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# Another Golden Year for Kanji

## “Kin” Picked as Character of Year for Third Time

[2016.12.12]

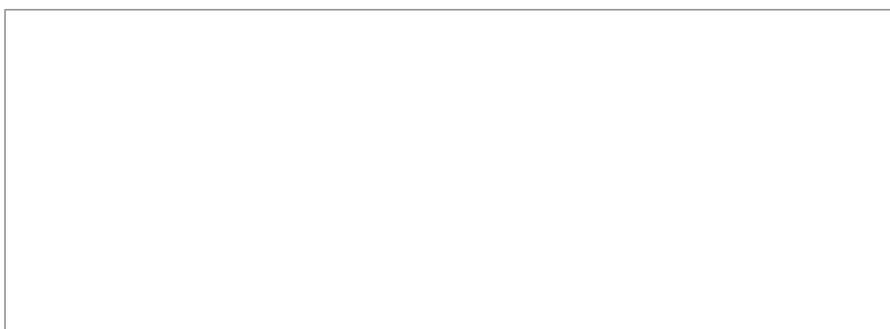
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The year 2016 was tumultuous and unpredictable by most people’s standards. But the kanji that best represents the year, as chosen by public vote in a keenly followed annual contest, was one that never goes out of style: 金, pronounced *kin* or *kane* and meaning “gold” or “money.”

Simple view / Print

December 12 is “Kanji Day” in Japan, so selected because the date, 12/12, can be playfully pronounced as *ii ji ichi ji*, or “a single good character.” Today the **famed temple Kiyomizudera** in Kyoto hosted the annual ceremony to announce the Kanji of the Year, an event sponsored by the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation. The foundation received a total of 153,562 votes in this year’s contest; *kin* was chosen by 6,655 of the voters as the kanji of 2016.

This was the third time for “gold” to take the gold medal in this contest, held annually since 1995. It previously topped the list in 2000 and 2012—both Olympic years, as this year was, pointing to the main reason for many voters’ selection: Japan’s performance in the **Rio de Janeiro Olympics** this summer.



### Editors' choices



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The 22 Kanji of the Year named to date.

The character can also mean “money” when pronounced *kane*, and this provided many voters with the reason they needed to put it at the top of their picks. The year was also one for political scandals involving money, notably the use of political funds for private purposes by Masuzoe Yōichi, which **cost him his seat as governor** of Tokyo in June.

Also mentioned as reasons that *kin* should represent 2016 were US President-elect Donald Trump’s (shockingly unnatural) shock of blond hair; the “golden milestone” of 3,000 hits for trans-Pacific baseball superstar Suzuki Ichirō in the Major Leagues; and the glittering costume worn by the comedian Pikotarō (Kosaka Daimaō) in his wildly popular “Pen Pineapple Apple Pen” video.

Coming in second in the voting, with 4,723 votes, was 選 (*sen/erabu*), “select” or “choose,” which resonated with people who had witnessed the British electorate choose to leave the European Union and the American voters pick Trump as their next president. In Japan, too, a **change to election law** that allowed 18- and 19-year-olds to vote for the first time made this kanji a popular pick. The third- and fourth-place finishers were 変 (*hen/kawaru*; “change” or “strange”) and 震 (*shin/yureru*; “shake” or “upheaval”), both previous winners in the contest. The fifth-place finisher was 驚 (*kyō/odoroku*; “surprise” or “shock”), also inspired by the year’s unpredictability. A full list of the top 10 selections is below.

1.	金 ( <i>kin/kane</i> )	Gold; money	6,655 votes
2.	選 ( <i>sen/erabu</i> )	Choose, elect	4,723 votes
3.	変 ( <i>hen/kawaru</i> )	Change; strange	4,619 votes
4.	震 ( <i>shin/yureru</i> )	Shake; quake	4,606 votes
5.	驚 ( <i>kyō/odoroku</i> )	Surprise; shock	3,746 votes
6.	米 ( <i>bei, mai/kome</i> )	Rice; America	3,616 votes
7.	輪 ( <i>rin/wa</i> )	Ring ( <b>2013 winner</b> )	3,327 votes
8.	不 ( <i>fu, bu</i> )	□ ot; negate	3,171 votes
9.	倫 ( <i>rin</i> )	Order; human relationship (used with 不 in 不倫, “ <b>illicit affair</b> ”)	2,769 votes
10.	乱 ( <i>ran/midareru</i> )	Chaos; disturbance	2,542 votes

The chief priest of Kiyomizudera, Mori Seihan, appeared on the grand wooden deck of the temple to write the winning character on a sheet of *washi* paper 1.5 meters high and 1.3 meters across.

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(Originally written in English. Banner photo: Mori Seihan shows his calligraphy skills to present the kanji of the year for 2016 at Kiyomizudera, Kyoto. © Jiji.)

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