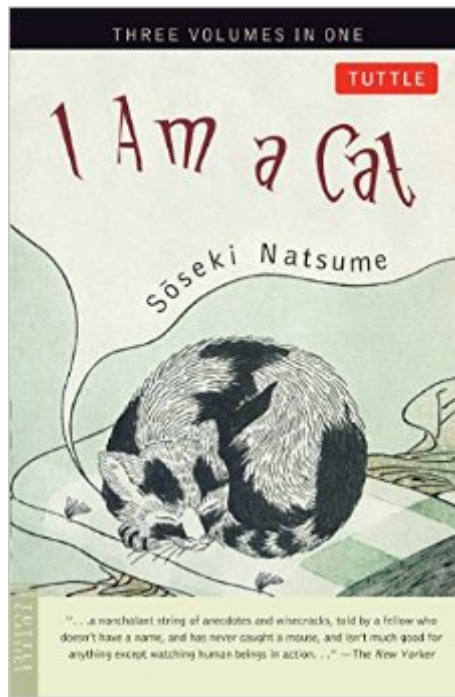


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I Am A Cat: Three Volumes In One



Synopsis

"A nonchalant string of anecdotes and wisecracks, told by a fellow who doesn't have a name, and has never caught a mouse, and isn't much good for anything except watching human beings in action..." — The New Yorker

Written over the course of 1904-1906, Soseki Natsume's comic masterpiece, *I Am a Cat*, satirizes the foolishness of upper-middle-class Japanese society during the Meiji era. With acerbic wit and sardonic perspective, it follows the whimsical adventures of a world-weary stray kitten who comments on the follies and foibles of the people around him. A classic of Japanese literature, *I Am a Cat* is one of Soseki's best-known novels. Considered by many as the greatest writer in modern Japanese history, Soseki's *I Am a Cat* is a classic novel sure to be enjoyed for years to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am shocked, deeply shocked, by comments that this is a poor translation. The original text is phenomenally complex, with interwoven puns and jokes and references to make an ordinary translator weep. Most such translations are stilted, painful to read except as "cribs" for students. But this one, well. Heh. Okay, consider this: "I've just been visiting a businessman and, according to him, the only way to succeed is to practice the 'triangled technique': try to escape your obligations, annihilate your kindly feelings, and geld yourself of the sense of shame. Try-an-geld. You get it? Jolly clever, don't you think?" This is a remark from one of the various intellectual snobs who are dominant characters here. Now if you can't guess, and I suppose several of the reviewers here

can't, there is a complicated pun in the original (my wife teaches Japanese literature and deals with the originals, you see). But the point is that it's sort of funny, but really it's just a play on words that's a little too labored to be funny. It's a joke for the sort of intellectual snobs that find this kind of thing amusing. And that's exactly what comes across with this "try-an-geld" thing. Brilliant! I know a professor who teaches Japanese literature who started working through the original and this translation with his students. At every turn, they found another deft and elegant in-joke turned into a deft and elegant English variant. It's not perfect, but this is as close to a perfect translation as you're ever likely to find. For those of you who know a lot about literature, consider translating Nabokov -- let's say *Lolita* or *Pale Fire* -- into Chinese, a totally uninflected language. Can you say, "pain"? Insanely difficult.

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