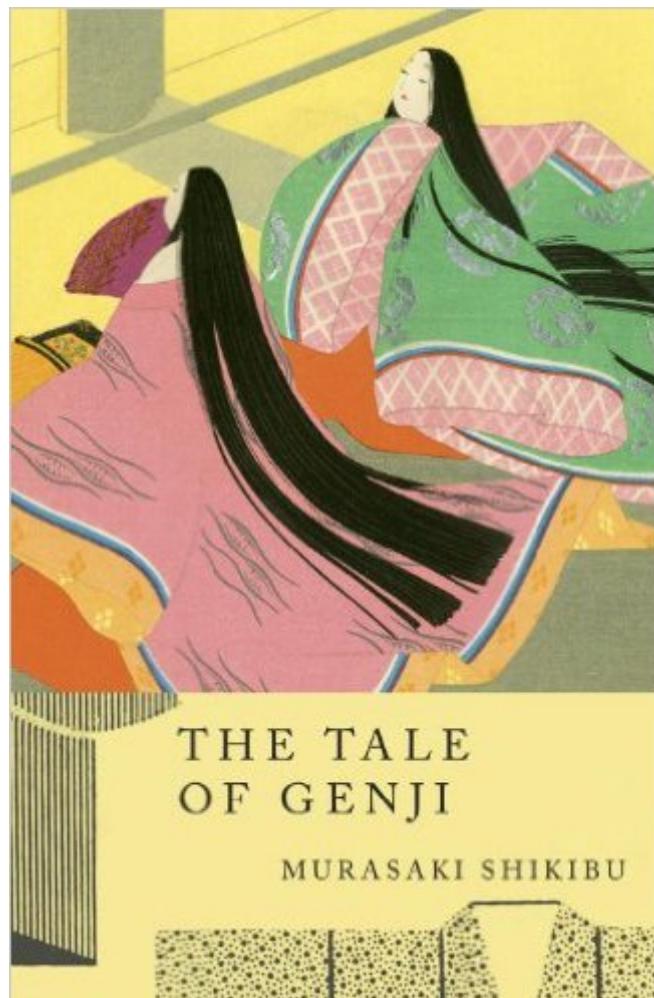


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# The Tale Of Genji (Vintage International)



## Synopsis

In the eleventh century Murasaki Shikibu, a lady in the Heian court of Japan, wrote the world's first novel. But *The Tale of Genji* is no mere artifact. It is, rather, a lively and astonishingly nuanced portrait of a refined society where every dalliance is an act of political consequence, a play of characters whose inner lives are as rich and changeable as those imagined by Proust. Chief of these is "the shining Genji," the son of the emperor and a man whose passionate impulses create great turmoil in his world and very nearly destroy him. This edition, recognized as the finest version in English, contains a dozen chapters from early in the book, carefully chosen by the translator, Edward G. Seidensticker, with an introduction explaining the selection. It is illustrated throughout with woodcuts from a seventeenth-century edition.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ (35 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

This is a review of the abridged translation of *The Tale of Genji* by Edward G. Seidensticker. The *Tale of Genji* was written in the 11th century by Lady Murasaki Shikibu, and its story is set in the same period. It is universally considered THE great Japanese traditional novel, and one of the greatest works of world literature. Seidensticker's abridged translation is about one-quarter as long as the complete work, and includes chapters 1, 4-5, 7-14 and 17. These chapters hang together fairly well as a self-contained narrative that gives a flavor for the complete work. The story begins with the lady of the Paulownia Court, a kind and refined woman with whom the Emperor falls in love. Because she lacks support at court, she is hounded to death by those jealous of her, including

Kokiden, the Emperor's wife. But before she dies she gives birth to the Emperor's son, Genji. Since, like his mother, he lacks influential relatives at court, the Emperor keeps him a commoner (and hence ineligible to become Emperor). But from his childhood, Genji's beauty, elegance, artistry and aesthetic sensibility leaves others awestruck, and frequently in love with him. In the period of the novel, upper-class people occupied themselves primarily with poetry composition, painting, ritual activities and romantic affairs. These affairs were largely tolerated, as long as they were conducted discreetly. Much of the novel is taken up with Genji's affairs, which lead him into near-disaster more than once. Eventually, he is discovered in the apartments of Oborozukiyo, sister of Kokiden. Genji might have gotten away with this under his father's reign, but by this time his father has been succeeded by the Suzaku Emperor, who is largely controlled by his mother, Kokiden.

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