The Tale of Genji Study Guide

The Tale of Genji by Murasaki Shikibu

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Introduction

Murasaki Shikibu's epic-length novel, *The Tale of Genji*, probes the psychological, romantic and political workings of mid-Heian Japan. The novel earned Murasaki Shikibu notoriety even in the early 11th century, some six hundred years before the printing press made it available to the masses. Court society, which served as the subject of the novel, sought out chapters. Ladies-in-waiting and courtiers even pilfered unrevised copies, according to legend. Some thousand years later, Murasaki Shikibu and her novel continue to delight an enthusiastic audience. Stamps, scrolls, comic books, museums, shower gel, movies, parades, puppet plays, CD-ROMS: Murasaki Shikibu and her creation *Genji* have achieved National Treasure status in Japan and admiration all over the world.

The tale spreads across four generations, splashed with poetry and romance and heightened awareness to the fleeting quality of life. Murasaki Shikibu's tale of love, sex, and politics explores a complex web of human and spiritual relationships. This focus on characters and their emotional experience, as compared to plot, makes the novel easily accessible to the modern reader. It explains, in part, why many scholars consider *Genji* to be the world's first great novel.

Readers through the ages have especially admired Murasaki Shikibu's depiction of the Heian court society's deep aesthetic sense. Beauty□in flesh, flowers, sunsets, musical notes□moved and influenced the society. The title character, Genji, flourishes in this atmosphere. He is a master of speech, poetry, music, manners, dress.

Many Japanese scholars cite as an influence Chinese poet Po-Ch-I's classic narrative poem, *The Song of Unending Sorrow*. Murasaki Shikibu writes in her diary of reading the poet's work to the empress. She also refers to it several times in *The Tale of Genji*. Importantly, the novel also marked Japan's liberation from Chinese influence. According to Richard Bowring in *Landmarks of World Literature: The Tale of Genji*, "Japan had just emerged from a time of substantial Chinese influ-ence and was going through one of its periodic stages of readjustment, during which alien concepts were successfully naturalized. *The Genji* is thus the product of a native culture finding a truly sophisticated form of self-expression in prose for the first time."

The Tale of Genji has had a pervasive influence on later Japanese and world-wide art. It has inspired Noh theater, waka poetry, scroll paintings, pop music and dances. It has had an especially profound influence on Japanese literature. Court fiction for hundreds of years after openly modeled itself after Genji. Present-day writers, including Kawabata Yasunari in his 1968 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, still cite *The Tale of Genji* as a great influence.

Author Biography

Murasaki Shikibu wrote the long novel *The Tale of Genji*, a diary, a collection of short lyric poems, and assorted poems found only in royally commissioned anthologies.

Very little is known for certain about her life. Much of her biography is gleaned from *Murasaki Shikibu Diary* and a set of autobiographical poems she left behind. She may have been born as early as 973, but possibly as many as five years later. She died some time between 1013 and 1031. Accepted wisdom has it that Murasaki Shikibu died around her fortieth year.

Murasaki Shikibu was born in the Japanese capital of Kyoto. Her father, Fujiwara Tametoki, was a member of a minor branch of the nation's most powerful family. Heian Japanese custom deemed it bad manners to record the names of well-born ladies. Shikibu refers to her father's post in the Board of Rites. Murasaki, which literally means "violet," probably refers to the character in her own novel. Before she began writing *Genji*, she seemed to have been known as To Shikibu.

Murasaki Shikibu's mother died when she was still a child. Her father was a well-known scholar, and other ancestors were accomplished poets. She grew up in her father's house, where she was educated alongside her brother. Murasaki Shikibu profited from her family's artistic and scholastic pedigree, as well as from the circumstances of her education. She learned all the feminine arts which would have been expected of her, but also developed a great command of Chinese and Japanese literature, as well as Buddhist writings. These pursuits were generally reserved for men.

Murasaki Shikibu married at about the age of twenty, but her husband died a year later. She had one daughter. Murasaki Shikibu probably began writing *Genji* before 1005, when she was appointed lady-in-waiting to Shoshi, the consort of Emperor Ichijo. Shoshi's father, Michinaga, had surrounded Shoshi with a brilliant group of court ladies, and Murasaki Shikibu may have been included because parts of *Genji* had already been circulated and admired. Her activities at Shoshi's court are detailed in the diary, which primarily deals with the birth of two sons to the empress between the fall of 1008 and the beginning of 1010.

Living among aristocrats, Murasaki Shikibu probably was privy to gossip of real court people. That knowledge, along with her cultured upbringing and sensitivity to human nature, helped Murasaki Shikibu to create a masterpiece of literature.

Long-standing debates about the chapter orders and whether the work is of a single author will likely never be solved. Except for fragments, the earliest surviving texts are from at least two centuries after the date of composition. The book circulated in the court in Murasaki Shikibu's days, not in complete manuscript form but rather as chapters. Thus, it's unlikely readers experienced the chapters in the chronology Murasaki Shikibu intended. The proper chapter order debate is complicated by the fact

that some chapters discuss events that happened at the same time, instead of advancing the plot chronologically.

Serious scholars do not question that Murasaki Shikibu wrote most□if not all□of *The Tale of Genji*. However, the discrepancies in style and tone, as well as poetic technique, have convinced some that isolated chapters were written by somebody else. The final ten chapters , in which the mood turns noticeably more pessimistic, are the subject of the most skepticism.

Plot Summary

Chapters 1-41

The Emperor and Kiritsubo give birth to the he novel's hero, Genji, in 11th century Japan. Kiritsubo, the Emperor's true love, is of the lower ranks of court. The slander and petty jealousy of the other palace wives contribute to the mental anguish which results in her early death, when Genji is but three years old.

Genji from the start impresses everybody with his unparalleled beauty. He is exceptional in every way. He is raised in the court. Despite his father's unflinching devotion, indeed because of it, the boy receives the name Genji, which classifies him as a commoner. The Emperor knows that without influ-ential maternal relatives, Genji's position as a crown prince (or a son picked to become future Emperor) would be tentative, especially after his own death. Since the Kokiden faction will most certainly cause his son problems, it seems more practical to secure for him a court ranking (a political but not royal position) and to encourage his studies. A Korean soothsayer's prediction that the boy will never become emperor plays a part in this decision.

Genji, or Minamoto, roughly translated means "commoner." It carries negative connotations, that the bearer of the name has been dispossessed of a potential birthright because of an embarrassment or scandal. But the name Hikaru Genji, by which he becomes known, means "the shining prince."

The Emperor's grief over Kiritsubo is eased when he meets her look-alike, Fujitsubo. She becomes the Emperor's official consort, and Genji grows up in her presence. Genji is drawn to Fujitsubo for much the same reasons as his father. The Emperor seeks a substitute for his wife, and Genji seeks a mother. Right after Genji's coming-of-age ceremony, at the age of twelve, Genji is married off to the Minister of the Left's daughter, Aoi. She is a Fujiwara. Aoi turns out to be cold and unsympathetic, and Genji spends most of his time at the Palace in his mother's apartments (though he is now denied access to her). His inattentiveness to his wife inspires resentment from his father-in-law. Aoi's brother, To no Chujo, becomes both Genji's close friend and bitter rival.

Five years pass between the first and second chapters. At the age of seventeen, Genji is already an experienced lover. His countless affairs occupy much of his time and energy. He seems to have a penchant for difficult situations, that or he is too weak to avoid them. Genji seduces Yugao, a former mistress of To no Chuo's, and she dies of a mysterious ailment shortly after. Lady Rukujo's living ghost seems to be responsible. Though this is Lady Rukujo's first appearance, it is understood that her jealousy (she is one of Genji's many partners) is the root cause.

Genji, now eighteen, discovers Murasaki in the hills north of Kyoto. He is there seeking a cure for a persistent illness. Though just a girl of ten, Murasaki looks hauntingly like Fujitsubo. She turns out to be her niece. A series of negotiations in which Genji tries to

adopt her fail. He won't be denied, though, and before her father, Prince Hyobu, can make his proper claim, Genji spirits her away to his household. He begins her education, grooming her to be his future romantic partner. Meanwhile, Genji's persistent efforts to be with Fujitsubo finally come to fruition. She becomes pregnant as a result of their one sexual encounter, but the son's real heritage must remain secret. Fujitsubo resolves not to allow Genji even the slightest access to her in the future, though the Emperor, unaware of the clandestine relationship, sometimes brings the two together. Everybody assumes the son, who eventually will be Emperor Reizei, to be the current Emperor's. Genji is filled with shame because he betrayed his father and fears that the secret will be revealed.

Genji's captivation with the young Murasaki further alienates him from Aoi. Meanwhile, he becomes involved with one of Kokiden's sisters, Oborozukiyo, who is engaged to the heir apparent (one of the crown princes). This is another very dangerous liaison because Kokiden sees Genji as a threat to her son, the crown prince.

Aoi becomes pregnant. As her pregnancy progresses, her health fails. Lady Rukujo again seems to be the culprit. Their baby is named Yugiri. When Aoi dies, Genji goes into a deep mourning, despite the couple's weak relationship. He consummates his relationship with Murasaki, thus making the transition from her father figure to her husband. The Emperor, Genji's father, dies, and the power shifts to the Minister of the Right and Lady Kokiden. As Genji's power and influence decline, he seems to mature. But then the Minister of the Right catches his daughter, Oborozukiyo, and Genji in the act of making love. Lady Kokiden is determined to punish Genji.

Feeling the force of Kokiden's wrath, Genji decides to go into a self-imposed exile in Suma. By now Genji has entered his twenty-sixth year. He is surrounded in the rustic seaside retreat by only a few attendants. The capital denizens almost all grieve the loss of Genji, who by now is well-known for his many gifts and charm. Genji at first maintains hearty correspondence with many friends, but after a while only Murasaki and To no Chujo ignore Kokiden's wishes to have him left alone. Genji increasingly longs to return. During a fierce storm Genji dreams that his dead father has told him to put out to sea. Coincidentally, or by divine intervention, depending on one's reading, the ex-Governor of Harima visits Genji. The entourage goes to Akashi. The ex-Governor promotes a relationship between Genji and his daughter. The affair is consummated shortly before the young emperor officially pardons Genji, who heads home.

Back in the capital, Genji's half brother, the emperor, abdicates his thrown to Fujitsubo's son (secretly Genji's, too). Genji is restored to the court. Akashi has a baby girl back in Akashi. Genji's genuine sympathy for women is shown through several incidences: he agrees to raise the dying Lady Rokujo's daughter and also helps the safflower princess out of miserable conditions. Genji's sensitivity and artistic talents are further displayed during a painting contest. He wins hands down by displaying works he painted during his exile. Though just thirty-one years old, Genji already begins contemplating his retirement.

Genji's domestic life now takes the forefront. He builds a series of elaborate complexes to house his many love interests and children. While he is less reckless than in his youth, Genji continues to pursue new affairs, such as with his cousin Princess Asagao. Murasaki begins to worry that Genji has grown tired of her. Fujitsubo dies and a period of mourning follows.

Yugiri (Genji's son with Aoi), now twelve, enters court life. Yugiri is prevented from pursuing a relationship with To no Chujo's second daughter Kumoi-no-kari (his cousin). Genji gets a larger estate and finally all his wives can share the same address. He covertly manages to bring Yugao's daughter (by To no Chugo) to his palace, in part so that she might avoid a bad marriage. Now thirty-six, Genji seems content. He remains loyal to his many female relations.

Tamakazura, Yugao's daughter, becomes popular among suitors. Genji, too, begins to fall in love with her, but is rejected. Genji thinks of revealing her identity to To no Chugo, but then begins tutoring her on the koto and decides to leave things as they are. Yugiri feels a pang of desire but thinks Tamakazura is his sister. Then he eavesdrops on Genji acting in an unfatherly-like manner to her. To no Chujo meanwhile discovers a long-lost daughter, a most inelegant woman, living in Omi.

When it comes time for Tamakazura's initiation ceremony, Genji reveals her true parentage to To no Chujo. With this fact now well known, Tamakazura's relationships begin to change. She soon marries Higekuro, unhappily. Higekuro's former wife, Murasaki's stepsister, goes into a jealous fit and pours burning incense all over him.

Now thirty-nine, Genji prepares for his Akashi daughter's initiation ceremonies. The magnificent ceremony reminds To no Chujo that his own daughters have not been as successful. He rues his decision to separate his daughter Kumoi from Yugiri, who by now has achieved distinguished rank. At a memorial service for his late mother, the late Princess Omiya, To no Chujo approaches Yugiri about a reconciliation. Subsequently, at a wisteria-viewing party, the two resolve their differences. That very night, Yugiri consummates his relationship with Kumoi, and soon they move into the refurbished Sanjo mansion.

The retired Emperor Suzaku wants to become a Buddhist monk. He convinces Genji to marry his favorite daughter, Nyosan, so that she'll be well taken care of. Her installation at Rokujo worries Murasaki, who resolves not to show any signs of jealousy. Nyosan is of higher birth than Murasaki but is unrefined in every other way, and again Genji appreciates his true love all the more. Kashiwagi is intent on having an affair with Nyosan.

Meanwhile, the little Akashi princess has a baby boy. During her labor, she meets her old grandmother and learns that she was not born in the capital. This fact, which marks her as being of unsophisticated ancestry, serves to humble her.

Murasaki beseeches Genji to let her become a nun, but he refuses. Genji gives Nyosan music lessons to prepare for a performance honoring the retired Emperor Suzaku's

fiftieth birthday. Murasaki again refuses to be jealous, and Genji contrasts her disposition to that of Aoi and Lady Rokujo. Murasaki falls ill, the work of Lady Rokujo's dead ghost. Once the ghost is lured into the open, Genji says prayers to appease her anger. Murasaki begins to get better.

While Genji is occupied with Murasaki, Kashiwagi seduces and impregnates Nyosan. Genji discovers the truth of the matter, and Kashiwagi's shame overwhelms him. He falls ill and dies before seeing his son. Nyosan delivers a boy who looks nothing like Genji and then becomes a nun. Yugiri takes responsibility for the care of his friend Kashiwagi's wife, Ochiba. Yugiri, who has been a near model of the faithful husband, soon makes unwanted advances toward Ochiba. When he returns to Kumoi, a letter arrives from Ochiba's mother. In order not to raise Kumoi's suspicions, Yugiri refuses to open it. Ochiba's mother assumes her daughter has been jilted, and soon after dies. Ochiba blames Yugiri, who alternately tries to console and seduce her. Kumoi, hurt and angered at her husband, takes her two daughters and moves back to her father's house.

In Genji's fifty-first year, Murasaki begins formal preparations for her death. She dies. Genji's grief is unbearable. He enters seclusion at Nijo, disperses his property, and destroys his old letters. His death scene is not rendered, but starting with Chapter 42 the story shifts to the third generation.

Chapters 42-54

Nine years have passed. Kaoru, distinguished by a strong and distinct odor, declines to pursue any romantic relationships, though he is desired by many court women. He becomes curious about the circumstances of his mother's flight to the nunnery. Niou does pursue romantic relationships. He, in fact, deliberately competes with Kaoru.

Kobai, To no Chujo's oldest surviving son, takes over as head of the Fujiwara clan. He has married Prince Hotaru's widow, Makibashira. They have a son together, Hotaru's first. He tries, as is tradition in the Fujiwara clan, to marry his daughters into the imperial family. Higekuro has died and left Tamakazura with two daughters. He has instructed her to marry them into the imperial family. After some competition for the daughters, the retired Emperor Reizei, who has long been interested in Tamakazura, accepts Himegimi as a replacement. She bears him two children. His other women, Chujo and Akikonomu, become jealous. The present emperor, angry that he wasn't given first choice of daughters, settles for Wakagimi. This turn of events turns people against Tamakazura, who is accused of arrogance in thrusting two daughters into the imperial line.

Prince Hachi, the Eighth Prince, is introduced. Living in exile, his wife, late in her life, gives birth to two daughters then dies. He lives a pious life in a meager cottage at Uji, though his parental responsibilities prevent him from taking religious vows. Kaoru begins studying Buddhist scriptures with Prince Hachi. They become fast friends. Kaoru becomes attracted to Prince Hachi's eldest daughter. On a subsequent visit, Kaoru

learns from Ben-no-kimi, daughter of the late Kashiwagi's nurse, the true story of his birth.

Prince Hachi dies shortly after giving his daughters final instructions to beware of casual suitors. Kaoru, upset that he failed to properly honor his true father, longs to become a monk. Kaoru and the two daughters mourn the loss, and so does Niou, though he obviously wants to use the occasion to seduce the princesses. Kaoru catches a glimpse of the women through a screen and is impressed by their beauty. Kaoru pursues the elder princess and promotes Niou to the younger. The elder, though, interprets her father's final wishes to mean that she should make no attachments at all. She tries to convince Kaoru to marry her younger sister. But Kaoru helps Niou, a known philanderer, to seduce the younger sister. They marry in secret. Around the same time, Niou takes another wife. He barely manages to spend any time with Nakanokimi. The elder daughter, Oigimi, becomes distraught over her role in the disastrous affair. She grows ill and dies.

Kaoru comforts Nakanokimi and comes to think of her as a replacement for Oigimi. Though Kaoru never consummated his relationship with the elder sister, he mourns for her as deeply as he would for a beloved wife. Nakanokimi respects this sensitivity. Niou plans to move Nakanokimi to the capital. Kaoru refuses to become involved with Yugiri's daughter Rokunokim because of his infatuation with Nakanokimi.

Nakanokimi becomes pregnant. Kaoru continues to console her. He begins to wish he'd taken Nakanokimi as his own when he had the chance. Niou suspects that his friend and his wife's relationship is no longer platonic. Nakanokimi, to avoid future jealousy, directs Kaoru to pursue Ukifune, an illegitimate half sister who looks like Oigimi. He does. Even though Kaoru marries above his station, he obsesses over Ukifune.

Ukifune's mother carefully supervises her daughter's interests while her husband thinks mostly of his own daughters. A guard lieutenant withdraws his proposal to Ukifune when he learns that she isn't a blood relative to the powerful governor. Ukifune, humiliated, is stored away at her half sister Nakano-kimi's house. Niou, finding her alone, nearly manages to force himself upon her. Ukifune's mother, in the name of security, takes her to an unfinished cottage. Kaoru finally manages a meeting with Ukifune and soon takes her to his villa at Uji, where he begins her social education.

Niou learns of Ukifune's situation. One night, in the darkness, Ukifune confuses Niou for Kaoru. He spends the night and the next day with her. Soon, Niou is as obsessed with her as Kaoru. They both send her letters professing their love and laying out plans to take her to a secret hideaway. Niou kidnaps Ukifune, who falls in love with him. Ukifune becomes depressed over her situation, burns her love letters and throws herself in the Uji River. Her body is discovered downstream, at the grounds of an abandoned mansion.

On the grounds of a nunnery, Ukifune recovers her health. An exorcism helps her recovery. She refuses to engage in even polite exchanges with a suitor. As she recovers

her memory, she realizes that Kaoru is of greater worth than Niou. She convinces the bishop to administer her vows and so renounces the world.

Kaoru learns of the situation. Much disturbed, he goes to the nunnery to talk with Ukifune. She refuses to acknowledge anybody, even her brother who delivers a message from Kaoru.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

At an indeterminate time in Japan's history, an unnamed emperor is in love with a lady of lesser rank much to the chagrin of the grand ladies at court. Although this unnamed lady is very beautiful and is a member of the upper classes, she is not fully highborn and is something of a dirty little secret for the emperor. However, the secret is not well-kept, and everyone at court knows that this lady is the emperor's favorite. This frustrates the other royal wives, who are of higher social station, so they routinely speak against this upstart woman who holds the emperor's affections.

As time goes on and the lady frequently spends her evenings with the emperor, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son she names Genji. Just like the mother, Genji becomes the emperor's favorite, more favored than the crown prince. Of course, this creates even more jealousy in the court, especially in the mother of the crown prince, and causes the other ladies to speak against the new favorite even more.

Eventually Genji's mother grows weary of the constant rumors and stress that come with her position as the emperor's beloved, and she falls ill and dies. The emperor, badly shaken by this, gives her a lavish funeral and posthumously promotes her to a higher rank. Unfortunately, none of these actions relieve the emperor's deep longing for his lost beloved and he continues to mourn for her. Longing for a piece of this lady, he brings the boy, Genji, into his home so that he can be raised well.

The years pass and Genji grows into a boy of remarkable beauty. In fact, he is so impressive and attractive that even the women who speak against him are awed at his beauty. Furthermore, a Korean physiognomist examines him and says that he should be put into the highest station possible. The emperor wishes to name Genji as the crown prince, but knows this is probably a bad idea. After all, Genji does not have any influential relatives and naming him the heir to the throne may only cause Genji trouble that he does not need. The emperor decides to keep his eldest son as the heir and, to protect his favorite son, he gives Genji the status of a commoner.

The years pass and the emperor still cannot forget Genji's mother, leaving him in a state of eternal mourning for his lost love. Though the emperor tries to sate himself with other women, none of them match up to Genji's mother until he meets Fujitsubo, a woman who closely resembles Genji's mother. Seeing this beautiful, graceful woman before him, the emperor is immediately pleased. However, Genji is also taken by this new woman who so resembles his mother and he is constantly trying to catch glimpses of her. Though he cannot remember his mother's face, he hears about the resemblance from others and, as a result, he is constantly trying to stay by her side.

Though Genji is quite in love with this new woman at the court, the Minister of the Left has other plans. He wishes to marry his only daughter Aoi to Genji, though neither Genji

nor Aoi have any particular desire to marry the other. However, the marriage is arranged and, upon Genji's coming of age, they are wed. Unfortuntely, the marriage does not change Genji's longing for Fujitsubo, who ends up marrying the emperor, and he continually thinks about this woman whom he cannot have.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The emperor is able to keep so many women at court because polygamy was allowed in Japan at the time that Murasaki Shikibu wrote this story. The emperor and many other men, including Genji, are able to be married to several women at once.

Though many of the women at court speak against Genji's mother, Kokiden is named particularly. Since Kokiden is the mother of the crown prince, she holds a great deal of influence, not only at court, but also over the man who will one day wear the crown. This foreshadows the problems that Genji will face, because of Kokiden's influence, when the crown prince becomes emperor.

The perfections of Genji's physical body are symbolic of the perfections of his mind and spirit. Because he is so beautiful on the inside, he is also beautiful on the outside, and vice-versa. People are drawn to his physical beauty because it also shows a distinct beauty throughout his being. This point is furthered when the Korean physiognomist looks at him and tells the emperor that Genji should be promoted to the highest position possible. After all, the best ruler is a good person and the physical body was, in the East Asia of the time, considered to be an outward expression of the character.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The young Genji lives with his wife at his father-in-law's house in Sanjo, but cannot resist his urge to stray from his wife. Though he detests the promiscuity that he sees all around him at court, he engages in a few trysts of his own. As Genji explores the wider world while meeting and sleeping with new women, he spends less and less time at Sanjo.

As well, Genji strikes up a friendship with To no Chujo, the son-in-law of the Minister of the Right. To no Chujo is not adverse to sleeping around, and is frequently out and about, getting into amorous adventures with several ladies.

One day, when Genji and To no Chujo are at court, they discuss the qualities of women and how difficult it is to find excellent women. To no Chujo has a great deal to say on the matter, and as he talks, two young courtiers enter. Of course, on a topic such as women, there are many different viewpoints, so To no Chujo invites the two newcomers to give their own thoughts on the qualities of women. Having had plenty of experience in the matter, the two young men talk about their own experiences with women and the ways in which they can be categorized. However, the men cannot come to any conclusions about what the ideal woman is and instead merely list off the many faults that can be found in women. So instead of looking for an ideal woman, the two young courtiers merely recommend that Genji and To no Chujo try out many women just to enjoy each type for their own, distinct pleasures.

Though Genji listens to the men and their stories, his thoughts turn back to Fujitsubo. Genji believes that she has all of the merits and none of the faults that the courtiers describe and he longs for her intensely. Unfortunately, it seems that he cannot have her, since she is married to the emperor.

The next day, Genji returns to Sanjo and enjoys himself immensely in the company of several women there. The route he took home passed through the realm of the Lord of the Center, a god who does not permit trespassers, and he must not stay the night at Sanjo. One of the men there offers Genji a place to stay with the governor of Kii, and Genji happily accepts.

Once Genji arrives at the governor's house, he hears that the governor of Iyo, the father of the governor of Kii, is there with his wife, Utsusemi, who is described as a "high-spirited lady" (44). Of course, after hearing about this woman, Genji is eager to spend time with her even though but he has no way of actually meeting her properly. After she has gone to bed, he sneaks into her room and lies down next to her.

Utsusemi is obviously shocked and she wants him to leave but Genji manages to talk her into listening to him and spends the night attempting to convince her to sleep with him. She consistently refuses and sends him away before dawn arrives.

Genji is very disappointed, but he is also very excited by this fascinating lady. After all, she refused his advances and the difficulty of wooing her is interesting all in itself. So Genji enlists her brother to help him sleep with the governor's wife.

Utsusemi's brother proves to be a tireless and resourceful agent for Genji. He passes messages and helps Genji sneak into her room at night, though she still refuses him. After all, she is lowborn and it is bad for a lowborn woman to attract the eye of a man from a noble line. As well, she is already married and she does not want to dishonor herself or her husband by sleeping with Genji. Though the lady enjoys Genji's attentions and would like to give in to him, she remains chilly to his advances and pushes him away time after time.

After yet another failed attempt, Genji is frustrated and sad. He feels that he is a failure because he cannot woo the lady he desires. Instead of spending the night with the lady, he sleeps beside her brother.

Chapter 2 Analysis

When the courtiers are speaking to Genji and To no Chujo, they talk a great deal about "hidden flowers" -- accomplished, sweet, kind women who can be found in unexpected places. After hearing about these women, Genji is intrigued by the idea of such women and, in the subsequent chapters, most of the women that Genji seduces are, in fact, hidden flowers.

It is night when Genji lies next to Utsusemi, so he cannot actually see her. In fact, the women in the story are very careful to never allow men to see them, so they often speak to men from behind curtains so that the men will not actually come face to face with them. This is also the case with Utsusemi, who Genji only visits at night so he does not actually see her face until the next chapter, despite the fact that he works so hard to spend time in her company.

Utsusemi's brother is willing to help Genji try to sleep with his sister because the unnamed brother has no prospects at court. Since the boy's prospects are so bad, he needs help from someone who has connections. Since Genji is very well connected, he is trading his sister's honor for a future.

The final scene of this chapter seems to be a scene of homoeroticism. In fact, it is not entirely clear whether Genji is sexually attracted to the boy or if he merely enjoys the boy's friendly company. The undertones of homosexual desire are certainly evident and may show that Genji is open to having sex with anyone. If, in fact, this is the writer's intention, it is one of the most openly sexual episodes in the book, as the rest of the book works very hard to cover up actual intercourse between characters.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Genji wakes up the next morning, still lying next to the boy, and he is disappointed. After all, he has been rebuffed time after time and has never had to deal with this sort of failure before. So, he tries for one more meeting with Utsusemi.

The day finally comes when Genji might be able to see this woman who has turned him away and her brother, once again, leads him into the house. While Genji is sneaking around the palace, he hears other women say that the lady is in another room playing a game, so Genji slyly works his way past the curtain to finally lay eyes on this woman who has so frustrated him. Seeing two women there, he realizes that the woman he is after is beautiful, if rather chatty and frivolous. However, Genji is happy that he finally has a chance to see this woman, so he has her brother arrange another nighttime meeting with her.

Once the plans are in place, Genji slips into the house and crawls into bed with the one woman in the room. Unfortunately, it is the wrong woman, since Utsusemi had a bad feeling about things and walked outside. The woman that Genji does join is more than willing to give herself up, and Genji would rather save face than admit that he made a mistake. They enjoy each other that evening but decide that they cannot continue to see each other or send messages.

After the boy helps Genji leave the house, Genji explains what happened and concludes by telling the boy that he has failed too many times. Then Genji leaves the boy, the lady, and the woman he slept with. Unfortunately, all of them miss him terribly.

Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter shows Genji's magnetic ability to attract people and make them desire to be near him. Though Utsusemi does not want to sleep with Genji, she is still fascinated by him and wants him to keep sending her messages. Also, the boy who has helped him in his failed endeavor to seduce Utsusemi is crushed when Genji casts him aside. Finally, the woman he sleeps with by mistake is quite taken with Genji and, apparently, his skills in bed, but her longing goes unrequited. All of these characters love Genji in their own way, and they are hurt terribly when he withdraws his affections from them.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Genji goes to visit his former nurse, Koremitsu, who has become a nun. While he is visiting the woman who cared for him as he was growing up, he asks her about Yugao, a girl who lives in a house near the nunnery.

After making some investigations, Koremitsu reports that she has not seen Yugao, but has written to her. She reports that Yugao writes in a very respectable hand. Genji, who is always on the lookout for new conquests, attempts to contact her but his attempts are unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, Genji also strikes up a romance with a lady living in the palace of Rokujo. After some initial resistance, he finally sleeps with the Rokujo lady, but he finds that finally fulfilling his desires leaves him cold. Indeed, the most attractive thing about her had been her ability to push Genji away and this sudden reversal of her intentions takes all the excitement out of their relationship. As a result, Genji stops writing to the Rokujo lady.

With one desire fulfilled, Genji turns back to Yugao and is suddenly successful. In fact, he is so successful that he spirits Yugao away so that they can spend time away from the house and all of her attendants. Yugao does not leave everybody behind. She brings along Ukon, her lifelong attendant.

Once they reach their final destination, a rundown old palace, Genji and the girl talk frequently, but Genji is, at first, too ashamed of his actions to actually sleep with her. His reservations eventually disappear and the two of them happily share a bed.

Then, one night Genji dreams that the Rokujo lady stands over him and tells him that he has left her for a girl of no account, despite the fact that Genji is on her mind all the time. Shocked and surprised, Genji awakes and calls for help. Then, as the alarm is raised, he returns to the bed where he and the girl were sleeping and finds Ukon lying next to Yugao. Yugao, however, is not breathing.

Unsure of what to do, he tells a servant to go fetch Lord Koremitsu, Genji's companion and frequent messenger. Once he arrives, he tells Genji that he must leave in order to keep the rumors under control. Genji's carriage is called and the two men place the body in it. Unfortunately, Ukon is inconsolable and seems ready to die of grief but is helped into the carriage and the funeral procession proceeds to Genji's palace at Nijo.

At Nijo, Yugao is given all the proper funeral rites. Having lost this woman to the grave, Genji is deeply saddened. It seems that he has fallen deeply in love with the woman, and the fact that she is gone has left him unable to function. He falls ill from grief and is bedridden for three days.

After recovering from his illness, Genji sends messages to his former loves, if only to lessen his guilt. In this way, Genji is able to recover from his sense of loss and he returns to his old self, if a sadder version.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In this chapter, Genji is shown to be a sort of Japanese version of Don Juan. He tallies conquests for the simple act of doing so and becomes disinterested in any woman who is interested in sleeping with him. Instead of being a man of perfection as he was before, he is now a fickle man with a straying eye. The reason for this is given in the last lines of the chapter, where the author writes that he is, "accused of romancing, of pretending… that he had no faults." (89) Thus, the author is attempting to make Genji less of a godlike being and more like a real human.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Genji is stricken with malaria and, after attempting several cures, is finally recommended to a sage who lives up the mountains. Eager to rid himself of the disease, Genji goes up to see the man who works his cures upon Genji.

As Genji is under the care of the sage, he happens to see Murasaki, a beautiful young girl who is only 10 years of age, living at a nearby nunnery. Despite Murasaki's age, Genji is suddenly taken with a desire to have this young girl as his own and make her his wife when she grows into a woman. Thus, with this new purpose, Genji is determined to take Murasaki under his care in order to instruct her properly, so he speaks with the bishop who runs the local nunnery.

The bishop is against the idea. The girl's father intends to take her back to his home and, furthermore, she is far too young to go off with a stranger.,especially a man such as Genji, who is a well-known womanizer.

Genji is undaunted by the bishop's refusal and visits with Shonagon, the woman caring for the girl, but she also refuses him. However, Genji is still not dissuaded from his desire to take the girl under his wing and he continues to insist that he be given custody of Murasaki.

This impasse continues until the time draws near for the father to take custody of Murasaki again. Genji, who has been unable to convince either the bishop or Shonagon to allow him to take the girl, finally barges into the house where Murasaki is staying and kidnaps her. He also demands that anyone who wants to come along to care for the girl get into his carriage immediately. Unable to stop Genji from having his way, Shonagon reluctantly joins Genji in his carriage. Genji also swears the women in the house to absolute silence so that, when Murasaki's father comes for the girl, the women say that Shonagon took her away.

Murasaki is suddenly very frightened of Genji and, for a while, she sternly resists his charms. But since she is still very young, she eventually warms toward Genji and she lets him become a regular playmate. For his part, Genji is very warm and happy around Murasaki and he gives her dolls and toys and anything else that her heart desires. In fact, Genji decides that he can be much more open with this girl than he could with a daughter of his own. So, as Genji and Murasaki spend time together, they are both very happy together.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The fact that Genji falls ill with malaria symbolizes the failure of all of his perfection. Not only is he a womanizer, but he becomes a kidnapper too. This is an allusion to the

mind-body connection which is central in much of Asian medicine: the malaria that infects his body shows that his spirit is also infected. In fact, according to Asian medicine, his spirit has to be infected in order to allow illness to enter his body.

When Genji barges into Murasaki's room to see her sleeping, despite the fact that the women there try to stop him, it foreshadows his kidnapping of Murasaki. Since he was willing to violently force his entrance once, he shows that he is not afraid of using violence and force to get what he wants.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Genji is still forlorn over the death of Yugao and he attempts to find another woman to replace her. When he hears a report of a possible prospect, Genji sends notes to her. However, the affairs never go anywhere, generally petering out quickly after only a note or two.

In this sad state of affairs, Genji strikes up a friendship with Tayu, a daughter of one of Genji's former nurses. Tayu provides him with reports about a princess living in very poor conditions. Unfortunately, Tayu cannot report anything about the looks or disposition of the Safflower Princess. He has never seen her face, but Genji is not dissuaded and immediately asks Tayu to act as his go-between with the Safflower Princess.

After passing notes back and forth, the princess finally gives in and permits Genji to visit her but, like all proper women, hides behind a curtain as the two of them talk. Obviously, Genji is frustrated at the shy manners of the princess so, during their interview, he pulls the curtain aside. However, the princess seems to sense that this is what Genji has in mind and she quickly runs out of the room before Genji can get so much as a glance of her face.

Genji, frustrated once again, returns to his home, but still sends messages to the Safflower Princess. However, the princess continues to rebuff him, leaving him ever more unsure of what to do with a woman who is so abominably shy. In fact, even his best efforts to see her face have not been successful, but he still holds out hope that she is a remarkable beauty.

Unfortunately, Genji's hopes and expectations are far from true. On a visit to the Safflower Princess's home, he convinces her to come outside to gaze at the morning sky and, while she is there, Genji gets a quick look at her face. Unfortunately, the princess is not attractive at all, and one might go so far as to call her ugly. However, her hair is very pretty and Genji pauses to admire it. Unfortunately, she is too thin, too misshapen, and her large, red nose is far too ridiculous for him to ever be attracted to her. So Genji gives up the idea of adding the Safflower Princess to his list of conquests.

Genji will not leave the princess entirely, however. In fact, Genji becomes the princess's protector and benefactor, sending her and her attendants several gifts that will help them survive in their straitened circumstances. The Safflower Princess, of course, is deeply grateful for the gift of his friendship, if not his love.

With this episode completed, Genji returns to his home in Nijo, where Murasaki is staying, and the two of them have fun with each other once again. Genuinely attached

to her protector, Murasaki is a loving and warm daughter figure to Genji, even though Genji still has plans to marry this very young woman.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The courting of the Safflower Princess illustrates a side of Genji's character that is not seen in the preceding chapters. Instead of following through with his plan to seduce the Safflower Princess simply for the chance to add another name to his list, his lack of attraction to the princess actually turns him into a friendly human being. Genji is not acting the role of the womanizer with the Safflower Princess, but acting the role of protector of the helpless and downtrodden.

The reversal of Genji's attitude toward the princess provides a symbolic contrast to Genji's intentions toward Murasaki. With the princess, Genji is changing from the lover to the father figure. He begins the chapter attempting to woo the princess, but by the end he is acting as her protector and instructor. However, with Murasaki, Genji is instructing and protecting her now, but he plans to become Murasaki's husband and lover by the time that she is of the proper age. The ugly princess is the counter-example to the beautiful Murasaki.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

When Genji returns he is, once again, the talk of the court. However, Fujitsubo is ashamed at his presence, since the two of them slept together and now she is carrying his child. Soshe returns home to her family, but Genji follows.

Meanwhile, rumors about Murasaki are getting out, though nobody knows much about her or the situation at Nijo. However, these rumors leave Genji's wife, Aoi, even more cold than she had been before and she treats Genji with utter contempt. Additionally, the Minister of the Left is shocked at Genji's treatment of his daughter, but he does nothing about it because he is very happy when he is in Genji's company. Things continue as they are because nobody seems ready to rock the boat.

Time passes and, in the Second Month of the year, Fujitsubo finally gives birth to a son who bears a striking resemblance to Genji. Fujitsubo sees this and expects their affair to be found out, but the emperor never catches on. Genji is embarrassed and ashamed at what he has done to his father and his stepmother, but the emperor simply attributes the similarities between Genji and his son to the fact that attractive people often look alike.

In the meantime, To no Chujo grows tired of Genji's continual admonishments to remain chaste, even though Genji is continually doing that very thing. So, To no Chujo puts together a little trick to play on Genji while he is sleeping with Naishi, a woman in her sixties.

While Genji is lying in bed with Naishi, a disguised To no Chujo storms into the room brandishing a sword and loudly proclaiming his intention to kill Genji. After some initial fright, Genji finally realizes who the intruder is and the two of them share a laugh about Genji's predicament. Eventually, they agree never to speak about the event again.

Back at court, the emperor decides to name Fujitsubo as his empress and name her son as the next in line for the throne behind Kokiden's son, the current crown prince. Though Kokiden is not in favor of the plan, the emperor has chosen, and Genji's son is now an heir to the crown.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Though Fujitsubo is pregnant with Genji's child, it is not at all clear when the two of them slept together. In fact, the author often leaves out such information, sometimes only hinting at events or simply mentioning them later. It appears that Genji and Fujitsubo slept together sometime between the events of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Genji's affair with Naishi shows that he is losing his skill for keeping his affairs quiet. Instead of having a clandestine affair with Naishi, To no Chujo finds out about it and

quickly corners him in bed with the old woman. Genji can no longer be sanctimonious and judgmental about To no Chujo's affairs. Also, Genji's indiscretions will prove to be a liability when the new emperor takes the crown, since he does not approve of such philandering, especially when the person is Genji, a man whom the crown prince's mother absolutely deplores.

When To no Chujo barges in on Naishi and Genji, Genji does not immediately stand up to fight. Instead, he shies away from the man carrying the sword. This shows that Genji is not possessed of all perfections and so is quite human. Where the ideal man might fight, Genji is shown to lack bravery.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The Festival of the Cherry Blossoms arrives and the courtiers around the palace entertain the emperor, empress, and crown prince with poems and dances. Genji, of course, outshines everyone there, but To no Chujo also does very well and impresses the assembled host.

After the festival, Genji returns to his room, but gets lonely. He decides he needs a woman to share his bed with, so he searches around the palace for a companion. Finding most of the doors locked, he finally comes across an open door and takes the woman he finds there back to his chambers. Once there, he and the woman, who is actually Oborozukiyo, Kokiden's sister, make love until the pre-dawn hours, when the woman has to rush back to her own room. However, Genji does not learn who she is until later.

The next morning, Genji wonders who this beautiful woman is, but is not sure. He thinks it is one of daughters of Kokiden, the mother of the crown prince, but he never actually learns her name. As he returns home, this strange woman still weighs on his mind.

Finally, Genji has his opportunity to learn the woman's name when he is back at court. Once there, he pretends to be drunk after dinner one night and he wanders over to the area where Kokiden and her family live. Then he speaks with one of the women and Genji realizes that Oborozukiyo has the same voice as the woman he slept with.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The final two sentences of this chapter, "He was delighted. And yet-" (166) may indicate one of two things. The first, of course, is that it may simply be an abrupt end to an incomplete chapter. The author may have simply left off at this point and never returned to complete the chapter. This point is helped by the fact that the chapter is rather short compared to the other chapters and thus may by missing some of the story. However, assuming that the chapter is complete, it shows that Genji is still a very fickle lover who only wants what he can't have. Just as he loses interest in women when they finally show interest in him, he is delighted with Kokiden's daughter until he actually meets her, since she is now real flesh and blood, not some idealized, nameless phantom who disappeared into the moonlight. The woman's reality almost immediately cools Genji's feelings.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The emperor abdicates and under the reign of the new Suzaku emperor, Genji needs to keep his romances under wraps. Instead of having his way with several women, he avoids meeting any new women so that he can stay in the good graces of the Suzaku emperor. Unfortunately, Genji cannot even see Fujitsubo, as she spends more of her time with the former emperor than she did before.

Additionally, Genji avoids seeing the other women he has slept with. The Rokujo lady is particularly hurt by Genji's indifference, but he refuses to visit her. Genji keeps up a moderate flirtation with her, which stings her even more, but he will not acknowledge her in public. In fact, he goes to great lengths to publicly snub her at the Kamo festival for the new priestess who was installed there. Though no one knows about the snubbing except Genji and the Rokujo lady, it is still a public display of indifference and the Rokujo lady is deeply hurt.

Since Genji cannot see other ladies, he spends more time with Aoi and she becomes pregnant. Genji is very pleased, as he will finally have a child to call his own. However, the pregnancy is very difficult on Aoi.

Priests are called and they attempt to exorcise the demons living in Aoi. Though most of the demons and spirits are simply having fun with Aoi, there is one spirit that will not move and it tortures Aoi day and night. In fact, none of the priests there can determine what the spirit is or where it came from and they are powerless against it. Unfortunately, this one immovable spirit wastes Aoi further and further until she becomes deathly ill.

As Aoi lies on her bed, pregnant and slowly dying, Genji tends to her as best he can. As he tends to her, the spirit talks to him through Aoi's mouth. Hearing the spirit, Genji realizes that it sounds exactly like the Rokujo lady.

The Rokujo lady, however, knows nothing of it. She hears news of Aoi's suffering and hopes that it is not her spirit that is torturing the woman. She knows that her spirit feels as if it is traveling routinely and she fears that she is actually the one torturing and killing Genji's wife. After all, she is angry at Genji, but she does not wish ill on Aoi.

Aoi continues to weaken but, as she does, she gives birth to a son, much to Genji's delight. After the birth, Genji returns to court to fulfill his duties. However, while Genji is at court, he hears the news that his wife is dead.

Genji returns to Sanjo to give Aoi a grand funeral. Now that she is gone, Genji looks back on their years and he wishes that he had not strayed so far or so often. With only memories left of his wife, he mourns deeply.

The mourning cannot go on forever, though, and Genji eventually returns to normal. Though his wife is dead, he realizes that he cannot mourn forever, and makes plans to marry another. Knowing his own mind, Genji decides to marry Murasaki.

Upon returning to Nijo, Genji hints to Murasaki that he wants to share his bed with her. Murasaki is shocked; she had no idea that Genji had any designs on her and she cannot understand why he would want to wed her. In fact, she feels as though their time together has been cheapened by Genji's proposal. She had "quite entwined herself around him" (193) and, now that his real designs are made clear, she is disgusted.

Genji, on the contrary, has decided and he is not at all dissuaded by Murasaki's shock and distaste. He is ready to wed the girl and he wants to wed her right away. He sends angry notes to his other romances in order to make them go away, all the while making plans for his marriage to Murasaki.

Chapter 9 Analysis

In this chapter,Genji's fickle nature is exposed once again. He can have the Rokujo lady, but he does not want her. He is only moderately interested in his wife but, after she is dead, he misses her terribly. Soon after Aoi is dead, Genji moves on and is ready to wed Murasaki, a mere girl. In fact, Genji thinks of himself as a cradle robber, but he actually enjoys the feeling. The very illicit nature of his love strengthens it. Furthermore, he wants to send a message about the impending wedding to Murasaki's father, who does not know where she is. It is as though he wishes to have as many obstacles to the wedding as possible and Murasaki's father would present the largest obstacle at all.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Genji continues to ignore the Rokujo lady, despite her intense longing for just the sight of the man she loves so much. When the Rokujo lady is almost ready to travel to Kamo, where her daughter will become high priestess, Genji allows himself a visit. After all, he does genuinely feel sorry for the Rokujo lady and he does feel some affection for her, though he does not love her at all.

Genji travels to the temporary shrine where the Rokujo lady and her daughter are staying and the lady receives Genji from behind a curtain. They talk for a bit, but the Rokujo lady does not allow herself to actually see Genji, lest she talk herself out of traveling to Kamo because of her longing for the man. However, Genji does not accept her wishes and he puts his head inside the curtain.

Seeing Genji, the Rokujo lady's reserve melts and she seriously considers staying behind in the hopes of seeing more of this beautiful man. However, after Genji leaves, her mind takes hold of the situation and she is convinced that it is time to move on. So she leaves the world behind and travels on to Kamo with her daughter.

Meanwhile, the former emperor is dying and, as he passes the last few days and weeks of his life, he advises the Suzaku emperor to take Genji as one of his advisors and adopt the current crown prince as his own son. Then, finally, the former emperor dies.

All the women at the palace have to leave now that their support, the former emperor, is gone. And now that the old emperor gone, Genji receives few visitors because he is no longer in favor at court. His frequent trysts are well known and the Suzaku emperor is not pleased with them. The Suzaku emporer does not take his father's advice, as he neither takes Genji as an advisor, nor adopts the crown prince as his heir. Instead, he rules according to his own mind.

Genji, who suddenly finds himself out of favor and lonely, thinks about Fujitsubo. Alhough she continues to be cold and unfeeling toward him in order to keep rumors from spreading, Genji's ardor is not dimmed and he continually tries to make her his own. In fact, Genji breaks into her house to spend time with her and she is saved only when guardsmen arrive and Genji is forced to hide in a closet.

When Genji finally emerges, he pours his heart out to Fujitsubo and tells her everything that he feels for her. However Fujitsubo is unmoved and she brushes away his advances, telling him that he chooses this punishment for himself. Frustrated with this cold, unfeeling lady, Genji decides to leave her until she feels sorry for him and relents to his advances.

Fujitsubo has different ideas, however. She knows that she must stop rumors about her relationship with Genji before they start, so she announces her intentions to become a

nun. After all, if people learn that Genji, rather than the former emperor, is the father of the crown prince, it will hurt the boy's prospects and may keep him from inheriting the throne. She must get as far away from Genji as possible or his continual advances might hurt her son.

Upon hearing this, Genji is distraught. He is now losing the woman he loves and, on top of that, he is falling out of favor at court. In fact, when the spring promotions are announced, Genji does not receive his due promotion, showing that he is out of favor, indeed.

The Minister of the Left, Genji's father-in-law, and the Minister's sons are also left out of the lists, putting everyone into a bad position. Though the Minister tries to hand in his resignation, the Suzaku emperor will not accept it. Instead, the Minister of the Left secludes himself in his Sanjo mansion, making the Minister of the Right much more powerful.

With everything turning against him, Genji is frustrated and lonely and he attempts another nighttime meeting with Oborozukiyo. Of course, Oborozukiyo is more than happy for it and she gladly invites Genji into her bed. During the night, a violent thunderstorm sends several of the women of the house into Oborozukiyo's room. Unfortunately, with all of these women about, Genji cannot escape and is trapped behind the curtains of Oborozukiyo's bed.

The next morning, the Minister of the Right visits so he can see that everyone is alright. During his rounds, he checks on Oborozukiyo and sees Genji behind the curtains. Knowing everything, the Minister of the Right decides that he has been too easy on the young man and it is time to do something about his impudence and his continual affairs.

Chapter 10 Analysis

It is because of Buddhist teachings that Genji meditates on the impermanence of things while he is at the Temple. According to Buddhism, all things in the world are impermanent and, therefore, a person should not attach himself to anything in this world. Genji is attached to things in this world, such as Fujitsubo and Murasaki so according to the Buddhist teachings that rule Japan at the time, Genji is in error because of the love and longing he bears for these two women.

The Suzaku emperor's refusal to follow the directions of the former emperor show that things are changing at court and many of the former favorites of the old emperor will lose face with the Suzaku emperor. This is borne out when the Minister of the Left loses power to the Minister of the Right. Also, with this new power shift, Genji is in a weak position so when the Minister of the Right finds Genji in Oborozukiyo's bed, it foreshadows Genji's exile to the Suma coast.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Genji is in trouble with the Suzaku emperor and his most important Minister, but he is not entirely centered on his own worries. In fact, a chance encounter at court leads him to think about Reikeiden, one of the former emperor's ladies, and her younger sister. Knowing that the younger sister is in difficult circumstances following the former emperor's death, Genji pays her a visit to see if there is something he can do for her.

Once Genji arrives at her house, he speaks with Reikeiden for a long time, sharing memories with her. Then, after enjoying the company of this accomplished, sensitive woman, he walks out. As he does, he chances to see Reikeiden's younger sister. Seeing the young woman, Genji ponders over the way that women can change and that a casual relationship can be much easier than a passionate one.

Chapter 11 Analysis

This chapter shows that Genji is not entirely self-absorbed. In fact, he still cares about others, especially the women he has had affairs with. The author points out that as Genji looks back on his affairs, he finds merit in all of the women he has slept with. Genji may be a womanizer, but he is a sensitive soul and in his own way, he genuinely cares for each of his paramours.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

As Genji falls farther and farther out of favor at court, he considers going out to the Suma coast to get away from life. However, he is held back by thoughts of Murasaki. Although he knows that he needs to go some place to escape the impermanent ties of life, he also knows that he is very tied to Murasaki and she is very tied to him. In fact, the thought of Murasaki's grieving is more than he dares to think about.

In addition, he is concerned about his other commitments, such as Reikeiden's sister. She is dependent upon him for support, as well as infrequent visits, and leaving would be a severe blow to her.

Despite these commitments to the world, Genji decides that he must exile himself to the Suma coast and he announces his intentions to his friends and family. They, of course, are sad to see him go, but he insists that it is the right course of action and they accept his decision. He visits friends and past loves before leaving, which delays his departure by a few days.

Finally, after putting all his affairs in order, Genji departs for the coast with a small retinue of attendants. Arriving at the rough seashore, Yoshikiyo, Genji's "confidential steward" (241), quickly delegates work to local overseers of Genji's manors and, in almost no time, Genji has a charming new house for the time that he is in exile.

Once he is settled, Genji misses all that he has left behind, especially the women he has known. In fact, they miss him too and they send him notes and letters frequently. As Murasaki sends him gifts of clothing and bedding to keep him warm and comfortable while he is out on the far-flung shore. Several old friends visit him on the Suma coast and, despite the distance from the city, Genji enjoys his time as best he can.

The Suzaku emperor and Kokidenare not pleased with the attention that Genji receives while he is in exile. In fact, Kokiden thinks that it is treasonous that people spend time worrying about Genji rather than the Suzaku emperor, her son. When she makes her displeasure known, the visits and the letters stop coming. To no Chujo is not dissuaded by rumors even though he has been made a councilor and he visits his friend despite the talk that it may create.

Otherwise, Genji keeps his men entertained and happy as best he can. After all, these men followed him into exile rather than stay behind with their friends and family. Genji's beautiful singing voice can be heard often along the shore and his men are glad for it. In fact, even the fishermen hear it and are drawn to the singing that wafts out along the waves.

As the months stretch on, Genji learns to cope with exile. Everything is interrupted, however, on the night that a mighty storm blows into Suma. As the wind tears across the

water and rain pours down from the heavens, Genji has a dream about the king of the sea. In the dream, the king comes to him saying, "The course summons you… Why do you not go?" (257) With this sign, Genji decides that he must leave Suma.

Chapter 12 Analysis

When Genji is considering exile, he thinks about the way that things reverse themselves. This is a tenet of the Buddhist philosophy of I Ching, which says that all things will eventually reverse themselves. The reversals that come to Genji are simply a matter of course and he should have expected them.

Genji considers exile, but his first concerns are for Murasaki and Reikeiden's sister. Though this shows that he is concerned about these women, it is also a sign that he is much too tied to the world. He must rid himself of these ties in order to better himself, according to Buddhism. It also shows that he is rationalizing his desire to stay in the city by putting his desires on other people. In reality, he does not want to leave, but he knows he must. By leaving the city and these women in order to go into exile, he is actually doing a good thing. Instead of making decisions on impermanent, reversible ties that are made in a world that will only change, he has the bravery to go forth and leave the world behind in order to better himself.

The storm that arises in the closing of this chapter symbolizes the split between the Suzaku emperor and Genji. Just as there is a storm tearing across the coast, so is Genji torn apart by the loss of his position at court and the loss of favor from the Suzaku emperor. Since storms move inland, the storm also foreshadows the problems that the rest of the country will face from the blowing winds and pouring rains.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The storm continues outside and Genji and his men are afraid. It seems as if the sea itself is coming to swallow them whole and there is nothing they can do about it. In fact, Genji ponders what sort of sins he has committed that justify such a fate, but he cannot determine what they might be. It seems that Genji must atone for something in his life, because lightning hits his home, creating a fire that destroys the gallery.

Finally, the storm subsides and everyone is relieved, as it seemed that they were about to be killed. Then, as the moon shines down on the seashore, Genji has a dream about his father, the former emperor. In it, the former emperor tells Genji that he has come back to earth to make things right between Genji and the Suzaku emperor. Then, just as quickly as he arrived, the ghost leaves Genji behind.

The next day, a small boat arrives on the shore with a monk who was once the governor of Harima. He came because of a dream in which he was ordered to come to Suma and take Genji to Akashi. Hearing this, Genji considers his options and, realizing there have been many strange signs the last few days, decides to go with the monk.

In Akashi, the monk immediately begins pressing Genji to meet his daughter. After all, if his daughter marries someone of Genji's stature and ability, her prospects would immediately improve and she would be in very good hands, indeed. Genji is reluctant to follow along with the monk's plan, since he is still engaged to Murasaki. He relents, however, and eventually speaks with the young woman. Unfortunately, she is very reserved and shy and, since she is far below Genji's rank, she cannot allow herself to imagine marrying him.

Meanwhile, as Genji enjoys his time in Akashi, storms tear through the rest of Japan. The streets in Kyoto are flooded, houses are torn apart, and still the wind and rain keep coming. On top of this, the Suzaku emperor falls ill and the entire court is gloomy. It seems that the Suzaku emperor has done something horribly wrong, but nobody seems to be sure what this sin could be. Though the Suzaku emperor thinks that his banishment of Genji is the error that is leading to the storms, Kokiden admonishes him to keep that idea out of his head. The Suzaku emperor eventually stops listening to his mother and issues an amnesty to Genji.

Genji is elated to hear the news that the Suzaku emperor has forgiven him and he can come back to the city. The monk who has been pushing Genji toward his daughter is disappointed, since it appears that all hope of marrying her to this exquisite young man is gone. Genji, though, does not forget this shy young woman. Before he leaves, he gives her one of his robes to remember him by. The young woman is torn and she desperately wants Genji to stay, but she realizes that she cannot keep him, so she hides her grief at his departure.

Back in the city, Genji and the Suzaku emperor are reunited and are back in good graces with each other. Furthermore, the Suzaku emperor's health begins to improve. As for Genji, he sends out a few notes to various women, but he has no intention of straying from Murasaki again.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The continuing storm that tears into the coast where Genji is exiled is a symbolic punishment for all his womanizing. He has to be frightened and cleansed for his actions. In fact, Genji seems to learn his lesson, since the chapter ends with the intention of sticking to Murasaki and not straying from her again. Before the end of this chapter, though, Genji has slept with the Akashi lady

The storms that tear into Japan and the city are punishment upon the Suzaku emperor for sending Genji into exile. The emperor is the representative of the nation, so an emperor in the wrong is a nation in the wrong. The entire country must feel the wrath of the gods when the Suzaku emperor acts badly. The Suzaku emperor also receives more specific punishment from the gods in the form of his illness. Furthermore, Kokiden falls ill because she advises her son to punish Genji.

In this context, Murasaki's willingness to accept Genji's affairs is actually a good thing. She shows remarkable patience and silence, two important values for Japanese women of the time, in not chastising Genji openly. She still makes her displeasure known to Genji and shows him that she does not approve of his wayward habits. Murasaki is a strong woman, though she uses her strength subtly.

It is never clear if the Suzaku emperor forces Genji's exile or if Genji exiles himself. In chapter 12, it seems that Genji is choosing to exile himself rather than face up to the anger of the court. However in this chapter, Genji needs to receive a pardon from the Suzaku emperor before he can return which reinforces the idea that he was forced into exile.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Genji returns to the city and to the confidence of the Suzaku emperor, whose health has improved dramatically after bringing Genji back into his good graces. The Suzaku emperor decides to abdicate in favor of the crown prince, Genji's son.

With the accession of the new Reizei emperor, Genji's fortunes take a sudden turn for the better. He is named as a minister for the Reizei emperor but he defers the post to his father-in-law. To no Chujo keeps his post as councilor and Genji's son Yugiri becomes a page for the Reizei emperor and the crown prince, one of the Suzaku emperor's sons.

Meanwhile, the Akashi lady gives birth to a daughter and it seems that a seer's words to Genji are coming true. A previously unmentioned fortuneteller told Genji that he would have three children, one would be emperor, another empress, and the third would become chancellor. Though physiognomists told Genji that he would ascend to great heights, it seems that the throne is out of his reach, so he is pleased enough that he will be the father to people who will rise to great heights.

Genji sends for the Akashi lady and her new daughter in order to bring them closer. In fact, Genji thinks often of his new daughter and misses her terribly, despite the fact that he has never seen her. Unfortunately, he also has to come clean with Murasaki about his affair so that she will not hear the story from someone else. When he finally tells Murasaki all that happened in Akashi, she does an admirable job of keeping her anger to herself.

Meanwhile, the Rokujo lady's health is failing and she resigns herself to her deathbed. Genji, upon hearing that she is soon to pass from the world, rushes to her side to try to make things right between them and let her know how much she meant to him. In fact, the Rokujo lady is very touched by Genji's attentiveness and she gives her daughter to Genji so that he can look after her.

Finally, the Rokujo lady dies and Genji takes care of the funeral arrangements. The entire house is very appreciative of his efforts, as he manages to put together a very good service while putting the household in order.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The words of the fortuneteller clearly foreshadow the fate of Genji's children. However, it also foreshadows the fact that Genji will not have any children with Murasaki, his current wife. The fortuneteller told Genji that he will have three children, and he already has a son from Aoi, a son from Fujitsubo, and now a daughter from the Akashi lady. Therefore Murasaki, Genji's own wife, will bear no offspring.

The doubts and anger of Murasaki foreshadow the doubts and anger that will eventually destroy her. However, Genji does nothing to help her, since he always seems to think that he wants to stay true to Muraski, but he never actually stops having affairs and he never stops communicating with his old lovers.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Returning to the time of Genji's exile, the Safflower Princess has fallen on hard times. Since she is dependent upon Genji for financial support and Genji cannot send money during his exile, her life begins crumbling.

As the months drag on, her palace falls into ruin, the gardens are overgrown with weeds, the fence around her palace crumbles, and her attendants all leave her, except Jiju, her old nurse's daughter. It has gotten so bad that neighboring herdsmen use her gardens as a cattle trail, and send their herds through the holes in her wall.

Meanwhile, the Safflower Princess's aunt continually asks her to come back to her house rather than live in the crumbling palace. The Safflower Princess is far too shy to go out into public and she would rather stay in her rundown old palace than live someplace where she would constantly have to meet people.

Around this time, Genji returns to court and the Safflower Princess hears wonderful tales of his skills and exploits. Despite all the talk of Genji's greatness, the Safflower Princess grows bitter toward him. After all, she was dependent upon him and now he has taken everything away. Furthermore, he does not write, he does not visit, and he certainly does not send any money that would help her escape from poverty and ruin. All she can do is remain in her palace with Jiju.

Eventually, the aunt comes calling and tells the Safflower Princess that she must leave the overgrown, rotten place. The princess refuses her aunt one last time. Unfortunately, Jiju has had enough of the ruined palace and she leaves with the aunt SO the Safflower Princess is left utterly alone in the crumbling building.

One day, Genji decides to pay a call to one of his former lovers and, along the way, he happens to see the palace where the Safflower Princess is living. Curious about the woman, he sends one of his attendants in to see if the princess is still alive. Learning that she is still living he reports the news to Genji, who also pays a visit to the princess.

After his visit with the ugly but kind woman, Genji sets things right. He sends over gardeners and workman to restore the grounds and the palace to their rightful state. Also, the princess's former attendants return to her, since working for her was much easier than some of the other posts they had found. The Safflower Princess is returned to happiness through Genji's kindness.

Chapter 15 Analysis

This chapter is mostly written from the Safflower Princess's point-of-view, giving the reader a glimpse into the mind of a woman Genji has, in essence, jilted. The object is to

show that the fickle Genji is not appreciated by everyone. In fact, Genji's tendency to wander and forget old lovers is a source of pain for those who are left behind. Therefore, Genji is not universally loved because his straying ways are sources of pain for those who Genji cannot bother to keep in his thoughts.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Genji happens to meet Utsusemi and the two trade messages back and forth. Despite Genji's hopes that he will be able to interest and excite her, she remains aloof and reserved. In fact, her husband is dying and she would rather spend time with him during his last days on earth. When her husband finally dies, she decides to become a nun.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Genji is taking care of Akikonomu, the Rokujo lady's daughter, and the former high priestess Ise, and he wants her to receive backing at court. To no Chujo's daughter is also there and To no Chujo wants the Suzaku emperor to favor her so the two men compete against each other for the attention of the new ruler.

The Suzaku emperor is particularly fond of art, so To no Chujo and Genji decide to use art as their means of gaining his favor. For his part, To no Chujo commissions works from the great masters and shows them to the Reizei emperor. Genji, on the other hand, prefers to show the Reizei emperor his own work while Akikonomu helps her cause by painting for the Reizei emperor.

Things come to a head when To no Chujo's daughter, who is living in the Kokiden apartments at the palace, and Akikonomu argue over the proper style of painting. All the women at court take sides in the debate, with the Kokiden faction favoring the newer, more romantic style while Akikonomu's side prefers the older styles.

The two women decide to hold a debate on the issue, where they will decide what the best painting style is. Both sides meet in a pavilion and each side parades their paintings in front of the assembled host in order to argue the relative merits of their favored style. This debate goes on for several days until the Reizei emperor finally hears about it. Since the Reizei emperor is a fervent art aficionado, he decides that he will watch the last day of the contest and declare the winner.

The day comes for the final debate and each side brings out their crowning piece. The Kokiden side displays a truly remarkable scroll, but the Akikonomu faction wins easily, thanks to Genji. They bring out a painting that he did on the coast of Suma and both sides are awed by the masterful depiction of the seashore. The debate is won by Akikonomu and her faction.

Chapter 17 Analysis

The debate over artwork is symbolic of the struggle between To no Chujo's daughter and Akikonomu, as well as the rivalry between Genji and To no Chujo. While To no Chujo is highly accomplished and very skilled and refined, much like the modern style, Genji's classic perfections still far surpass those of his friend and sometimes-rival. Genji's ward is able to best her rival in all things, including in the eyes of the Reizei emperor, thanks to the perfections of her protector.

Genji's concern over education in the closing of the chapter foreshadows his decision to send Yugiri to school rather than send him into a life at court. While Genji is speaking of learning, he seems to possess a certain longing for all the knowledge that he never

gained. He wants his son to have a thorough educational grounding and achieve all that Genji cannot.

At the end of the chapter, Genji ponders retirement so that he can turn away from the world and study religion, but he is held in place by his concerns for Murasaki. In Buddhism, this is a bad thing. In order to attain nirvana, a person must go forth from the world and remove all attachments to the impermanent aspects of life. So by tying himself to Murasaki and refusing to leave her behind, Genji fails. In fact, the wiser course for him would be to leave the world behind and take holy orders.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Genji refurbishes a mansion in Miyako so that the Akashi lady will find a welcoming and comfortable home. When the Akashi lady finally arrives with her child, she feels perfectly at home at the palace. It is remarkably similar to her old home and it is secluded enough that she will not be thrown into the bustle of life in the city.

Meanwhile, Murasaki grows ever more jealous of Genji's relationship with the Akashi lady. Genji is spending significantly more time with her than he is spending with Murasaki, making her wonder when Genji will leave her.

Genji, meanwhile, ponders the future of his daughter. He wants her to grow up to be an imperial consort, so he must teach her all the proper graces of a woman. Therefore he takes it into his head to have Murasaki raise the child.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The growing jealously of Murasaki shows that she is falling deeper into ruin. By worrying about Genji and his constant straying, she is harming herself and her peace of mind although Genji does not spare many thoughts for his wife. Instead, he is worried about his own concerns, especially those surrounding his infant daughter. A rift is growing between the two and neither person appears to be ready to bridge gap.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Genji decides that the Akashi lady must move closer to him so that he can spend more time with his daughter. However, the Akashi lady does not want to get too near him, since she has often heard that Genji becomes cold to any woman that he gets close to. Since the Akashi lady does not want to get too close to Genji and Genji wants his daughter nearby, the Akashi lady is forced to give up her daughter.

The little girl comes to Genji's home and, though she misses her mother at first, she develops a love for Murasaki. Murasaki, for her part, proves to be a loving and attentive parent to this girl that she is given and they quickly build a strong bond.

Meanwhile, Genji builds an elaborate series of complexes to accommodate his various women. Though he is not as wild as he once was, he does continue to look for new conquests and affairs, including an affair with Princess Asagao.

Unfortunately, after a year of ill health, Fujitsubo finally succumbs to her illnesses and dies at the age of 37. With this blow, Genji's happiness is interrupted and he mourns deeply. After all, Fujitsubo gave birth to his son, who now is emperor. The shock of losing this woman sorely wounds Genji's spirit.

After Fujitsubo's death, a holy man visits the Reizei emperor and tells him that he suspects Genji may be the Reizei emperor's father. The Reizei emperor, of course, is shocked, since he thought he was the son of another emperor. However he realizes that it may very well be true, especially considering his stark resemblance to Genji. When it comes time for promotions, the Reizei emperor wants to make Genji chancellor. Genji refuses the appointment, and the Reizei emperor is content to raise Genji up into the next rank.

In the meantime, Murasaki is not happy and she grows more concerned that Genji has grown tired of her. Genji is aware of Murasaki and her concerns, so he attempts to ease her mind. Murasaki distrusts her husband and wonders when Genji will simply leave her behind. Even though Genji becomes more attentive, Murasaki's worries only increase.

Chapter 19 Analysis

When Genji takes the Akashi lady's daughter and gives her to Murasaki, Murasaki's often worries about Genji and the Akashi lady. In fact, Murasaki realizes the tremendous sacrifice that the Akashi lady is making by giving up her child, allowing Murasaki to see her as something other than a rival. This foreshadows the friendship that grows between the two women.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Genji sends notes to Princess Asagao in order to seduce her, but she will not have anything to do with him. Instead of the warm replies he desires, Genji receives very stiff, formal notes from the princess, showing that she has no intention of becoming another of his conquests. When she returns to her now-deceased father's palace in Momozono, Genji pays her a visit, but is jilted again. Then, finding himself turned down by a woman he hoped to sleep with, Genji lays awake in bed, disappointed by his failure. Princess Asagao's attendants all say that she should have given in to such a handsome and talented man as Genji.

Unfortunately, despite Genji and the princess's best efforts to keep his visits quiet, word gets out about his visit to Momozono and Murasaki hears of it. Though she is hurt by these new rumors, she stifles her jealousy in the belief that if Genji had visited Princess Asagao, he would have said something. She notices that Genji seems very distant, almost like a stranger to his own wife.

Genji continues to woo Princess Asagao unsuccessfully and tries to keep his attempts secret from Murasaki. However, one frozen night when the snow lies gleaming on the garden, Genji finally tells Murasaki that he has had love affairs with other women and he admits that he has been attempting to seduce Princess Asagao.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Murasaki's increasing jealousy in this chapter further foreshadows the fact that her jealousy will destroy her. Though she is unwilling to admit to herself that Genji sleeps around, she still senses his straying ways and it stings her deeply. Genji's infidelities are hurting his wife and leading to her demise.

The snow lying on the ground symbolizes the coldness that lies between Genji and Murasaki when he finally tells her that he has been having affairs. Just as the ground is frozen, so is the intimacy between the two of them. And, just as the snow on the ground is beautiful, Genji and Murasaki are beautiful. However, the coldness that has both frozen the ground and their relationship cannot give birth to new life.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

It is time for the annual promotions and everyone is expecting Yugiri, Genji's son, to be advanced in rank by the Reizei emperor. Genji does not want to see his son receive promotions that he is not worthy of, so he decides to send Yugiri to the university in order to learn and expand his mind. By doing this, Genji hopes that Yugiri can become a worthy minister of state someday, even though many of the other nobles find the whole idea rather silly when compared to the advantages of quick promotion. Of course, Yugiri studies hard and, after his examinations, Yugiri is accepted by the university.

In the Eleventh Month, there are to be Gosechi dances at the festival and Genji provides a dancer for the celebrations. Then, in order to ensure that the dancers are in top-notch form, Genji orders a final rehearsal. A daughter of Koremitsu, one of Genji's servants, is among the dancers and Yugiri happens to catch a glimpse of her. After seeing this stunning young woman, Yugiri is immediately in love and he sends her a love letter. Hearing about this note, Koremitsu is amused to hear that Genji's son has fallen for her daughter.

In the meantime, Genji's grand Rokujo mansion is finished and Murasaki, Akikonomu, the lady of orange blossoms, and Lady Akashi move into the wings of the palace that Genji has assigned to them. Genji lives with Murasaki in the southeast quarter, while the other women are each assigned to their own, separate quarters around the palace.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The beautiful grounds of Genji's Rokujo palace are a tribute to both Genji's taste and his enduring devotion to all the women he has been with. Rather than leaving his former loves in their own homes or putting all of his women in simple rooms, he has constructed a palace that is nothing short of a jewel. This shows that Genji is thoroughly devoted to every woman he has loved and is steadfast in his desire to keep them happy. He is still eager to please them in any way that he can.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Genji fondly remembers Yugao and he often wonders what happened to the daughter that she had with To no Chujo. Despite Genji's interest, he urges Ukon, Yugao's former maid and now one of the Genji's servants, not to search for her. This is because he does not want people to hear how Yugao died.If Ukon were to find the lady's family, they would be full of questions about where she has been and where she is. Genji's abduction of Yugao would become a source of rumor and Genji does not want word to get out about his part in Yugao's death.

Tamakazura, Yugao's daughter, was taken to Dazaifu in Kyushu because Yugao's nurse had adopted Tamakazura and, when the nurse's husband was named deputy viceroy of Kyushu, the family brought Tamakazura along. Since the family did not know of Yugao's death, they constantly prayed to the gods to help them find her or her father. However, no news ever came, so the nurse kept Tamakazura by her side.

Once, Tamakazura is grown, she becomes a beautiful young woman. News of her beauty gets out and the young nobles of the region send her letters and notes to court Tamakazura and hopefully make her a wife. Though the nurse's family explains that Tamakazura actually has deformities that prevent her from being married, one of the nobles, Taifunogen, is undaunted and presses his suit with an almost violent ardor. In order to save the girl from Taifunogen, the nurse and her family flee toward Kyoto.

The family races down the coast in a boat, but it almost isn't fast enough. In fact, a persuit takes place and they are almost caught while making their escape. Fortunately, they manage to keep ahead of the boat long enough to enter the mouth of the Yodo River, where they are finally safe.

While in Kyoto, the family makes a pilgrimage to Hatsuse and, through a twist of fate, they are staying in the same place as Ukon. When Ukon looks through an opening in the family's curtains, she happens to see the nurse she used to work with so long ago. In fact, Ukon has been visiting the temple annually to pray for news of Tamakazura and, much to Ukon's surprise, it seems that the gods have finally answered her prayers.

Eventually, Ukon creates an opportunity to speak with the nurse and, upon seeing her old friend, the nurse and Ukon weep with joy. When Ukon sees the rest of the party, she honors them by inviting them to her place in the temple so that the nurse's family can pray almost directly under the statue of Buddha. Then, after three days of reunions, everyone goes their separate ways.

Upon returning to Rokujo, Ukon tells Genji about her trip to Hatsuse and once Genji receives all the details, he is eager to help Tamakazura and the family. In fact, he

decides to adopt Tamakazura himself and, in order to educate the young lady properly, he tells the lady of the orange blossoms to care for her and teach her.

After all the arrangements are made, Tamakazura moves into the Rokujo mansion and, on her first night there, Genji sees his new charge for the first time. Though Tamakazura is confused and looks away when Genji pulls her curtains aside, Genji gets enough of a glimpse of Tamakazura to know that she is a rare beauty. In fact, Genji finds himself very attached to the daughter of the woman he loved and he wishes to spend more time in her company.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The boat that pursues them down the coastline could be a pirate, or it could be a craft sent by Taifunogen. Since the boat is never identified, it is not clear who is chasing them. However, since the family would prefer pirates to Taifunogen, it shows just how menacing the man is and how eager the family is to get their adopted daughter away from this him.

Genji's willingness to intrude upon Tamakazura and his sudden attachment to her foreshadow his attempts to make her one of his consorts. Since Genji is so forward with all women and he has had little experience with father-daughter relationships, it is clear that he intends to woo this new lady in his life. Furthermore, since she is the daughter of To no Chujo, there is nothing to prevent him from taking her for his own.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Genji calls on the Safflower Princess in order to see how she is doing, but Genji is shocked to see how she has aged. Though Genji still holds a certain attachment to her, she has lost the few charms that she had now that she has gotten older. In fact, her hair, the one attractive part about her, is now gray, thin, and dried to a stringy mess. Unfortunately, though her hair has grown light, she has not lost her most obvious feature, her bright red nose.

Genji is so repulsed by the princess that, while he is visiting her, he arranges the curtain so that he cannot make out even a hint of her features through the blurring cloth. However, Genji does notice that she seems to be cold, so he sends to Nijo to deliver silks to the Safflower Princess so that she will be warm in the frigid months of winter.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Though Genji could not find the Safflower Princess any less attractive, he is still willing to help her as much as he can, as shown in his desire to send her silks. Even though the Safflower Princess has lost the one alluring trait she once had, her hair, Genji does not completely leave her out on her own. Because Genji was interested in her once, he still cares about her and is willing to give her assistance when he can provide it.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Analysis

The Empress Akikonomu sends Murasaki a gift of arranged autumn leaves and flowers in an ornate box and Murasaki is very grateful for the gift. In fact, she wants to return the favor by showing the empress her spring garden. Hearing of Murasaki's plan, Genji agrees to it, but he knows that an empress cannot make casual visits. Genji creates a grand spectacle for the empress and her attendants so that she will be suitably honored and impressed by her reception at Genji's home.

Meanwhile, Tamakazura and Murasaki strike up a friendship, though Tamakazura is not yet sure if she can trust Murasaki, since she has been badly treated through the years. In fact, several men hear of Tamakazura and eagerly pursue her, but Genji carefully wards them off. To make matters worse, Tamakazura's suitors even include To no Chujo's sons, who do not know that they are attempting to woo their own sister. As well, Yugiri frequently visits Tamakazura and presses his own suit on this girl who has come to his father's home.

Though Genji takes care of Tamakazura, he also finds himself becoming romantically interested in his ward. Murasaki picks up on Genji's interest and she tells Genji that she is starting to become jealous of the new girl in the house. However, Genji is not dissuaded and he attempts to woo the girl. Unfortunately, Tamakazura is not sure what to make of Genji's advances and she can only weep in her confusion at the change in Genji.

Chapter 24 Analysis

When Genji says that he is acting as a foster parent to Tamakazura, the author mentions that he says this to cover up "what he was really thinking" (447). This foreshadows Genji's attempts to woo Tamakazura. It seems that Genji is not able to act as a parent to any girl who is not his own child and he quickly turns his mind to getting Tamakazura in bed.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

There are several men making advances to Tamakazura, but Genji keeps them away from this child in his care. Genji is eager to marry the girl to someone worthwhile, so he arranges for Prince Hotaru to visit her. Then, when the prince is visiting, Genji carefully orchestrates a way for Prince Hotaru to actually see Tamakazura in the light of fireflies. Of course, Genji's ploy works and Hotaru is taken with the beautiful woman. Unfortunately, it also throws Tamakazura into even more confusion.

Meanwhile, To no Chujo has a strange dream and he is unsure what to make of it. In the dream he visits a seer, who tells To no Chujo that he may hear from a long-lost child. Though To no Chujo cannot remember putting a child up for adoption, he begins to wonder about Tamakazura.

Chapter 25 Analysis

When Genji manages to show Tamakazura's face to Prince Hotaru, it not only shows the prince what Tamakazura looks like, but it also disconcerts Tamakazura. In fact, the ploy may not only be an attempt to show the girl to Prince Hotaru, it may also be Genji's attempt to get even with her for resisting his advances. If so, Genji has certainly succeeded, because Tamakazura is thoroughly embarrassed by the event.

To no Chujo's visit to the seer foreshadows the fact that he will soon learn that Tamakazura is his daughter. Though Genji has not made any attempt to tell To no Chujo the truth about Tamakazura, he will clearly do it soon.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

On a hot summer day, Genji cools himself in his pavilion as he sits with his son Yugiri. As the two of them relax in the heat, several of To no Chujo's sons came over, much to Genji's delight. He was feeling bored, so the chance to sit down with his friend's sons is a pleasure.

As the men sit in the pavilion, Genji asks Kobai, one of To no Chujo's sons, about the daughter that To no Chujo is supposed to hear from soon. Kobai dismisses the talk, saying that his father simply had a dream and nothing more will come of it. Of course, Genji knows the truth about Tamakazura and the fact that To no Chujo will soon learn that he is her father, but Genji says nothing. Instead, he makes fun of To no Chujo for his incessant affairs. This is partly motivated by the fact that To no Chujo is preventing Yugiri from seeing Kumoinokari and allowing their love to blossom.

While To no Chujo is in the palace, he decides to visit Kumoinokari. Seeing that his daughter is napping, To no Chujo is struck by how beautiful she is. Unfortunately, he also thinks about the fact that Kumoinokari is not the talk of the city and he finds this frustrating. After all, a girl this pretty, especially his own daughter, should be the envy of all around, but Kumoinokari is not a subject of any sort of talk or rumor. After pondering these things, To no Chujo wakes Kumoinokari and chastises her for sleeping when she should be on her guard. Furthermore, he gives his daughter a lecture about vigilance and reiterates his rule against her ever seeing Yugiri. Furthermore, To no Chujo decides that, rather than allowing his own daughter to waste away, he will send Kumoinokari to Omi for instruction.

Later, as To no Chujo continues his rounds, he comes to Omi's room and sees that she is playing backgammon. Though Omi is pretty and has a beautiful head of hair, she also has a narrow forehead and she tends to speak rapidly. In fact, she speaks so rapidly that it actually makes her seem less attractive than she is. Though To no Chujo instructs her to slow down her speech, Omi replies that speed is in her nature. Then, realizing that Omi is utterly free of embarrassment over her faults, To no Chujo sees that he is looking at a female version of himself.

Chapter 26 Analysis

When To no Chujo confronts Omi about her faults, she is utterly unapologetic about them, showing no shame for her shortcomings. Of course, this reminds To no Chujo of himself, since he is also utterly shameless since despite the fact that he sleeps around and has had children with several different women, he does not feel any shame. Meeting his female alter ego makes him very uncomfortable. Through Omi, To no Chujo is confronting his own shortcomings, not the least of which is a complete lack of shame.

It is only when he sees this same trait in a woman that he recognizes it in himself. This is a very uncomfortable feeling for a man who has never stepped back and examined himself.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Genji is in Tamakazura's room and, while they sit together, he tells her everything that To no Chujo is doing to Kumoinokari. Of course, Tamakazura is flabbergasted to hear that her father is forcing her daughter to live under the care of one of his consorts, and she suddenly finds herself very happy that she is under the care of Genji rather than To no Chujo. Furthermore, as Genji sits down in the warm summer's evening and plays his koto, Tamakazura finds that she is falling in love with her benefactor.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

A wicked storm hits Genji's palace in Rokujo and Genji sends Yugiri to Sanjo to comfort his grandmother and ease her concerns about the storm. Once Yugiri sees to his grandmother and ensures that she is safe from the terrible winds and pouring rains, he returns to Rokujo.

Upon his return, Yugiri is walking through the garden and happens to hear Genji and Murasaki's pillow talk. Yugiri is surprised at this and is not sure what to make of it. However, as Yugiri is becoming a handsome young man in his own right, it is very educational for him.

Yugiri continues his walks around the grounds of the Rokujo palace and, as he enters a new area of the palace, he overhears Genji attempting to lure Tamakazura into bed. This is the first that Yugiri has heard or experienced of Genji's incessant philandering, so he has a sudden understanding of his father that he had not had before. Yugiri is also very confused, due to the fact that he still thinks that Tamakazura is Genji's daughter.

Chapter 28 Analysis

In this chapter, the reader learns that Yugiri has never laid eyes on Murasaki, except for once when he was very young. It seems that Genji is trying to keep Yugiri from actually seeing the woman who serves as his mother. This seems to indicate that Genji is eager to prevent Yugiri from falling in love with Murasaki in the same way that Genji fell in love with Fujitsubo, his own stepmother.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Genji wants to put Tamakazura's affairs in order so that he tell To no Chujo about his daughter and Genji can finally give her to his friend. However, Genji is torn because he also wants to keep Tamakazura in his house where he may be able to get her into bed. Murasaki's fears about Genji and Tamakazura seem to be well founded and Genji will, once again, become a subject of rumors.

In the Twelfth Month there is a royal outing to Oharano and all the ministers, councilors and the rest of the court turn out for the occasion. Adding to the spectacle, carriages and people line the streets to view the procession. In one of these carriages, Genji and Tamakazura sit together and witness the finery of the royal progress.

Once the procession passes, Genji asks Tamakazura if she would like to go to court, but she is not sure if that sounds like an interesting option or not. Genji knows that it may be too soon for him to send Tamakazura to court even if she does want to go, since he sent Akikonomu there not long ago. It may be too early to press another woman's case.

Genji does not want Tamakazura to leave, but he knows that he must eventually tell To no Chujo about his daughter. The problem is made even worse by the fact that Princess Omiya, To no Chujo's mother and Tamakazura's grandmother, is ill and if she dies, Tamakazura must be allowed to mourn her grandmother.

With all this in mind, Genji sets out for Sanjo at the beginning of the Second Month in order to check on Princess Omiya. Of course, Genji is relieved to see that Omiya is well, though Omiya tells Genji that she expects to die before the year is out.

Finally, Genji comes clean and tells Omiya that To no Chujo is Tamakazura's father. Of course, Omiya is surprised at this news and she calls her son to her side so that he can speak with Genji. There, Genji finally tells his old friend about Tamakazura's past and asks him if he would like to take over the duties as her father. With this, the years of rivalry and the strains on their relationship melt away and Genji and To no Chujo laugh and weep as much of the tension in their relationship finally disappears.

Returning home, Genji finally tells everyone, including Yugiri, that Tamakazura is To no Chujo's daughter. The entire state of affairs becomes clear to Yugiri, who thought that Genji was attempting to sleep with his own daughter.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Genji must tell To no Chujo that Tamakazura is his daughter so that she can mourn properly if Princess Omiya dies. This is because Tamakazura must perform certain funeral rites should her grandmother die, and to prevent her from performing these rites

is a sacrilege. Genji would be guilty of the sacrilege if Omiya dies before To no Chujo learns about this daughter because Genji would be knowingly keeping Tamakazura from fulfilling her responsibilities.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Tamakazura is unhappy because she does not know either Genji or To no Chujo well enough to trust them, but she knows that they are holding her future in their hands. She worries about her fate as the two men put her affairs in order. Since To no Chujo allows Genji to act as Tamakazura's father, the girl is being cared for by a man who is also attempting to seduce her. To no Chujo is experienced enough to know that Genji is not a man to be trusted with a young girl, but he wants to defer to his friend's wishes, since both of them want to relieve the tension in their friendship.

Tamakazura is summoned to court by the Reizei emperor and, once Genji receives the message, he gives it to Yugiri so that he can deliver it to Tamakazura. Since the two of them had been friendly when Yugiri thought that Tamakazura was his sister, Tamakazura continues to be friendly with Yugiri, believing that their friendship should not be spoiled merely because their relationship has changed. So when Yugiri arrives at her curtains, she receives him warmly. Yugiri remembers the time that he actually caught a glimpse of Tamakazura and, now that he knows he can freely court this young woman, he brings a bouquet of flowers in order to entice her. All this does is show Tamakazura that things have changed and, rather than continue to be friendly with Yugiri, she keeps herself on her guard, as she does with any other suitor.

The months pass and the time comes for Tamakazura to go to court. As she prepares for her departure, letters arrive for her from several men who wish to woo her. Tamakazura is mostly uninterested and keeps the suitors at bay with a constant front of cold disinterest. Out of all the men who write to her, including General Higekuro, Prince Hotaru and a royal guard by the name of Sahyoenokami, only Prince Hotaru receives letters in reply.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The fact that To no Chujo and Genji both see Tamakazura as a model of womanhood, despite the fact that she is the very sort of cold, reserved woman they once despised, shows that they have a double standard when it comes to women. When they are attempting to seduce women, they like them to be pliable and to see them easily give in to a few frilly words. However, when it is a girl who is like a daughter to them, they applaud her coldness and reserve and her unwillingness to give in to any man.

The fact that Tamakazura responds only to Prince Hotaru is instructive. It shows that she is not interested in a man who is eager to marry, such as General Higekuro, and prefers the more relaxed, disinterested sort of love that Prince Hotaru offers her. In fact, it seems that Higekuro's insistent efforts to marry Tamakazura do nothing except turn her away. As a result, she prefers to write to Prince Hotaru, who does not appear to be

interested in such arrangements, as though only encouraging men of lukewarm sentiment will give her freedom from the bondage of marriage.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Before Tamakazura leaves for court, she does the unexpected and marries General Higekuro. Higekuro has not had experience with any woman besides his current wife for a long time and, now that he is visiting Tamakazura at Rokujo, he is unsure of how to handle himself around his new bride. Genji is unhappy with the match, since he wanted to keep Tamakazura at Rokujo in hopes of making her one of his consorts but there is nothing he can do to stop the wedding, so he gives it his blessing.

Unfortunately, Higekuro's first wife poses a problem to the marriage. An evil spirit has infected her and this has made her prone to bouts of unexpected and overwhelming rage. This erratic behavior was what has ruined their marriage and makes him decide to look toward Tamakazura. Unfortunately, the evil spirit also makes it hard for the first wife to accept Higekuro's new marriage. When Higekuro tries to persuade his wife to accept his new marriage with Tamakazura, she picks up a large censer and dumps the ashes onto Higekuro's head.

Higekuro's wife is still ill and continues to be violent and there does not seem to be anything that anyone can do for her. Higekuro calls for exorcists and prayers, but they do no good. However, she also has lucid moments and, during one of her moments of clarity, she realizes that her marriage is dissolving. In order to save herself and her husband a lot of grief, as well as save face, she leaves the palace so that she will not be near Higekuro and Tamakazura.

Higekuro and Tamakazura take a trip to visit the court so that Higekuro can show off his new bride to the Reizei emperor and all assembled there. But while they are there, Tamakazura is visited by the Reizei emperor and he chastises her for marrying Higekuro instead of becoming one of his wives.

News of the Reizei emperor's visit gets back to Higekuro and the two of them quickly leave court and return to Higekuro's palace. Once they are back at home, Tamakazura receives a note from Genji, whom she still misses.

As the months pass, the health of Higekuro's wife is declining and she has fewer and fewer lucid moments as her mind gives way to insanity. Unfortunately, Higekuro's new marriage is not much better, as Tamakazura grows increasingly weary of Higekuro's dull company. Tamakazura fulfills her wifely responsibility, however, and gives birth to a son.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Tamakazura's marriage to Higekuro is not so much one of love as it is one of necessity and convenience. Tamakazura does not want to rely on either Genji or To no Chujo because she does not trust either of them. However, she does not want to be a minor

consort of the emperor and live the life of a kept woman relying on the favors of a fickle emperor. She accepts the advances of Higekuro, a man she is not even interested in, much less in love with, in order to put herself in a secure position. This marriage of necessity shows how women were living in very tenuous circumstances in feudal Japan and had to rely on their wits and their ability to negotiate a secure place in order to live any sort of life that does not require absolute reliance on the good intentions of men.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

The emperor sends word that Genji's daughter will go to court, so Genji begins to prepare for her initiation. Genji collects various works of literature for her and he invites the finest calligraphers of the realm to create masterpieces of handwriting. Toward this end, Genji selects poems from admired anthologies himself, and even tries several styles with fine results. In fact, he is so intent on the work that he secludes himself so that he can concentrate fully on the task of creating these small masterpieces. He keeps a few trusted women with him so that he can get opinions and commentary on the quality of his work. The women are very impressed with Genji's creations, as he is a man of utmost refinement and skill.

Chapter 32 Analysis

When Genji comments on the "degenerate age" (545) in which he lives, he is essentially speaking for the author. In fact, the author thinks that she is living in a degenerate age in which all the formalities and graces are falling apart and everything is going to ruin as even the glories of Buddhism collapse. The masterful man of all perfections, Genji, notices that things are not as good as they should be and, in many ways, he is the final expression of a great age. His calligraphy is the essence of perfection, though this perfection will disappear when he is gone. As later chapters show, there are none like Genji and his death will leave a significant void in the life of the court and in Japanese culture.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

To no Chujo decides to hold a banquet and he invites Yugiri to the festivities. On the night of the banquet, To no Chujo grows impatient for the arrival of Yugiri. Once the wine is served, To no Chujo is kind to Genji's son. Pretending to be very drunk, To no Chujo admires Yugiri, who has waited a long time for permission to marry Kumoinokari, and finally To no Chujo relents. Though there had been a great deal of ill will between them, when Kumoinokari is pledged to Yugiri, Yugiri is thoroughly relieved and happy. After six years of separation, Yugiri will once again be able to see Kumoinokari and make her his wife.

That very night, Yugiri pretends to be very drunk in order to stay the night at To no Chujo's palace. During the night, Yugiri sneaks into Kumoinokari's room and the two of them spend the night together.

Later, the emperor Reizei and the former emperor Suzaku make an official visit to Rokujo but after the event the Suzaku emperor falls ill. He has long been a sickly, infirm man, but this new illness seems to be very grave. It seems that the Suzaku emperor cannot live out his dream of taking holy orders and retiring from the world, because he is worried about his daughter, the Third Princess. The girl is without support in the world and, should the former Suzaku emperor leave the world behind, she will have nothing. The Suzaku emperor cannot leave everything behind without first securing a place for his daughter.

Yugiri comes to see the Suzaku emperor and the former emperor sees him as a possible solution to the problem of the Third Princess. However, Yugiri intends to marry Kumoinokari soon, so he is not the answer. The Suzaku emperor asks Yugiri to take a message to Genji, asking Genji to visit as soon as possible.

Chapter 33 Analysis

The Third Princess, who is alone in the world without the former Suzaku emperor, is a woman who desperately needs a man to take care of her. She is young and cannot live without some form of financial assistance. The Suzaku emperor wants to put her with Genji because Genji, despite his reputation as a womanizer, also takes care of the women he has been with. This episode foreshadows the Suzaku emperor's plan to send her to live at Rokujo with Genji.

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

The Suzaku emperor is still intent on taking holy orders and, just before he does so, he sends the Third Princess to Genji so that she will have a decent life. Murasaki is jealous of this new woman in Genji's life, but she does not say anything. She feels threatened by this new young woman at Rokujo and fears that Genji may cast her away.

Even if Murasaki had protested, Genji would not refuse a request from the former emperor. Toward the middle of the Second Month, the Third Princess comes to Rokujo to marry Genji, who has just turned 40. After the wedding, the Suzaku emperor moves into his temple in the West Mountain and gives up all ties to the world.

As things turn out, the Third Princess is far too immature for Genji to sleep with. She is 13 or 14 years old, yet she still plays with dolls and acts with the stubborn selfishness of a girl half her age. Genji sees that his latest wife is nothing special and he should not expect her to become a lady of worth anytime soon.

Meanwhile, Kashiwagi, who once courted the Third Princess, is crushed by the news that she has married Genji. He is still longing after her and wishes that he could have married this young girl. It seems that all is lost and he will never be able to make this girl his wife.

Later in the year, Kashiwagi comes to Rokujo and, while he and Yugiri are playing a game in the courtyard, he is shocked to see the Third Princess through an open window. Kashiwagi is allowed this glimpse of his beloved because a cat ran through the Third Princess's room and as it did, it pulled back a curtain, revealing the Third Princess. It is the first time Kashiwagi has ever seen the princess and, though he pretends that nothing happened, Yugiri knows that Kashiwagi has seen her. Unfortunately, she is the wife of Genji, and Kashiwagi's love is a forbidden love. Since Kashiwagi cannot have the princess, he calls the cat to him and holds it lovingly.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Though Genji marries the Third Princess mostly because he does not want to refuse the Suzaku emperor's request, there is another reason for him to wed the girl. She is a niece of Fujitsubo, the woman that Genji loved and, in many ways still loves. By wedding the Third Princess, Genji is making another connection to his lost beloved and further securing a place for Fujitsubo in his life.

When Genji secretly visits Oborozukiyo, it sets up a contrast between Genji and the Suzaku emperor. The Suzaku emperor loved Oborozukiyo and wished to marry her. However, she was in love with Genji and she remained devoted to him, despite the fact that he never married her or brought her to Rokujo. Though the Suzaku emperor failed

with Oborozukiyo, it turned out well for the former emperor, as it allowed him to take holy orders and live a life away from the world, the ideal life for Buddhists. This is in contrast to Genji, who did win Oborozukiyo and several other women as well. But instead of finding peace or enlightenment, Genji has tied himself to all these women and he cannot leave them behind to take holy orders. Genji's successes have become his own downfall. When Kashiwagi calls the cat over, he wants to hold it because it reminds him of the Third Princess and the cat becomes his reminder of his one glimpse of the woman he loves. This foreshadows Kashiwagi's intense desire to take the cat and keep it, as it is the only link he has to the Third Princess.

Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

On the last day of the Third Month, Genji is holding a banquet in the Rokujo mansion and Kashiwagi is invited. Though Kashiwagi has his misgivings, he attends the event so that he might be able to be near the Third Princess. As the other men vie against each other in archery and equestrian competitions, Kashiwagi wants nothing to do with these sports. Yugiri is concerned about the young man when he notices that Kashiwagi frequently looks up to the Third Princess's window, hoping to catch another glimpse of the woman he loves.

Four years later, the Reizei emperor celebrates his eighteenth year of rule. Unfortunately, he falls ill and, in order to keep the realm is good hands, abdicates in favor of the crown prince. With accession of the new emperor, the grandson of the Akashi lady is named crown prince.

In the meantime, Genji is giving koto lessons to the Third Princess before a celebration of the jubilee of the Suzaku emperor. Genji hopes that the koto lessons will give the Third Princess some refinement for the celebration and allow her to show everyone that she has matured under Genji's care. After several lessons, Genji holds an all-female concert so that the Third Princess can rehearse before her performance. The Akashi lady plays the lute, Murasaki the thirteen-stringed koto, and the Third Princess plays the seven-stringed koto. Three of the most important women in Genji's life are together for one event.

Unfortunately, after the magnificent concert, Murasaki wakes the next morning with a high fever. The disease wastes her badly and Genji stays by her side all day in case he can do something to comfort his most beloved wife. As Genji sits next to Murasaki, she asks to become a nun but Genji refuses to allow her to take holy orders.

Meanwhile, Kashiwagi is still pining away over the Third Princess and is anxious to have some piece of her for his own. Guessing that the Rokujo mansion will be deserted during the celebration for the Suzaku emperor, he manages to steal into the Third Princess's bedroom and finally manages to sleep with the woman he loves. However the experience leaves him feeling guilty, as he has betrayed Genji, a man he deeply respects.

Guilt lies heavily on the Third Princess and the shame of her actions actually makes her physically ill. Hearing the report of the Third Princess's illness, Genji comes to see her in Rokujo. When he arrives, a messenger comes from Nijo, saying that Murasaki has died. With this news, Genji rushes back to Nijo in order to be by Murasaki's side again.

Once he reaches Nijo, Genji says that Murasaki is not dead and he prays fervently for her health and for her protection. This is because Genji believes that Murasaki is being

attacked by the spirit of the dead Rokujo lady and, thanks to his prayers, he manages to get her to leave Murasaki. Then, with the malign spirit gone, Murasaki returns to health and escapes death. However, she is still very weak from her battle with the disease.

The months pass and Murasaki remains in bed, too ill to move. Genji wants to stay by her side throughout her ordeal, but he must go visit the Third Princess, who is also ill. Of course, Genji is not eager to see her, but he must not neglect the woman who is both his wife and the daughter of the Suzaku emperor.

After some time, the Suzaku emperor visits Genji and many people come to see the ceremony of his arrival. Kashiwagi, however, does not want to go, since Genji has learned of his relations with the Third Princess. To no Chujo's urgings and Genji's warm invitation eventually win him over and he goes to Rokujo. He is horribly uncomfortable there, despite the fact that Genji talks to him with the utmost unconcern and friendliness. Although Genji's manner is happy and amiable, Kashiwagi imagines that every word he says is filled with secret meaning and malice. With mounting concerns about himself, Genji, and the Third Princess, Kashiwagi loses his will to live. Since he cannot have the woman he loves, his world is falling apart and it becomes too much for him. He contracts a grave disease after leaving Rokujo and his outlook is bleak.

Chapter 35 Analysis

Murasaki's illness clearly foreshadows her death. Her years of jealousy and concern over the often-straying Genji have caught up with her and the experience of playing a concert with two of his other women is too much for her. The illness attacks her and she barely clings to life. In fact, she seems to be dead and it is only Genji's love that returns her to life. Unfortunately, Genji's love has proven to be very fickle, so it cannot keep her in this world forever.

After she recovers, Murasaki wants to remove herself from life rather than continue to be one woman among Genji's many women. This is illustrated by the fact that she wants to become a nun. However Genji will not allow her to either die or become a nun. His own errors are now hurting the woman he loves. Just as Genji cannot give up all attachments to the world, he cannot allow Murasaki to give up her attachments to the world which puts Genji doubly at fault. Instead of merely being wrong on his own, he is forcing others to be wrong as well.

In addition, Kashiwagi's illness foreshadows his death. He is killing himself for want of a woman that he cannot have. However, he does not seem to understand that he can freely have the Third Princess and Genji will not mind. Genji merely took her on as a favor to the Suzaku emperor. Unfortunately, Kashiwagi is bound up in the ideas of honor and honesty. Along with the knowledgethat he cannot keep the Third Princess and the guilt of sleeping with Genji's wife, Kashiwagi is overwhelmed.

Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Eventually, the Third Princess suffers from birthing pains and delivers a boy who is named Kaoru. Genji observes all the ceremonies attending the birth of a son, but the Third Princess notices that he is cold toward her. To the Third Princess, it seems that Genji is unwilling to accept her or her child into his home, but Genji is stoic and she cannot determine exactly what is behind his frigid demeanor. When her father, the Suzaku emperor, comes to see her, she asks him to administer the vows that will allow her to become a nun. Of course, the news that the Third Princess has taken holy orders is the final disappointment for Kashiwagi and it pushes him even closer to death. Just before Kashiwagi passes away, he asks Yugiri to look to the needs of his wife, the Second Princess.

While Genji observes the ceremonies of the Kaoru's fiftieth day, Genji sees that the child is a charming infant and Genji feels genuine warmth toward this child who is not even his. Knowing that Kashiwagi cannot see his own son, Genji sheds tears for the man who has lost part of his own family. As the tears flow, Genji cries for Kaoru, who will have to bear the burden of being an illegitimate child for the rest of his life. Finally, Genji feels sorry for himself, because he is an old man holding a child who is not his own.

Meanwhile, Yugiri frequently visits the Second Princess in order to obey the dying wishes of his friend. As Yugiri spends time with the Second Princess, his dutiful visits become attempted seductions. Yugiri's words do not change the Second Princess, and she continues to keep him at arm's length. In fact, his affectionate approaches are nothing but an annoyance to her because of the memory of her dead husband and she wishes that Yugiri would leave her alone.

Chapter 36 Analysis

The fact that Genji sheds tears for Kashiwagi, who impregnated Genji's wife, shows that he would have rather seen Kashiwagi marry the Third Princess. This shows not only that he holds very little love for the woman he married, but that he feels genuine sympathy for the man who did love her. Genji is a man who respects love itself, even when love makes him a cuckold.

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

One year later, on the anniversary of the death of Kashiwagi, Genji mourns the loss of such a respectable man. After thinking about Kashiwagi and the woman who bore his son, he goes to visit the Third Princess with Kaoru. Instead of offering words of consolation, Genji is taken by her beauty and tells her that he regrets allowing her to become a nun however Genji realizes that he cannot be anything to her as he watches the young Kaoru wobble around on two legs that are still learning how to walk. The very youth of Kaoru makes Genji understand that he is getting old and, as a result, he wonders how much longer he will be on this earth.

Later in the year, Yugiri visits the Second Princess again and, while he is there, her mother, Lady Ichijo, gives him a flute that once belonged to Kashiwagi. That night, Kashiwagi appears to Yugiri in a dream and tells him that the flute should not be his.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Genji realizes that heis an old man and he knows that he cannot live for much longer. His concerns about his own mortality foreshadow the fact that he will die only a few chapters later.

The episode of the flute is a symbol of Yugiri's attempts to seduce the Second Princess. Kashiwagi left the flute behind when he died, just as he left the Second Princess behind. Kashiwagi did not intend to give the flute to Yugiri, just as he did not intend to give his wife entirely to him. By telling Yugiri that he should not keep the flute, the spirit of Kashiwagi is telling Yugiri to stop attempting to seduce the Second Princess.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Genji continues to visit the Third Princess, but he knows that he cannot have her now that she has become a nun. Instead of being dissuaded by the fact that she is completely inaccessible, Genji wants to be with her all the more. Unfortunately, there is nothing he can do to have her and he cannot bring himself to give her up, so he simply comforts her so that she might be able to accept her lonely life away from the world.

Chapter 38 Analysis

The fact that Genji wants the Third Princess after she has become a nun shows that he is still the same fickle man that he was before. Despite his advancing years, he has not gained wisdom and, despite the fact that many people around him are giving up their ties to this world, he is unwilling to remove himself from it. Even in the presence of a woman who has taken a bold step toward renunciation of the world, Genji does not stop to think that he should do that himself. Instead, this old man continues to pursue a young woman who does not want him, never wanted him, and is far too young for him in any case.

Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Yugiri has never had a love affair in all his life, but now he realizes that he is deeply in love with the Second Princess. When Lady Ichijo goes to Ono Villa and the Second Princess joins her mother on the expedition, Yugiri goes to Ono, as well. With the excuse that he is seeing to the health of Lady Ichijo, he visits them frequently and spends a great deal of time talking with the Second Princess. After some time in Ono, he sends his men away so that he can court the princess away from the prying eyes of others.

Once in the presence of the Second Princess, Yugiri makes an attempt to seduce her, but the princess is not swayed. When Yugiri pulls the curtain aside, she tries to run away into a back room. Yugiri is insistent and he grabs hold of her kimono to keep her there. He even goes so far as to attempt to force her into the moonlight so that he can see her, but the Second Princess manages to hold back and protect her honor.

Although the Princess resists Yugiri, a healer who is there for Lady Ichijo sees Yugiri leaving the room of the princess the morning after his assault and the healer assumes the worst. This news gets out and the Second Princess's reputation is destroyed. Since marriage is the only way to protect the princess from gossip, the mother writes Yugiri a letter requesting him to come to their home and arrange a marriage. However, Yugiri only sends a short note in reply and refuses to sit down with the family. With the honor of Second Princess ruined by rumors, Lady Ichijo dies in despair.

This turn of events is not Yugiri's fault, because Lady Ichijo's letter never reached Yugiri. Kumoinokari intercepted the letter and, in a fit of jealousy, sent her own reply. Once Yugiri hears of this, he is shocked and dismayed and wants to make things right. Toward this end, Yugiri helps with the funeral, though the princess attempts to keep as far away from him as she can because the princess thinks that her mother died as a result of Yugiri's cruel attitude and she wants nothing to do with him. Even when Yugiri goes to Ono in order to apologize to the Second Princess, she will not see him.

Rumors about Yugiri and the Second Princess continue despite his efforts to correct the situation. Yugiri makes arrangements to place the Second Princess in his Ichijo mansion so that the rumors will be quelled. Unfortunately, the Second Princess does not want to go there, so she is in tears on her arrival and she locks herself in a closet in order to escape Yugiri.

This arrangement cannot last forever and Yugiri finally convinces the Second Princess to accept him as her husband. Kumoinokari is deeply hurt by Yugiri's affair and she returns to To no Chujo's house rather than live with the husband who wronged her.

Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

After four years of illness, Murasaki continues to wish to become a nun. Unfortunately, Genji does not want to give her up, so he refuses to allow her to leave him. When Murasaki dies, Genji is distraught because of his own unwillingness to let her go. Realizing his mistake, Genji wants Yugiri to administer the vows of a nun on Murasaki, but it is too late. Yugiri calls for priests and he asks them to administer the rites so that he can try to set things right between Genji and Murasaki.

Chapter 40 Analysis

Once again, Genji's unwillingness to give up ties to the world has come back to haunt him. Instead of allowing his own wife to become a holy woman, he holds her back and prevents her from disassociating herself from the impermanent world in which he lives. Not only is he hurting himself with his unwillingness to give up on the world, he is now hurting someone else. In fact, it is his own wife, the woman he claims to love, that is being injured by Genji's stubborn attachments to life and everything in it.

Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Genji knows that he is growing old and, after the death of Murasaki, he spends his autumn years attempting to comfort himself and his shattered emotions. Sadly, memories of Murasaki come to him constantly and everything reminds him of his lost wife. In his grief, Genji has a companion in the 4-year-old Niou, the third son of the current emperor. Aside from his young friend, Genji mostly secludes himself from the world.

Genji occasionally visits some of his former loves, but they only remind him of Murasaki, so he prefers to avoid them. However, he does have a soft spot for Chujo, one of Murasaki's former servants. Chujo is only another link to Murasaki and her presence gives him more reason to miss his true love.

Chapter 41 Analysis

In this chapter, Genji grieves tremendously for the one woman he truly loved but, in his grief, Genji's fickle tendencies show themselves in the sharpest relief. Though Genji truly misses Murasaki, he did not do much to cement their relationship while she was alive. Rather than staying true to his wife, Genji had affairs throughout their marriage, all the while keeping Murasaki in the dark about his trysts and pretended that they were not happening. Unfortunately, Murasaki was severely jealous and did not approve of his habits but Genji did nothing to reform them. Instead, he slept with just about anyone who was willing to go to bed with him and frequently treated Murasaki as though she did not exist. Now that she is dead, Genji is deeply in love with his dead wife. Genji once again shows that his love moves almost entirely toward women that he cannot have.

Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

"The shining Genji was dead, and there was no one quite like him." (788) Now that this glowing man of many accomplishments is gone, the world mourns his passing. Though there are several other men in the realm who are worthy, none of them match up to the many perfections of Genji.

Among these worthy men are Niou, a frivolous 28-year-old, and Kaoru, the prudent young son of Kashiwagi and the Third Princess. They are both thought to be exceptionally handsome young men, but even they do not match up to the "shining Genji" (788). Furthermore, they are very good friends, though they are, in many ways, rivals as well.

Though the entire world believes that Kaoru is Genji's son, Kaoru has his doubts. These doubts about his lineage leave him troubled and he wants to leave the world and become a monk. He does not take on holy orders and, instead, he lives very much in the world.

Chapter 42 Analysis

There are some questions as to whether we have access to all of the chapters of *The Tale of Genji*, and the gap between chapters 41 and 42 is one piece of evidence that may show there are many chapters missing. Since the reader does not see many of Genji's later days and never sees him die, it seems like there should be more information. In fact, the reader is never even told when Genji died and, since there is a 24-year gap between chapter 41 and chapter 42, we are left without knowing when, exactly, the principal character in this tale died. Furthermore, there is even some question as to whether Murasaki Shikibu wrote the story from chapter 42 onward, and some point to her daughter as the author. However, most experts agree that is was probably Murasaki Shikibu who wrote the entire tale.

There is a certain parallel between the relationship between Genji and To no Chujo and the relationship between Niou and Kaoru. In both of these relationships, the men are best of friends, but they are rivals as well. Niou and Kaoru are a latter day expression of Genji and To no Chujo, though the younger men do not live up to the high standards that their forefathers achieved. Niouis a frivolous, carefree young man, just like To no Chujo, who slept around and fathered many children with many different women. Meanwhile, Kaoru is the prudent young man, much like Genji, who is uncommonly fine and proper.

Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary

Kobai, the oldest surviving son of the late To no Chujo, is now the Lord Inspector and he wants Niou to marry his second daughter. However, Niou is not interested in the girl and, turns his fancy toward the stepdaughter of Makibashira rather than the second daughter of Kobai.

Meanwhile, Kaoru calls on Tamakazura with a New Year's greeting and he finds her in the chapel, where she invites him to join her. Of course, he is not there simply to offer a greeting; he is actually there to get into Tamakazura's good graces. As Kaoru and Tamakazura's older daughter are fond of each other, Kaoru wishes to ensure that he may have Tamakazura's blessing on the match.

When Kaoru enters the chapel, something about his manner makes the women want to joke with him. Kaoru does not take kindly to their habit of calling him Lord Proper and his replies are brusque. Hearing Kaoru's discomfort with this joking, Tamakazura reproves them for their bad manners while they are around such a prudent young man which makes the ladies stop poking fun at their guest.

Chapter 43 Analysis

Kaoru thinks that he is the son of Genji, but he is, in fact, the son of Kashiwagi. And, since Kashiwagi was the brother of Tamakazura,(they are both children of To no Chujo) Kaoru is actually at risk of sinning by marrying his own cousin. Even though it would be an unwitting marriage between cousins, it is still a situation to be avoided. Because this marriage would be so overwhelmingly wrong, it foreshadows the fact that Kaoru will not actually marry Tamakazura's oldest daughter.

Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary

Kaoru has always been a very proper young man, but he does not like the reputation that it has given him. In fact, people call him Lord Proper because of his sober mien and Kaoru is eager to shed the title. Kaoru decides that it is time to show Tamakazura another side of his character, and he heads to her mansion to prove that he is more than just a stern face.

Unfortunately, arriving at the mansion, Kaoru sees that another young gentleman has preceded him in his errand. It is Yugiri's son, a lieutenant, who is also in love with the oldest daughter of Tamakazura. Since neither man can do anything about the other's presence, they both politely accept an invitation to join the ladies.

As some of the women at the mansion begin playing kotos and flutes, Tamakazura falls into tears at the sight of Kaoru because Kaoru resembles her late brother Kashiwagi and she misses him terribly. However, neither is aware that Kaoru is Kashiwagi's son. Kaoru continues in his attempts to woo his own cousin.

The Third Month arrives and several of Tamakazura's women are sit on the veranda and enjoy the air. The blinds are up so that the women can enjoy the outdoors. However, this leaves them visible to any who come by and, as chance would have it, Yugiri's son arrives in order to visit Tamakazura's son. Unsure of where to find his friend, Yugiri's son finds an open gallery door and peers inside. The young man happens to steal a glance of Tamakazura's oldest daughter and her beauty dazzles him. Yugiri's son falls even deeper in love with this woman and is even more determined to have her for his own.

Unfortunately for Yugiri's son, the girl is sent to the Reizei Palace and she falls out of his reach. Kaoru's love is not as strong as his rival's and he is not that disappointed by her departure. But when he spends several days at the palace, Kaoru fully realizes that he has lost this girl and becomes depressed, wanting to be alone with his thoughts.

Chapter 44 Analysis

Since Kaoru should not marry his own cousin, the fact that Yugiri's son is also after Tamakazura's daughter shows that the lieutenant will actually manage to get the girl. This is foreshadowed even further when the lieutenant happens to see Tamakazura's daughter and becomes even more committed to marrying the girl.

Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Summary

The Eighth Prince, a holy man who has not left the world to take on the life of a monk, lives in Uji with his two daughters and, together, they enjoy a slow-paced life in his country villa. One day, as he and his daughters write poems about some mallards swimming on the pond, the Eight Prince begins thinking about these birds and their lives. Though he once thought little of their frivolous lives, the death of his wife has changed things. In fact, he is jealous of their ability to simply swim about, unconcerned about either the future or the past, and are content to simply be what they are. The Eighth Prince has officially renounced the world, but he has not left it behind entirely. In fact, he has stayed firmly in it so that he can take proper care of his daughters.

The Eighth Prince leaves his villa in order to visit a priest and while he is gone, Kaoru comes to Uji in order to spend some time with this holy man. Instead of seeing the Eighth Prince, he happens to see the two princesses sitting outside, admiring the moon. Transfixed by the vision of these two women, Kaoru continues to watch them with rapt and unwavering fascination. In fact, this is the first time that Kaoru has laid eyes on the two women in all his years of visiting Uji and the image of them sitting out under the moon is seared into his mind.

Eventually, the old woman Benn finds Kaoru and she greets him properly. Then, with the welcomes finally administered, she takes him inside the Eighth Prince's palace and the two of them discuss Kaoru's birth. This is due to the fact that Benn's mother worked for the late Kashiwagi, giving Benn an idea of everything that was happening around the Kashiwagi as he pined away for the Third Princess. As Benn and Kaoru speak with each other, Kaoru starts to understand that Kashiwagi may be his father.

After taking his rest, Kaoru sits down with Benn again to finally clear up the identity of his father. Benn dispels all doubts when she gives Kaoru a document that proves, once and for all, that Kaoru is Kashiwagi's son. With this proof in hand, Kaoru finally has his confusion laid to rest.

By way of explanation, Benn tells Kaoru that she has this vital document because, when Kashiwagi died, he asked her to keep it safe for him. Within it is the story of his affair with the Third Princess and an explanation of how he came to father a child by her. Unfortunately, though this clears up Kaoru's worries and questions, it would also be a disaster if anyone found out that he is a bastard child. He accepts the scroll with an admirable calm that belies the torment that he feels inside.

Chapter 45 Analysis

The mist that lies over the mountains when Kaoru awakes symbolizes the confusion that Kaoru feels about his own birth. Just as the mist obscures the mountains in the

distance, Kaoru cannot fully see just who his father is. However, the fact that the mist still allows a glimpse of the mountains, Kaoru has received an inkling of his true parentage through his conversation with Benn. The mist over the mountains will eventually rise and allow a full view of their peaks. Thus, the mist on the mountains foreshadows the revelation to Kaoru that he is Kashiwagi's son.

Additionally, the men fishing in the Uji River symbolize Kaoru's pursuit of his true lineage. The men cast about the river, hoping to find the renowned Hiou fish and they each hope that their particular method will be successful. However, none of them can be absolutely assured of success. This parallels Kaoru's attempts to find out who his father is, though he does not know how to do it.

Kaoru is shocked to hear that he is actually an illegitimate child, even though many of the men and women in the previous chapters were illegitimate and were not looked on badly by their peers. The difference Kaoru's case is that he is a very proper man and believes that proper men should not be bastard children. Despite all his outward attempts to be a perfect gentleman, he has a secret stain that cannot be erased. Lord Proper is not so proper after all.

Chapter 46

Chapter 46 Summary

Niou and Kaoru make a pilgrimage to Hatsuse by boat and stop along the way at Uji to visit the Eight Prince at his villa by the river. Upon arriving, the party learns that the Eighth Prince died recently and the entire house is in mourning. The Niou and Kaoru pass on to Hatsuse and, after returning home, Niou, sends a letter of condolence to the Eighth Prince's daughters.

As the months pass on into a sad winter at Uji, Kaoru goes to the villa where the princesses are staying to console them in their deep mourning. While he is in Uji, Kaoru asks to visit the chapel where the Eighth Prince prayed. Once inside the chapel, he prays to Buddha in the hope that the Eighth Prince might reach nirvana.

Chapter 46 Analysis

The fact that Niou's messenger makes such good time with Niou's letter of condolence and returns with the response so quickly shows that Niou is a man who shows his passions. The messenger would not have raced to and from the princesses' house, through wild country, unless Niou had demanded that he make all speed. Niou's passion is what is pushes the rider on to dispatch his letter and return the reply is such short time. Since Niou's passion is so effective at getting things done, it will also be very effective at pushing aside resistance to his seductions. This foreshadows his ability to have any woman, including the woman that Kaoru wants.

Chapter 47

Chapter 47 Summary

The year passes and when autumn arrives, Kaoru tends to the needs of the Uji princesses as well as he can while they make preparations for the anniversary of the Eighth Prince's death. Kaoru writes out part of the services himself to honor this venerable man. Meanwhile, the princesses are also preparing for the ceremony.

One night while Kaoru is at Uji, he finds Oigimi and spends part of the night speaking with her but is unsuccessful at seducing her, as her very proper demeanor keeps him at bay. His attempts at seduction fail completely and Kaoru is deeply hurt by his inability to woo this beautiful woman.

This setback does not stop Kaoru though, and on another evening he sneaks into Oigimi's room again. Oigimi does not want to marry Kaoru because she would rather see her younger sister Nakanokimi wed this worthy man so she asks Nakanokimi spend time with Kaoru. Kaoru is not interested in Nakanokimi and is unable to comfortably spend time with her. He simply broods on his newest failure, ruining both his and Nakanokimi's evening.

The next day, Kaoru decides to return home rather than continue his unsuccessful attempts to court the older princess. Before he leaves, he gives a poem to Oigimi is which he presses his suit even harder but Oigimi remains firm in her hope to see Nakanokimi marry Kaoru, so she hands the poem over to Nakanokimi so that she can answer it. Nakanokimi is not interested in responding to love poems sent to her sisterand she refuses to answer, telling Oigimi to respond to the poem herself.

Since Kaoru cannot wed Oigimi while Nakanokimi remains unattached, he decides to introduce Niou to Nakanokimi so that they will fall in love. With this in mind, he leads Niou towards Uji and, once Niou and Nakanokimi meet, they are very happy in each other's company. Kaoru is delighted with this outcome, since no Oigimi has no excuse for refusing his advances.

Later, on the night of Niou and Nakanokimi's marriage, Niou is so late in arriving that people there wonder if he will come. Then, just around midnight, he arrives, much to Nakanokimi's delight. Finally, the two of them spend a happy time together before Niou returns to Kyoto.

It is not until the Tenth Month that Niou returns to Uji. Nakanokimi has been very excited by the impending visit of her husband. Niou does not race to her side, but instead, spends a night at Yugiri's house, which lies across the river, before seeing Nakanokimi again.

Unfortunately, Oigimi has taken ill and, as the disease takes its course, Oigimi slowly moves toward death. When Oigimi has finally died, Kaoru gazes at her face. Though

there is no life in it, it is still as beautiful as the night he saw her in the moonlight. Kaoru wishes that he could stay there forever, staring at her face, though his grief cuts him deeply. Kaoru even considers killing himself, though he finally manages find the strength to keep going on without her.

Chapter 47 Analysis

On Niou's return to Uji after his wedding, the fact that Niou does not rush to Nakanokimi when he arrives in Uji shows that his passion has its limits. It seems that his passion has cooled now that he has married Nakanokimi. This is not the same man who sent a messenger charging through the wilderness to speed a message to the two princesses. Instead, it is a man who looks forward to seeing his wife, but is more focused on maintaining Formalities. This event foreshadows his willingness to succumb to the allure of sleeping with Ukifune rather than stay true to his loving wife.

The verse that Kaoru writes about the uncertainty of life foreshadows the illness and death of Oigimi, as it reminds the reader that life is uncertain. In Buddhist teaching, life is merely temporary, and happiness is fleeting. This idea is illustrated in the death of Oigimi, since Kaoru was counting on her to provide happiness for him. Since life is temporary, it is fruitless to look to another person for happiness and the only chance to achieve any victory over the uncertainty of life is to give up all ties to the world. The Eighth Prince attempted to do this, but he was unsuccessful, as shown in the fact that he did not reach nirvana. In fact, he did not give up all ties to the world, since he still lived in a splendid home and cared for his daughters. Ideally, the Eighth Prince should have left his home and his daughters in order to become a monk and the fact that he did not do so prevents his soul from entering nirvana.

Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary

In the New Year, Niou decides that Nakanokimi should come to his mansion in Kyoto so she prepares to go to her new home. One day before she leaves, Kaoru comes to Uji and they sit and talk about Oigimi. Then, as Kaoru and Nakanokimi trade remembrances of the dead princess, Kaoru recalls the night that he spent with Nakanokimi. It is only then that the full weight of his mistake hits Kaoru. Rather than having a beautiful woman to call his own, he ruined his chances with Nakanokimi by stubbornly keeping his affections directed toward Oigimi. Now that he has nothing to show for staying true to his love, Kaoru is jealous of his friend Niou and of his wife.

The next day, the procession leaves Uji in order to take Nakanokimi to her new home. It is a difficult trip, since the road is long and the carriages have to travel through the mountains in order to get to Kyoto. It is only then that Nakanokimi finally understands the Niou visited infrequently because of the sheer difficulty of travel to and from Uji. As they drive through the mountains, Nakanokimi realizes just how tenuous her relationship with Niou really is. In fact, she would rather be back in Uji living a quiet life with her sister than traversing difficult terrain and high mountains in order to live with Niou in his palace.

Chapter 48 Analysis

Kaoru's regrets over giving up Nakanokimi show that he is guilty of the same sort of fickleness that caused Genji so many problems. Rather than being happy for his friend and his new wife, Kaoru is sad that he has lost a woman that could have been his. Instead of understanding that his decision was based on love, the clarity of hindsight shows him that things went wrong. Kaoru is not so much recovering from his mourning over Oigimi as much as he is trading it in for mourning over the loss of a potential relationship with her sister.

Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary

The emperor calls for Kaoru to come to the palace and Kaoru arrives as requested. When he sits down with the emperor, the emperor pulls up a Go board and makes a vague hint of a wager. The emperor secretly wants Kaoru to take the Second Princess as a wife, but is not willing to say it to Kaoru directly. When the emperor loses the game, he hints at what he wants for Kaoru. Understanding the emperor's intentions, Kaoru accepts the cautiously implied offer of the hand of the Second Princess.

Meanwhile, a marriage is arranged between Niou and Rokunokimi, the sixth daughter of Yugiri. Nakanokimi is disappointed when she hears this, as she will now have to share her husband with another woman but she accepts it.

When Kaoru hears of the impending marriage between Niou and Rokunokimi, he immediately comes to the Nijo mansion to console Nakanokimi. When Kaoru arrives at the mansion, he is astonished by the resemblance between Nakanokimi and her dead sister. Of course, this only deepens his regret for having refused Nakanokimi, in spite of Oigimi's wish. Now, instead of having a beautiful wife, Kaoru is alone and Nakanokimi is being left behind by her husband.

On the night of his marriage to Rokunokimi, Niou attempts to comfort Nakanokimi. Unfortunately, it does nothing to help her and she weeps over her new life. Although life in the Uji village was severe, she wishes she could be there instead of living in Kyoto with a husband who is taking on another wife.

Yugiri holds a celebration for the marriage of Niou and Rokunokimi and the host has prepared a splendid banquet. Kaoru attends and participates in the festivities while enjoying the hospitality of his host. As usual, Niou is late to arrive but, finally appears at Yugiri's home after dark, allowing the assembled host to toast to the health and wealth of the new marriage.

After the celebration, Kaoru cannot sleep, so he goes to the room of a woman by the name of Azechi and passes the much of the night with her. Because Kaoru wants to avoid prying eyes, he leaves her room at midnight to keep his visit secret. Azechi is annoyed at him for leaving, but he writes a poem of farewell and makes up a passable excuse so that he can escape.

At the end of the Ninth Month, Kaoru visits Uji so that he can talk further with Benn. During the discussion,, he is told that Oigimi has a stepsister named Ukifune and she bears a striking resemblance to Oigimi. Hearing this, Kaoru is immediately interested and he tells Benn to pass along a letter to Ukifune.

Some time later, Nakanokimi gives birth to a son, and Nakanokimi's attachment to Niou is secured. Festivities honoring the birth of the boy are ordered and, at the celebration,

Kaoru sends several small but opulent gifts to Nakanokimi. However, Nakanokimi is unimpressed, as she already has a husband and a child and is not looking to trade them for Kaoru.

The marriage of Kaoru and the Second Princess finally comes to pass and, after a short time, Kaoru brings his new wife into his mansion. Of course, this marriage is surprising, since it is customary for a princess to wait until her father has abdicated before she takes a husband. The emperor was eager to see his daughter married to Kaoru, so he pushed for the two to wed while still reigns.

Celebrations are held for the marriage of Kaoru and the Second Princess, but Kaoru is not in a festive mood. He sits alone and sulks as he thinks about the fact that the Second Princess is not Oigimi, Nakanokimi or Ukifune. Kaoru finds himself feeling lonely even as everyone is toasting to him and his future.

Later in the year, Kaoru goes to Uji to inspect the chapel that is being built there. As he approaches Uji, he chances to meet up with a procession crossing the bridge. Interested in the collection of people attending the carriages, Kaoru asks who the procession is for and learns that it is for Ukifune, the woman that Benn told Kaoru about. Of course, having already learned that the woman is very beautiful and she bears a striking resemblance to Oigimi, Kaoru tries to see her secretly. He fails to gain an audience with this young woman and is left to imagine what she might be like.

Chapter 49 Analysis

The parallels between Kaoru and Genji are furthered in this chapter with many examples. First, Kaoru once again desperately misses women that he cannot have, mirroring Genji's desire for any woman that he cannot have. Second, he gives Nakanokimi exquisite gifts of fine taste, mirroring Genji's excellent taste. And third, the very act of getting a woman, in Kaoru's case the Second Princess, leaves him lonely and longing for others, mirroring Genji's fickleness. Kaoru is shown to be a sort of substitute Genji, although he cannot match up to Genji's achievements and perfections. Instead, he is, in many ways, a false successor to Genji, in much the same way that he is Genji's false son.

Chapter 50

Chapter 50 Summary

Kaoru is eager to marry Ukifune, but her mother, Chujounokimi, is not keen on the match. Because Kaoru and Ukifune are of entirely separate status, she turns down Kaoru's offer and, instead, arranges for her to marry a lieutenant. Chujounokimi is incorrect in her assessment of Kaoru, but there is nothing that he can do to correct it since he does not want anyone to know that he is a bastard child.

Though Chujounokimi is eager to give his stepdaughter, Ukifune, a good marriage, Chujounokimi's husband, the governor of Hitachi, loves his real daughter much more than his stepdaughter and he wants to give her a good marriage first. Once the lieutenant discovers that Ukifune is the stepdaughter of the governor, the lieutenant changes his mind and decides that he would rather marry the governor's real daughter. For this, he needs substantial support from the governor who is only too happy to oblige. The governor is, in fact, delighted that the lieutenant has changed his mind, and entertains the lieutenant splendidly. After a night of celebration, the room that had been appointed for Ukifune is given to the lieutenant as a guestroom.

All but cast out of her own home, Ukifune is rescued when Chujounokimi asks Nakanokimi to take care of her. She does this because she once happened to see Niou through a crack between two doors and, when she looked at him, she immediately admired his beauty, as well as the joyous family that surrounded him. Chujounokimi decides that this man's wife would be an excellent foster mother and instructor for her daughter.

Leaving Ukifune with Nakanokimi, Chujounokimi goes back to her husband's house. After Ukifune's arrival, Niou accidentally passes the room where she is staying and sees her there. Struck by her beauty, Niou runs up to her and asks what her name is. Ukifune is horrified by this presumptuous man and wonders whether he might be Kaoru, whom she has heard so much about. Nothing further happens between the two of them, despite Niou's attempts to seduce Ukifune.

This event is not easily kept under wraps and Nakanokimi is eager to get Ukifune out of the way to a place where Niou cannot find her. Nakanokimi hides Ukifune in a cottage at Sanjo so that her husband will not be able to spy her again.

Hearing that Ukifune is at Sanjo, Kaoru comes to visit with her for the first time. After sitting with the woman, Kaoru is even more in love than he was before and he moves Ukifune from Sanjo to Uji. As soon as he arrives at Uji, he realizes that he is at the very spot where the soul of Oigimi rests. Unfortunately, these thoughts of Oigimi are simply too much for Kaoru and he is moved to tears.

Chapter 50 Analysis

Because both Niou and Kaoru are in love with Ukifune, their attempts to court and seduce this beautiful young woman are foreshadowed. Of course, Niou is much more successful with women, and it is clear that he will be able to bring Ukifune to bed. This is especially true thanks to the fact that Kaoru actually had Ukifune alone, but was so taken with thoughts of the dead Oigimi, he did nothing with his opportunity. The failure of Kaoru to take advantage of his opportunities opens the door to Niou and his relentless, passionate nature.

Chapter 51

Chapter 51 Summary

Early in the New Year, while Niou and Nakanokimi are enjoying some time together, a private message for Nakanokimi arrives from Uji. Though Nakanokimi does not tell Niou who the letter is from, he quickly understands that it is a letter from Ukifune. Since Niou has thought of Ukifune in the days and months since he saw her, he decides that he must look for her at Uji.

With this errand in mind, Niou goes secretly to Uji and attempts to find Ukifune. In the middle of the night, he sneaks up to a house and has a look at the interior through a crack in the shutter. Luckily his instincts are right, and he sees Ukifune lying in front of him. As he continues to gaze at her, Niou notices that there is a distinct resemblance between Ukifune and Nakanokimi but it does not dissuade him from his mission in the slightest. Niou sneaks into the house and he and Ukifune spend the night together.

Not content with one visit, Niou comes back to see Ukifune again and, this time, he stays with her for three nights before making his way home. His blissful reverie is interrupted when a messenger meets him along the road and gives Niou an angry message from his wife. It seems that everyone at court is displeased with him for his absence, so he returns to Kyoto as quickly as he can.

Some time later, Kaoru comes to Uji to see Ukifune. Once again, Ukifune reminds him of Oigimi and he loses himself in thoughts of the past. Meanwhile, Ukifune is worried about the fact that Niou continues to visit her and thinks that this may cause trouble. Kaoru does not suspect anything and he attributes Ukifune's silence to a growing maturity.

Again, Niou comes to Uji and, this time, he takes Ukifune by boat to a small, hidden cottage on an island. Along the way, Ukifune is nervous and she desperately holds on to Niou. Seeing Ukifune's fright, Niou is pleased, as it not only brings her close to him, but it ensures that she is helpless to leave the island where he is taking her.

After the escape to the island, Ukifune receives frequent letters from both Kaoru and Niou. One day their messengers happen to meet and the Kaoru's man is puzzled to see the other man there. He mentions the matter to Kaoru who finally realizes that Niou and Ukifune have been having a relationship.

Kaoru is furious and he decides that he must put an end to Niou's nighttime visits. He posts guards all around Ukifune's house and orders them to prevent Niou from seeing Ukifune or stealing her away.

Meanwhile, Niou is anxious to see Ukifune again, so he rushes off to Uji once more. This time, however, his attempts to get to her are foiled. As Niou tries to enter the

grounds around the Uji palace, the guards spot him and release dogs that scare him off so his latest attempt to see Ukifune fails.

Niou is undaunted, however, and he asks his companion Tokikata to visit Ukifune's maidservant and to obtain information. Once Tokikata manages to meet with Ukifune's maidservant, he successfully takes her out of the house and brings her to Niou. Once Niou meets with the maidservant, she explains the situation to him. With the maidservant's report, Niou realizes that there is no hope for him to ever see Ukifune again and he dissolves into tears. The maidservant comforts him by promising that she will do everything in her power to bring Ukifune back to him.

Chapter 51 Analysis

The closing of this chapter shows that Ukifune is utterly powerless to control her own life. Niou and Kaoru are treating her like a commodity and now Niou has enlisted the help of Ukifune's own maidservant to steal her and deliver her to Niou. Ukifune's complete lack of power foreshadows her desire to take her life into her own hands when she has the opportunity to escape from her life as a mere commodity.

Chapter 52

Chapter 52 Summary

Niou receives a note from Ukifune but, when he reads it, he realizes that something is not right. In order to learn what is going on, Niou sends Tokikata to Uji with orders to learn what is wrong with Ukifune. Once there, Tokikata learns that Ukifune is dead, though he finds it difficult to learn the exact cause of her death. He does determine, though, that she died in a rather strange way and it would be best not to learn exactly how it happened. Fortunately, Tokikata does learn that Kaoru was not involved in Ukifune's death in any way, allaying fears that Kaoru was somehow seeking vengeance upon the woman for her willingness to sleep with Niou.

Kaoru is crushed by the news of Ukifune's death, especially on the day that she was to return to Kyoto to live in his mansion. With another love lost, Kaoru sends a poem of mourning to Niou so that they might mourn Ukifune together. However, Niou is with Nakanokimi when he receives the note and, when he writes his reply, he is careful to avoid addressing the poem directly, lest Nakanokimi get wind of Niou's amorous adventures with Ukifune.

In order to confront his grief, Kaoru pays a visit to Uji and, while he is there, he talks with Ukifune's maidservant and learns exactly what happened to Ukifune. It seems that Ukifune thought she was caught in an impossible situation with two men pulling her in either direction and, rather than attempt to sort everything out, she threw herself into the river. Hearing this startling news, Kaoru is deeply saddened and unsure of what to do next. After yet another terrible experience with a woman, Kaoru wonders if he is meant to live a life of loneliness.

Chapter 52 Analysis

Kaoru has reached a stage where he has almost given up on the idea of love. With each successive failure and disaster, he has been wounded deeper and the suicide of Ukifune seems to be the last straw for him. It seems that Kaoru has no choice other than to accept the fate of loneliness, despite the fact that he is married. Kaoru displays not merely the general fickleness of Genji, but rather an extreme form in which he seems incapable of even remembering a woman that he is married to.

Chapter 53

Chapter 53 Summary

The night when Ukifune attempts to kill herself, the bishop of Uji comes down from his mountain to care for his ill mother. As he walks along the edge of the Uji River, his attendants find a lump of white cloth behind the Uji temple. Unsure what to make of this, they examine it more closely and realize that it is a beautiful young woman leaning against a tree root.

Once again, the disciples are unsure what to make of this, so they decide to undress her in order to learn if she is actually a woman or a fox that has taken on the shape of a human. Upon approaching her, they learn that it is a woman and not a fox attempting to deceive them. In fact, it is Ukifune shortly after her failed attempt to kill herself. Seeing this woman weeping in front of him, the bishop takes pity on her and brings her to his sister, a nun in the Ono village.

The nun cares for Ukifune and, by autumn, Ukifune has recovered her health and her strength. Unfortunately, she is also aware enough to know that she is out of place with the nuns, for she is not as refined as they are. However she can use a brush and write, so she sits in front of a scroll and writes a poem about her plight.

One of the nuns in Ono has a son-in-law who is a guard captain who once caught a glimpse of Ukifune and has been unable to forget her. Upon his return, he attempts to woo Ukifune but his attempts to come to nothing, leaving him frustrated. Although this is partly because the captain is bad with words, it is also because Ukifune has had enough of men courting her and she would rather leave the world behind and become a nun.

When the bishop returns to Ono, Ukifune has made up her mind and she asks him to administer the vows necessary for her to become a nun. The bishop agrees to the request and, by the time the other nuns see Ukifune again, the hair over her forehead is cut off, signifying that she has taken holy orders. Then the bishop tells her that she has done well to walk away from the future that she could have had with a fine husband. But Ukifune is not interested in a future that involves marriage. Rather, she is simply happy that she has finally been able to determine her own future.

Chapter 53 Analysis

The younger nun helps the guard captain attempt to court Ukifune, but Ukifune is not having any of it. It seems that this young nun is not helping her friend, who has obviously had enough of men and their ways. This event shows that holy people are just as impressed by youth and beauty as other people and will often assume that youth and beauty have a certain responsibility to stay in the world. This foreshadows the bishop agreeing to help Kaoru court Ukifune, despite the fact that Ukifune would commit a great sin by turning her back on her vows and returning to the world.

Chapter 54

Chapter 54 Summary

One day in the spring, Ukifune sits alone, admiring the world around her and thinking back on her days with Niou. Instead of attempting to contact him, she composes a poem recounting her memories of former days. As she ponders those days, she realizes that Kaoru was much more worthy than Niou and she would have done better to avoid Niou and his charms.

Meanwhile, the Yokawa bishop is visiting the empress and he tells her the story of how he found Ukifune. The story gets out and, when Kaoru hears it, he realizes that the girl in the story must be the Ukifune that he knew and loved. On the way home from Mt. Hiei, he visits the bishop. Bringing the young brother of Ukifune along with him, Kaoru introduces him to the bishop as one of his messengers before asking the bishop to write a letter to be delivered to Ukifune. In order to press the bishop into writing a letter, Kaoru explains that he plans to marry the girl and take her back to Kyoto with him. Hearing this, the bishop realizes that he may have done something wrong by taking Ukifune away from the world and a wonderful future with an honorable man, so he agrees to write the letter.

That night, Ukifune is watching the fireflies along the garden brook and recalling her past when, as she gazes out over the valley, she sees a large number of people carrying torches toward her. As Ukifune listens, she hears the voice of Kaoru and realizes that he is coming for her.

Ukifune does not want to see him and she does not want to go back with him. She is quite content to live as a nun and she does not want to return to the world. So, in order to avoid Kaoru, she hides herself in the back of the house. When Kaoru sends Ukifune's brother into the nunnery so that he can look at her and report back for certain if it is Ukifune, she refuses to come out and meet him.

Since he cannot get in, Ukifune's brother gives his letters, one from the bishop and one from Kaoru, to another nun so that they will be delivered to his sister. Despite the urgings of the other nuns there, Ukifune refuses to answer the letters. In fact, she says that she cannot remember anything from her life before she was found by the bishop. Telling the nun that, "There may have been a mistake," (1183) Ukifune returns the letters, saying that she does not remember the person who wrote them.

Chapter 54 Analysis

As the parallels between Genji and Kaoru continue, this chapter is a reversal of Murasaki and Genji's story in which Murasaki died. While Genji refused to allow Murasaki to take the vows of a nun, Ukifune seized the opportunity to start her life all over again and she gave up all her attachments to the world. As Kaoru attempts to pull

Kaoru back into the world, she refuses to go. It is, in a sense, a victory. Where Murasaki failed to escape the world because of Genji, Ukifune succeeded against Kaoru. Even though Kaoru is not the man that Genji was, Ukifune was allowed to become a better woman than Murasaki. While secularism won in Genji's world, religion has the final victory down the road.

Characters

Lady Akashi

Daughter of a provincial governor turned priest, Genji woos her during his exile. She is daunted by his elevated position and refinement, but eventually succumbs and becomes one of Genji's secondary wives. Her daughter is adopted by Murasaki and eventually becomes empress.

Akikonomu

Akikonomu is the daughter of Prince Zembo and the Lady of Rokujo. She serves as high priestess of the Ise shrine and later, with Genji's backing, becomes the Reizei Emperor's (Genji's son) wife. She eventually becomes Empress. Genji inappropriately tries to seduce her.

Lady Aoi

Genji's first principal wife, Lady Aoi marries him when he is twelve and she is somewhat older. She is portrayed as cold and curt, and the two never seem compatible. Genji incurs the resentment of her family by his prolonged absences from her home at Sanjo. She is the only daughter of the Minister of the Left at the opening of the novel. Like her brother, Genji's friend To no Chujo, she is his child by his principal wife, Princess Omiya. At a lustration ceremony, Lady Aoi pushes her carriage past Lady Rokujo's. This move humiliates Rokujo, and in turn inspires her spirit to take possession and kill Aoi. After her death, Genji mourns profusely. This deep mourning period may be explained by Genji's feelings of guilt, both for being a bad husband and for causing her premature death. Before Aoi dies, she gives birth to their son, Yugiri.

Princess Asagao

Princess Asagao is daughter of Prince Momozono, who was a brother of Genji's father. She is thus his first cousin. He pursues her from time to time, but without success.

Bennokimi

The daughter of Kashiwagi's late nurse, Bennokimi holds the true story of Kaoru's birth. She finally, after many years, tells Kaoru everything and hands over a packet of Kashiwagi's old love letters to his mother, Princess Nyosan.

Bishop Of Yokawa

The Bishop of Yokawa performs the exorcism that enables Ukifune to recover from her seemingly fatal illness. Later, he cuts her hair and allows her to take vows. He regrets having done this after he realizes Kaoru's attachment to the woman.

Chujo

The name means "captain." Several female servants bear this name, probably taken from their fathers' rank. One is the servant of the wife of the Governor of Iyo. In a subsequent chapter, a different Chujo seems to be a servant of the Lady Rokujo.

To no Chujo

To no Chujo is not only Genji's brother-in-law, but also his best friend and frequent rival. Like Genji, To no Chujo possesses great charm, beauty, and refinement in the arts. He has much success in his romantic pursuits. However, he is always seen as just a step below his rival in all areas: a poor man's Genji. He is the eldest son of a Minister of the Left and Princess Omiya, and the brother of Lady Aoi. He is the father of Kashiwagi, Kobai, Kumoi, and (by Yugao) Tamakazura. His principal wife is a daughter of a Minister of the Right.

Chunagon

A series of ladies in waiting bear this name. In Chapter 7, a Chunagon is mentioned as an attendant of Lady Aoi, and he later sleeps with her. The same or another Chunagon serves as Genji's intermediary in a correspondence with Oborozukiyo.

Fujitsubo

After the death of Kiritsubo, the Emperor (Genji's father) marries her look-alike, Fujitsubo. Fujitsubo is the sister of Prince Hyobu, and thus the aunt of Murasaki. Though she ranks as a secondary wife, Fujitsubo is clearly his favorite. She serves as a substitute not only to the Emperor for the loss of his wife, but also to Genji for the loss of his mother. Genji recklessly pursues Fujitsubo and finally seduces her. As a result, she bears a son, the future Reizei Emperor, whom the world thinks of as the Emperor's child. She and Genji shamefully protect the terrible secret. She becomes a nun to impede Genji's persistent advances. Her death at the age of thirty-seven sends Genji into a long period of mourning.

Genji

The son of the Emperor and Kiritsubo, Genji is marked from his birth as extraordinary in every way. Because of weak maternal backing (Kiritsubo was of the lower ranks of court), the Emperor deems Genji a commoner. Ironically, the Korean fortuneteller who predicts, and thus helps seal, this fate also deems the boy, "The Shining Genji." Genji's natural beauty, combined with his cultivated skills in all the arts, makes him incomparably charming. It explains, in part, Genji's great success with women. He marries Lady Aoi at an early age but never has a meaningful relationship with her. He pursues Fujitsubo, his father's principal wife after Kiritsubo, and eventually impregnates her. Their offspring, the future Emperor Reizei, is passed off as the son of the Emperor. This and other similar events demonstrate the way future generations repeat the mistakes of their ancestors. Genji grooms Murasaki to be his perfect wife. Murasaki, like Fujitsubo, represents a substitute for his dead mother. Along the way, Genji has countless other romantic affairs and never forgets his women. He often gets into trouble as a result of inappropriate interludes, especially with Oborozukiyo. This affair leads to his exile in Suma. As he grows older, Genji's complexes grow to accommodate his many wives, concubines, old loves, and many children. This loyalty seems to arise from Genji's great sympathy for humanity. But in the spirit of *mono no aware*, Genji also understands too deeply the fleeting quality of earthly things. Through it all, Genji's one true love remains Murasaki. Soon after her death, Genji too passes away, and the implication seems to be that society from that point on is in decline.

Prince Hachi

A younger stepbrother of Genji's, Prince Hachi enters the novel at the very end. While living an ascetic existence in exile, Prince Hachi's wife gives birth to two daughters and then dies. Prince Hachi, already quite old, must give up plans to become a priest to assume his new parenting responsibility. He lives a saintly existence in a cottage near Uji. He and Kaoru become friends and study Buddhist scripture together. On his deathbed, he appoints Kaoru guardian of the Uji princesses

Prince Higekuro

Prince Higekuro successfully wins his bid for Genji's ward Tamakazura, to unsatisfactory results. Tamakazura seems to hold no fondness for Prince Higekuro and marries him out of fate. Prince Higekuro's principal wife, Murasaki's stepsister, is a supposed mad woman whose father, Prince Hyobu, becomes angry with Prince Higekuro and wants his daughter and all their children to return to his home. The principal wife dumps ashes all over Prince Higekuro, thus ending any attempt at reconciliation. The act of jealousy is attributed to spirit possession. Prince Higekuro's father was a Minister of the Right. His sister Shokyoden becomes the principal wife and empress of the Susaku emperor, so he is an uncle of the emperor reigning at the novel's end.

Himegimi

The daughter of Prince Higekuro and Tamakazura, the beautiful Himegimi attracts many suitors. Emperor Reizei wins her mother's approval, in part because Prince Higekuro wanted his daughters married into the imperial line. She bears Emperor Reizei two children, a second daughter and first son, and in the process causes jealousy among his other wives, Chujo and Akikonomu.

Prince Hotaru

A younger half-brother of Genji, Prince Hotaru unsuccessfully courts Tamakazura, who is so shy that she lets her attendant Saisho handle all correspondence. Finally, Genji convinces her to bring a bag of fireflies (hotaru) into her bedchamber, which gives off enough light for Prince Hotaru to get a glimpse of her. This is where he gets his name.

Prince Hyobu

Prince Hyobu is the son of a former emperor and brother of Fujitsubo. Genji's love, Murasaki, is Prince Hyobu's child by a concubine. A daughter of his principal wife becomes the principal wife of Prince Higekuro.

Kaoru

A son of Genji's second principal wife, Princess Nyosan, he learns as an adult that his true father is not Genji but Kashiwagi. He looks nothing like Genji. He feels guilt and a sense of failure for not having properly honored his true father. His rivalry with his cousin Prince Niou is the main topic of the last quarter of the novel. Kaoru is not inclined toward romantic pursuits until he meets Prince Hachi's daughters, Oigimi and Nakanokimi. He seems to have Genji's sympathetic nature, but not his skill with women. Though both of the Uji princesses are beautiful, he falls in love with Oigimi, who dies without succumbing to his advances. He transfers his love to Nakanokimi, but out of loyalty promotes Niou as her husband. He instead consoles Nakanokimi over Niou's long absence. Upon Nakanokimi's advice, he transfers his love one more time, to her stepsister Ukifune. This final affair ends even more disastrously than the others do. As Kaoru and Niou vie for possession of Ukifune, the fragile woman becomes overcome with shame. After a failed suicide attempt, Nakanokimi ends up in a nunnery, where she refuses to communicate with Kaoru or any potential suitor.

Kashiwagi

A son of To no Chujo, Kashiwagi possesses some of the fine skills of the earlier generation, especially with the koto [a musical instrument]. His principal wife is Princess Ochiba, a daughter of the Susaku Emperor. He is a suitor for Genji's ward Tamakazura.

He seduces Genji's second principal wife, Princess Nyosan, and is the true father of Genji's son Kaoro. When Genji discovers the secret, he becomes sick with shame and dies young.

Kiritsubo

Genji's mother, the Emperor's favorite consort, is extremely beautiful but from the lower ranks of court society. The Emperor's other ladies exhibit malicious jealousy toward Kiritsubo, which causes her to fall ill and die. Due to her class standing, Kiritsubo's son Genji faces a future with no strong maternal backing. This contributes to the Emperor's decision to deem his son a commoner. Both the Emperor and Genji will search far and wide for Kiritsubo's substitute, a dynamic that leads, in the case of Fujitsubo, to much regret.

Kobai

After Kashiwagi's death, Kobai is To no Chujo's eldest surviving son. He takes over as head of the Fujiwara clan upon his father's death. Kobai has two daughters from his first principal wife, and his union with Makibashira finally produces a son. In true Fujiwari fashion, Kobai attempts to marry his daughters into the imperial family. He sends notes on a branch of rose plum, which is how he gets his name.

Kogimi

The brother of the Lady of the Locust Shell, the beautiful Kogimi serves as messenger between Genji and his sister.

Kokiden

Genji's wicked stepmother, Kokiden, the Emperor's principal wife, sees Genji as a threat to her own eldest son's future. Her jealousy and hunger for power lead her to treat Genji as a foe. Kokiden's son is indeed made crown prince while Genji settles for commoner status. Under the reign of their son, the Susaku Emperor, she and her father, a Minister of the Right, are very powerful. A sister apparently marries Prince Hotaru. A younger sister, Oborozukiyo, marries the Susaku emperor. Kokiden's relentless rage over Genji's affair with Oborozukiyo leads to his self-imposed exile.

Koremitsu

The son of Genji's old nurse goes on confiden-tial missions for Genji.

Lady Kumoi

Lady Kumoi becomes Yugiri's principal wife after a long period in which their match is prevented by her father, To no Chujo. They consummate their love after a wisteria-viewing party. There seems to be a parallel between this affair and Genji's with his cousin Asago, except here Yugiri is more successful. Her name is taken from the lines of one of her own poems, "wild goose in the clouds," that tells of her longing for Yugiri.

Lady of the Bedchamber

See Naishi

Lady of the Evening Faces

See Yugao

Lady Of The Locust Shell

While she is wife of the governor of Iyo, Genji persists in his unwanted advances toward The Lady of The Locust Shell (also known as Utsusemi) until finally he manages to seduce her. He is attracted by her quiet and sullen temperament. This begins a long relationship. Early in the novel, when she gives him the slip, Genji winds up sleeping with her stepdaughter, the wife of the governor of Kii. After the death of her husband, she suddenly becomes a nun.

Lady Of The Orange Blossoms

Genji takes charge of The Lady of the Orange Blossoms after the death of her younger sister Lady Reikeiden, who was a consort of Genji's father. She helps raise Genji's son Yugiri and To no Chujo's daughter Tamakazura. She is considered "no great beauty."

Makibashira

Makibashira marries Kobai after the death of her first husband, Prince Hotaru.

Lady Murasaki

Lady Murasaki first enters the novel as a ten-year-old child. She is the daughter of Prince Hyobu, and thus Fujitsubo's niece. Genji discovers her in the northern hills on a mission to receive treatment for a persistent illness. Her resemblance to Fujitsubo gives rise to Genji's obsession for her. Genji's desperate and persistent pleas to adopt her are finally approved, but at the same time Prince Hyobu decides to take charge of her. Genji

steals Murasaki away to begin her education, which amounts to a long, careful grooming to become his perfect lover. At fourteen, she becomes one of Genji's secondary wives and his favorite. She embodies the ideal Heian woman, sophisticated, loyal, and of an even temperament. She dies at almost the same time of the year as Aoi, causing Genji such despair that he's unable to tend to the funeral arrangements. Her name is from a plant that produces a lavender dye. Her prominence in the novel probably accounts for its author being known as Murasaki Shikibu.

Naishi

Naishi, also known as the elderly Lady of the Bedchamber, acts as aggressor toward Genji, which makes him very uncomfortable. Genji and To no Chujo inadvertently enter her bedchamber at the same time and make light of the situation by staging a mock fight.

Nakanokimi

The youngest daughter of Prince Hachi, Nakanokimi is seduced by Prince Niou, who immediately becomes preoccupied with another wife. His long absences from Nakanokimi seem to confirm his reputation as a philanderer and mark their relationship as a disgrace. Her sister dies from the shame of having promoted the relationship against her father's wishes. With Nakanokimi pregnant in Uji, Prince Niou marries Rokunokimi.

Prince Niou

The third son of Emperor Kinjo and the Akashi Empress, Prince Niou hopes to succeed his brother to the throne. He thwarts his own hopes through scandalous behavior. Prince Niou, who is extremely elegant, engages in a friendly rivalry with Kaoru. He wins Nakanokimi, whom Kaoru also loves, if after the fact. His marriage to Yugiri's daughter Rokunokimi prevents him from spending time with Nakanokimi even during her pregnancy. Eventually, he suspects Kaoru has become involved with Nakanokimi. Always the rival, Prince Niou's crassness leads to his pursuit of Ukifune and her eventual misery.

Nun of Ono

After finding the sickened body of Ukifune, the Nun of Ono nurses Ukifune back to health.

Princess Nyosan

A daughter of the Susaku Emperor, Princess Nyosan (also known as the Third Princess) becomes Genji's second principal wife. Murasaki, who is of lower birth, worries when Princess Nyosan moves into the Rokujo mansion. Princess Nyosan gives birth to Kaoru, who would seem to be Genji's son but is actually the product of an illicit affair with Kashiwagi. Genji learns of the affair through a letter left carelessly out in the open.

Oborozukiyo

A younger sister of Kokiden, Oborozukiyo is engaged to the heir apparent (the Susaku Emperor). Genji seduces her after failing to gain admittance to Fujitsubo's chambers. Her father, the Minister of the Right, catches her and Genji in the act. Their affair inspires Kokiden's wrath and earns Genji exile.

Ochiba

After her first husband, Kashiwagi, dies, Ochiba (also known as the Second Princess) is attended to by Yugiri. She is shocked when, at the height of her mother's illness, Yugiri tries to hoist himself on her. Ochiba's mother writes Yugiri, but he does not respond due to an awkward situation with his wife. The mother equates the lack of response to a public jilting; she has a relapse and dies. Yugiri continues to pursue Ochiba.

Oigimi

Oigimi interprets her father's (Prince Hachi) dying wish (a warning against frivolous suitors) to mean that she and her younger sister Nakanokimi should reject all proposals. Partly for this reason, she rejects Kaoru's persistent advances. Trying to do what is best for the future, Oigimi tries to deflect Kaoru's interest to Nakanokimi. When the affair seems to end in disgrace, Oigimi starves herself to death in a scene reminiscent of Murasaki's death.

Omyobu

Omyobu is one of the women who attend Fujitsubo.

Lady Reikeiden

A one-time minor wife of Genji's father, Lady Reideiden has fallen on hard times. Genji is interested in her younger sister, the Lady of the Orange Blossoms.

Reizei Emperor

The son of Fujitsubo, the Reizei Emperor abdicates early, after he learns that he is the child of Genji rather than of Genji's father. His principal wife and empress is Akikonomu. His other ladies include Chujo and later Himegimi.

Lady Rokujo

The widow of Prince Zembo, Lady Rokujo is a longtime mistress of Genji. She is apparently an older women whom Genji tires of after their initial liaison. Her jealousy is so strong that her wandering spirit kills Yugao and Aoi and attacks Murasaki, among others. Distracted by jealousy and anxiety over Genji, Lady Rokujo accompanies her daughter Akikonomu in her move to court as a Shinto priestess at Ise. On her deathbed, Lady Rokujo begs Genji to look after her beautiful daughter. The character gets her name from the branches of the tree on which Genji ties love notes.

Rokunokimi

Yugiri's daughter Rokunokimi is first promoted as a wife to Niou, and then to Kaoru. Niou finally accepts Yugiri's proposal just as his other wife Nakanokimi becomes pregnant in Uji.

Safflower Lady

Genji and To no Chugo engage in a friendly rivalry for the affections of the Safflower Lady, also known as Tayu. When Genji glimpses the Safflower Lady, he is not impressed but visits her anyway out of sympathy. It turns out she has a big red nose. In addition, she lacks culture, which is exhibited in the poorly made Chinese robe she gives Genji as a present. In a rare example of insensitivity, Genji, in a poem, compares her unkindly to a safflower, a flower with a bright red bloom. He makes jest of her in a private moment with Murasaki by painting his own nose red. Later, a more mature Genji shows his compassion when he saves the Safflower Lady from miserable conditions. Genji helps repair the mansion she inherited from her father and then moves her to his own, better, living quarters.

Second Princess

See Ochiba

Shokyoden

Shokyoden is the sister of Prince Higekuro, principal wife of the Susaku Emperor, and mother of the emperor reigning at the end of the novel.

Shonagan

Shonagan is the nurse of Murasaki. Her name is the same as that of a famous contemporary of the author's, Sei Shonagan, a sharp-tongued woman who wrote the *Pillow Book.*

Suzaku Emperor

The Suzaku Emperor is Genji's brother, the son of their father and his principal wife, Kokiden. He succeeds his father and is succeeded by the Reizei Emperor, who is succeeded in turn by the Susaku emperor's son (by the sister of Prince Higekuro), who is reigning at the end of the novel. His daughter Princess Nyosan (by Genji no Miya) becomes Genji's second principal wife. Another daughter (by Lady Ichijo) is the principal wife of To no Chujo's son, Kashiwagi. Another wife is his maternal aunt, Oborozukiyo, who deceives him with Genji.

Tamakazura

The daughter of To no Chujo and his mistress Yugao, the whereabouts of Tamakazura remains unknown for years. After she flees an aggressive and unattractive suitor, Genji finds Tamakazura and brings her to his mansion at Rokujo. Genji keeps her existence secret from her father and commissions the Lady of the Orange Blossoms to raise her. He makes advances toward Tamakazura, but she rebuffs him. He finally marries her off to Prince Higekuro, with whom she has several sons and two daughters. When Tamakazura finds imperial matches for both daughters, court ladies accuse her of being presumptuous. This causes her great depression. Her unsuccessful suitors include To no Chugo's son, Kashiwagi and Genji's younger brother, Prince Hotaru. Tamakazura and Genji's discussion about fiction is one of the most memorable scenes in the novel.

Tayu

See Safflower Lady

Third Princess

See Princess Nyosan

Ukifune

A stepdaughter to the Emperor, Ukifune gets thrown over by a guard's lieutenant when he discovers she's not a blood relation. Ukifune's mother is intent on arranging a suitable match for her daughter. Kaoru expresses interest in Ukifune, but before he can claim his prize, Niou finds her alone at her half sister Nakanokimi's house. In an attempt

to divert disaster, Ukifune's mother moves her daughter to an unfinished cottage. Kaoru finds her and moves her again, to his own villa at Uji, where she begins koto lessons. Niou covertly visits Ukifune and manages to trick her into intimate relations. The two rivals bombard Ukifune with ardent and aggressive pledges. Ukifune's affections are divided, and her shame and indecision are so great as to cause her to leap into the Uji River. She is found alive and taken into a nunnery, where she takes her vows and maintains a distance from the world, in particular men.

Ukon

Used for several female attendants, including one of Yugao's maids. Genji supports her for many years. She is instrumental in bringing Tamakazura to Genji's palace.

Utsusemi

See Lady of the Locust Shell

Yugao

Yugao, also known as the Lady of the Evening Faces, is the former mistress of To no Chugo, by whom she has a daughter, Tamakazura. To no Chujo abandons Yugao because, as he says in his rainy night conversation with Genji, she is too meek and forgiving. Genji later and by coincidence notices the flowers or "evening faces" outside her house, and investigates the hidden delights inside. Unlike To no Chujo, Genji is attracted to Yugao's gentility. Yugao briefly becomes Genji's mistress, but she is quickly killed by the jealous spirit of the Lady of Rokujo. Out of sympathy, Genji employs Yugao's maid Ukon and asks her to find the daughter Tamakazura, whom he raises under his protection.

Yugiri

The son of Genji and Aoi, Yugiri, like Genji, rises through the ranks to eventually become an important minister of state. Yugiri suffers from the policies of Genji and his uncle To no Chujo, who act to prevent him from making the mistakes of their own youth. As a low-ranking court member, he studies the classics. Yugiri for some years feels oppressed by his father's decision not to promote him more rapidly. His childhood friendship with his cousin Lady Kumoi grows into romance, but her father, To no Chujo, initially prevents their match. Eventually, as Yugiri rises in station, the match is approved and Lady Kumoi becomes his principal wife. At the behest of his friend, Kashiwagi, Yugiri accepts the responsibility to care for Ochiba (Second Princess). Once a relatively faithful and devoted husband, Yugiri starts to feel smothered by Lady Kumoi and their many children. He pursues Ochiba. Lady Kumoi, upset, leaves with their daughters to go home to her father. Yugiri compares his own ill fortune to Genji's good fortune with women.

Themes

Overview

Murasaki Shikibu's epic-length novel, *The Tale of Genji*, probes the psychological, romantic and political workings of mid-Heian Japan. The tale spreads across four generations, splashed with poetry and romance and heightened awareness to the fleeting quality of life.

Evanescence

The theme of evanescence unifies much of the action. Evanescence means, literally, "to dissipate or disappear like vapor," according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*. The characters in *The Tale of Genji* appreciate beauty to an extreme degree, an aesthetic known in Japan as *miyabi*. But this appreciation is tempered by an understanding of the impermanence of all things, especially life. The theme of surface phenomenon as illusory repeats itself throughout Buddhist doctrine. It is this prevailing attitude that gives the novel a tone of underlying sorrow, which can be translated into another Japanese term, *mono no aware*, or, loosely, "the pity of things."

Many characters throughout the novel, with this idea of fleeting human beauty and life in mind, take religious vows. Fujitsubo, Genji's old nurse, Ukifune, and others attempt to leave the material world. Murasaki and Genji seriously consider taking vows, though they ultimately don't follow through. These characters demonstrate their understanding that the time and things of Earth quickly give way. Murasaki depicts Genji as a complex character with a keen awareness of the sorrow of his existence.

The Law of Karma

The concept of moral causality is used to explain events of the novel. Fate is related to past lives. Good actions will be rewarded and bad actions will be punished. In this formula, there is no escaping justice. For example, Kaoru seems to be the victim of severely bad luck. He knows, though, that he surely did something to bring on this ill fortune. "His thoughts on the road were of long ago. What strange legacy had brought him and the Eighth Prince together? A bond from an earlier life, surely, had tied him to this family and its sad affairs, and made him see to the needs of this last foundling, even."

Genji, of course, is highly sensitive to the cause-and-effect quality of his actions. His regret often predicts future retribution. He also worries about others. "The bishop talked of this ephermal world and of the world to come. His own burden of sin was heavy, thought Genji, that he had been lured into an illicit and profitless affair. He would regret it all his life and suffer even more terribly in the life to come."

According to William J. Puett, in *Guide to The Tale of Genji,* "To the Heian mind karma neatly accounted for the apparent inequities in the world: why one man, despite his virtue, seemed to have nothing but troubles to live with, or why another was blessed with continuous satisfaction. It was also employed to explain such strong emotional affinities as when one falls in love at first sight, for people once bonded together in a previous life were likely to be pushed together by force of karma."

Substitution

Throughout *The Tale of Genji*, male characters seek consolation for lost or unattainable loves in women of similar composition. Genji's father, the Emperor, is inconsolable after the death of Kiritsubo until he finds a woman, Fujitsubo, who almost exactly resembles her. Genji himself falls in love with Fujitsubo, a mother replacement. Later, he falls in love with Murasaki because of her resemblance to Fujitsubo. His interest in Yugao and her daughter Tamakazura stems from one love. Late in the novel, Genji's supposed son Kaoru loves Oigimi, and then her younger sister Nakanokimi, and then a half-sister Ukifune. In Kaoru's desperate and endless search for Oigimi, the reader sees the need for substitution as being almost beyond the character's control.

Richard Bowring, in *Landmarks of World Literature,* writes, "...in *The Genji* this substitution is largely effected on the principal of similarity. Desire as original sin will always win out, so that when the first object of desire proves to be out of reach, attention is naturally transferred to the next best thing."

Jealousy

In the Heian society of *The Tale of Genji*, men take multiple wives. A woman's relative standing is measured in part against her relationship to her husband. Jealousy, then, is a natural part of the order. It also, in the novel's world vision, kills.

The novel opens with a case of jealousy as a murderous weapon. Kiritsubo, the Emperor's favorite, becomes the subject of malicious gossip. All the Emperor's other women resent her. A sensitive and beautiful woman, Kiritsubo finally wins her plea to go home. "Fearing that even now she might be the victim of a gratuitous insult, she chose to go off without ceremony, leaving the boy behind." She dies an emaciated wreck of her former self.

Several episodes of spirit possession come about due to jealousy. Lady Rukujo's spirit takes possession of Aoi, Yugao, and Murasaki. The first two women die as a result, and Murasaki gets very ill before her recovery.

According to Doris G. Bargen, in *Yugao: A Case of Spirit Possession in The Tale of Genji,* "Jealousy is traditionally regarded as the major force behind spirit possession in the Genji because female grievances are revealed to be rooted in the polygynous [sic] system which constantly threatens women's status and lowers their self-esteem in the very sensitive matter of sexual relations." Higekuro's wife, too, acts in a way attributed

to spirit possession. She flies into a jealous rage at the news that she likely will be ousted from her position as principal wife by a new mistress. She dumps ashes all over her husband's head. Though contemporary readers no doubt understand her rage, Heian readers, especially male, would disapprove of such jealousy. Women were to welcome their competition, almost as family. In fact, Genji loves Murasaki all the more for her resistance to jealousy.

Supernatural Events

Other supernatural events infuse the novel with a mystical quality. The Korean fortune teller of the opening chapter figures in the Emperor's decision to give his son commoner's status. Genji's malaria is cured my an old mountain sage who is more exorcist than physician. The storm in Suma serves as a sign that Genji should move to Akashi. The Suzaku Emperor's dream of Genji's father leads to an eye ailment. These and other supernatural events are meant to be interpreted literally.

Social Decline

In a novel that covers four generations, no character can compare with Genji. Even in his lifetime Genji is seen as a throwback to a better time. The Emperor calls Genji's wonderful *Dance of the Blue Waves*, the "only one worth seeing." Time and again, the author makes the point that there is no comparison to Genji. The insinuation is that as time marches on there is an inevitable decline in the social order. Genji possesses unparalleled beauty. His skill in the arts, his social graces, his inconceivable refinement□everything he does is unmatched. Genji is the peak. Everything after Genji is downhill.

According to Edward G. Seidensticker in the introduction to his English translation of the novel, "A widely held belief in Heian Buddhism was that the religion itself, like everything else, was caught in an irreversible process of decline. The last sad stage, in which forms would remain when faith was gone, was expected to begin several centuries after the death of the historic Buddha. One chronology held that this event would occur in the eleventh century. So, with the Buddhist law itself entering an inferior age from which there could be no recovery, there could be no hope for improvement in the affairs of man, so ephermal and insignificant by comparison."

In Genji's last appearance, he is, "handsomer than ever, indeed almost unbelievably handsome. For no very good reason, the holy man was in tears." And then in the next chapter, nine years later, "The shining Genji was dead, and there was no one quite like him." The novel then follows Niou and Kaoru, the first a quick-witted man of action, the latter a sensitive and introspective soul. Neither can measure up to the standards set by Genji. According to J. Thomas Rimer, in *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, "Together they might have equaled Genji; separately, they seem limited, inadequate."

Excessive Desire

Love in Japanese really means longing. Love, then, is a loss of self control. Genji is peerlessly handsome, incomparable in everything he does□whether painting, dancing, or composing poetry. He lacks all restraint in his pursuit of earthly pleasures, though. This is a Buddhist sin. Genji understands he should not pursue Fujitsubo, Oborozukiyo, and many other women, but still he does it. This weakness defines the human condition in *The Tale of Genji*.

Style

Genre

The Tale of Genji does not meet many of the classical requirements of an epic. Merriam-Webster's *Encyclopedia of Literature* defines epic as, "Long narrative poem in an elevated style that celebrates heroic achievement and treats themes of historical, national, religious or legendary signifi-cance." It goes on to report, "The main aspects of epic convention are the centrality of a hero□sometimes semi divine□of military, national, or religious importance; an extensive, perhaps even cosmic, geographical setting; heroic battle; extended and often exotic journeying; and the involvement of supernatural beings, such as gods, angels, or demons, in the action."

The Tale of Genji is written in prose, not verse. The hero and the setting are completely mortal, more realistic than cosmic. It is a time of peace and tranquility.

The quintessential epic tales□such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*□tell of great war heroes. Genji never brandishes a weapon, nor does he ever receive notice for his bravery. Rather, Genji distinguishes himself in love. His self-exile to Suma fits into the epic mold: the hero goes abroad, where he confronts and passes a series of potentially fatal tests. His hero status is achieved through national recognition of his talents in arts, manners, and beauty.

Narrative Technique

In a work of fiction, the narrator, or teller of the story, is distinct from the author. The narrator is the voice through which the author speaks.

Murasaki Shikibu's distinct narrative technique establishes a framework for the whole story. Since she wants to chronicle life in this idealized society, Murasaki Shikibu must convincingly portray the characters, setting, and action. Here, the fictional world is represented as true to the historic world. The first sentence reads, "In a certain reign..." This immediately provides a vague historical context to the story. Though the narrator, at this point, does not overtly come through the pages, she is already establishing trust with her reader. Later, the author intrudes upon the narration, lending it a conspiratorial tone, as if she is revealing something of herself to the readers. "I had hoped, out of deference to him, to conceal these difficult matters; but I have been accused of romancing, of pretending that because he was the son of an emperor he had no faults. Now, perhaps, I shall be accused of revealing too much."

At times, the author intrudes upon the narration to comment on her rationale for leaving out certain details, on her mood, on her writing process. Otherwise, the narrator remains unobtrusive, more or less objective though not omniscient. Richard Bowring, in *Landmarks of World Literature,* explains, "...it is probably that Murasaki Shikibu retained the somewhat raw technique of open narrative intrusion in order to play with her

audience, to remind them that they were not reading gossip and that *Genji* was not to be seen in the same light as its predecessors."

Plot

Genji's rise, followed by his decline, give the first 41 chapters a raw outline. In general, though, *The Tale of Genji* does follow traditional plotting techniques. Most stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Typically, plots exhibit causality and unity. In *The Tale of Genji*, the action, which covers four generations, is more episodic, meaning the action shifts from one to another incident of seemingly equal weight. Even Genji's death, which would seem of monumental importance, receives very little dramatic attention. He dies and the action picks up nine years later with a shift in focus to the next generation.

Certainly, there is tension in the novel. Genji's many affairs, and their potential consequences, stir the reader's curiosity. There is little attempt to maintain this tension, though. William J. Puett, in *Guide to the Tale of Genji,* writes, "A story may begin in one chapter, recede for several more, then break out in a chapter further on, while other subplots are developing at their own, very practical rate with similarly measured thrusts. Plots overlap and tangle in a complicated and totally realistic fashion."

It is difficult to say how much of the plotting can be attributed to the author's technique, and how much might be explained by the shuffling of chapters over the years.

Character Development

In the course of such a long novel, the reader learns about major characters both through narrative commentary and their action in various scenes. Murasaki Shikibu promotes her readers' understanding of characters in ways that seem related to her times. For example, characters are often described in terms of their parentage. In introducing Genji, the narrator first tells the reader all about his mother. This Heian method is known as *ab ovo*.

Other times, the narrator refers to new characters as if they've already been presented. Lady Rokujo appears for the first time in Chapter 4, though from the context it seems as if the reader should already know something of her biography. It is another five chapters before this character directly participates in the story. Again, it is impossible to know if this was a convention used by Murasaki Shikibu, or if it was the result of chapters being lost or shuffled.

Use of Poems

Sprinkled through the novel are nearly 800 poems. These poems illuminate the importance of artistic achievement in Heian society and also the conventions of courtship. Beyond that, the use of the poems highlights the relationship between spiritual and human. References to nature infuse many of the poems. The accumulate

effect□"august clouds," "wailing groves," "river of tears"□is to equate nature with a higher power. In a line like, "The dew does not rest long upon the leaves," there is a very clear connection between nature and human existence.

Keene writes of the poems, "...they contribute not only to the beauty of the style but also to the creation of a lyrical mode of narration."

Tone

The author's attitude toward her subject matter can be deduced from the tone of the words in *The Tale of Genji*. This relates closely to two of the novel's major themes, evanescence and social decline. A melancholy and generally pessimistic tone communicate the premise that the material world, especially life, is fleeting, and that society is in perpetual decline. This melancholy can be detected in the scene where Genji first meets Murasaki. "She was weeping, and a vague sadness had come over Genji too. The girl gazed attentively at her and then looked down. The hair that fell over her forehead was thick and lustrous." The novel is filled with regret and sadness, especially in the final few chapters. The darker tone of the post-Genji chapters shows a world in definite decline. "Nothing more was to be done, clearly, and the boy feared that he was beginning to look ridiculous. Saddened and chagrined at his failure to exchange even a word with his so grievously lamented sister, he started for the city."

Style

Style refers to the author's unique arrangement of ideas, her use of diction, her manner of composing sentences, using figures of speech, imposing a rhythm. In essence, it refers to the qualities of her craft that make her work distinct. Murasaki Shikibu employed a somewhat ornate style of writing, in keeping with the aristocratic society of which she wrote. The author went into elaborate and meticulous detail of costumes, scents, habits.

Historical Context

Heian Era (794-1186)

The era gets its name from the capital, which in 794 moved from Nara. It occupies the area today known as Kyoto. Heian means "peace and tranquility." The capital was built to accommodate almost exclusively the emperor and the ranked hierarchy of the court. The scope of *The Tale of Genji*, then, is the refined aristocrats and not the society at large. All that was considered noble, beautiful, and worthwhile resided in the capital. Therefore, Genji's exile to the mountains and his relationship to a country woman would be seen as vulgar.

Genji, adept at all the most refined arts, epitomizes the idealized Heian aristocrat. In a culture that ranked beauty above all else, Genji possessed almost overwhelming charm. His true love, Lady Murasaki, represents the idealized Heian woman. The tale opens during the reign of Emperor Daigo (897-930), an age considered to be the high point of Heian civilization. The novel moves ahead some seventy years to Murasaki's own time. The tenth son of Emperor Daigo, Minamoto no Takaakira, might have been a model for the character Genji. Like Genji, he was made a commoner, was exiled (in 969), and later was restored to the capital.

The Heian court was weakened by the rise of military powers outside the capital, and in the twelfth century several revolts occurred. But Genji made a lasting impression on Japanese culture. Donald Keene, in *Seeds in the Heart*, says, "During the centuries after the completion of *The Tale of Genji* the court life it so superbly evoked was overshadowed by the rise to power of the samurai class, and at times its existence seemed to be imperiled; but the fierce warriors who threatened the way of life at the court generally did not remain immune to its charms, and they turned with respect and a kind of nostalgia to *The Tale of Genji*."

Heian Literature

The literature of the era was dominated by women. The proliferation of literature, and especially of the long novel, was made possible by a new, purely phonetic, writing system. The Buddhist Kobo Daishi, who had studied Sanskrit in India, introduced a phonetic alphabet. Hirgana consists of simple, cursive strokes in which each character represents a single syllable. Hirgana is easier and faster to write, and doesn't require a knowledge of Chinese characters. In the Heian period, women generally used hirgana and men used kana. Murasaki, however, wrote Genji in kana, making it accessible to men.

According to Richard Bowring, in *Landmarks of World Literature*, "Japanese prose had to wait for its true beginnings until the phonetic script had become fully established,

because to write Japanese exclusively in Chinese characters was an extremely cumbersome business."

Love and Marriage

Court ladies were rarely seen by men; they were hidden behind curtains, doors, or screens. Men fell in love not based on looks, but rather from the sound of a woman's music or the words of her poem. A glimpse of a woman, though, might send a man into a swoon of longing.

Women painted false eyebrows on their foreheads in place of their real eyebrows, which they shaved off. Their teeth were blackened. Their faces: were pudgy and powdered white. A slight plumpness was considered beautiful. Hair was the most admired physical trait, custom dictating that a woman's hair be at least as long as she was tall.

Clothing and scents were also carefully thought out. Court women's robes were layered and arranged so that various color shades and combinations could be admired in the long, dangling sleeves. Sometimes, a man could glimpse a sleeve jutting out from behind a screen or carriage door, in a style referred to as idashi-guruma. Over time, robes were delicately incensed and perfumed to create a distinctive fragrance, and a person of good breeding could easily recognize the woman by her scent.

William J. Puett, in *Guide to the Tale of Genji*, notes, "For the denizens of the capital, the actual world of daily activities was, by comparison to ours, largely nocturnal, where time was solely governed by the flow of events. People slept, ate, and committed their other quotidian duties around their social activities, which more often than not were conducted at night, till just before dawn. Even the design of the buildings and furniture required that, for the most part, the courtiers lived out their lives in a state of semi-darkness...."

Polygamy, or the practice of having more than one spouse at a time, was common practice. The first, major, marriage was arranged by family, and subsequent, lesser, marriages could be made by any combination of arrangements. After marriage husbands and wives generally lived apart, like Genji and Aoi, with the husband making occasional visits. Sexual relations with close family members, like with Genji and Fujitsubo, were not considered taboo. The problems in such relationships involved politics (tampering with the imperial succession) more than anything.

Politics

The Fujiwara clan, headed by Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1027), dominated Japanese politics. Michinaga used a carefully-designed network of marital arrangements to maintain control. He was brother-in-law to two emperors, uncle to one, uncle and brother-in-law to another, and grandfather to two more. Women were critical in the successful manipulation of these marriage politics. Women had income, property and other rights that made them more privileged than women of later eras.

The Arts

Heian women were expected to be educated at home in calligraphy, embroidery, painting, and other feminine arts. Men were to learn the Chinese classics and the histories in preparation for official careers. All members of court were expected to be accomplished musicians on a variety of instruments. In the novel, there is frequent mention of the koto, but also the lute and the flute. The 13-string koto was considered a feminine instrument. Genji was a master of the 7-string koto, which went out of fashion, historically, about the time of his fictional demise.

During the Heian period (794-1185), poetry became increasingly involved with the court. There were many poetry competitions, know as uta-awase, held under the sponsorship of the emperor or some other member of the imperial family. Poetry was often written on assigned topics. Judges heavily weighed how well a poem fulfilled the specifica-tions. Court members composed the poetry, but never used court life as a subject. Poetry was often used to decorate paintings.

That *The Tale of Genji* gained high regard in Heian times and beyond is evidenced in its pervasiveness throughout the arts. In the last century of the Heian period, the illustrated narrative handscroll, the *emaki*, came to prominence. Dating from about 1130, the illustrated *Tale of Genji* represents one of the high points of Japanese painting. This system of pictorial conventions conveys the emotional content of each scene.

Religion

At least three religions impacted Heian culture: Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

In Buddhist thinking, life is characterized by suffering, which is created by desire, pleasure, attachment to this world, and rebirth. If nothing is done to end the cycle of rebirth, it will continue forever. The law of karma determines whether the cycle of rebirth is broken. Nirvana, the divine state, is possible for all human beings, but only when a person is free from human desire. Taking vows was seen as a way toward achieving nirvana. Failure, in the Buddhist mindset, is never final because compassion is central to its beliefs.

The native religion of Japan, Shinto, literally, means "the way of the Gods." All that is beautiful in nature is deified. The right to rule was tied to Shinto beliefs. Shrines were built for the exclusive use of the imperial family and were used in connection with imperial succession. Shinto, then, was important for public concerns, and Buddhism, private. The Sumiyoshi shrine, which is central to Genji's exile, plays an important part in his return to the capital and the birth of a future empress.

Confucianism remained an essential part of formal education, but like Buddhism was primarily a male preserve. Prior to *The Tale of Genji*, Japanese culture was heavily influenced by the Chinese, and so naturally Confucianism played a role. According to "The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World," Confucian thought is characterized by

a spirit of humanism, rationalism, and moralism. It relies on human experience□rather than religious doctrine□to uphold its beliefs. It places *ren*, meaning humanity or love, above all other values. During Murasaki Shikibu's time, Confucianism remained an essential part of formal education, and, like Buddhism, was primarily a male preserve. In Confucian belief, the ideal society could be realized because each individual had the capacity for self-actualization and the state was obligated to aid in their cultural and intellectual growth.

Publishing

The printing press did not come to Japan until the 17th century. Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji* in handbooks with an inkstone and brush. Court people were probably employed to copy it as she went along. The court people who formed her audience sometimes copied chapters as they read them.

Critical Overview

Ever since its birth, *The Tale of Genji* has been almost universally applauded by literary critics and readers, with some exceptions. Medieval writers deemed it inferior because prose was considered a feminine form. Japanese purists into the 20th century have lambasted the novel's decadence as immoral.

Donald Keene, in *Seeds of the Heart*, points to the oldest work of criticism of Japanese fiction as an indication of early praise. *Mumyo Zoshi* (*Story Without a Name*, c. 1200) is cast in the form of conversation among various literary ladies about their favorite books. They all take it for granted that *The Tale of Genji* is the supreme work of fiction. One of them says, "The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that to have created this *Tale of Genji* was such an extraordinary achievement it could not have been accomplished without divine aid. I believe it was a genuine miracle granted by the Buddha in response to the author's prayers."

Soon after its appearance, *The Tale of Genji* became essential reading for the upper class. In the last part of the 12th century, digests of it were required reading for poets. *The Tale of Genji* continues to be regarded as an integral part of a Japanese student's curriculum. *The Economist*, in an article published Christmas Day 1999, wrote, "In Japan today, *The Tale of Genji* is as natural to the culture as Mount Fuji and the cherry-blossom season. High schools teach sections of the ancient text, in its classical Japanese, to prepare pupils for university entrance. Novelists challenge themselves by writing modern translations...."

Motoori Norinaga, writing in the eighteenth century, dispelled commonly accepted Buddhist and Shinto interpretations of the novel. Norinaga insisted that the good and evil of *The Tale of Genji* did not stem from religious traditions but rather from a quality of *mono no aware*, or a delicate awareness of the pathos of the human condition.

The novel's broad and long-lasting appeal can be attributed, in part, to its focus on character. The first English translation was published in six volumes between 1925-32. Keene, writing in *The Pleasures of Japanese Literature*, says, "Ever since Arthur Waley's translation appeared in the 1920s, readers have been astonished by its seeming modernity. Waley himself discussed the resemblance that reviewers had found between Murasaki Shikibu's work and those of Proust, Jane Austen, Boccacio, and Shakespeare."

Indeed, comparisons to Marcel Proust, Jane Austen, and William Shakespeare happen throughout the body of criticism, as well as comparisons to Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson. Keene speculates, "Murasaki Shikibu devoted her greatest attention to the elements of human life that have changed least over the centuries. Because the emotions of her characters are so easily intelligible, we sometimes obtain a startling impression of modernity, and it is easy to overlook even the aspects of life in Heian Japan that differ most conspicuously from our own."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, Evans examines the reasons why Murasaki Shikibu's thousand-year-old novel remains so accessible and appealing.

Image a white-faced, black-toothed woman. Painted eyebrows crest either side of her forehead. Her hair falls down to the floor. She hides behind a screen, just the ornate sleeves of her robe in plain view. On the other side, a carefully-scented man. At home waits his wife, and his other wife, a couple of concubines, a pseudo-adopted daughter who someday will be his lover. But for now□as he sends off a love haiku via messenger□his passion swells for this woman whose koto he heard as he sat under the cherry blossoms.

Ever since the first installment of Arthur Waley's English translation appeared in 1925, critics of Mirasaki Shikibu's eleventh-century Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji* have remarked on its seeming modernity. Even today, readers find the novel far more accessible than other dated classics. White-faced women, modern? Polygamous men, modern? Haiku poetry? Kotos?

Nearly a thousand years and a continent separate the contemporary American reader from the Japanese society of Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*. Homer, Milton, Chaucer, through Shakespeare□the study of these great writers happens tentatively, and only with an arsenal of study guides. Genji, somehow, has a more timeless quality. Why?

Edward G. Seidensticker, in a 1993 introduction to a reissue of his own English translation, writes, "The Genji describes the highest levels of Heian society, so high that the governor who was god to the rustics out in the provinces could himself be treated like a rustic buffoon. Yet all the important characters fall within the ordinary range of human experience."

Content, in this case the focus on characters and their psychological and emotional experience, is the main ingredient in Murasaki Shikibu's recipe for an ageless story. Craft, especially the author's decision to portray an entirely realistic world, makes the recipe come out right. The modern reader has a warehouse of emotional experience in which to relate to any story. In so many antiquated tales, though, the circumstances, the characters, and the setting seem so foreign as to be absurd. The footnote is the clumsy, cumbersome antidote to this problem.

Writers of long ago□due to standard literary conventions, social norms, political pressure, and other now largely-defunct expectations□seldom invented worlds that seemed true to their time even during their time. It could be that Murasaki Shikibu benefited from her rare circumstances: an intellectual and artistic woman working in a form dominated by women, living in a culture that regarded art above all else. She makes no apologies for her novel or the behavior of its characters. Murasaki Shikibu uses precise, detailed descriptions to make her Japanese aristocratic society come to

life. The reader develops an immediate trust for the narrator, lets the narrator guide her through the book. The customs, manners, and style might seem odd to, say, an American teenager living in New York City. But they always make sense in context. Once the reader trusts the world, then she can also trust the emotions. The object that inspires the emotion□an old shoe, a kite, a white-faced woman□becomes, in a sense, arbitrary.

The title character Genji invites compassion. He is deemed, from his early childhood, a commoner, somebody who will be held down by his lack of birthright. He is a hero in the vein of all the mutt heroes to come. Yet, Genji defies the word common. His natural beauty combines with the other skills he cultivates in dance, song, poetry, music, painting. Nobody compares to his prowess in any of the arts, of which romance seems to be one. So Genji is at once a mutt and a thoroughbred, a character accepted by almost everybody.

Perhaps Genji's great compassion comes from his disadvantaged birth. Throughout the novel, the hero repeatedly shows affection, even respect, for characters well below his station. When he stumbles across a down-on-her-luck Safflower Lady, Genji, by now the highest aristocrat, instinctively wants to help. He restores to order her disheveled mansion and brings the red-nosed woman to his own mansion.

One thousand A.D. or two thousand, it doesn't matter: decency, kindness, and especially humility hit home.

It starts with beauty. America's cultural obsession with beauty is well documented: pretty faces and perfect tans and washboard abs dot the advertising landscape. Billboards smile, and television ads blink, and web sites pop up: all the pitch men and starlets reek of beauty. Though the Heian era's definition of beauty differs from Y2K America's definition, the obsession remains the same.

"[Genji] was wearing several soft white singlets with an informal court robe thrown loosely over them. As he sat in the lamplight leaning against an armrest, his companions almost wished that he were a woman." One can almost imagine that very sentence, with an updated wardrobe, in the pages of a Hollywood gossip rag. As American fans marvel over the minutia of a star's life, so too does Murasaki Shikibu marvel over the minutia of her star's life. She mentions Genji's dazzling looks at every turn. "The chrysanthemums in Genji's cap, delicately touched by the frosts, gave new beauty to his form and his motions, no less remarkable today than on the day of rehearsal." "A slight flush from drink made Genji even handsomer than usual." "...the messenger was able to observe Genji at close range. He was moved to tears of admiration by what he saw." One almost couldn't cast Genji in a Hollywood production. Tom Cruise, too short. Mel Gibson, too macho. Jackie Chan, not enough charm. Genji's kind of beauty is rare indeed.

Genji obtains hero status much like so many American heroes gain pop culture stardom. Genji's reputation spreads far and wide. Murasaki Shikibu seems intent on exploring his inner workings. The modern American can easily understand Genji's accomplishments

without understanding the finer points of the culture. The context is Genji's ranking: first, by far. One need not know what a koto is or what it sounds like to know that Genji's skill in using it is astonishing. One need not appreciate the Heian culture's sense of beauty to understand that Genji sends women into a swoon.

To describe Genji as merely a lover is to cheapen his overall effect. At his core, Genji, it is true, is a romantic. He lusts after countless women, no single one able to suppress his great sexual appetite. He goes to great lengths to conduct clandestine affairs: he travels far, he uses disguises, he employs messengers and enlists allies. Even when he suffers from malaria, Genji musters the strength to pursue the child Murasaki. During his exile he manages to find a new partner.

In the course of Genji's amorous adventures, he risks everything: his reputation and social standing, the continued happiness he has with his true love, standing with the Gods. He does not come through it unscathed. Genji's self-imposed exile, to cite the most dramatic instance, is the result of an unwise affair.

Genji's exhilaration, the recklessness of his infatuations, predates by hundreds of years Shakespeare's Romeo and Goethe's Faust. It predates Tristan. The modern era is filled with such stories of reckless, hopeless romance. Importantly, Genji is not a cad. Unlike Don Juan, his interest is never in the conquest. Unlike Don Giovanni, who humiliates Donna Elvira for belaboring their affair, Genji never forgets any woman he has loved. He sees to the needs of the Safflower Lady with her big red nose, and pretends to maintain an interest in her. He educates rather than chastises Omi for her crassness. Though Genji hoists himself on his share of women, such as the frightened Yugao, he redeems himself through a genuine interest in their lives.

Genji's narrator relates, "There were no ordinary, common women among those with whom he had had even fleeting affairs, nor were there any among them in whom he could find no merit; and so it was, perhaps, that an easy, casual relationship proved durable. There were some who changed their minds and went on to other things, but he saw no point in lamenting what was after all the way of the world."

The famous rainy night conversation, in which Genji and To no Chujo debate the characteristics of the ideal woman, is noteworthy. To a modern reader, the discussion presents an array of chauvinistic viewpoints. Again, though, Genji's magnetic personality helps bridge this cultural gap. According to William J. Puett, in *Guide to the Tale of Genji*, "...each character in the discussion does emerge as a distinct personality and, most of all, Genji's sensitivity and open-mindedness are seen by comparison."

The sexual politics of the novel might present the greatest difficulty for a contemporary American reader. For somebody whose legal and moral system deems it inappropriate for a boss to ask an underling on a date, it must seem wrong indeed for a man to scoop up a woman in a moment of lust and literally carry her off to his home. Male dominance might have been a fact of life in Heian society, but that doesn't mean the modern reader will want to tolerate it. Why do they, then?

Before long, Genji has a complex for his women so enormous as to anticipate suburban sprawl. Construction crews seem constantly at work making new living quarters for the latest concubine, wife, or casual conquest. Always, the reader senses that Genji does not abide by the usual rules of male chauvinism. He cares.

Donald Keene, in *Seeds in the Hearts*, writes, "Genji responds perfectly to each woman. He is a genius at lovemaking, and if he had lived in a society where monogamy was strictly enforced or if, deciding that Murasaki was an ideal wife, he had never looked at another woman, the world would have been the poorer. Unlike Don Giovanni, he not only woos and wins each lady but he makes each feel sure of his love, and each is content with her small part of his life."

Genji's sensitivity, his sympathy, his loyalty continue, today, to be respected qualities. These characteristics are easily seen against any backdrop, even Heian era Japan. Genji's flaws, his mistakes, seem to accentuate these qualities. For every mistake, he seems all that much more in touch with the complicated fabric of his life as it collides with other lives.

Genji's underlying humanistic tendencies give him a more rounded and identifiable profile than the archetypal hero. He betrays family and friends. He regrets poor decisions. Even in his betrayals, maybe because of them, he appreciates his impact on the world around him. He is able to laugh at himself.

When Genji and To no Chujo meet in the elderly Lady Naishi's bedchamber, it is a most embarrassing moment for The Shining One. "Still ignorant of the latter's identity, Genji thought of headlong flight; but then he thought of his own retreating figure, robes in disorder, caps all askew." As the scene progresses, and the two rivals engage in mock battle, Genji swallows his pride. "Somewhat rumpled, they went off together, the best of friends." It's not the only time Genji gets caught with his pants (or robe, as the case may be) down. The Minister of the Right catches Genji and Oboro-zukiyo in the act. A derobed Genji can be read figuratively as a character exposed to the world. A hero with insides.

Genji, as the embodiment of *mono no aware* [a sensitivity to things], is acutely aware of the fleeting quality of life. Though Genji has a tremendous lust for life, he understands his time as a flicker in space. "But he was also obsessed with evanescence.... He wanted to withdraw quietly and make preparations for the next life, and so add to his years in this one." This mindset derives from Buddhist philosophy. But the origins, again, are irrelevant. People through the ages, in whatever capacity or form suits them best, have had to deal with the reality of death. Genji's great sadness over the loss of Fujitsubo, Aoi, and especially Murasaki seems extremely modern. He mourns what was, even as he anticipates what will be.

"There seemed to be nothing in the least false about Genji's own tears, which gave an added elegance and fineness of feature."

The fact that Genji has invaded the pop culture, especially in Japan, but also here in America, suggests that the modern reader can easily cast Genji as a modern hero. There is a popular Genji comic book. An animated film. A Murasaki Shikibu stamp. A Genji museum in Kyoto. A sandalwood and musk-scented Genji shower gel. Many, many web sites.

Those readers who especially admire Murasaki Shikibu's great achievement, who appreciate *The Tale of Genji* as great literature, might take offense at such treatment. After all, to lump the refined and incomparable Genji in with Pokemon and Brittany Spears seems like a grand insult. But in modern American society, such recognition constitutes flat-tery. It means that *The Tale of Genji*, far removed in time and place from its birth, has not lost its appeal.

Source: Donald Evans, for *Epics for Students*, Gale, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In this essay, the author illustrates how The Tale of Genji *was the birth of the modern novel.*

1001-19

The modern novel was born at the imperial court of Japan.

Almost exactly 1,000 years ago, a young woman in a small town in Japan began to write the story of an imagined prince who had just about everything□brains, looks, charm, artistic talent and the love of well- born ladies. He was Genji, "the shining one", so dear to his father, the emperor, that the latter reduced his rank to that of a commoner, to spare him the malice at court.

Born in the first chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, the prince reinvents himself as the most powerful commoner in the kingdom. When last seen, by now aged 52, he is planning to seclude himself in a mountain temple. Further chapters concern his supposed son Kaoru, troubled to find out that his adored father is not his natural father at all.

Today, *The Tale of Genji* is acknowledged as the world's first modern novel, and its writer, Murasaki Shikibu, not just as a pioneer but as one of enormous talent, not least in her use of irony. This long book is peopled by dozens of well-wrought characters, sophisticated figures in an aristocratic society that values celebrity and ambition. It has often been compared to Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. Both works "explore memory and passing time. The psychology of the characters is complex; the central drama is their internal con-flict," says Haruo Shirane, professor of Japanese literature at Columbia University, in New York.

Murasaki's characters and their setting reflect the reality around her. Genji's seduction of court women is also political opportunism. He fathers at least one emperor and an empress. In the late Heian era (893-1185), when the book is set, the ruling Fujiwara clan of upper- class commoners (to which Murasaki belonged) would send their daughters to court at Kyoto, hoping that one would give birth to a crown prince and ensure their control of the imperial power.

Little is certain about Murasaki Shikibu. The name itself is a pen- name. She may have lived from around 975 to 1025. Until her marriage she perhaps lived in the province on the Japan Sea where her bureaucrat father had been appointed governor. She married probably in 998; had a daughter; was widowed in about 1001; and probably then began "Genji". She kept a diary, which reports her arrival at court□thanks to both her connections and her talent□in 1005 or 1006.

There, in Kyoto, an attendant to Empress Akiko, she was Lady Murasaki, "pretty yet shy, unsociable, fond of old tales", as her diary puts it. Everyone wanted to read the story of

Genji. The young empress was the first to see the work-in-progress, which Murasaki did not complete until about 1019.

She wrote the novel in her own hand; court amanuenses copied it as she went along. Ladies-in-waiting and courtiers sought it out, even stealing unrevised pages from her room. Although Murasaki read Chinese, and indeed instructed Akiko in its ideograms, she wrote her book in the Japanese phonetic kana syllabary. That was one reason for its appeal. Educated men studied Chinese; few women did.

The Tale of Genji soon became essential reading for the upper class. In the late 12th century, digests of it were required reading for poets. At last, in the 17th century, when the printing press came to Japan, the book was available to the masses. Murasaki's style became the Japanese model for writing, if not for morality: her hero's active sex life, and the luxury of the ancient court, as she represents it, were deplored as decadent by Japanese purists into the 20th century.

In Japan today, *The Tale of Genji* is as natural to the culture as Mount Fuji and the cherry-blossom season. High schools teach sections of the ancient text, in its classical Japanese, to prepare pupils for university entrance. Novelists challenge themselves by writing modern translations. The most recent, by a Buddhist nun, 76-year-old Jakucho Setouchi, came out in ten volumes, the final one in 1998. Between them, they have sold over 2m copies. Other well-read modern versions by Akiko Yosano, a poet, and by two novelists, Junichiro Tanizaki and Fumiko Enchi (who supposedly lost her eyesight working on *Genji*), also are in print.

Spin-offs from the book, serious and less so, are legion. A CD-ROM about it has sold 15,000 copies. Internet websites abound, most created by academics. Several films have been drawn from it. The late 1980s brought a successful pop group calling themselves Hikaru Genji□Shining Genji. An animated Genji film came out in 1987, following a television series. A Tale of Genji museum opened in Uji, near Kyoto, in 1998. In its first eight months it had 120,000 visitors, mostly middle-aged or elderly women. This year, the last part of Saeko Ichinohe's three-part dance *The Tale of Genji* was premiered at New York's Lincoln Centre.

Modern translations of the novel have been published in Chinese, German, French, Italian and English. Arthur Waley, a British scholar also known for his translations of Chinese literature, published his version from 1925 to 1933. It was his limpid prose that brought *Genji* to western readers, as they re-examined Japanese culture after the second world war. An American author-translator, Edward Seidensticker, produced a fuller translation in 1976, using a matter-of-fact voice akin to Murasaki's own. His is the preferred version in the United States today.

Source: "The Tale of Murasaki Shikibu," in *The Economist,* Vol. 353, Issue 8151, December 25, 1999, p. 106.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Bargen considers the social implications of the episodes of spirit possession in The Tale of Genji*, suggesting that "they can be viewed as a female protest against the polygyny of Heian Society."*

The Japanese national classic, Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari*, is chiefly valued for its exquisitely drawn psychological character portrayals and detailed realistic descriptions of tenth century Heian court life. Yet the work also contains highly dramatic episodes and animated scenes of spirit possession. One of the most memorable scenes occurs in a minor episode in which Higekuro's wife dumps ashes on her husband's head. She is violently enraged by the prospect of being ousted from her position as principal wife by a new mistress, and she is possessed. According to the Heian practice of polygyny, she was expected to tolerate another woman joining the household, and therefore her indignant and undignified behavior is perceived as that of a madwoman:

> Suddenly she stood up, swept the cover from a large censer, stepped behind her husband, and poured the contents over his head. There had been no time to restrain her. The women [in attendance] were stunned.
>
> The powdery ashes bit into his eyes and nostrils. Blinded, he tried to brush them away, but found them so clinging and stubborn that he had to throw off even his under robes. *If she had not had the excuse of her derangement* he would have marched from her presence and vowed never to return. It was a *very perverse* sort of spirit that possessed her.

Higekuro's wife's case is the exception to the rule which takes spirit possession seriously and requires that it be treated with respect. Inasmuch as spirit possession "permits the expression of things that cannot be said ordinarily or directly," it is, as a technique of communication, eminently suited to the general cultural preference for elegant indirections and subtleties in Heian Japan (A.D. 794-1185). Thus it is the very directness of the distraught woman's physical attack on Higekuro that renders her blunt action comic. Precisely because her behavior is undisguised and straightforward, and thereby unconventional, it paradoxically appears as an instance of the infuriated lady's "derangement." This particular madcap version of possession is counterproductive; direct action defeats its own purpose.

The relative simplicity of this comic possession contrasts with the extraordinary complexity of a series of possessions which involve the eponymous hero of *The Tale of Genji*. In the first of them, Genji's affair with Yugao is suddenly terminated when Yugao is possessed. Her death puzzles Genji and his puzzlement leads us to speculate about the phenomenon of spirit possession and its relation to gender and courtship conventions at the peak of the Heian period (c. 950-1050). These speculations enable

us to understand spirit possession as a female protest against the polygyny of Heian Society.

A few readers have begun to speculate about *The Tale of Genji's* four major possession cases. William H. McCullough has pointed to "the havoc wreaked upon Genji's lovers and wives by the possessing spirit of the very possessive Lady RokujO," whose spirit he sees as "one of the principal unifying elements" in the *Genji*. McCullough draws several useful conclusions. First, the victims of spirit possession in Heian times□indeed in most cultures, and especially in polygynous societies□are women. Second, the spirit who attacks is most typically that of a dead person, and third, the spirit's motive is jealousy. These insights are valuable, but, in light of the questions raised by anthropologists, they merely lay the foundation for an investigation into the very complex interaction between the possessed, the possessor and society.

The phenomenon of spirit possession is an old and universal one, but anthropological research into the subject is relatively new. The opinion that spirit possession is *not* simply a primitive, pathological practice of superstitious peoples is even more recent. Since the pioneering work of Oesterreich (1921), the many varieties of spirit possession have been divided into two basic categories: voluntary (self-induced) and involuntary (spontaneous). Similarly, the response has been twofold: spirit possession is either thought to be desirable or undesirable. In the latter case, exorcism is deemed necessary. In the most problematic case, then, someone involuntarily enters an "altered state of consciousness" that is considered undesirable or is feared by society at large. It is important to note that spirit possession is not merely a conflict between the possessed and the possessor; it is also a test of the values of the whole society. These values are usually, but not always, represented by exorcists who employ a medium to approach the possessed and drive out and identify the spirit. With identification of the spirit and the promise to meet its wishes, the spell is broken, the victim and the spectators are relieved and, curiously, life goes on much as it had, until the next seizure occurs. Unlike witches, the possessed are not persecuted or punished.

When such dramatic occurrences are placed in the realm of fiction, they must be understood within their literary context. While in reality altered states of consciousness can have purely physical causes, as, for example, the hardships of pregnancy, nutritional deficiencies or the use of drugs, the literary manifestations of possession can usually be traced to grave psychological disturbances or conflicts.

Certain peculiarities about the phenomenon of spirit possession□such as the elements of ecstasy and self-enhancement in the state of dissociation or speaking in different voices□have raised important questions about the meaning of spirit possession. Who are the possessed in relation to the possessor and the witnesses? What public statement does the intensely private and esoteric experience of spirit possession make about the society in which it occurs? In other words, what do the spirits' complaints and wishes, voiced either directly through the possessed, or indirectly through a medium, say about the values of the society? How successful is possession as a psychological strategy?

It is mainly women who are possessed because they and other peripheral groups oppressed by the dominant group release their tensions and frustrations in this way. Their protest, however, is not directed straightforwardly at the dominant group, but indirectly, through the mysterious esoteric language of spirit possession. Joan M. Lewis has aptly described the nature of this protest as "oblique aggressive strategy."

Jealousy is traditionally regarded as the major force behind spirit possession in the *Genji* because female grievances are revealed to be rooted in the polygynous system which constantly threatens women's status and lowers their self-esteem in the very sensitive matter of sexual relations. Thus it is a conspicuous fact that the mainly female authors of Heian tales and diaries voice complaints that are universal to polygynous societies, namely, that competing wives, concubines and mistresses become the agents or victims of jealousy. And to the extent that Heian aristocratic women enjoyed exceptional freedom and economic independence, they made bold to express psychological conflicts in a variety of ways. However, from a pool of diverse grievances, scholars have singled out jealousy as the symbol□or source□of women's rebellious rejection of their assigned role in society.

As the case of Higekuro's wife demonstrates, openly violent, aggressive behavior was viewed with contempt in an elitist society that prided itself on its refined esthetics and an exquisite code of manners in harmony with the society's hierarchical structure. Therefore hostile and aggressive feelings could not easily find expression. They must be repressed or find their own culturally accepted idiom. Higekuro's wife's behavior was not respectable because of the violation of options available to women under intense psychological pressures. These options encompassed a wide range of activities, such as religious austerities or devotion to the arts. Spirit possession was a woman's most dramatic strategy.

Yugao's possession is the first of the major possession cases. It is prototypical and symptomatic of the cause and purpose of possession, even though its technical apparatus is minimal: there are no exorcists, no mediums and consequently no public ritual. The only spectator, aside from a lady-in-waiting who merely confirms but does not perceive the possessing spirit, is Genji, the woman's lover. Although spirit possession constitutes the climax of an intensely private love affair, its larger social implications cannot be ignored. What especially distinguishes this possession from the others is its direct termination in death.

For many critics of the *Genji*, spirit possession is virtually synonymous with death. Yet between the first and the last case a remarkable progression takes place. While possession and death are practically synchronic events in the first case, in the next three cases the fatal consequences of spirit possession are postponed or avoided completely. Consequently, a note of hope is sounded in the last case: a suicide attempt is converted into spirit possession, which is transformed in turn into an act of artistic affirmation. Ukifune, the last of the heroines in the *Genji*, sublimates her self-destructive desires into spirit possession and then resolves her psychological crisis through the therapeutic composition of poetic memoirs.

Yugao, however, is seized by a spirit, and dies. The mystery of the sudden possession and its tragic end challenges the witness's analytic powers. The events before and after the climax of the affair□the possession□are viewed mainly from Genji's male perspective. His biased interpretation complicates and psychologically charges this famous episode.

Crucial to an understanding of the affair between the son of an emperor and an aristocratic lady of relatively low rank are the lovers' secretive motivations that lead to the mysterious, supernatural event of spirit possession. The mystery of this affair is largely due to the lovers' sustained incognito. One singular aspect of Heian courtship ritual was that the lover frequently had no inkling of his or her sexual partner's physical appearance and identity before the consummation of the affair. Esthetic responsiveness was all that mattered and furtive glimpses of the prospective lover were ever so much more enticing than full visibility. In the case of Genji and Yugao, however, the couple's tantalizing secretiveness continues beyond their initial encounters and into the phase of intimacy. Why? The lovers' previous adventures determine their response to each other, and provide a clue to the tragedy that results from their departure from courtship routines.

Yugao's unhappy love affair with Genji's best friend TO no ChujO bears directly on her subsequent relations with Genji.

An orphan without the parental backing necessary for marriage, Yugao was at the mercy of her former lover and had no choice but to forgive him for his frequent neglect. However, after three years of mistreatment, her patience was exhausted. When TO no ChujO's wife dealt the last blow by humiliating her, Yugao resolved to disappear, to live without her lover's support, and to take with her the daughter she had borne him□a strategy that contained elements of self-assertion, protest and self-sacrifice. Her inaccessibility revives TO no ChujO's interest. In the famous "Rainy-Night Discussion," he con-fides to Genji the story of his lost love. Genji is intrigued and, through a fortuitous turn of events, begins to court Yugao, whom he does not initially recognize as the lost lady described by his friend. She is caught in a psychological conflict between lovers which provokes her to terminate the new relationship with a strategy that is the logical, forceful extension of the first: spirit possession and death.

Genji's discovery of Yugao is serendipitous. He is attracted by a humble flower whose name is the sobriquet of the woman of lower rank with whom it is symbolically associated: Yugao. When Genji comes upon the woman, he is captivated by the Yugao flower, its mystery deepened by the poem penned on the fan that accompanies it. Genji pursues this enticing flower-woman despite the fact that he is married to Aoi (TO no ChujO's sister) and is still interested in his first passion (Lady RokujO) and in other ladies of high rank. Much later when Genji has taken not only the flower but also the woman, he fully realizes what he had merely suspected: he has coveted his best friend's love.

While Yugao sees herself in two triangular situations□as a rival of TO no ChujO's wife for his love and as the object of an implicit rivalry between Genji and TO no

ChujO□Genji perceives quite a different triangle. Aware of his own promiscuity, he imagines his neglected ladies consumed by jealousy over the new mistress. From his perspective, the figural constellation seems initially to involve several females and one male. Genji's subsequent awareness of Yugao's identity complicates matters considerably. The ominous thought crosses Genji's mind: "Might she be the lady of whom TO no ChujO had spoken that rainy night?" The possibility of identifying Yugao with TO no ChujO's unassertive lady is so disturbing that it is, at first, entirely repressed: "Genji did not know who the lady was and he did not want her to know who he was."□

As his love becomes like "madness," Genji grows increasingly reflective about his fascination with Yugao: "What was there about her, he asked himself over and over again, that drew him to her?" The lady, in addition to her profound excitement, is unduly worried and through her anxiety betrays the fact that she is experiencing this affair in the traumatic context of the previous one: "She was frightened as if he were an apparition from an old story." While the bittersweet memory of the "old story" with TO no ChujO causes her to repress the source of her pain, the mystery of her new incognito lover evokes once more the half-forgotten past which casts its ominous shadow on the present and well into her daughter's future. It is unacknowledged triangular complications of this kind that trigger spirit possession.

Genji alludes lightheartedly to the uncanny mystery of their bond. The metaphor used for their reciprocal seductiveness is the fox: "Which of us is the mischievous fox spirit?" As the fox in Japanese folklore induces sexual passion by taking either male or female shape, the image is appropriate and occurs in other possession scenes. Approaching the height of his passion, Genji is again reminded of TO no ChujO's unassertive lady. Although he intuitively recognizes a strong resemblance between his friend's lost love and Yugao, his behavior indicates that he still resists identifying the two.

It is at this point that the first crisis in their love affair occurs. During their harvest-moon love-making at Yugao's residence, Genji fascinated at first, but soon exasperated, by the epitome of lower-class life, the "plebeian voices in the shabby houses down the street," which he finds "genuinely earsplitting." Such a difference in the lovers' sensibilities would ordinarily have been unthinkable in Heian court life, but here dark romantic passion overpowers conventional etiquette. Genji manages to resolve the crisis. Inspired by a pious old man, he makes a modest vow to Yugao and takes her, against her wishes, to a desolate, isolated villa. This forced move triggers their second crisis, and it is lethal for her.

Yugao may seem unreasonably "frightened, and bewildered," but the fears that she experiences as she approaches the climax of the relationship concern a power no less than nemesis. Of lower rank than her former and her present lovers, she must consider herself fortunate to be favored by such high-ranking courtiers. At the same time, she has learned to be distrustful of uneven matches. Yugao, whose self-confidence the earlier affair has already impaired, suffers from anxiety about a similarly abrupt end to passionate love.

The move to Genji's desolate villa is an ambiguous statement that both threatens and elates Yugao. On the one hand, Genji's earlier plan to establish her at NijO, his main residence, was rather quickly abandoned in order to avoid all risk of public scandal. In this sense, Yugao interprets the isolation of their affair as her lover's refusal to acknowledge her and as an omen of inevitable rejection. On the other hand, "Memories of past wrongs quite left her" when she considers how much she must mean to a disguised lover willing to risk his own peace of mind at a neglected residence where "devils" might come forth. The lovers oscillate between psychological stress and the joys of passion, but the trauma of her first love intensifies Yugao's conflicts to a degree not experienced by Genji.

At the deserted villa, in the dead of night, Yugao becomes possessed. It is important to note that the phenomenon is described from Genji's perspective. Because of his successful repression of all thoughts concerning Yugao's affair with TO no ChujO, he interprets the possession as an expression of *his* imagined triangular conflict, i.e., simply as the result of female jealousy. However, for Genji's other women to have been jealous of the new mistress required their knowledge of her existence. Since the affair had been kept a secret, none of them knew of the new affair and each of them had reason to attribute Genji's neglect to attentions paid to one of the others rather than to the unknown Yugao. Yet critics have unanimously adopted Genji's preliminary interpretation of jealousy. In fact, in their exclusive focus on Lady RokujO, they have been more definite than he. And they have ignored the function of the possession and its meaning for the afflicted female protagonist.

Time and setting help induce Yugao's extreme mental and physical agitation: "The girl was trembling violently. She was bathed in sweat and as if in a trance, quite bereft of her senses." Genji too is entering an altered state of consciousness□albeit on a quotidian scale□that of sleep. While sleeping, he has a nightmare of "an exceedingly beautiful woman" who berates him for neglecting her in favor of Yugao. Genji awakens just as this specter of one of his neglected ladies is turning to snatch his beloved away from his bedside. He has been jolted from sleep by Yugao's violently restless possession trance. His first thought is for himself: he does *not* at once conclude that *Yugao* is possessed: "He awoke, feeling as if he were in the power of some malign being." This moment has gone virtually unnoticed by scholars because Genji reaches for his sword, symbolic of male power, and quickly dispells his fears for himself. Nonetheless it is important to see that the drama of Yugao's possession is so powerful that Genji feels compelled to share her altered state and continues to do so, in a form of "possession once removed," even after she has died.

While Genji's waking, dozing and sleeping during that fateful night are minutely described in reference to Yugao's crisis, the heroine's perspective is dramatized in far less detail. It is through Genji's feverishly involved perspective, at crucial times bordering on the hallucinatory, that Yugao's rapid psychological and physical decline are first assessed. Genji's frame of mind is, therefore, at least as pertinent to our understanding of Yugao's tragedy as her own history of anxieties. In fact, the violent dénouement of the love affair forces the hero into the role of interpreter. Due to the suddenness of Yugao's death and the absence of an exorcist who might have lent the

seal of authenticity to the mysterious, Genji must psychologically master his lover's possession and death without the aid of esoteric magic rituals.

It is only when Genji's "rationalizations" include his role in the drama of spirit possession that he gradually learns to come to terms with Yugao's death. With a certain amount of self-pity, Genji acknowledges his share of guilt: "He was being punished for a guilty love, his fault and no one else's he would gain immortality as the model of the complete fool." Torn between the conflicting emotions of grief for the lost lover and a terror akin to that of a murderer who must dispose of a dead body, Genji's breakdown seems inevitable. His suffering does not end when his confidant Koremitsu takes care of practical matters. Indeed, he further implicates himself by lying to the suspicious TO no ChujO about the cause of his absence from court and his present inaccessibility. Not surprisingly, emotional distress is accompanied by psychosomatic symptoms, such as headaches, lack of appetite and fever. Again, only his confidant can help him by suggesting practical ways of doing penance, instead of passively "torturing" himself.

Although Genji risks discovery of his involvement in Yugao's fate, he feels compelled to pay his last respects to his departed lady. At a mountain temple he overcomes some of his own grief by commiserating with her lady-in-waiting. Yet, exhausted from guilt and shame, and perhaps from a momentary sense of relief at having completed this tragic affair, he falls from his horse, like a fool. It is as if this accident were the worst fate liable to afflict a courtier who has been romantically involved with a woman of lower rank.

Back at NijO he must endure the aftereffects of stress in a twenty-day crisis. His readjustment is slow and painful: "For a time he felt out of things, as if he had come back to a strange new world. He spent a great deal of time gazing into space, and sometimes he would weep aloud." Since "gazing into space" was a common expression of Heian women's "immobile existence," Genji's form of suffering gives him the appearance of a woman possessed. In short, Genji now reenacts a milder version of Yugao's trauma which the court, despite their ignorance of Yugao's tragedy, diagnose as akin to possession: "He must be in the clutches of some malign spirit, thought the women."

From Genji's standpoint, Yugao's tragedy can be traced back to his offenses against several women, thus evoking the possessing spirit of jealousy, the stock explanation for female hysteria. That this spirit might attack him as well as any preferred lover is vaguely sensed by the female public's assessment of Genji's psychological state. Yet males in Heian culture generally fancied themselves not only aloof from but even immune from the untidy, specifically female emotion of jealousy. Hence Genji remains fixed on the "exceedingly beautiful woman" of his nightmare as the victimizer of Yugao.

Although the possessing spirit is never named, a significant detail (foot) noted by one reader, most critics have identified the "exceedingly beautiful woman" as RokujO. But the image of the beauty is a collective image, an allegory of Genji's betrayed ladies. To single out RokujO "whose sense of rivalry" becomes a serious threat only in the second possession case, or to speculate about others such as Aoi, is equally beside the point.

The emphasis of the author is not on solving the riddle of the spirit's identity but on analyzing the male response to the complex phenomena. The critics have neglected the role which TO no ChujO plays in Yugao's possession and in Genji's guilty reaction to it. While the affair with RokujO is over as far as Genji's is concerned, Yugao's affair with TO no ChujO lies in the immediate past and is, moreover, the very affair confided to Genji in the "Rainy-Night Discussion." As accomplices in love, Genji and Yugao have both, each in his or her own way, betrayed TO no ChujO. It can plausibly be argued that this betrayal contributed to Yugao's possession and death and to Genji's profound misery. The wrong done to TO no ChujO is, after Yugao's death, followed by Genji's continuing offenses. Not only does the hero dishonestly cover up the affair, but he also blocks TO no ChujO's paternal rights until ChujO's daughter by Yugao is nearly grown. Genji is, in fact, claiming to be doing penance by caring for Yugao's child, but his charitable intentions appear rather selfish in the light of his friend's frustrated natural privileges. No wonder, then, that Genji develops a painful conscience. After the 49th-day services for Yugao, Genji is in a bad way: "His heart raced each time he saw TO no ChujO." He concludes that the secret affair with Yugao was actually an "unfortunate contest of wills." Once again, Genji is haunted by the nightmarish dream "of the woman who had appeared that fatal night." This dream had originally functioned to repress Genji's guilt toward TO no ChujO, and it continues to do so.

The problem, however, is that Genji's initial interpretation of the nightmare and the possession, and his subsequent guilt about his betrayal of TO no ChujO, ignore the one person who suffers firsthand from the casual behavior of both men: Yugao. Genji's other women and his best friend are all quite unaware of Yugao's affair with Genji. In short, only Yugao, the most vulnerable of all the people involved, had been in a position to know all the relevant facts. If anyone had a motive for the oblique aggressive strategy of spirit possession, it was she, the otherwise helpless woman who had been victimized once and was fearful of a second victimization by a second lover. Unfortunately for Yugao, her feverish attempt at spirit possession fails because Genji is simply unable to realize that she, a woman made vulnerable by her lower rank, is the person most likely to use the only psychological weapon available to her in her unequal position vis-à-vis Genji, TO no ChujO, and their high ranking aristocratic wives and concubines. Ironically, then, after a moment of fear that he himself might be possessed, he interprets her possession and death neither as an obliquely hostile act nor as an appeal for sympathy and reassurance; he can do no better than to assume egoistically that Yugao's trauma is the result of female rivalry over him. His halting efforts to fathom TO no ChujO's and his own complicity in Yugao's fate cease. His perceptions are too gender-bound to see that the complex relations between men and women in polygynous Heian society are reflected in the superimposed triangular constellations of his affair with Yugao. Consequently, his guilt remains diffuse. In later years, it intensifies. When his wife Aoi and his favorite concubine Murasaki become possessed, Genji's sympathy for his women grows, but his intellectual response remains clouded by the mores of the times. Finally, spirit possession cannot change the social structure, and male-female relations remain as they were.

Yugao, the female heroine, is doomed to lose in her nonverbal oblique aggressive strategy; in her case, spirit possession is a self-destructive protest. Yet at the end of the

Yugao chapter, the author of the *Genji*, herself a lady at the Heian court, verbalizes the heroine's grievance against the hero by making a direct appeal to the reader. *Monogatari* conventions, which required the hero of a romance to be an idealized prince, are flouted. In short, Murasaki Shikibu refuses to make concessions to public taste: "I had hoped, out of deference to him [Genji], to conceal these difficult matters; but I have been accused of romancing, of pretending that because he was the son of an emperor he had no faults. Now, perhaps, I shall be accused of having revealed too much." Yugao's case of spirit possession is an oblique criticism of male behavior toward women in polygynous society. Unlike subsequent possessed heroines, who are more eloquent, this unassertive lady has, quite literally, no voice to express her fears. Her spirit possession neither castigates the men who toyed with her nor does it calm her agitated mind. She may nonetheless have scored a victory. The shock of her spirit possession left Genji vaguely, uncomprehendingly, uneasy. In the attempt to penetrate the mystery of his dream and her possession, he is compelled to rehearse□again and yet again□the drama of her death.

Source: Doris G. Bargen, "Yugao: A Case of Spirit Possession in 'The Tale of Genji,'" in *Mosaic,* Vol. XIX, No. 3, Summer, 1986, pp. 15-24.

Critical Essay #4

In this excerpt, Mary Dejong Obuchowski explores the influence of Japanese religious eclecticism on The Tale of Genji.

In the lengthy and complex Japanese novel, *The Tale of Genji*, Buddhist priests attend court ceremonies, women disappointed in love become nuns, jealous spirits possess the bodies of Genji's wives and mistresses, and folk superstitions work their way into the most dramatic of adventures. These varied and apparently conflicting religious elements pose some questions about the dominant religious attitudes in the story. Are the various practices exclusive, and are they ever at odds with each other? How do knowledge of religious rites and understanding of the associated beliefs illuminate both the plots in the novel and the themes that dominate it?

Rather than maintaining distinct identities, these religious beliefs and their related customs tend to come together in Japan.

In order to approach these questions, one may look at religious practices in Japan to illustrate the eclectic nature of the general attitudes toward Buddhist, Shinto, folk, and even Christian beliefs. A historical context shows them most clearly. The folk religions, indigenous to Japan, came first, before history. The mythological beginnings of Japan, imbedded in folk tales, were transmitted, preserved, and undoubtedly transmuted by storytellers until they were permanently committed to writing in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* in the eighth century as the official history of Japan. Shinto priests kept the manuscripts for many centuries more, and the myths solidified into part of the Shinto orthodoxy. Folk legends outside these documents still hover around shrines and landmarks, especially in rural areas, and recently anthologists have compiled amazing numbers of such stories and variations of them. Shinto became the national religion and remains in its "pure" form at the state shrines at Ise and elsewhere. After 1945, however, the government declared state and religion separate. It denied the belief in the emperor as divine in heritage and act, though many adults today still consider Hirohito to be ordained by the gods. The role of religion nationally remains controversial.

Buddhism arrived in Japan in the eighth or ninth century through China and Korea. At first a threat, it merged into the established religion by a creed known as *Ryobu*, or two-way Shinto. The practices mingled, and Buddhism became increasingly Japanese as new sects such as Zen groups and followers of Nichiren emerged. Christianity first came via Portugese Jesuits in the fifteenth century. Toccata Hidetada declared it illegal in the seventeenth, and his son, Tokugawa Iemitsu, who also closed Japan to outsiders, had Christians pursued and persecuted. They went underground, and preserved their icons in disguise; artifacts purportedly Buddhist but containing secret Christian symbols appear from time to time. Missionaries arrived again in the nineteenth century when Japan reopened itself to foreigners.

Rather than maintaining distinct identities, these religious beliefs and their related customs tend to come together in Japan. Of course, they exist offi-cially in relatively

pure forms, but many supposedly Shinto Shrines bear decorations in Buddhist style. A wedding may have both Christian and Buddhist ceremonies, and when a baby is born, his parents might take him to a Shinto shrine for a ritual visit. Legally, funerals must proceed according to Buddhist conventions. Even young Japanese consciously or unconsciously maintain respect for their ancestors as well as for family honor. Most homes keep small altars which display pictures of deceased parents, often with incense burners beside the portraits. A missionary at a theological seminary told me about a Christian student who, after his ordination, went directly to a cemetery to "tell" his ancestors.

In the eleventh century, when Murasaki Shikibu was writing *The Tale of Genji*, Christianity had not yet reached Japan, but *Ryobu* Shinto had already assimilated much of what was Buddhist in ritual and architecture as well as belief, and folk superstitions were only more present than they are today in the intensity of their reality to the Japanese. Therefore, when one examines religion in the novel, he must consider its eclectic nature. In the novel, most of the religious ceremonies at the court appear to be Buddhist. The installations, coming of age rites, purifications, and prayers for success or prevention of trouble seem to follow these conventions. Exorcisms, though Shinto in origin, are performed by Buddhist priests. On the other hand, a religious conflict occurs when Lady Rokujo's daughter becomes Vestal Virgin at Ise. Rokujo accompanies her to that royal Shinto shrine. When she returns, however, Rokujo feels a definite struggle, even a sense of guilt at having violated the Buddhist faith by observing the Shinto rites, and decides to become a Buddhist nun □.

Lady Rokujo is also a primary figure in one of the most complicated tangles of religion and superstition and the occult that occur in the story. With her, Genji has his first adult affair of consequence. As the liaison progresses, she becomes irritable, demanding, and jealous, the last with some reason. While Genji is trying to disentangle himself from this "older" woman (she is in her middle twenties, he in his teens), he meets a mysterious girl. She is called Yugao, after a flower translated as "evening face," because of her lovely, fragile appearance, their nocturnal meetings, her shadowy background, and the terrifying nighttime circumstances which bring about her death. As this affair proceeds in great secrecy, neither party revealing name or history, a spirit suddenly possesses Yugao and kills her. Since the whole situation is so clandestine (the body is disposed of quickly and silently), and Genji is prostrated by grief for weeks afterward, no one investigates the cause of Yugao's death. Twice on the night of the disaster, however, Genji has seen at their bedside a dreamlike figure of an angry woman who is undoubtedly responsible.

Some years later, Genji's proud and estranged wife, Aoi, develops the symptoms of a similar possession after she gives birth to Genji's only legitimate son. Because the circumstances of her illness are more public, unlike the secrecy with Yugao, Aoi is subjected to prayers and incantations to remove the spirit which is debilitating her, although no one is absolutely certain that she is really possessed. She dies, and Rokujo seems to be the only person jealous enough of Genji to be responsible. Rukujo acknowledges that on occasion her body and spirit do feel detached from each other, and though she emphatically intends Aoi no harm, she may not be able to control the

hatred she cherishes toward Genji's wife. She admits to herself that she has retained a deep sense of injury against Aoi since that lady's servants rendered Rokujo an unintentional insult during Aoi's pregnancy. In Japanese folk literature, spirits of the jealous, both living and dead, may enter the object of that hatred and kill that person: this belongs to the most ancient of recorded beliefs. Still later in the novel, Genji's beloved consort Murasaki falls prey to an identical malady (though she is not pregnant), and Genji again calls in quantities of priests to force the spirit out. At length, a medium induces the spirit to identify itself as Rokujo, who has died several years before, and it answers that it had caused the deaths of both Yugao and Aoi. It tries unsuccessfully to persuade Genji to call off the priests. Murasaki partially recovers for a while but later dies anyway, and Genji follows soon after. It is interesting in this context to note that the beliefs regarding possession are folk beliefs, the priests are Buddhist, and the acts of exorcism are Shinto: nowhere is there any indication that those beliefs and practices should be exclusive, nor, in spite of the failure of the rites, that any is more powerful than the others.

Both folklore and Buddhism subscribe to the theory that a spirit of a person longing for a loved one at the time of his death will not be able to rest. Hence, Rokujo's spirit remains active after she dies. Similarly, in Book Five, Hachi no Miya, a half-brother of Genji, is urged to stop mourning his wife in order that he, a priest himself, might be at peace after his own death. He dies, still longing, mourned by his two daughters. The story proceeds in a different direction, enhanced by more folk superstitions. One of the girls, Agemaki, is courted by Genji's supposed son, Kaoru. She resists all of his advances and offers, and she tries to turn his affections toward her younger sister, Kozeri. Genji's grandson, Niou, however, begins an affair with Kozeri first, and carries her off as his mistress. Worn out by resisting Kaoru and worrying about the future of her sister, Agemaki wastes away and dies. Heartbroken by the loss of both girls, Kaoru locates a half-sister of theirs, Ukifune, becomes intimate with her, and prepares to set her up near him. Niou, single-minded and voraciously competitive in regard to women, again moves faster and visits her secretly. When Ukifune finds that Kaoru has learned about her infidelity, she attempts suicide by jumping into a rushing river, and her household gives her up as dead. A group of travellers find her and nearly run away because they fear that she is a fox-spirit. According to folklore, foxes are notorious shape-changers. They may assume the form of beautiful maidens and seduce men, or they may perpetrate other kinds of mischief. Apparently a good deal of trouble had occurred in the locality where Ukifune appeared, for an old man reported,

"Oh yes, it's a fox that has done that □ They're always doing odd things just here. It's their favorite tree. Only last autumn one of them carried off a child or two and brought it to this very spot. And when I came running up, do you suppose that fox took any notice of me? Not at all." "What a dreadful thing!" said one of the priests. "The child, I suppose, was dead?" "No, it wasn't," said the old man rather testily, "it was alive. Fox isn't a fellow to do any real harm.

He just likes to give people a bit of a fright sometimes;
that is all."

Nevertheless, the travellers decide Ukifune is really human and nurse her, though she lies half-conscious for months, not revealing her identity. Her rescuers feel, of course, that she must be possessed, and request a priest to exorcise her. The spirit he contacts makes a significant admission:

"I, too, in my day was a master of magic such as yours.
But I died with something on my mind. Not much□a
trivial resentment; but it was enough to hold me back,
to keep me drifting hither and thither, back and forth
between this world and the next. I walked into a
house. It was full of beautiful women. One of them
[Agemaki?] I destroyed. Then I bided my time, and
presently this girl here gave me the chance I sought.
Day after day, night after night, she lay moaning and
weeping, and calling for death to come. At last, one
evening when it was very dark, I saw her get up and
leave the house. I followed her, and when she was
alone, I did my work."

Later, the priest states an additional theory of his own: that because she was found in a clump of trees, Ukifune may have been a *tengu*, or tree-spirit. *Tengu* are also shape-changers and causers of mischief, and even as recently as 1860, official documents contained warnings against them. Ukifune, still pursued by Kaoru and yet another suitor, retreats from these complications by becoming a nun. The story, then, incorporates a number of folk myths and creatures as well as possession and exorcism.

Many of the superstitions and folk beliefs have bases in common sense, as a matter of fact. Possession explained many illnesses that medical science has more clearly defined in recent years. Custom dictated, however, that a person weakened by sorrow or guilt was more vulnerable to wandering spirits than a happy and stable one might be, as in any illness. The possessing spirit was generally one of an unhappy, grieving, or jealous individual, as is the case with Rokujo and with the spirit that worked upon Agemaki and Ukifune; hence the concern that a person be done with worldly attachments before he dies. Themes of the damage caused by jealousy, shame, and guilt run through the novel like threads of different colors but of similar texture. Genji and his descendants alike compromise their happiness and that of their offspring by repeating mistakes engendered by passion or willfulness.

The cluster of stories surrounding Rokujo establishes one dominant theme: that hatred kills, directly or indirectly. The jealousy in her destroys the three most important women in Genji's life, and his death is surely linked with that of Murasaki. It works inversely in the case of Rokujo's final illness; her hostility may well have provoked it. Genji has tried desperately to placate her, even to arranging the marriage of her daughter to the heir

apparent. She finally seems to accept his attempts to make amends and his apologies at her deathbed, but her spirit still runs its destructive course afterward.

In fact, it becomes increasingly clear through the novel that one is fundamentally responsible for his feelings and desires as well as for his acts, and that religious belief has firm grounding in common sense. In Buddhist as well as Christian thought, the sins of the father are visited on the sons, and the corruption may affect or express the condition of his country. For example, Genji has an affair with his beautiful stepmother, Fujitsubo, who has a baby, Ryozen. The child is apparently Genji's step-brother but really his son. The boy becomes Emperor while still a small child and comes painfully to find that he was born out of divine succession. The priest tells him, "□ the Powers Above are manifesting their displeasure; for, as you have been taught, it frequently happens that the sins of one generation are visited upon the next." He knows that by continuing as Emperor he is violating religious and ancestral traditions. According to Waley's note, "In sacrific-ing at the Imperial tomb (as if in honor of his father), etc., he was committing an outrage upon the dead." Moreover, this time is one of political and astrological unpleasantness. Public dismay coupled with irregularities in astronomical and weather conditions seem to portend displeasure on the part of the Sun God, from whom the Emperor of Japan is supposed to descend. Now that Ryozen is of suffi-cient age to understand the problem of his birth and its possible consequences, he worries about whether or not to resign. Genji feels acutely his own guilt in the matter, but attempts to persuade his son to continue as Emperor, because if the reason for his resignation became known, it would appall the Japanese people, who had never known the line of succession to be broken before. The political effects might be drastic. Nevertheless, after some years Ryozen quietly resigns with the excuse of poor health. Thus, the religious belief in divine succession is intertwined with issues of practical responsibility and the consequences of guilty knowledge.

Further links between the effects of sexual misconduct, the physical ravages of guilt or shame, and the kind of understanding that leads to forgiveness come up in a parallel situation. In his later years, Genji takes on an unwelcome marriage of convenience with a niece, Nyosan, in whom he (surprisingly, for Genji) has little interest. He neglects her outrageously. A nephew of his, Kashiwagi, falls in love with Nyosan and seduces her, and she bears his son, Kaoru (mentioned earlier in connection with Agemaki and her sisters). Kashiwagi, a young man who makes heavy demands on himself and who is anxious to be right and perfect in whatever he does, breaks down completely, overwhelmed by grief and guilt at having betrayed his friend and idol, Genji. When Genji finds that Nyosan is pregnant, knows that the child is not his, and suspects Kashiwagi, he is angry only at first. Remembering that he behaved in an almost identical fashion toward his father and that his child by Fujitsubo had been a constant source of discomfort and guilt, he regains his compassion. Consequently, Genji acts kindly toward his nephew, but Kashiwagi feels terrible remorse and imagines that Genji must be justly angered at both himself and Nyosan, and declines rapidly in health. Moreover, he feels that death would remove his "treachery" from Genji's memory, and in his last days confesses to Genji's legitimate son, Yugiri, "for if I died with it on my conscience I should be held back from Salvation in the life to come." His self-hatred finally destroys him. As

Fujitsubo had done before her, Nyosan becomes a nun: her shame, too, drives her out of the world.

Genji is a character of sufficient magnitude and intelligence to sustain successful affairs with a score or more women; to seduce his father's wife and to father an emperor out of succession; to survive exile (provoked because of still another affair with another emperor's prospective consort) and return to political prominence; and to develop enough self-knowledge and conscience to forgive the nephew who philanders with his wife. He is a gifted musician, dancer, calligrapher, poet, and diplomat, among many other accomplishments. With every woman he seduces or even desires, he maintains a gentle consideration for the remainder of her life; he even employs or grants places in his household to several former favorites (who get along amazingly well), and he never forgets one or deliberately treats any unkindly. Genji's descendants inherit a number of his physical assets but lack, however, his self-consciousness and moral strength. As the story about Agemaki and her sisters indicates, Genji's grandson, Niou, and supposed son (really his great nephew by two routes), Kaoru, expend themselves on affairs with women without putting similar energy into other accomplishments. Nothing particularly distinguishes either young man except charm and good looks. Niou stands out only in his appetite for new affairs, from which he quickly tires: he may have more than Genji, but he does not exhibit the concern that Genji has lavished on his ladies, even the old and unattractive ones. He vies with his more serious cousin, Kaoru, trying to reach first any woman Kaoru might have been courting. (Genji and his cousin, To no Chujo, Kaoru's real grandfather, had carried on a lighthearted rivalry as youths: Yugao, for example, attracted them both.) Kaoru, indeed, inherits some of the moral sensitivity that appears in both Genji and Kashiwagi, his real father, but he finds himself unable to act upon it and wastes his time in ceaseless worry and indecision. After his successive failures with Agemaki, Kozeri, and Ukifune, he, too, wants to leave the world and take up the religious life, but he never manages to decide to do so.

In religious as well as practical terms, a person not only bears the responsibility of his own acts and inclinations, he also passes on those predilections and their consequences. For example, Genji's affair with his father's consort grants him understanding when his own wife is seduced. Genji's grandson, Niou, inherits his ability to carry on numerous affairs, and they both have liaisons with women who are really possessed or supposed to be. Though Genji passes on his charm and beauty to his descendants, he cannot prevent them from repeating his errors; though he can understand Kashiwagi, he remains unable to extricate him from the consequences of his affair; and though Genji's relationship with Yugao is one of the most profound in his life, that of Niou (and Kaoru as well) with the lady Ukifune dwindles off into nothingness.

Thus, the religious elements of court ritual, exorcism and folk superstition, and themes of jealousy, guilt, and responsibility turn out to be so closely intertwined as to be inseparable. Possession and other folk beliefs work together with the practical realities of jealousy and hatred and the destruction they work on both the object and the source of those emotions, as in the stories about Rokujo. They point up the physical as well as the spiritual consequences of anger and depression. Adherance to Shinto and Buddhist ritual becomes intimately connected with politics in the case of the Emperor Royzen's

tenure. Belief that crosses religious boundaries, as in the recurrent emphasis that a man's errors affect his children, is Buddhist in the context of *The Tale of Genji* but universal in its implications.

Source: Mary Dejong Obuchowski, "Religious Threads and Themes in 'The Tale of Genji'" in *CLA Journal,* Vol. XX, No. 2, December, 1976, pp. 185-94.

Adaptations

A CD-ROM introduces the novel through picture scroll reproductions, photographs, illustrations, and narration. It was produced in 1999 by the Futitsu Software Corporation, out of San Jose, CA.

An animated version of *The Tale of Genji* was produced in 1987 as a joint production of Asahi Publishing, the Asahi National Broadcasting Company, and Nippon Herald Films. Directed by Girsaburo Sugii, whose previous work includes *Night on the Galactic Railroad* and *Street Fighter II*, the film won accolades from the Japan Film Appreciation Society. It will be released on video in the fall of 2000.

A Tale of Genji museum opened in Uji, near Kyoto, in 1998. In its first eight months it had 120,000 visitors.

The last part of Saeko Ichinohe's three-part dance, *The Tale of Genji* premiered at New York's Lincoln Centre in early 2000.

Topics for Further Study

In *The Tale of Genji,* a great importance is placed on art. People gain respect and admiration based on their musical, painting, and writing ability. How does this value system compare to that of contemporary America?

Describe the political system in Heian-era Japan. Who were the decision-makers and how did they come to power? Explain the fundamental differences between that system of government and a democracy.

The characters in *The Tale of Genji* are highly sensitive to the seasons. Make a list of poetic references to each of the four seasons: five each for spring, summer, winter, and autumn. Judging by the context of these references, what broad assumptions can you make about the characteristics of these seasons?

The law of karma assumes that actions in past lives influence circumstances in the present life. How does this spiritual law serve to govern morality? How does it function compared to modern legal systems, which also serve to influ-ence human behavior?

What kinds of rights and privileges did court women have in the society depicted in *The Tale of Genji*? You can use the author as an example.

What could women in this society do to preserve and increase these rights?

Compare and Contrast

Heian (Classical) Period (800-1186): About the time of the First Crusades, Japan's Heian Era, which was depicted so skillfully in *The Tale of Genji*, is coming to its end. This marks the end of a period of great material prosperity, of learning and the arts. As suggested in *The Tale of Genji,* the ruling classes are not so interested in the arts of government and war. They stay enclosed in a tight circle of high refinement and pleasure. Literature is largely the work of women. The *The Tale of Genji* is written towards the end of the Heian period.

Kamakura Period (1186-1336): This period is associated with the decline of learning under the rule of the Shogun, who values mainly warlike accomplishments. Ties to China, which had strongly influenced the poetry and arts represented in *The Tale of Genji* are mostly severed. Under the much more masculine culture of the Shogun, the contributions by women to the literature of this period are insignificant.

Modern-day Japan: Modern-day Japan little resembles the feminine court society of the Heian culture. Japan has a democratic government that represents all Japanese people, not just those related to and living near the emperor. The outside world knows of Japan more as an economic superpower than a center of the arts. (Though current Japanese artists and writers are indeed numerous and highly influential.) Nor does modern Japan resemble the Shogunate days of the Kamakura Period. The current Japanese constitution restricts the government from building up military power and from waging war, and Japan is highly connected to other countries and cultures. Both men and women contribute to the great body of current Japanese literature. Kenzaburo Oe recently won the Noble Prize for Literature.

What Do I Read Next?

Murasaki Shikibu's *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, translated by Richard Bowring in 1996, primarily deals with the birth of two sons to the empress between the fall of 1008 and the beginning of 1010.

Sei Seishonagon's *The Pillow Book*, written around 1000 A.D., is a series of jottings and essays that chronicles life in the Heian court. Characterized by the author's extreme wit, the book was translated into English by Ivan Morris in 1971.

The Ten Thousand Leaves, the first great anthology of Japanese poetry, was written in the first half of the eighth century and translated into English by Ian Hideo Levy in 1981. It represents the best surviving example of a native Japanese literary tradition.

Tales of a Time That is Now, a collection of more than 1,000 Buddhist and secular tales from India, China, and Japan, appeared around 1120. It is particularly notable for its rich descriptions of the lives of the nobility and common people in the Japan society of that time.

Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, from an unknown author in the early 10th century, is considered the ancestor of all romances. It is the story of the exquisitely beautiful Kaguya-hime, who was born inside a bamboo stalk.

Chinese poet Po-Chu-I's classic poem *The Song of Unending Sorrow* was much admired in Heian Japan. It tells of Emperor Hsuan Tsung's love for the beautiful Yang Kuei-fei.

Further Study

Collcutt, Martin, Marius Jansen, and Isao Kumakura, *Cultural Atlas of Japan*, Phaidon, 1988.

An overview of Japan's cultural history and physical environment. Illustrations include depictions of Heian court, its culture, and society.

Field, Norma, *The Splendor of Longing in the Tale of Genji*, Princeton University Press, 1987.

Includes a glossary of character names that helps establish their various names and relationships to each other. A thorough analysis of women and poetry in Japanese society.

Goff, Janet, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, Princeton University Press, 1987.

Translations of select works that were inspired by Murasaki Shikibu's novel.

Hempel, Rose, *The Golden Age of Japan, 794-1192*, Rizzoli, 1983.

This book focuses on art and culture in the Heian period and includes many photos and pictures.

Miner, Earl, Hiroko Odagiri, and Robert E. Morrell, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1985.

Covers Japanese literature from its beginnings through the end of the Tokugawa period (1868). Includes a glossary of literary terms, a listing of major authors and works, and essays on literary history.

Morris, Ivan, *The World of the Shining Prince*, Knopf, 1972.

An overview of the Heian period, including glossaries of characters and historical figures.

Puett, William J., *Guide To The Tale of Genji*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1983.

A condensed guide to the lengthy novel, plus insight into historical, cultural, geographic, and artistic aspects of the culture.

Rimer, Thomas J., *A Reader's Guide to Japanese Literature*, Kodansha International, 1988.

This work illuminates wide-ranging classics from poetry to essays, fiction to dramatic texts.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Epics for Students (EfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, EfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of EfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of EfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in EfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by EfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

EfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Epics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

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□Night.□ Epics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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