

7.30 *The Tale of Genji*

SUMMARY: *The Tale of Genji*, written by Murasaki Shikibu in the 11th century, recounts the life of Hikaru Genji, or "Shining Genji." Genji is the son of an ancient Japanese emperor, known to readers as Emperor Kiritsubo, and a low-ranking but beloved concubine called Lady Kiritsubo. For political reasons, the emperor removes Genji from the line of succession, demoting him to a commoner by giving him the surname Minamoto. He then pursues a career as an imperial officer. The tale concentrates on Genji's romantic life and describes the customs of the aristocratic society of the time.

Instructions: Read the following excerpts from *The Tale of Genji*. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions in full sentences and find one quote to support each of your answers.

The women may not have understood all the finer points, but the uniforms of even the common guardsmen were magnificent and the horsemanship was complicated and exciting. The grounds were very wide, fronting also on Murasaki's southeast quarter, where young women were watching. There was music and dancing, Chinese polo music and the Korean dragon dance. As night came on, the triumphal music rang out high and wild. The guardsmen were richly rewarded according to their several ranks. It was very late when the assembly dispersed.

1. Based on the excerpt above, what type of ceremony was taking place?
2. Based on the excerpt above, what was the atmosphere like at the ceremony?

In the Twelfth Month there was a royal outing to Oharano. All the ministers and councilors and whole court had turned out for the occasion. The princes and high officials were beautifully fitted out. Their guards and grooms, very good-looking, had put on special dresses. The princes and high courtiers in charge of falcons were in fine hunting dress. The falconers from the royal guards were even more interesting, all in printed robes of most fanciful design. Even the skies seemed intent on favoring the occasion, for there were flurries of snow. The procession left the palace at six in the morning and proceeded south along Suzaku Avenue and west on Gojo. Carriages of viewers lined the streets all the way to the river Katsura. The princes of Rokujo and Tamakazura were among the spectators. Tamakazura paid special attention to the Emperor Reizei, her own father, To-no-Chujo, Prince Hotaru and General Higeguro. The emperor in his red robe, who resembled Genji, attracted Tamakazura. It was her opinion that no one compared with him.

3. Based on the excerpt above, what type of people went on the outing?
4. Based on the excerpt above, what did the people look like?