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A court lady of the Heian era, an early modern philologist, a novelist of the Meiji period, and a physicist at Tokyo University. What do they have in common, besides being Japanese? They all wrote *zuihitsu*?a uniquely Japanese literary genre encompassing features of the nonfiction or personal essay and miscellaneous musings. For sheer range of subject matter and breadth of perspective, the zuihitsu is unrivaled in the Japanese literary tradition, which may explain why few examples have been translated into English.

The Columbia Anthology of Japanese Essays presents a representative selection of more than one hundred zuihitsu from a range of historical periods written by close to fifty authors?from well-known figures, such as Matsuo Basho, Natsume Soseki, and Koda Aya, to such writers as Tachibana Nankei and Dekune Tatsuro, whose works appear here for the first time in English. Writers speak on the experience of coming down with a cold, the aesthetics of tea, the physiology and psychology of laughter, the demands of old age, standards of morality, the way to raise children, the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the thoughts that accompany sleeplessness, the anxiety of undergoing surgery, and the unexpected benefits of training a myna bird to say "Thank you." These essays also provide moving descriptions of snowy landscapes, foggy London, the famous cherry blossoms of Ueno Park, and the appeal of rainy vistas, and relate the joys and troubles of everyone from desperate samurai to filial children to ailing cats.

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