

Japanese Genres Discussed in Today's Workshop

A Short Introduction

Creative Nonfiction by a Novelist

- “The Little Woods in Fukushima” by Hideo Furukawa, creative nonfiction by an acclaimed novelist, is included in the readings for this workshop. It is a chapter from *Zero-F*, the book he published ten years after the disaster.
- We have examples of this in the West (think of Barbara Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, 2007), but it is an especially popular genre in Japan.

Manga

- Manga is a genre that includes any type of graphic story, from comic books to literary stories (often called “graphic narratives”) like “The Heart of a Lunchbox” by Satoshi Kitamura, included in the readings for this workshop.
- This genre dates back to the Edo period (1615–1868), when the word “manga” referred to sketches. Hokusai produced many volumes of manga.

Zuihitsu

- *Zuihitsu* are short personal essays that usually focus on daily life, such as “Dinner at Mine” by Tomoka Shibasaki, included in the readings for this workshop.
- This genre dates back to the “pillow books” of tenth-century Japan.
- *Zuihitsu* continue to be very popular in Japan.

I-Novel

- The I-Novel is best described as autobiographical fiction that focuses on the narrator's personal life and emotions.
- “Turtledoves” is by Naoya Shiga (1883–1971), who is closely associated with the development of the I-novel.
- This genre dates to the early twentieth century, when realism was introduced into Japanese fiction, influenced primarily by French writers such as Emile Zola.

Waka poetry

- Waka is the oldest type of poetry in Japan — found in the *Kojiki*, (Record of Ancient Matters, 712), and still popular today.
- Tanka, literally “short poem,” is a type of waka with the 5-7-5-7-7 meter.
- Haiku are even shorter: 5-7-5.
- You will see examples of both in the selections.