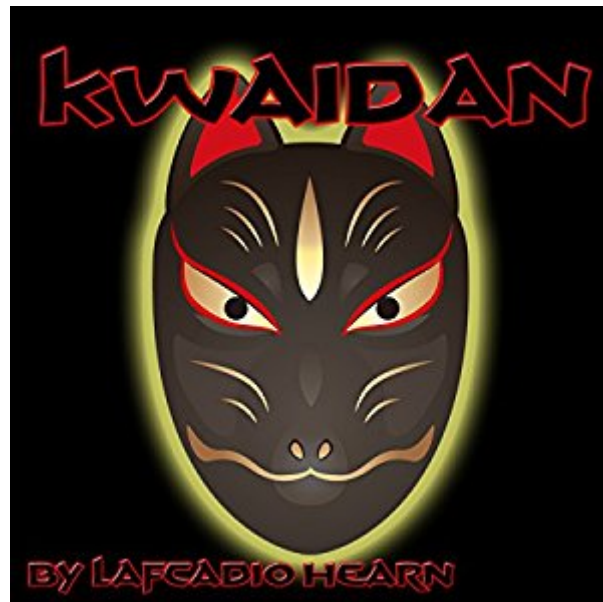


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# Kwaidan



## Synopsis

This anthology is a thorough introduction to classic literature for those who have not yet experienced these literary masterworks. For those who have known and loved these works in the past, this is an invitation to reunite with old friends in a fresh new format. From Shakespeare's finesse to Oscar Wilde's wit, this unique collection brings together works as diverse and influential as *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Othello*. As an anthology that invites readers to immerse themselves in the masterpieces of the literary giants, it is a must-have addition to any library. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Kwaidan" is Hearn's most famous book, and justifiably so. It is the least academic of his works, collecting together some of Japan's core ghost and monster stories into one slim volume. Much like the Brothers Grimm, Hearn did not actually create these stories but rather compiled them and put them into written form for the first time, learning them from folk tales and storytellers. Along with famous, "Kwaidan" is Hearn's most influential book. "The Story of Mimi-nashi Hoichi" is as well-known in Japan as "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is in the United States. The "Yuki Onna" has made it into a few films, including Kurosawa's "Dreams" and the filmed version of this book, "Kwaidan." The stories themselves are of excellent quality, ranging from spooky ghost tales to humorous tales of wandering monks encountering monsters. Each story ranges from 5-15 pages long. Along with the stories are three insect studies, the likes of which can be found in all Hearn

books. These are excellent academic studies of insects in traditional Japanese folk lore, including children's songs and haiku poetry involving insects. Included are: The story of Mimi-nashi Hoichi Oshidori The story of O-Tei Ubazakura Diplomacy Of a mirror and a bell Jikininki Mujina Rokuro-kubi A dead secret Yuki-Onna The story of Aoyagi Jiu-Roku-Zakura The dream of Akinosuke Riki-Baba Hi-Mawari Horai Insect Studies - Butterflies Mosquitos Ants

This book is a very readable series of very short stories of Japan, followed in the latter part of the book by some reflections on the part of the author, a Westerner living in Japan one hundred years ago. It is of interest to read of such cultural diversity, mythology and religious views. The author's book, IN GHOSTLY JAPAN, was a much better collection of Japanese lore, in that the stories were longer and lent themselves to greater character development and complexity. Nevertheless, I know of no other author who translates Japanese myths, and both books are worthwhile.

To be clear, this review is for the March 15, 2005 edition of this book. The book is of good quality, pages are the right thickness, and the cover is beautiful. I am a firm believer that the cover of a book can indeed change how you view the stories inside that book. The stories are wonderful, and the insect studies at the end of the book are very interesting. The insect studies talk a lot about Chinese origins of stories related to them, especially butterflies. The stories themselves are great, and the way Hearn writes is very smooth and not boring. This is a book everyone should have a copy of if they are interested in short stories, or Japan. This is the kind of book you can re-read in a few months and still enjoy.

I very much enjoyed this unique and ghostly little book, as to give it the rare five stars. Much of my acclaim for 'Kwaidan' is, admittedly, subjective in nature, stemming mainly from my own personal perceptions of it (and, the personal circumstances in which I read it); but I will present my impressions, for what their worth. I found the book, first, to be enchanting and engaging, in a whimsical, simplistic way that is rarely encountered in contemporary literature. The classical, no-nonsense storytelling forced me to suspend all disbelief, which, combined with the book's archaic age and matching tone, left me in a state of childhood acceptance, as few books can (even vastly more-elaborate ones). Additionally, the book contains an overarching surreal quality, with its antiquated folklore being recounted by a nineteenth-century scholar of Japan, now himself antiquated; reading it, I felt to be observing an observer observe somebody (who was themselves observing the world, through their storytelling). Finally, the book's last chapter threw me for a loop,

in a positive sense, being so suddenly philosophical and profound (yet with an odd relevance that only contributed to the book's overall allure). All in all, I loved 'Kwaidan' (though I could see someone of different tastes being wholly unimpressed -- or even myself being so, had I read the book under different circumstances). My thanks goes out to the book's author (posthumously), subjects, and publishers. I am grateful for, and have benefited from, your work and service.

While this is not the most in depth collection of Japanese folktales and ghost stories, Hearne does recount the stories in an effective manner. The stories are in fact shared by a storyteller, rather than being catalogued in an encyclopedic nature. If you are interested in tales of ghosts, fairy spirits, or all manner of goblinry, Kwaidan should give you your money's worth. If you are interested in ancient or feudal Japanese culture, this book also gives a decent glimpse into customs and beliefs. Good as both an introduction to Japanese folklore and as light reading for anyone into supernatural stories and fairy tales. The ending is more of a series of academic essays on insects and beliefs tied to them; it is interesting reading but much drier than the stories. Ultimately, there are a wide variety of tones and themes in these stories.

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