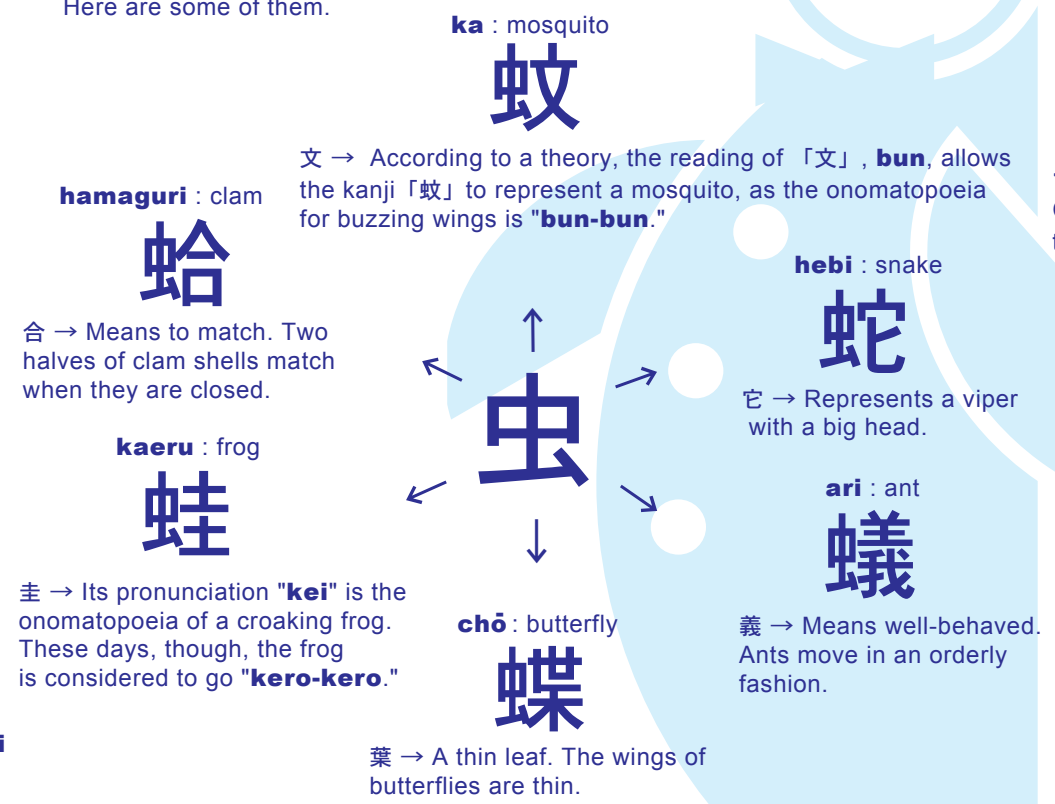
Choose the correct phrase listed in the previous column to complete the sentence.

- He is a good person, but I don't like him.
いい人なのですが、どうも () です。
i hito nandesu ga dōmo _____ desu
- I feel aggravated even though I won the case.
裁判で勝っても () !
saiban de kattemo _____

Answers: a) - 5) b) - 3)

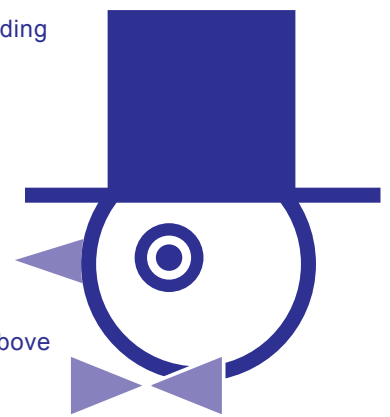
<Creatures with the left-hand element 虫 in their names>

Combined with other kanji, 「虫」 can indicate various creatures. Here are some of them.



<Expressions using 虫-related kanji>

- 蚊の鳴くような声 : **ka no nakuyōna koe**
An indistinct voice just like the buzzing of a mosquito.
- 蛙の子は蛙 : **kaeru no ko wa kaeru**
A child resembles the parent. A child often follows in the footsteps of the parent.
- 蛇の生殺し : **hebi no namagoroshi**
Keep someone in suspense while withholding the coup de grace.
e.g., the way a snake immobilizes its prey before eating it.



<Exercise 2>

Choose the correct phrase from those listed above to complete the sentence.

- I can't hear you at all because you're mumbling.
() で何を言っているのか全然聞こえません。
de nani o itteirunoka zenzen kikoenai desu
- A vague situation surrounds this development, putting me on tenterhooks.
この件についてハッキリしない状態が続いて () です。
kono ken ni tsuite hakkirishinai jōtai ga tsuzuite _____ desu
- You became an actor just like your father. As expected, you chose the same path as your father.
お父さんと同じ役者になったんですね、やはり () ですね。
otōsan to onaji yakusha ni nattan desune yahari _____ desu ne

Answers: a) - 1) b) - 3) c) - 2)