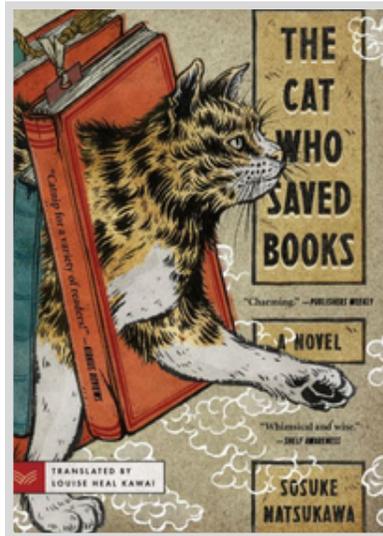


The Cat Who Saved Books by Sosuke Natsukawa

Discussion Date: Tuesday, April 28
7:00 - 8:00 p.m



Summary

Bookish high school student Rintaro Natsuki is about to close the secondhand bookstore he inherited from his beloved bookworm grandfather. Then, a talking cat appears with an unusual request. The feline asks for—or rather, demands—the teenager's help in saving books with him. The world is full of lonely books left unread and unloved, and the cat and Rintaro must liberate them from their neglectful owners.

Their mission sends this odd couple on an amazing journey, where they enter different mazes to set books free. Through their travels, the cat and Rintaro meet a man who leaves his books to perish on a bookshelf, an unwitting book torturer who cuts the pages of books into snippets to help people speed read, and a publishing drone who only wants to create bestsellers. Their adventures culminate in one final, unforgettable challenge—the last maze that awaits leads Rintaro down a realm only the bravest dare enter . . .

An enthralling tale of books, first love, fantasy, and an unusual friendship with a talking cat, *The Cat Who Saved Books* is a story for those for whom books are so much more than words on paper.

Translated from the Japanese by Louise Heal Kawai.

Provided by Publisher: Harpervia

The Cat Who Saved Books by Sosuke Natsukawa



About the Author

Sosuke Natsukawa is a Japanese physician and novelist. He graduated from the Shinshu University medical school and practises medicine at a hospital in the largely rural prefecture of Nagano. His multi-volume debut novel, *Kamisama no Karute* (God's Medical Records), has won several prizes and has sold over three million copies in Japan. He is the author of the internationally bestselling *The Cat Who Saved Books*. *The Cat Who Saved the Library* is the second book in his series featuring Tiger the talking tabby cat.

Provided by Pan Macmillan's website: <https://www.panmacmillan.com/authors/sosuke-natsukawa/41251>

Discussion Questions

1. The Cat Who Saved Books blends a quiet story about grief with fantastical, magical realism elements. Did you find this combination effective in telling Rintaro's story?
2. The second labyrinth critiques the modern desire for speed and efficiency by "streamlining" reading. Do you feel the pressure to read quickly or consume content faster in your own life? If so, how do you handle this?
3. The novel centers on Rintaro, a hikikomori, a term for someone experiencing acute social withdrawal. In what ways does Rintaro's journey reflect the broader pressures that young people face today regarding school, social life, and finding their place in the world?
4. Which of the three main labyrinth masters (the Imprisoner, the Mutilator, or the Seller of Books) presents the most compelling or frightening vision of how the modern world corrupts reading? Why did that particular philosophy stand out to you?
5. How did you interpret the character of Tiger? Did you see him as a straightforward mentor, the personification of literature's soul, or something else entirely?
6. Rintaro's motivation evolves throughout the novel, shifting from defending his grandfather's ideals to rescuing Sayo. What does this change reveal about his character arc and the theme of The Courage to Emerge From Isolation?
7. What is Sayo's role in the story beyond being a friend to Rintaro? How does her character development reinforce the novel's central theme that books cultivate empathy?
8. Tiger recruits Rintaro to save books from people who mistreat them. If you could rescue one book from a specific kind of modern mistreatment (like turned into a disappointing movie), which book would you choose, and why?
9. What might a fifth labyrinth, representing a contemporary threat to reading not covered in the book, look like? Who would be its master, and what would their flawed philosophy be?

Questions provided by SuperSummary.com

Reviews

Kirkus Reviews (10/01/2021):

A young Japanese bookseller sets out to rescue books in peril—with the help of a most unusual feline. After the death of his beloved guardian and grandfather, high school student Rintaro Natsuki drifts into running his grandfather's rare bookshop while waiting to be sent to live with an aunt he doesn't know. Rintaro is a hikikomari—socially withdrawn and isolated from most activities—and finds comfort and meaning in the books so precious to his plainspoken and well-meaning grandfather. His quiet, solitary life is disrupted when, in a bolt of magical realism, a talking tabby cat named Tiger enlists his help in rescuing "books that have been imprisoned." Some of the victimized books are locked away from readers by collectors, others are mutilated by abridgment and summarization, and more are treated as commodities by publishing conglomerates. Rintaro undertakes the challenges assisted by the saucy cat few humans can see, and his quests resemble the tests posed to heroes in myth, legend, and video game. His growing awareness of the attentions of persistently positive schoolmate Sayo lends the tale a gentle wholesomeness. Rescuing the story from sappiness are references to the classic books on the store's shelves, mostly from the Western canon, that have formed Rintaro's belief system. Lovers of traditional literature and books themselves will find validation in the lessons Rintaro learns (and teaches), while the story's structure and fanciful nature may hold appeal for a young adult audience more familiar with the conventions of gaming. Tiger gets the best lines of dialogue but...why not? Cats, books, young love, and adventure: catnip for a variety of readers! COPYRIGHT(2021) Kirkus Reviews, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Booklist (10/01/2021):

It starts with a cat—a large, plump one that shows up one day in the tiny used bookstore that originally belonged to Rintaro Natsuki's late grandfather. His parents gone and his grandfather now dead, Rintaro—a "completely average" high school student except that he is something of a recluse and a voracious reader—is left on his own. He immediately stops going to school, to the distress of Sayo Yuzuki, a neighborhood girl, and she—but wait! What about that cat? Well, unlike Rintaro, it's anything but average, for this is a talking cat. And he has come to enlist Rintaro's aid in confronting someone called the Imprisoner of Books. And thus starts the first of four book-related adventures that will increasingly test Rintaro's mettle and impact his relationship with strong-willed Sayo, who insists on coming along. Yes, bibliophiles will dote on this charming import from Japan, smoothly translated by Louise Heal Kawai. Let Rintaro's grandpa have the final word here, for his mantra is unimpeachable: books, he says, have tremendous power. And so they do. COPYRIGHT(2021) Booklist, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.