



## Modern Japanese Literature: From 1868 to the Present Day

*Donald Keene (Editor), Kanagaki Robun (Contributor), Masao Kume (Contributor), Ryunosuke Akutagawa (Contributor), Hattori Busho (Contributor), Takiji Kobayashi (Contributor), Riichi Yokomitsu (Contributor), Hino Ashihei (Contributor), more... Yasunari Kawabata (Contributor), Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (Contributor), Osamu Dazai (Contributor), Fumiko Hayashi (Contributor), Katai Tayama (Contributor), Yukio Mishima (Contributor), Kawatake Mokuami (Contributor), Tsubouchi Shōyō (Contributor), Futabatei Shimei (Contributor), Ichirō Higuchi (Contributor), Kunikida Doppo (Contributor), Soseki Natsume (Contributor), Tson Shimazaki (Contributor), Kafū Nagai (Contributor), Takuboku Ishikawa (Contributor), Ōgai Mori (Contributor), Kyōka Izumi (Contributor), Kansuke Naka (Contributor), Naoya Shiga (Contributor), Kan Kikuchi (Contributor), Sam Houston Brock (Translator), W.H.H. Norman (Translator), Shio Sakanishi (Translator), G.W. Sargent (Translator), Edward G. Seidensticker (Translator), Burton Watson (Translator), Meredith Weatherby (Translator), Robert H. Brower (Translator), Harold Gould Henderson (Translator), Howard Hibbett (Translator), Glenn Hughes (Translator), Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto (Translator), Yozan T. Iwasaki (Translator), Ivan Morris (Translator) ...less*

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Modern Japanese Literature is Donald Keene's critically acclaimed companion volume to his landmark Anthology of Japanese Literature. Now considered the standard canon of modern Japanese writing translated into English, Modern Japanese Literature includes concise introductions to the writers, as well as a historical introduction by Professor Keene. Includes: Growing Up by Ichiyo, a lyrical story of pre-adolescence in the 90s; Natsume's story of Botchan, an illustarred and ineffectual Huck Finn; Nagai's The Sumida River; Kokomitsu's Kafkaesque Time; Kawabata's The Mole; Firefly Hunt; a glimpse into Tanizaki's masterpiece Thin Snow; and the postwar work of such writers as Dazai and Mishima.

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## From Reader Review Modern Japanese Literature: From 1868 to the Present Day for online ebook

### Ben says

Keene's anthology is a helpful springboard from which to delve deeper into Japanese literature, being a good introduction to a number of important Japanese writers and genres. With Keene's expert editorial judgement guiding the selections, it also gives well-balanced literary context to those wider readings.

However, the fact that most of these pieces are excerpts means the result isn't a very engaging reading experience. This is the trade-off for the rounded and balanced contents. A collection of shorter pieces - for example the Columbia or Oxford anthologies - whilst being more enjoyable, cannot offer the same level of representation and balance that this collection does.

Possibly for this reason, Keene's pioneering anthology still, apparently, remains a set text on many Japanese literature courses.

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### Vleegoodfellow says

read "The Tiger"

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### Courtney says

- 1) The Beefeater; Kanagaki, Robun
- 2) The Western Peep Show; Hattori, Busho
- 3) The Thieves; Kawatake, Mokuami
- 4) Modern Poetry in Chinese
- 5) The Essence of the Novel; Tsubouchi, Shoyo
- 6) The Drifting Cloud; Futabatei, Shimei
- 7) Growing Up; Higuchi, Ichiyo
- 8) Old Gen; Kunikida, Doppo
- 9) Modern Haiku: I
- 10) Botchan; Natsume, Soseki
- 11) The Broken Commandment; Shimazaki, Toson
- 12) One Soldier; Tayama, Katai
- 13) The River Sumida; Nagai, Kafu
- 14) Modern Poetry: I
- 15) Modern Waka
- 16) The Romaji Diary; Ishikawa, Takuboku
- 17) The Wild Goose; Mori, Ogai
- 18) A Tale of Three Who Were Blind; Izumi, Kyoka
- 19) Sanctuary; Naka, Kansuke
- 20) Han's Crime; Shiga, Naoya
- 21) At Kinosaki; Shiga, Naoya
- 22) The Madman on the Roof; Kikuchi, Kan

- 23) The Tiger; Kume, Maso
  - 24) Kesa and Morito; Akutagawa, Ryunosuke
  - 25) Hell Screen; Akutagawa, Ryunosuke
  - 26) The Cannery Boat; Kobayashi, Takiji
  - 27) Time; Yokomitsu, Riichi
  - 28) Earth and Soldiers; Hino, Ashihei
  - 29) The Mole; Kawabata, Yasunari
  - 30) Modern Poetry: II
  - 31) Modern Haiku: II
  - 32) The Firefly Hunt; Tanizaki, Junichiro
  - 33) The Mother of Captain Shigemoto; Tanizaki, Junichiro
  - 34) Villon's Wife; Dazai, Osamu
  - 35) Tokyo; Hayashi, Fumiko
  - 36) Omi; Mishima, Yukio
- 

### Jacob van Berkel says

Een paar nuttige kennismakingen maar jammer genoeg vooral fragmenten in plaats van volledige verhalen. Als je in de wachtkamer van de tandarts één verhaal zoekt om te lezen zou ik *Hell Screen* (1918) van Akutagawa aanraden of het fragment uit *Earth and Soldiers* (1938) van Hino Ashihei.

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### Gertrude & Victoria says

Donald Keene does a nice job of bringing together in one work, stories, including many poems, that are representative of modern literature in Japan.

*Modern Japanese Literature: From 1868 to the Present Day* is an attractive anthology for those interested in Japanese literature beyond the popular and famous works of today's novelists. Some of the stories presented are not easy to come by, and some might even be impossible to obtain. Keene saves us the trouble.

This collection was published in 1956. The book begins with Kanagaki Robun: *The Beefeater*, and ends with Mishima Yukio: *Omi* who passed away around forty years ago.

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### Dia says

Really annoying that the stories chosen here are excerpts from novels. I'd hoped that they would be fully intact, living & breathing short stories, but no...they're excerpts. Chopped-off chunks of larger, unknowable beings. I suppose such an anthology must exist, and that it has its reasons, but how annoying. Anyway, the introduction gives a great little history of modern Japanese literature (from 1868 to Mishima Yukio). Keene is so knowledgeable and a very good writer -- I'm hooked and will keep looking for something more substantial from him. The selections are...excerpts. They might lead to further reading, but only with a grudge. And I'm puzzled and disappointed that he says so little about Kawabata. It seems strangely difficult to find out much of anything about this man. Opium addiction-cover up?? Or what?

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## Tim says

Oh this was shit. A few excerpts from things worth reading, a few excerpts from shit not worth reading. BUT ALL EXCERPTS. EVEN SHORT STORIES WERE EXCERPTED. FUCK OFF.

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## Cris N. says

I read a lot of the stories in here (admittedly I didn't feel like reading everything, which is how I tend to react to anthologies like this). This seemed like a pretty good collection, overall. I can't judge the accuracy of the translations, and can only judge some of the literature choices. Some of them I think were excellent choices, as in the cases of Osamu Dazai ("Villon's Wife") and Ryunosuke Akutagawa ("Kesa and Morito", "Hell Screen"). Many seemed good but I wasn't sure if there might have been better options due to my lack of familiarity with the authors (Tanizaki, Nagai, Izumi, etc.). However, there were also some authors where I thought the stories chosen were definitely not the right choices, such as with Yasunari Kawabata ("The Mole") or Yukio Mishima ("Omi"). Of course, I have nowhere near as much knowledge about Japanese literature as Donald Keene, who is a respected expert and translator. However, this is just my opinion based on what I have researched/read thus far.

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## Tosh says

Donald Keene's great anthology of Japanese tales - and all the suspected stars (the great one's) are here in this package. Mishima, Dazai, Tanizaki, Kawabata, etc. Like the one down below, this is another essential anthology of Japanese writing.

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## Tim says

This is an anthology of excerpts from major Japanese writers beginning with the Meiji period. I think Keene also edited a companion book of classic Japanese literature as well. I thoroughly enjoyed this brief tour of the Japanese literary landscape, and was introduced to a number of stimulating authors. The introductions to the pieces are often too brief; I would have enjoyed a little more in the way of description and assessment. Most of the pieces here are sections from novels or short stories, along with a couple of essays and poems.

Futabatei's "The Drifting Cloud", influenced by Turgenev, looks like a fascinating novel - the story of a sad sack of a young man who loses his girl to a more socially adept rival. It is a sharp satire of Japanese social conventions. Higuchi was a wonderful writer who died at 24 and left behind a small body of work. I enjoyed her story "Growing Up", an evocative portrayal of teenagers and neighborhood life. Kunida's "Old Gen" is a well-known sad tale in which a lonely middle-aged man unsuccessfully reaches out to a troubled youth. Another work that lovingly evokes the twilight of pre-industrial Japan is Nagai's "The River Sumida", the story of a once-influential family now down on their luck. I found the excerpt of Natsume's novel to be striking in its similarity to the current work of Murakami Haruki; both present a viewpoint of hip nonchalance, a deadpan look at life's absurdities.

Moving further into the conflicts of the 20th century, Tayama's piece is a gripping account of life in the Russo-Japanese war. Ishikawa, one of the many in this collection who did not live a long life, is represented

by an excerpt from his "Romaji Diary", a real diary he wrote in Western script to in order to confound prying eyes. He comes across as a cynical, dreamy, depressed young man who understood that his life would not be a long one. Mori's nicely written "The Wild Goose" concerns the romantic misfortunes of a young woman. The portion of Naka's first novel included here gives a charming presentation of a young man's solitary summer in the beautiful countryside. Kikuchi's short play "The Madman on the Roof" is a goofy black comedy with a very different feel from the rest of this book.

The refined, subtle short story of Kawabata's included here encourages me to one day read some more by this Nobel laureate. Tanizaki, the other titan of Japanese mid 20th century writing is also represented here with a couple of nice pieces. His work seems more emotionally charged and philosophical than Kawabata's. The notoriously dissolute Dazai contributes a solid short story concerning a dissolute man and his common law wife. Hayashi Fumiko's work concerns working class Japanese, and her story "Tokyo" is a touching portrayal of a lonely woman's struggle in the post-war ruins. The book closes with an excerpt from Mishima's "Confessions of a Mask."

All in all a nice sampler, like a tray of interesting appetizers which whet the appetite for more - in other words, a successful collection of its kind.

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### **Rahadyan says**

An anthology I read about 25 years ago, during a time in which I had envisioned someday becoming a professor of Asian languages and literatures. Recommended.

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### **Sabrina says**

Only excerpts :(

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### **Jeremy says**

Donald Keene knows everything about Japanese Literature. Ultimately, however, this is more a reference book than an engaging read. Reading a Dazai or a Mishima novel that you want some better context for? It's the place to go - but it's not exactly 'casual' or 'entertaining' reading.

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### **Carol Storm says**

Incredible classic collection of Japanese short stories of the modern era. My favorites were "One Soldier" which reads like a much tougher version of THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE or THE NAKED AND THE DEAD. Also HAN'S CRIME which reads like an Alfred Hitchcock thriller. You don't have to be a lover of Japanese culture and cuisine like I am to read this outstanding collection!

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## J. Watson (aka umberto) says

Reading these excerpts is worth spending my time since it's like reading an overview of modern Japanese literature from 1868 onwards by 15+1 translators. Only two are quite familiar to me, that is, Donald Keene and Edward Seidensticker. As for the rest, it is my first time to enjoy reading their fine translations. In the team, there're three Japanese translators as follows: Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto, Yozan T. Iwasaki and Shio Sakanishi. Why +1? Surprisingly, I read "The Cannery Boat" (pp. 333-338) and found its 'TRANSLATED ANONYMOUSLY' notification at the end.

I bought this brownish paperback from a booth selling second-hand ones in a Book Fair in Bangkok in April, 2011. I recall reading only two titles whose authors I've read their other works, namely, "Kesa and Morito" by Akutagawa Ryunosuke and "Omi" by Mishima Yukio. Then I'd kept it somewhere till I finished reading Kawabata's five translated novels and wondered which authors I should find and read their longer novels that are worth spending my time. One of the reasons is that I didn't know which one I should read his/her novels due to innumerable titles by seemingly eminent Japanese authors and it's a waste of time to read them at random.

Therefore, from my reading survey, these are the first three authors I'd read their novels. For each title from this anthology, I'd cite its excerpt and my reasons why I prefer it as brief as I can. Please note, I don't arrange in its normal order but they're presented according to my reading series.

### 1. "Tokyo" by Hayashi Fumiko.

This female writer has amazed me since she could write so well, sentimental that I could imagine and follow her plot and key characters wistfully.

Excerpt:

Two days later Ryo set out happily with her boy to visit Tsuruishi. When she reached the bomb site, she was surprised not to see him before his cabin, his red kerchief tied about his head. Ryukichi ran ahead to find out if he were home and came back in a moment.

"There are strangers there, Mamma!"

Seized with panic, Ryo hurried over to the cabin and peered in. Two workmen were busy piling up Tsuruishi's effects in a corner.

"What is it, ma'am?" one of them said, turning his head.

"I'm looking for Tsuruishi."

"Oh, don't you know? Tsuruishi died yesterday."

"Died," she said. She wanted to say something more but no words would come.

...

(pp. 424-425)

### 2. "Botchan" by Natsume Soseki.

This writer with his government scholarship studied in England in 1901-1903 and wrote some short stories based on his experiences there. Eventually, he was Professor of English Literature at Tokyo Imperial University. However, I'm not sure with which longer novels of his I should start. From this novel, I realized he'd like to focus on humanity between the hero and an old female servant.

Excerpt:

On the day of my departure she came in the morning and helped me with things. She put in my canvas bag some toothpaste, a toothbrush, and a towel that she had bought at a shop on the way. I told her that I did not need them, but she was insistent. We rode to the station in rickshaws and went up to the platform. When I had boarded the train she looked intently at my face.

"I may not see you again. Be sure to take good care of yourself," she said in a small voice. Her eyes were full

of tears. I was not crying but I would have been with just a bit more. When the train finally got under way, I thought that everything would be all right now. I put my head out of the window and looked back. She was still standing there. She looked very small. (p. 133)

3. "The Mother of Captain Shigemoto" by Tanizaki Junichiro.

This writer's name's strangely presented a dilemma to me, a feeling of either being vague or being familiar since I've never read him before. Possibly I came across some of his novels in Kinokuniya Bookstores. I found his plot and description dazzling and second to none.

Excerpt:

To come back to our story. It is clear from Shigemoto's diary that his father too was trying to train himself to the sense of foulness, that the enchanting figure of the beauty who had deserted him – the "lost crane" of the Po Chu-i poem, "whose voice has gone silent behind the green clouds, whose shadow is sunk in the brightness of the moon" – was always with him; and that in the excess of his grief he had summoned up his will to beat back the vision. ...

"Then you've been out before?" Shigemoto asked. His father nodded with the greatest emphasis. For some months now, choosing moonlit nights, he had waited for the house to be quiet and gone out in search of enlightenment, not to one specific place but to any charnel on the edge of the moor, and had stolen back again at dawn.

....

(pp. 394-395)

That's it for now, I think, in fact, there are still a few I'd like to tell my friends more, for instance, "Growing Up" by Higuchi Ichiyo, another lady writer who wrote superbly till, I think, we'd like to return to our childhood via the time machine, if any.

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