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Título: Botchan

Autor: Soseki Natsume

Precio: \$168.00

Editorial:

Año: 2007

Tema:

Edición: 1ª

Sinopsis

ISBN: 9784770030481

Like *The Catcher in the Rye* or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Botchan*, a hilarious tale about a young man's rebellion against "the system" in a country school, is a classic of its kind. Among Japanese readers both young and old it has enjoyed a timeless popularity, making it, according to Donald Keene, "probably the most widely read novel in modern Japan."

The setting is Japan's deep south, where the author himself spent some time teaching English in a boys' school. Into this conservative world, with its social proprieties and established pecking order, breezes *Botchan*, down from the big city, with scant respect for either his elders or his noisy young charges; and the result is a chain of collisions large and small.

Much of the story seems to occur in summer, against the drone of cicadas, and in many ways this is a summer book_light, funny, never slow-moving. Here, in a lively new translation much better suited to Western tastes than any of its forebears, *Botchan's* homespun appeal is all the more apparent, and even those who have never been near the sunlit island on which these calamitous episodes take place should find in it uninterrupted entertainment.

Published in 1906, this comic novel remains popular in Soseki's native Japan. A precursor to the rebellious school youth works popularized by Salinger and others, it follows a city teacher who relocates to a less-sophisticated rural area but has little use for the small-town elders or students. Copyright 2005 Reed Business Information.

Biography

NATSUME SOSEKI, novelist and scholar of English literature, was born in Tokyo in 1867. After graduating from Tokyo University, he taught English language and literature at high school. In 1900, he was sent by the Education Ministry to study in London. On returning to Japan in 1903, he began to teach English literature at Tokyo Imperial University. Also around this time, he was invited by the poet and novelist Takahama Kyoshi to contribute stories to the literary magazine *Hototogisu*. When *Wagahai wa Neko de aru* (I am a Cat) and *Botchan* were serialized in the magazine, they established his reputation as an author.

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Translator J. COHN studied Japanese at Cornell and Harvard Universities, as well as in Japan, and now teaches Japanese literature at the University of Hawaii. The author of *Studies in the Comic Spirit in Modern Japanese Fiction*, Professor Cohn was the recipient of the prestigious Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature from the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture, Columbia University in recognition of his translation of *Botchan*.