
ABOUT

The purpose of this site is to make the works of Natsume Sōseki more accessible to students of Japanese. These works date from the early 1900s, and the language can be challenging, but reading the original texts is well worth the effort.

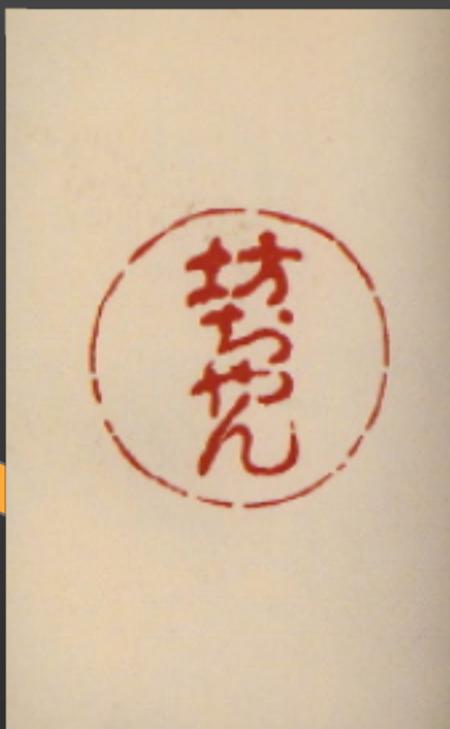
The site provides a number of tools to assist the reader (explained in detail in the Features link). However, a solid understanding of Japanese grammar and mastery of basic vocabulary have been assumed in order keep the extent of vocabulary helps, explanations, and notes reasonable. A minimum of two or three years of college-level Japanese study (or equivalent) is recommended before starting on these works.

Many of Sōseki's works are available in English translation, but it is recommended that these translations be avoided. This advice is not meant as a criticism of the translators, but rather reflects the view that much of the flavor and character of the original text is inevitably lost when translating Japanese literature into English. Rough translations are available in the Study Guide pages, but these should only be referenced when the meaning of the Japanese text is not clear. After consulting the translations, the reader should return to any problematic Japanese text and work to understand the meaning.

This site is strictly non-commercial, with no advertisements or solicitations. The only request of site users is to provide comments or suggestions (through the Contacts link) for how the site could be improved. Also, a short note from any who find the site useful would be appreciated, as the site coding includes no scripts to track users or usage.

Any and all help is welcome, especially with the detailed text coding. The hope is that with improvements over time this site will evolve from a simple initial effort into a valued resource for fans of Natsume Sōseki.

SOSEKI PROJECT



Botchan

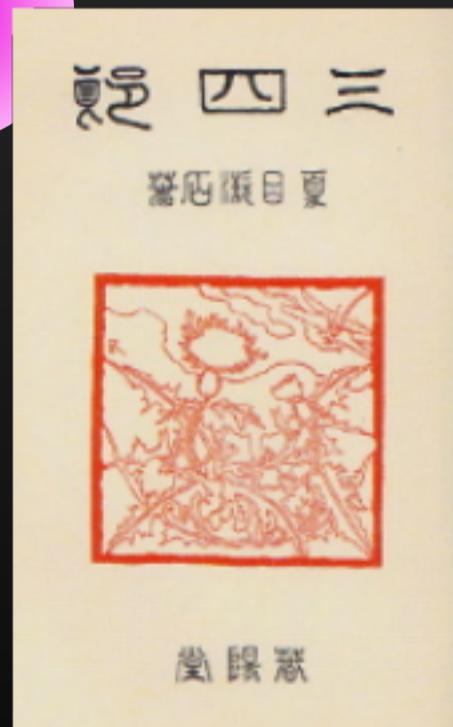
1906

The most famous and widely read of Sōseki's works, this novel begins by illustrating Botchan's rash and reckless nature through anecdotes from his childhood and early schooling. The story then shifts into a hilarious account of his ill-fated first job, a teaching assignment far from Tokyo in "barbaric" small-town Shikoku.

Sanshiro

1908

The charming story of Sanshirō, a young man who arrives from the country to study at the University of Tokyo. Passive by nature and just beginning to explore life's possibilities, Sanshirō cautiously samples the offerings of his new environment: the big city, elite academia, and captivating young ladies.





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坊っちゃん

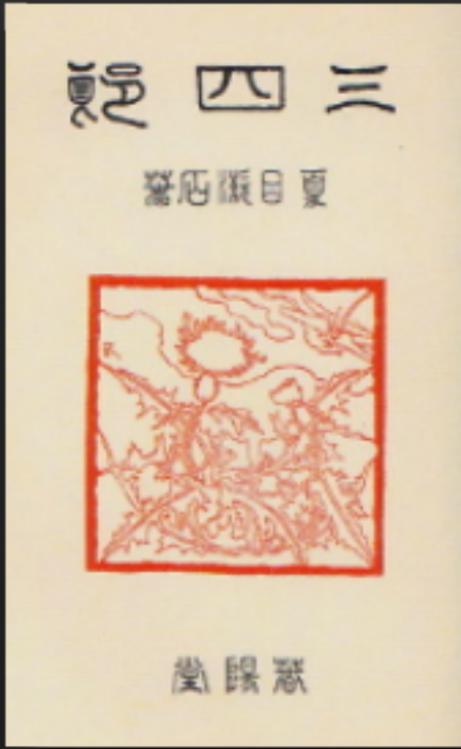


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KOKORO

こゝろ



1914

A young student forms a friendship with an enigmatic older man, whom he refers to as 'Sensei.' Over time, and finally through a long confessional letter, the younger man comes to know of Sensei's past and to understand the reasons behind his eccentric demeanor.

I AM A CAT

吾輩は猫である



1905

A lost cat takes up residence in the home of a teacher, from where he offers a no-holds-barred commentary on his master, his master's household, the neighborhood, Japanese society, and human beings in general.

SHORTER WORKS



Ten Nights of Dreams (夢十夜)

Bunchō (文鳥)

The Tower of London (倫敦塔)

SōSEKI PROJECT



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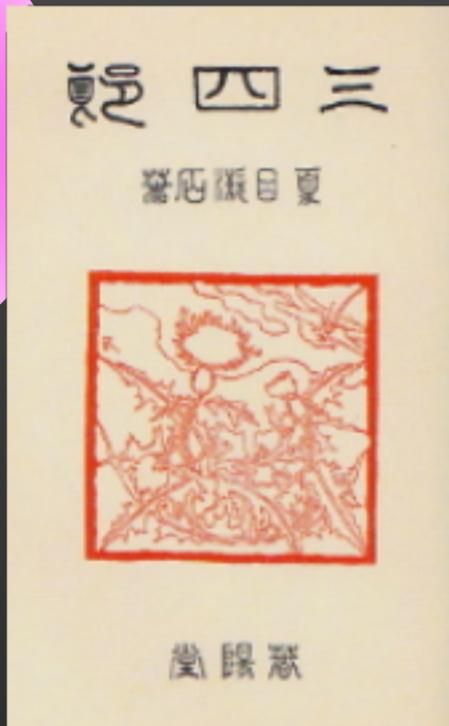
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SOSEKI PROJECT



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Kokoro

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Ten Nights of Dreams

1908

A series of ten dreams set in various times and touching on various themes.

Bunchō

1908

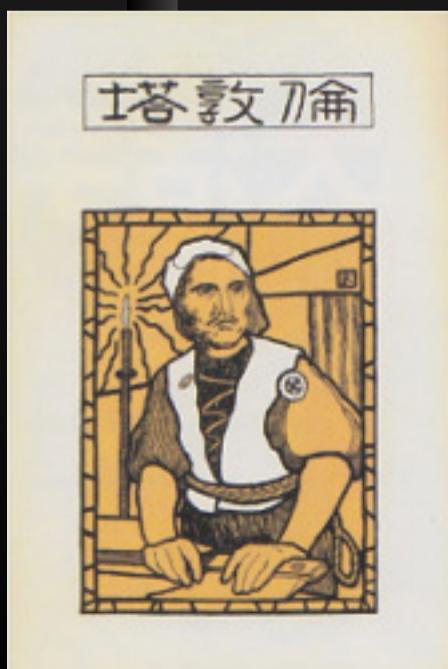
A solitary writer, prone to musing on a beautiful woman he once knew, toils away in his cold study to complete a novel. At the urging of a friend, he takes a bunchō (Japanese rice sparrow) as a pet. The story traces his relationship with the bird, from initial apprehension, to fascination, to indifference, and finally, to tragic neglect.



The Tower of London

1905

An impressionistic account of the author's sole excursion to the Tower of London during his two years of study abroad in the city. A mix of memories from the visit and fantasies evoked by the sights and sounds and history of the site.



Section 001

Study Guide

Audio

親譲りの無鉄砲で小供の時から損ばかりしている。小学校に居る時分学校の二階から飛び降りて一週間ほど腰を抜かした事がある。なぜそんな無闇をしたと聞く人があるかも知れぬ。別段深い理由でもない。新築の二階から首を出していたら、同級生の一人が冗談に、いくら威張っても、そこから飛び降りる事は出来まい。弱虫やーい。と囁したからである。小使に負ぶさって帰って来た時、おやじが大きな眼をして二階ぐらいから飛び降りて腰を抜かす奴があるかと云ったから、この次は抜かさずに飛んで見せますと答えた。

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Botchan

Section 001 Study Guide

Practice Text (Full Hiragana)

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Rough Translation

I was born with a reckless nature, and it's landed me in endless trouble for as long as I can remember. I once jumped from the second floor of my elementary school and was laid up for a week with a dislocated hip. Some might ask what inspired such an ill-advised stunt. There was no deep reason. I was leaning out from the second floor of our newly-constructed school building when a classmate taunted me jokingly, "You act like a big shot, but we all know you're too scared to jump from up there. Chicken!" My father looked at me quizzically as I arrived home on the janitor's back. When he asked, "What kind of fool jumps from the second floor and dislocates his hip?" I replied, "Next time I'll land it right and my hips will be just fine."

One of my relatives gave me a western-made pocket knife, and I was holding the shiny blade out in the sun to show my friends. One of them said, "It's definitely shiny, but doesn't look like it could cut much." I shot back with, "I'll bet there's nothing this blade can't cut." "Then let's see you cut your finger," came the reply. I told him it could easily cut my finger, and I proceeded to cut into the back of my right thumb at an angle. Fortunately the knife was small and the bone in my thumb was hard, so the thumb is still attached. But there's a scar there that I'll carry for life.

無鉄砲

recklessness

(lit: without a gun; from the idea of rushing into battle without a gun)

Section 001

Study Guide

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坊っちゃん

三四郎

こゝろ

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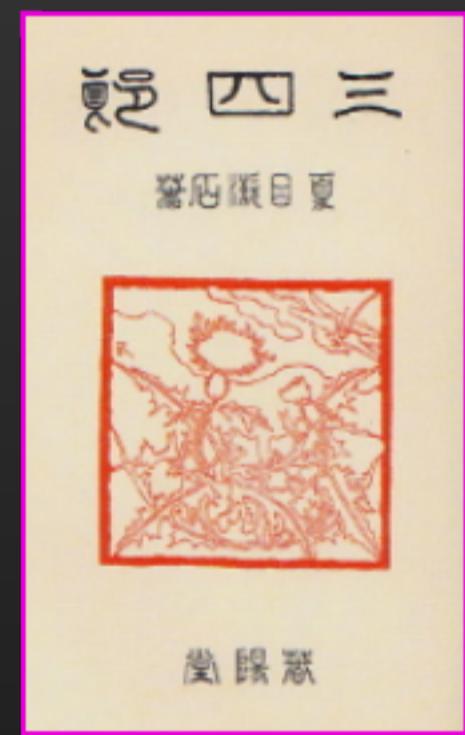
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BOTCHAN



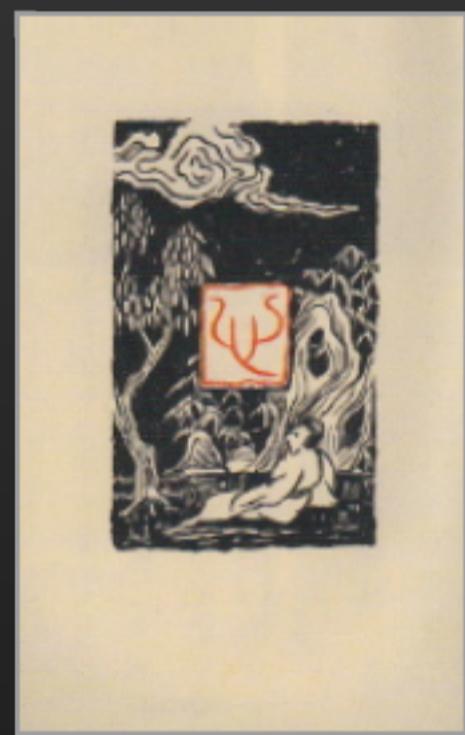
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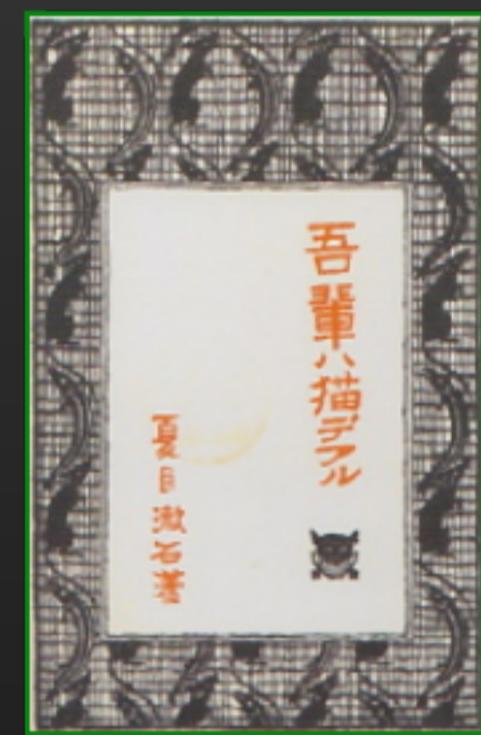
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