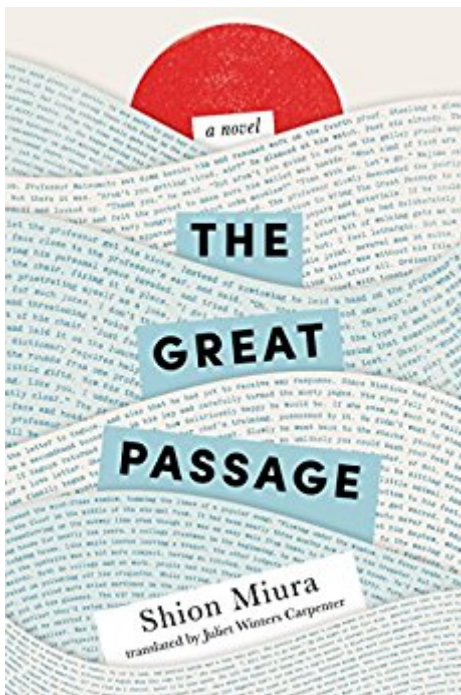


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The Great Passage



Synopsis

A charmingly warm and hopeful story of love, friendship, and the power of human connection, award-winning Japanese author Shion Miura's novel is a reminder that a life dedicated to passion is a life well lived. Inspired as a boy by the multiple meanings to be found for a single word in the dictionary, Kohei Araki is devoted to the notion that a dictionary is a boat to carry us across the sea of words. But after thirty-seven years creating them at Gembu Books, it's time for him to retire and find his replacement. He discovers a kindred spirit in Mitsuya Majime—a young, disheveled square peg with a penchant for collecting antiquarian books and a background in linguistics—whom he swipes from his company's sales department. Led by his new mentor and joined by an energetic, if reluctant, new recruit and an elder linguistics scholar, Majime is tasked with a career-defining accomplishment: completing *The Great Passage*, a comprehensive 2,900-page tome of the Japanese language. On his journey, Majime discovers friendship, romance, and an incredible dedication to his work, inspired by the bond that connects us all: words.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A simple and enjoyable but very interesting read, especially if you happen to be interested in Japanese culture, cuisine, and language, or if you're simply a lover of words. The story follows the thirteen year process of the Gembu publishing house's making of a new dictionary called The Great Passage, and how each major character's involvement with the dictionary transforms his or her life. I think you'll especially enjoy the book if: -You don't mind fairly straightforward prose. Personally, after reading a few very heavy books, I was glad to take a break with a book whose style is pretty simple. This isn't to say that the writing isn't good, on the contrary. There's a placidity to it that I really enjoyed, but if you like a lot of acrobatics and stunning imagery in your literary fiction, this may not be the book for you. -You like a bit of sad poignancy in your stories, but not too much. For the most part, this is a happy, feel good story. No huge changes in a character's fortune, or grand dramatic plot sequences. Rather, the story is about people who would otherwise never interact, but who over the years become incredibly close through their shared passion for bringing The Great Passage to fruition. -The idea of reading a fictional story about how a dictionary gets made makes you rub your hands together in anticipation. If the idea instead makes you yawn, you might want to skip this particular book. I was fascinated by the entire process. Miura clearly either had experience in the industry, or did a STELLAR research job. Lovers of books, of words, and of reading about other people's jobs should enjoy the details about the dictionary making process. -You're interested in Japanese culture. I've traveled to Japan a few times for business, and felt while there that I was missing the current of meaning underlying every human interaction. Missing this meaning and context left me feeling clumsy and awkward. I loved that the Great Passage is straightforward enough that you glean a really interesting and clear view into Japanese culture--commonly held mores and values, and how these play out between people. In fact, since most of this book is about interactions between colleagues, it's arguably much more helpful preparation for a trip to Japan than one of those "How to Do Business in Japan" books. I LOVED this aspect of the book. I also love Japanese food, and the characters spend a lot of time going out to dinner after work. You see how food is important to social cohesion in a very different way than it is in western cultures. Finally, you also learn about a few Japanese words and the differences in nuance between them, though I personally would have liked to see more about the language itself. I'd absolutely recommend this as a fairly light, feel good read for people who love books and Japan.

I'M GLAD I CHOSE THIS BOOK because it's much more than a regular story. It's about "living words" molding and being molded by

people made truly alive by their love of words. We see how words help us humans to connect with each other in amazing and intimate ways. That *Ōfukuro* is a journey of 15 years in the lives and through the eyes and words of characters we grow to love, understand, befriend. THE THEME -- We see how, like words, people have multiple meanings--every day, every moment, being much more than we see on the surface. And the greatest word "love" in Japanese--drives the characters in their work, self-identity, and close relationships. THE CHARACTERS are real, lovable, sometimes laughable. Like Mitsuo Majime is passionate in his work and yet possessing a dream that sets him off on a grand adventure. I love this guy's quirky and exciting look at the world, his three deep obsessions -- the creation of a new dictionary of 2,900 pages, his sweetheart and wife Kaguya, and his cat Tora (Tiger). Several other characters are well-developed and add depth and insights to Japanese life. But THE character from start to finish is THE DICTIONARY: a ship that crosses the sea of words. THE PLOT is simple and linear, heading straight toward the completion of the dictionary. But suspense and challenges are gripping, a deadline that takes the team's utter effort to reach. Along the way we learn much about lexicography, printing dictionaries and marketing them. But all this is intertwined very well with the story. THE PACE is deceptive because you'd think that a story about compiling a dictionary would be laboriously slow. Although this book isn't a fast-paced thriller, it gripped my attention all the way. The descriptions of Japanese life add flavor to the story without interrupting the flow of the plot and interactions of the characters. THE GREAT PASSAGES -- dedicate yourself to doing a task to your utmost best. That is a worthwhile journey with its special rewards. Appreciate the people who help you along the way. And words can have so much depth that they more fully flesh us out as humans. "They had made a ship. A ship bearing the souls of people traveling from ancient times toward the future, across the ocean rich with words." (Page 200).

This book is about people creating dictionaries for people. The translation was very smooth, warm, and seamless. I found it fascinating to see how dictionaries are created. My first dictionary was one I purchased for college. I would read it and find new words to enhance my vocabulary. My classmates thought I was nuts to read a dictionary. The author took me on the journey from beginning of the planning all the way to the finished book. I also appreciated how by acknowledging human weaknesses we can show compassion to our fellow travelers and both can grow and

encourage others. Hopefully we don't have to wait too long for the next book to be translated.

Most of the May Kindle First selections did not appeal to me; either they were a genre that did not interest me, or they appeared to be "more of the same." So I decided to try *The Great Passage*. I love words and reading and all things Japanese, so there was a hint of promise there. I was amazed at how much the book grabbed me and held my interest. It was a great choice for me, and a book I will recommend and reread. The characters felt real, and I could actually feel the pressure to publish the dictionary. The translator did a great job; Now I have to try to track down a copy of the award winning movie made from the book. And now I want even more to return to Japan and spend more time.

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