

# Humanities University Study Guide

## LIT 532 Japanese Literature

### Required Texts

Bedford Anthology of World Literature, Books 1-6. Boston: Bedford-St. Martins, 2004.

UNIT	WEEKS	TOPICS	READINGS
I	1	<b>Ancient Literature</b> Introduction Man'yōshū (8 <sup>th</sup> century)	Book 2, 1010-1018 Book 2, 1018-1044
		Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: tanka, hanka, chōka, elegy
		Essay Topics	E1. Please provide an overview of the Man'yōshū, its contents, its forms of poetry. E2. Please describe the life and works of Hitomaro. E3. Please describe what Hitomaro is observing, thinking, feeling in "When He Passed the Ruined Capital at Omi." How does the poem invoke a sense of sadness? E4. In "On the Death of His Wife: I and II," what does the narrator feel and do when his wife dies? How does the poet use images from nature to convey feelings and ideas? E5. Please describe the life and works of Okura (1035) E6. In Okura's "Longing for His Son Furuhi," how does the poem express a sense of grief and loss upon the death of his son? What are some of his memories, and what feelings do they evoke? E7. Please describe the life and works of Ōtomo no Yakamochi E8. In "Lament Addressed to His Son-in-Law, Fujiwara Nakachiko," what is the subject of the poem? How does the poem function to console the person to whom it is addressed? Elegies are a vehicle for acknowledging, addressing, and validating collective grief, and they simultaneously offer consolation (a tactic for using the grief to effect communal bonding, and to motivate one to reach out to others).
	2	Kokinshū (905)	Book 2, 1044-1058
		Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: tanka
		Essay Topics	E1. Please provide an overview of the Kokinshū and the forms of poetry contained there. E2. What is the editorial direction of the Kokinshū? Why do you think that it could be considered a textbook of poetry as well as examples of poetry? E3. Describe the thematic arrangement of the Kokinshū anthology. E4. Please provide an overview of the principle authors. E5. Please provide a history of the Japanese system of writing. E6. In "381: Parting from someone" from Book VIII: Poems of Parting, what are the feelings expressed? How does the poet use the idea of color and dye to convey an emotion? E7. In the poems in Book XII on love, how do the poems describe the feelings of lovers? The poems contain allusions to disrupted and restless sleep. How does that condition heighten the overall sense of longing and desire?
	3	Sei Shōnagon (966-1017)	Book 2, 1059-1086

Author Please write a brief author biography.

Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of key stories and include any ideas and themes.

Literary Terms Please briefly define key literary terms: zuihitsu ("random jottings")

Essay Topics E1. In "Especially Delightful is the First Day," what is being discussed?  
E2. The Pillow Book belongs to the genre of "random jottings." How do they create an impression? How do they explore human nature?  
E3. Describe the author's use of descriptions. How do they bring about a mood or a feeling in the reader?

4 Murasaki Shikibu (973-1030)

Book 2, 1086-1147

Author Please write a brief author biography.

Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes.

Literary Terms Please briefly define key literary terms:

Essay Topics E1. In Tale of Genji, who is Genji's true love? How does he feel toward her?  
E2. To what does one speaker compare "bits of driftwood"? What is the significance?  
E3. What are Genji's feelings toward the women with whom he has affairs?  
E4. What kind of tradition does Genji establish, and how do his sons carry it on?

**II**

5 **Middle Ages**  
Tale of Heike (1371)

Book 2, 1148-1174

Author Please write a brief author biography.

Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes.

Literary Terms Please briefly define key literary terms: gunki monogatari (war tales)

Essay Topics E1. In "The Initiates' Chapter," what announces the coming of autumn? Explore the concepts of honor and duty.  
E2. What do the joint of bamboo pillars recall? What causes the tears at the reunion of the Imperial Lady and the Retired Emperor? What is the significance?  
E3. How does Tale of Heike reflect upon human frailty?  
E4. How does Tale of Heike show the impact of fate and/or fortune on individuals?

6 Zeami Motokiyo (1364-1443)  
Atsumori

Book 2, 1175-1179  
Book 2, 1180-1186

Author Please write a brief author biography.

Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical

scenes.

- Literary Terms Please briefly define key literary terms: Noh Drama
- Essay Topics E1. Why does the priest seek Atsumori? Why does the priest not expect music from the reapers? What is the significance to the play?  
E2. What do Atsumori and Kumagai achieve in the course of the play? When the young samurai is killed in the Genpei War, what are some of the values that are brought to the reader's attention?  
E3. Describe key characteristics of Noh drama and describe how and where they appear in Atsumori.

### III

- Early Modern Japan**
- 7 Tokugawa Era Book 4, 624-630  
Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) Book 4, 631-649
- Author Please write a brief author biography.
- Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of key stories and include any ideas and themes.
- Literary Terms Please briefly define key literary terms: "stories of the floating world"
- Essay Topics E1. In "What the Seasons Brought the Almanac-maker," according to the story, what is fall?  
E2. How does Moemon at first avoid and then get into trouble at his aunt's? Who appears to Osan in a dream?  
E3. How does "What the Seasons Brought the Almanac-Maker" exemplify the "floating world"?  
E4. Describe how the stories address the tension between individual aspirations and social norms and expectations.
- 8 Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) Book 4, 650-684  
The Narrow Road through Backcountry
- Author Please write a brief author biography.
- Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes.
- Literary Terms Please briefly define key terms: haiku, Zen Buddhism, renga, kasen
- Essay Topics E1. According to Basho, what does a pilgrimage or long journey entail? What is the purpose?  
E2. What remains of warriors' dreams? What is the significance of this?  
E3. Describe how Basho's poetry evokes deep emotion.  
E4. Explore the possibility that Basho's quest was to achieve complete absorption of one's ego into the infinite and gorgeous universe.
- 9 Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724) Book 4, 685-718  
The Love Suicides at Amijima
- Author Please write a brief author biography.
- Literary Analysis Please provide a brief description of plot, themes, main characters, character analysis of the main character, critical scenes.

Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: jōruri (puppet plays); Kabuki; sewamono (domestic play)	
Essay Topics	E1. Who are the lovers? How does Tahei hope to win Koharu in act 1? Why does it matter? E2. How do the lovers cast off their ties to the world? What does this indicate to the reader? E3. Describe how the play explores human feelings. What are the techniques that are unique to the domestic play? E4. What do the suicides suggest about attitudes about life, death, suicide, and sacrifice?	
<b>IV</b>	<b>Modern Japan</b>	
10	Meiji Period Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848) Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) The Dancing Girl Higuchi Ichio (Higuchi Nitsuko) (1872-1896) The Thirteenth Night	Book 5, 1070-1076 Book 5, 1076-1083 Book 5, 1083-1102  Book 5, 1103-1118
Author	Please write a brief author biography.	
Literary Analysis	Please provide a brief description of key stories and include any ideas and themes.	
Literary Terms	Please briefly define key terms: novel, Meiji	
Essay Topics	E1. In Higuchi Ichio's "The Thirteenth Night," what does the arrival foreshadow? E2. How are Meiji men and women viewed in "The Thirteenth Night"? What are their dominant characteristics? E3. Describe the tension between a yearning for freedom and resignation to one's fate of conformity that occurs in "The Thirteenth Night."  E1. In Ōgai's The Dancing Girl, what was Ota's experience of Germany? E2. How does the story represent the awakening of the modern self? E3. How does "The Dancing Girl" explore tensions between East and West?	
11	Tanizaki Junichiro Aguri	Book 6, 460-472
Author	Please write a brief author biography.	
Literary Analysis	Please provide a brief description of the story and include any ideas and themes.	
Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: feminism	
Essay Topics	E1. Describe the two visions of the feminine that occur in Aguri E2. What does the change in Okada's figure do? Who does not notice Okada's physical decline? How is Okada a figure of Japanese womanliness? E3. Describe the tension between the modern and the traditional.	
12	Kawabata Yasunari "The Moon on the Water" "Snow"	Book 6, 659-671

Author	Please write a brief author biography.	
Literary Analysis	Please provide a brief description of the stories and include any ideas and themes.	
Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: Neo-Sensualism	
Essay Topics	E1: Please discuss the pursuit of beauty in life in Kawabata's post-war novels. E2: Describe the dying man's mentality and experience in "The Moon on the Water"? E3: Discuss the need for solitude and escapism in "Snow."	
13	Tamura Ryuidhi	Book 6, 529-532
Author	Please write a brief author biography.	
Literary Analysis	Please provide a brief description for each poem: poetic form, subject, figurative language, and impression on the reader.	
Essay Topics	E1: Describe the connection between the defeat of the Japanese and "October Poem." E2. Discuss the themes in "A Vertical Coffin" and "October Poem." E3. Find examples of repetition and discuss the impact on the reader.	
14	Abe Kobo "The Red Cocoon" and "The Stick"	Book 6, 914-923
Literary Analysis	Please provide a brief description of the stories and include any ideas and themes.	
Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: surrealism, absurdism, alienation	
Author	Please write brief author biography for Abe Kobo.	
Essay Topics	E1: Discuss the use of surrealism in the work of Abe Kobo. E2. Explain the idea of metamorphosis in "The Red Cocoon" and "The Stick"? E3. Discuss themes of identity and alienation in Abe Kobo's works.	
15	Takenishi Hiroko The Rite Oe Kenzaburo Hiroshima Notes	Book 6, 967-971 Book 6, 971-990 Book 6, 765-766 Book 6, 766-769
Literary Terms	Please briefly define key literary terms: existentialism, essay	
Author	Please write brief author biographies for Takenishi and Oe.	
Literary Analysis	Please provide a brief description of the story, the main theme, the main characters, character analysis of the main character (Aki).	
Essay Topics	E1: How do the characters respond to a traumatic experience? How do they try to avoid feeling loss and sorrow? What is the significance of "The Rite"? E2. "The Rite" contains elements of realism. Please provide examples. Please list descriptions of daily life.	

Literary Analysis Please provide an overview of the essay, Hiroshima Notes.

E1. Please discuss existentialism in Oe. Please defend your position with examples.

**V**

16 **Finals**  
Review, Essay, Exam