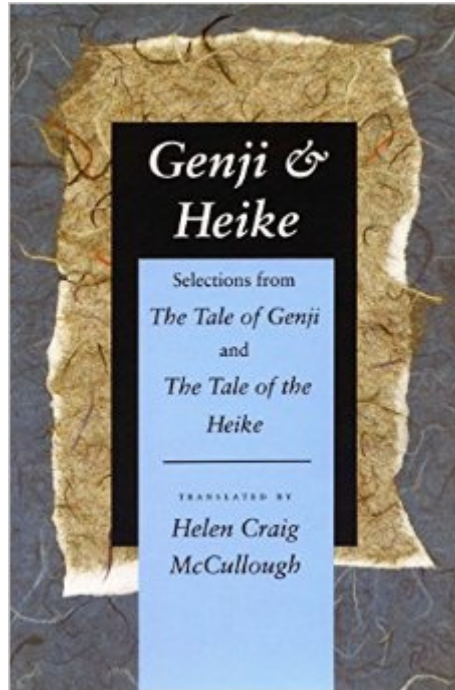


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Genji & Heike: Selections From The Tale Of Genji And The Tale Of The Heike



Synopsis

The Tale of Genji and The Tale of the Heike are the two major works of classical Japanese prose. The complete versions of both works are too long to be taught in one term, and this abridgement answers the need for a one-volume edition of both works suitable for use in survey courses in classical Japanese literature or world literature in translation and by the general reader daunted by the complete works. The translator has selected representative portions of the two texts with a view to shaping the abridgments into coherent, aesthetically acceptable wholes. Often called the world's earliest novel, The Tale of Genji, by Murasaki Shikibu, is a poetic evocation of aristocratic life in eleventh-century Japan, a period of brilliant cultural efflorescence. This new translation focuses on important events in the life of its main character, Genji. It traces the full length of Genji's relationship with Murasaki, the deepest and most enduring of his emotional attachments, and contains all or parts of 10 of the 41 chapters in which Genji figures, including the "Broom Tree" chapter, which provides a reprise of the themes of the book. In romanticized but essentially truthful fashion, The Tale of the Heike describes the late twelfth-century political intrigues and battlefield clashes that led to the eclipse of the Kyoto court and the establishment of a military government by the rival Minamoto (Genji) clan. Its underlying theme, the evanescence of worldly things, echoes some of the concerns of the Genji, but its language preserves many traces of oral composition, and its vigor and expansiveness contrast sharply with the pensive, elegant tone of the Genji. The selections of the Heike, about 40 percent of the work, are taken from the translator's complete edition, which received great acclaim: "this version of the Heike is superb and indeed reveals to English-language readers for the first time the full scope, grandeur, and literary richness of the work."¹⁵¹; Journal of Asian Studies

For both the Genji and the Heike abridgments, the translator has provided introductions, headnote summaries, and other supplementary materials designed to help readers follow the sometimes confused story lines and keep the characters straight. The book also includes an appendix, a glossary, a bibliography, and two maps.

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Customer Reviews

I disagree with the reviewer who thought Dr. McCullough's translation is unwieldy. I have read Waley, Seidensticker and McCullough and I only wish McCullough had printed a full version. It is difficult to present tenth century ideas in a form comprehensible to late 20th century Westerners. I think Dr. McCullough does a fantastic job, and I encourage readers to read her abridged version of the Tale before attempting the full version by any other translator. To suggest that Dr. McCullough take "slightly more poetic licence [sic] in order to make it easier [sic] to read" is missing the point of translation. If you want to read the results of "taking more poetic license", read Waley. But know that he messed up the chronology and threw out an entire chapter because it "didn't fit." Murasaki Shikibu wrote that chapter for a reason. We should not disregard the work of this paragon and progenitor of Japanese fiction simply because it "doesn't fit" with our idea of how a story should read. It is a masterpiece, and Helen Craig McCullough's translation is accurate AND readable.

A fantastic collection of both works. Absolutely beautiful text. Loved every page. Such a good story, such moving poetry, such a great read.

These are the kinds of things I enjoy reading and this book has done a good job with translating. I enjoyed this a lot.

This was a great read. The book was in great condition too. Read this for history class and thoroughly enjoyed it

Recent publications have rendered Helen McCullough's volume almost obsolete. We now have three complete English translations of The Tale of Genji: those by Waley, Seidensticker, and Royall Tyler. (Considering accuracy and readability, I prefer the Seidensticker translation.) For those who want an abridged Genji, both the Seidensticker and Tyler translations are readily available in

abridged form, and both are superior to McCullough's abridgement in the volume under review. Burton Watson's new translation of the most important parts of The Tales of the Heike completely eclipses the three complete English translations (by Sadler, Kitagawa/Tsuchida, and McCullough) in readability and in incorporating a valuable bibliography, and renders McCullough's abridgement, in the volume under review, obsolete. In short, my recommendations are Seidensticker's Tale of Genji, either complete or abridged (but by all means read the complete Genji if you can), and Watson's The Tales of the Heike.

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