Japanese Literature for the High School Classroom

An annotated bibliography compiled and edited by the Education Department, Japan Society

Dear Educator,

Japan has a rich literary heritage that offers readers a doorway into Japanese history and culture. For high school readers Japanese literature can bring alive the historical characters they may meet in social studies class. Japan also offers a fascinating comparison to the literature of western or other Asian countries. Japanese literature has always been closely related to the visual arts and offers countless subjects that can be transformed into a variety of art forms.

This annotated bibliography was prepared to help high school educators explore the world of Japanese literature that is appropriate for use in their classrooms. Because of the great breadth of subject matter in Japanese literature, it is often difficult to find works that fit into the interest and lives of young people. To make the search easier we offer this list of works that has been reviewed by a committee of high school educators.

The works span the literary spectrum from verse, drama, and essays to novels, diaries, and short stories. Some of the works, such as 11th century *The Tale of Genji,* are well-known masterpieces of world literature. Other pieces, such as the 1989 short story, *TV People,* examine technology and its effect on contemporary urban society.

The reviewers were asked to rate the works according to their ***suitability in the high school classroom*** on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable). All of the works were well- known by those who follow the world of Japanese literature. It was the aim of this review, not to give an exhaustive listing of the great works of Japanese literature, but to offer only those works that are can be used with young adults.

In early 1998 a group of eighteen educators who teach social studies, literature, art, English-as-a-second language, as well as other disciplines, were asked to review forty-five works of Japanese literature. Each work was read by two to five reviewers. They then submitted written summaries, highlighted themes, and gave suggestions for classroom activities and discussions. The reviewers, as a whole group, met to discuss their final views on certain works.

We commend the reviewers on their excellent work. They offered thorough examinations and insightful comments on each of the works. We extend a special thanks to all of them for undertaking this task. The resulting bibliography is a compilation of the work of the reviewers that has been edited by the staff of the Educational Outreach Department at the Japan Society. The Educational Outreach Department takes full responsibility for any mistakes or omissions in this bibliography.

Literature Review Participants

Susan Curtin	Martin Luther King, Jr. High School
Scott Endsley	New School for Arts and Sciences
Linda Gold	The Packer Collegiate Institute
Lynne Greenfield	Townsend Harris High School
Sidney Hodges	High School for Health Professions and Human Services
Jeffrey Levitsky	Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School
Angela Magliano	Herbert H. Lehman High School
Kathleen Moran	Middle College High School
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Amy Rathgeb	New School for Arts and Sciences
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Lois Stavsky	Seward Park High School
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Dennis Vellucci	Archbishop Molloy High School
Janice Warner	Hunter College High School
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All of the high schools are in New York City

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Note: Where no author is given, the work is anonymous

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The Sea and Poison (1958) by Endo Shusaku
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Classical and Heian Period (700-1185)

Man'yoshu (*Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*) (ca. 700-750)

Type of work: poetry
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The *Man'yoshu*, the oldest collection of Japanese poetry, was compiled in the 8th century and consists of more than 4,000 poems, some of which date from as early as the 5th century. While consisting mainly of 31 syllable poems (*tanka*, also called *waka*), it also contains many examples of long poems (*choka*). The subject matter of the poems varies from travel descriptions to elegies and poems of love and loss. There are also poems reflecting Chinese and Buddhist influences. The *Man'yoshu* poems are direct and accessible to any audience unfamiliar with Japanese culture and the conventions of Japanese poetry.

Themes:
Relations between men and women; relations between parents and children; marital relations in ancient Japan; love and devotion; futility of attachments in life; impermanence of life.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Have students write "dialogue" and "envoy" poems.

Compare the ancient *tanka* with modern *tanka* in *Salad Anniversary* by Machi Tawara.

Bibliography:
Man'yoshu. In *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the earliest era to the mid-nineteenth century*, compiled and edited by Donald Keene, pp. 33-53. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Commentary:
Keene, Donald. "The Man'yoshu and Kokinshu Collections." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 363-377. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 24-27. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Kokinshu (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*) (ca. 905)

Type of work: poetry
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-8
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The *Kokinshu*, completed in 905 AD, is the first collection of poetry sponsored by the imperial family. Almost all of poems in this collection are in the form of *waka* (also referred to as *tanka*),

consisting of 31 syllables in five lines. Even though many of the poems are suggestive and indirect in their meaning, these poems of love, loss and impermanence can be understood by any audience. There are 1,111 poems in the complete collection.

Themes:
Buddhist themes of impermanence and the fleeting nature of life; marital relations in early Japan; love and loss of a loved one.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Have students write their own poems.

Compare the ancient tanka with modern tanka in *Salad Anniversary* (1987) by Machi Tawara.

Bibliography:
Kokinshu. In *Anthology of Japanese Literature,* edited by Donald Keene, pp. 76-81. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Two complete translations of the *Kokinshu,* both containing commentary:
McCullough, Helen Craig, trans. *Kokin Wakashu: The First Imperial Anthology of Poetry*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.

Rodd, Laurel R. and Mary C. Henkenius, trans. *Kokinshu, A Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company, 1996.

Commentary:
Keene, Donald. "The Man'yoshu and Kokinshu Collections." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 363-377. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 28-32. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

The Gossamer Years: The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian Japan (954-974)

Type of work: diary
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 6-9
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The Gossamer Years is an autobiographical work by a member of the aristocracy of the Heian period known to us only as Michitsuna's mother. The work centers on the author's relationship with her husband and encompasses a period of about 20 years (954-974). As a secondary wife in a polygamous culture in 10th century Japan, the author recounts her initial happiness in the marriage, soon to be followed by anger, jealousy and finally, resignation.

Themes:
The role of aristocratic women during the Heian period; the difficulties of living within a polygamous society; religious belief systems that supported this cultural practice; the passing on of society's expectations to younger generations.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Students can examine a diary as a literary medium, how it illustrates the relationship to the actions of the characters and the complexities surrounding their lives, and gives voice to their thoughts and emotions.

Reading this book in conjunction with *The Tale of Genji* and *The Pillow Book*, both written by educated Heian court women, offers opportunities for great comparisons and contrasts in terms of the characters, writing style and related themes.

This is a very good work to use in social studies classes in understanding the attitudes and culture of the Heian Period. Book One and the first section of Book Three can be used to introduce classical Japanese culture.

The book would work extremely well in a women's history/literature course in which comparisons can be made with women in ancient China and/or pre-modern Europe.

The students may want to update this work to a contemporary setting, as certain attitudes and approaches to life are readily identifiable and can be related to by students.

Bibliography:
Seidensticker, Edward G., trans. *The Gossamer Years: The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian, Japan*. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1964.

Commentary:
Ruch, Barbara. "A Book of One's Own: The Gossamer Years; The Pillow Book; and the Confessions of Lady Nijo." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 405-408. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

The Pillow Book (late 10th C) by Sei Shonagon

Type of work: essay/diary
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 8-10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The Pillow Book is a random series of observations, descriptions of events and ceremonies, and lists and poems, written by a noble woman in the late 10th century. While not a diary *per se*, the book offers a rich portrait of life at the Heian court. The lists, on such topics as "Things One is Likely to Neglect" and "Hateful Things," are thought-provoking and highly readable. They can often bring a smile of recognition to the contemporary reader despite the ten centuries separating them from the author. The book reveals that the author was a highly spirited person with a sharp eye and a caustic tongue, capable of creating vivid images with a few well-chosen words. The structure is very flexible so a teacher could easily adapt it in a number of ways to suit students.

Themes:
Heian court life, including the relationships between men and women; the complex social hierarchy of the period; art and aesthetics of the period; the eclectic religious beliefs with the co-existence of Shinto, Buddhism and others; the etiquette of court life; education of women; and filial piety.

Suggestions for classroom:
The work, taught in conjunction with *The Tale of Genji* and/or *The Gossamer Years*, offers an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary work among art, social studies and literature courses.

Each student can create a "pillow book"--a series of lists, observations, rules of proper behavior, descriptions of unique places, and so on. The form is remarkably flexible and can easily be relocated to contemporary New York, the intrigues of a soccer team or today's political situation. Students can also formulate their own lists with topics such as, "Things which are Reassuringly Tedious" or "Things which are Initially Deceptive."

Bibliography:
Morris, Ivan, ed., trans. *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Commentary:
Morris, Ivan. *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan*. New York: Kodansha International. This is an excellent study of court life in ancient Japan. An educator can reveal to their students that a civilization, remote in time and place, is well worth the effort to discover.

Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 44-47. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Ruch, Barbara. "A Book of One's Own: The Gossamer Years; The Pillow Book; and the Confessions of Lady Nijo." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 408-412. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

The Tale of Genji (early 11th C) by Murasaki Shikibu (ca. 978-1015)

Type of work: novel
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-9
Grade levels: 11th, 12th

Summary:
Set in Heian Japan (794-1185), *The Tale of Genji* focuses on the romantic intrigues of Genji, the "Shining Prince," at the Imperial Court. Genji, representing the ideal aristocrat of his time and place, is handsome, refined and skilled at the arts of poetry, dance, calligraphy and love.

The tale begins with the story of Genji's parents and of his birth and childhood, marred by the early death of his mother. The central romance of the book is that of Genji and Murasaki, whom Genji met when she was a child and which forms one of his most lasting and profound attachments. Also included are his liaisons with other women, most notably with his father's main wife, and his banishment from court.

Themes:
The meaning of political power--from the beginning of the story the reader sees how power is acquired and maintained in Heian Japan. Without appropriate "backing," no one, male or female, can acquire power at the court, yet to be held too much in favor by the emperor could cause jealousy and provoke rivalry.

The status of women in Heian Japan. Women survive in worlds in which complex and heavily nuanced social mores dominate life and in which "background" defines one's place in an intricate web of relationships.

The Japanese view of nature. The seasons and their relationship to the events in the story show the depth of the changing seasons as a metaphor in Japanese literature. The complex way in which the natural background permeates the narrative invites students to go beyond a stereotyped view of the meaning of the seasons.

The role of poetry in Heian Japan. Poems served a range of functions: to reveal the inner nature of the character; to demonstrate ideals of femininity and masculinity; to comment on the main narrative of the story.

How Buddhism and native Shinto beliefs were woven into the fabric of everyday life of the nobility. "Religious" ideas were not separate from everyday life.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This work can be effectively used in social studies, art and literature classes. The complete work contains a vast number of characters and continues well past the time of Genji's death, but the first few chapters can be used as an introduction to the Japanese court of a thousand years ago.

A particular strength of the work is the power of the characterizations. Genji's lovers emerge as complete, if stylized women, individual in their response to the constricting society in which they live. The author created women who suffer pain and rage in their limited roles. Students can

write a first-person narrative for any of Genji's many lovers to reveal a personal point of view of the "Shining Prince" and his dalliances.

Students can also explore the relationship between poetry and narrative. The characters in the *Tale* reveal themselves through poetic allusions that speak of shared cultural experiences. How would students weave together poetry and fictional narrative?

The Seidensticker translation is illustrated with black-and-white woodcuts from a 17th-century edition that provide stylized faces and perspectives familiar from many editions of Genji. Students might do a range of visual assignments from the *Tale*, from researching other illustrations, to creating their own.

The students can explore two Noh dramas, *Aoi* and *Nonomiya*, that are based on chapters of the *Tale of Genji*.

Bibliography:

There are several translations of *The Tale of Genji*.

Murasaki, Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Translated and abridged by Edward G. Seidensticker. New York: Random House, 1976. 360 pp. The Seidensticker abridged version of his translation contains twelve of the fifty-four extant chapters. The volume may be the most accesible for the use in the classroom.

Murasaki, Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji.* Translated Edward G. Seidensticker. The unabridged version contains all extant chapters.

Murasaki, Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. In *Genji and Heike: Selections from The Tale of Genji and The Tale of Heike*, translated by Helen Craig McCullough, pp. 3-242. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994. Another excellent translation that combines selections of these two important works, *The Tale of Genji* and *Tales of the Heike*.

Commentary and related works:

Morris, Ivan. *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan*. New York: Kodansha International. This is an excellent study of court life in ancient Japan.

Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 36-40. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Seidensticker, Edward G. and Haruo Shirane. "The Tale of Genji." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 390-403. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

Related Films and Videos:

The Tale of Genji (animated), Sugii, 1987.

Classical Japan and the Tale of Genji. Produced for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and distributed by the Annenberg/CPB Multimeida Collection, 45 minutes, 1996.
Four Columbia University professors give the historical and cultural background to *Genji* as well as discuss the significance of the tale to later literary traditions. A very informative, mini graduate-level lecture on this very important work.

The Tale of Genji. Distributed by Films for the Humanities, 60 minutes, 1993.
This video examines the 12-century scroll that is the oldest extant text of the tale. Excerpts of this lengthy presentation can be helpful in the literature classroom.

Medieval and Tokugawa Periods (1185-1868)

An Account of My Hut (1212) by Kamo no Chomei (1153-1216)

Type of work: essay
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 7-8
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
An essay written by Kamo no Chomei (1153-1216), who renounced the world and became a Buddhist monk during the time of great disasters (fire, whirlwinds, famine and earthquake) that befell Japan in the late 12th century. In the first part of the essay, Chomei recounts the endless suffering found in the world. In the second part, he gives his readers a Buddhist guide to the renunciation of attachments and his search for tranquility in his mountain hut.

Suggestions for the classroom:
How does Chomei view other men? What do your students think about Chomei's views on his fellow men? Does this essay present universal ideas or is it specific to Japan?

An Account of My Hut can be used with *The Tale of the Heike* to give students an understanding of the political and military situation of the time which resulted in the shifting of power from the imperial court system to the establishment of the shogunate.

Students can examine the Buddhist ideal of the renunciation of worldly attachments and whether they believe that Chomei is free of attachments, given his affection for his little hut.

The solace found in nature is also another major theme of the work, connecting it with the work and life of Thoreau.

Although a tale from 12th-century Japan, *An Account of My Hut* is applicable to other times and places. In many cultures, natural disasters are seen as the forerunners of political change. In the Chinese dynastic cycle, nature itself signals a change in the Mandate of Heaven. Augustine recounts the tragedies, both human and natural, that befell Rome in *The City of God*. Contrasts can be made between the decline of Rome and the decline of the Imperial Court.

Bibliography:
Kamo no Chomei. *An Account of My Hut*. In *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, edited by Donald Keene, pp. 197-212. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Commentary:
Anderer, Paul. "An Account of My Hut." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 420-427. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 54-56. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

The Tale of the Heike (ca. 1250)

Type of work: epic narrative
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 3-10 with most reviewers giving it 7-10
Grade Level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The Tale of the Heike is a warrior epic of the historic battles between the Genji (Minamoto clan) and the Heike (Taira clan) between 1169 and 1185. The *Tale* follows the rise of the Heike, their arrogance and abuse of power, and their destruction at the hands of the Genji. Students who are interested in the transition to and the rise of the warrior class in Japanese history will find this a content-rich work.

Themes:
Buddhist karma and rebirth in the story in "Lady Nii" and the infant emperor in "The Fight at Dan no Ura"; Buddhist and Shinto in the everyday lives of the people of the period; the meaning of leadership using the examples of Kiyomori, Shigemori and Munemori; conflict between duty (*giri*) and personal feelings (*ninjo*).

Suggestions for the classroom:
Sections of *The Tale of the Heike* can be used in any literature or social studies course to highlight the social structure and beliefs of the period. Descriptions of the role of religion are especially detailed regarding the devotion to the Amida Buddha, the belief in karma, the role of the monk, the renunciation of worldly concerns and the hope of rebirth in the Buddhist Pure land.

The cast of characters is immense and can be confusing, but students may enjoy analyzing a few of the personalities and role-playing. There are many memorable characters--the most prominent is Kiyomori, the despotic leader of the Taira Clan, whose vices are responsible for the clan's downfall.

Compare *The Tale of the Heike* with warrior tales in other cultures.

The Tale of the Heike has been an unending source of inspiration for works of visual art, poetry and drama. The story of Atsumori has been dramatized in the puppet theater (bunraku), kabuki and noh drama, and has also been the subject of innumerable works of art. This one brief story can lead to very productive collaboration for art, literature and social studies classes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art often has a Heike-related art in the Japan Gallery. Call ahead to find out what is on exhibition.

Three noh dramas, *Atsumori, Tadanori* and *Yashima*, are drawn from the *Tale of the Heike*. This may be a good assignment for a research paper.

Bibliography:
Kamo no Chomei. *An Account of My Hut*. In *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, edited by Donald Keene, pp. 197-212. New York: Grove Press, 1955.
Murasaki, Shikibu. *The Tale of Heike*. In *Genji and Heike: Selections from The Tale of Genji*

and The Tale of Heike, translated by Helen Craig McCullough, pp. 245-458. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 59-62. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Related Films and Videos:
Gate of Hell, Teinosuke Kinugasa, 1953, 86 mins.
New Tales of the Taira Clan, Kenji Mizoguchi, 1955, 108 mins.

Essays in Idleness (ca. 1340) by Yoshida Kenko (1283-1350)

Type of work: essay
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 7-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
This book is a collection of 243 episodes written by Kenko, a 14th-century Buddhist monk. The author writes in the *zuihitsu* (follow-the-brush style) that employs the loose and unstructured stream-of-consciousness method. Kenko considers a variety of topics, from the beauty of nature to what constitutes a "true gentleman," freely writing his impressions of the world as seen from a Buddhist point of view.

Themes:
The themes of the collection vary from topic to topic--examples are Kenko's impressions on Buddhism, conduct of a gentleman, Taoism, politics, celibacy, Japanese aesthetics, impermanence, vanity of worldly possessions and achievements, traditions, fondness of the irregular and incomplete, and the divinity of the emperor.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Since each entry is short, teachers can select sections most relevant to their objectives. Examining the structure of the book and creating their own example of *zuihitsu* is interesting.

Using some essays, the teacher can portray the use of suggestion, simplicity and impermanence in Japanese aesthetics, thereby showing contrast to the Western presentation of art. After absorbing the concept, students may gain a greater appreciation of the use of empty space and the use of brush strokes to suggest an object in both Japanese and Chinese art.

Ask students to identify and discuss Kenko's contradictory opinions and what this contradiction means.

This book will be an ideal text to accompany, or include in, a course on Japanese history, literature and religion.

This is a good work to compare to Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book.*

Bibliography:

Yoshida, Kenko. *Essays in Idleness*. Translated by Donald Keene. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967**.**

Related works:

Capellanus, Andreas. *The Rules of Courtly Love*. In *The Portable Medieval Reader*, edited by James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin McLaughlin. New York: Penguin Books, 1949.

Kaibara, Ekken. *Precepts for Children*. In *Sources of Japanese Tradition, vol. 1*., compiled by Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, pp. 367-368. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958.

Tokugawa, Ieyasu. *Laws Governing Military Households*. In *Sources of Japanese Tradition, vol 1.*, compiled by Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, pp. 326-329. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958.

Commentary:

Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 56-59. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Tied to a Pole (Boshibari), The Delicious Poison (Busu) and *Hiding the Badger (Kakushi-Danuki)* (ca. 1350)

Type of work: drama
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 8-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th (especially 9th)

Summary:

These three plays are some of the most famous works in the repertoire of kyogen, Japan's 600-year-old comic theater tradition. Performed as interlude pieces between the longer and more ethereal noh plays, kyogen brings emotional release and offers dramatic contrast. Most kyogen plays are short and simple, characterized by accessible humor and amusing depiction of the foibles of human nature.

In *Tied To A Pole*, a master ties up his two servants because he wants to keep the servants from drinking his *sake* while away from the house for the day. Even though one of the servants is literally "tied to a pole" he figures out how to get to the *sake*. The master returns to find his servants drunk, and they are so intoxicated that they do not realize that the master is listening to their nasty remarks.

In *The Delicious Poison*, a master orders his two servants to guard a barrel which, he says, contains deadly poison. Curiosity overtakes obedience and the servants taste the "poison," only to find that it is actually sugar. They proceed to eat to the bottom of the barrel, but fearing their master will become angry, the crafty pair invents an elaborate story that involves destroying the master's other valuable possessions, leading to an even more preposterous situation.

In *Hiding The Badger*, the battle of wits between master and servant continues. A master suspects his servant of poaching badgers and gets him drunk in order to find out the truth. Much of the humor of this story takes place through movement.

Themes:
Comic stereotypes of the stingy master and the clever servants.
The universality of humor--how and why is this story humorous?

Suggestions for the classroom:
Compare the play with present-day television sitcom shows and cartoons.

Comparisons can be made with Chaucer.

Points of discussion may include how the kyogen theater creates laughter by mocking the weaknesses of human nature and social relationships.

Students can stage the play themselves or create their own comedy using the technique of comic reversal in which the servant character outwits the authority.

Bibliography:
Kenny, Don, comp. *The Kyogen Book: An Anthology of Japanese Classical Comedies.* Tokyo: The Japan Times, 1989. *The Kyogen Book*, unfortunately out-of-print, contains all three of the plays and may be borrowed from the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

Brazell, Karen, ed. *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. This anthology contains plays and commentaries on works of noh, kyogen, bunraku and kabuki. *The Delicious Poison* is included.

Related works and Video:
Ortolani, Benito. Samuel Leiter (editor). *Japanese Theater in the World.* New York: Japan Society, 1997. This volume illustrates over 700 objects, covering the whole range of Japanese theater and its history from its ancient roots to contemporary theater. The companion video provides an excellent visual introduction to all forms of Japanese theater. The book and video may be borrowed from the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society

Atsumori (15th C) by Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443)

Type of work: drama
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-9
Grade level: 11th, 12th

Summary:
In the play *Atsumori*, a warrior-turned-monk recalls his past life as a warrior who renounced his status after slaying Atsumori, a brave youth of the Taira familyof his own son's age, during warfare between the Taira and the Minamoto clans.

Noh drama evolved in the early 14th century from earlier popular forms of theater and religious ceremonies. It is a deeply serious theater form that became closely identified with Japan's ancient warrior class. This is one of the approximately 240 plays comprising the noh theater repertoire.

The formal language and abundant footnotes may pose a challenge, but the themes of the play are universal and are handled in a poignant way that should be easy for students to understand.

Themes:
Remorse, forgiveness and reconciliation; the values and meaning of Buddhism that permeated the warrior consciousness.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This is a very good piece that ties together the curricula of literature and social studies. The play can be used effectively in a social studies classroom when read in conjunction with its source as told in *The Tale of the Heike*, acting both as background and as a foil for the noh version of the story.

In a drama class, this play can be read along side such works as *Agamemnon*, *The Odyssey*, *Oedipus at Collonus* or *The Inferno*. The use of masks and a "chorus" in noh could also be compared with Western theater forms.

Bibliography:
Brazell, Karen, ed. *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. This anthology contains plays and commentaries on works of noh, kyogen, bunraku and kabuki. *Atsumori* is included, pp. 126-142.

Zeami, Motokiyo. *Atsumori.* In *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, edited by Donald Keene, pp. 286-293. New York: Grove Press, 1955.

Zeami, Motokiyo. *Atsumori*. In *Japanese No Dramas*, edited and translated by Royall Tyler, pp. 37-48. London: Penguin Books, 1992.

Related works and video:

Hare, Thomas Blenman. “Three Plays of the Noh Theater.” In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 501-516. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

Keene, Donald, ed. *Twenty Plays of No Theatre*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.

Ortolani, Benito. Samuel Leiter (editor). *Japanese Theater in the World.* New York: Japan Society, 1997. This volume illustrates over 700 objects, covering the whole range of Japanese theater and its history from its ancient roots to contemporary theater. The companion video provides an excellent visual introduction to all forms of Japanese theater. This 2-hour video can conveniently be viewed in parts. The book and video may be borrowed from the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

Traditional Performing Arts of Japan: The Heart of Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku. Nippon Steel Corporation Vidoe J/V, 1987. This 38-minute video is an excellent introduction to three of the traditional forms of Japanese theater. Good for the classroom.

Sumidagawa (Sumida River) (15th C) by Zeami Motokiyo (c. 1400-1432)

Type of work: drama
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
A woman from the capital wanders the country searching for her 12-year-old son who was kidnapped by thieves trading in children. She crosses the Sumida River, far from her home in the eastern part of the country, only to discover that her son has died by the riverbank the previous year.

Noh drama evolved in the early 14th century from earlier popular forms of theater and religious ceremonies. It is a deeply serious theater form that became closely identified with the samurai Japan's ancient warrior class. *Sumidagawa* is one of the approximately 240 plays comprising the noh theater repertoire.

Themes:
The tragic loss of a loved one; a mother's grief at the death of a child; madness brought on by grief.

Suggestions for the classroom:
The author, Motomasa, made a broad allusion to Episode 9 in the classical work, *Tales of Ise* (10th century). This episode deals with a famous courtier crossing the Sumida River who observed the same birds that the grief-stricken mother saw while lamenting the loss of her child. Understanding the connection between these two works is not necessary for students, but gives the present-day reader some idea of the literary atmosphere in which the author framed his story of loss and grief.

Benjamin Britten based his opera, *Curlew River*, on *Sumidagawa*. Literature and drama students can examine both of these works.

Bibliography:
Zeami, Motomasa. *Sumidagawa*. In *Japanese No Dramas*, edited and translated by Royall Tyler, pp. 251-263. London: Penguin Books, 1992.

Other works of Noh theater and videos:
Brazell, Karen, ed. *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. This anthology contains plays and commentaries on works of noh, kyogen, bunraku and kabuki.
Hare, Thomas Blenman. "Three Plays of the Noh Theater." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 501-516. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.
Keene, Donald, ed. *Twenty Plays of No Theatre*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
Ortolani, Benito. Samuel Leiter (editor). *Japanese Theater in the World.* New York: Japan Society, 1997. This volume illustrates over 700 objects, covering the whole range of Japanese theater and its history from its ancient roots to contemporary theater. The companion video

provides an excellent visual introduction to all forms of Japanese theater. This 2-hour video can conveniently be viewed in parts. The book and video may be borrowed from the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

Traditional Performing Arts of Japan: The Heart of Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku. Nippon Steel Corporation Video J/V, 1987. This 38-minute video is an excellent introduction to three of the traditional forms of Japanese theater. Good for the classroom.

Narrow Road to the Interior (1689) by Matsuo Basho (1644-1694)

Type of work: diary/travelogue
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 5-7
Grade Level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
Narrow Road to the Interior is the travel diary of Matsuo Basho. In the spring of 1689, Basho and his disciple Sora left Edo (present day Tokyo) for a five-month, 1,233-mile trek to the northern and interior areas of Honshu, the main island of Japan, during which they visited places of natural beauty and places of significance in history. This travel diary written in a mixture of prose and haiku.

Note: *Oku no Hosomichi* is the Japanese name of this work. It has been has been variously translated as: *Back Roads to Far Towns, Narrow Road to a Far Province,* and *Narrow Road to the Far North,* among others.

Theme:
Finding truth in nature.

Suggestions for the classroom:
The book can be read in its entirety. but many of the sketches can stand on their own. Assign "Weather-exposed Skeleton" for students to explore the question of self-scrutiny in the search for identity in nature.

The life of Basho can be as interesting for students as his poetry--how does his work demonstrate his life as a poet?

Why is *The Narrow Road* considered a great work of literature? What makes a work "great" and who decides whether a work is great or not?

Compare Basho and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Bibliography:
Matsuo, Basho. *Narrow Road to the Interior.* In *Basho's Narrow Road: Summer and Autumn Passages*, with annotations and translated by Hiroaki Sato, pp. 38-155. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996.

Related works and Commentary:
Matsuo, Basho. "Learn From the Pine." In *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson and*

Issa, edited by Robert Hass, pp. 233-238. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994. This is Basho's commentary on the art and craft of writing poetry. Students may find this work inspiring and insightful into the world and thinking of Basho.

Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 69-73. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Shirane, Haruo. *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Basho.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Shirane, Haruo. "The Poetry of Matsuo Basho." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective: A Guide for Teaching*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 378-389 Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994. This is an excellent reference article for teachers and students that includes topics and questions for student homework and research assignments.

The Love Suicides at Sonezaki (1703) by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724)

Type of work: drama
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 9-10.
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
This play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon depicts the tragic love story of Tokubei, an honest young shop assistant, and his lover, Ohatsu. Their love is thwarted by the plans for an arranged marriage for Tokubei which he does not want to follow. In trying to break free from this situation, Tokubei is betrayed by a man he thought was his good friend, and is ruined financially. The only honorable option for him is to commit suicide, an act in which Ohatsu agrees to join him.

Themes:
Suicide is a last resort in issues of honor and ill-fated love. Concepts of dealing with dishonor and disgrace can be discussed. Students can discuss their own perceptions of suicide and definitions of true love.

The roles of women during the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) can be explored.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This straightforward play can be read out loud with various students taking the selected parts, including the narrator. Students can compose their own work for the puppet theater (bunraku) or the kabuki, using Chikamatsu's work as an example. Students can also rewrite the ending or add a scene to the play.

The concept of ill-fated love is prevalent in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. A comparative essay can be written addressing the works of Shakespeare and Chikamatsu.

Bibliography:
Chikamatsu, Monzaemon. *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki*. In *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, translated by Donald Keene, pp. 39-56. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

Related works and videos:
Keene, Donald. "The Love Suicides at Sonezaki." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 517-525. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

Ortolani, Benito. Samuel Leiter (editor). *Japanese Theater in the World.* New York: Japan Society, 1997. This volume illustrates over 700 objects, covering the whole range of Japanese theater and its history from its ancient roots to contemporary theater. The companion video provides an excellent visual introduction to all forms of Japanese theater. This 2-hour video can conveniently be viewed in parts. The book and video may be borrowed from the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

Traditional Performing Arts of Japan: The Heart of Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku. Nippon Steel Corporation Video J/V, 1987. This 38-minute video is an excellent introduction to three of the traditional forms of Japanese theater. Good for the classroom.

Chushingura: The Treasury of Loyal Retainers (1748) by Takeda Izumo, Miyoshi Shoraku and Namiki Senryu

Type of work: drama
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 2-10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
This play, written in 1748, is based on a series of true events that took place between 1701 and 1703. First created as a puppet play, the story was expanded to become a complex kabuki drama and has offered Japanese audiences as the basis of countless modern adaptations in theater, movies and television. The story centers on a group of 47 masterless samurai (*ronin*) whose lord was unjustly forced to commit suicide after being goaded into an altercation with a senior samurai official, an act that was viewed as a grave offense. The 47 samurai spent two years plotting to avenge the death of their lord, which they do by killing the official responsible for their lord's death. By this act the samurai upheld their ideals of loyalty but they were sentenced to death by the Tokugawa shogunate.

Themes:
The unconditional loyalty of the samurai; justice and revenge; integrity of character.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This work can be used in social studies classes when studying the Tokugawa period. The work is challenging, even to sophisticated high school readers, but can be used effectively if the students are well prepared.

Use as part of an assignment for a research paper on Tokugawa society informed by Confucian ideals of loyalty.

Bibliography/filmography:
Keene, Donald, trans. *Chushingura: The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, A Puppet Play*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

Kenji Mizoguchi. *47 Ronin*,

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*. pp. 77-80. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Related Films and Videos:
47 Ronin, Kenji Mizoguch., This is a 1942 film available as a two-part video, 219 minutes.
Chushingura (The Loyal 47 Retainers), Hiroshi Inagaki, 1962, 207 minutes.

Journal of My Father's Last Days (1801) and *A Year of My Life* (1819) by Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827)

Type of work: diary/narrative/poetry
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
Kobayashi Issa, together with Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) and Yosa Buson (1716-1783), is regarded as one of the great haiku masters in Japanese literary history. *A Year of My Life*, Issa's major prose work, was written after the deaths of three of his children. *Journal of My Father's Last Days* is Issa's record of the month he spent nursing his dying father and the bitter struggles he had with his stepmother at the time. Fear, disappointments, untimely deaths and a difficult life temper Issa's haiku. For all their sadness, Issa's poetry and prose can be easily comprehended and appreciated by high school students.

Themes:
Strong and mysterious powers of nature; death and transformation; life of animals.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Compare the life and work of Issa and Basho.

Compare the works of Issa and Machi Tawara's *Salad Anniversary* (1987).

Issa may be compared to Pablo Neruda and Walt Whitman.

Bibliography:
Kobayashi, Issa. *Journal of My Father's Last Days* and *A Year of My Life*, translated by Robert N. Huey. In *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson and Issa*, edited by Robert Hass, 197-229. Hopewell: The Ecco Press, 1994.

Kobayashi, Issa. *The Year of My Life*, translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 86-89. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Child's Play (1895-96) by Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-1896)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 5-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th; especially 11th and 12th

Summary:
Set in the pleasure quarters of the late Meiji era, this short story focuses on neighborhood adolescents who experience the beginning of adulthood. A gang of boys and one girl, once close-knit playmates, drift apart as they face the inevitabilities of growing up. Two characters in the story, Nobu, a boy following the path to priesthood, and Midori, a girl who will eventually become a prostitute in the licensed brothel quarters, hold mutual affection for one another but sadly realize that their paths will never cross as they are about to shoulder life's responsibilities.

Themes:
Adolescence and the coming of age (the reasons behind the separation of Midori and Nobu); social structure and the role of the family; the expectations demanded by parents and society, conformity, and rebellion; setting--the characteristics of the brothel quarter and street life during the late Meiji era.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This story can be used to augment a Social Studies curriculum in which the teacher discusses Japanese society during the turn of the century.

Bibliography:
Higuchi, Ichiyo. *Child's Play*. In *In the Shade of Spring Leaves*, translated by Robert Lyons Danly, pp. 254-287. New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1981.

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 108-111. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Botchan (1906) by Natsume Soseki (1867-1916)

Type of work: novel
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 6-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th; especially 9th and 10th

Summary:
Written and set during the turn of the century, the novel is about a young man from Tokyo nicknamed Botchan, or "young master," who moves to a remote fishing village to take up a teaching job. Alienated from his family, he leaves behind his beloved, aged servant. At the village, the brash but honest Botchan finds his students and colleagues dull, hypocritical and selfish. Using a universal sense of humor, these amusing characters are portrayed with warmth and affection.

Themes:
Character image--the lazy and defiant Botchan in comparison to the stereotype of Japanese people as polite and industrious; hypocrisy and cruelty; mood and social atmosphere in Japan during the early 20th century--what aspects of the novel reveal the efforts of the Japanese to incorporate Western ideas and things into their lives?; teacher/student relationships.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Compare Botchan with other characters from Western writing, such as Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, as well as Holden Caulfield from *Catcher in the Rye*.

If the work is too long, chapter 1, which deals with Botchan's youth, could stand alone as a character sketch.

Bibliography:
Natsume, Soseki. *Botchan*. Translated by Alan Turney. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1972.

The Razor (1910) by Shiga Naoya (1883-1971)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 8-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th; especially 11th and 12th

Summary:
Master barber Yoshisaburo is known to all of his customers as the finest barber around. Suddenly he falls ill, leaving his shop and his expert reputation to two inexperienced assistants. When an order arrives for a sharpened razor from a wealthy customer who is about to take a trip, Toshisaburo feels compelled to sharpen the razor himself, even though he is quite sick. Then suddenly a young man enters the shop for a quick shave and the situation becomes a recipe for disaster.

Themes:
Do a character study of Yoshisaburo, whose personality determines the action of the story; the positive and negative aspects of perfectionism; the psychology of repressed rage and violence.

Suggestions for the classroom:
The construction of this story lends itself to discussions of the use of foreshadowing, dramatic tension, mood and the atmosphere of the setting. How and when does the story reach its climax?

Bibliography:
Shiga, Naoya. *The Razor*. In *The Paper Door and Other Stories*, translated by Lane Dunlop, pp. 16-25. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1992.

Rashomon and Other Stories (1915) by Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 8-9
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
Rashomon and Other Stories contain six brief and highly readable stories. "In a Grove" presents a crime from five perspectives. "Rashomon" is an eerie tale of a desperate old woman surviving by pilfering the hair of corpses. "Yam Gruel" has a pathetic central character whose single ambition is to eat his fill of yam gruel. "The Martyr" tells a tale of virtue and renunciation. "Kesa and Morita" deals with questions of perception, infatuation and love. "The Dragon" questions the reliability of memory.

Themes:
Perceptions of realty and illusion; intent, meaning and perception.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This work can be used in literature, psychology and social studies classes, as Akutagawa leaves the reader to struggle to understand the motivations of the characters.

Students can use the author's various writing styles as models for their stories.

Bibliography and filmography:
Akutagawa, Ryunosuke. *Rashomon and Other Stories*. Translated by Takashi Kojima. New York: Liveright Publishing, 1970.

The remarkable 1950 film by Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon*, combines elements from two of Akutagawa's stories, "In A Grove" and "Rashomon."

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 142-144. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Related Films and Videos:
Rashomon, Akira Kurosawa, 1951, 89 mins.

The Shopboy's God (1919) by Shiga Naoya (1883-1971)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 5-8
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th; especially 11th

Summary:
Senkichi, an apprentice at a shop selling scales, is drawn to the expensive sushi shop after overhearing store clerks praise the restaurant. But finding himself too poor to afford sushi, Senkichi beat a shameful retreat from the shop. Witnessing the boy's disappointment, Awano, a member of the House of Peers, treats the boy to his desire. While Senkichi is devouring the sushi, Awano slips away, leaving behind the boy, who is later convinced that Awano must be the fox god.

Themes:
Japanese religion; the meaning of social status.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Discuss what Awano and Senkichi could have in common.

Discuss why having Awano appear to be the fox god is a consolation to Senkichi.

Have the students suggest other endings to the story. Why did the author choose this ending?

Bibliography:
Shiga, Naoya. *The Shopboy's God*. In *The Paper Door and Other Stories*, translated by Lane Dunlop, pp. 90-99. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1992.

The Izu Dancer (1927) by Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972)

Type of work: novel
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 6-7
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, especially 11th and 12th

Summary:
In the early 20th century, a 19-year-old boy meets a group of itinerant performers while travelling through the Izu Peninsula. He joins them in their journey and develops an affection for one of the younger female dancers. Mutual love does not transpire, and the youth returns to Tokyo. His tears are testimony of the fondness he feels for those he encounters during this brief journey.

Themes:
Adolescence and first love; relationships and behavior--formal and informal behavior; Japanese aesthetics as seen through the language and mood of the story; life in early 20th-century Japan, especially the social position and treatment of entertainers.

Suggestions for classroom activity:
Explore the ways in which the author sets the melancholic mood of the story, using geography and climate.

Discuss the author's delicate and poetic use of language.

Bibliography:
Kawabata, Yasunari. *The Izu Dancer*. In *The Izu Dancer and Other Stories*. Translated by Edward Seidensticker, pp. 9-38. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974.

Related Films and Videos:
The Izu Dancer (animated), Takasuka, 1986.

Late 20th Century

The Sea and Poison (1958) by Endo Shusaku (1923-1996)

Type of work: novel
On a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 10
Grade level: 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
While working in a military hospital during World War II, a young medical intern named Suguro is haunted by his involvement in experimental surgery conducted on American POWs. Suguro witnesses rivalry between doctors impeding care for patients as well as the cover-up of fatal malpractice. Confused, distraught and frustrated, Suguro finds himself resigned to circumstance and unable to escape the situation. This dark novel scrutinizes human weaknesses and ruthlessness.

Themes:
Issues of morality and ethics from medical, military, and wartime points of view; the dehumanizing and desensitizing of people; making a decision as an act of morality; ambition vs. morality.

Suggestions for classroom activity:
Character analysis of the key characters such as Suguro, Toda, "the old lady" and Hilda.

Discuss what the students would do under the same conditions in which the characters find themselves.

Bibliography:
Endo, Shusaku. *The Sea and Poison*. Translated by Michael Gallagher. New York: New Directions Book, 1992.

The Woman in the Dunes (1962) by Abe Kobo (b. 1924)

Type of work: novel
On a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 4-10
Grade level: 12th, advanced students

Summary:
An amateur entomologist on an expedition in a remote village is misled by locals and, against his will, becomes the helpmate/prisoner/companion of a woman whose life consists of shoveling sand for the welfare of her community. The man's response progresses from disbelief to anger to defiance, and finally, to resignation. The woman--a quiet, enigmatic figure--is simultaneously submissive and manipulative; both deferential and strong-willed. When given a chance to escape, the man chooses to stay in his prison/home.

Themes:
Mortality, the meaning of work, freedom, commitment, free will, power and endurance; the individual wants and needs vs. those of the community; the rights of the individual to pursue his or her own path; individual sacrifice.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Issues of resistance, collaboration and adaptation can be explored through the novel. This book, as well as Endo Shusaku's *The Sea and Poison*, can lead to good discussions of the issues facing people in such situations.

Though much of the "action" of the novel is interior, and the novel's sexual content is fairly explicit, mature students will find the novel accessible, provocative and a source for serious discussion.

Explore links to Western literature that students may be familiar with: the Sisyphus myth, the works of Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett.

Bibliography and filmography:
Abe, Kobo. *The Woman in the Dunes*. Translated by E. Dale Saunders. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964.

Screening excepts from Hiroshi Teshigahara's 1964 film adaptation of the novel can be very helpful to the students to visualize the setting of the story.

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 178-180. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.
Treat, John Whittier. "The Woman In The Dunes." In *Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective: A Guide for Teaching*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller, pp. 457-469. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

Related Films and Videos:
Woman in the Dunes, Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1964, 123 mins.

Black Rain (1966) by Ibuse Masuji (1898-1993)

Type of work: novel
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
Mr. Shigematsu is searching for a suitable husband for his beloved niece, who was contaminated by the radiation of the "black rain" that fell from the sky after the Hiroshima bombing. The story changes settings as Mr. Shigematsu reads his wartime diaries. Sections of the niece's diaries also appear in the work. Through these diary entries the reader experiences not only the terror of the bombing but also how people continued to cope and adjust under extreme conditions.

Themes:
The anticipation of death, death of loved ones; survival under extreme conditions; family and social structure in the face of unprecedented upheaval during and after the war; continuation of traditional values in marriage and family despite the war's devastation.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Given the length and complexity of this work, the teacher must be well prepared to discuss the myriad of historical, cultural and social issues imbedded in the story. The novel can lead to discussions on philosophy, religion, cultural values and historical events.

Bibliography and filmography:
Ibuse, Masuji. *Black Rain*. Translated by John Bester. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1969.

Shohei Imamura's excellent 1989 film adaptation, *Black Rain*, can be effectively used (in sections) to enhance students' understanding of this very moving story.

Commentary:
Rimer, J. Thomas. *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, pp. 151-154. New York: Kodansha International, 1999.

Related Films and Videos:
Black Rain, Shohei Imamura, 1988, 123 mins.

Human Ashes (1966) by Oda Katsuzo (b. 1931)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 8-10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
An adolescent boy survives the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. As he stumbles out of the munitions factory where he was working at the time of the bombing, he comes face-to-face with the horrors of the devastation. He doesn't realize the cause of the tragedy until hours later. His thoughts turn from his astonishment at the vast numbers of people suffering around him to concerns for the fate of his own family members.

Themes:
The effects of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the meaning of war in terms of individuals.

Suggestions for the classroom:
The use of the first person to tell this harrowing account of the war gives American students the opportunity to place themselves in a situation they may never consider. The tone, which emphasizes the confusion and seemingly apathetic perspective of the boy, could be addressed, as well as the use of imagery, such as fire, ashes and black rain which covers the bodies of the victims of the bombing. The graphic descriptions of the burned victims are also powerful tools for discussion.

Bibliography:
Oda, Katsuzo. *Human Ashes*. In *The Crazy Iris and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath*, edited by Kenzaburo Oe, pp. 63-84. New York: Grove Press, 1985.

Hiroshima (1946) by John Hersey
The Empty Can by Kyoko Hayashi, also included in *The Crazy Iris*, a collection of 11 short stories that marked the 40th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Related Films and Videos:
Barefoot Gen, 1993,

South Wind (1978) by Tsushima Yuko (b. 1947)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 7-9
Grade level: 11th, 12th

Summary:
The story centers on the annual correspondence between Akiko, a young mother, and Toyokichi, an elderly man whom Akiko met once while on a brief holiday. At the time of their initial encounter, Akiko was married and the mother of a four-year-old daughter. Years later, her life is drastically altered by divorce, estrangement from her daughter and ex-husband, an affair with a married man and the birth of a son. Struggling with the physical and psychological difficulties of caring for a child alone, Akiko is reluctant to share the uncertainty of her new life with this elderly chance acquaintance.

Themes:
The relationships between men and women and how these relationships define women's roles in the contemporary world; the meaning and responsibility of paternity and maternity.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Short stories by Banana Yoshimoto such as "Lizard" and "Helix" have parallels to "South Wind" in terms of their insights into the relationships between men and women. "Silent Traders" is another short story found in *The Shooting Gallery*. Both stories examine the lives of women with conflicting demands and emotions complicated by single parenthood, illicit affairs, loneliness and uncertainty.

The character of Toyokichi takes on mythic proportions as the story progresses. What does he represent in Akiko's imagination?

Students may discuss women's continuous struggle for independence and equality. It might be particularly interesting to compare Akiko to women in earlier works, such as *The Tale of Genji*, *The Gossamer Years* and *The Love Suicides at Amijima*.

These works may be used in literature and social studies classes, as well as psychology, health education and group guidance classes as they pose cross-cultural questions for today's young people.

Bibliography:
Tsushima, Yuko. *South Wind*. In *The Shooting Gallery and Other Stories*, translated by Geraldine Harcourt, pp. 22-34. New York: New Directions Books, 1997.

The Samurai (1980) by Endo Shusaku (1923-1996)

Type of work: novel
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 5-10
Grade levels: 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The Samurai is a work of historical-fiction centering on Rokuemon Hasekura, a low-ranking member of a Japanese mission sent abroad in the early 16th century. A four-year sojourn lets him experience the cultures of Mexico, Spain and Rome. These Western cultures serve as mirrors in which to reflect the samurai warrior philosophy. The ambitious Franciscan missionary's attempt to convert Japan into a Christian country ultimately fails and the protagonist returns to Japan disillusioned and spiritually broken.

Themes:
The connection between commercialism and religion during the age of expansion; the Catholic Church's attempts to spread Christianity to Japan; the political, religious and economic impact of the spread of trade and religion; comparisons of European and Japanese sensibilities.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This book is an informative and entertaining way to examine Japanese feudal society from a Japanese point of view, but requires concentration as well as interest in the time period. In its entirety, the book can be assigned to older students who are interested in global studies and/or religion as extra reading for credit or as part of a research paper.

Bibliography:
Endo, Shusaku. *The Samurai*. Translated by Van C. Gessel. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

Moonlight Shadow (1986) by Yoshimoto Banana (b. 1964)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 7-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
Moonlight Shadow is a very moving short story about two grief-stricken teen-agers--Satsuki, a girl, and Hiragi, a boy, whose respective boyfriend and girlfriend perish together in an automobile accident. The story centers on Satsuki, whose boyfriend was also Hiragi's brother. Satsuki is haunted by her memories of their relationship, and Urara, a magical young woman, helps her recover from her loss.

Yoshimoto is a particularly readable writer who addresses significant themes in an off-hand, approachable manner. She is a writer who is accessible to the reluctant reader but rich enough in arresting images and ideas for the advanced reader.

Themes:
Love and loss; growth, forming emotional bonds and overcoming obstacles; overcoming grief and depression; the supernatural in everyday life; food is a very strong image in this story; the transition Yoshimoto establishes in her themes between tradition and modernity offers rich material for discussion; Kurt Vonnegut's work, especially *Sirens of Titan* and *Slaughterhouse Five*, offer comparisons of magical realism

Bibliography:
Yoshimoto, Banana. *Moonlight Shadow*. In *Kitchen*, translated by Megan Backus, pp.109-152. New York: Washington Square Press, 1988.

Kitchen (1987) by Banana Yoshimoto (b. 1964)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (no suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
This poignant story tells of a warm friendship between two young adults who cope with the deaths of their loved ones. The plot centers around Mikage, a college girl, who meets Yuichi and his transvestite mother, Eriko, after the death of the grandmother who was her last remaining relative. After being welcomed into the home of Yuichi and Eriko, Mikage recover from her loss. Following Eriko's murder, Mikage helps Yuichi, just as he had helped her, to recover from his own tragic loss.

Themes:
Coping with death; the friendship and independence of young adults.

Suggestions for the classroom:
Discuss the significance of the kitchen in Mikage's life. Why is it a special place for her?
Write a personal essay on a significant place.

Bibliography:
Yoshimoto, Banana. *Kitchen*. In *Kitchen*, translated by Megan Backus, pp. 3-105.
New York: Washington Square Press, 1988.

The Honey Flower by Atoda Takashi (b. 1935)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The protagonist reflects on his bittersweet childhood memory of surviving World War II, when he and his family escaped the air raids in Tokyo by moving to a rural village during the summer of 1944. There, the ten-year old protagonist befriends a girl named Kei who becomes the object of his affection. Kei and the narrator play in Kei's favorite honey flower garden, where they find brief refuge from the war. Then, air raids on the village bring about Kei's death.

Themes:
Memory and recollection of childhood; the symbolism of the honey flower garden in contrast to the destruction of war; survival during the war--ways in which children tried to cope in the midst of war; the guilt of those who survive the war; evanescent beauty and reincarnation.

Bibliography:
Atoda, Takashi. *The Honey Flower*. In *The Square Persimmon and Other Stories*, translated by Millicent M. Horton, pp. 105-120. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1991.

Salad Anniversary (1987) by Tawara Machi (b. 1962)

Type of work: poetry
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (excellent): 10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
A collection of modern tanka poems written by Machi Tawara. The author touches thematically upon all of the emotions and concerns of people of all ages: insecurity, the pursuit of happiness, the ups and downs of love affairs and loneliness. The poems are connected thematically and are written in vignettes that lure the reader into wanting to know how some of these situations are resolved. This is poetry with universal appeal.

Suggestions for classroom activity:
Compare the poems with the works of classical poets in the *Man'yoshu* and *Kokinshu*, and other early poets, such as Basho and Issa.

Select a poem and elongate it through the use of the same theme and format.

Teach the structure of tanka poems.

Bibliography:
Tawara, Machi. *Salad Anniversary*. Translated by Juliet Winters Carpenter. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989. This book is available in a bilingual edition in the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

The Yamada Diary (1988) by Takeno Masato (b. 1966)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 9-10
Grade level: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
The story focuses on a high school boy who impulsively purchases a computer game software called "The Yamada Diary." He finds the game to be unusually similar to his own life, and eventually becomes obsessed with the game as he uses it to vent his repressed frustration.

Themes:
Computer-age generation; the daily life of urban high school students in Japan; rebellion against conformity and respect of authority in Japan; the relationship of son and mother; the breakdown of family life; the blurring of "reality" and "virtual reality"; escaping from the routine of everyday life through fantasy.

Suggestions for classroom activity:
Have students create a video game based on their own lives or analyze the content of any video game with which they are familiar.

Examine Japanese comics (*manga*) and animations (*anime*).

Discuss the work in conjunction with stories by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Franz Kafka.

Discuss what the author's intention was in writing the story--is it a "cautionary tale?"

Bibliography:
Takeno, Masato. *The Yamada Diary.* In *Monkey Brain Sushi*, edited by Alfred Birnbaum, pp. 279-304. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991.

TV People (1989) by Murakami Haruki (b. 1949)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 8-9
Grade level: 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
A young Tokyo businessman's apartment is invaded by a group of small, silent creatures who disrupt the order created there by the narrator's meticulous wife. The creatures leave behind a TV set. Gradually the TV begins to infiltrate the other aspects of the narrator's life and ultimately he becomes one of the TV people.

Themes:
The significance of electronics in modern society; the personality of the main character; values and lifestyle of a young urban married couple.

Suggestion for the classroom:
Engage students in a discussion on the effect that television and media have on people's lives.

The story can be used in a sociology or health course as well as a literature course, as it asks some of the same questions raised in Marie Winn's book, *The Plug-In Drug*.

Read this story with "An Account of My Hut" by Kamo no Chomei. Discuss what one needs to be connected with the world and what one can exist without.

The narrator mentions that his lack of interest in machines has made people question whether he was a Luddite. The students could research Luddites and discuss whether there are reasons to resist the "invasion" of technology.

Have students explore the way the author draws an image of the mundane juxtaposed with the extraordinary/fantastical.

Bibliography:
Murakami, Haruki. *TV People*. In *Monkey Brain Sushi*, edited by Alfred Birnbaum, pp. 5-28. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991.

Unexpected Muteness by Oe Kenzaburo (b. 1935)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 10
Grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
At the end of World War II, American soldiers arrive at a Japanese village whose inhabitants are encountering the occupying army for the first time. While several of the soldiers are swimming, the shoes belonging to their Japanese interpreter disappear. Convinced the shoes were stolen by one of the villagers, the interpreter sets out to find the thief. The situation escalates into a deadly confrontation with the villagers. The Americans depart from the village and its silent inhabitants, leaving the unsolved tragedy behind them.

Themes:
The many different relationships in this short story make for worthwhile discussion, including the relationship between the villagers themselves; the interpreter and the villagers; the soldiers and the interpreter; and relations between the soldiers and the villagers with particular attention to their reception in the beginning in contrasting with how the villagers respond to their departure. Communication is a major theme of the work--examine the ways all the characters interact, both verbally and non-verbally; the usage of different languages is also interesting to consider.

Suggestions for the classroom:
This work is great for literature and social studies classes, and a useful story for examining the components and complexities of war in general: the participants; the inhumane acts and atrocities that are committed; their absurdity; and the ways in which they evolve.

Bibliography:
Oe, Kenzaburo. *Unexpected Muteness*. Translated by William Wetherall. *Japan Quarterly* (January-March 1989): pp. 35-44. A copy of this short story is available at the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

Flame Trees by Kizaki Satoko (b. 1939)

Type of work: short story
Suitability on a scale from 1 (not suitable) to 10 (very suitable): 6-9
Grade level: 10th, 11th, 12th

Summary:
In 1963, Makiko and her husband are spending a year in Pasadena, California. The reader eventually learns that Makiko, who grew up in Manchuria, was orphaned at the age of six. Her mother died and her father was taken away to a work camp in Siberia where he is presumed dead. The terror of being alone and abandoned still haunts Makiko in her adult life. Then, the birth of a son allows her to come to grips with her fears and reintegrate her life.

Themes:
Immigration/expatriation--all of the characters are living in the U.S. but have come from other parts of the world; the ability to have the "double consciousness" of a temporary foreign resident can be relevant to students in New York; family life; the psychology of the main character's trauma; war memories; images that have resonance to inner life--sun, fire and flame trees.

Bibliography:
Kizaki, Satoko. *Flame Trees*. In *The Phoenix Tree and Other Stories*, translated by Carol A. Flath, pp. 47-121. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1990.

Anthologies of Japanese Literature

We recommend the following anthologies for classroom use. All volumes are available for loan at the Educators Resource Center, free of charge.

Birnbaum, Alfred, editor. *Monkey Brain Sushi: New Tastes in Japanese Fiction*. New York: Kodansha International, 1991. Selections of daring and off-beat stories from contemporary authors such as Murakami Haruki and Takeno Masato. Includes *TV People* and *The Yamada Diary*.

Gessel, Van C. and Tomone Matsumoto, editors. *Showa Anthology: Modern Japanese Short Stories*. New York: Kodansha International, 1985. A collection of short stories from distinguished authors such as Ibuse Masuji, Inoue Yasushi, Abe Kobo and Oe Kenzaburo.

Keene, Donald, editor. *Anthology of Japanese Literature from the earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. NY: Grove Press, 1988.
A compilation of stories, essays, poems, plays and diaries dating from the ancient era to the mid-19th century. Includes excerpts of classics such as *The Pillow Book*, *Tale of Genji* and *Love Suicides at Sonezaki*.

Keene, Donald, editor. *Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology. NY: Grove Press, 1989.*
A companion and continuation of Keene's anthology of early literature.

Oe, Kenzaburo, editor. *The Crazy Iris and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath*. New York: Grove Press, 1985. A collection of short stories focusing on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945.

Japanese Theater

Brazell, Karen, editor. *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Contains plays and commentaries on works of noh, kyogen, bunraku and kabuki. Includes *The Delicious Poison*.

Keene, Donald, translator and editor, *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Ortolani, Benito. Samuel Leiter, editor. *Japanese Theater in the World.* New York: Japan Society, 1997. This volume illustrates over 700 objects, covering the whole range of Japanese theater and its history from its ancient roots to contemporary theater. The companion video provides an excellent visual introduction to all forms of Japanese theater. The book and video may be borrowed from the Educators Resource Center at the Japan Society.

Tyler, Royall, translator and editor, *Japanese No Dramas*. London: Penguin Books, 1992.