

Word Count: 500

I'd always possessed an affinity for storytelling—my other major was English, after all—but I'd never considered integrating my passion for Japanese with my love of literature until my junior year of college. While studying abroad at Sophia University in Tokyo, I enrolled in an introductory course on Japanese literature through which I discovered an array of acclaimed Japanese writers, including Kawabata Yasunari, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Mishima Yukio, and Enchi Fumiko. I quickly fell in love with the evocative and visceral imagery ubiquitous in their works and began to crave more. The following year, I registered for Aiko Nakamura's "Love, Gender, and Identity in Japanese Literature" and Aaron Smith's "The Natural Environment in Japanese Literature and Culture." In these courses, I particularly enjoyed Tanizaki's twisted love story, *Quicksand*, and the pungent sense of desolation in Abe Kōbō's *The Woman in the Dunes*. Since obtaining my bachelor's degree, my interest in modern Japanese literature has only grown stronger. I've devoured several short stories by Murakami Haruki and am steadily unraveling Kawabata's oeuvre. So far, my favorite pieces of Kawabata are *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, "One Arm," and *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories*.

But modern literature isn't the only Japan-related field for which I've developed a sincere fondness; I am also deeply intrigued by Ainu culture. In 2013, I expatriated to a small town in Hokkaido to work as an English teacher. There, I plunged myself into Ainu culture: I visited several Ainu museums, conversed in Japanese with various Ainu people, and attended a weekly Ainu-language immersion class for two months (*irankarapte!*). I'm specifically fascinated by Ainu mythology, or *kamuy yukar*, and its survival into the modern age. Ideally, I'll eventually be able to translate the *kamuy yukar* into English without using Japanese as an intermediary.

Both of these interests of mine, albeit evidently distinct, share a defining characteristic: they tell a story of Japan—a story I am committed to engaging with on a scholarly level. This is why I am ready for graduate school at the University of Michigan. Your Master of Arts in Japanese Studies program offers an ideal interdisciplinary environment wherein I can develop strategies for decoding the symbolism and syntax of Japanese narratives while honing my Japanese-language skills. A master's degree will also assist me significantly in my career. For the past year I've worked as a freelance writer and editor, but my overarching goal is to break into Japanese-English translation, preferably in the literary sector. Despite my holding JLPT N2 certification, I lack both basic knowledge of translation methods and sufficient exposure to the Japanese literary canon; thus, I believe the University of Michigan's program in Japanese studies will not only improve my Japanese but also provide me with the tools, support, and foundation necessary for ultimately becoming a successful literary translator.



Truly, I am committed to this intellectual journey, and to the University of Michigan itself. Though I've yet to meet personally with any faculty members, Christopher Hill (for modern Japanese literature) and Jennifer Robertson (for Japanese ethnography) appear to possess research interests most closely aligning with my own. Attending the University of Michigan for Japanese studies is a natural step for me, one I'm prepared to take and work tirelessly for, with both diligence and alacrity. I've made my decision. Now, I look forward to yours.