



Portrait of Miyazawa Kenji as a young man ©Rinpo

Travels in Northern Japan

In search of Miyazawa Kenji's unique modern vision

Nadine Willems, Belgium

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Distant view of the Kitakami River in Iwate Prefecture ©Iwate Tourism Association

Motivation In the mid-nineteenth century Japan embarked on an intense modernization program. The speed and scale of the transformation testify to the energy, resilience and inventiveness of the country's population. As a historian of Japan, I have long been curious about the way ordinary people responded to the changes in everyday life. What did it feel like to *become modern*? What means of expression did citizens use to convey their experience?

Rather than focusing on what happened in Tokyo and other major cities - the *centers* that initiated and directed this modernizing drive - I have looked at life in regional towns and villages. We know that people in the countryside made disproportionate sacrifices in order to support Japan's new developments during the Meiji period and beyond. In the course of my research, however, I soon realized that in spite of hardship and a degree of isolation, people in the regions were incredibly resourceful and creative in their own right. I have a particular interest in the cultural heritage of Hokkaido and Tohoku, having spent much time investigating Japan's northern poets and storytellers. How they embraced, contested, and negotiated modernity is a fascinating topic, which helps us understand Japanese history in a different way.

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Objective Miyazawa Kenji exemplifies the creativity of northern Japan. Almost unknown outside his native Iwate Prefecture in his lifetime, he is nowadays an iconic figure in the Japanese literary world. During his short life - he died of lung disease in 1933 at the age of 37 – he wrote some profound and challenging poetry and the most delightful and intriguing children's tales. But he is also remembered as a scientist, teacher, devout Buddhist, Esperantist, music lover and cultivator, an individual engaged in a wide variety of intellectual and practical pursuits, and dedicated to the well-being of his fellow humans. I have been fortunate enough to trace Miyazawa's footsteps in northern Japan. By connecting his work to the places he knew, I have come to appreciate the richness and singularity of the region's trajectory of modernization.

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Context Northern prefectures have historically been particularly vulnerable to crop failures, poverty, and famine. Sometimes people were even forced to resort to the sale of daughters into prostitution. This situation continued into the modern period. Times were especially hard for Tohoku peasants, who also suffered under the oppressive landlord-tenant system. But this does not mean that after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 life persisted unchanged from the Edo period. Modern trends – particularly in the form of western knowledge – reached the region too and were adapted to local requirements. My own enchantment with Tohoku comes in part from its legends and traditional literature, strongly inspired by animist traditions, which plunge the reader into a world of spirits and magical phenomena. Indeed, majestic mountains, dark forests and icy rivers make a perfect habitat for strange creatures. Let us not forget however that Tohoku is also a region where natural disasters, such as the earthquake and tsunami of March 2011, can be devastating. This environment shaped the thought and life of Miyazawa Kenji.



*Miyazawa Kenji on a country walk,
wearing his trademark bowler hat*
©Rinpoo

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The city of Hanamaki, where Miyazawa Kenji was born on 27 August 1896, sits inland about an hour's drive from the Pacific Ocean. Located in Iwate Prefecture in the northeast of Japan's main island, it stretches along the banks of the Kitakami River, watched over in the distance by the imposing Mount Hayachine. Its population of about 15,000 in the early twentieth century has grown to almost 100,000 today. But Hanamaki remains a quiet city, mostly going about its own business, while cherishing the memory of its native son, one of Japan's most revered literary figures.

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Meganebashi Bridge along Kamaishi Line ©Iwate Tourism Association

The charming railway line that links Hanamaki to coastal Kamaishi runs as a tribute to Miyazawa. In actuality, it follows a slow scenic route all the way to the ocean, but it is also meant to take travelers on a ride through the imaginary world of *Night on the Galactic Railroad* (*Gingatetsudo no yoru*). This 1927 children's science fiction tale of a young boy going on a train journey among the stars bears the hallmarks of Miyazawa's genius, as the story seamlessly combines scientific and spiritual themes. We are encouraged to marvel at constellations in the sky, consider the texture of crystal and jade, and reflect on the transparency of hydrogen. Discoveries, however, are as much spiritual as they are scientific. The galactic ride is also a reflection on reincarnation, compassion, and the everlasting bonds of true friendship, which hold the world together.

Looking out at the Iwate landscape passing by, I recalled that the story's protagonist is a railroad, and that even if celestial, it constitutes the most powerful emblem of modernity, one to which the author returns numerous times in his works. The Tohoku Mainline, a railway linking Tokyo to Aomori, had been completed by 1891 and the black smoke of steam locomotives must have dotted the region's landscape during Miyazawa's childhood. I also thought of *The Little Prince*, a popular French book written in 1943 by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, permeated by similar themes of (aviation) technology, interstellar travel and the strength of human bonds.

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Miyazawa witnessed during his lifetime an exponential development of scientific knowledge. He was as interested in Einstein's theories as he was in the flight mode of birds, devouring any information available in the fields of geology, botany, chemistry and astronomy. His intense sense of wonder at the complexity of the universe seeped through all of his writings. As he tells us, there is a place along the bank of the western part of the Kitakami River where he used to observe fossilized nuts with his students. He baptized this stretch of the riverside the English Coast (Igirisu Kaigan), as a nod to the whiteness of English cliffs at Dover (that he knew of but never visited), an appellation now formalized by the city of Hanamaki. Walking along the path, I tried to locate this particular formation of rocks and water, where Miyazawa also identified the fossilized footprints of large mammals. Sadly, it appeared only faintly on that day.

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Peering through the clouds at the Kitakami Mountains, however, I sensed that, for Miyazawa, hard scientific facts had no meaning on their own. They fitted into the holistic, non-anthropocentric Buddhist worldview that was intrinsic to his thought. He saw the world and beyond as an interconnected entity, where a multiplicity of organisms and phenomena endlessly relate to, and depend on, each other. According to this vision, beautifully rendered by the Buddhist metaphor of *Indra's Net* – also the title of one of Miyazawa's tales, the entire cosmos is reflected ad infinitum in every one of its smallest particles.

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Igirisu Kaigan – The English Coast ©Iwate Tourism Association

Looking at this sand at my feet I could see yellow and blue sparks twinkling and then burning in each grain. It made me think that the frozen lakeside of the Tsuera plateau was also part of the Milky Way.

Indra's Net; translation by author

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*Sculpture of Miyazawa Kenji in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of Morioka Agriculture and Forestry College, Iwate University, 2002, Waragai Osamu
©Nadine Willems*



Sculpture of Miyazawa Kenji, Morioka, 1993, Uno Tsutomu ©Nadine Willems

A fervent follower of Nichiren Buddhism, Miyazawa interspersed his work with references to Buddhist sutras, such as in *Okhotsk Elegy* and *Sakhalin Railroad*, two poems he wrote following the death of his beloved sister Toshi in 1922. A vegetarian, he disliked the idea of eating living things – he considered they were creatures with a soul – and wrote about the relationship between humans and animals.

In the satirical fantasy *The Restaurant of Many Orders* he depicts a reversal of the food chain to shocking effect. Similarly, *The Bears of Nametoko*, a short story, illustrates a dialogue between a bear and a hunter, who pleads for understanding with his victims:

*Bear, I didn't kill you because I hated you.
This is my job and I've got to shoot you.
I hunt because I've got to.
It's bad luck that you were born a bear,
it's bad luck that I do business like this.
Look, next time, don't be born a bear.*

Miyazawa Kenji: Selections; Berkeley, 2007; translation by Sato Hiroaki

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Shita no hatake

©Hanamaki Tourism Association



Shita no hatake ni orimasu, Kenji (I'm in the field below, Kenji)

Reproduction of the message left by Miyazawa at his door when working in the fields ©Hanamaki Tourism Association

Despite his intellectual achievements, Hanamaki's local prodigy was also a man of action. Inspired by his Buddhist beliefs, he devoted much of his life to looking after others, believing it was the only path to happiness. Miyazawa's experiments on fertilizers while a research student at Morioka Agriculture and Forestry College in 1918 and later as a teacher at Hanamaki Agricultural High School in the early 1920s attest to his faith in the potential of modern science to improve the lot of humans.

He studied soil density and fertilizers' chemical processes in earnest, knowledge he would later on transmit to Iwate's peasant-cultivators. By 1926, he had decided to become a farmer himself, vowing to live as those he professed to help. Setting up a small society, the *Rasu Chijin Kyokai* – *chijin* here means *man of the earth* – he endeavored to interest local farmers in music and other arts while giving them advice about modern agricultural techniques.

An admirable humility and sheer grit sustained Miyazawa throughout his short life. Although not always understood by people around him, including some of the farmers he tried to assist, he ploughed on undaunted. More often than not, he was battling frail health while attempting to cope with the harsh reality of his birthplace. That is why I find the message he used to leave by his house so uplifting: *I am in the field below, Kenji*. These are a few words that said it all; that he was simply working the soil, rooted to the Iwate earth, yet in communication with the rest of the universe. A plaque that bears this phrase is found today where his little house stood, in the midst of a cluster of pine trees, a few hundred meters above the river.

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Mount Iwate seen from Koiwai Farm ©Nadine Willems

Miyazawa seemed to know everything about the Iwate landscape. He knew the cruelty of the climate, the detours of each mountain road, the lining of every cloud, the sounds made by every gust of wind. Mount Iwate, to the northwest of the city of Morioka, where he was a student, held no secrets for him. He climbed it numerous times and named a poem after it.

Mount Iwate

*Weathered black, gouged
Into the sky's dispersed reflection
Deposited filthy white at the very bottom
Of a particle series of light*

Strong in the Rain: Selected Poems; Hexham, 2007; translation by Roger Pulvers

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Koiwai Farm Cattle Barn No. 1, a milking facility built in 1934 ©Nadine Willems

The mountain overlooks Koiwai Farm, established in 1891, faithfully modeled on western farms and a paragon of modernity. It inspired Miyazawa's longest poem, an account of his journey there in the spring of 1922, in which he muses about the meaning of solitude under the changing sky, which ends with these sober lines:

*No matter how many times I say I'm not lonely
I'm sure I'll be lonely again.
But, for now, this is all right.
Burning loneliness and sorrow,
the man moves in a transparent orbit.
Larix, larix, more blue,
the clouds more curled, gleaming.
The road turns exactly to the east.*

Miyazawa Kenji: Selections; Berkeley, 2007; translation by Sato Hiroaki

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Miyazawa's poetry is not just about celebrating the natural world. If places and phenomena have a tangible reality, which he describes in much detail and factuality, they always have an intangible, emotional meaning too. Thus, the riverbank is both a site for the study of fossils and a window that lets us peek into another world. Clouds form according to the law of physics, but also evoke love. In other words, we can always attach a layer of dreams – what he called *mental sketches* – to any aspect of reality.

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Ihatov is the toponym created by Miyazawa to name the imaginary landscape inspired by his home region. Looking at Mount Iwate in the distance, I realized that Ihatov may extend far beyond the prefecture's borders, perhaps all the way to the plains of Eurasia, and certainly high up into what he refers to in his poem *Koiwai Farm* as a *strange, huge cosmos of mental images*. In this imaginary realm, a land of all possibilities, people help each other on a daily basis.

For Hanamaki's prodigious son creativity had no bounds. Language was one of his tools, and one that he stretched in all directions, as illustrated by his abundant use of onomatopoeia. How else could he give life to natural phenomena or the unworldly creatures of his native Iwate? See, listen, feel, this is the wind: *sarasara, gatagata, gotongoton, hyu hyu, do...*

In *The Restaurant of Many Orders*, the wind is howling (*do*), the grass swishing (*zawazawa*), leaves are rustling (*sarasara*) and trees smacking the wind (*gotongoton*), each onomatopoeia expressing a subtle nuance of sound and action.

Likewise, Miyazawa resisted the standardization of language that educational – modern – authorities meant to impose nationwide after the Meiji Restoration. His writings are full of expressions in local dialect, so rooted was he to the soil of Iwate and confident that language should not be a form of standardization but a natural flourishing of sounds and meanings.

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Seaside view from Otsuchi ©Nadine Willems

In the winter of 1925, Miyazawa travelled between Hachinohe on the Pacific Coast in Aomori Prefecture and Kamaishi, about 200 km further south. He walked part of the way, as he wanted to experience Buddha-like comfortless solo travel in harsh conditions. This is the same stretch of coast that was devastated by the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011, in which almost 20,000 people died or went missing. Today, each town and village carries on with reconstruction, still trying to make sense of the disaster.

In Otsuchi, a town on the Iwate side of the coast, a commemorative stele reproduces the first lines of a poem by Miyazawa. He wrote it when travelling there, in awe about the electric blue color of the sky:

Jealous of the Dawn

*The sky at dawn is about to melt
The pure fine sapphire-like planet
Sparkling, gleaming with noble light
Gathering the essence of snow and manganese spar...*

*Strong in the Rain: Selected Poems; Hexham, 2007; translation by
Roger Pulvers*

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Tourist facility in Jodogashima with a plaque on the first floor that marks the height of the tsunami of 11 March 2011
©Nadine Willems



Jodogashima, a beauty spot on the Pacific coast that Miyazawa particularly liked
©Nadine Willems

On the day of my visit, the sea is quiet, almost oily, but the traces of the disaster are numerous. On buildings that are still standing, a line on the wall marks where the tsunami struck. It reaches above the first floor. Meanwhile, huge concrete walls are being erected along the shore in order to stop future giant waves.

In this part of Tohoku, it seems that Miyazawa Kenji is everywhere. He has become an emblem of resilience in the face of adversity. Everyone is aware that he was born and died in years when major earthquakes struck the region, 1896 and 1933. His most famous poem, written on the day of his death, starts with these powerful lines:

*Ame ni mo makezu, kaze ni mo makezu –
Neither yielding to rain, nor yielding to wind*

Miyazawa Kenji: Selections; Berkeley, 2007; translation by Sato Hiroaki

It is an ode to persistence in the face of the unbearable and to the spirit of altruism that Miyazawa has come to represent. You can find it inscribed on plaques and steles throughout the country, and probably in the minds of many Japanese. Rudyard Kipling's poem, *If*, occupied for generations a similar symbolic place in Britain's collective consciousness.

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There is another reason why the Iwate poet is nowadays still held in such regard in Tohoku and beyond. His stories are comforting. In *Matasaburo of the Wind* (Kaze no matasaburo), he tells us about the physical properties of the wind in detail. But he also suggests that it carries the souls of the departed, who are therefore always with us.

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Night on the Galactic Railroad conveys a similar message, that all souls are travelling among the stars. In the story, Giovanni mourns the drowning in the river of his best friend Campanella and travels with him in the galaxy:

The two ran from the white rock plateau as quickly as they could so as not to miss the train. They ran faster than they could ever have imagined, and without ever running out of breath or feeling tired – it was as if they had become the wind.

Night on the Galactic Railroad and Other Stories from Ihatov; Long Island City, 2014; translation by Julianne Neville

At the end, Giovanni knew in his heart that Campanella was no longer amongst them; instead he was within the cosmos, waiting at the farthest reach.

In his lifetime Miyazawa only managed to self-publish one collection of poetry and one book of children's tales. At his death he left behind about 3,500 pages of unpublished material. Most of it is delightful, intriguing and unconventional. His polyphonic poems and curious stories represent the world he saw and imagined, one of multiple possibilities.

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Distant view of Nanatsumori Forest ©Iwate Tourism Association

Closing Miyazawa Kenji remains a vital figure in the context of twenty first century Japan, and indeed beyond, because of the holistic vision that undergirded his life and work. Rather than focusing on one particular discipline and compartmentalizing knowledge in the manner that has become standard in the modern world, he saw the universe in a seamless, naturally *interdisciplinary* manner in which there was no contradiction between reciting Buddhist sutras and investigating the geological properties of soil or between tales from folklore and science fiction.

Miyazawa's message from Iwate to the world is that nature, of which human beings are part, is a pure expression of interconnectedness. The ethical understanding that follows – *rita no seishin*, or *being of service to others* – was the bedrock of the Tohoku region's resilience after the triple disaster of March 2011. It has subsequently become the official motto of the town of Otsuchi that he visited during his 1925 pilgrimage.

Having travelled in his footsteps, I understand now how rooted Miyazawa Kenji was in his home region, and how much his vision of what it is to be modern can teach us all today.

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Dr Nadine Willems, a Belgian national, worked in media and business in Tokyo for more than fifteen years before returning to academia in 2008. She obtained her PhD in History from the University of Oxford in 2015 and joined the University of East Anglia as lecturer in Japanese history in 2016. She specializes in the intellectual and cultural history of modern Japan. She has written about early twentieth-century revolutionary connections between Europe and East Asia, and the development of the discipline of geography in Japan. Her research interests extend to the history of ethnography, farmers' movements and proletarian and modernist literature. She recently translated and edited, *Kotan Chronicles: Selected Poems, 1928-1943*, a volume of poetry by Hokkaido-based poet and activist Sarashina Genzo (Isobar Press, 2017).

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Places **Igirisu Kaigan**

A stretch of bank on the western part of the Kitakami River that Miyazawa named the *English Coast*, associating the whiteness of the stones with chalk cliffs of Dover in the United Kingdom. He often took students there on scientific observation trips in order to investigate fossil formation. He also found footprints of large mammals on that part of the riverbank. He shares his discoveries in the August 1923 text.

025-0063, Iwate, Hanamaki shi, Kamikobunato

[web-site](#)

Koiwai Farm

3,000 hectare private farm located at the foot of Mount Iwate to the northwest of the city of Morioka. Founded in 1891 by Ono Gishin, Iwasaki Yanosuke and Inoue Masaru, who aimed to revive the area's agriculture. It was equipped with the latest facilities, including cattle barns and silos. Today it produces meat and dairy products while also catering to tourism. Miyazawa was fond of Koiwai farm, which he visited in 1922.

020-0507, Iwate, Iwate gun, Shizukuishi cho, Maruyachi 36-1

[web-site](#)

Miyazawa Kenji Dowa Mura – Village of Fairy Tales

Facility complex designed to experience the world of Miyazawa Kenji through interactive exhibitions and son-et-lumière effects. Visitors learn about the birds, animals, stars, plants, and rocks that appear in Miyazawa's fairy tales. The facility also offers exploration of dream-like atmospheres recreated from some of his best stories and allows visitors to wander around a fairy-tale park.

025-0014, Iwate, Hanamaki-shi, Takamatsu 26-19

[web-site](#) (Japanese)

Miyazawa Kenji Ihatov Museum

Exhibitions explore Miyazawa's accomplishments from a scholarly perspective, displaying various aspects of his works in detail. The museum also collects and sells books and other materials related to Miyazawa. It organizes lectures, workshops, and music performances. It is also the headquarters of the Miyazawa Kenji Association, Ihatov Center.

025-0014, Iwate, Hanamaki shi, Takamatsu 1-1-1

[web-site](#) (Japanese)

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Places **Miyazawa Kenji Memorial Museum**

Dedicated to Miyazawa Kenji's accomplishments in literature, agriculture, education, and science, the exhibition of manuscripts, personal belongings, photographs, videos, and detailed explanations helps visitors understand Miyazawa's life and thoughts.

025-0011, Iwate, Hanamaki shi, Yazawa 1-1-36

[web-site](#) (Japanese)

Mount Iwate

Active volcano west of the city of Morioka that has been largely quiet since a major eruption in 1732. Its elevation of 2,038m makes it the highest mountain in Iwate prefecture.

028-7100, Iwate, Hachimantai shi

[web-site](#)

Rasu Chijin Association

Society for the improvement of farmers' lifestyles founded by Miyazawa in 1926. Besides dispensing advice on agricultural techniques, it encouraged appreciation of the arts and farmers' participation in cultural activities.

Chijin means *man of the earth* and refers to agricultural work but up to this day it is not clear why Miyazawa chose the word *rasu* as a name. The small building that housed the association is where Miyazawa lived alone until he fell ill in 1928. It was relocated to the grounds of Hanamaki Agricultural High School and is maintained by the pupils of the school.

025-0004, Iwate, Hanamaki shi, Kuzu 1-68

[web-site](#)

Publications **Miyazawa Kenji: Selections**

Miyazawa, Kenji; Sato, Hiroaki (Ed.); 2007; Berkeley and London: University of California Press

Excellent translation of, and introduction to Miyazawa's poetry. A previous, slightly different version of the book was published in 1989 by North Point Press in San Francisco, as *A Future of Ice: Poems and Stories of a Japanese Buddhist*.

Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature

Ueda, Makoto; 1983; Berkeley: University of California Press

A rich introduction to eight major Japanese poets of the modern period. The chapter on Miyazawa stresses the Buddhist aspects of his work.

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- Publications** **Night on the Galactic Railroad & Other Stories from Ihatov** 20125
Miyazawa, Kenji; Neville, Julianne (Trans.); 2014; Long Island City: One Peace Books
One of several translations of Miyazawa's most famous children's tale. The book also contains the delightful story of Signal and Signal-less.
- On Uneven Ground: Miyazawa Kenji and the Making of Place in Modern Japan**
Long, Hoyt; 2012; Stanford: Stanford University Press
Dense and thoughtful scholarly analysis of the literary context in which Miyazawa created poetry and children's stories
- Strong in the Rain: Selected Poems**
Miyazawa, Kenji; Pulvers, Roger (Trans.); 2007; Hexham: Bloodaxe Books
Very good selection of Miyazawa's poetry with commentary
- Strong in the Rain: Surviving Japan's Earthquake, Tsunami, and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster**
Birmingham, Lucy; McNeill, David; 2012; New York: Palgrave Macmillan
Well researched and moving account of the triple disaster of March 2011 and how ordinary people experienced it

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Glossary **Edo period (1603-1868)**

The period that precedes the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when Japanese society was under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate and divided into more than 250 feudal domains. During that time the country was largely closed to international trade and at peace. Edo, now Tokyo, was the capital and one of the world's largest cities.

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Hanamaki

City in central Iwate Prefecture known as the birthplace of Miyazawa Kenji

- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)
- ▶ Tohoku

Ihatov

The name given by Miyazawa to a fictional land where events in his stories take place. It is an imaginary site derived from the reality of Iwate prefecture, but the Slavic and Esperanto sounding name also suggests that its borders go far beyond Iwate. The use of the toponym (place name) highlights Miyazawa's linguistic creativity.

- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)

Iwate Prefecture

One of the six prefectures in Tohoku, the northern region of Japan's main island. Rich in natural resources, history and traditions.

- ▶ Hanamaki
- ▶ Kamaishi
- ▶ Kitakami River
- ▶ Otsuchi
- ▶ Tohoku

Kamaishi

City located on the southeastern coast of Iwate Prefecture, abundant in natural resources. Like many other coastal cities and towns in northeast Japan, Kamaishi was devastated by the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011.

- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Tohoku

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Glossary

Kitakami River

River that originates in the Nanashigure Mountain of Iwate Prefecture and flows to the south into the bays of Ishinomaki and Oppa in Miyagi Prefecture. The largest river in Tohoku.

- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Tohoku

Lotus Sutra

The basis of Nichiren Buddhism. One of its main teachings is that all creatures have the potential to become Buddhas. The full Sanskrit title for the sutra is Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, which is how Miyazawa refers to it in his poems. It translates into English as *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*.

- ▶ Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)
- ▶ Nichiren Buddhism

Meiji Period (1868-1912)

The historical Meiji (enlightened rule) era of the reign of Emperor Meiji. The beginning of Japan's modern period.

- ▶ Meiji Restoration of 1868

Meiji Restoration of 1868

A radical change, which restored the Emperor of Japan as the country's official ruler and consolidated the political system under his name. The Restoration ushered in a vast modernization program and Japan's rapid transformation into a capitalist nation.

[web-site](#)

- ▶ Meiji Period (1868-1912)

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Glossary **Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)**

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One of Japan's most revered modern poets and author of children's literature. Born in Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture, on 27 August 1896, the eldest son of a wealthy pawn-broker couple. Graduated in 1918 from Morioka Agriculture and Forestry College. Became a teacher at Hanamaki Agricultural School in 1923. Published a collection of poetry, *Spring and Asura*, and a collection of children's tales, *The Restaurant of Many Orders*, in 1924. Resigned from his post as a teacher at the age of 30 and started to work as a farmer. Founded the Rasu Chijin Kyokai in 1926. Died of pneumonia in 1933 at the age of 37.

web-site

- ▶ Hanamaki
- ▶ Ihatov
- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Lotus Sutra
- ▶ Miyazawa Toshi (1898-1922)
- ▶ Nichiren Buddhism
- ▶ Spring and Asura

Miyazawa Toshi (1898-1922)

The beloved sister of Miyazawa Kenji who died at the age of 24.

- ▶ Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)

Nichiren Buddhism

Major Japanese Buddhist sect, founded by the 13th century religious teacher, Nichiren. Its principles were established on the basis of the Lotus Sutra, one of the most important texts of Mahayana Buddhism. Miyazawa converted from Pure Land Buddhism, the branch followed by his family, to Nichiren Buddhism in 1915, after reading the Lotus Sutra.

web-site

- ▶ Lotus Sutra
- ▶ Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)

Otsuchi

Mountainous town on Iwate Prefecture's Pacific coast.

- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Tohoku

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Glossary **Spring and Asura**

The title of Miyazawa's first collection of poetry, and the only one published in his lifetime. In Mahayana Buddhism, an asura is a demon-like, malevolent creature. *Spring* and *Asura* represent two contrasting concepts.

▶ Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933)

Tohoku

Region located in the northeast of Honshu, Japan's biggest island, and which comprises six prefectures: Akita, Aomori, Fukushima, Iwate, Yamagata, and Miyagi. It is known for its harsh climate and scenic beauty, and retains a reputation for remoteness. In March 2011, it was the site of a major earthquake and tsunami, followed by a nuclear accident.

- ▶ Hanamaki
- ▶ Iwate Prefecture
- ▶ Kamaishi
- ▶ Kitakami River
- ▶ Otsuchi

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Imprint

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