

Japanese Literature during the Medieval Period Essay

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During the Medieval period (1185–1603) in Japan there was change and innovation in Japanese literature. “Waka composition practices change as Japanese society does” (Huey 652). The medieval world was greatly reflected in Japanese literature because during this time there were numerous civil wars that led to different classes in society. “In fact, many different types of people helped shape the medieval period. Over 400 years, from the late twelfth to the late sixteenth centuries, emperors and priests, women and merchants, poets and playwrights, and, of course, samurai created a complex yet fascinating society” (Segal). These were the years of Japan’s first two warrior governments: the Kamakura (1185-1333) and the Muromachi (1336-1573). The work during this time usually consisted of a certain mentality that was twisted, not perfect, dealt with unhappiness and karma. There were insights on life and death, lifestyles, making fun of the disabled, ghosts living with people, and redemption through means of killing. Buddhist religion was also influenced greatly during this time and dealt with sutra, priests and monks.

There were many tales during this period that were written to represent the changes and happenings during this time. One example is the Tale of Heike which was a war tale, with its author unknown due to different versions being passed down. The Tale of Heike is

about the Minamoto family and the Taira family fighting for the control of Japan after the [Genpei War](#) (1180-1185) which was the end of the twelfth century.

"The Tale of the Heike is a long narrative about the fall of the [Taira clan](#) and the victory of the Minamoto. It has no single author and was probably compiled from various oral sources, but it does present a c...

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...efore it. It had a tendency to show the unfortunate dwellings and helplessness individuals faced.

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