

FLEX ENGLISH COMMUNICATION II

<Lesson 1>

Part 1

Have you ever seen the television anime series *Lucky Star*? It is based on a simple comic strip series that first appeared in a magazine in 2003. It is a funny story about the everyday lives of four high-school girls. *Lucky Star*, which was shown on TV in 2007, became very popular, like *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*, which was one of the most popular television anime series of 2006.

Many fans of novels, movies, and TV dramas make “pilgrimages”: which means they visit locations from stories. The “pilgrims” consider these sites to be “holy” places. Anime fans also enjoy visiting such sites. These trips are called “Anime Pilgrimages.” The sites have attracted fans, both from Japan and from around the world.

Part 2

One famous “Anime Pilgrimage” site is Washinomiya Shrine, in Saitama. A shrine in *Lucky Star* was created to look like it. After some fans noticed this, they went to visit the shrine. This news spread quickly and many more fans rushed to visit there. In this way, Washinomiya Shrine became famous as a “holy” place for *Lucky Star* fans.

According to statistics, in 2007, before the anime appeared on TV, the number of New Year’s visitors to the shrine was only about 130,000. The next year, however, it reached about 300,000. Then it reached 470,000 in 2011, and it stayed there for several years. It is said that the “pilgrimages” added about 3.1 billion yen to the local economy in the ten years after the anime was shown on TV.

Part 3

Anime-related events are still held at Washinomiya Shrine and at other “Anime Pilgrimage” sites. Many kinds of souvenirs, such as character goods, are sold there. Many fans visit the sites to buy souvenirs and to take photos.

Sadly, the growing number of “Anime Pilgrims” can also cause problems. For example, some fans go into private places to take pictures. Others walk around local neighborhoods to find better photo spots, and they are often very noisy. Such behavior makes the local people angry.

It is clear that some “Anime Pilgrims” do not respect local communities and lifestyles. However, more and more visitors now try to communicate with local people. As their efforts continue, many of the visitors want to do something to help the local community.

Part 4

Even though *Lucky Star* was ended in 2007, fans still continue to visit the Washinomiya Shrine area and communicate with the people there. At first, “Anime Pilgrims” just wanted to try to experience the world of *Lucky Star*. But later, as they came back again and again, they became fans of the area, too. At the same time, local people have tried to accept the anime and “Pilgrims” better.