

Soseki's *Kokoro* as a Cross-Cultural Study For Exchange Students from North America and Europe

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility of Soseki's *Kokoro* as a means of cross-cultural study for exchange students from North America, Hawaii, UK, France, and Germany. *Kokoro*, written in 1914 has been loved by Japanese citizens for nearly a century and it is considered a great masterpiece of Soseki Natsume, one of Japan's most notable authors of the 20th century. In my course for international students on Japanese Culture and Literature, I emphasized the current significance of Soseki's *Kokoro*. The class lectures also focused on such topics as "mujokan," the philosophy of mortality and transience of human attitude, "Zen Buddhism" and "Bushido." We spent 6 weeks (90 minute' lecture, twice a week) on the study of Soseki's *Kokoro* during the spring semester in 2011. We discussed the issue of human loneliness and the anachronism of the protagonists influenced by the modernization of Japan. Through the analysis of the protagonists' convictions formed by Japanese traditional culture and their changing actions influenced by modernization and the transition between value systems from the spirit of Meiji to Taisho's modernity, the exchange students seemed to learn the kernel of the Japanese traditional heart and its implications for cross-cultural studies. Through this novel they also found the phantom of human loneliness in the wake of the modernization of Japan. Soseki's warnings to his contemporaries in terms of an identity crisis of the transitional Japan from the spirit of Meiji to individualism in modernization seems to be reflected in Japanese people today who are losing their cultural identities in the midst of globalization in the 21st century. This paper will examine today's significance of Soseki's *Kokoro* through the positive and critical reactions by the international exchange students at Konan University (2010-2011).

Key words: modernization, loneliness, love triangle, confession and Mujokan

“You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves.” (*Kokoro* p. 30)

“For Kokoro is a battleground over love, and Sensei is a man who is prepared to die—give up his heart—to see it transferred for ever into the breast of another man.” (Flanagan, 2010)

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the possibility of Soseki’s “Kokoro” as a cross-cultural study for 26 exchange students mainly from North America, Hawaii and Western Europe who studied at Konan University from 2010 to 2011. Some of them were originally from South Korea and Hongkong but have studied at Konan’s affiliated Universities in the US, Canada and UK. The class is made up of 8 students from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, 4 from the University of Leeds, UK, 3 from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA, 2 from the University of Pittsburgh, USA, 2 from the University of Victoria, Canada, 2 from the Universite Jean Moulin Lyon 3, France, 1 from Universite Francois-Rabelais de Tours, France, 1 from Humboldt Universitat zu Berlin, Germany, 1 from University of New York at Buffalo, 1 from the University of Arizona and 1 from Carleton University, Canada. They were majoring in Japanese language and culture, Japanese literature, history, economy, anthropology and international relations.

We discussed not only the theme of Soseki’s *Kokoro* but also the cross-cultural significance of understanding the heart of Japanese culture as expressed through Mujokan, Zen Buddhism, Confucianism, Bushido concepts and the spirit of Meiji which explicitly and implicitly engulfed the heart of the protagonists throughout the story of *Kokoro*. This novel explores the human agony involved in love and friendship along with fatal triangle love relations in the context of interwoven strands of egoism and guilt in the “shame culture” of Japanese society.

This psychologically stimulating novel has kept the readers debating Japanese identity crisis as influenced by the modernization of Japan through “Sensei’s Testament.” Our exchange students found several layers of Japanese emotions, mentalities and changing value systems through the voice of Watashi, K’s inner conflict of “True Way” and the confession of Sensei in his testament for the contemporary readers engulfed by modernization.

Through the analysis of the main protagonists of the story, class discussion, mid-term research papers, and oral presentations, the exchange students seemed to rediscover the kernel of the Japanese traditional habits of the heart and Soseki's warnings against the blindly rapid transition from traditional Japan to modernization. We can see the students' deep insights into Soseki's testament written in the midst of the transformation of Japan from the traditional Meiji-era to the modern era through their comparative views of the West. They found a completely different style of the story which keeps the readers participating in the story not as a third person, but as a first or second person, such as Watashi, Sensei and K who have no personal names. This was quite fresh for our exchange students who have been used to reading the clearly developing plots with several distinctive heroes and heroines in the Western novels they have been familiar with. As I found from their research papers, oral presentations in class and several e-mails from them after returning to their home countries, I have become more certain that Soseki's *Kokoro* has stayed alive in the hearts of individual exchange students even after they left Japan.

Although *Kokoro* was written nearly 100 years ago, we can still see several meaningful key concepts which weave cross-culturally rich descriptions that transcend cultures, generations and countries. This is why *Kokoro* has still been widely read and examined by many scholars in and out of Japan. It has trans/inter-generational appeal and is widely read by most Japanese high school students and discussed in modern Japanese language classes even now. Several key concepts which we discussed in our class are as follows:

1. **The spirit of Meiji in Japan**
2. **Filial piety in Confucianism**
3. **Spiritual aspiration (true way) in Zen Buddhism**
4. **Mujokan, philosophy of mortality and transience of human attitude**
5. **Individualism, freedom and egoism in modernization**
6. **The fatal romantic love triangle**
7. **The phantom of loneliness in the modern world**
8. **Guilt resulting from egoism and self-punishment as suicide**
9. **The power of confession**
10. **Dramatic irony in *Kokoro* and Shakespearian *Othello***

Some of these key concepts are prerequisite to understand Japanese implicit

culture and can be a point of departure for cross-cultural studies and life education for exchange students. In this paper, I would like to focus on how the story of Soseki's *Kokoro* has helped exchange students from the West to explore the Japanese mind in its implicit culture, and consequently confirm that it still has infinite cross-cultural implications for understanding Japanese habits of the heart in the Meiji-era.

2. Soseki Natsume, A Writer Surviving The Test of Time

The life of Soseki Natsume (1867-1916) was historically dramatic and so were his many literary works. He was born in 1867, the last year of Edo era (1603-1867), at the dawn of Meiji Restoration (1868) and he lived through Meiji-era (1868-1914) and died in 1916, the beginning of Taisho-era (1912-1927). He graduated from the English Literature Department of Tokyo Imperial University with highest honors in 1893. He studied at the University of London (1900-1902) on a Japanese government scholarship. He was one of the outstanding scholars who were sent to England by the Japanese government so that on their return they could occupy university positions that were currently occupied by Westerners. Soseki took over the lectureship of Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) and became a popular professor of Shakespeare at Tokyo Imperial University. It is said that his lecture on a series of Shakespearean works was full of serious students.

However, in 1907 Soseki astonished the academic world by abandoning his prestigious career of Tokyo Imperial University in order to become a chief of the literary section of Tokyo Asahi Newspaper, serializing his own novel. It was really a professional decision which made Soseki a writer of modern Japan.

Soseki Natsume was once a Haiku poet largely influenced by Shiki Masaoka (1867-1902), a representative Haiku poetry and Soseki's best friend. Soseki has become the greatest novelist and the most influential literary figure of modern Japan. All of his novels have become modern classics which have been loved by Japanese citizens for more than 100 years. Some of his works has been used as high school textbooks and *Kokoro* is still one of the national best-sellers.

His works continuously explore the greatest adventures of human hearts and pursues the heart of the Japanese mind. This has enabled them to endure the test of time, as Willam Shakespeare (1564-1616) proved in Europe in the 16th century. Soseki consistently explored the weakness and discrepancy of human hearts throughout his works of comedy which are full of satire, wit, humor and irony,

and his works of tragedy which are full of jealousy, deception, betrayal and loss of love. Most of them were influenced by the works of William Shakespeare. However, what is vital is that Soseki was agonizing over his identity crisis haunted by the phantom of modernization and human loneliness in London, yet he retained his cultural identity and spirit in his works. Viglielmo (1972) pointed out that "Soseki is exceedingly Oriental in his outlook, and it is proof that while he was undoubtedly influenced by the West, he certainly did not reject his Eastern heritage" (p.377). This is the reason why his works have been loved by domestic and global audiences over 100 years.

Soseki was suffering from the agony of anachronism between the spirit of Meiji and the modernization of Japan in the 1910s. He consistently implied that loneliness is the price we have to pay for freedom, independence and the power of "ego" throughout *Kokoro* as his own testament two years before he died. The principal characters were exposed to layer after layer of egoistic individualism and a sense of guilt involved in a fatal love triangle, friendship and self-punishment. We can say that the story of "Kokoro" will be Soseki's testament to the Japanese people of Meiji and even today, especially those who were blindly infatuated by the enormous tide of westernization for the sake of the modernization of Japan.

3. The Brief Summary of *Kokoro*, an Exploration of Human Hearts

Kokoro, one of the masterpieces of Soseki's works, consists of three chapters which focus on the inner conflicts of the three main protagonists. The first chapter, 'Sensei and I,' provides us with the stage of their initial encounter, and their dialogue predicts the fatal tragedy of human loneliness. Readers meet the main protagonists and come to know their personalities through the narrator (Watashi). A great exploration of human hearts starts with Watashi's human observation. And before we know it, we readers gradually bring ourselves to become Watashi himself, enchanted by Soseki's penetrating human insight. Sensei is a sensitive introvert who has been suffering from loneliness and deceit in his family drama. Human loneliness is explained by Sensei to Watashi and this becomes the main theme for the rest of the story.

In the second chapter, 'My Parents and I,' the story mainly focuses on Watashi. The chapter leads the reader to know Watashi who has both the traditional Japanese filial piety and individualism. The point is that the sense of filial piety for his dying father and the sense of responsibility for his Sensei's sudden suicide

fought with each other in the heart of Watashi. To stay with his dying biological father, or to go back to Sensei, his spiritual father, who has already committed suicide in Tokyo; that is a question.

The final chapter, 'Sensei and His Testament,' explores the abyss of Sensei's heart. We come to step into Sensei's stream of consciousness and witness the agonizing human drama. Sensei becomes a human because of his romantic love for Ojosan and the kindness of her mother. He seems to have become humanized and overcome his phantom of loneliness caused by his uncle's strategic betrayal which reminds us of the strategic betrayal of Hamlet's uncle in Shakespeare. However Sensei suffers from the phantom of loneliness again by deceiving his best friend for the sake of his passionate love for Ojosan. Sensei's egoistic love for Ojosan, resulting from the uncontrolled monster of jealousy in the fatal love triangle with K in Soseki's theater reminds us of the tragic dual death of Othello and Desdemona in Shakespearean theater. Readers of *Kokoro* are being invited to the magic of 'dramatic irony' by Soseki as the audiences of the Elizabethan age were invited to the Shakespearean dramatic irony in the 17th century.

Eventually Sensei deceives Ojosan who becomes his wife, and his marriage with her, preoccupied by the sense of guilt and shame. Finally he deceives himself again in order to escape from the sense of guilt by taking his own life. Sensei becomes egoistic and inhuman despite the fact he initially tried to humanize the misanthropic K with his friendship. Even before K died, Sensei had built a barrier between him and the world just like the sliding door which symbolically separated them mentally and physically. Sensei finally committed suicide to punish himself for the guilt he had been suffering from, freeing from the phantom of loneliness with which he had been preoccupied. Sensei lived with the spirit of Meiji and he ended his life when Meiji was over.

4. The Main Characters of *Kokoro*

It is quite surprising for exchange students to see such a small number of characters in the story of *Kokoro* and that, most of the major characters have no personal names except Shizu which means "quietness" or "tranquility." The simple method of using characters' names as the first and second person makes the story more contextually realistic as if the readers were directly spoken to and engulfed in the stream of the plot. How many characters and personal names are there in *Kokoro*? There are only five main characters in this story. Let us look at

the nature of the main characters.

1. **The narrator, I (Watashi):** a private person who eventually publicizes Sensei's personal hidden secret before the public. He seems to be what Sensei used to be as an innocent promising young man with integrity and sincerity. This young student seems to represent the readers of Sensei's story in the third chapter, the most dramatic part of Sensei's Testament. The story begins with the narrator's introduction of Sensei by referring as follows, "I always called him "sensei." I shall therefore refer to him simply as "Sensei", not by his real name. (p.1)" In a word, this story is an implicit dialog between Watashi and Sensei from the very beginning to the end until Sensei leaves this world. Flanagan (2007) states that the whole text of *Kokoro* becomes the narrator's epitaph to Sensei.
2. **Sensei,** the protagonist: Sensei seems to represent the sensitive personality of Soseki himself who suffered from acute cultural shocks and nervous breakdown in London and, consistently warns about the human loneliness and social alienation influenced by Japan's modernization in 1910s. Sensei committed suicide when General Nogi took his life following the death of Emperor Meiji. Sensei is the representation of Soseki himself with his critical view of life, too. Sensei confesses the truth only for Watashi in the form of his testament.
3. **K,** Sensei's best friend who pursues the lofty mind of "True Way" in Zen Buddhism: K committed suicide and became the dark shadow of Sensei for the rest of his life. He was suffering from the identity crisis between lofty religious aspiration for the "True Way" in Zen Buddhism and his natural "eros," that is, his strong romantic desire for Ojosan, a beautiful young lady as a human.
4. **Ojaosan,** an honorable daughter of a soldier family who became Sensei's unhappy wife. We know only her personal name as Shizu, which means tranquility or quietness as if she were a manifestation of both traditional woman of Meiji and modern woman of Taisho. We can see a description of Ojosan by Watashi as follows: "What also impressed me was that fact that though her ways were not those of an old-fashioned Japanese woman, she

had not succumbed to the then prevailing fashion of using “modern” words (p.37).

5. **Okusan**, Shizu’s mother: a traditional Japanese woman and the widow of a soldier who had Samurai spirit. She was kind to Sensei when he started to live in her house but she was reluctant to welcome K to her house for the sake of Sensei and Ojosan. She was quite calm and brave enough to deal with K’s suicide in her house as a soldier’s widow.

Life is unpredictable and so are friendship and love. Nothing is immortal and immutable. K, who used to be an ideal of Sensei, turns out to be his enemy because of the fatal love triangle. The life story of two different men is interwoven in the narrative of *Kokoro*. These two characters, involved in Ojosan, go through their chosen individualism. Sensei said, “My own past, which made me what I am, is a part of human experience.” (p.247). Soseki’s inner dialog in terms of monolog (his testament) was expressed directly as the first person to the second person, namely to young Watashi, which has made the readers feel as if we were the narrator (Watashi) himself.

We also see Sensei’s uncalculated friendship with K which eventually turns out to be antagonism against K caused by jealousy in the fatal love triangle. On the other side we see friendship and a sense of compassion between Watashi and Sensei based on trust and respect beyond generation and value systems. Sensei is a man in Meiji. Watashi belongs to the new generation living in Taisho era which has more freedom and independence influenced by modernization. Watashi deserves to be the first and direct listener of Sensei’s confession, namely Sensei’s Testament thanks to his trust and friendship. Watashi gets material life from his parents and obtains mental and spiritual life from Sensei as his life education.

It is fascinating to know that Sensei and K represent the “past,” Ojosan who has become Sensei’s wife represents the “present,” and Watashi symbolizes the “future” after the Meiji era, and eventually the novel enables us to think of the shifting characters in Meiji influenced by modernization before we know it.

Regarding the human relationships among the main characters in *Kokoro* Flanagan (2010) states as follows:

At the beginning of the novel the narrator says that he will not refer to Sensei with a mere letter, as Sensei in his testament refers to K, because this is too ‘cold.’ As discussed, this has inspired much debate in Japan, but the significance of this is

surely to emphasize that the bond between Sensei and the narrator is even stronger than that which existed between Sensei and K. And when at the end of Sensei's testament he asks the narrator that his secret is not made public while Sensei's wife still lives—and it is implied that she is still alive when the story being told to show that the love bond between Sensei and the narrator is being held up as more important than any commandment regarding Sensei's wife.

(Introduction of *Kokoro*, 2010)

The story of *Kokoro* does not seem to be over with the sad death of Sensei. The question is “What will become of Watashi and Shizu after the death of Sensei?” The clue to the answer might be discovered in the words of the protagonists.

5. Soseki's Identity Crisis in London

Soseki was sent to University of London on a Japanese Government scholarship from 1900-1902 in order to bring back the advantages of modernization in England. However, he witnessed the loneliness of modernization as a price for freedom, independence and individualism, which affected his works, especially *Kokoro*.

Flanagan (2005, p. 10) states that, “Yet it was London that was to be the crucible and crossroads of his life, the place where Soseki was faced with the intense cultural shock and social alienation that led to the eventual tumultuous release of his pent-up creative urges.”

We have found Soseki's contradictions in his cross-cultural conflicts and his identity crisis in London. We can see his ambivalent feelings about England and Japan, referring to English gentlemen in advanced England and Japanese gentlemen in traditional Japan in his work, *Letter from London* (1901), too. We can see Soseki's mixed feelings in London.

“Many things have caught my attention: how literature and the arts are flourishing in this country and how the flourishing of literature and the arts is influencing the national character; to what extent this country's development has advanced materially and what trends lie behind that advance; that there is in England no word for samurai but the word ‘gentleman’ and what meaning the word ‘gentleman’ has; how the ordinary person is generous and hard working... Yet, at the same time, many irritating things crop up. Sometimes I find myself hating

England and desiring quickly to return to Japan. But then again, when I reflect on the state of Japanese society, I feel it to be pitifully unpromising. Japanese gentlemen are, I fear, extremely lacking when it comes to their moral, physical and artistic education. How nonchalant and self-satisfied our gentlemen are! How foppish they are! How inane they are! How satisfied they are with modern Japan, and how they continue to lead the ordinary populace to the brink of degeneracy! They are so shortsighted as not to even know that they are doing these things. Many such grievances occur to me. *(Letter from London 1901 p.49)*

Also Flanagan (2005) continues to discuss Soseki's contradictions and disoriented behaviors through his cross-cultural conflicts as follows:

But impressions of Britain remained vivid, painful and precious. Just as cultural shock causes him acute neurosis in England, even leading him to believe he was being followed and spied upon, and provoking outbursts of rage against the hypocrisy of the British that lasted until his death, so too, that culture silently oozed into his pores. Upon his return to Japan, Soseki appeared obnoxiously Europeanized to his Japanese students. Now he sported a fashionable Kaiser moustache, ate beef and toast and wore a frock-coat. And for all his vitriol against the British, when the First World War broke out, he found himself deeply concerned over the fate of British liberalism under the threat of German militarism. *(2005, p.12)*

The irony is that Soseki himself had a psychological nervous breakdown involved in his cultural identity crisis as he witnessed the human loneliness and social alienation in the highly industrialized modern society in London. His personal identity crisis is implied in the following words spoken by Sensei in *Kokoro*: "You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves (*Kokoro* P.30). It is quite ironical that although Soseki was sent to London in order to take back positive aspects of modernization in the capitalism of the UK to Japan, he brought back the negative aspects of modernization as a warning to the intellectuals of Japan in the Meiji era.

As a matter of fact, Brodey (2004) emphasizes this in his introduction of *My Individualism and The Philosophical Foundation of Literature* (1914) by Soseki

as follows:

Rather than focusing on the enthusiastic imitation of the West, Soseki is now concerned with what happens when that imitative drive is converted into a desire for national or domestic homogeneity; when a mistrust of foreigners paradoxically leads to a mistrust of Japanese citizens (p.22).

Soseki himself warned about the issue of individual freedom as follows: "Individual freedom is, without a doubt, at the heart of individualism, which serves as a foundation for the happiness of human beings. But this freedom rises and falls like a thermometer according to the prosperity or poverty of the country (p.54).

Soseki continues as follows:

Lately we have talked a lot about Ego and awareness of oneself, using these terms to describe the self. We must recognize that there are many serious dangers. Some people, while insisting that we rigorously respect their Ego, take no account of the Egos of others. I am firmly convinced that if we look at things fairly and if we have a sense of justice, as we develop our own individuality to attain happiness we must at the same time guarantee to others the same freedom as we grant to ourselves. Unless we have reasonable cause, we must not be in any way an obstacle to the development of the individuality of other people, in their own way, allowing them to attain happiness.

(Soseki, p.45-46, *My Individualism and The Philosophical Foundations of Literature*)

We can hear the human loneliness and alienation derived from egoistical individualism in modern society through the works of Soseki, especially in the voice of Sensei in *Kokoro*.

6. Human Loneliness in Modernization

The fatal transition and confusion from traditional morals in Meiji-era to egoistical modernity in Taisho-era brought about *Kokoro*'s tragic sense of loneliness in modernization. Clay (2005) refers to Soseki's sharp observations of the inner human heart as follows:

The irony of *Kokoro* consists in Soseki's observation that the desire to escape a hostile universe of selfishness and betrayal, to escape crime that created one's

own terrible interiority and isolation from society, can only and ineluctably, without meaningful participation in society, reproduce the very same tragic narrative of mediated desire and self-ruin that created the crime in the first place (Clay, 2005, p.107).

What Soseki warned through Sensei's voice in *Kokoro* in 1914 can be another warning to Japanese people in the 21st century, those who are suffering from the phantom of loneliness in highly developed Japan with high technology and the highest suicide rate in the world. (30513 suicides in 2011 and more than 30000 suicides for the 14 consecutive years since 1998) Soseki might have predicted today's human loneliness and alienation caused by highly advanced technological society in globalization more than 100 years ago. We can see another warning by Soseki from the ending shot of the protagonist in the story of *The Three-Cornered World*, too.

'Look out, look out, or you'll find yourselves in trouble.' The railway train which blunders ahead blindly into the pitch darkness is one example of the very obvious dangers which abound in modern civilization. (*The Three-Cornered World* by Soseki, p.182)

As a Shakespeare scholar, Soseki, at the end of *Equinox*, had made manifest his conclusion that the greatest adventure in life is the exploration of the human heart (Flanagan, 2007 p.). Through the inner conflict of the protagonist of *Kokoro*, Soseki explores the timeless psychological analysis of one man's alienation from society in Meiji era influenced by Westernization and modernization. This must be Soseki's intention to describe the loneliness in the modern world in his novels. Soseki went through an identity crisis in London and found the loneliness of modernization at the price of freedom and individualism in the Western world, and he warned about the issues of modernization to the Japanese people. There are clear messages from Soseki to Japanese readers in Meiji in his works, such as *The Tower of London*, *The Three-Cornered World* and *Kokoro*. Let us read Soseki's warning about modernization, starting with his description of the railway train which would take many young Japanese soldiers to control China as symbol of modernization which was brought by the West.

I was being dragged back more and more into the world of reality. Anywhere that

you can find a railway train must be classed as the world of reality, for there is nothing more typical of twentieth-century civilization. It is an unsympathetic and heartless contraption which rumbles along carrying hundreds of people crammed together in one box. It takes them all at a uniform speed to the same station, and then proceeds to lavish the benefits of steam upon every one of them without exception. People are said to board and travel by train, but I call it being loaded and transported. Nothing shows a greater contempt for individuality than the train. Modern civilization uses every possible means to develop individuality, and having done so, tries everything in its power to stamp it out. It allots a few square yards to each person, and tells him that he is free to lead his life as he pleases within that area. At the same time it erects railings around him, and threatens him with all sorts of dire consequences if he should dare to take but one step beyond their compass. It is only natural that the man who has freedom within the confines of his allocated plot, should desire to have freedom to do as he wishes outside it too. Civilization's pitiable subjects are forever snapping and snarling at imprisoning bars, for they have been made as fierce as tigers by the gift of liberty, but have been thrown into a cage to preserve universal peace. This, however, is not a true peace. It is the peace of the tiger in a menagerie who lies glowering at those who have come to look at him. If just one bar is ever taken out of the cage, the world will erupt into chaos, and a second French Revolution will ensue. Even now there are constant individual revolts. That great North-European writer, Ibsen, has cited in detail the circumstances which will lead to this outbreak. Whichever I see the violent way in which a train runs along, indiscriminately regarding all human beings as so much freight, I look at the individuals cooped up in the carriages, and at the iron monster itself which cares nothing at all for individuality...

(*The Three-Cornered World* by Soseki, p.181-182)

We can see Soseki's consistent warning against modern civilization through a railway train as a visible incarnation of monstrous civilization which has swallowed up all human beings.

Soseki was different from most contemporary writers blindly enlightened by Western civilization. Yiu (1998.p.113) refers Soseki's critical and skeptical attitude towards Japan's blindly-copying westernization unlike most optimistic intellectuals then who saw their ideal in Western civilization. Yiu (1998) states as follows:

In contrast to their optimistic outlook, Soseki speaks of nervous prostration and despair, not because of any inherent pessimism, but because he understands only too well that Japan has to pay a high price for its rapid modernization and Westernization. He points out that the enlightenment of Japan is not a gradual process that occurs from within (naihatsu) like a bud coming into bloom, but a process imposed from without (gaihatsu), giving that the Japanese are trying to “condense a hundred years of development of the West into a span of ten years” (11:340). While other critics may remain insensitive to the phenomenon, Soseki discerns the insecurity in the collective consciousness of the nation as a result of such externally imposed development. Such insecurity manifests itself in the loss of manners and decency in society. (p.113)

Actually Soseki (1907) criticizes the dominating tide of modern enlightenment of Japan in his another work, *Nowaki* (1907) as follows:

The tide that dominates the modern enlightenment of Japan is a Western current, and, since Japanese who experience that wave are not Westerners, whenever a current washes in, we feel ill at ease as hangers-on in its midst. At any rate, whenever the new wave arrives, we have to give up whatever characteristics and reality of the old wave without a moment's thought. (sz, 11:339-340)

According to Flanagan (2005), English writer Caryl Philips was also very much charmed by the works of Soseki and after reading *The Tower of London* translated by Damian Flanagan. Carol Philips wrote about the deep sense of alienation and something which represents our common identity crisis involved in modernization in the English newspaper. It took more than 125 years for the Germans and French to recognize the greatness of Shakespeare and so will be the works of Soseki as he brought about universal human issues such as loneliness and identity crisis. We must be careful about the generalization of Soseki as a unique Japanese writer representing Japanese culture. Soseki's *Kokoro* has universal issues as not a few exchange students discussed as following in class.

First, Samuel Wong, an exchange student from Canada discusses the issues of Japan's modernization which brought individualism, loneliness and alienation. Samuel discusses the change from the traditional world towards the modern world as follows:

In Soseki's novel, *Kokoro*, many aspects of the human mentality that is human versus human conflicts were dealt with in the form of the characters' morality and linking it to the ever-changing traditional life of Japan to the modern world. The majority of the novel focuses on the tragic love triangle between Sensei, K, and Ojo-san—the woman they both loved, greatly emphasizing human loneliness, miseries and the alienation of life during the reformation of the Meiji period to modern Japan. Soseki was born in the Meiji period and died in 1916, 4 years after the end of the Meiji period. During that time, Soseki was sent to University of London by the Japanese government in order to obtain and bring back the advantage of modernization. However, it was during this time that Soseki experienced a great deal of loneliness in regards to modernization. This influence that Soseki had experienced in his life was one of the prevalent themes throughout *Kokoro* and is greatly confronted by the characters of Sensei and his friend K. The distrust, alienation, misery, selfishness and other characteristics of the bad side of human nature would be found in anywhere and in any era.

Soseki's novel shows the both Soseki's feelings towards modernization and also the enviableness of it. This is shown by Sensei's assimilation towards the modern world from the traditional world; Sensei could be considered a man that lived in both the traditional and modern world, from his actions with the initial encounter of K to towards the climax of the novel. In any era, the experience of misery, alienation, distrust and guilt will be present, however in my opinion the book outlined not the characteristics of human nature but rather the major difference of the change from the traditional world towards the modern world that is the sense and value that people will have.

(Samuel Wong, Carleton University, Canada)

Maxime Danesin also discusses Soseki's *Kokoro* in terms of the human mind and modernization influenced by Western geopolitical views or rather Said's *Orientalism* (Western-centered conception of the Orient, 1976). Maxim discusses as follows :

In following my previous thoughts, I would like to explain why, in my opinion, *Kokoro* appears as one of the best novels but also – and that's my point –, as the Japanese vision or part of a movement in fact worldwide. In that sense, what is making *Kokoro* unique is that it's written with a new point of view – especially at that time –. Speaking of the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, we have to remember how this period is a worldwide period of a breaking point.

Symptoms of the World War I are already visible. Geopolitically, ancient power like France, England – Colonial Empire – are on the decline as there are no more territories to discover. The USA is becoming more and more of a Giant, and a nation – Japan –, which should have been just a “*non-civilized country*” in the belief of European extremists, defeated the Russian Empire in a modern war. Those kinds of change are also in the mind and heart of the people. Politics have new ideas, making people as the Center of the State. There is the new field of study: psychology. The mind, our own personality is becoming the subject. People of France, Britain, Japan, USA, are facing a new question: who is “*I*”, what is “*I*” in “*my society*.” Everything is changing. And when everything is changing, there are two logical things happening. The first consequence is that people are feeling unstable, uncertain, divided and, extremes become more powerful– conservatives and revolutionaries. (Maxim, University of Tures, France)

Next Alexandra Loyer, a Canadian exchange student discusses the theme of loneliness which evolves into different inner conflicts for the two main characters, Soseki and K as follows:

The novel ***Kokoro*** by Soseki Natsume is filled with many themes, hidden emotions, and most importantly is a story about life. One of the major themes of ***Kokoro*** is the loneliness of the human heart. This theme occurs throughout the story, and evolves into different, stronger emotions for the two main characters, Sensei and K. The theme of loneliness is one that slowly grows throughout the story, and one realises at the end, that it is one of the reasons for the dramatic downfall of the characters. Sensei and K show signs of loneliness at the start of their story. It grows when Sensei invites K to live with him, and climaxes towards the end when the situation becomes desperate for a chance at love, in which case the characters end up destroying each other. ***Kokoro*** starts out with Sensei recalling his first case of real loneliness.

(Alexandra Loyer, University of Victoria, Canada)

Patrick Mcdaniel, an American exchange student deeply discusses the space between two people in *Kokoro* in terms of the Phantom of loneliness which is inherent in all human society. Patrick found the impact of loneliness in human connection expressed in Soseki’s *Kokoro* as follows:

I sat for a long time wondering what I would write about this book. The simplicity of this novel seems to mock me, as I now see all the separate layers of emotion

and conflict, burning in and out like ash from a cigarette. I dug my fingers in between the pages near the end, and began reading through some of the last paragraphs of the book when I found a passage that led me to the exact question that I could not seem to grasp. The passage reads, “You and I belong to different eras, and so we think differently. There is nothing we can do to bridge the gap between us. Of course, it may be more correct to say that we are different simply because we are two separate human beings.” The moment I read this, the question shot clear through my body, “What is this phantom that seems to exist between all people?” This dense ghost of nothingness that seems to always make us feel alone, trapped in our own minds forever. If that question is dissected even more, other questions can branch from it, such as “How can we destroy this phantom in order to truly connect with other humans?” or “What is this 'nothingness' and how can such a thing exist?” Before getting overwhelmed, I want to first explore the phantom, or the “fundamental loneliness inherent in all society” as it is described on the back cover of the novel. I refer to it as a 'phantom' merely because that is exactly what this loneliness is. In Webster's dictionary phantom is defined as “something apparent to sense but with no substantial existence.” It is also important to distinguish this loneliness from the more short-lived loneliness. If we part from our lover, and do not see them for months or even years, this is indeed a deep loneliness- but not the loneliness that Soseki is experimenting on. The loneliness that is the dirt and roots from which this novel grows is the feeling that Sensei has, that we all have, but which Sensei chooses to let guide him. I believe that Soseki's intention was to in the end force us to see the impact of this loneliness on our lives. In seeing this loneliness, we can move closer to destroying it and come closer to achieving the greatest feat of all: human connection.

(Patrick Mcdaniel, University of Illinois, USA)

From these discussions on the loneliness of human hearts, the phantom of loneliness and loneliness involved in ego, we can say that the loneliness which preoccupies human hearts in modern society is a universal issue. We can reconfirm that the greatest adventure in life must be the exploration of the human heart as Soseki implies in his many novels. This is the reason that the title of this story “Kokoro” does not necessarily means the state of mind but it symbolizes the exploration of the human heart involved in complex human relationships. In other words, “Kokoro” is a mirror of human hearts and it reflects human loneliness and its abyss of sorrow, where K and Sensei have wondered around and consequently

drowned into their ‘white rest.’

7. Estimation of Soseki's *Kokoro* by the Exchange Students

I assigned the 26 exchange students to write their own opinions on Soseki's *Kokoro* as a mid-term research paper. I encouraged them to use their own original tools to examine *Kokoro* in order to construct their own criticism and discuss it in class. It is interesting to know that the tools they used the most to analyze the story are closely related to the key concepts of traditional Japanese implicit cultures or psychological terms related to human hearts. They wrote their mid-term research papers on Soseki's *Kokoro*, basing it on their own tools. I have got copyright permission from the exchange students in order to use some paragraphs of their mid-term research papers with their full names as important quotations of this paper (See the References). The tools they used to analyze Soseki's *Kokoro* are as follows:

7-1. Students' tools to analyze Soseki's *Kokoro*

Japanese Hierarchical System by Tim Kittel (Humboldt Universitat zu Berlin)

French Title of *Kokoro*, The Poor Heart of Man

by Jérôme Penet (Universite Jean Moulin Lyon 3, France):

Zen and Bushido by Richard Russell (University of Illinois, USA)

The Phantom of Loneliness by Patrick Mcdaniel (University of Illinois, USA)

Sensei's Mirrors: Mirrors Reflected by The Characters

by Bryan Anderson (University of Illinois, USA)

Watshi's Role and The Future of The Story

by Andrew Macas (University of Illinois, USA)

Secrecy, Responsibility and Honor by Asim Sarwar (University of Leeds, UK)

Biblical Perspectives: Proverb in Bible by Soo Ohe (University of Illinois, USA)

Japanese Sabi-Loneliness by Angela Wing Yan (University of Leeds, UK):

Dramatic Irony in Comparison with Othello

by Joshua Faulk (University of Hawaii, USA)

Hawaiian Value System by John Paul Gampon (University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA)

The Change from Traditional World Towards Modern World

by Samuel Wong (Carleton University, Canada)

The Power of Ego and Confession by Jessica Dang (University of Leeds, UK)

Power of Confession by Kai Wasson (State University of New York at Buffalo, USA)

Woman's Position in The story: Egalitarian Point of View

by Caroline Wallace (University of Victoria, Canada)

Perspectives of Loneliness by Alexandra Loyer (University of Victoria, Canada)

Guilt and Shame: Shame Culture and Sin Culture

by Kyle McCreedy: (University of Illinois, USA)

Sense of Space Between People in Japanese Culture

by Emily Chu (University of Illinois, USA)

The Deep-seated Emotions by Amelia Hobbs: (University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA)

As a Western Reader (Me and *Kokoro*) by David Donovan (University of Leeds, UK)

The End and The Beginning of an Era with General Nogi

by Karhim Kim: (University of Illinois, USA)

Context Approach: France, UK, USA and Japan

by Maxime Danesin: (Universite Francois-Rabelais de Tours, France)

The Individual and Society by Anna Quinn (University of Pittsburgh, USA)

Embodiment of Japanese Faults by Alana Swiss (University of Pittsburgh, USA)

K and My Own Relationships With My Parents in Korea

by Hwisun Lee (University of Arizona, USA)

The Neutral Tone of Confession

by Faiza Sahraoui (Universite Jean Moulin Lyon 3, France)

I provided the English version of *Kokoro* to all exchange students in the first class and later the Japanese original version to some who were willingly to read it in the original as the token of their serious study in this semester. Some students told me that they would share this great book with their parents or friends back home, which assured me of the value of *Kokoro*. Actually some exchange students have already e-mailed me that they shared the work of *Kokoro* with their families and friends in their home country. I have come to be more certain that the heart of Japanese culture and literature is still alive in their hearts even now, which has made the study of Soseki's *Kokoro* more meaningful and universal for future generations beyond national and cultural borders.

For example, the spirit of Meiji in Soseki's *Kokoro* has a cross-cultural implication for many exchange students. Anna Quinn from University of Pittsburgh e-mailed me six months later after she returned to the USA as follows: "I am using Soseki's *Kokoro* as the heart of my philosophy term paper this semester. I am writing about Soseki as a symbol of the decline of the Meiji era. I

am going to send it when it is done.” Karhim Kim also wrote me that coincidentally she has just finished reading Soseki’s *Kokoro* in the original in her Japanese Language Class in this semester at University of Illinois. This is what I expected when I put Soseki’s *Kokoro* into the syllabus of “Japanese Culture and Literature” in Japan Studies for exchange students. Education is cross-culturally worth sharing and continuing. I sincerely appreciate the open-minded attitudes of all the exchange students and their great contribution to this paper.

7-2 Cross-Cultural Comments by The Exchange Students

Spirit of Meiji

The spirit of Meiji is the ultimate clue to open Soseki’s *Kokoro*. The Spirit of Meiji is Emperor Meiji himself, as Jun Eto translated as follows: “He is the living symbol of a traditional morality that seems to control ugly modern egoism.” We have discussed the historical backdrop of Emperor Meiji’s death and the loyal death of General Nogi in terms of a parallel between fiction and historical facts. General Nogi’s suicide gave Sensei a good reason to die as Emperor Meiji gave General Nogi a reason to follow his master. Sensei read General Nogi’s testament in the newspaper and found that the general has been longing to die for 35 years with the heavy shadow of shame, and so has been Sensei.

Kyle McCreedy, an exchange student from USA who specialized in Japanese history discusses the spirit of Meiji as follows:

One final example of Soseki showing Japanese Meiji era cultural conflicts is the scene in which Sensei and his wife are discussing the end of the Meiji era. Having heard that the Meiji Emperor had died, Sensei mentions that he is worried that all those who grew up during the Meiji era will become anachronisms. He is worried that he himself will become an anachronism. Jokingly his wife suggests to him ‘junshi’, or ritualistically killing oneself to follow one’s lord into death. While his wife suggests this as a joke, Sensei begins to take it very seriously. Soseki also brings up General Nogi, who famously lost his standard during the Russo-Japan War. He was extremely shamed by this, but refused to kill himself because he felt that would be a disservice to his emperor. He decided to live with his shame for many years, and after the death of the Meiji Emperor he committed seppuku with his wife. These things show the Japanese ideal of deleting shame through suicide. This tradition goes back to the samurai era and the tradition of ‘seppuku’ to make

up for a flaw in honor or for an act of cowardice. In the Meiji era 'samurai values' continued to have a large impact on society, especially in the military and in companies.

(Kyle McCreedy , University of Illinois, USA)

Karhim Kim, exchange student from USA with Korean background, discusses the spirit of Meiji, referring to Junshi as follows:

Sensei wrote, "On the night of the Imperial Funeral I sat in my study and listened to the booming of the cannon. To me, it sounded like the last lament for the passing of an age (246)." After the death of the Emperor, General Nogi, a figure who represented the new Japan due to the victories from the Russo-Japanese war, committed *junshi*, an act of an older era. This is a changing point for Sensei. He realizes that he is not so compatible with the "modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves (30)." Following this realization came the decision to commit suicide. In the testament he sends to *Watashi* Sensei never ceases to mention the differences in their perspective caused by the generation gap. Sensei understands that *Watashi* might not be able to understand his decision to end his life but wants *Watashi* to know that part of the reason came from the fact that he was a part of the older era, the one that *Watashi* is and was not a part of. Although both of their identities are formed in Tokyo, where Sensei's identity is altered and where *Watashi* begins to dismiss traditional ideas, adopting the more *modern* views, the differences of time has led one to end his life, marking the end of an era and one to continue with the new era.

(Karhim Kim, University of Illinois, USA)

Shame Culture

Kyle McCreedy discusses guilt and shame in Japanese culture in comparison with Christianity in western culture as follows:

Kokoro also deals a lot with feelings of guilt and shame. One great example of this is sensei's feelings of guilt over betraying his best friend. This is a great example of Japanese shame culture. In western cultures feelings of guilt and shame are very much linked to Christianity, and so doing evil things cause one to feel guilty in relationship to ones relationship to god. In Japanese culture, guilt is manifested differently. Shame is felt because of how one has harmed a comrade, or friend, or family member. In short, because of one's actions that harm the rest

of society. The conflict between Sensei and K is a great example of this, in that Sensei harmed a friend for personal reasons, and it resulted in irreparable harm. As a result Sensei feels horribly guilty until he himself decides to follow K into death. This can even be seen as a commentary on the change toward a more modern and individualistic society in general.

(Kyle McCreedy, University of Illinois, USA)

Zen Buddhism

Richard Russell, an exchange student from USA discusses Zen Buddhism and its influence on Soseki's *Kokoro*.

He refers to "True Way" based on Zen Buddhism which has preoccupied the heart of K until he took his life:

Zen Buddhism can be summed up with two points, these points being what Zen Buddhism tries to get across. The first point is that there is a 'True Way' of life and that people find it through Buddhist enlightenment in the form of purification of worldly desires and needs. The second point is that the world solely consists of things that ultimately lead to pain and suffering; this pain and suffering is caused by our desires and that we find enlightenment as mentioned, by letting go of all our worldly desires. Of course understanding this is only a single part of the larger picture that Souseki Natsume illustrates with *Kokoro* and to better understand this story there is still a little more background necessary. When considering Souseki Natsume's *Kokoro*, obviously the time period and the author himself are variables that need to be considered. There is however an entire individual's life and experiences that are also incorporated into their work, and we go another level deeper when there is a cultural background to consider as well. For this story, Souseki Natsume and the Japanese culture it is imperative to understand the concept of Buddhism, particularly the Zen sect of it. What can be taken away from this story more than anything else is a look into the past and an entire generation's way of thinking. The story of *Kokoro* is a memorable one for the overall themes in the story and the message it gives to it's readers, not only that the story works as a great interpretation of the Japanese people of the Meiji period as well as Souseki Natsume. Perhaps part of Souseki Natsume is represented through the characters K and Sensei, as a testament of the Meiji era and the past speaking out to the later generations of Japan as they are represented through Watashi, as the past and truth are slowly revealed. Though the story is assisted by

having a grasp of Bushido as well as Zen Buddhism, the story in itself is one that can be understood cross-culturally by people who take the time to understand the power of truth, confession, loyalty and love. *Kokoro* will likely continue on to be a timeless story as well, for future generations as a voice of the past, confessing all of its successes and failures.

(Richard Russell, University of Illinois, USA)

Sabi

Sabi is a medieval aesthetic combining elements of old age, loneliness, resignation, and tranquility. The configuration of the grief-stricken *Kokoro* itself is colored with Sabi. Angela Mak, a student from UK discusses the factors of Sabi in Soseki's *Kokoro* as follows:

Generally, I have been under the impression that the creation of 'Sabi' comes from either physical or mental suffering. As these sufferings can cause negative feelings such as loneliness, misanthropy and melancholy, which in worst cases, getting too immersed in these feelings can result in one killing himself, like Sensei (or possibly Soseki). Nevertheless, I would like to appreciate Soseki's way of presenting his ideas in such forms of ordinary conversations and without expanding them too much. A Chinese idiom would suit to his light inkling of ideas - 'a dragonfly gently touches the water,' and provokes a wave of ripples spreading out from the centre. A metaphor that Soseki, as the dragonfly, gives us hints and allows readers to expand their thoughts freely as if the thoughts are the ripples. No wonder Soseki is the true master of literature-a master of human life reflections.

(Angela Mak, University of Leeds, UK)

Bushido

Richard Russell refers to Bushido linked with Confucianism in *Kokoro* as follows:

Bushido is another part of the cultural background and ultimately the message of *Kokoro* as it is a concept that has a great deal of influence on the Japanese people of Souseki's time which ultimately means his written work as well. Bushido translates to "way of the warrior," however there is a great deal more going on here than simply just swords and fighting as Bushido is a cultural concept that comes from Chinese Confucianism. This concept ties to filial piety and loyalty, which is perhaps the most important thing to Confucianism and Bushido as well.

As a result of these ties, much of the story focuses on the concept of letting go of our desires and loyalty to something we perceive as greater than ourselves.

(Richard Russell, University of Illinois, USA)

Asim Sarwar, an exchange student from UK also discusses the Japanese values of Bushido in Soseki's *Kokoro* as follows:

In addition to this, Soseki also manages to include Japanese values of Buddhism as well as those of Bushido, beautifully incorporated into the storyline and personalities making the novel unique to readers worldwide and also acts as a priceless insight into Japanese cultural values and modern day issues. I do not see this to be so different to how I imagined the Samurai to have acted with their own wives. It is under my impression that the Samurai, following the way of Bushido, did not speak much of their own thoughts or emotions to their wives. Instead they kept to themselves, and valued honour and respect above everything else.

(Asim Sarwar, University of Leeds, UK)

Confucianism

The psychological conflict between individualism and Confucianism is also in the hearts of protagonists in the story. At first, Sensei's inner conflict is between his Individualism and his collectivism influenced by Confucianism and traditional Japan in Meiji era. His individualism was influenced by his education at Tokyo University and westernization of Japan. Second, guilt in the romantic love triangle and self-punishment come from the moral code of Confucianism. Let us look at a comment related to Confucianism by Karhim Kim from US, who was originally brought up in Korea.

It would seem that Watashi's father stands on the same side as Sensei regarding the event of the Emperor and of General Nogi's death. "Oh, His Majesty is gone at last. I too...(91)." This suggests that the father was quite stricken by the news of Emperor's death. As his sickness worsened he was talking deliriously, saying, "Will General Nogi ever forgive me? ... How can I ever face him without shame? Yes, General, I will be with you soon (117)." While there is no implication that the father has a reason to feel shame, one can see that just as the general follows his master to the grave, the father is associating the general's passing as an obligation on his part to follow in the same path. This sentiment is most likely rooted from the Confucian value of *filial piety*, the relationship between the ruler

and the ruled. In other words, individuals of the older era, the father and Sensei, as a part of a society where they still value the idea of *bushido*, were much more affected by the display of loyalty and self-sacrifice performed by General Nogi. Upon hearing the news of Emperor's death, Sensei says, "I was overcome with the feeling that I and the others, who had been brought up in that era, were now left behind to live as anachronisms (245)." With this remark, Sensei's wife mentions *junshi*, and Sensei "reminded of its existence," jokingly states that if he were to commit suicide it would be "through loyalty to the spirit of the Meiji era (245)." These expressions of grief and loneliness which Sensei and the father display demonstrate the values of the older era, where *bushido* was embedded in the society unlike the new era in which neither Sensei nor the father succeeded in adjusting.

(Karhim Kim, Univ.of Illinois, USA)

Hierarchical Society

Tim Kittel a German exchange student from Berlin, specializing physics and Japanese culture, discusses Japanese hierarchical system, referring to Soseki's *Kokoro*. As he has been a member of traditional Japanese Karate, his observation on Japanese hierarchical society is quite meaningful. He discusses as follows:

Having lived for one year in Japan, I had the possibility to see the unique way of human interactions within the Japanese Society. It is a world, that resides between tradition and advancement, between hierarchical understanding and group feeling, mixing the new western culture in the Japanese understanding of living and creating something completely new. Before coming to Japan, I read "Die Axt im Chrysanthemenwald" by Kerstin und Andreas Fels, a book that describes "50 Wegen, sich in Japan zu blamieren" (50 ways on how to embarrass yourself in Japan) and explains how to avoid them. Even though I was fully aware that this book exaggerated a lot about Japanese people, I was sure that there was a lot of truth in it. So coming to Japan, I tried to remember a lot of the hints the book gave me and tried to be as open-minded as possible at the same time. Something, the book stresses quite a lot is the importance of hierarchy for the Japanese Society... Japanese people are worldwide known for being hard workers and in my opinion this is partly a result of the hierarchal understanding. Having respect for your superiors and your company you follow their orders and it would be a shame for a lot of Japanese workers to leave work before their superiors. This diligent work attitude is one of the main reasons why Japan became such a powerful industrial

nation but at the same time it is one of the major sources of Japan's problems nowadays. Even in Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro*, we can clearly see how Sensei teaches Watashi and gives his life experience to him. The whole book is part of teaching your life experience to the next generation, as I explained more detailed in my essay. I think Japan has a very unique possibility to create a modern society that includes "western thoughts" like flexibility, change and construction but does not lose its own traditional ideas. And with that, Japanese people will find a way to be true to themselves and still developing forward. As I showed in my essay, Japan is in the middle of doing the progress to achieve this goal and I am glad I have the possibility to witness it.

(Tim Kittel, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany)

7-3. Positive Remarks on Soseki's *Kokoro* by Exchange Students

The followings are some of positive remarks on Soseki's *Kokoro* by exchange students in my class from their own cultural, national and personal views with their own analytical tools. First, Jessica Dang, a British exchange student states how Soseki skillfully weaves love, guilt and human loneliness into the souls of the major characters. Jessica persuasively discusses the role of ego which is related to human loneliness and the power of confession. Ego affects our human drama as Jessica discusses:

"You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence and our own egotistical selves."

Common themes often talked about when discussing Natsume Soseki's masterpiece *Kokoro*, are the topics of love, guilt and loneliness. They are apparent in the novel, and are therefore the most obvious choices. However, one that is usually missed because Natsume so skillfully weaves it into the souls of the characters is the theme of ego and the power of confession. Through the two main protagonists, ego shows itself as the root of conflict between Sensei and K and each of their approaches to Ojōsan, and thus, it also forms the basis of the plot of the story. We must first begin by defining the meaning of ego. The most common interpretation of the word involves pride in oneself and one's own actions, which we will see certainly plays a part, but it can also mean one's identification with self and their place in society, which strongly influences the characters in the story.

From the point of view of a western reader, Sensei is a very prideful man.

He seems to care a lot about how people think of him, especially Ojōsan, the object of his affection. Sensei, who was swindled by his uncle, developed a lack in trust in people from a young age. He even says to the narrator 'Watashi', "*It's not you particular that I distrust, but the whole of humanity.*" And by the time K came along, he had become almost possessive over Ojōsan. The very thought of another thing that he considered 'belonged' to him being taken away again frightened him. Not to mention, this time it seems as though he was going to lose against his best friend K, who he had invited into the household himself, and who he had always held an inferiority complex against. Despite his strong feelings, Sensei found himself bound by what he thought society wanted of him, that he could not bring himself to propose to Ojōsan. It was only when the situation got so desperate that he thought he might really lose her to K that Sensei mustered the courage to ask for her hand in marriage, simultaneously getting what he had always wanted but betraying his friend at the same time.

(Jessica Dang, University of Leeds, UK)

Another exchange student from UK, Asim Sarwar, highly estimates Soseki's *Kokoro*. Asim wrote as follows:

Kokoro-a historic piece of work described by *The Independent* as "A brilliant study of self-hatred and guilt" is often referred to as Soseki's masterpiece. Its wide appeal I believe is partly due to the extraordinary presence of various themes in the story including love, envy, guilt, loyalty, anxiety, loneliness only to name a few. Overall, I believe Kokoro is a tragic story of love and relationships, the power of loneliness and in some ways, the importance of communication and companionship. Sensei and K, two lonely men torn apart over Ojōsan, are both men who represent figures of honour and respect. In this way, it is an interesting insight into traditional Japanese values presented to us in a more modern day situation. Sensei's dramatic confession at the end of the novel acts as a conclusion to an otherwise rather uneventful, minimally detailed story of Sensei and K. Soseki's work "Kokoro" is indeed a fascinating story, one which I believe could only be pulled off by a Japanese author in this extraordinary fashion.

(Asim Sarwar, University of Leeds, UK)

Next, a French exchange student, Jérôme Penet discusses the French title of *Kokoro*, "Le Pauvre Coeur des Hommes" which implies a darker side of human hearts. He discusses as follows:

I think that the French title of the novel “Le Pauvre Coeur des Hommes” is actually quite accurate. This title could be translated in “The poor heart of men”, “men” being here a generic term including in it women as well and reflects perfectly in my opinion, Natsume Soseki’s will to describe how men have no control of their own hearts and destiny. They are, in this novel, victims of their lives and cannot fight against the changes they can observe in themselves..... The two best examples of this are of course Sensei and K. K is a mere spectator of his own changing, he feels the trouble in his heart, his love growing for Shizu, and has no control upon this which makes him suffer a lot because it goes against his will to pursue his path. He sees the changes occurring but is totally unable to control or fight it. In parallel Sensei cannot control his own behavior when he understands what is going on between Shizu and K. His first wish was to help K to get out of his path and to bring him back in society, but when he understands that what he did actually becomes dangerous for his love for Shizu, he fights K and pushes him even deeper in despair to preserve himself. And during this process he is completely aware of what he is doing but cannot fight himself. He becomes, just as K, a spectator of his own change and I think this description of their mental processes is brilliant.

In conclusion, I really appreciated this novel because of this tragic atmosphere. The mental processes are so well described that it made me feel like I could have been any of those characters and made me aware of this weakness that is in any of us and that can lead people to forget who they really are. This is also why I think this French title is actually quite accurate and reflects the intentions of the author and his vision of people.

(Jérôme Penet, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3, France)

Finally we would like to share North American students’ positive estimation of Soseki’s *Kokoro*. Bryan Anderson from USA discovered the reflection of others symbolizing Sensei’s mirrors. They have reflective tendencies that we as human beings cannot help but adopt. Bryan deeply discusses it as follows:

In this essay, due to the appropriate symbolic meaning, I will refer to the latter group as ‘mirrors.’ This reflective concept is very well executed by Soseki, and is unquestionably universal. As Sensei said, “My own past, which made me what I am, is a part of human experience” (247). Although all the characters who interact are mirrors unto each other, Sensei’s case is particularly strong. Because of this, I will focus on his character for the analysis of the importance of mirrors in

Kokoro... *Kokoro* serves to present brilliant analyses of the human condition, and Soseki subtly and masterfully presents the reflective tendencies that we as human beings cannot help but adopt. Through Sensei's mirrors, we are shown how are personal convictions are made, reinforced, damaged, and broken as it is with his uncle and K; we are shown through Ojosan how our view of others is often really a view of ourselves; and finally we are shown how we seek redemption through those we find in similar situations to ourselves, as is shown through the interactions with Watashi. Because Soseki so strongly understands the tendencies of the human mind, *Kokoro* to this day remains a steadfast classic.

(Bryan Anderson, University of Illinois, USA)

Anna Quinn also discusses the depth of Sosei's *Kokoro* in terms of a reflection of the others (main characters of the story) as follows:

Among all those who have attempted to capture the essence of the Japanese word "kokoro," Lafcadio Hearn may very well have managed the most faithful translation, citing its meaning as "the heart of things" (*vi*). Indeed, Natsume Sōseki, through the fated relationship he draws between Sensei, K, and Shizu, as well as through the link provided by the narrator, allows the reader a glimpse not merely into the lives of these four characters alone, but also makes a statement about human life and death as a whole. Part of the effectiveness of Sōseki's characters, I would argue, is the intricate manner by which they are intertwined. Out of the four characters, not a single one manages to stand independently; rather, each is (even if only slightly) a reflection of the others. For example, the narrator ("Watashi") arguably makes the least impact upon the plot's turn of events, at least as far as Sensei, K, and Shizu's storyline is concerned. And yet, the influence Sensei has made upon Watashi's life (even prior to the arrival of his testament) cannot be overlooked. For example, after Watashi has returned home to care for his father, his family becomes preoccupied with Watashi's future prospects. Watashi's mind is filled with Sensei's advice regarding his father's estate ("I wonder what has been decided about the family property?"); his mother, meanwhile, continues to fret, concerned over the lack of a response from his mentor, crying, "Haven't you heard from him yet?" (114). Thus, despite the second portion of the book taking place in a locale entirely separate from that which Sensei occupies—nor have Watashi's family actually come in contact with the man personally—Sensei's existence nevertheless affects the narrator's household's atmosphere.

(Anna Quinn, University of Pittsburgh, USA)

Amelia Hobbs from University of Hawaii discusses how the deep-seated emotions carry with them power, both to affect our own lives and the lives of those around us, and consequently they rule the tragic destiny of the major protagonists as follows:

We know that the narrator is drawn to Sensei as a person early on. Why is this? What is responsible for our first impressions of someone? Aside from appearance, it is our behaviour that either draws people to us or keeps them away, and Sensei's behaviour is characterized by the deep emotions that he has kept to himself for all these years. One might interpret the reason for the narrator's approach to mean that he extra perceptive, and was aware of some of the content of Sensei's "heart." Here, he has approached a man who has spent his life closing out anyone who might have been a friend or companion, including his own wife. And the narrator, because of persistence, benefits from his knowing of Sensei – he learns about relationships between humans, gains social experience, and ultimately provides the outlet that Sensei needed for his trapped emotions. Sensei's behaviour, which to others appeared to be that of someone reclusive and almost misanthropic, may have been interpreted by the narrator as a plea for human contact, for someone to converse with.

In this contact Soseki demonstrates beautifully the complex nature of "Kokoro." For Sensei, who feared exposure of his past so much that he sealed himself off from the world, also wanted and indeed needed the friend that he found in the narrator more than anything else. The narrator, too, learned from this friendship, as demonstrated when he goes home to his ailing father and suddenly wonders about the fate of his family's wealth. And he learned about friendship and love, because Sensei saw in him many of the qualities of Sensei's younger self. Sensei was able to show some aspects of the narrator's own self to him. On the extreme other end from the narrator is K, who fought his own emotions. Then, when he confessed, instead of being able to discuss his emotions with Sensei, he was ashamed of them. Soseki presents the destructive power of emotions, and their ability to draw people together. The purpose of *Kokoro*, then, may be to express these thoughts on "heart" that Soseki has learned: the idea that we do not know ourselves, but that these deep-seated emotions carry with them power, both to affect our own lives and the lives of those around us. Jealousy, loneliness, friendship and love are all themes used to explore this, but it is ultimately the

author's own heart that is in bared in the book.

(Amelia Hobbs, University of Hawaii, USA)

Kai Wasson from USA discusses the power of confession which is decisive in the tragic destiny of protagonists in Soseki's *Kokoro*. Kai found that Soseki intentionally reminds us of the power of K's confession to Sensei while he was alive and the power of Sensei's confession to Watashi as his testament. Kai discusses it as follows:

The awesome power of confession is a phenomenon that is recognized in many societies and cultural works. Soseki Natsume is one person among many who have realized this fact and utilized it to teach us about ourselves as human beings... K's suicide at first seems to be out of despair resulting from Sensei's proposal of marriage to Okusan. However, I believe K had decided to end his life after Sensei had essentially ridiculed him for falling in love despite having constantly professed love to be an obstacle for finding "the true way." Sensei's testament later explains "One might say that his [K's] past was his life, and to deny it would have meant that his life thus far had been without purpose. ...he could not but continue along the path that he had so far followed" (p. 218). Before K had moved in with Sensei K had explained that he was not only interested in scholarly knowledge, but to "become a strong person through the exercise of will-power" (p. 173). K had decided that to remain true to himself he would have to kill himself so that the pain of love would not ruin his will-power to seek "the true way." In this sense K successfully lives up to his own ideals and releases himself from his pain as a result of his confession. Sensei, on the other hand, is left alive to deal with the guilt of having essentially caused his friend's death. In the end, Sensei too decides to take his own life, albeit for different reasons than K. With the recent death of the Meiji emperor as well as General Nogi, Sensei decided that then would be a good time to take his leave of the world and relieve himself of the guilt that he had been carrying since K's death. Whereas K had killed himself to remain true to his own past, Sensei takes his own life to escape his "divine punishment." His entire testament to Watakushi serves as the confession he should have said from the very beginning. With this confession, Sensei can at least find some peace of mind before he finally left the world for good. Thus, confession has the power to relieve one from one's anguish, or to destroy the one who bottles up that anguish and lets it dominate their life.

(Kai Watoson, State University of New York at Buffalo, USA)

Emily Chu from USA highly estimates the immortality of Kokoro as follows:

Kokoro has been hailed as a masterpiece by critics around the world, a novel written at an acclaimed author's literary peak, a story that embodies the soul of Japan at the end of an age. Indeed, part of Kokoro's immortality as a novel can be attributed to how deeply it pulls from the sense of space between people in Japanese culture. Loneliness lies at the heart of the story, but Natsume's expression of it is unique among authors. Not in its setting, or even necessarily the characters (though the natures of Sensei, K, and the others could encompass another paper entirely), but in how the story is told.

(Emily Chu, University of Illinois, USA)

Hwisun Lee, a Korean Student from University of Alizona discusses K's personality in comparison with his own personality and relationships with his parents.

Reading through Kokoro (Soseki Natsume) I personally thought that it helps to realize daily life that everyone experiences love, friendship, secret life and tragedy with no age limit or whoever you are. However, it was more special in Kokoro that reflects love between lovers with secret life that could not show it to Ojosan or Watashi, betraying over friendship and secret life in Japanese point of view. I found similarity of my personality with K and complete opposite view of Sensei. I also felt my experience that had conflicts over different thinking between my parents and I. When I reached to read the part where Sensei was testifying his early life to Watashi, it was starting to resolve why Sensei was veiling to either Ojosan or Watashi. At the same time, I knew more about this person, K, in the middle of his testament. But I experienced same result of time difference existing between my parents and me. There was definite difference of thinking that different aged people have different mind set that causes conflicts. I remembered when my parents were argued with me because their thoughts were slightly different than what I was thinking about. Same as happened between Sensei and Watashi. The quote that Sensei said, " Please remember that you met after I had become soiled. If one respects one's elders because they have lived longer and have become more soiled than oneself, then certainly I deserve your respect." (Pg. 142) This was what my parents were exactly thinking about when I had a conversation with them. Sensei did not trust anyone even himself. Therefore, he was very careful to look into someone, especially Watashi in the beginning of the novel. However, he realized how Watashi was trustful student. This was exactly

what happened to me. My parents were not sure about trusting me as their faithful son. As time goes by, they start to believe in me as their trustful son although I had a lot of conflict with them. Thus, I saw Sensei's hesitation that my parents were also experienced throughout *Kokoro*.

(Hwisun Lee, university of Arizona, USA)

7-4. Critical Comments on Soseki's *Kokoro*

There are some critical views on the work of Soseki's *Kokoro* regarding the way the women were described in *Kokoro*, Japanese communication styles, Japanese societal faults, Western plotline, Biblical perspectives, the neutral tone of confession. First, Caroline from Canada criticizes the status of women throughout the story in terms of egalitarianism, albeit she knows the cultural and inter-generational differences between Japan and USA in *Kokoro*. As an egalitarian modern student, she criticizes the attitudes of Japanese men towards Japanese women in the story of *Kokoro* as follows:

There are many themes present in the novel *Kokoro*. Loneliness due to modernization, as well as loneliness created from the loss of a friend. Guilt, as well as punishment for the guilt is also discussed. Throughout the novel there were instances of the status of women being lower than that of men. I know that this could be due to the Japanese culture, yet I could not help being offended. In the novel, women are not regarded highly. Sensei frequently looks down on his wife, and Watashi does so as well. Sensei feels that if he were not around, his wife would not be able to survive on her own. He states things such as, he must return home for his wife's sake, or that she has no one to depend on but him. Shizu is constantly thought of as not being able to survive on her own. Another theme brought up, in relation to truth is evident, in his letter, when he thinks, "Is it not because women are so trusting that they are constantly being deceived by men?" (156). Sensei, having trusted his uncle so much, resulting in his being deceived, looks down on the idea of trust. Watashi also states his idea of women when he notes that, "Sensei's wife, it seemed, had so little to do in the house that she could, if she wished, serve her guests homemade ice cream"(71). I may be looking too deeply into this, or it could be the translation, yet I found that these instances offended me a little.

(Caroline Wallace, University of Victoria, Canada)

John Paul from Hawaii discusses the sadness of dual suicide in *Kokoro* in terms of Hawaiian value system and the differences of communication styles between Japan and USA. He criticizes the dual suicides as a form of release in *Kokoro* as follows:

What really bothers me about this book is the aspect of suicide as a form of release. The reason for the deaths in this book was a lost way in "K's" case and the burden of guilt for Sensei (although his death came after a release of that guilt). A lot has to do with the relationships that these men have with their friends and family. In Hawaii, the ties with friends and family are made so strongly that everyone that close is considered family. I think that because there is always someone to turn to when one has a problem, reading about grief and the lack of communication between friends strikes me as very odd. What I also did not understand was the lack of real life experience that caused Sensei to not trust anyone. For example, Sensei has a top notch education, an estate, and money to live off of without needing a job and yet he still can't get over a betrayal by his family. He then gets married and with all of this he still cannot be a happy person. There are many families in Hawai'i that struggle to make ends meet, but the real wealth there is not material, it is in the quality of friends and family. So when I read this book, I felt as though Sensei had everything he needed but lacked the communication skills to open up to his family and friend enough to know what needed to be done to create a more harmonious world, for himself. In my opinion he is the kind of person who really takes for granted the treasures that are right in front of his eyes and cannot move forward with his life because of a hardship. That being said, I think that the Japanese way of writing is much like its speech, or rather the "chinmoku" and "amae" aspects. As I read through this book, I had no idea that the sliding doors between Sensei's room and K's room were a reflection of their relationship or the connection of their hearts. Or that the elements play a part in human emotion. I myself like fantasy, science-fiction or suspense type books, so to me, any rain or door closing is literal in my imagination. I think that is the difference between the direct style of communication versus the indirect Japanese way of speaking or reading, and that is also why I want to read this book and other books in its original language.

(John Paul Gampon, University of Hawaii, USA)

Alana Swiss from USA discusses Japanese societal faults to the Japanese people and demonstrates the weakness of the human heart as follows:

The idea of *Kokoro* is plentiful when analyzed through the development of the characters. This title directs the audience's attention to the nature of the characters and invites you to look deeper into their own struggles throughout the story. When viewed from the book as a whole, however, I believe *Kokoro* carries a slightly different connotation. With the context we have established above, *kokoro* refers to the root, or the center of an idea or problem. Due to the fact that the intention of *Kokoro* is to highlight Japanese societal faults to the Japanese people and demonstrate the weakness of the human heart, *Kokoro* may refer to the heart of the Japanese people, the heart of a society, and how hearts must be connected in order to learn from one another. This is the concept Soseki wishes to convey to his readers.

(Alana Swiss, University of Pittsburgh, USA)

David Donovan discusses Soseki's *Kokoro* in terms of plotline of Western literature as comparative literature as follows:

With *Kokoro* having been the first Japanese novel of real length I have read, I found one aspect of it particularly intriguing, and at first rather surprising. That was the novel's focus, or rather what Souseki Natsume had chosen to focus on, and that was human emotion. Something that is often made to take a backseat in favour of a story or plotline in Western literature, yet provided the driving fuel of the novel in *Kokoro*'s case. This is indicating from the very beginning, even in the book's title and in my eyes it is this that makes for a truly aptly titled book as we see Souseki Natsume's 'Kokoro'. Souseki's outstanding skill in this book is to fascinate through personality, through the medium of his characters and exploration of them are we captivated. I feel this focus goes a great deal to allowing the audience to engage with the characters even if the audience themselves may indeed be a very different person to the characters. Even as a Western reader of the novel however, I do not believe this difference could be said to make the novel slightly harder to read for Western audiences since the way in which the characters have been portrayed by Souseki Natsume are such that their realism makes it easy for us to engage with the text. As a reader, thinking of the struggle that K for example had to go through in order to honestly tell Sensei of his feelings for Ojousan, or Sensei's difficulty to trust even his closest of friends, K due to his lingering feeling of betrayal in his early years. It is actions such as these which I believe allow us to engage with the novel.

(David Donovan, University of Leeds, UK)

Soo Ohe, a Korean student from University of Illinois, critically discusses Soseki in terms of Biblical perspectives, especially, Proverbs in Bible. She discusses as follows:

“Carefully guard your thoughts because they are the source of true life.” (Proverbs 4:23) This interesting statement about ‘kokoro’ is from the Bible, the Book that we Christians believe in as to be the word of God. Although they are using the specific word of ‘thoughts’ in the English version, the expression used in Korean version is more close to its original meaning of Japanese word ‘kokoro’. Despite of little differences in terms of language, all those words are implying the same thing in the end; one’s heart, the core of a human being, which makes one truly like a human being and also distinguishes one from the others.

As well known, Natsume Soseki seems to have been quite knowledgeable of the context of the Bible; however, it is not likely that he fully understood what all the teachings of the Bible mean and took them in personal, which is completely understandable for that the Bible is not an easy text to understand at all even for the most serious Christians. I, as a Christian myself, noticed of several parts of the book of ‘Kokoro’ where the author had a touch with the Biblical theme or idea. I have been reading the Bible through my whole life, and it was an interesting work to trace down different parts of ‘Kokoro’ reflecting Biblical concepts while reading the book from the Christian viewpoint. Although there are several ideas I compared and contrasted with great interest, yet by the time I finished reading the book it was the quotation from the Proverbs Chapter 4 which sums up everything to me. Speaking of the quotation, I find it very intriguing for that the author of the Proverbs suggesting that “kokoro”, one’s heart, is the most worth to protect because it is the source of the true life. And I think this ‘true life’ is not far different from what K was desperately seeking for through his entire life, the true way.

(Soo Ohe, Univ. of Illinois, USA)

Sahraoui Faiza from France criticizes the way Soseki let Sensei confess his secret. The confession is done with such a neutral tone that it seemed really unnatural to French young lady like Faiza. She discusses as follows:

It took me a long time to read *Kokoro* completely. Sensei’s confession really got on my nerves. Not because of what he was telling, but because of the way he was telling it. He wrote his confession with a so neutral tone that it seemed really unnatural to me, because he was writing about his own life. So even if I knew it was written like this in purpose to do not influence Watashi on his opinion about it

and his reflection may be at the end of the letter, it seemed that he passed all his life to think about it without any judgment about himself, without seeing how he was because his comments were too neutral. Also, at the end of the book, Sensei says that he knows he is quite lucky because his financial situation was good so he did not have to work and was able to live withdraw from the society; but at the beginning he gave a completely different impression. Every time he talked about it, when he presses Watashi to ask his father to write his testament or finely explain to Watashi what happened to him in the letter it seems that money takes a really important place in this story, not just as the reason of his uncle betrayal. As if he was as shocked by the fact of losing his money as by the fact of being betrayed by someone he really trusted in it. Because of this, until the last 20 pages where Sensei gives a really interesting judgment about himself, sensei appears to me as an egoist and uninteresting protagonist, and read a book about his life annoyed me. I think I need to read this book a second time to appreciate it. I certainly missed a lot of thing because of my bad feeling.

(Sahraoui Faiza, Universite Jean Moulin Lyon 3, France)

These critical views are worth discussing with exchange students as a cross-cultural study when today's significance of *Kokoko* is under strict examination of trans-cultural values in many academic papers and dissertations in the world. It is challenging for exchange students to criticize Soseki's attitude and the way he described human hearts, though most exchange students have relevant background knowledge of Meiji-era.

8. Dramatic Irony in *Kokoro* influenced by William Shakespeare.

The prerequisite of great fiction includes novelty, historical backgrounds, romance, death, confession and, what is called, dramatic irony, involving principal protagonists. Dramatic irony is a certain context in which a hero or heroin is to be involved in tragedy simply because they are not aware of the truth (innocent), albeit the audience or readers are well aware of it. We can see the effectiveness of dramatic irony and confessions in great tragedies of Shakespeare, such as *Othello*, *Hamelet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. So can we see the power of confession along with dramatic irony in the works of Soseki influenced by Shakespearean dramatic irony.

Joshua Faulk found the effectiveness of dramatic irony in Soseki's *Kokoro* in parallel with that of Shakespeare as follows:

Dramatic irony is the literary device in which the reader is given information that at least one of the characters in the story are unaware of. There are three stages to dramatic irony: installation, exploitation and resolution. This creates conflict as the information the character believes to be true is known by the reader to not be the correct information. William Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello" and Natsume Soseki's novel "Kokoro" both employ dramatic irony.... I think that the dramatic irony in "Othello" and "Kokoro" are similar because they both deal with love, Othello believing that his wife Desdemona is having a relationship with Cassio and Sensei marrying Ojosan. They also both end up with an important character committing suicide, Othello committing suicide before he is taken into custody for killing Desdemona and K killing himself after finding out that Sensei is planning on marrying Ojosan after K confided that he was in love with her.

(Joshua Faulk, University of Hawaii, USA)

Throughout the story of *Kokoro*, the power of confession which could control human destiny echoes from one person to another among the protagonists, which we have founded in the tragedy of human relations and connections in most Shakespearean characters. In this sense Soseki can be compared to Shakespeare in terms of the deep insights into human characters. Soseki compared human events and people to Noh play and actors in his famous novel, *The Three-Cornered World*, which has been highly appreciated by Westerners. He wrote, "I wonder how it would be if, while I am on this short journey, I were to regard events as though they were part of the action of a Noh play, and the people I meet merely as if they were actors." This reminds us of Shakespeare's famous poem, *All the World's a Stage*, (*As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7, JACQUES's lines) which sings, "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts,..." We can see how much Soseki's human insight in his works was influenced by the works of William Shakespeare. Another example is the parallel of tragedy in *Othello* and that of Sensei in *Kokoro*. For instance, the green eyed monster of *Othello* preoccupied by accumulated jealousy of Cassio for the sake of love for Desdemona can be compared to the aching jealousy of Sensei who suffered from his jealousy of K for the sake of his love for Ojosan (Shizu).

However, the difference between Shakespeare and Soseki are quite distinctive

and interesting. While Shakespeare describes the tragic destiny of a famous king, prince, princess, general and some aristocratic people, Soseki described tragic destiny and the vanity of human life among ordinary citizens in daily life, which makes his stories realistic and universal as well. Flanagan (2007, p.146) states that the significant differences between Shakespeare and Soseki is that Shakespeare tried to describe the external world in his diversified skillful ways, however, Soseki tried to describe the same external world involved in the stream of human consciousness in our daily lives.

Furthermore, as Shakespeare was critical of Elizabethan age influenced by religious reformation, Soseki was critical of modern age influenced by western civilization, too. Soseki consistently pursued the issues of living in our modernized society influenced by the high tide of westernization of Japan.

9. The Future Storyline of *Kokoro*

After reading the story of *Kokoro*, most readers including the exchange students ask a simple question; “What will become of Shizu?” and “What will happen to Watashi?” Andrew Macas from USA discusses the role of Watashi and the future of Shizu as follows.

In Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro*, the ending is undefined after Sensei's confession. However, I believe that the main character and narrator Watashi takes on the role of Sensei and replaces him in the end. Since Sensei's marriage with Shizu is connected to his betrayal of K, he cannot allow himself to be happy and cannot fulfill her wish to start a family. Sensei entrusts Watashi with the story at the end of the novel. However, examining the book further, it seems as if Watashi also took the place of Sensei and married Shizu.

Although the ending of the book does not reveal the fate of Sensei, Shizu, or Watashi, it is not unreasonable to assume that Watashi ended up marrying Shizu. Sensei's last wish to Watashi is a selfish one to not inform her of his haunted past. However, reading closely, it is also a request to protect her innocence. “My first wish is that her memory of me should be kept unsullied as possible. So long as my wife is alive, I want to keep everything I have told you a secret—even after I myself am dead.” (248) Sensei casts Watashi as the custodian of his wife's innocence. In addition to asking Watashi to not reveal his past to her, Sensei often hints at how he will leave his wife alone in the world after he has died. After Shizu's mother died, it was only Shizu and Sensei living together. “There

remained only my wife and myself. My wife said to me ‘In all the world, I now have only you to turn to.’ (241) He has left her enough money to live off of for the rest of her life. However, since she will be alone after his death, it is only natural that someone would take Sensei’s place; In this case, it is Watashi.

There are many signs of attraction between Shizu and Watashi. At their first meeting, Watashi takes note of her beauty. He had never felt it for another woman before he met her. Watashi does not seem to have any other love interests, and since Shizu is the only main female figure, it would make sense that he has an interest in her just as Sensei and K did. One particularly convincing piece of evidence is the line on page 17 where Watashi describes having children as a nuisance. However, McClellan failed to translate a relevant nuance. According to Koji’s translation, it mentions that Watashi did not have children at that time, but that he has them now. (17) If that is true, then it is very likely that he has married Shizu and given her the children that she wanted to have. In this respect, Watashi would have assumed Sensei’s previous role as a husband to Shizu.

After Sensei has committed suicide, I believe that Watashi takes his place. Sensei and Shizu’s marriage is connected to the death of K, and due to Sensei’s overwhelming guilt, he does not allow his relationship to be happy. In addition, he even justifies not having children as a divine punishment. Because of this, Sensei cannot fulfill the hope of his wife to neither have a happy married life nor children. Because of this and his guilt, Sensei entrusts his life story to Watashi before he dies. However, by informing Watashi of his past, it allows Watashi to step into Sensei’s life and to learn about his current situation. Since his wife will be left alone and there is an attraction between Watashi and Shizu, I believe that they get married and have children after the end of *Kokoro*.

(Andrew Macas, University of Illinois, USA)

A key to predict the future of Watashi and Shizu, Sensei’s beautiful wife, depends on our interpretation of the conversation between Watashi and Shizu on page 17, line 12-15. Even in the original Japanese version of *Kokoro*, there are divided opinions among current Japanese literature academics, about Soseki’s real intention. Depending on the slightly different translation in English versions of *Kokoro*, the scene in question goes as follows:

“It would be so nice if we had children.” Sensei’s wife said to me.” “Yes, wouldn’t it?” I answered. But I could feel no real sympathy for her. At my age, children

seemed an unnecessary nuisance.

(p.17, translated by Ewin McClellan in 1957)

“It would be nice if we had children, you know,” she said, turning to me. “Yes, I’m sure.” I replied. But I felt no stir of sympathy at her words. I was too young to have children of my own and regarded them as no more than noisy pets.

(P. 18. translation by Meredith McKinney in 2007)

If we look again carefully at this scene in the original Japanese version of *Kokoro*, a alternate translation could be as follows:

“It would be very nice, if we had children.” Sensei’s wife said to me. “Yes, indeed.” I replied. But I did not feel any sympathy for her. I, who did not have any children at that time, thought they seemed an unnecessary nuisance.

The translation versions in 1957 and 2007 do not seem to cover the implication of the original Japanese words, “Sono toki no Watashi,” which means “Watashi at that time.” The question is “what does Watashi think of his children now?” and “Whose children are they indeed now?”

As Andrew discusses in his paper above, and considering Soseki’s pet theory of “Pity’s akin to love” in *Sanshiro*, it is not unreasonable to think of Watashi’s role for Shizu after the death of Sensei.

10. Today’s Significance of Soseki’s *Kokoro*

In 1907, Soseki surprisingly amazed the academic world by announcing that he would leave his honorable position as a professor of Shakespeare and English literature at Tokyo Imperial University, in order to become a writer. He became a professional writer contracted by Asahi Newspaper company, a leading daily newspaper for intellectual citizens at that time. His contract was to write at least one novel for a year for serialization without writing any for other newspapers. This must have been Soseki’s professional decision and he might have felt his own mission to warn about the issues of modernization to Japanese people through his novels which explores the abyss of human hearts and transient human attitudes in his novels.

Kokoro, which appeared in the Asahi Newspaper in 1914, was the zenith of Soseki’s professional career, followed by his last masterpiece, *Light and Dark* in

1916, which was unfinished due to his peaceful death.

Soseki's warning to the Japanese people, especially intellectuals who read Asahi newspapers in Meiji era, also implies the warning to Japanese people today who are suffering from a cultural identity crisis in this highly advanced society due to globalization in the 2010s. Where have traditional Japanese morals and spirit gone over the century, influenced by our highly advanced and affluent society? By exploring the heart of Soseki through the protagonists of *Kokoro*, we might find a key to open the heavy door of culturally devastated Japan today. This must be today's significance of Soseki's *Kokoro*. A.I. White states the significance of Soseki's *Kokoro* as follows:

Kokoro, Soseki's last completed novel, is widely considered to be his best, the book in which the themes he had developed in previous works were fully realized. Yet whether *Kokoro* represents Soseki's apex or not, experiencing it can only whet your thirst for more. In Sensei's testament Soseki vividly describes the process of baring oneself: "Now I myself am about to cut open my heart, and drench your face with my blood. And I shall be satisfied if, when my heart stops beating, a new life lodges itself in your breast." By the end of *Kokoro*, neither the narrator nor the reader can doubt that this is precisely what has happened. Soseki executes his exploration of humanity's intricate psychological condition with an intensity and sophistication that is hard to ignore. He is an author who deserves to be read widely outside a Japan that has recognized him as one of its best.

(*Kokoro* by Natsume Soseki)

By wondering around a psychological labyrinth full of traps and the closed doors of the protagonists' hearts in *Kokoro*, we can see the difficulty of overcoming egocentricity and the fatal link between the nature of man and human destiny. The readers of *Kokoro* can reconfirm Soseki's philosophical ideal, "Soku Ten Kyo Shi", which means "to model oneself after the heaven and depart from the self" through the tragic destiny of the principal characters. This is what Soseki's intended to represent himself through the artistic expressions of each character, and especially Sensei's final confession heard in the form of Sensei's testimony, the last chapter of *Kokoro*. Sensei fails to confess his real genuine feelings to K and Ojisan, which makes K, Ojisan and even Sensei himself tragically unhappy. The truth of Sensei is being kept from other characters albeit, all the readers know it, which activates the dramatic irony of *Kokoro* in the Soseki's theater of human

hearts. However, all of us are astounded by the dramatic confession of the major protagonist to Watashi, that is Sensei's Testament, the whole last chapter. This is really a great theater of Soseki's exploration of human hearts.

The universality of *Kokoro* beyond nations is that it deals with human hearts, human weakness, and human destiny. We cannot live without human relationships and connections involved in love and friendship. The Testament is not only for Watashi but also for all the people (readers) at that time as a lesson in life and a warning for the issue of modernization. *Kokoro* has gone beyond time and space since 1914.

It is interesting to reconfirm today's significance of Soseki's *Kokoro* through Flanagan's comment on the introduction of *Kokoro*. Flanagan (2007) states that *Kokoro* thus manages to be both one of the most celebrated novels in the world and one of the least known—draw what conclusion you will about the gulf between East and West. He concludes that “For *Kokoro* is a battleground over love, and Sensei is a man who is prepared to die—give up his heart—to see it transferred forever into the breast of another man.”

It is a very tragic and heart-aching human drama for most readers, especially for young innocent readers. However, strangely enough, after finishing the last page of this novel, not a few readers find themselves in peace and tranquility rather than the sense of loss and sorrow of Sensei's death involved in human tragedy. The reason might be that Sensei died as the spirit of Meiji faded away but his testament is still alive in the heart of the contemporary readers and it is still passing on his will to the next generation. This must be the significance of *Kokoro* which has enchanted many Japanese readers for more than 100 years as a nationally-loved novel.

Lastly another significance of Soseki's *Kokoro* concerns the words “Ma” and “Asobi.” Both are “Yamato Kotoba,” traditional Japanese words which have lasted for more than 2000 years in Japan. Soseki leaves room for imagination for the future plotline of the story. Japanese culture respects “Ma” which means “space or room for imagination” and “Asobi” which means bringing ourselves into the exploration of the wonder of nature to be a lonely but lofty poet in terms of Basho's (1644-1694) “Haiku” context. “Ma” and “Asobi” are symbiotic and essential in Japanese life and literature. The room for implicit imagination is sometimes more meaningful than the explicit or direct statement. We can appreciate Soseki's professional ingenuity of the tranquil “Ma” and poetic “Asobi” in his implication at the end of the story. Soseki's *Kokoro* resonances like a long solitary poem as he

was originally a Haiku poet influenced by his close friend, Shiki Masoka.

The story of *Kokoro* is not over with the dual death of K and Sensei shadowed by the irreparable human loneliness and guilt. What makes the story of *Kokoro* more compelling to us is that Soseki leaves the future of Shizu and Watashi to the imagination of the readers. This is why the story of *Kokoro* seems to end up in peace, albeit the story has been tragically destined by the transient human hearts. Soseki tries to explore the possibility of love and shows us the impossibility of love. Human hearts may get hurt, but the pursuit of love never die as long as human beings are human beings.

11. Conclusion

We have conducted an overview of the significance of Soseki's *Kokoro* in terms of a cross-cultural study which has had a great influence on most exchange students from the West as a new type of novel which they have not been familiar with. It seems that Soseki's *Kokoro* is quite fresh and inviting to most international students as they have been interested in Japanese implicit culture and some Japanese mysterious behaviors in their human relationships conditioned by the Japanese "shame culture," most of which is an untraveled imagination for them.

However, the point is that most exchange students have successfully clarified the mysterious attitudes of protagonists in *Kokoro* with the clues to the heart of Japanese culture such as Mujokan, Zen Buddhism, Confucianism and Bushido. They have found out the way Japanese people in Meiji strived to pursue what has never changed or, what is called Japanese cultural identity in the rapidly changing society of Meiji influenced by the wave of modernization and westernization. And what is more vital is that Japanese people today in the 21st century are also striving to pursue their own cultural identity and trying to search for a chart of life in the massive flood of globalization.

In this respect Soseki's *Kokoro* could be one of the recommendable texts for cross-cultural studies as well as human studies in life beyond cultures and nations. The significance and universality of Soseki's *Kokoro* can be found in the hearts of exchange students. As Kyle McCreedy, an exchange student from the U.S. concludes in his final paper: "Overall *Kokoro* is a great book, and I greatly appreciate the insights gained from it when it comes to Meiji era Japanese culture. I for one will have my mother read it when I return to America so that she can understand a part of the culture that I have learned so much from."

We can learn timeless and priceless values and significance through the eyes and the heart of Soseki in the Meiji era influenced by the powerful westernization and modernization. Soseki already predicted and warned of the problems of the 2010s in his works in Meiji Era. We can see human loneliness, aloofness, alienation from society, guilt in loving and human agony every day. Only the works of a great writer like Soseki survive through the judgement of time. He explored the heart of Japanese cultural identity, suffering from identity crisis both in London and Japan. Therefore Soseki could outlast most contemporary Japanese writers who blindly followed the Western influence and the enlightenment movement in those days. Popular writers will be forgotten when their readers die. However, as Shakespeare proved with his many works, a great writer like Soseki can give an answer to the question of human loneliness and suffering in modernization beyond time and culture. Soseki died but his *Kokoro* is immortal.

Burton E. Martin, professor of Shakespeare, was a friend of Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972), and once a teacher of Yukio Mishima (1925-1970) at Tokyo University. Mishima killed himself right after his impressive lecture on the decline of Japanese cultural identity at Okuma Auditorium of Waseda University in 1970. I was one of the members of the audience. Professor Martin was very shocked by the heroic suicide of Mishima (Harakiri) and so was I. The next year in 1971, Professor Martin became my supervisor to my graduation thesis on "Love and Jealousy in Othello's Dramatic Irony" at Waseda university in 1971. He used to say in his lecture on *Othello* and *Hamlet* as follows: "As long as human beings are human beings, Shakespearean characters are still alive today." Forty years later, after the death of my supervisor, I can proudly say that Soseki's characters in *Kokoro* are still alive today in our daily life, and the voices of Sensei, K, Ojisan and Watashi are heard within ourselves, though the power of globalization is ruthlessly depriving us of our cultural identity and tradition.

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Appendix 1 Konan University, Japan Studies IV, Spring Semester 2010-2011
***Culture and Literature in Japan* (Syllabus) Koji Nakamura**
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The purpose of this class is a cultural exploration into the kernel of Japanese culture and literature by examining the ideal of the Japanese habits of hearts and a sense of beauty in a comparative and interdisciplinary context. Japan is a country of both harmony and tension, a mixture of the old and the new, tradition and change, the conservative and the innovative, the polite and the aggressive, the disposable and the sustainable. Japan can be described as a paradoxical nation blessed with natural beauty, human hospitality and technology through the test of long history-2000 years.

First, we will explore the heart of Japanese culture through 俳句 (Haiku, Japanese traditional short poems) and 短歌 “**A Hundred Verses from Old Japan**” which demonstrated the pleasure and pain of romantic love colored by the natural beauty of Japan. You will go through the impressive Haiku moment by putting yourself in the middle of the peaceful dialogue between human and nature and will encounter the precious moment of 一期一会, “once-in-a-lifetime chance in Japan”

Second, as Japan's implicit culture is quite pregnant and mysterious, we will enter the traditional Japanese cultural context such as “**Wabi**”, 侘び: aesthetic taste for simplicity, tranquility and peace of mind, “**Sabi**”, 寂: **poetic elegance** combining elements of old age, loneliness, resignation, and tranquility, **Ma**間: empty space, represents both dimensional space and interval of time for full of meaning and imagination, “**Mujoukan**”, 無常観: Buddhist view of life: awareness of mortality, impermanence, transience, mutability, and “**Mononoaware**”, もののあはれ: Human sensitivity to the wonder of nature and people in Japanese life. In addition, we will learn the heart of traditional Japanese dance in practice and theory from Prof. Yukio Konishi. You are invited to dance together.

Next, we will discuss the theme of, “**Kokoro**”, written by **Soseki, Natsume**, one of Japan's most notable authors of the 20th century. This novel explores the human agony between love and friendship in the context of interwoven strands of egoism and guilt, as opposed shame culture. This psychologically stimulating novel will keep the readers debating Japanese identity influenced by the modernization of Japan through “Sensei's Testament.” You could find several layers of Japanese emotion, mentality and psychology through “**Kokoro**.”

Finally, we will discuss the secret of cultural, educational and economic

backbone which can be symbolized by “和 (**wa**) 魂 (**kon**) 洋 (**yo**) 才 (**sai**).” This concept implies the Japanese spirit combined with Western knowledge, which has been an energizing power to modernize an encapsulated society since 1868 and revitalize the devastated land since 1945. We will study how this spirit has played a key role in Japanese society, education and production system.

This course will be taught in a lecture/discussion/presentation/fieldwork format. You will be expected to do a mini-research on issues related to your presentation. You will be expected to give an oral presentation on some aspects of culture and literature in comparative perspectives.

Texts

The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture Edited by Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno. Tuttle Publishing: Boston. (2000).

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Recommended Books and Papers

Donald Keene (1988). ***The Pleasures of Japanese Literature***. Columbia University Press, N.Y.

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Yasunari, Kawabata. (195). ***Izu Dancer***,

Class Schedule - Japanese Culture and Literature– Spring 2011

Week	Tuesday – 3 rd Period	Friday – 3 rd Period
01 January 18, 21	<p>*Self-introduction with your cultural shocks</p> <p>*The Heart of Japanese Culture 俳句 The Haiku Moment</p> <p>*The Japanese Sense of the Season (p.153-158)</p>	<p>*The Heart of Japanese Culture 美意識</p> <p>*The Japanese Sense of Beauty</p> <p>Transience and life's mutability and mortality</p> <p>もののあはれ、無常観、侘び、寂</p>
02 January 25, 28	<p>The Heart of Japanese Culture 俳句: Haiku</p> <p>*Presentation of your Haiku and Haiku Moment</p> <p>*Simplicity and elegance as Japanese Ideals of beauty</p> <p>④やまと言葉、言霊</p> <p>Yamato Kotoba 道、遊び</p>	<p>The Heart of Japanese Culture 短歌: Tanka</p> <p>*Presentation of Your Tanka and Tanka Moment</p> <p>短歌 Tanka: Japanese Poems of 31 syllables</p> <p>A Hundred Verses from Old Japan and their values</p>
03 February 1, 4	No class (Entrance Exams)	No class (Entrance Exams)
04 February 8, 11	<p>The Heart of Japanese Culture: Japanese Traditional Dance and demonstrations:</p> <p>Prof. Yukio Konishi</p>	No class (Field Trip)
05 February 15, 18	<p>The Heart of Japanese Culture ⑦ 無常観 Mujokan, philosophy of mortality and transience of human attitude</p> <p>もののあはれ: Human sensitivity to the wonder of nature/ people and transience</p>	<p>The Heart of Japanese Culture 禅仏教: Spiritual Aspiration</p> <p>Prajna: Transcendental Wisdom, Karuna: Love and compassion, 孝 filial piety in Confucianism and the spirit of Meiji in Japan</p>
06 February 22, 25	<p>Japanese Literature ①</p> <p>“Kokoro”</p> <p>Who is Soseki Natsume? Why has “Kokoro” been so popular in Japan since 1914? What is the main theme of this novel? What is the writer's intention in the Testimony ?</p>	<p>Japanese Literature ②</p> <p>“Kokoro”</p> <p>Why did K die? Why did Sensei die? K's strength and dignity</p> <p>Sensei's loneliness and his dual motivation to die involved in romantic love, friendship, guilt and egoism</p>

07 March 1, 4	Japanese Literature ③ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ” Soseki’s philosophical and identity crisis in London involved in Western individualism and Japanese Confucian ethics and loyalty	Japanese Literature ④ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ” Your criticism Modernity and tradition, individualism and guilt in Japan in Meiji Transition from Meiji to Taisho
08 March 8, 11	Japanese Literature ⑤ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ”: K’s True Way Human Loneliness at the cost of freedom, independence and egoistical individualism	Japanese Literature ⑥ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ”: Confession The Power of Confession K’s confession and his death Sensei’s Confession as his Testament
09 March 15, 18	Japanese Literature ⑦ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ” Dramatic Irony in Shakespearean <i>Othello</i> and that of Soseki’s <i>Kokoro</i>	Japanese Literature ⑧ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ” Today’s significance of “ <i>Kokoro</i> ”
10 March 22, 25	No class Field Trip	Japanese Literature ⑨ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ”: <u>Presentations based on Students’ research papers and Discussion</u>
11 March 29, April 1	Japanese Literature ⑩ “ <i>Kokoro</i> ” <u>Presentations/ Discussion</u>	Japanese Literature ⑪ Izu Dancer by Yasunari Kawabata, Nobel Prize Winner
12 April 5, 8	① Japanese Culture and Modernization Japan’s Modernization since 1868 and 1945 和魂洋才 Japanese spirits combined with Western knowledge, Adopting Elements of Foreign Culture Text (p.127-134)	② Japanese Culture and Modernization Japan’s Modernization since 1868 and 1945 和魂洋才 Japanese spirits combined with Western knowledge Group Harmony and Obligation: Good Service

13 April 12, 15	③ Japanese Culture and Modernization: Japan's Modernization since 1868 and 1945 和魂洋才 Japanese spirits combined with European knowledge <u>Adopt and Adapt (DVD)</u>	④ Japanese Culture and Modernization: Japan's Modernization since 1945 to 2010 和魂洋才: Japanese Culture and Modernization <u>Innovation *TOYOTA Culture : Kaizen</u>
14 April 19, 22	⑤ Japanese Culture and Modernization <u>The Spirit of Engineer</u> <u>*UK SONY: Teamwork</u> <u>Japanese Professionals</u>	⑥ Japanese Culture and Modernization <u>The Spirit of Engineer</u> <u>The Spirit of Japanese Professionals</u>
15 April 26, 29	⑦ Japanese Culture and Modernization: Professionals	No class (National Holiday)
16 May 3, 6	No class (National Holiday)	<u>Presentation 1</u> Based on your research paper:
17 May 10, 13	<u>Presentation 2</u> Based on your paper: Discussion & Evaluation	<u>Field Trip to Kobe City Fukiai High School as a cultural exploration.</u> Participation in Class Discussion and Debate
18 May 17	<u>The Final Lecture: The Future of Japan: Cultural Identities in Globalization</u>	

Course Evaluation and Course Credit

You will be expected to give a 5 minute *presentation* on some aspect of Japanese culture, society education and literature at least twice. This should be developed further into a 3-page research paper with at least three sources. The paper may be longer if you like, but I expect it to be clear and direct. It will be due electronically or paper-based by May 13. You will also be expected to make a final oral presentation based on your research. Class participation in the readings and discussion are of course expected.

Grading will be: *Research Paper* 30%, *Class Essays* 20 %, *Oral Presentation* 20%, and *Class Participation* 30%

Attendance Policy

The Year-in-Japan program has adopted a uniform attendance policy for the afternoon Japan Studies courses. You are allowed only two unexcused absences during the semester without penalty. A third unexcused absence will reduce your grade in the course by 10 points (equivalent to one letter grade in the American system). A fourth unexcused absence will reduce your grade by another 10 points. More than four unexcused absences will result automatically in a failing grade for the course. Legitimate excuses for absence are normally limited to illnesses or accidents that require medical attention. Please consult with KIEC staff in advance if you believe that you have some other legitimate reason for absence. Students must document all legitimate excuses.

Appendix 2 Evaluation of the Class by the Exchange Students

Course: Japanese Literature and Culture

Instructor: Koji Nakamura

Semester: Spring 2011

Mean Scores (all scores are out of 5):

How do you rate the course organization ?	4
How do you rate the course material?	3.9
How do you assess the amount of effort you put in to prepare/study for this class?	3.3
How do you rate the clarity of expectations from the instructor?	3.8
How do you rate the competence and qualifications of the instructor?	4.1
How do you rate the evaluation methods used?	4.2
Field trip (rate only if your class took a field trip).	4.5
Responsiveness of instructor to student concerns	4.8
Overall course rating	4.2
Instructor rating overall	4.5

Comments (These comments were copied directly from the student evaluations):

- Like his lectures
- Koji sense is a very friendly, professional teacher with wit and charm.
I recommend his class to all.

- Not as much literature as I expected, but still a fun course.
- I really enjoy Koji sensei's classes as a whole and they're an interesting way to get an overall view of Education and that sort of thing but I think the classes tend to lack concrete material that I can say, "I learned about this today." Although the in depth review of *Kokoro* was very useful for me.
- He is a very effective teacher because he is truly interested in what he teaches and is very dynamic. I felt encouraged to participate in class all the more because of his enthusiasm to hear and consider the opinions of other students.
- I've learnt a lot of Koji sense about Japanese culture in this class, it's far more interesting than the course in last semester. I love Koji sensei.
- Fantastic course
- It was just perfect
- Would have preferred to study for Japanese language course
- Koji taught us things that are not in any textbooks or taught in any other type of class. Koji taught us about a kind of Japanese culture which can only be learned through self-study and reflection. He has taught us intimate aspects of Japanese culture that most Japanese people aren't even aware of. Although this class was not the most rigorous academically speaking, it was more a class of life lessons and cultural understanding. Koji is a great man.
- Koji sensei is a great instructor and clearly has a strong passion and care for his subject and his students. I only wished that perhaps we could have moved faster only subjects in order to cover more materials.
- Strongly recommend Nakamura Koji sensei's classes.
- Perhaps just clearer expectations for the class. I often found myself lost as to what the teacher wanted me to do. Length of the paper, what structure and format they preferred, what resources could be used, etc.
- I loved Koji sensei
- Great
- Koji sensei taught us more than just class materials. We came to understand Japan better culturally and on a daily basis thanks to his class and his teachings.
- I did not know what was expected of in the essay we had to write, so I was worried about what my grade would be. I would have liked to have had a better outline of what was expected of me.
- Koji sensei is definitely an inspiring person to be around, however, apart from *Kokoro*, was never really sure what we were supposed to be studying.

- Not only was the course itself interesting, the teacher himself makes you want to learn--he has a very good style of teaching.
- The method he uses to make everyone stand and go in front of everybody when answering whatever question is quite disturbing and not encouraging to participate but apart from that I liked the content of the class and appreciate Koji sensei a lot.