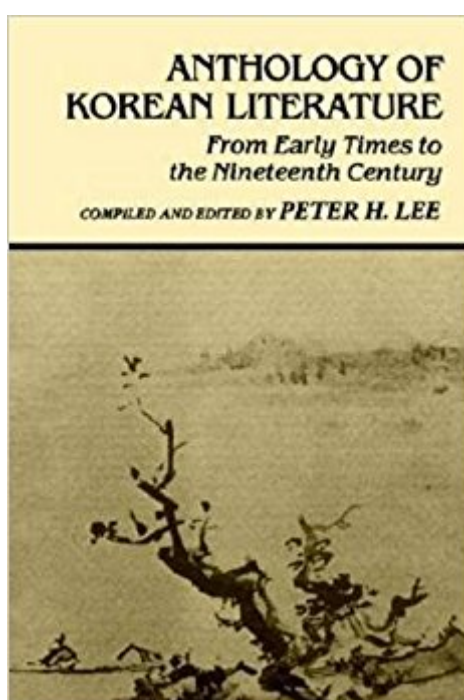


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Anthology Of Korean Literature: From Early Times To The Nineteenth Century (UNESCO Collection Of Representative Works: Japanese Series)



Synopsis

This book offers a comprehensive sampling of the major genres of poetry and prose written from about A.D. 600 to the end of the nineteenth century. The book contains a dazzling array of myths and legends, essays and biographies, love poems and Zen poems, satirical tales and tales of wonder, stories of adventure and of heroism, as well as quieter works treating the farmer's work and days and the pleasures and sorrows of the simple life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Here the cultural history of an ancient people is revealed, beautifully, through myths, short lyrics, adventure tales, fables, romance, portraits, satire, semifictional biographies--all retain a remarkable freshness and power. In every way--in literary and vernacular works chosen, arrangement and annotation--this is an exemplary anthology.-- "Booklist"

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An excellent poetic world .Excellent.

good!

Anyone interested in Korean literature would benefit from reading this book. However, there are a few things to be aware of. First, I believe it was Dr. Lee's intent to make these works available to the broadest possible audience. Rather than make his readers work, he occasionally presents the material within the context of Western literature. This sometimes makes for awkward reading, like I was reading old English or French literature rather than Korean literature. Additionally, I felt it limited my understanding of the work and the context in which it was written. One example is the poem found on page 19, "Ode to Knight Kip'a". For someone familiar with Korean history, I wondered what Dr. Lee's usage of the word "knight" was intended to represent. In checking it against another source (*Understanding Korean Literature* by Kim Hunggyu, translation by Robert J. Fouser), the same piece was titled "Ode to Hwarang Kip'a". I was surprised to recall Dr. Lee had referenced the "Hwarang" in his introduction. He stated "the hwarang was an indigenous institution which recruited men of ability for national service and educated them as soldiers, statesmen and poets". The usage in this instance referred to a soldier of the Silla dynasty. Secondly, I would have liked to see more explanation as to why these selections were deemed to have literary merit as well as some guidance on how they should be understood. All that being said, this anthology is truly a comprehensive collection of the finest representative works of the major genres of Korean literature. I am not aware of any other book to date that surpasses it in breadth. Pair it with "*Understanding Korean Literature*" by Kim Hunggyu — *Understanding Korean Literature* (New Studies in Asian Culture) and you will be rewarded.

I thoroughly enjoyed this large selection of prose, stories, poems and pansori, drawn from numerous contributors. Many of the passages are brief verse or short stories, so you can continually pick up and put down this book, reading it in easily digestible bite-size chunks. Just enough to give you a thought for the day or to look at if you have ten idle minutes. The verse is well translated and even in English you can get a sense of the rhythm, tone and beauty of the work. It also offers a view into the history of a country. Those familiar with Korea will like the picture of the natural, rural past (which contrasts with the largely urban industrialised nation today). The book as a whole leaves a peaceful, pleasing image. It reflects a former time of great cultural diversity and richness.

Lee covers prose and poetry. Showing the richness of Korean literature and its historic antecedents.

Perhaps the book can be considered in part an affirmation of the very existence of Korea, since it has had the unfortunate fate of often being dominated by China and Japan. The stories give insight into the Korea of their times, and of the general cultural outlooks implied by the narratives. The poetry is quite different from Japanese haiku, and the selected poems are short. It is unclear whether there are any classic long Korean poems, or whether Lee just decided to present us with short ones.

There is a lot in here, in this wonderful anthology. Of particular interest to me (and perhaps to you) is a wealth of Buddhist thought (in prose and in poetry). Enjoy.

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