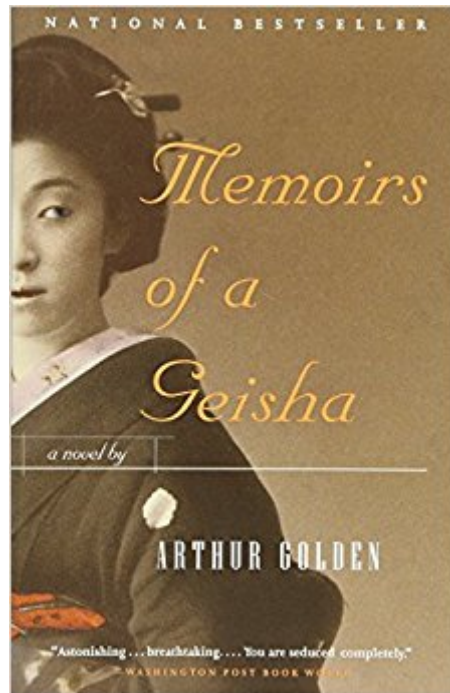




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# Memoirs Of A Geisha: A Novel



## Synopsis

A literary sensation and runaway bestseller, this brilliant debut novel tells with seamless authenticity and exquisite lyricism the true confessions of one of Japan's most celebrated geisha. Speaking to us with the wisdom of age and in a voice at once haunting and startlingly immediate, Nitta Sayuri tells the story of her life as a geisha. It begins in a poor fishing village in 1929, when, as a nine-year-old girl with unusual blue-gray eyes, she is taken from her home and sold into slavery to a renowned geisha house. We witness her transformation as she learns the rigorous arts of the geisha: dance and music; wearing kimono, elaborate makeup, and hair; pouring sake to reveal just a touch of inner wrist; competing with a jealous rival for men's solicitude and the money that goes with it. In *Memoirs of a Geisha*, we enter a world where appearances are paramount; where a girl's virginity is auctioned to the highest bidder; where women are trained to beguile the most powerful men; and where love is scorned as illusion. It is a unique and triumphant work of fiction—•at once romantic, erotic, suspenseful—•and completely unforgettable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

According to Arthur Golden's absorbing first novel, the word "geisha" does not mean "prostitute," as Westerners ignorantly assume--it means "artisan" or "artist." To capture the geisha experience in the art of fiction, Golden trained as long and hard as any geisha who must master the arts of music, dance, clever conversation, crafty battle with rival beauties, and cunning seduction of wealthy patrons. After earning degrees in Japanese art and history from Harvard and Columbia--and an M.A. in English--he met a man in Tokyo who was the illegitimate offspring of a renowned

businessman and a geisha. This meeting inspired Golden to spend 10 years researching every detail of geisha culture, chiefly relying on the geisha Mineko Iwasaki, who spent years charming the very rich and famous. The result is a novel with the broad social canvas (and love of coincidence) of Charles Dickens and Jane Austen's intense attention to the nuances of erotic maneuvering. Readers experience the entire life of a geisha, from her origins as an orphaned fishing-village girl in 1929 to her triumphant auction of her mizuage (virginity) for a record price as a teenager to her reminiscent old age as the distinguished mistress of the powerful patron of her dreams. We discover that a geisha is more analogous to a Western "trophy wife" than to a prostitute--and, as in Austen, flat-out prostitution and early death is a woman's alternative to the repressive, arcane system of courtship. In simple, elegant prose, Golden puts us right in the tearoom with the geisha; we are there as she gracefully fights for her life in a social situation where careers are made or destroyed by a witticism, a too-revealing (or not revealing enough) glimpse of flesh under the kimono, or a vicious rumor spread by a rival "as cruel as a spider." Golden's web is finely woven, but his book has a serious flaw: the geisha's true romance rings hollow--the love of her life is a symbol, not a character. Her villainous geisha nemesis is sharply drawn, but she would be more so if we got a deeper peek into the cause of her motiveless malignity--the plight all geisha share. Still, Golden has won the triple crown of fiction: he has created a plausible female protagonist in a vivid, now-vanished world, and he gloriously captures Japanese culture by expressing his thoughts in authentic Eastern metaphors. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"I wasn't born and raised to be a Kyoto geisha....I'm a fisherman's daughter from a little town called Yoroido on the Sea of Japan." How nine-year-old Chiyo, sold with her sister into slavery by their father after their mother's death, becomes Sayuri, the beautiful geisha accomplished in the art of entertaining men, is the focus of this fascinating first novel. Narrating her life story from her elegant suite in the Waldorf Astoria, Sayuri tells of her traumatic arrival at the Nitta okiya (a geisha house), where she endures harsh treatment from Granny and Mother, the greedy owners, and from Hatsumomo, the sadistically cruel head geisha. But Sayuri's chance meeting with the Chairman, who shows her kindness, makes her determined to become a geisha. Under the tutelage of the renowned Mameha, she becomes a leading geisha of the 1930s and 1940s. After the book's compelling first half, the second half is a bit flat and overlong. Still, Golden, with degrees in Japanese art and history, has brilliantly revealed the culture and traditions of an exotic world, closed to most Westerners. Highly recommended.-?Wilda Williams, "Library Journal"Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Recently I watched the movie again, and then read about it, and was intrigued to read a man had written it AND it was his first book. So of course I had to read the book. It was even better than the movie. Interesting to me that the geisha's voice changed, matured, even as she added years to her life. I was richly blessed by the reading of this book. Thank you, Mr. Golden, for writing it.

Unfortunately, I admit I haven't read this book in twenty or so years and I imagined it reading the same. I couldn't have been more wrong! It's so much more heartbreaking, intriguing and entertaining than when I was younger. There was so much I thought I understood back then that now I appreciate.

This book was a very easy and quick read. Very detailed, so much so that I felt that I was shadowing a Geisha and entertaining in tea houses. I could smell the fish, feel the water and even feel the silk of the Kimono's. I have always enjoyed the movie and wanted to read the book to see if the book would answer some unanswered questions that the movie did not answer for me (like what happens after Cinderella gets the Prince), and it more than did. (\*\*WARNING SPOILER\*\*) If you are a fan of the movie then you must read this book, it's a must because the story continues well on after the Chairman becomes her Danna. I also respect the author for giving the positives as well as the negatives on her life with the Chairman as her Danna, because let's face it, the Chairman was married and did have children. If you enjoyed the movie, then trust me, you will more than love the book.

I really loved this book. I usually hate reading and only read for school. I read this for fun and found myself reading 100 pages a day. The book is so well written, the character development is very good. You really understand who the characters are and why they do what they do. So much happens in the book as well so it doesn't get boring. However, I did find the first 4 chapters a bit boring. You really get a look at how Japanese culture used to be and what life was like during WWII. Chiyo goes through so many ups and downs, it's so fun to follow her on her journey. As for book vs. movie- after I read the book I watched the movie and noticed a lot of changes. The book is really long so I don't blame the writers for leaving stuff out and making modifications. When you read the book you get a better understanding of the characters. I kind of felt like reading the book first ruined the movie for me because I expected it to be just as good as the book, but it's really hard to make a movie as good as a book, not to mention a really long book. Over all- this book is the best book I've

ever read. you get to see a society that's so different from ours. plus i loved the historical context.  
this is a must read!

I actually read this book 5+ years ago. I was absolutely mesmerized from page one. I gave it to my best friend to read (the book looked brand new) and when he was done with it the book looked like it had been through a hurricane! LOL The binding was all broken up, pages were bent, and it was well loved. He agreed that the book was wonderful! So, I told him he could keep the book, and I purchased it again on my Kindle. It's one of those books that has stayed with me for years after I read it. I've only had a handful of books do that, so I thought I'd come on and recommend it anyone who is in search of a great read. After reading this book, I was almost obsessed with anything "Japanese." The culture, the customs, the decor, you name it! It's definitely a book I would pick up and read again! The only reason I haven't is that I have a room full of books that I am working my way through! I am not to be trusted in a bookstore with cash or a credit card! :)

This book has been sitting on my "to be read" shelf for a long time, mainly because the teeny tiny little print that fills the pages to within half a centimeter of the edge filled me with trepidation at the apparently insurmountable task ahead. Fortunately, I took the coward's way out and watched the movie first, and this gave me the boost I needed to get started. Watching the movie first allowed me to put faces to the names, and to witness almost firsthand the intricacies of the rituals that are so intimately described in the book. Suffice to say that I was completely captivated from Chapter one, and was even reluctant to put it down at the end. The novel tells the story of a young Japanese girl named Chiyo who is taken from her village in the 1930s and sent to Gion, to an okiya or geisha house. Her sister Satsu is also taken, but lacking Chiyo's striking beauty, she is sent to a house of ill repute. At first Chiyo dreams of finding Satsu and running away from Gion, but later realizes that this is never going to happen. The resident geisha at her okiya is a jealous and arrogant woman named Hatsumomo, who sabotages Chiyo's progress towards becoming a geisha herself, leaving Chiyo in the unenviable position of being a maid for the rest of her life. Fortunately for Chiyo, a chance encounter with a wealthy businessman (known as the Chairman) opens new doors for her and this brief meeting changes the course of her life forever. Soon, Hatsumomo's rival, an extremely popular and successful geisha named Mameha decides to take Chiyo under her wing as her little sister, and after the usual haggling over fees and royalties is completed, Chiyo finally gets her chance to continue her geisha training. An intense and vicious rivalry develops between the geisha "tag teams" of Hatsumomo and her trainee Pumpkin, and Mameha and Chiyo, who then assumes

the geisha name Sayuri. With the threefold purpose of defeating Hatsumomo, winning a wager, and paying off Sayuri's debts, Mameha orchestrates a bidding war between rich men for the apparently acceptable privilege of deflowering her young apprentice, the financial results of which set a new record in geisha history at the time. Just when things seem to be settling down nicely, two events shatter the relative calm, and Sayuri finds herself torn emotionally by the reappearance of the Chairman, and then later, mentally and physically by the outbreak of World War II. After the War, she goes back to being a geisha, but has to choose between following her heart and following what seems to be the obvious path. The film and the novel are different in several sections, even down to the ending, but of course the book provides a lot of important background information that could not be captured in the movie version, even though I'm not sure of the historical accuracy. I would strongly recommend them BOTH to anyone who is not familiar with the amazing gilded world of Geisha. Amanda Richards, April 14, 2007

The story was captivating and tastefully written about a subject that could have been difficult to describe without losing the impact of the truth. It was recommended to me and I would recommend it to someone interested in the geisha culture.

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