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Rashomon And Other Stories (Tuttle Classics)



Synopsis

"Clear-eyed glimpses of human behavior in the extremities of poverty, stupidity, greed, vanity" — Story-telling of an unconventional sort, with most of the substance beneath the shining, enameled surface." — The New York Times Book Review This collection of six short stories, most of which have never been translated before, includes "In a Grove", a psychologically sophisticated tale about murder, rape, and suicide; "Rashomon", the story of a thief scared into honesty by an encounter with a ghoul; and "Kesa and Morito", the story of man driven to kill someone he doesn't hate by a lover whom he doesn't love." There are enough Swiftian touches in Akutagawa to show his hatred of stupidity, greed, hypocrisy and the rising jingoism of the day. But Akutagawa's artistic integrity kept him from joining his contemporaries in the easy social criticism or naive introspection. What he did was question the values of his society, dramatize the complexities of human psychology, and study, with a Zen taste for paradox, the precarious balance of illusion and reality." — Howard Hibbett, from the Introduction of *Rashomon and Other Stories* Classic Japanese stories include: In a Grove, Rashomon, Yam Grue, The Martyr, Kesa and Morito, The Dragon

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Customer Reviews

The edition of Rashomon is a collection of six short stories: "In a Grove," "Rashomon," "Yam Gruel," "The Martyr," "Kesa and Morito," and "The Dragon." The first two are apparently the short stories on which Kurosawa's famous film, "Rashomon," is based. Short stories are not my usual cup of tea; however, I greatly enjoyed these. They are clearly older stories, but Akutagawa is extremely talented at evoking emotion in the reader. Of the six stories, "Yam Gruel" was my favourite. "In a Grove" and "Kesa and Morito" consider the notion of truth by observing a story from multiple perspectives, and "Rashomon" closely looks at empathy, but "Yam Gruel" was the most successful in portraying a character for whom my heart moved. Of the stories, my least favourite was "The Martyr." I won't give much away from the story, except to say that the notion of martyrdom bothers me -- a community singing the praises for someone whom they have caused great suffering isn't particularly useful once that person has passed. I hope that this is the emotion that Akutagawa intended to evoke. These stories aren't plot-driven, and they're not for someone who wants a quick hit of adrenaline. I recommend them to anyone who is interested in literary classics, and to those who enjoy slower stories that drive the reader to reflection. Started: January 8, 2016 Finished: January 8, 2016 Rating: 9/10

For readers uninitiated with Japanese literature, few better starting points present themselves than Ryukusone Akutagawa's collection: *Rashomon & Other Stories*. Short, sweet, and to-the-point with a haunting flair, this collection of short stories delivers to novice Japanese literature patrons a solid dose of early 20th century prose from a lean, intelligent, and creative mind. For many readers already knowledgeable of master Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon* may be a familiar name. Indeed, Kurosawa adopted Akutagawa's *Rashomon* into a classic film in 1956 starring frequent collaborator Toshiro Mifune; additionally, Kurosawa borrowed heavily from another Akutagawa story in this slim volume to complete his film version of *Rashomon* (the name will remain silent to add surprise). The author, Ryukusone Akutagawa (1892-1927) writes from the unique viewpoint of a culture caught in between two worlds: (1) the modern Japanese culture, which mimicked Western nations, especially in colonial expansion; (2) and from the pre-modern Japanese perspective, which championed inward-looking, self-aware, isolationist worldviews. Akutagawa saw the Japanese world changing before him. Additionally, Akutagawa saw himself as an outsider in his

homeland; perhaps this is because of his Christian faith among other things? Akutagawa's personal and political emotions are dyed with isolationism, which translates into his writing, especially in the first two stories: In the Grove & Rashomon. A third story, Yam Gruel, is longer than the other writings and contains a slightly different theme of "be careful what you wish for". However, Yam Gruel is also keeps with Akutagawa's belief that Western modernity would lead to a deep corruption of traditional Japanese values. Rashomon and Other Stories is a very lean book (less than a hundred pages) and while it can easily be read in one sitting. However, this tactic is not recommended as the reader will only abuse their own pleasure by speed-reading. Akutagawa's sharp prose and lean passages create a savory work not to be rushed, but laconically enjoyed. In the end, Rashomon & Other Stories make a nice contribution to the canon of Japanese literature and is recommended to all readers interested in memorable short stories.

I bought this Kindle book mostly to read the original sources for Kurosawa's movie. The stories themselves were good, but the Kindle edition is VERY poorly formatted. Large gaps between paragraphs, sometimes large gaps in the MIDDLE of paragraphs, lots of incorrect punctuation, etc. In short, the same dreary mess I've already seen in too many low-end ebooks. This book was \$1.99, and I've had lots of free books that were put together with more care than this one.

This is only the second authentic Japanese work I have ever read. It was prompted by reading Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination. Both books I thought superb and both are page turners. They seemed similar in sharing the qualities of character development, a sombre tone for the most part, and intricate plotting- and yet all this is done in a well paced, almost short story format. I am too much of a novice to know if the styles are characteristic of Japanese literature but I was left wishing had more to offer by the same authors. It seems there is a supply if you know the language, which I don't. By the way, the complex characterization still leaves you room to draw your own conclusions about the protagonists. Well worth trying.

I saw the movie when it first came out and I really enjoyed it. It is required reading for most literature majors at our university. When I read the book I kept thinking to myself 'where is the gate'. Then I realized that the movie is actually based on 3 different stories written by Ryunosuke Akutagawa. I loved the book so much that I tried to get all of his stories to read. Unfortunately I was unable to find an English translation. I did however order the book of 17 stories. A couple of them are repeats from what I read in Rashomon but I really am looking forward to reading that book. His writings have

so many twists and turns that I am always surprised at the end. What seems to be true is not or is it?

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