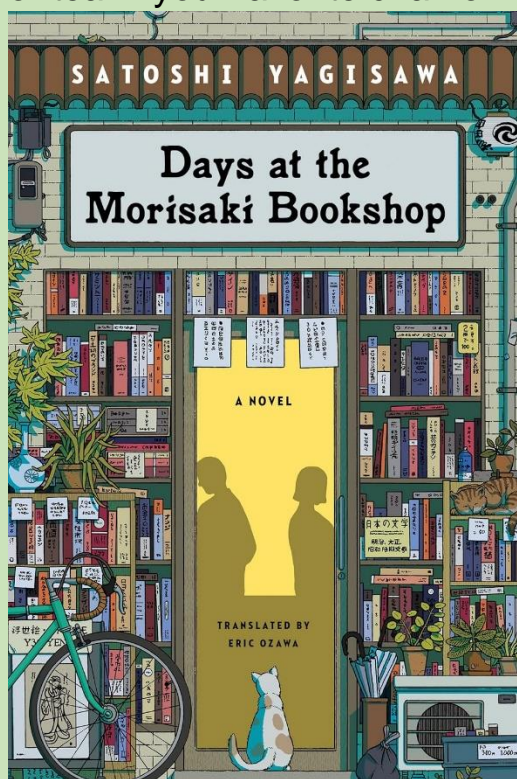


Allison's Book Corner  
April 2025

***Days at the Morisaki Bookshop***  
***More Days at the Morisaki Bookshop***  
By Satoshi Yagisawa & Eric Ozawa (Translator)

Happy Spring!

As many of you know, I love a good memoir. However, I also love fiction and romance at times. This month I am writing about two excellent fiction books that we can all learn from while being delighted with the writing, the culture and the characters. Delving into these novels is like sitting with a warm cup of coffee or tea in your favorite chair or window seat. The author's words on these pages provide a calm that is so comforting that you want to bottle it and sell it on every street corner.



I happen to believe that the right book can find you at the right time. I was browsing in the new fiction section here at the Library when I ran across the second book in this series. The two-line author biography on the back of the book mentioned that the author had won a Japanese Literary award for the first book in the two-book series. Something told me to find the first book and read them both. I am so happy that I did.

Both books are set in Japan. I have always been rather fascinated with Japanese culture. Perhaps it was always my love of the 1975 book and 1980 television mini-series *Shōgun* (yes, I am dating myself.) Yagisawa's delightful books are set in a secondhand book shop in a real section of Tokyo called Jimbōchō Book Town, which is famous for its many secondhand bookstores and publishing houses, and a haven for bibliophiles. The writer has brought this wonderful neighborhood to life for us. Our story takes place at the fictional Morisaki Bookshop run by

protagonist Takako's Uncle Satoru. At age twenty-five, Takako has lost her job and her boyfriend at the same time. Takako had been thinking ahead to a wedding while the boyfriend had other plans. Events lead her to take residence above the bookshop while she contemplates her next move. This plot might sound very basic, even a bit boring, but what ensues is a wonderful tale of family, friendship and love. We learn how the Japanese express their feelings differently from how we Americans do. It is very enjoyable to read and recognize these differences. There is subtle humor in these novels. Also, the Japanese have a deep love and veneration for their elders that is missing from American culture.

I do not want to spoil the wonderful story that flows between these two books, which are translated from the original Japanese and are beautifully written.

Takako eventually opens up to a new life at the bookstore, and as that happens, her life takes on special nuances and she makes friends. She also must deal with her elderly Uncle and his wife Momoko. In these novels we find the universal feelings of depression, grief, and love.

From the very first page of *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*, I was enthralled. I am someone who would love to live above a bookstore. And then, of course, the reader becomes drawn into the little world the writer has so wonderfully created. I can relate to Takako wanting to escape and having time to pause. As Uncle Satoru says, "...It's important to stand still sometimes. Think of it as a little rest in the long journey of your life. This is your harbor. And your boat is just dropping anchor here for a little while. And after you're well rested, you can set sail again." The relationship that forms anew between Takako and her uncle is truly heartwarming.

There are little life lessons like this throughout both novels.

I am not alone in my love for *Days at the Morisaki Bookshop*. Author Satoshi Yagisawa won the Chiyoda Literature Prize for a first novel. This award is significant recognition of literary merit in Japan. According to press reports, this book became a top seller in Japan and internationally before being released in the United States.

It may sound grand or cliché, but I want to make a bet with you readers: read both novels and tell me that your life is not changed for the better in some way. A huge change for me is that Japan made it to my small bucket list. It was the furthest thing from my mind before I read these two books. Currently I do not speak any Japanese. However, I dream of strolling the streets of Jimbōchō and exploring the secondhand bookshops with a fellow book lover beside me. And I have it on good authority that there are a few shops there with books written in English.