

Raspberry Heaven

HEARTWARMING HIGH SCHOOL ROLE-PLAYING
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PLAYTEST VERSION 0.3.2

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You Belong: Introduction

I don't know about you, but for me high school wasn't all that great, frankly. It wasn't terrible, but it was boring, some of the teachers were either hopelessly dull or outright annoying, everything to do with school spirit was stupid, and don't even get me started on some of the other students. The one thing that made it bearable was friendship. All of us nerds would hang out in the cafeteria and play *Rifts*. We'd hang out on the weekends, have little adventures to movie theaters, malls, and arcades, and generally enjoy life. I still regularly hang out with several of my high school friends, and while things aren't quite the same, that feeling of friendship is still there.

I got a bit emotional when I watched the last episode of *Azumanga Daioh*. There's a scene where the girls are heading out to go have some fun after their graduation, and Chiyo stops, faces the school, and bows. Later, she rejoins the group, takes in their smiling faces, and thinks to herself, "Even though we've graduated, we're still all together." It's not exactly nostalgia that gets me all choked up just thinking about it. It's more like, it reminds me of everything that's good about my life. It reminds me of "raspberry heaven," that place that's sweet and wonderful and just a little bit tart. I wanted to make a game that celebrates that feeling.

Raspberry Heaven is a role-playing game intended for around three to six players. It's directly inspired by slice of life high school anime and manga, notably *Azumanga Daioh*, *Strawberry Marshmallow*, *Lucky Star*, and *Sunshine Sketch*, so being familiar with some of those is a big plus. (There's a list of different manga and anime you might look at on p. 35.) There's no Game Master or other central authority figure—everyone plays a Japanese high school girl—but at least one of the players should be familiar with the rules before you start playing.

Playtest Version 0.3.2 Notes

This is another incremental update over the previous version, most notably dealing with the addition of foils and clarifying gameplay procedures (since in playtesting I noticed that, amongst other things, talking of "narration rights" created some confusion).

- Maybe something interesting should happen when a player plays their last card?
- Does it need any more Quirks?
- Snippets/Asides; something to let individual players have a brief solo scene/monologue.
- I have a vague notion of rules for "arguments", where players can waste cards to resolve conflicts.
- Does it need some kind of relationship mechanic?
- Should you be able to play off of a wild card based on its rank?

Being a Japanese (Anime) Schoolgirl

You are about to embark on what might be called an idealized version of the Japanese high school life, as seen in certain kinds of anime. You had to pass an entrance exam to get into the school, though it's not super-prestigious or anything. Rather, it's close to home and has a reasonably good reputation. And maybe one of your friends from middle school is going there.

It's going to last for three years, just like middle school, and each year you'll be assigned to a specific class. You're going to really get to know the people in the same class, since everyone spends the whole

day in one classroom, with the teachers moving from room to room. Classes are referred to by year and a number, so class 2-1 is Class 1 of the second-year students. On the other hand, you don't often have much contact with students from other classes. School starts and ends in the spring, right around the time when the cherry blossoms are blooming, and breaks are few in number and short.

The school requires students to wear uniforms. Boys wear slacks, white button-up shirts, and stiff-collared jackets, while you girls wear a "sailor fuku" with a skirt and a blouse that has a small tie/scarf in front. You have to carry your books and such with you in a flat bag by its handle, and the ones who are either really diligent or have parents who like to cook will bring boxed lunches with them. Most students walk or bike to school from home. If you didn't bring lunch with you, you're in for some difficulty. There is a cafeteria, as well as a place that sells filled bread rolls, but both of them are always swamped and sell out quickly.

Hopefully you'll be able to make some friends at your new school. This place seems to have a nice atmosphere at least, and it has lots of activities throughout the school year. Although you're probably not the type to get too involved, the school does have a good number of clubs. These cover sports, traditional and contemporary arts, and all sorts of hobbies, but they all require you to stay after school for club activities.

Before graduation, you should probably start thinking about whether and where you want to go to college. Pretty much any college you might want to go to will require you to take an entrance exam, which means you'd better do some extra studying to prepare. A lot of students take the extra step of going to a cram school, but you're not the type to sacrifice quite that much of the present for the future. You don't have to go to Tokyo University to have a good life, especially if you have good friends.

What You Do In This Game

In a way, you could think of this as a deliberate hybrid of two different types of games. It's partly a card game, and partly a role-playing game. You play cards with your friends, and those help you decide what to role-play about.

You already take on different roles in everyday life. Within the course of a single day I could be a train passenger, a reader, a game designer, a translator, a student, a classmate, a friend, a son, a brother, a customer, and any number of other things. Although you never stop being *you*, you inevitably adjust your behavior according to your current role. Role-playing means taking on a specific role, pretending to be a certain type of person, for some kind of objective. Role-playing can be used for education, therapy, or just for fun. In a role-playing game, you take on the role of a fictional character in a fictional world to have fun, and you have them act and react within that world how you believe they would.

The optimum way to play is to have everyone seated around a table, but you can easily play it while sitting on the floor or at the local park. You need to be comfortable, and have a flat surface for playing cards. When your character is taking part of a scene, just speak as she would. When she would take some kind of action, either use pantomime to get the point across, or failing that explain it in words. You can even act out things for real, but don't do anything that's unsafe or makes people uncomfortable. If it isn't safe, it's almost certainly something that doesn't belong in the game, and if it makes your real-life friends uncomfortable you should think twice.

Getting Started

So, by now you've hopefully decided you want to actually give *Raspberry Heaven* a try. There are a few things you'll need to do before you can get started:

Materials

Aside from this book and some friends to play the game with, there are a couple of things you'll need to have ready in order to play this game:

- Two decks of ordinary playing cards. You can get by with one, but using two significantly reduces the amount of shuffling you have to do. Cute-looking cards are nice, but any old playing cards will be fine.
- Paper; copies of the character cards are handy, but any paper is fine. A copy of the scene template is extremely helpful too, especially if you've never played before.
- Pencils

Some other stuff that's helpful but not required:

- Quirk cards (there's a PDF on the website). These make it much easier to keep track of quirks and their special moves.
- Some kind of object to pass around the table to represent who is currently going first playing cards. I prefer to use a plushie, but anything will do.
- Something to make visual representations of the characters, whether Pinky St. dolls, an avatar creator program, or just extra paper to doodle on.

People, A Place, and a Time

You'll need to gather a group of about three to six people to play the game. You need a decent block of time (2-3 hours), and a location where you can sit comfortably and make a little bit of noise without disturbing others. At least one person needs to know the game's rules, and everyone needs to have some idea of the game's genre.

Setting Up The Setting

Raspberry Heaven assumes that your stories will take place at an ordinary, slightly above average high school in Japan. If you want to change it a little bit (for example, having it be an art-oriented school like in *Sunshine Sketch*) or just flesh out some more details of the school, take some time to talk about it as a group. Once that's done, each player needs to make a character.

Keeping It Simple?

If you're not yet used to the game, using absolutely all of the rules could get a little overwhelming to keep track of. If you want to keep things as simple as possible while still keeping the more stuff that makes *Raspberry Heaven* what it is, you can ignore the rules for Foils, Applause Cards, Interjections, and Memories, at least until everyone knows the game a bit better.

New Friends: Creating Your Schoolgirl

In this game you'll pretend to be a Japanese high school girl. Just like the people sitting around the table in real life, all of your schoolgirl characters are or will hopefully soon become friends.

1. Quirks

Quirks are important traits that define your character. Part of the appeal of high school slice-of-life manga is the loony characters it involves, so in terms of the game's rules, "quirks" are the most important part of your character. You get to pick out three quirks. These represent your character's most over-the-top, emphatic qualities, which you'll be bringing into the game by playing cards. You don't have to have a quirk to have a trait—a character without the Cute quirk can still be cute—but having the quirk makes it matter to the rules.

You might want to give some thought to what quirks the other players are picking out for their characters, since it'll probably be boring if everyone happens to pick the same things. As a rule of thumb, no more than two characters should have any one quirk, and no two characters should have more than one quirk the same. If you think keeping track of quirks is going to be annoying, you can print out a set of quirk cards from the PDF on my website, and let everyone just pick out cards.

Each Quirk has a **Special Move**. The Special Move lets you use certain cards as wild cards (more on that later), but using one also means that something related to the quirk happens in the story. For each Special Move you have, choose a number from 2 to 10. You can use cards of that rank of any suit as wild cards. So for example if you picked 9 to go with your Space Cadet quirk's "From Pluto" special move, you could use it with a 9 of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, or Spades. You can't pick the same rank for more than one of your Special Moves, and you can't choose the aces, face cards (King, Queen, Jack), or Jokers.

Baka (Dummy)

Frankly, you're kind of dumb, albeit in an energetic, cavalier kind of way. You're lacking when it comes to brains, but you're seldom embarrassed or flustered.

Power of Dumb: You do something stupid and attention-grabbing.

Beauty

You're quite the looker, with an attractive, mature figure. This often makes you the center of attention, whether you want to be or not.

Sticking Out: You draw lots of attention through your appearance.

Boke (Funny Man)

In the manzai comedy routine of your life, you play the *boke*, or "funny man." You make it your job to misinterpret things, forget stuff, and generally pretend to be a buffoon. Ideally one of the other players should be making a character with the Tsukkomi quirk to go with it.

Eternal Comedian: You make a stupid or insensitive joke.

Complex

You have some kind of complex, an obsession with some aspect of your body or your life that in reality you're largely powerless to change. You put a lot of time and energy into dealing with it (e.g. trying different diets), or at least complaining about it.

Sensitive Subject: Something happens relating to your complex.

Cool

You've got a naturally cool, calm demeanor, so that people find you cool but a little unapproachable.

Cool as Ice: You have trouble expressing yourself because of your cool exterior.

Cute

You are outright adorable, probably in part because you're naturally small and look sweet. Of course, as much as people might like you, they don't always take you seriously.

Adorable Little Girl: Someone cuddles you and treats you like a little kid.

Delicate

You're a little bit sickly and/or frail, so you can't handle much in the way physical exertion, and require more rest than most of your friends.

Not Feeling Well: Something makes you need rest.

Diligent

You're a hard worker. You may not be terribly above average, but you can get solid grades because you're motivated enough to actually sit down and do homework and study.

Hard Work: You work hard at something at the expense of relaxing or having fun.

Gaijin (Foreigner)

You come from another country (probably America), and you're one of those foreigners who doesn't fully grasp Japanese culture and doesn't especially care. You don't have to take this quirk to play a non-Japanese character, but it's very fitting for how they're usually portrayed.

Wakaranai Desu: You miss something about Japanese culture and forge ahead.

Genius

You're exceptionally smart, head and shoulders above most of your class. Some people might resent you for it, and others might be bugging you to copy your homework...

Book Smart: You display book smarts at the expense of practicality.

Hyper

You're too "genki" (energetic, cheerful) for your own good. You're relentlessly hyperactive, often to the point of being annoying.

Indomitable Energy: You display hyperactivity that people find annoying.

Innocent

You're naturally good and innocent, and don't fully understand the dark underbelly of the adult world.

I Don't Get It: Something adult or worldly goes completely over your head.

Jock

You're athletic, and you love doing physical things. You're great at any kind of physical activity, but you're lacking when it comes to tact.

Tomboy: You display physicality at the expense of being tactful or feminine.

Lazy

You have a really hard time getting up and motivation to do anything that isn't immediately fun and/or gratifying. You might be able find time to play video games and such, but somehow your homework and chores always seem to fall by the wayside.

Procrastinate: You put off doing something you're supposed to do.

Nice

You're a naturally nice, honest person. You try to be pleasant, tactful, and helpful, and while not everyone respects you, most people like you and enjoy your company. You're naturally kind, but not exactly assertive.

Please: You do something nice that others could easily take advantage of.

Obsession

You're obsessed with something. It could be that you're an outright otaku, or you might have a more specific and individual obsession (like a specific person at school you really admire). You put a lot of energy into pursuing this obsession, but have a hard time showing any kind of restraint in the face of it.

Gotta Have It: Your obsession gets the better of you.

Physically Gifted

For some reason nature saw fit to bless you with a substantial level of natural physical ability, even though you'd much rather do other things. People regularly bother you to join their sports-related clubs, but you're just not interested.

Unwanted Gift: Your athletic prowess attracts unwanted attention.

Plain

In Japanese when you say that someone has a "thin shadow," it means they're plain and easily overlooked. That's your problem; you're entirely too good at being inconspicuous.

Thin Shadow: People fail to notice or remember you during the scene.

Slow

You're not all that smart, in a slow, ponderous kind of way. You're nearly always calm (it's harder to get upset when you don't really know what's going on), but you're bad at things that require actual intelligence.

I Missed Something: You completely miss something important about the situation.

Softy

Whatever you might appear on the outside, you're just a big softy, and tend to melt in the presence of things that are too sentimental or cute (pick one).

Aww: You completely lose it over something that makes you all googly.

Space Cadet

You're kind of weird, and you don't think in quite the way that other people do. It gives you a tendency to space out, and say things that give people pause.

From Pluto: You do something that makes people think you're really weird.

Timid

The world can be a big, scary place, and sometimes you feel small and scared. You have a hard time being assertive.

Excuse Me: You wind up being ignored or overlooked for your timidity.

Tsukkomi (Straight Man)

In the manzai comedy routine of your life, you play the *tsukkomi*, or "straight man." You're good at making retorts, even if you're kind of stiff. Ideally one of the other players should be making a character with the Boke quirk to go with it.

Retort: You try to shut down other people's stupid fun.

Tsundere (Prickly-Sweet)

“Tsundere” is a word used by otaku for a certain character archetype, a girl that’s usually *tsuntsun* (cold, haughty), but under certain circumstances becomes *deredere* (melly, lovestruck, flustered). Whether or not you like to admit it (probably not), this describes you perfectly.

Through The Cracks: You show some emotion you wanted to repress.

Worldly

You are perhaps too knowledgeable about the big, scary adult world, and you’re determined to do what it takes to get ahead. You want money and crave good food and material possessions, preferably with as little effort as possible. You know all about money and the things you want, but seldom show restraint in going after what you want or correcting other people’s misconceptions.

If Only They Knew: You do something that could detract from someone else’s innocence.

Making New Quirks

Although you can have a lot of fun coming up with novel combinations of quirks (there are over 10,000 possible combinations with the existing ones), you might want to make up new ones. All you really have to do is come up with a concept, and then make a Special Move to go with it. Special Moves should result in something that makes things more interesting for the character in a way they don’t like, even if it doesn’t put them at a disadvantage per se. If you do create a new quirk, talk it over with the group to make sure it makes sense and fits in with the others.

Random Quirks

If you’re well and truly stumped as to what Quirks to pick, you can pick them out randomly. If you’ve printed up a set of quirk cards (there’s a PDF on the website), you can just pick some at random. If you’d rather use playing cards, check the cards you draw against the table below.

Card	Quirk	Card	Quirk
A♥♦	Baka (Dummy)	A♠♣	Lazy
2♥♦	Beauty	2♠♣	Nice
3♥♦	Boke (Funny Man)	3♠♣	Obsession
4♥♦	Complex	4♠♣	Physically Gifted
5♥♦	Cool	5♠♣	Plain
6♥♦	Cute	6♠♣	Slow
7♥♦	Delicate	7♠♣	Softy
8♥♦	Diligent	8♠♣	Space Cadet
9♥♦	Gaijin (Foreigner)	9♠♣	Timid
10♥♦	Genius	10♠♣	Tsukkomi (Straight Man)
J♥♦	Hyper	J♠♣	Tsundere (Prickly-Sweet)
Q♥♦	Innocent	Q♠♣	Worldly
K♥♦	Jock	K♠♣	—

Picking and Changing Quirks

Sometimes it might take a while to really figure out what you want your character to be like, which in turn means that the Quirks you picked out might turn out to not quite be what you really want.

If picking out three quirks at the start of the game is difficult, you can just pick one and add the other two later on, between scenes or episodes.

If as you play the game you feel you've picked the wrong Quirk for your character, or you just feel she's developed in such a way that a given Quirk no longer really fits, you can change it. Between scenes or episodes you can remove or swap out a Quirk.

However you decide to do all of this stuff, a character cannot have more than three Quirks.

2. Name

Come up with a name for your character, something you like the sound of. Below are some examples of Japanese names, but feel free to use others from wherever you like. There might be one or two exchange students from, say, America or China, but the characters should be mostly Japanese.

Female Given Names

Aiko, Akane, Akira, Aoi, Arisa, Asagi, Asuna, Ayumu, Chiaki, Chihiro, Emi, Ena, Fuuka, Haruka, Haruna, Hikari, Himeko, Hoshi, Kagami, Kana, Kasumi, Kaori, Kazumi, Kumiko, Kurumi, Makie, Michiru, Mika, Minako, Misa, Misora, Miura, Miyako, Nanami, Nodoka, Sae, Sakurako, Satsuki, Setsuna, Tomo, Yotsuba, Yue, Yui, Yuka, Yukari, Yuko, Yuna, Yuno

Family Names

Asakura, Ayase, Hasegawa, Hayasaka, Hayashi, Inoue, Ito, Izumi, Kagura, Kagurazaka, Kakizaki, Kasuga, Kimura, Kitagawa, Kobayashi, Koiwai, Komatsu, Kurosawa, Mihama, Minami, Miyamoto, Miyata, Miyazaki, Mizuhara, Momose, Sakurazaki, Saotome, Sasaki, Sato, Serizawa, Shiina, Shiraishi, Suzuki, Tachibana, Takara, Takeda, Takino, Tanaka, Tanizaki, Tominaga, Uehara

3. Details

Take a little time to think about what your character looks like, what kind of person she is, and so on. Your Quirks can tell you a lot about your character, but they leave a lot of room for interpretation. You don't need to write a big essay about your character; you'll get to know her better as you play. However, try to come up with at least three details about her to start off with.

4. Sharing Characters

Next, it's time to share your characters with each other. Each player should give his or her character a short introduction, giving the other players her name and some idea of her personality and general background. Feel free to ask questions and discuss the characters and how they relate to one another. If you think you'll have trouble remembering the other characters' names, you might want to make some name tags.

Likes

For all of the other players' characters, write down a sentence starting with "I like [name] because..." This isn't important to the rules, but it's good to have a list of who's who and why they're your character's friends.

Nickname

If you want, you can come up with nicknames for some of the other characters, but not every character needs one.

Japanese nicknames are often made by taking the name and cutting off a syllable from the beginning or end, and/or adding "chi" to the end. Names that end in "ri" often get a nickname that ends in "rin" instead. Other nicknames can come from just about anywhere: where they're from, speech habits, hair styles, etc.

Secondary Characters

You should also take a moment to think about what secondary characters will play a role in the game. At a minimum you should come up with the characters' homeroom teacher. Secondary characters don't get Quirks, but you should as a group come up with three distinctive things about the teacher.

5. Foils

Part of the chemistry of a cast of characters is how different characters serve as foils for one another. Natsumi tends to shut down Rika's silliness, but Ayumu has a way of coming out of left field and leaving Natsumi dumbfounded as well. Each character gets to pick one other character to be a foil to. Pick one of your character's Quirks, and one of theirs, and note them down. In play, this means that if the other character has used that Special Move, you play yours using not only the usual cards, but any face card (Jacks, Queens, or Kings).

Ideally everyone should have one other character as a foil, but don't worry *too* much about this, especially, if, say, having an odd number of players makes it complicated.

Some Quirks make it pretty obvious what kinds of other Quirks make good foils. Boke and Tsukkomi are pretty much made to go together, but you can get pretty creative with such things.

A Daily Rhythm: How to Play

This chapter deals with how you go about actually playing the game once your characters are all ready.

Getting Together, Warming Up

I recommend playing the game in a place and time where everyone can relax and feel comfortable. You'll need some kind of table or a clean patch of floor/ground to sit around and do things with playing cards. You might want to allow some time for everyone to socialize normally too. My friends usually haven't seen much of each other in the time since the last game night, and it takes a little while for everyone to catch up and calm down enough to role-play, and of course no one's going to role-play that well on an empty stomach. Watching an episode or two of whatever anime most inspires you for this game doesn't hurt either, though you might also want to do something a little more social like playing a round of some quick-playing card game to get warmed up.

Starting an Episode

Once all the players have their characters and are ready to play, you need to agree on the overall subject of the episode. Episodes can be about a very specific event (the school's cultural festival) or a general theme (things you're scared of), or anything in between. The next chapter is full of ideas for episodes.

Once that's done, shuffle the deck, and put the card on top of the deck face-up on the table to start the discard pile. If this card is a Joker, flip over the next card until you get something else. Also put one card face-down in front of each player for Applause Cards (see p. 18).

Next, pick someone to be the tutor for the first scene. The tutor's role is sort of like a dealer for a card game, but the tutor also helps control the pacing of the scene. When a scene ends, the person to the tutor's left becomes the tutor for the next scene, unless the episode is ending.

Scenes and Phases

The game is divided up into **scenes**, much like in an anime or a movie. A scene is a short block of action, and usually occurs in one location. Each scene is further divided into four **phases**, so that each scene has its own mini-story.

The four phases of a scene are based on a four-part structure sometimes used in Japanese narrative, called *kishoutenketsu* (起承転結). It originated with Chinese poetry but these days people use it for just about anything. The four parts are introduction (*ki*), development (*shou*), turning point (*ten*), and resolution (*ketsu*). One place you see it a lot is in Japanese 4-panel manga, some of which were key inspirations for this game. *Yon-koma* manga consist of four panels arranged vertically, and more often than not the panels correspond to the stages of *kishoutenketsu*.

Each phase goes as follows:

1. The tutor flips over the card that will be the base for that phase, signaling that a new phase is starting.
2. The players play cards to determine who sets up that phase.
3. The winner sets up the basic contents of the phase.
4. He or she then says "Go." All of the players who have characters participating in the scene role-play it out.

Playing Cards

At the start of a scene the tutor draws four cards from the deck and places them face down in the middle of the table; these will become the bases of the piles for each of the four phases of the scene. The scene template is helpful here, but not necessary. From there, the tutor deals cards to all of the players—5 each for the first scene, 3 each for all of the subsequent scenes.

When it's time to start playing cards for a phase, the tutor flips over the card, and it's time to start playing cards. During the first phase of the first scene, the person to the tutor's left starts playing first, and in each subsequent phase the starting player is the one to the left of the one before. If you have trouble keeping track, give the starting player some kind of object (the box from the cards, a plushie, etc.), and have him or her pass it along at the end of each phase.

Once you start playing cards, the players start taking turns playing cards, again going clockwise around the table. Each player can do one of three things on his or her turn:

- Play a card. With normal cards, you can only play a card on top of a pile if the one below it is the same rank or suit. If the current card is a 4♦, you could play a 4 of any other suit, or a ♦ of any rank.
- Use a wild card. Jokers are always wild cards, and your Special Moves let you treat certain other cards as wild cards. If you use a Special Move, you should clearly state what you're using. If you have Quirk Cards, put that card forward on the table too.
- If the character you are a foil to has used her Special Move and you haven't had another turn since, you can treat not only the usual cards, but also all face cards (Jacks, Queens, and Kings) as wild cards for using your corresponding Special Move.
- Say "Pass" and do nothing.

Whoever is the last one to play a card on a phase's pile gets narration rights for that aspect of the scene.

If for whatever reason no one plays cards on a phase, the tutor gets narration rights by default, and does so as though he or she played the base card.

Card Effects

What card you play influences the contents of that part of the scene. Each suit represents an overall mood, and each non-number card represents some special effect. These don't dictate the mood per se—that's really up to you and your friends to figure out. Rather, they're meant to be a starting point, and very much open to interpretation. Each phase has a list of examples for the different cards, but those are also just guidelines.

Suit	Mood	Image
♥	Warm/Happy	It's a heart!
♠	Weird/Confused	An upside-down heart, and some other things.
♦	Responsible/Frustrated	It's pointy and straight.
♣	Lazy/Bored	A tree to relax under.
Card	Special	Notes
Joker	Overkill/Wildcard	Jokers are always considered wildcards, but they also mean that whatever is being done gets overdone in some way.
Jack	Imaginary	Jacks bring in some kind of imaginary or delusional element into the scene. A character's imagination runs wild from something said, or the conversation goes into a very strange place.
Queen	Teacher	Queens mean that a teacher or some other kind of authority figure has something to do with the scene.
King	World	Some aspect of the world itself (geography, school rules, etc.) has an impact on how things turn out.
Ace	Hit the Nail on the Head	Aces mean that something goes off perfectly, with no difficulty at all.

Special Moves

Every character has one Special Move for each Quirk they have. Special Moves let characters use certain ordinary cards as wild cards, but they require that something specific happens with the character, even if the player doesn't win that phase. Also, since Special Moves are particular to the character, not the player, the player's own character has to actually appear in the scene.

Jokers are technically considered a Special Move that anyone can use. A Joker is always a wild card (meaning when you play one you can ignore what's on top of a pile and pick a suit that anyone who wants to play off of will have to match), and as noted above it also means "overkill."

Regardless, to use a Special Move you should play your card perpendicular to the others, and clearly state what Special Move you're using to the other players. If you're using quirk cards (which you can get as a free PDF from the website), put your card forward on the table to make it easier to keep track.

Memories

If you're playing for the second time or later, you should have at least one Memory recorded. You can use Memories like a special kind of Special Move. See p. 23 for more details.

Special Four-Card Combinations

When the fourth card is finalized, check to see if you have one of the following special combinations of cards. Each has a special effect on the outcome of the scene.

Combination	Special	Notes
Four of a Kind	Falls Into Place	When the final scene cards are all of the same rank, things just sort of fall into place of their own accord.
All Hearts	Friendship	The conclusion of the scene should emphasize the characters' friendship in some way.
All Spades	Dream Sequence	Whatever was going on turns out to have been a dream sequence, and gets much, much weirder before it ends.
All Diamonds	Synergy	Something about two or more of the characters comes together to resolve things.
All Clubs	Idyllic	The scene ends on a calm, pleasant note.

Out of Cards?

If everyone is out of cards at the start of a phase, the tutor should deal one card to each player.

Setting Up A Phase

Whoever wins at playing cards for a phase gets to decide the relevant aspects of the scene. This should be something quick—no more than a sentence or two—and fairly open-ended, so the players in the scene still can be creative in how they role-play. Also, once you've done this setup, you no longer have any special control over the scene.

The four phases, and what the winner gets to decide for each one, are explained below. The short version is, during each phase the winner should briefly answer the following questions:

- **Phase 1: Introduction:** Where and when does the scene take place? Who's there?
- **Phase 2: Development:** What's going on?
- **Phase 3: Turning Point:** What bit of difficulty is happening?
- **Phase 4: Resolution:** How do things get resolved?

Keep in mind that even if you're setting up a scene, you can't force another player's character to do something, and you can't make up new facts about them. You can always introduce things dealing with the outside world, but you can also simply phrase things about other players' characters in terms of a request. Instead of saying, "Rika trips and falls," say, "I'd like to have Rika trip and fall here."

Special Moves are something of a special case, since by using one at all a player has committed to doing a certain thing with their character. If you've won a phase, you should try to set things up with an eye towards helping bring the Special Move's effects into the story.

I Can't Think of Anything!

Everyone gets stuck or dumbfounded once in a while. Although it's best to refrain from playing cards unless you think you're ready to do the setup, if it does happen, don't panic. Take a little extra time to think about what you want to do, and be willing to ask the other players for help and ideas.

Interjecting

Sometimes you want to throw something into the scene without taking over setup completely. While you can always offer suggestions to your friends, “interjecting” is a way you can step in using the game’s rules.

To interject, first you must make a legal play onto the discard pile instead of the current phase’s pile. That means you need to play a card that matches the rank or suit of the card on top of the discard pile, or play a wild card (either a Joker or a card from a Special Move).

When you do that, you can ask the narrating player a “leading” question, which he or she needs to answer. For example:

- “Isn’t Kurosawa-sensei going to show up?”
- “What if the cake turns out to be chocolate?”
- “Wouldn’t Fuuka being Slow make a difference here?”

If you use a Special Move, the corresponding quirk should affect the interjection you offer. If as the narrating player you get an interjection, you need to address it in some way. You don’t have to put exactly what they want into the scene, but you can’t just give a categorical “no” either. An interjection should always affect your setup, but doesn’t dictate it.

Applause Cards

“Applause cards” are a way to show your appreciation for when other players do stuff that you find really entertaining. At the start of an episode you get on card face-down in front of you. At any time you can put it into the hand of another player who did something neat.

Role-Playing

Once you’ve set up a phase, you can start role-playing. Just speak in character and let things go where they go. It’s a little tricky to feel out what should and shouldn’t be considered okay to introduce into a scene without playing a card, but then a phase shouldn’t take up more than a few minutes of real time. When the tutor feels ready to move on to the next phase, he or she flips over the next card to signal to the group that it’s time to start playing cards again.

The Flow of Role-Play

Adopting different roles is a very natural thing for people to do, and little kids do it all the time without really thinking about it. It’s when people are asked to role-play consciously and with some kind of objective in mind that they can feel out of their depth. It’s actually not all that hard, once you get the hang of it.

For the purposes of this game, there is always going to be a little bit of a set-up process before the actual role-play begins. If you’re playing for the first time, the players need to create characters, and regardless someone is going to be setting up a scene before you start role-playing.

Once the actual role-play starts, things move more or less in real time. You simply speak and gesture as you believe your character would, and when combined with everyone else doing the same a full-on role-play will result. Different people approach role-play differently. I have to get into my character’s head and act instinctively, but other people can multitask enough to watch from the outside and make careful decisions about how to play the role. Although the rules and the phase winner’s setup can contribute a

lot of details, there is no script, and pretty much anything can happen within the boundaries of the game's milieu.

Those are the main things you need to know. Below are some trickier issues that you should also be aware of.

Modes of Speech

People who play role-playing games have a way of switching in and out of character all the time. In the space of a few minutes a player might speak about their character or themselves in the first person, talk about their character in the third person, ask a rules question as themselves, and refer to another player's character by either the character's name or the player's. Not only that, but different people have different preferences for how to do these. Some players consistently talk about their characters in the first person, while others mostly use the third person. If this doesn't confuse you at all, then just do whatever works for you. If it's causing some confusion, try using these hand signals to indicate what mode of speech you're using:

- **In Character:** If you're speaking as your character, just talk normally. If you think she should be gesturing (Japanese people are relatively restrained about hand gestures, but they definitely do use them), then do so.
- **Narration:** If you're speaking about events in the game but what you're saying isn't what's coming out of your character's mouth, make a "scissors" sign (the one from Rock-Paper-Scissors) at least at the start of your narration. You'll mainly need to narrate if you're your character is doing something that can't be communicated by gestures.
- **Out of Game:** If you're speaking about something unrelated to the game, put your hand on top of your head, palm-down. Some people find talking about tangential stuff nigh-irresistible, and while most RPG characters are unlikely to be reciting Simpsons quotes, it helps to give a concrete cue to prevent out-of-game speech from being mistaken for in-character dialogue.

Controlling Reality

The thing about role-playing is that unlike with writing a book, the story belongs to a group of people. In most role-playing games a large chunk of the authority to decide things rests in the hands of a Game Master (GM), and the other players have input into the story through their character's actions. However, it's impossible to decide every detail of the game world in advance, so it becomes necessary to invent some things on the fly.

In a strictly traditional role-playing game this is the GM's sole prerogative, but in reality there can be a great deal of gray area. In such gaming groups it's up to the participants to decide (often tacitly) how much "authorial control" gets distributed to the regular players. However, *Raspberry Heaven* is one of those games that has no GM to fall back on as a central authority figure. On the other hand, it's not meant to have a competitive atmosphere either, so in principle the authority to decide stuff rests with the group as a whole. Keep the following guidelines in mind when playing the game:

1. This game lacks any kind of fantastic/genre elements. If it doesn't fit into a normal slice-of-life high school story, it also doesn't belong in the game. No one gets any magic powers or anything like that.
2. Regardless of who has authority over a given aspect of the game, everyone should be willing to give and receive ideas and advice.

3. The overall game/story belongs to the group. Elements that impact the big picture should be decided by group consensus.
4. The individual player has authority over the specifics of his or her character. Do not invent anything about another player's character without consulting them first.
5. "Off-camera" action (things that take don't take place in an actual scene) should be minimal and inconsequential.

Telegraphing

"Telegraphing" is a technique from Jeepform, a kind of live-action role-playing from Sweden¹. The idea is that in order to concentrate more on pure role-playing, you convey things to the other players by having your character say something that gives an implication instead of saying something directly and out-of-character. A combination of gesturing and telegraphing lets you role-play most anything without having to narrate what's going on out of character. Instead of saying "Ayumu comes into class late," you might have her say, "Sensei, I'm sorry I'm late."

This is especially handy when it comes to dealing with props. Use whatever object you have handy where you're playing as a "symbol" of the object that appears in the story, and say something as your character that suggests what it is. If you want Rika to pull out a homemade box lunch, rather than saying, "Rika pulls out a bento," you could pick up a stray DVD case, put it in front of you, and say, "I made my own lunch today, though I'm not sure the tamagoyaki came out right."

Telegraphing requires a certain amount of trust and collaboration on the part of the players. To make it work smoothly, you need to be willing to just keep role-playing, and not worry too much about whether people interpret what you say exactly how you want. Or to put it another way, you need to treat what you say as simply words coming out of your character's mouth, and let the events of the story be whatever emerges from the characters' actions.

Conflicts in Heaven

Compared to pretty much every other role-playing game out there, *Raspberry Heaven* is a strange beast in that doesn't really lend itself to conflict per se. This is more a consequence of following the source material than a deliberate choice. Still, in the absence of bad guys to fight or wrongs to be righted you might be wondering what it is you're supposed to *do*. In a way, this game is meant to be sort of a "quiet time" game you'd play as a break from more intense ones, in the same way that the source material is a change of pace from all those action-packed anime about giant robots, ninjas, or death reapers.

Conflict isn't totally absent from the girls' lives though. Just like in real life friends don't always get along perfectly, and there are always the trials and tribulations of high school life. If you're not sure how something should turn out, talk about it with your friends. If you're still not sure, go for whatever you think will be fun.

¹ See www.jeepen.org if you want to know more.

The Four Phases

Here's a guide to what each phase involves, with some examples of possible things to include based off of different cards.

Phase 1: Introduction

Where and when does the scene take place? Who's there?

The purpose of the Introduction phase is to establish the overall setting of the scene. This means you get to decide when and where it takes place. As this is *Raspberry Heaven*, the time is roughly present-day, and the place is normally somewhere around the school or neighborhood where the girls live. Here are some examples:

- Characters that live close to each other might meet on the way to or from school, or even make a habit of walking together.
- PE class can be held at the track, on the field, or at the school's swimming pool.
- After school the girls can pick someone's house to hang out at for a little while.
- There are plenty of other places to go to play or hang out, like arcades, restaurants, parks, or karaoke.

You also take the lead in deciding *who* is present in a scene. Anyone who plays the final card for a phase should have their character have some influence, at least in spirit. If other players want their characters to take part, you should let them unless there's a compelling reason to do otherwise, like if it's already been established that they're somewhere else. This is especially true for scenes that take place at school.

On the other hand, a character can be present in the general area without necessarily taking part in the scene. Just because your character isn't taking part in a scene that takes place during class doesn't mean she's skipping school.

Secondary Characters

You can also ask players to temporarily take on the role of secondary characters. These are other classmates, teachers, parents, animals, etc. that might show up in the story. Try to avoid making players juggle multiple characters, however. Secondary characters do not have Quirks or Special Moves.

Examples

Card Played	Example Introduction
♥	The girls eat lunch on the rooftop, on a nice, sunny day.
♠	The girls bump into each other at an arcade, even though they normally never go to one.
♦	The scene takes place in the classroom, during a lecture.
♣	The scene takes place in the library, where the girls are supposed to be studying but are spacing out instead.
Joker	The scene takes place at an arcade with all the machines and music blaring so loud you can barely hear each other.
Jack	One of the girls has a dream about her friends.
Queen	The scene takes place with two of the girls consulting with a teacher at his or her desk in the staff offices.
King	While on their school trip to Kyoto, the girls visit the famous Kiyomizudera temple.
Ace	The girls all bump into each other by chance at the shopping district on a Sunday with clear skies and pleasant weather.

Phase 2: Development

What's going on?

This is where you establish the situation that's taking place, and kick the role-playing into high gear. Whoever wins at cards for the development phase gets to decide what's actually going on in the scene. This should be open to interpretation, or at least open-ended, and leave plenty of room for whoever wins the remaining phases to add new stuff to the scene.

Examples

Card Played	Example Development
♥	An adorable kitty pokes his head out of the bushes, and tentatively approaches one of the girls.
♠	One of the girls has made an attempt at drawing... something in her notebook. Everyone looks at it.
♦	The teacher calls on one of the girls to do a difficult math problem on the blackboard.
♣	One of the girls lets out a perfect, Zen-like yawn. This will be the subject of the rest of the scene.
Joker	The restaurant turns out to be all you can eat!
Jack	Someone asks the all-important question: What would happen if Ayumu went to America?
Queen	The homeroom teacher is late for some reason.
King	There's a sudden power outage.
Ace	One of the girls stops to pick up a 100-yen coin just in time for a cat to land right on her head!

Phase 3: Turning Point

What bit of difficulty is happening?

The third phase is the turning point, where something happens that needs to be resolved. This phase can be relatively short, but can also be very important in terms of deciding what happens.

Examples

Card Played	Example Turning Point
♥	How are we going to divide up this cake?
♠	In my dream I see a button labeled “Do Not Press.”
♦	If you don’t get through this study session, you’re going to fail the test.
♣	It’s such a nice day, it’s hard to keep awake.
Joker	The costume for the school festival is so popular the wearer is mobbed.
Jack	One of the girls hovers in front of the fire alarm, tempted to press it even though it’s “rumored” that one is actually a self-destruct switch.
Queen	The teacher makes one of the girls stand in the hallway while holding buckets of water.
King	While on a walk, the girls find a small stream they must cross if they want to proceed.
Ace	One girl gives another a hard time for getting 100 points on the last exam.

Phase 4: Resolution





How do things get resolved?

The fourth and final phase is the resolution, where whatever wrinkle was brought up in the third phase gets resolved at least somewhat, and the scene is brought to a close.

Concluding the Scene

When the tutor feels the scene has run its course, he or she can signal the end of the scene by gathering all of the cards from the four phases and put them into the discard pile. If you’re doing another scene after this, any players with more than 5 cards in their hands should discard down to 5.

Examples

Card(s) Played	Example Resolution
	The angry impasse suddenly ends in laughter as the girls realize how silly they've been.
	One of the girls says something so bizarre that everyone just stops what they're doing.
	Whatever the girls were doing gets cut off when it turns out they're late for class.
	The girls fall asleep while at the park, and wake up as evening approaches.
Joker	Although she's won the race, the star of the track team keeps running, into the distance, for no apparent reason.
Jack	One girl's hiccups are finally cured... and somehow they seem to have jumped to another.
Queen	The teacher pulls up in her car, and offers the girls a ride.
King	The girls tumble down the hill and into the snow, where they round out the day with a snowball fight.
Ace	The baseball thrown high up into the air comes down... right on Natsumi's head.
Four of a Kind	Rika shows up at the last minute, with cake in hand.
All Hearts	Rika passed her entrance exam too! Everyone holds hands and dances a happy dance!
All Spades	Ayumu appears in front of Mt. Fuji, holding an eggplant and a falcon, and says, "Hi there! Time to wake up!"
All Diamonds	Rika hits the golf ball too hard; it bounces off of a tree and hits Ayumu on the head as she was distracted by a butterfly. Hole in one!
All Clubs	Under the setting sun, everyone sits down on a bench and eats sweet potatoes to round out a perfect day.

Next Scene

Once the scene ends, it's probably going to be time to move onto the next one. The next person becomes the tutor, plays the bases cards, and deals three cards to each player.

Concluding the Episode

Episodes end pretty much whenever the group feels like having them end. Usually after 3 to 6 scenes you'll hit a natural stopping point, so you can just finish up that last scene and call it a day. Since *Raspberry Heaven* is about slice of life stories, there's not a "plot" that needs to be resolved, so it's not too hard to find a place to stop.

However, before you all go home or get into doing something else, you can write down a Memory.

Memories

A "memory" is a record of the neatest thing that happened during a given episode, and the "scrapbook" is a list of the memories you've recorded so far while playing the game. You don't have to do this if you're not planning to play again with the same people, or if you really can't think of anything good to record, but it's a fun thing to do.

In order to record a memory, first everyone needs to agree on one thing to record. If you have trouble agreeing on one thing, you can vote or do something with cards or whatever.

Once you know what it is you want to record as a memory, you need to write the following things down:

1. Choose a particular card (both rank and suit) to represent the memory. Pick an Ace or a face card. The suit and rank of that card should both be appropriate to the memory.
2. Note down the names of the characters involved with that particular memory.
3. Write down a very brief summary of what happened.

Using Memories

Memories act as a kind of Special Move, so you should have the list of them out in plain view while you play. Anyone whose character's name appears on the memory's list of characters can use the memory's card as a wildcard, but a given player can only use one memory per episode, and a given memory can only be used once per episode. When you use a memory as a Special Move, something happens that is similar to what happened in the memory.

Everyday Warmth: Scene Ideas

This section has an extensive list of ideas for episodes and scenes. You can come here when you're completely stumped, or just when you need a little something extra. If you're not as familiar with Japanese high school life, this section also has valuable information on different aspects of school life. I've kept this section relatively brief. If you want to know more, there are some great books out there, to say nothing of what you could learn in person. But, for this game having fun playing is much more important than making it "authentic."

Everyday Fun

Club Activities

If the characters are involved in a school club, they'll be spending time after school doing club activities more often than not. There are clubs for sports, literature, art, music, manga, and more. Some schools require all students to join a club, while others let you opt for the "go-home club". You might have none of the characters in clubs, gloss over clubs in the game, or make being part of a club central to the game.

Each club has to have a teacher serve as an advisor. A really involved advisor runs the club meetings, and organizes different activities, while a more hands-off advisor might just put their name on a piece of paper as a formality after being cajoled by students. Clubs also have to have a minimum number of members, usually four.

Clubs will sometimes have "training camps", where the members go on a trip and spend a few days somewhere to work extra hard at their club activities. For sports clubs this means some serious training, but for other clubs it can be a bit more leisurely.

Coming Over to Play

Japanese adults tend not to socialize at people's homes very much, but high school students don't have the luxury of going out every time they want to spend time with friends, so they wind up doing stuff at friends' houses. Just like in the West, this can involve sitting around talking, playing video games, watching TV, or just chilling out in the same room.

Dieting

Some girls worry about their weight, and try to diet, even when they're young enough to not be fully developed. In Japanese, "dieting" refers to anything someone does to try to lose weight, which can include not only changing one's eating habits, but exercise and so on. In manga, a girl's attempt at dieting usually plays out in terms of not eating as much, then gaining back weight anyway, then getting teased by her friends about it.

Dreams

If you want to get a bit surreal, you can delve into the realm of the characters' dreams. Cast the familiar characters in unfamiliar roles, bring your favorite plushies to life, and generally let things stop making sense for a little while.

Going to School

High school students commute to school on foot or bicycle. A few take public transportation, and even fewer have someone drive them. Students might run into each other on the way to school, and they could

also come across distractions in the form of animals, shops, and other students. Friends who live close enough together might make a habit of walking to school together.

Homeroom

Homeroom is where the class takes care of organizing stuff. This is when they'll elect a class rep, and when the class rep sets up schedules for cleaning and other everyday things, as well as special stuff like the cultural festival, athletic festival, and school trip.

Infirmary

The school has an infirmary for when students are hurt, sick, or just overtired. There's a school nurse there to take care of such students, and the infirmary has some comfortable beds where students can rest when they need it. Some students wind up there a lot for legitimate reasons (especially if they have the Delicate quirk), and others try to get in there just to sleep. Some teachers do that too.

Karaoke

Karaoke is a popular pastime throughout Japan. While there are karaoke bars, the more common way to do it is to rent a karaoke box, a private room where a group of people can do karaoke for a few hours. The room includes a karaoke machine with a couple microphones, some couches to sit on, a coffee table, and a phone you can use to order snacks and drinks to be delivered to the room.

Some people reveal their strange tastes while doing karaoke, whether odd pop songs, melancholy and melodramatic *enka* music, or children's songs. Some characters will no doubt turn out to be surprisingly good singers, while others are totally tone-deaf.

Lunch Time

Students basically have two choices for what to eat: they can bring something from home, or try to buy something at school. I say "try" because the cafeteria (which has stuff like ramen and curry) and especially the bread seller tend to sell out very quickly. Some students eat in the cafeteria, but a lot of them eat in the classroom, and move their desks together to eat with friends.

P.E. Class

Needless to say, Japanese high schools have physical education classes too. They include some written tests for health topics, but the class is mostly sports and other athletic activities like volleyball, swimming, baseball, running, etc. This is an interesting time for characters to show off their athletic ability... or total lack thereof.

Part-Time Job

Some high schoolers try to get part-time jobs (*baito*) to make some extra money for something fun, or in more unfortunate circumstances, to make ends meet. They usually work in restaurants or stores, which lets them witness capitalism in action, and meet strange customers.

If a student's family runs a shop, chances are she'll have to help out there sometimes. Burly, aggressive store-owning fathers who dote on their daughters, and gentle mothers who can rule said father with an iron fist, are the standard cliché for that kind of thing.

Sick Day

Everyone gets sick once in a while. When a character is sick enough, she can stay home from school. In Japanese schools you have to call up your homeroom teacher to take a sick day. Hopefully the teacher will believe you.

When a friend is sick, it's customary to briefly visit them at home (an *omimai*) to wish them well and maybe drop off an appropriate gift (fruit, flowers, soup, etc.). Of course, not everyone behaves respectfully when visiting a sick friend...

Study Date

Japanese high school students have to take their studies seriously to keep up. Sometimes your characters can get together to study, especially when there's a big test coming up. Of course, lazy characters will just get distracted and copy their more diligent friends' homework. (In Japanese schools they don't really care about copying.)

Holidays

Birthday Party

The Japanese (and Asians in general) don't celebrate birthdays as much as in the West, but people do it occasionally. A birthday episode can involve getting presents for the birthday girl, having a party, and whatever that entails, whether a quiet time at someone's house or going out for karaoke.

Christmas

Although Christmas was "imported" into Japan a number of years ago, it's a secular holiday, and while little kids and parents may have a Christmas celebration (including eating Christmas cake) other young people go and have fun.

- **Presents:** In Japan, Christmas presents are more something for kids, or that friends exchange in very small quantities, say by having a gift exchange.
- **Christmas Party:** A Christmas party can be a fun way to spend time with friends. While Japanese people do get into decorations a little bit, the real signature thing you need to have to get into the holiday spirit is a Christmas cake. Stores everywhere sell them around that time of year.

New Year's

For the Japanese, New Year's is a holiday full of family obligations, with relatively little time for visiting friends.

- **New Year's Cards:** People are expected to send cards to most everyone they know for the new year. These are usually simple postcards, and they're so ubiquitous this time of year that the postal service has a special delivery service just for bringing them on time. Some people are a little weird about what kinds of cards they send.
- **Cleaning:** It's traditional to do some major housecleaning before the new year comes. Very few people shirk this tradition, but some people are better at focusing on it than others.

- **Watching TV Specials:** On New Year's Eve, it's time to sit down with family to watch the usual TV specials, with a singing contest and everything, all while eating traditional dishes.
- **First Dream:** There's also a sort of superstition that the first dream you have after the start of the new year is particularly important and portentous. They say that a dream that includes Mt. Fuji, an eggplant, and a falcon is especially lucky.
- **First Shrine Visit:** Finally, on New Year's Day, most people go for their first shrine visit of the year. Some wear kimonos to do this. They go to a nearby Shinto shrine to make a donation, pray (ring the bell and clap your hands twice!), and get a fortune (*omikuji*). If you get an unlucky fortune, tie the paper to a tree branch to let the bad luck go away.

Valentine's Day

The Japanese have their own particular way of celebrating Valentine's Day. Girls are supposed to give chocolates, preferably handmade, to whoever they like. Of course, many girls just give chocolates to their friends, and there's this concept of giri-choco ("obligation chocolate").

- **Making Chocolates:** Getting the ingredients for making Valentine's Day chocolates is the easy part. For the less domestically-inclined schoolgirls, making them could become a major struggle.
- **Giving Chocolates:** Once you've made (or given up and purchased) chocolates, there's the matter of actually giving them. That means the embarrassment of handing someone appropriately cute candy on Valentine's Day.
- **White Day:** White Day comes on March 14, one month after Valentine's Day. It was created as a cynical ploy by a candy company in 1980 to sell more by creating a holiday for guys to reciprocate the chocolates they got the month before.

School Calendar

Athletics Festival

Once a year, around the beginning of June, the school holds an athletics festival (*tai'iku sai*). The school is divided into two teams (red and white), and students compete in a bunch of different events. Each student should pick one or two events to participate in, and there are a few where most or all of the school takes part. We'll assume that the rest of the school is average, and the players' characters can tip things either way depending on how well they do.

- **Ball Throw:** Baskets are set up on poles, and your objective is to throw as many foam balls into it as you can.
- **Borrowing Race:** Each participant gets a piece of paper; your object is to find whatever's written on the paper and bring it back as quickly as possible. Sometimes it's everyday items (glasses), and sometimes it's a person (hopefully "someone you admire" or some such, but sometimes you won't want to tell them why...).
- **Bread-Eating Contest:** When Japanese people talk about "bread" (*pan*), they usually mean filled bread rolls. In the bread-eating contest the bread is suspended by a string, and your objective is to eat.

- **Cavalry Battle:** The red and white teams each divide up into squads of three. Each squad has two people support a third between them with their arms and shoulders. The third person wears a headband, and everyone tries to take as many of the opposing team's headbands as possible.
- **Folk Dance:** At the end of a long day of fun, the students divide into groups and do a "folk dance." The groups are arranged into two rings, boys and girls, and do a dance where they keep changing dancing partners. Some schools have a bonfire here too.
- **Others:** Other events can include cheerleading, a marathon, a relay race, a three-legged, race, tug-of-war, etc.

Cultural Festival

Another fun but hectic yearly event is the cultural festival (*bunkasai*). Each class (and club) puts on some kind of event, so the class representative gets the unenviable task of trying to get everyone to agree on what the class should do. A café and a haunted house are the two standard cliché options, and someone from the class *will* suggest them. Hopefully you'll be able to come up with something a little more original. Some other possibilities include putting on a play (or other performance), or serving some other kind of food (takoyaki and taiyaki are must-haves for any festival after all).

- **Deciding What to Do:** The cultural festival first enters the students' lives when the class rep tries to get everyone to come up some idea for what the class should do for the event. Ideally, a couple of interesting ideas come up and it comes down to a vote.
- **Preparations:** Doing something for the festival requires some planning, and a lot of everyone running around like a chicken with its head cut off on the day of the festival.
- **The Festival:** During the festival itself, the students try to keep up with whatever they're doing, and take short breaks when they can to check out what other classes and clubs are doing. Some people go nuts trying to advertise their class' offerings, while others slack off, and some struggle just to keep up.
- **Over At Last:** Finally, the festival ends, and everyone raises a glass of juice to celebrate before cleaning up and heading home.

Entrance Exams

Third-year students who want to go to college need to start seriously thinking about taking entrance exams. If you're going to a college of any prestige, the entrance exam is serious business, and takes a lot of studying to prepare for, well above and beyond what one learns in school. Entirely too many students go to cram schools to get ready.

Some exam results are sent out by mail, but a lot of the time you have to go to the university and check a big bulletin board for your number. If it's listed, you passed!

First Day of School

The first day of school comes in the spring, right around when the cherry blossoms are in bloom, with almost no pause after the previous school year.

- **Entrance Ceremony (Year 1):** First-year students must attend the school's entrance ceremony. Like most such functions, it's pretty dull. The principal and other school officials that you

probably won't see much of normally make some boring and predictable speeches. Can the more rambunctious characters really behave themselves at a time like this?

- **Checking Class Changes (Years 2 and 3):** At the start of each new school year, the classes get shuffled around a bit. A lot of the time you'll wind up with most of the same classmates and the same homeroom teacher, but there's always that moment when you have to worry about whether you'll be separated from your friends. Naturally this is done publicly, with big lists of names by class posted for everyone to see.
- **The First Class:** The very first class can be especially interesting during the first year, since often times there are new people to meet. This is especially true when it comes to the homeroom teacher, who is going to have a big impact on how the school year goes.
- **Picking a Class Rep:** Each class has to pick a class representative (*i'icho*). This person is forced to handle most of the mundane organizational stuff. Some people (like those with the Diligent quirk) can thrive on it, while others are coerced into it. Some of them wind up having *i'icho* as their nickname all through high school.
- **Introductions:** Once things get properly under way, the characters can have the opportunity to get properly introduced to each other. This can take place over the course of a series of scenes (which would feel more natural), or circumstances might somehow throw the players' characters together somehow.

Graduation

In Japanese high schools students attend graduation in their regular school uniforms. There's a big assembly with everyone present, where the principal makes a speech, some awards are handed out, and everyone stands to sing a traditional graduation song. After that, students go to their classrooms, where the teachers hand out the actual diplomas.

Physical Examinations

Once a year, students are divided by gender and the school nurse does a series of measurements, including height, weight, and bust/waist/hips. This is especially stressful for girls, because they get to find out in excruciating detail how much (or how little) they've grown since last time.

School Cleaning

Japanese high schools do not have janitors; the task of keeping the school clean falls to the students. The class representative sets up a rotating schedule, and everyone takes turns staying after to clean the classroom.

School Trip

Third-year students usually go on a school trip a little before summer vacation. School trips are usually to somewhere in Japan like Kyoto (the former capitol, which has tons of old shrines and historical sites), but sometimes places like Okinawa or even Hawaii. If you want to do a school trip episode, I highly recommend doing some real research on wherever it's going to be.

Summer Vacation

In most of Japan summers are hot and humid, and the heat and humidity don't really let up even when it rains. People thus get to try to balance the desire to turn on the air conditioner with the reality of electricity bills. And there's the insects too, from the pleasant sounds of cicadas to the annoyance of mosquitoes. Summer break is relatively short for Japanese high school students, so it's best to make the most of it. There are all kinds of things the girls could be doing during this episode, so take a little time to think about what they'd want to do during their precious summer vacation.

- **Stuck at Home:** Chances are the girls aren't going to be having fun through the *entire* summer break. There's going to be at least a few days where they're stuck at home trying to pass the time by playing, sleeping, doing homework (see below), and of course trying to beat the heat.
- **Summer Homework:** A lot of teachers are going to assign some homework to be done over summer break. In elementary and middle school they'd give you cute little art projects, but in high school it's basically more of the same kind of homework you'd do normally. Of course, some people inevitably slack off through the break and copy their friends' homework.
- **Road Trip:** A long trip to somewhere interesting could be a fun way to spend some of the summer, especially with friends along. A true "road trip" would require getting an adult (i.e., a parent or teacher secondary character) to drive the group, which has the potential to be a fun scene or two in itself. Otherwise there'll be a long train ride in store, probably followed by a bus or two. One of the characters might have a summer home if her family is rich enough, or the group might be able to spring for a stay at a hotel or a ryokan (traditional Japanese inn), or they could just take a day trip somewhere.
- **Fun at the Beach:** Whether as part of a road trip or its own day trip, the beach is a definite possibility. Of course, that requires getting a swimsuit (unless you want to wear the one from school), which means a trip to the store beforehand. Once they arrive, the girls can do things like make sand castles, play in the water, do melon-splitting (set a watermelon on the ground, wear a blindfold, try to split it open with a wooden sword or bat), get a tan, play volleyball, and so on.
- **Summer Festival:** Many, many different places around Japan hold summer festivals (*matsuri*). People traditionally wear yukatas (cotton kimonos) to attend these open-air festivals, though of course street clothes are fine. At the festival there'll be booths offering snacks (yakisoba, takoyaki, cotton candy, shaved ice, etc.) and games (shooting gallery, balloon fishing, goldfish scooping, etc.). And of course, a fireworks display.

Teacher Consultation

Japanese schools don't have a "parent-teacher night." Instead, teachers do home visits, where they go to a student's house and talk to their parents. Actually showing one of these requires bringing one of the characters' relatives in as a secondary character, though that can be an opportunity to bring someone else as quirky and twisted as the rest into the game. Does the teacher have good news or bad news about how your character has been doing in school? What do your parents think about it?

Transfer Student

Japanese students typically go to the same school for all three years of high school. In fact, fathers who get transferred to other parts of the country (or other countries entirely) for work often wind up living in small apartments while their families stay put so the kids can keep going to the same school. When

students to change schools, they usually do it between school years—some schools outright disallow transferring in during the school year—so a transfer student coming in partway through the term is even more unusual. Transfer students who come in suddenly are also allowed to wear the uniform of their old school for a little while until they get a new one.

Sometimes you'll need to introduce a new player character into the game, say if someone new has just joined your ongoing game. You can just have them be someone who was going to the same school all along and was either in a different class or just never stood out, but this can be more interesting sometimes. It's a well-established cliché in anime that on a transfer student's first day, the teacher has her come into the room and stand in front of the class to be introduced.

Enjoy Everything: Appendix

Changing The Game

One of the great things about role-playing games is that you can do pretty much whatever you want with them without having any specialized skills to speak of. Here are some specific ideas for how to alter or add to *Raspberry Heaven*:

Fun Toys

Perhaps more so than most, this is a game that lends itself to having extra props and such on hand.

- **Dolls:** Nothing beats a three-dimensional representation of your character, though any way you look at it, it can get kind of expensive to put something like that together. One way you might go about it is to have a bunch of Pinky St. dolls, and use the various parts and outfits and such to assemble representations of your characters. If you're going to be playing the game in the long term, you might even consider making or commissioning plushies of each character.
- **Music:** Playing music during an RPG session is a little tricky since it can be distracting, but it can be awesome when it works right. As for what to play, most of the anime series mentioned in the Inspirations section below have background music on their soundtrack CDs that'd be perfect.
- **School Stuff:** Especially if you like to use lots of pantomime, having some props on hand can be very helpful. If there's a Japanese shopping center nearby you could even go so far as to get Japanese-style notebooks and other school supplies, and bread rolls and such for lunch time.
- **Toys:** Toys, especially plushies, can be great props for this game. If one character gives another a present, you can have the actual plush toy on hand to mess with as you play. If an animal is going to play a role in the game, you can likewise have a toy to represent it, and when someone is playing the animal's part as a secondary character, he or she can play with the toy.

Adaptation

Another fun thing you can do is to simply play as the characters from your favorite slice of life anime. As far as I'm concerned there's nothing wrong with role-playing fanfiction, though of course you need to have a group of people who're all pretty familiar with the title in question. As a bonus, you can use goods related to the series as props in the game (e.g., each player can have a plushie or figure of the character they play), and play the music from it to help you get in the mood.

Teachers

In *Raspberry Heaven* the teacher is normally a secondary character, but if you want you can have a player take on that role instead of being a schoolgirl.

To make a teacher as a regular character, just pick out quirks like usual and make sure to note that your character is a teacher. If you want, you can take the Educator quirk below, to make your character's teaching subject relevant to the game.

Educator

You're a teacher, trained to teach students in a particular subject (English, Japanese, P.E., art, literature, history, etc.) and tasked with molding young minds, or at least keeping those kids in line.

Practical Application: You put knowledge from your teaching subject to use, albeit not necessarily in a responsible or useful way. For this Special Move you must select Queens as the wildcard rank, rather than a numbered rank.

Teacher Game Role

On the other hand, you might want to be something of a teacher for the purposes of playing the game as well. In that case, you can use these optional rules.

1. As the game's teacher, you must make a teacher character with the Educator quirk. Your other two quirks are for you to decide.
2. You are the tutor for every scene.
3. You can only bring your own character into odd-numbered scenes (1st, 3rd, 5th, etc.), unless someone plays a Queen on top of the pile and wins narration rights.

Uno

Raspberry Heaven's card mechanics are partly inspired by Uno, partly because it's about the only card game I have particularly fond memories of. Anyway, it's relatively easy to play the game using an Uno deck instead of playing cards, though of course it'll change the selections of certain things. If you want them to be more precisely the same, I suggest finding a way to add a 0 of each color (since there's normally only 1 of each color 0), or at least don't have anyone pick zeroes for a Special Move. Some Uno decks come with some blank cards for no particular reason, and these can count as zeros. Likewise, you can take out the Wild Draw Fours, or just leave them in and treat them as Jokers.

Playing Card	Uno Card
Ace	0
2-10	1-9 (count 1 as 10)
Jack	Reverse
Queen	Skip
King	Draw Two
Joker	Wild
N/A	Wild Draw Four

Doing Other Things

By default, *Raspberry Heaven* characters are Japanese high school girls who lead quirky but uneventful lives. Although things like the color and the selection of Quirks are geared towards this, the game is mostly a way to use playing cards as cues for role-playing scenes. I started *Raspberry Heaven* basically trying to make an RPG version of a couple of my favorite anime, but the end result is a game that could be re-purposed without all that much difficulty. The advantage of the existing setting is that it takes place in a fictional, idyllic setting that is a step removed from reality. For Westerners it's an image of an image of school life in a foreign country, and even for Japanese people it wouldn't be based directly on reality, with all of its unpleasantness. Hence, in a sense this game isn't about Japanese schoolgirls so much as the images of Japanese schoolgirls seen in certain kinds of anime.

In any case, although I believe I've picked an optimum genre for this game, you're more than welcome to try it with most anything, depending on how much you're willing to tweak the game. This is especially true if you want to stay within variations of lighthearted slice of life stories. Having characters that are in another level of school, in school somewhere besides Japan, or are even (gasp!) boys instead of or in addition to girls isn't too hard. Likewise, the game could easily be about housewives in a certain neighborhood, tenants of an apartment building, or most any sitcom type setup.

You can opt for a more exotic setting too; one fun thing you see in anime is series like *Aria* where a low-key slice of life story takes place somewhere removed from a realistic contemporary earth. In anime in particular you'll see the patterns of Japanese high school life grafted onto nearly any setting imaginable, sometimes with a very self-conscious sense of absurdity. The characters themselves don't necessarily have to be mundane either, though a *Raspberry Heaven* game about kids who are going to a wizardry school might be a bit harder to pull off.

Whatever you want to try, you should take a careful look at the Quirks. They're the tools you use to make characters, so they need to fit your setting.

Male Given Names

Should you decide to allow for male characters, here are some male Japanese given names:

Akihiko, Akio, Akira, Akito, Asuma, Ataru, Fuyuki, Gen, Harunobu, Hayate, Hiro, Hitoshi, Isao, Jinpachi, Kanji, Kaoru, Kazuto, Ken, Kenta, Kiichi, Kosuke, Kyo, Kyusaku, Makoto, Manabu, Masaharu, Mitsunori, Nagisa, Natsuki, Nenji, Shigeo, Shinji, Shu, Shutaro, Souichiro, Sunao, Takahiro, Takashi, Takayuki, Takeo, Takeru, Takuma, Takumi, Tomokazu, Toraji, Yuichi, Yuji, Yukito

Inspirations

Here are some of the titles that inspired *Raspberry Heaven*. Only a few 4-panel comics have really caught on here, but fortunately Yen Press has published a lot of them.

- **Azumanga Daioh by Kiyohiko Azuma:** Easily the most successful 4-panel manga in the West, *Azumanga Daioh* is about a group of quirky high school girls, their teachers, and their dreams. If you only read one title from this list, make it this one. The creator's newer manga, *Yotsuba&!* is also a must-read.
- **G.A. by Satoko Kiyuduki:** There seem to be a lot of 4-panel manga about art students. *G.A.* isn't the best in my opinion, but it definitely has its moments. It also has several strips about color theory and other elements of art.
- **Ichiroh by Mikage:** A fun little manga about girls who've graduated from high school and are attending prep school to get ready to retake the college entrance exams they failed the first time.
- **K-On! by Kakifly:** This manga (with a very popular anime adaptation) is about a group of girls who restart the "Light Music Club" at their high school, which basically means starting a rock band. It starts out light and quirky, but the teacher who is their adviser turns out to be completely insane.
- **Lucky Star by Kagami Yoshimizu:** This very popular manga is about the everyday life of a tiny, lazy otaku girl named Konata Izumi, and her more normal friends.
- **Sketchbook by Totan Kobako:** Unfortunately this manga hasn't been released in English yet. It's about the members of the art club of a high school in a small town. The anime adaptation has a sedate pace, but the original manga is a relentless series of gags.
- **S.S. Astro by Negi Banno:** A bit of a twist on the typical formula, *S.S. Astro* is actually about a group of high school teachers rather than students.
- **Strawberry Marshmallow by Barasui:** This manga concerns four elementary school girls and Nobue, older sister of one of them, who are constantly hanging out together. This comic is very fluffy and *moe*, with some truly strange characters.
- **Sunshine Sketch by Aoki Ume:** This fun little manga is about four girls who live in the same apartment complex and attend the art section of a high school. The characters are all quirky, and it has a very light, fun atmosphere.
- **Suzunari by Shoko Iwami:** This manga kind of juxtaposes the everyday and the fantastic. Kaede is an ordinary high school girl, but one day she finds she has a "twin sister" named Suzu who looks like her with bigger boobs and cat ears. Her silly parents immediately accept Suzu, and the comic is mainly about Kaede and Suzu going to school together.

Design Notes

On an emotional level, RPGs are usually about exhilarating adventure, or sometimes horror. The indie scene has brought us games that have expanded the palette of designed emotions in other directions, with games about trust, betrayal, grief, paranoia, culture shock, and more. However, there aren't any games to speak of that are heartwarming, and it wouldn't have occurred to me to try to make such a game if not for *Yuuyake Koyake*, another brilliant game by Ryo Kamiya, the designer of *Maid RPG*. The shortest explanation I can give is that it's about magical animals helping out ordinary people in a small town in rural Japan. The setting and mechanics come together beautifully to create a heartwarming experience, and they've yet to fail me in that respect. It probably would not have occurred to me that such a game is even possible without *Yuuyake Koyake* so amply demonstrating it.

However, with *Raspberry Heaven* I'm aiming to create a game that is not only heartwarming, but lacks any kind of obvious conflict. It's sort of a "quiet time" game that you can play as a break from the more intense stuff. In my first attempt at designing rules for it, I came up with the system of quirks to create characters, which in itself worked very well. On the other hand, I tried to have rules based around rolling dice to resolve "challenges," and that fell completely flat. As it turned out, my friend Mike Stevens has been thinking about creating an RPG based on *Neko Machi*, a 4-panel webcomic I'd been doing about the everyday lives of a group of high school catgirls, only to learn that I was working on this game. He later mentioned that his concept was to play cards to represent each of the four panels, and once I was armed with this key idea, the heart of the game just fell into place. Success or failure isn't particularly relevant to the genre, because it's more about putting quirky characters into familiar situations. That's why the rules of the game needed to be more of a way to provide cues and guidelines for role-playing.