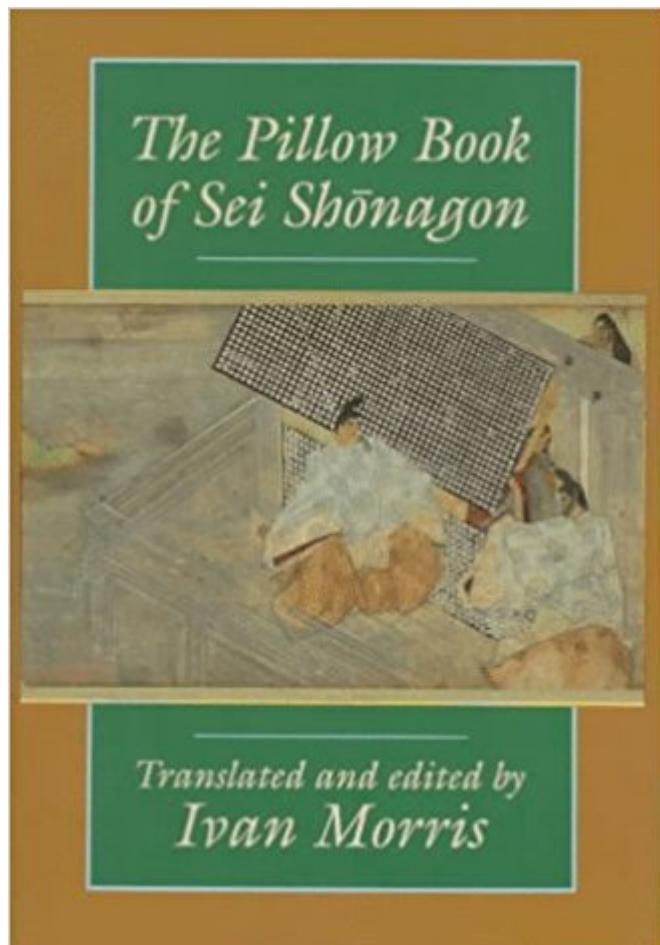


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# The Pillow Book Of Sei Shonagon



## Synopsis

The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon is a fascinating, detailed account of Japanese court life in the eleventh century. Written by a lady of the court at the height of Heian culture, this book enthralls with its lively gossip, witty observations, and subtle impressions. Lady Shonagon was an erstwhile rival of Lady Murasaki, whose novel, *The Tale of Genji*, fictionalized the elite world Lady Shonagon so eloquently relates. Featuring reflections on royal and religious ceremonies, nature, conversation, poetry, and many other subjects, *The Pillow Book* is an intimate look at the experiences and outlook of the Heian upper class, further enriched by Ivan Morris's extensive notes and critical contextualization.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The *Pillow Book* of Sei Shonagon has not only amply filled the long-felt need for a full English translation, but has also made a contribution to Heian studies.... A mine of information... [Morris's] translation maintains a high quality throughout. (*Journal of Asian Studies*) The *Pillow Book* is one of the three most important works of its kind in Japanese literature, and Professor Morris has given it handsome treatment. (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*) Gives all sorts of insights into the court life of the times, and into the worldly character and mentality of its author. It comes over extraordinarily well in this translation, and can rank with any other collection of court memoirs the world over. (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*) The liveliest

and most endearing of Heian writers, and the one who gives the most intimate and vivid picture of life at court.... Its denizens emerge as real and never-to-be-forgotten people.... Morris belongs to the literary rather than the literal school of translators, and his talents are shown here at their best. (Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies)"[Morris's] scholarship is a living thing... he sees through all the painted paper screens.... Outstanding. (New York Times)A beautiful translation. (Japan Quarterly)A mine of information. (Journal of Asian Studies)Shonagon comes through vividly.... [Morris] has given us for the first time in full a delightful and fascinating book which is also a work of notable scholarship. (The Observer)

Text: English, Japanese (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I have always had an avid interest in anything to do with ancient Japanese culture. Their haiku, senryu and Tanka are my favorite poetry forms. I also love their literature but I had not read this famous book (The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon translated and edited by Ivan Morris) until recently. I purchased it on for a bargain price. This very enlightening book came from Sei Shonagon who was a court lady in tenth-century Japan. It is actually a personal diary of a woman who explains all the things she likes and displeases her in the daily life of a court lady. She comments on a wide range of topics such as nature and the seasons, the flowers she likes, the importance of good manners, people she likes and hates, the behavior of servants, the correct behavior of lovers and numerous other topics. This book has real historical value because it covers the everyday life of people who are part of the royal family as well as the servants and mistresses of court life in tenth-century Japan. What makes this book unique is that it chronicles the common everyday life in early Japan and shows the emphasis on good manners and proper dress and attitude was essential to all from the highest to the lowest. This 411 page paperback book also has some interesting illustrations showing the clothes and houses of this period. If you are interested in early Japanese culture you should check out this book. Rating: 4 Stars. Joseph J. Truncate (Author: Zen Poetry Moments: Haiku and senryu for special occasions).

If you are interested in books that shed light on life in the old world, this book is for you! The striking thing about this book is that it really seems like Sei Shonagon (the author) wanted her work to be read by people of the future. It is almost like reading a blog from ancient Japan! She is very funny, and her cutting wit is relentless. This book is an absolute treasure, and this paperback publication is

nicely presented.

If Sei Shonagon were alive today, she would be a livejournalist. That's the overall impression I got from this book--it reads very much like a modern livejournal or blog, being a collection of random observations on whatever Shonagon found interesting, lists of things she likes or dislikes, and snippets or scraps of poetry. Shonagon's use of metaphor and imagery is quite beautiful, and paints an evocative picture of a world, life, time and society very different from that of the modern day. However, she herself and the social circle in which she moves come off as fairly shallow, trivial and self-absorbed, as well as grotesquely classist and sometimes even cruel (as when she and her fellow ladies in waiting send a mocking poem to a commoner who has just lost his entire house and worldly possessions in a fire from which his son barely escaped.) Of course, given her own social status and position in her society at the time, perhaps these attitudes are to be expected; however, they still are not particularly attractive. Nevertheless her writing is very readable, engaging, light and witty, and of course it is of great historical and literary significance, especially for something that was, by her own admission, not intended to be circulated publicly. It makes me wonder if any of today's blogosphere authors will still be read a thousand years from now, and what picture they will paint of modern society if they are.

I read this book 30 years ago in Russian translation. Remembered it forever and now bought it in English for my daughter to enjoy wonderful writing by Sei Shonagon, a woman lived more than a thousand years ago. Her feelings, description, impressions of her life touches you, amaze you. Besides learning about life in Japanese court from ancient times you will realize that life is the same for people from thousand years ago and us. I will recommend this book for any age, you will find there what you are capable to see.

I really enjoyed reading this book! I felt like I was experiencing history. It reads like a diary, but that makes it charming. This book holds a permanent place on my book shelf so that I can revisit it in the future.

Highly recommended. Beautiful snapshot of Japanese history during the Heian period.

I had heard about this book and this particular translation. I read a little bit at a time. Besides being a wonderful writer, this is a terrific Japanese history lesson. I absolutely love this book. the voice of

the writer is unique, intelligent, whimsical, wise, and much more. You will want to start writing about the everyday scenes in your life as beautifully as she did.

Shonagon's prose are beautiful. This book illustrates much about Heian culture such as personal relationships, religious pilgrimage, and stresses an intimate connection to nature.

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