

Breaking into Japanese Literature

(Japanese Literature Made Easy and Audible)

<http://www.speaking-japanese.com/literature.html>

(From the website) “Breaking into Japanese Literature’ is designed to make great works of Japanese literature accessible. It features four stories by Natsume Soseki, the father of modern Japanese literature, and three stories by Akutagawa Ryonosuke, the Japanese master of the short story. The book (‘Breaking into Japanese Literature’ by Giles Murray ASBN4-7700-2899-7 ¥2,200) presents the seven stories with the Japanese original and the English translation side-by-side, with a dictionary running along the bottom of the page. To get maximum enjoyment and benefit from this site, it is best to have read the book first. You listen to the stories free but to read you need to buy the book which can be easily done on line. This web site offers sound files of all seven stories in the book. Download a file and see if you can keep up, reading the kanji at native speed as you follow the text. If you feel really confident you can just listen to the story without looking at the text. Note that audio is provided as a single soundfile for Soseki’s Ten Nights of Dreams (Nights 1, 3, 5, 7). Akutagawa’s In a Grove, The Nose and Rashomon are much longer and so are divided into six or so soundfiles each.” http://www.speaking-japanese.com/lite_01.html takes you straight to Soseki’s Nights of dreams no 1 which you can listen to in Japanese free. It is short and easy to listen to. The web page gives the following introduction in English to the story.

A man sits by the deathbed of his lover, unable to believe that so young and beautiful a woman as she could be doomed to perish. Before dying, she makes the man promise to wait faithfully for a hundred years at her graveside until she comes back. The man dutifully places her body in a hole he digs out with an oyster shell, and marks the place with the fragments of fallen stars. He watches the sun rise and set again and again until he finally loses count of the days and the years. He is just beginning to doubt her promise, when a flower sprouts up from the grave and presses itself to his lips. He looks up at the sky where a single star shines. She has returned.