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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Stunning.

By Nikkibird

I was attracted to the title of the book initially--"snow country" just sounded lovely, and I was not disappointed. The descriptive prose was lush and silky smooth, even while taking on a crisp distant feeling. The descriptions of the snow and the harshness of the landscape took on an almost mythical feeling, which made the sharp unsteadiness of Komako's character even more pronounced--in a way, she reminded me of Daisy Buchanan from the Great Gatsby. There's a lot I don't fully understand about this novel, and a lot I need to reflect on--but the snow country was a beautiful, starkly poignant place to dwell for a while.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A story of sadness in human relationships and wasted love

By Amazon Customer

"Snow Country", by Yasunari Kawabata, translated by Edward Seidensticker, is the first book by this Japanese Nobel Prize winner that I have read.

I mention the translator because a non-Japanese speaker is totally dependent on the skill of the translator to capture the atmosphere, the nuances and the unspoken cultural aspects of the original Japanese. It goes without saying that a straightforward translation of words and grammar would most likely be very inadequate. This is true of any translation of fiction, not only this book.

With that caveat, I was struck with the simplicity of language and "spareness" of the writing. There is hardly a superfluous word, and very few adjectives or adverbs. I was reminded of the economy of Haiku and the simplicity of traditional Japanese gardens.

The story is simple in the extreme. A wealthy Japanese sophisticate and dilettante, Shimamura, spends his holidays in a hot springs inn in the "snow country" of western Japan. The "snow country" setting would have special resonances for Japanese readers and the translator explains its significance and other important cultural aspects (eg the hot springs inn and the geisha) to help the English reader get into the mind of a Japanese reader. Of course, this is almost a futile exercise, but the attempt is worth making.

Shimamura gets involved with a local geisha, Komako, who becomes very attached to him, although he does not reciprocate. Komako is a forlorn but appealing figure who is forced to make her own way in life as a hot springs geisha, bereft of family. Shimamura is married with children but he takes his holidays alone in the snow country.

There is no happy ending and no unhappy ending - although the book ends in tragedy. The ending, like much of the narrative, is ambiguous.

It is a book of great sadness in its human relationships and wasted love - and great beauty in its depiction of the physical landscape in the snow country. Imagery has great significance and the reader gets as much enjoyment from his impressions and intuitions as from the explicit text itself. This is the mark of a great writer.

Like all truly great books, you could read Snow Country several times and gain fresh insights and pleasures with each reading.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A great novel, and one that highlights differences between Western and Japanese culture By Steven A. Boggs

This novel was cited in Kawabata's Nobel Prize citation for literature. It is relatively short, but clearly a masterpiece.

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