

# Japanese civilization notes essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Departures is a movie about a young man named Adagio Sickbay's who has recently landed a job as a cellist in an orchestra in Tokyo.

After finding out that the orchestra is shutting down Sickbay's decides with his wife Mike to return to his hometown. This is a prominent feature of Japanese culture and family structure, since Dialog is the head of the house, she will follow him wherever he goes. It is her duty to follow him as the head of the house; this full obedience is a strong characteristic of the Japanese family system.

Coming from the days where the father/husband had legal obligations over everyone in the family. Mike doesn't have a choice per se because that's what her society tells her. After returning to his hometown Adagio looks for work, he finds a job called "Departures" and believes it to be a travel agency.

When he arrives at the job for an interview Dialog realizes the job is for an "unconfined" a person who prepares the dead for burial in a coffin. Adagio is hesitant but accepts because the money is good and his boss is an understanding and gentle man.

Adagio is disgusted at the thought of the job, as is most of Japanese society, they look down upon the profession of Onionskin the art of burial preparation. This has a strong connection with the religion of Shinto, in respects to the fact you are not allowed into a Shinto shrine if you have been around death as you are unclean. You can imagine the stigma this puts on a person who deals with death everyday, touching, preparing corpses for a living. Adagio's friends and even his wife despise his job, Mike even refuses to

let Adagio touch her and moves out of their home upon learning what his Job is.

Adagio continues to learn the art of Onionskin and time goes on he earns a respect or the beauty of death and the healing it brings to the families he serves. Many females In the movie look down upon him even though he is preparing their dead. One family demands that he redo their relative because he made her look cheap, one family screams at Adagio because he was late. Upon completion of Onionskin the family is thankful for the tasteful and beautiful delicacy in which he prepares the dead and apologizes to Adagio.

In Japanese culture it is easy to look down upon someone with a Job like Adagios, but in Japanese culture is also a deep-rooted sentiment of respect for the elders and dead. This respect can often time be blurred In the pain of death, but once the family senses their elders and dead are receiving the level of respect they give, an appreciation is formed even for the Onionskin.

They can be the family they want, Adagio refuses. At this time a very close family friend of Adagio dies, he convinces Mike to Join him in the preparation of the body.

After watching the care, love, and compassion that Adagio expresses even in a time of grief, Mike finally understands why Adagio does what he does. In the Japanese family system, Mike knows that Adagio is still the head of house so when she finds out she is regnant she returns to him and asks him to do what he needs to do for the family.

Adagio knows in order to make this family work he must have his wife's blessing. In this instance he makes her understand his job and she accepts it allowing for a traditional Japanese family hierarchy to continue.

Adagio has never met his father, and is very angry for him leaving Adagio and his mother at such a young age. One day Adagio gets a letter telling him his father is dead.

Adagio agonizes between the anger he has felt all these years and the duty he must pursue as a son. After walking out of his work vowing to not deal with his father's death, his coworker convinces him to see his father as one last favor to his father even though he left Adagio as a child. He drives with Mike to claim his father's body.

At his father's side, he watches as the careless Onionskin workers through about his father's body with no respect for the true art of Onionskin. Adagio make them stop and performs the ritual himself.

During this ceremony he finds that connection to his father that he had lost, being able to see his father's face in his memories as a child. This brings Adagio great closure that he didn't know he was missing. Even after all Adagio had been through, the tradition of the Japanese family system was still too much to ignore.

Adagio knew he must care for his father's body no matter how he felt personally. The duty of a son to care for the family as a unit is one of the strongest attributes of the family system. A great reverence for the dead is

the hallmark of the Japanese family system rooted deep in Shinto and Buddhist religions.

Departures represents the dichotomy of Japanese culture and family system. While great care and love is placed on the family hierarchy and respect for elders and the dead, the same cannot be said for those that care for the dead.

Wanting respect for your dead relative and not giving it to those performing the ceremony. There are many ways Japan has a duality in life, the connection of Shinto and Buddhist religion in Japanese culture is one duality. The Shinto religion in itself is dualistic, no real one god, but millions of gods in everyday life, this lends it's self to strong reverence for the dead, but looking down upon the uncleanness of it. Those her perform the Onionskin in it's true spirit of respect and love are essential to Japanese culture both as a societal norm but in the healing process of the family.