

■ カタカナ語 Katakana words

In modern Japanese カタカナ語 is used to write borrowed words. (Although the first borrowed words were from Chinese, they have been thoroughly absorbed!) Some borrowed words from various languages, reflecting Japan's historical connections, are:

- カステラ a sweet sponge cake (from the Portuguese castella)
- ランドセル a school satchel (from the Dutch ransel)
- レントゲン x-ray (after the German scientist Roentgen who invented it)

Many English words have been borrowed, but in some cases their meaning has shifted, and some have actually been 'made in Japan'!

Can you guess the meaning of the following? Answers below.

- ❖ ストーブ
- ❖ スマート
- ❖ ストリートライブ
- ❖ ヘルスメーター

Answers: heater, slim, busking, scales

■ 仮名の成り立ち The development of kana

平仮名 is a simplified cursive form of a character, while 片仮名 comes from one part of a character. Here are 5 examples. (left)

The diagram shows the evolution of five kana characters from their original Chinese characters. Each row represents a character, with arrows indicating the progression from the original character to its modern form. The characters are: ウ (u), カ (ka), ナ (na), ヒ (hi), and レ (re). The original characters are shown in a traditional style, and the modern forms are shown in a simplified, cursive style. The modern forms are shown in a smaller font size, and the original characters are shown in a larger font size.