



The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature: From Restoration to Occupation, 1868-1945 (Modern Asian Literature Series) (Volume 1)

J Rimer and Gessel

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This comprehensive anthology collects works of fiction, poetry, drama, and essay-writing from a pivotal time in Japanese history. In addition to their literary achievements, the texts reflect the political, social, and intellectual changes that occurred in Japanese society during this period, including exposure to Western ideas and literature, the rise of nationalism, and the complex interaction of traditional and modern forces. The volume offers outstanding, often new translations of classic texts by such celebrated writers as Nagai Kafu, Shimazaki Toson, Natsume Soseki, Kawabata Yasunari, and Yosano Akiko. The editors have also unearthed works from lesser-known women writers, many of which have never been available in English.

Organized chronologically and by genre within each period, the volume reveals the major influences in the development of modern Japanese literature: the Japanese classics themselves, the example of Chinese poetry, and the encounter with Western literature and culture. Modern Japanese writers reread the classics of Japanese literature, infused them with contemporary language, and refashioned them with an increased emphasis on psychological elements. They also reinterpreted older aesthetic concepts in light of twentieth-century mentalities. While modern ideas captured the imagination of some Japanese writers, the example of classical Chinese poetry remained important for others. Meiji writers continued to compose poetry in classical Chinese and adhere to a Confucian system of thought. Another factor in shaping modern Japanese literature was the example of foreign works, which offered new literary inspiration and opportunities for Japanese readers and writers.

Divided into four chapters, the anthology begins with the early modern texts of the 1870s, continues with works written during the years of social change preceding World War I and the innovative writing of the interwar period, and concludes with texts from World War II. Each chapter includes a helpful critical introduction, situating the works within their literary, political, and cultural contexts. Additionally, there are biographical introductions for each writer.

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