

## Recitation A

### Fireworks

A display of giant fireworks exploding in the night sky is one of the highlights of the Japanese summer. Each starburst lasts just 5 or 10 seconds. But these fleeting moments of beautiful pyrotechnics never fail to captivate the watching crowds. More than 5,000 firework displays are held throughout Japan every year.

There are many kinds of fireworks. The 'chrysanthemum' is the most famous in Japan. The explosion of the round shell sprays stars in all directions, forming a sphere like a giant chrysanthemum in full bloom. Each star has a lingering tail, forming the shape of long petals. The firework named 'willow' features streamers of light that fall slowly to earth, much like the branches of a weeping willow tree. The climax of any firework display is a rapid-fire series of bursts called 'star-mines'. Hundreds of fireworks are launched to form a blazing curtain in the sky. The colors and sizes are carefully calculated to create wonderful combinations.

Do you know how fireworks are made? Many are packed with numerous small powder charges known as stars, each of which becomes a blazing point of light when the firework explodes in the sky. The stars are packed evenly, so that they will scatter in all directions.

Letting off small fireworks with your family and friends is just as much a symbol of summer in Japan as the big pyrotechnic displays. There are many different kinds of handheld fireworks. Perhaps the most popular are traditional sparklers called *senko-hanabi*. Invented more than 150 years ago during the Edo period, they produce a magical show of sparks that lasts about 30 seconds. After the sparkler is lit, its appearance changes many times.

Fireworks hold a special place in Japanese hearts: sparkling for a few moments and then falling slowly from the sky, they symbolize both the spirit of summer and the transience of life.

(311words)