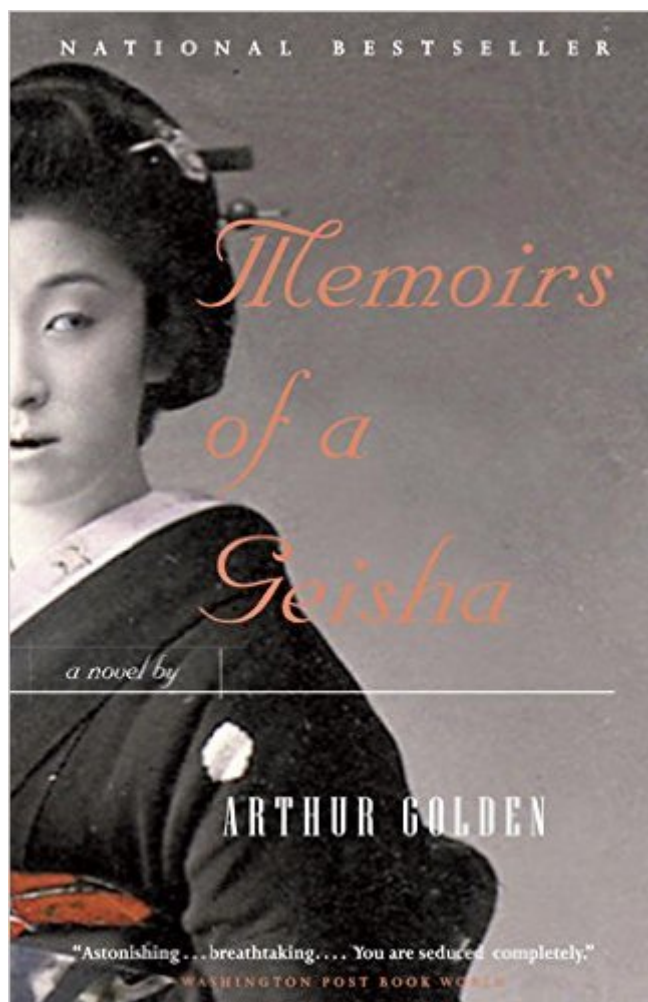


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Memoirs Of A Geisha: A Novel



Synopsis

A literary sensation and runaway bestseller, this brilliant debut novel tells with seamless authenticity and exquisite lyricism the true confessions of one of Japan's most celebrated geisha. Speaking to us with the wisdom of age and in a voice at once haunting and startlingly immediate, Nitta Sayuri tells the story of her life as a geisha. It begins in a poor fishing village in 1929, when, as a nine-year-old girl with unusual blue-gray eyes, she is taken from her home and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house. We witness her transformation as she learns the rigorous arts of the geisha: dance and music; wearing kimono, elaborate makeup, and hair; pouring sake to reveal just a touch of inner wrist; competing with a jealous rival for men's solicitude and the money that goes with it. In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, we enter a world where appearances are paramount; where a girl's virginity is auctioned to the highest bidder; where women are trained to beguile the most powerful men; and where love is scorned as illusion. It is a unique and triumphant work of fiction "at once romantic, erotic, suspenseful" and completely unforgettable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a "gaijin" (foreigner) who spent 6 years in Japan and had ample opportunity to witness many of its social customs, I think it's worth noting that the setting Mr. Golden creates in his "Memoirs" is very much of a Japan gone by. This is sad. It is precisely the aspects of Sayuri's world that are the most exotic to us which exemplify the best of what is uniquely Japanese. Modern Japanese cherish the remnants of that romantic past the same way that Americans revere tales of our pioneering forbears--as a way to hold on to, and honor all that was poetic and noble about ourselves. I think it

also bears mentioning that the average Japanese person today knows almost as little about the life of a typical geisha as the average Westener. Geisha entertainment has always been the province of extremely wealthy, powerful men--going to a teahouse to be entertained by geisha served the same function for a Japanese VIP that a British one would find at his tony men's club. Throughout the centuries that Japan's entertainment quarters--"the flower and willow world" as they call it--has existed, the number of patrons who could afford top-notch geisha entertainment for themselves and their friends has been an exclusive club indeed. In today's highly Westernized and technology-worshipping Japan, the idea of a geisha party is nearly as anachronistic and unattainable as it is here. Geisha belong to the same category as cowboys, knights on horseback and damsels-in-distress: cultural icons who have no place in the modern world. Mr. Golden does a superb job of capturing some of the magic of Sayuri's metier for those of us who will never have the opportunity to witness it firsthand.

As a twentysomething Irishman who's only ever lived in the UK, my contact with traditional Japanese culture, society and history is, as you can imagine, scant. However, Golden's classic 'Memoirs of a Geisha' is so beautifully crafted, and so powerfully descriptive, that even my bare knowledge of Japanese history is extended by having read it. It's the fictional story, cleverly told from an autobiographical point of view, of one of Japan's most famous and enthralling Geisha, a woman of a profession commonly mistaken for prostitution (Golden draws some clever and insightful distinctions between the two, both in general and specifically). Sayuri tells her story from her humble beginnings as Chiyo, the daughter of an impoverished fisherman, through desperation, war and trial, to the final happy ending. For a man to write so convincingly as a woman is a very rare thing - Nick Hornby's 'How to be Good' is an example of how it can go wrong - but for an American man to write so beautifully and convincingly as a Japanese woman from a highly secretive society is an unequivocal triumph. We believe, from the first few chapters, that Sayuri is this observant, silent little thing, a lower-class child facing the arduous and enforced task of becoming a Geisha. We are there with her when she is sold into servitude, when she attempts a failed escape, when she eventually becomes a successful geisha - all thanks to Golden's rare gift for combining a strong plot with incredible descriptive prose. You can smell the incense and see the kimono as Sayuri is preparing to go to work.

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