

# 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World Unit 17: Asian Literature

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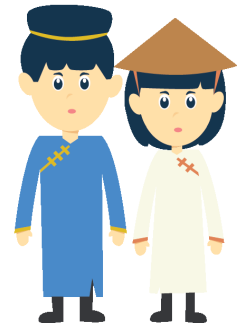
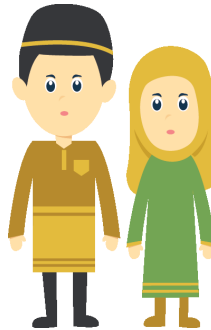
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GRADE 11/12 | 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World

**UNIT 17****Asian Literature**

Asia, the biggest continent in the world, boasts a spectrum of literary masterpieces that transcended through time. China, Japan, Korea, India, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines all had an impact on the literature of Asia. Who would not even know Rabindranath Tagore,



Basho, Confucius, and Jose Rizal? These people are only some of the thousands of literary writers in the Orient. In this unit, we are going to explore the literature of China, Japan, India, Thailand, and Indonesia. Part of getting to know their literary treasures is learning about the various writers who made their countries well-known all over the world.

**Unit Objectives**

In this unit, you should be able to:

- describe Asian literature;
- enumerate various Asian writers and their works; and
- explain the themes and features of Asian literature.



## Lesson 1: Chinese Literature

Home to 1.3 billion people, China remains to be a country filled with a long and colorful history where even the oldest of rites are still being practiced by its citizens up to this day. One of the significant contributions of China to the world is its rich literary heritage that dates back in the ancient times. Its literature has extended from the East to the West and has been revered all over the world.



### Essential Question

How does Chinese literature define its culture and society?



## Warm-up!

### Think-Pair-Share

Imagine yourself living in a period when the internet and high-end gadgets have not yet been invented. You have no other means of communicating with other people except through writing letters or talking to them over the old models of the telephone. How would you have lived in such era? Write down five things that you would do to live through that period. Share your answers with a partner.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



## Learn about It!

Chinese literature dates back thousands of years, from the dynastic court poetry to the fiction novel that blossomed during the **Ming dynasty** (1368-1644) to entertain the common literate Chinese. The establishment of woodblock printing during the **Tang dynasty** (618–907) and the invention of movable type printing during the **Song dynasty** (960–1279) gave rise to written Chinese literature.

### Classical Poetry

The *Book of Changes* is one of the most important classical texts in Chinese literature. It is a book of divination based on eight trigrams, which existed during the **Zhou dynasty**. The writers of the Warring States period attempted to explain the world and its moral principles through the commentaries found in additional sections of the text.

The *Classic of Poetry* is the earliest collection of poetry, consisting of **305 poems** that included **folk and festival songs, hymns, and eulogies**. The collection of documents and speeches written by rulers and officials of Zhou period is called the *Classic of History*. The *Classic of Rites* is a collection of texts that describes ancient rites and court ceremonies during the Zhou dynasty. It was written during the Warring States period. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is a chronological history of the state of Lu. It contains monthly narrations of important events during the rule of the twelve leaders of Lu. The *Analects of Confucius* is a book of sayings recorded by his disciples that talks about his teachings on how to live a harmonious life and how to deal with other people.

Classical poetry reached its peak during the Tang dynasty. The early Tang period was known for its *lushi*, consisting of eight lines with five to seven characters in each line. Two distinguished poets of the period were **Li Po** (Li Bai), known for the romanticism of his poems, and **Tu Fu**, a Confucian moralist.

### Vocabulary

- **divination** - the art of reading tea leaves and cards to predict the future
- **trigrams** - any of the eight possible combinations of three whole or broken lines used especially in Chinese divination
- **vernacular** - ordinary or everyday language
- **sparse** - less than what is necessary or normal

Take a look at a poem written by Li Po:

### Clearing at Dawn

Li Po

*The fields are chill, the sparse rain has stopped;  
The colors of Spring teem on every side.  
With leaping fish the blue pond is full;  
With singing thrushes the green boughs droop.  
The flowers of the fields have dabbled their powdered cheeks;  
The mountain grasses are bent level at the waist.  
By the bamboo stream the last fragment of cloud  
Blown by the wind slowly scatters away.*

Another poetic form that became popular was the *ci* form, which was first developed during the Tang dynasty. It then flourished during the Song dynasty, as poets based *ci* poetry on the tune of popular songs. The development of Chinese *sanqu* poetry, a freer form patterned on dramatic arias, led to the development of vernacular Chinese literature.

### Let's Check In!

What period marked the peak of classical Chinese poetry?

## Classical Prose

The Spring and Autumn periods contributed significantly to Chinese prose style. Works of **Mencius** and **Zhuang Zi** demonstrated well-reasoned and carefully developed ideas and showed a remarkable improvement in style. Mencius was noted for his elegant diction, while Zhuang Zi was revered for his use of metaphorical, anecdotal, and allegorical style.

The Tang period saw the emergence of the neoclassical style of prose, which strongly

influenced prose writing for the next years. **Han Yu** (786–824) was a major essayist who strongly advocated the return of Confucian orthodoxy. Vernacular fiction became popular after the 14th century. The greatest 18th century vernacular novel is *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin.

## Modern Literature

Modern Chinese literature began in the late **Qing period** (1895–1911), which was described as a period of **active intellectual pursuits sparked by a nationalistic climate**. Translated Western writings introduced new ideas and cultures, thereby resulting in the flowering of prose fiction that expressed new social and cultural roles for writers. Chinese fiction became concerned with social problems, historical upheaval, and changing values. Among the distinguished writers of the period are:

- a. **Li Boyuan** - He was a writer who used vernacular writing for people who did not receive classical education. His writings are focused on social and political issues during the late Qing dynasty as a reflection of the Chinese society of that period.
- b. **Liu E** - He was a writer, archaeologist, and politician who used symbolism and classical writing illustrations in his writing. This made his writing more appealing to those who attained classical education.
- c. **Zheng Pu** - He was a novelist who used symbolism and classical literature illustrations in his writing. During his time, he was also known as the only author who knew a different language because he knew the French language.

It was also during the late Qing dynasty that the new “civilized drama” emerged, a hybrid of Chinese operatic drama and Western-style drama. **The New Culture Movement** (1917–1923) saw the vernacular language being widely used and eventually displacing the classical language in all genres. Among those who popularized vernacular literature was **Lu Xun** (1881–1936), considered the founder of modern *baihua* literature (literature that uses colloquial language) in China.

With the establishment of the League of Left-Wing writers, Lu Xun and other followers adopted the ideals of **socialist realism**, adhering to the principle that art must depict contemporary events exposing the ills of nonsocialist society. The **Maoist Era** (1949–1976) placed the publishing industry and the book distribution system under government control and implemented strict censorship.

Despite the measures to instill literary uniformity, a great number of novels of excellent quality were produced. These writings became the textbooks on life of the young generation, for they reflected the historic changes in the lives of Chinese people. The **Post-Mao Era** (1976–present) published a large number of **prose fiction**. The writers protested against and bemoaned the abuses but also expressed their eagerness to contribute in building a new Chinese society. Literary outlets were revived to satisfy the increasing appetite of the people. Literary magazines publishing translations of foreign fiction became very popular to the young generation. Writers also became freer to write about sensitive matters that do not necessarily conform to literary conventions. However, one of the struggles of modern writers is the censorship imposed by the Chinese government on both journalism and literature, as evidenced by the blocking of certain websites and the banning of some books from being sold in China.

#### Let's Check In!

Who were the most important writers during the late Qing era?



### Check Your Understanding

1. When did the fiction novel start to become popular in China?
2. What is the Chinese's book of divination?
3. What is the collection of documents and speeches written by rulers and officials of the Zhou period?
4. In which dynasty did modern Chinese literature begin?
5. How did the societal changes in China affect the themes of Chinese fiction in the modern period?





## Let's Step Up!

With a partner, choose one of the sayings in the *Analects of Confucius* and discuss its application in real-life situations. Present the saying and your analysis in class.

### Let's Revisit the Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss it in class.



## Lesson 2: Japanese Literature

Japanese literature has landed a special place in the worldwide literary scene when *manga* was introduced. However, Japanese literature has its roots dating back centuries ago. It has survived various periods and rapid changes of time. It has come a long way to become what we know today.

### Essential Question

How did Japanese history influence its literature over the years?



### Warm-up!

#### Group Activity

List down your five impressions about Japan and Japanese literature. Write a short explanation on why you think such. Then, discuss it with your group mates.

	Impressions	Explanation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		



### Learn about It!

The literature of Japan presents a rich source of beauty and new ideas highly significant to the West. The Western discovery of Japanese literature was aided by William George Aston's A

*History of Japanese Literature* first published in New York in 1899.

Chinese elements are regarded as an integral part of Japanese literature, just as the literature of Greece and Rome are an integral part of Western literature. The literary forms of China, as well as Chinese ideographic forms, are at the root of Japanese literature.

The Japanese have an extensive literature spanning more than twelve centuries, which are divided into different periods.

### Archaic Period

It was marked by two events that were of prime importance to the development of literature in Japan:

- **Introduction of the art of writing (kanji) from China**

Until they became acquainted with the Chinese, the Japanese had no written characters. Chinese characters were adopted to write Japanese, creating what is known as the *man'yōgana*, the earliest form of kana or syllabic writing.

- **First propagation of the Buddhist religion**

Buddhism gained much greater importance in Japan. It took on the highly aristocratic and uniquely Japanese form. It was influential in developing the Japanese culture. Literature during this period was mostly a series of songs and poems about war and historical incidents, and series of *norito* or prayers to the gods of the Shinto, Japan's indigenous religion predating Buddhism.

### Nara Period

Considered as the **Golden Age of Poetry**, it began in 710 AD when Nara was made the seat of the emperor's government and ended in 794 AD when the capital was moved to Nagaoka. It produced two important literary works:

- a. *Kojiki* or *Records of Ancient Matters*, which contain the **early traditions of the Japanese race, mythology, and legendary history**; and
- b. *Man'yōshū* or *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*, the **oldest extant anthology of**

#### Vocabulary

- **extant** - still existing; not destroyed or lost
- **voluminous** - being very many in number or great in amount
- **bawdy** - humorously indecent
- **revere** - to greatly respect someone or something

**Japanese poetry.** Divided into twenty chapters or *kan*, it contains some 4,500 poems written over a period of about 440 years and representing the works of several hundred poets. This collection employs two principal poetic forms: *tanka* or short poem, the most universal form of poetry in Japan, made up of 31 syllables arranged in five lines or units; and *choka* or long poem, formed with 31 syllables with undefined length and concluding with an extra seven-syllable line.

The **representative prose works** during this period are the following:

- Shoku-Nihongi***, a history text;
- Izumo Fudoki***, an ancient record of Izumo; and
- Nihon Shoki*** or *Chronicles of Japan*, the second oldest book of classical Japanese history. This is a text that shows the history of Japan from its origins until 697 AD.

These texts provide historical accounts of how Japan came to be as a nation.

In the excerpt below, the text narrated the story of Izanagi and Izanami, the gods that represent masculinity and femininity in the Shinto religion.

### Nihon Shoki (excerpt)

#### *The Story of Izanagi and Izanami (Book I)*

"The Gods of Heaven addressed Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto, saying: 'There is the country Toyo-ashi-hara-chi-i-wo-aki no midzu-ho. 'Do ye proceed and bring it into order.' They then gave them the jewel-spear of Heaven. Hereupon the two Gods stood on the floating bridge of Heaven, and plunging down the spear, sought for land. Then upon stirring the ocean with it, and bringing it up again, the brine which dripped from the spear-point coagulated and became an island, which was called Ono-goro-jima. The two gods descended, dwelt in this island, and erected there an eight-fathom palace. They also set up the pillar of Heaven."



Then the male Deity asked the female Deity, saying:—"Is there anything formed in thy body?" She answered and said:—"My body has a place completely

*formed, and called the source of femineity." The male god said:—"My body again has a place completely formed, and called the source of masculinity. I desire to unite my source of masculinity to thy source of femineity." Having thus spoken, they prepared to go round the pillar of Heaven, and made a promise, saying:—"Do thou, my younger sister, go round from the left, while I will go round from the right." Having done so, they went round separately and met, when the female Deity spoke first, and said:—"How pretty! a lovely youth!" The male Deity then answered and said:—"How pretty! a lovely maiden!" Finally they became husband and wife.*

## Heian Period

This period is considered the **classical age of Japanese literature**. It refers to the period when **Kyoto** or **Heian-kyō** ("City of Peace") was the real seat of government. Its literature reflected the pleasure-loving and effeminate but cultured and refined character of the class of Japanese who produced it. It was largely the **work of women**; thus, literature during this period was gentle and domestic.

The popular works produced during this period were the following:

- a. **Kokinshū** (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*) is an anthology of the best poems produced during the previous 150 years; the prose work such as *Kokinshū's* preface was written by Ki No Tsurayuki and which was the start of criticism becoming a distinct form of Japanese literature; and
- b. **The Tale of Genji** by Murasaki Shikibu is sometimes referred to as the first modern Japanese novel. Here is an excerpt from the first chapter of the novel.

### The Tale of Genji (excerpt)

Murasaki Shikibu

*When the young Prince was three years old the Hakamagi took place. It was celebrated with a pomp scarcely inferior to that which adorned the investiture of the first Prince. In fact, all available treasures were exhausted on the occasion. And again the public manifested its disapprobation. In the summer of the same year the Kiri-Tsubo-Kōyi became ill, and wished to retire from the palace. The Emperor, however, who was accustomed to see her indisposed, strove to induce her to remain. But her illness increased day by day; and she had drooped and pined away until she was now but a shadow of her former self. She made scarcely any response to the*

*affectionate words and expressions of tenderness which her Royal lover caressingly bestowed upon her. Her eyes were half-closed: she lay like a fading flower in the last stage of exhaustion, and she became so much enfeebled that her mother appeared before the Emperor and entreated with tears that she might be allowed to leave. Distracted by his vain endeavors to devise means to aid her, the Emperor at length ordered a Te-gruma to be in readiness to convey her to her own home, but even then he went to her apartment and cried despairingly: "Did not we vow that we would neither of us be either before or after the other even in travelling the last long journey of life? And can you find it in your heart to leave me now?" Sadly and tenderly looking up, she thus replied, with almost failing breath:—*

*"Since my departure for this dark journey,  
Makes you so sad and lonely,  
Fain would I stay though weak and weary,  
And live for your sake only!"*

*"Had I but known this before—"*

*She appeared to have much more to say, but was too weak to continue. Overpowered with grief, the Emperor at one moment would fain accompany her himself, and at another moment would have her remain to the end where she then was.*

## Kamakura-Muromachi Period

It was characterized by a **constant state of warfare and turmoil**, and the **decline of learning**.

The important works of the period are the following:

- Shin Kokinshū*** (*New Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*), which is reflective of the gloom and solitude of the period;
- Heike Monogatari*** (*Tale of the Heike*), which tells of the defeat of the Taira by the Minamoto clan;
- Gempei Seisuki***, which is the history of the rise and fall of the Gen and Hei, two great noble families who fought for absolute control over Japan during the latter half of the

12th century, and

- d. **Tsurezuregusa** (*Essays in Idleness*) by Yoshida Kenko; it is a collection of essays on various subjects.

The period saw the Buddhist monks as the chief maintainers of learning, the development of **renga** or linked verse, and the evolution of **Noh drama**, which consists of a one-act dance performed by male actors with extremely slow movements as they chant prose passages and sing verse sections. **Zeami Motokiyo** developed the Noh drama to its highest form.

### Edo Period

Literature during this period was more voluminous and had a far wider range of subjects. It was produced by the **merchant class** and was considered as bawdy and worldly. During the period, forms of popular drama developed, which later evolved into **kabuki**, a popular Japanese theater form consisting of a colorful background, lively and emotional music, dancing, and exaggerated acting. The period saw the perfection of the **haiku**, a poem of 17 syllables in three lines of five, seven, five syllables, respectively. A haiku is known to depict the beauty of nature as seen in the eyes of the writer. Matsuo Bashō, Kobayashi Issa, and Yosa Buson were notable haiku writers of this period.

The following is a side by side Japanese-English translation of a haiku by Matsuo Bashō. The translation is by William George Aston.

#### Frog Poem

Matsuo Bashō

(translated by W.G. Aston)



Japanese	English
<i>Furu ike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto</i>	<i>An ancient pond! With a sound from the water Of the frog as it plunges in.</i>

Take note that in the original Japanese version, the syllables follow the 5-7-5 pattern in the respective order of lines. It also shows the emotion and imagery of nature as seen by the writer. Interpretations may depend on the reader of a haiku.

Other important works of the period are the following: *Koshoku ichidai otoko*, *Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige*, and *Oku no Hosomichi*. These Japanese works reflect philosophical meditations toward existence. They highlight Japanese sensibilities when it comes to daily or mundane experiences.

## Meiji Era

The Meiji era saw the **reopening of Japan to the West** and was a **period of rapid industrialization**. It bore witness to the following:

- **Fukuzawa Yukichi** and **Nakae Chōmin** wrote enlightenment literature, while pre-modern popular books portrayed the fast-changing country;
- *Haibun*, a kind of composition that **combines prose and haiku**, flourished during this period;
- **Ichiyō Higuchi**, a woman writer who wrote short stories on powerless women of this age, was among the first important writers who emerged during this era;
- **Izumi Kyōka**, who wrote early novels such as *The Operating Room* (1895) and *The Holy Man of Mount Koya* (1900), is revered for having his own distinctive style that made use of supernatural elements.

## Modern Period

During this time, literature is characterized by the denial of the worth of traditional writings and by themes of disaffection, loss of purpose, and coping with defeat as a result of World War II and Japan's defeat. Osamu Dazai's novel, *The Setting Sun*, is one of the stories that reflect the aftermath of war.

Prominent writers of the 1970s and the 1980s identified with intellectual and moral issues in their attempt to raise social and political consciousness. These writers include the following:

- **Kenzaburō Ōe** wrote *A Personal Matter* in 1964 and became Japan's second winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature;



- **Kōbō Abe** wrote fantastic novels such as *Woman in the Dunes*, which won the Yomiuri Prize for literature in 1962 and was adapted into a film in 1964;
- **Shizuko Todo** won the 1988 Naoki Prize for *Ripening Summer*, a story that captures the complex psychology of modern women;
- **Haruki Murakami** remains as one of the most popular and controversial of today's widely acclaimed Japanese authors.

In the 1980s, Japan established its prominence in the literary scene by producing *manga* (comic books). Manga became popular as a material for leisure reading of children and young adults. Part of the reason why manga was successful was its portrayal of women in the modern world, and ultimately its representation of a traditional country, such as Japan, which embraces the challenges of urbanity and the future.

#### Let's Check In!

Reread the haiku by Bashō and answer the following:

*The first day of the year:  
Thoughts come - and there is loneliness;  
The autumn's dusk is here*

1. What is your interpretation of Bashō's haiku?
2. What is the overall tone of the poem?
3. Describe how Bashō presents the emotion in the poem,



## Check Your Understanding

1. What are the roots of Japanese literature?
2. What were the two remarkable events during the Archaic period that added to the development of Japanese literature?
3. Which period was considered as the Golden Age of Poetry in Japan?
4. Which period was considered as the classical age of Japanese literature?
5. Between haiku and manga, which Japanese literary form do you prefer to read? Why?



## Let's Step Up!

Observe your current surroundings and write a haiku about it. Write it on a  $\frac{1}{4}$  sheet of bond paper and post it on your bulletin board.

### Let's Revisit the Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss it in class.



## Lesson 3: Indian Literature

India, with its vast number of languages, is teeming with a wide repository of different literary forms. From its ancient writers like Kalidasa to its modern-day writers such as Tagore and Roy, its values, practices, and beauty continue to captivate the hearts and imagination of the people who had the chance to read these literary masterpieces.



### Essential Question

How does religion shape Indian literature?



## Warm-up!

### Think-Pair-Share

Philippines, like India, has more than a hundred languages that are spoken all over the country. Think of five Philippine languages and give an example of any literary pieces using the languages. Discuss with a partner:

1. the significance of these literary pieces to the Filipinos, and
2. the contribution of literature in solidifying the identity of a nation.

Present your discussion in class.



## Learn about It!

Indian literature pertains not only to the literature of what we know as India today but also that of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Historically, these countries were considered one until the partition of India in 1947, which created India and Pakistan. Then, in 1971, Bangladesh seceded from Pakistan. In the case of literature, although the countries are no longer one, their literary tradition is unquestionably united.

Today, the constitution of India recognizes **22 official languages**. This includes **Sanskrit**, which is an ancient language that was used for writing epics and religious texts. Though Sanskrit is no longer used by the majority, it is still considered an important part of Indian cultural heritage that is at par with the Latin and Greek of the West. While Sanskrit and other languages developed from Sanskrit are still active languages in Northern India, most languages used in the south come from Dravidian, a different language family. An example of Dravidian language is Tamil. Because of the contact of Indians with Persians and the rest of the Middle East, Urdu emerged as a language in the 1500s. As India was colonized by the British Empire, English became a vital language. However, only a small percentage of the Indian population use English because it is mostly accessible through formal education. The Indian colonial experience affected how writers expressed their sentiments.

### Vocabulary

- **secede** - to separate from a nation or state and become independent
- **couplet** - two lines of poetry that form a unit
- **octosyllabic** - composed of eight syllables

Most literary forms and works in Indian literature incorporate philosophical and religious concepts. Often, these works are viewed as extensions of Hindu teachings. Considered to be the oldest Hindu writings, the *Vedas* (meaning “knowledge” in Sanskrit) are a collection of sacred books written in Sanskrit. There are four *Vedas*:

- **Rig Veda** (“knowledge of the verses”) - a collection of 1,028 sacred hymns and is divided into ten books called *Mandalas*;
- **Yajur Veda** (“knowledge of the sacrifice”) - a handbook for priests in the performance of sacrificial rituals;
- **Sama Veda** (“knowledge of the melodies”) - a collection of chants and melodies drawn from the Rig Veda and are to be sung during worship; and
- **Atharva Veda** (“knowledge of the fire priest”) - a collection of charms, spells, and hymns, largely outside of the scope of worship and Vedic sacrifice.

India prides itself as a civilization that holds some of the world’s oldest epics: the *Mahabharata* by **Vyasa** and *Ramayana* by **Valmiki**. *Mahabharata* narrates an ancient tale of war within a family caused by a desire for power. The entire text contains **100,000 lines**, hence, it is considered as **one of the longest literary masterpieces**. It is actually a group of poems in one. The epic story of the great war between the two branches of the Bharat family comprises

only about a fifth of the whole work, which runs about 100,000 *sloka* (lines) or double octosyllabic couplets and is contained in eighteen books and a supplement. Meanwhile, the *Ramayana* takes its story from an episode in the *Mahabharata* and gives it a romantic treatment in the form of *kavya* or court poetry. It centers on the life and adventures of the couple Ramachandra and Sita. The tale of Savitri is another narrative found in *Mahabharata*. It is told to the exiled king of the Pandavas by way of consoling him for the plight of his much-tried queen, Draupadi. Savitri takes her place alongside the more famous Sita (heroine of the *Ramayana*) and the admirable Shakuntala (whose story is also told in the *Mahabharata*) as the type of ideal Indian womanhood.

Here is an excerpt of the tale of *Savitri and Satyavan* from the *Mahabharata*:

### Savitri and Satyavan (excerpt) from the *Mahabharata*

"Wait my husband," she said, "let me go with you. To-day I cannot leave you." Satyavan sought to dissuade her. "You are weak with fasting," he said, "and the paths are steep and rugged." But Savitri's love for the prince overcame her weakness and she begged him earnestly not to forbid her. Satyavan at last consented but told her to bid the king and queen farewell. For he was afraid that she might die of fatigue in the



forest. Savitri did so, and explained to them that she could not abandon Satyavan on his last day of life. Nor could she beg him not to go into the forest. For he said that he wished to cut wood for the sacrificial fire. The king and queen understood, and blessing her they bade her care for Satyavan. Savitri went back to the prince and the two entered the woods. And the prince pointed out to Savitri the streams sparkling in the sunlight and the flowering shrubs and the peacocks that looked down upon them from the boughs of tall, leafy trees. But Savitri's heart was heavy. And although her lips answered Satyavan, her thoughts dwelt always on his coming peril. The prince, thinking nothing of his danger, climbed into the trees and plucked their fruit, and with his hatchet he cut down boughs for the sacrificial fire. Suddenly he felt a sharp pain in his head, his limbs began to ache and sweat stood out upon his body. Slowly he walked back towards Savitri. And Savitri, seeing his illness, ran to him and made him lie down, and taking his head in her lap bade him sleep and rest. The prince was soon unconscious. But Savitri, who knew that the hour of

*danger had come, looked anxiously about her. Soon she saw by her side a giant of monstrous aspect. His face was black and yellow. His eyes were bloodshot. His clothes were red, and in his hand was a mighty noose, and he wore a huge gold and jewelled crown that flashed back the rays of the sun. Savitri guessed that he was Death, come to claim her husband. Bravely she moved the prince's head from her lap to the ground and, rising to her full height, she faced the giant. Joining her hands together she said with a trembling voice, "My lord, from your mighty form I know you to be no mortal but a god. Tell me who you are and what you desire?"*

*"I am Yama the god of Death," answered the giant. The prince's hours were numbered from his birth and with the noose in my hand I shall bind him and drag him away." "Lord Yama," replied Savitri, "how is it that you have yourself come to drag away Satyavan and not, as is your custom, sent one of your messengers?" "A prince so great and so noble as Satyavan," said Yama, "deserved that I should come in person to take him away."*

*With these words he bound with his noose the helpless form of the prince and began to drag him away towards the south. Savitri, stricken with grief, followed. A few minutes later Yama turned round and saw that she followed, "Go back, Princess," he said, "you must return home now, and there honour the dead prince with the last rites."*

*Savitri bravely faced the god and said, "The wise have said that by walking but seven paces together one contracts friendship with another. Thus I have become your friend. Listen, therefore, I pray you, to what I say. It is my duty to follow my husband wherever you take him, even if I go to my death also. For true happiness lies in wedlock and neither celibacy nor widowhood equal it in merit."*

*Yama was touched with Savitri's words and replied, "Princess, I, too, consider myself your friend. Ask me, therefore for any boon you will except only the life of your husband, and I shall grant it to you." "Lord Yama," said the princess, "my father-in-law is blind. Graciously give him back his sight. That is the boon that I ask of you." "Princess," said Yama, "I grant you the boon. King Dyumatsena will recover his sight."*

*But Savitri still followed. Shortly afterwards King Yama turned and saw her. "Princess, you are wearied with walking. Turn back home, I beg of you. For you will gain nothing by journeying further." "Lord Yama," answered Savitri, "I feel no fatigue while I stay with my husband, and where he goes there also shall I go. For Satyavan was a virtuous prince, and the wise have said that but a single day spent with the virtuous is a great gain. So I desire to spend all my life in his company."*

Yama's heart was again touched with Savitri's words. "Princess, your words are full of wisdom and they please me. Ask of me, therefore, a second boon. And if it is not Satyavan's life I shall grant it to you." "Lord Yama," answered the princess, "my father-in-law King Dyumatsena through his blindness lost his kingdom. The second boon that I ask of you is this. Grant that the king my father-in-law may recover his kingdom." "Princess," replied King Yama, "your boon is granted and Dyumatsena will soon be ruling happily over the kingdom of the Salyas. But now I pray you to return homewards. For you are very weary."

But still Savitri followed King Yama. And he again asked why she did not turn back. "Lord Yama," said the princess, "even righteous mortals shew mercy to their enemies when they seek their protection. You are a god and you have declared yourself my friend. It is proper for you therefore to shew me mercy." "Indeed, I will gladly shew you mercy," answered King Yama. "But I cannot grant you Satyavan's life. Ask me another boon and I shall grant it to you." "As you will, Lord Yama," said Savitri. "The boon that I ask for is this. My father King Asvapati has no son. Grant that he may have a hundred sons." "I grant you the boon," said King Yama, "and now I pray you retrace your steps."

But Savitri still followed King Yama. Once again King Yama turned back and pressed her to go homewards. "Lord Yama," said the princess, "you have shewn me kindness and you have shewn mercy. But you are the Lord of Justice and it is for you now to shew me justice. I therefore beg of you my lord Satyavan." "O Princess," said King Yama, "the life of Prince Satyavan I cannot give you. Ask me any other boon and it shall be yours." "I thank you, Lord Yama," answered Savitri, "and the boon that I ask is this—grant that I may bear to Prince Satyavan a hundred sons, strong, brave and beautiful as he was."

"O Princess," said King Yama, "I grant you this boon but I cannot grant you any more. So turn back homewards and do not weary yourself in vain by following a dead husband." "No, Lord Yama," said Savitri, and her wan face lit up with a smile of triumph, "the boon which you have just granted me cannot take effect, unless you give me back Satyavan. You are an Immortal and righteous, and you will not let your words prove false. Therefore give me back Satyavan so that I may bear him a hundred sons."

King Yama thought deeply but he could see no escape from the snare in which the brave princess had taken him. At last he said, "So be it, Princess. I set free your husband. You will bear him a hundred sons, strong, brave and beautiful as he himself is. And I add to the boons which I have



*given you yet another. You shall both live for four hundred years."*

*With these words King Yama unbound Prince Satyavan and, leaving him lying on the ground, departed immediately to his kingdom far away in the South. But Savitri went up to her husband's body and sitting down beside him once more placed his head on her lap. In a short time he awoke and looked round him, not knowing where he was.*

Savitri is portrayed in this tale as a person with beauty and intelligence. As she found her true love in Satyavan, she will do everything to have him back, even going through the dangers of facing Yama, the god of death. She used her wit and intelligence to eventually trick Yama into returning the soul of Satyavan.

Some of the notable contemporary authors of Indian literature include **Arundhati Roy** and **Rabindranath Tagore**. Roy was known for her famous novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997). It won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997. Meanwhile, Tagore was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. Some of his remarkable works include *Manasi* (1890), *Chitrangada* (*Chitra*, 1892), and *Sonar Tori* (*The Golden Boat*, 1894).

### Let's Check In!

What are the four Vedas? What are the contents of each Veda?



## Check Your Understanding

1. What is the ancient language of India?
2. What is considered as the oldest Hindu writings?
3. It is one of India's oldest epics, which narrates an ancient tale between two warring families due to their desire for power.
4. It is an epic about the couple Ramachandra and Sita.
5. In your own words, explain the influence of the English language on the Indian literary scene.





## Let's Step Up!

Look for the summary of the Indian literature that is assigned to your group. Discuss the summary to the rest of your class. Use graphic organizers in your presentation.

Group 1: *Mahabharata* by Vyasa

Group 2: *Ramayana* by Valmiki

Group 3: *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore

Group 4: *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy

### Let's Revisit the Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss it in class.



## Lesson 4: Thai and Indonesian Literature

The Southeast Asian region is teeming with a varied collection of literary forms and masterful pieces. Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Indonesia have their own literary treasures that they can be proud of to the rest of the world. These pieces and forms are products of continuous preservation and appreciation by their people.



### Essential Question

How do Thai and Indonesian literature showcase their culture and traditions?



## Warm-up!

### Pair Activity

Find a partner and complete the table:

What do we know about Thai and Indonesian literature?	What do we want to learn about Thai and Indonesian literature?	What have we learned about Thai and Indonesian literature?

Afterward, share your table in class and compare your answers.



## Learn about It!

### Thai Literature

Indian literature greatly influenced Thai literature. In fact, the national epic of Thailand is called *Ramakien* and was referred to as the Thai version of *Ramayana*. However, numerous versions of the epic were lost after the war of Ayutthaya.

The *Inao* is an important classical literary work in Thailand because it presented the history of the land, including the people's traditions, customs, manners, and figures prominently in the repertoire of classical dramas. **Sunthorn Phu** (1786–1855) was regarded as one of the major literary figures in Thailand. His style of writing is sensitive toward the **life and sentiments of the common folk**. This style is brought about by his adventurous life endeavors.

In Thailand, even members of the royalty are revered as literary personalities. Historically, King Rama V and King Rama VI had great passion for poetry, which were intensely philosophical. This, of course, was made possible by the fact that they were introduced to many avenues of learning.

In the early 20th century, **Phya Anuman Rajadhon**, a literary writer and scholar, wrote about Thai culture, language, and folklore. His works influenced the succeeding generations of scholars in various fields. Also, the works of **Dokmaisod** (the pseudonym of M.L. Boopha Nimmanhaeminda) became popular to Thai readers. At present, her works are still read in different grade levels in Thailand. Her best known works were: *Phu Di*, *Nung Nai Roi*, *Nit*, and *Chaichana Khong Luang Naruban*. Another author, **Malai Choopinit**, was a popular name in full-length stories. His prominent works are *Thung Maharat*, a novel about rural life, and *Long Phrai*, a novel that is about an adventure in the forest.

#### Vocabulary

- **repertoire** - a complete list or supply of dramas, operas, or musical works available for performance
- **prevalent** - generally or widely accepted, practiced, or favored
- **dissent** - to publicly disagree with an official opinion, decision, or set of beliefs

## Indonesian Literature

Since Indonesia is an archipelago, its literature can be described as **multicultural** because of the great influences of its diverse ethnic groups. Its earliest form of literature is **oral in nature** and was handed from one generation to another. When Indonesians had acquired a writing system of their own, they wrote their literature on caves and on branches of trees and leaves.

Indonesia's earliest recorded literary tradition dates back to the eighth century, when their **folk and ancient narratives** were local versions of older Hindu texts. For two centuries, during the Medang or Mataram Kingdom, the development in the arts, literature, and culture because of the influence of Hindu-Buddhist traditions rapidly increased. The spread of Islam was also helpful in the development of Indonesian literary and artistic practices as they were exposed to **Islamic ideas** coming from Islamic West India, the Arab culture, and Persia. This event paved the way for the advancement of literature and sacred texts, music and instruments, and dance.

*Wayang*, with its origins dating back to the Neolithic period, is the tradition of using Javanese shadow puppets in theater performances, and it further developed during the period of Indianization when it was used in the portrayal of *lakon*, which are complex Hindu dramas. Further refinements to this tradition were added in the 16th to 18th century upon the country's contact with Islamic culture.

The modern Indonesian literature was characterized by works with Western influences, which have emerged in the twentieth century. Prose narratives differ and are influenced by Indian literature and those of the neighboring countries. They usually focus on "beast fables," legends, riddles, adventure stories, and more. Texts were written in various languages, chiefly in Javanese and Malay.

Early Javanese literature works existed between the ninth and the tenth century CE. Prose and poetry were prevalent, they were variations of the famous Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Moreover, the Javanese adapted the Sanskrit court poetry and developed it as their own. However, the onset of Dutch colonization from the 18th to the 19th century led to the decrease in Javanese and Malay works.

In Javanese society, there is a long tradition of poets being critics of authority. During the reign of Suharto, poets and playwrights, including **W. S. Rendra** and **Pramoedya Ananta Toer**, had

their works banned, and they were even imprisoned because their literary works expressed their dissent against the government. Even so, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, a novelist who wrote *This Earth of Mankind* won the Ramon Magsaysay Award, a prize valued as an Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize for Literature. The situation of the writers eased when Suharto was forced to resign in 1998.

**Let's Check In!**

In what ways are Thai and Indonesian literature similar and different?  
How did these similarities and differences affect their literature?

**Check Your Understanding**

1. What is considered as the Thai version of *Ramayana*?
2. What is an important classical literary work in Thailand for it presented its history, traditions, customs, manners, and prominent figures in the repertoire of classical drama?
3. During which period did Indonesian arts, literature, and culture develop?
4. What is the term for the tradition of using Javanese shadow puppets in theater performances?
5. Explain in your own words how literary influences from other countries have shaped the literature of Thailand and Indonesia.



## Let's Step Up!

Find a partner, and read one literary piece from Thailand and Indonesia. Create a 10 to 15-slide presentation about the selections you have read. Explain the following:

1. the themes of each selection,
2. the nationalistic identity revealed in the selections, and
3. the realizations you had as you read and discussed the selections from both countries.

### Let's Revisit the Essentials!

Go back to the essential question on the introduction page and discuss it in class.



## Performance Task

### Book blog

**Goal:** Your task is to promote reading and appreciation of one particular literary novel from China, Japan, India, Thailand, or Indonesia through a book blog.

**Role:** You are a book blogger. You got fascinated and impressed by a novel from one of the countries discussed. You want to promote it to other people and hopefully make them appreciate it as much as you did.

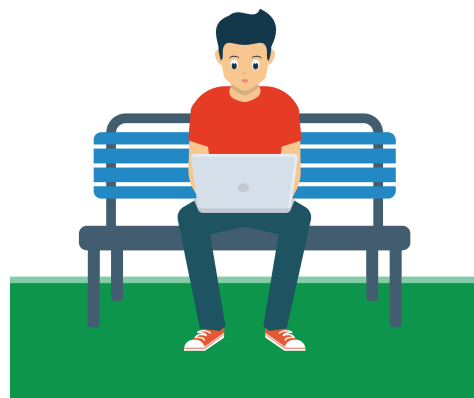
**Audience:** Your target audience are teenagers to young adults aged 15 to 25 years old who are avid readers of your blog page.

**Situation:** You have read a book from China, Japan, India, Thailand, or Indonesia. You were very much impressed with the entire novel that you decided to promote it your readers. You think that it will make them appreciate and understand the country and its people even better. You must persuade your readers to take a look at the novel you have read through a book blog.

### Product/Performance and Purpose:

Write and publish a book blog on a classic Asian literature novel.

1. Read a classic novel from China, Japan, India, Thailand, or Indonesia. You may choose any genre and any theme that interests you.
2. Write a book blog with the following specifications:
  - a. Include a 200-word summary of your chosen novel.
  - b. Write an analysis of the novel by choosing an aspect of the novel that you would want to focus on. It could be a character analysis, thematic analysis, a reader's response or reaction paper-type analysis, etc.
  - c. Write a recommendation about the novel. *Is it worth reading? Why?*



- d. In the analysis, include excerpts from the text and properly cite them using APA style.
  - e. Include a title that is connected to the theme of your analysis and the novel.
3. Publish a blog post on your blog site (if applicable) or social media account and set your post to public. Submit a hard copy of your blog post and the URL of your post on a short bond paper, calibri font size 11.

**Standards and Criteria for Success:** Your project will be graded using the rubric below:

	Criteria	Beginning (0-12 points)	Developing (13-16 points)	Accomplished (17-20 points)	Score
General	Content	The book blog did not include an in-depth analysis of the novel.	The book blog discussed an analysis of the novel but was lacking in depth and impact.	The book blog discussed the analysis of the novel in detail with proper use of evidence from the novel.	
	Organization	The book review does not follow a logical sequence, and the transition markers are ineffectively used.	Some parts of the review are vague. The transition markers used did not effectively help in the transition of one idea to another.	The review is easy to understand, and there is a smooth flow of ideas from one to another. There is an appropriate use of transition markers.	
	Language	There are six or more errors in the spelling, mechanics, grammar, and language usage in the book review.	There three to five errors in the spelling, mechanics, grammar, and language usage in the book review.	There are zero to two errors in spelling, mechanics, grammar, and language usage in the book review.	
	Punctuality	The book review is	The book review	The book review is	



		posted online after two days or more after the deadline.	is posted online after a day of the deadline.	posted online on or before the deadline.	
Task-specific	Novel summary (must be 200 words or less; gives a gist of the novel)	The summary is too long and incomprehensive.	The summary followed the prescribed length but lacks important details from the novel.	The summary followed the prescribed length and is comprehensive.	
	Recommendation (must include a recommendation about the novel reviewed)	No recommendations were included.		Recommendations were included.	
	Use of citation (use of APA style of citation properly)	The blog entry did not use proper citation.		The blog entry used proper citation	
Total Score:					



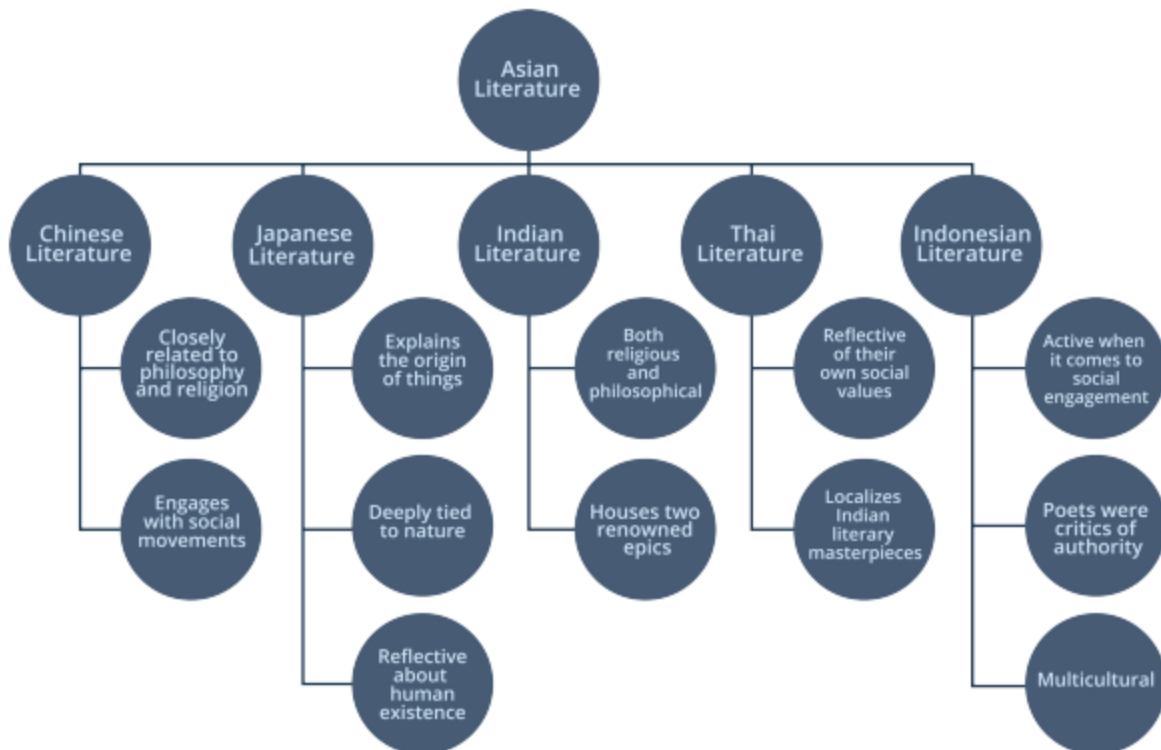
## Self-Check: How Well Did I Learn?

Do a self-check on how well you learned the lessons in this unit. Place a checkmark in the appropriate box.

<b>Skills</b>	<i>I think I need more practice and assistance.</i>	<i>I am familiar and can perform well with minimal assistance.</i>	<i>I am confident that I can perform this on my own.</i>
I can describe Asian literature.			
I can enumerate various Asian writers and their			

works.			
I can explain the themes and features of Asian literature.			

## Wrap Up





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### Recommended Links for This Unit:

2,000 Years of Chinese History! The Mandate of Heaven and Confucius: World History #7 -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIWORYToTo4>

Japan in the Heian Period and Cultural History: Crash Course World History 227-  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnZEoOJ-cxE>