



Night on the Galactic Railroad & Other Stories from Ihatov

Kenji Miyazawa , Julianne Neville (Translation)

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Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933) is one of Japan's most beloved writers and poets, known particularly for his sensitive and symbolist children's fiction. This volume collects stories which focus on Miyazawa's love of space and his use of the galaxy as a metaphor for the concepts of purity, self-sacrifice and faith which were near and dear to his heart. "The Nighthawk Star" follows an lowly bird as he struggles to transform himself into something greater, a constellation in the night sky; "Signal & Signal-less" depicts a pair of star-crossed train signals who dream of eloping to the moon; and "Night on the Galactic Railroad," Miyazawa's most famous work, tells the story of two boys as they journey upon a train that traverses the cosmos, learning the true meaning of friendship, happiness and life itself along the way.

Night on the Galactic Railroad & Other Stories from Ihatov Details

Date : Published February 11th 2014 by One Peace Books (first published December 17th 2013)

ISBN : 9781935548355

Author : Kenji Miyazawa , Julianne Neville (Translation)

Format : Paperback 112 pages

Genre : Fiction, Asian Literature, Japanese Literature, Cultural, Japan, Short Stories, Fantasy



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From Reader Review Night on the Galactic Railroad & Other Stories from Ihatov for online ebook

Amal says

3.5/5 overall.

Clearly this translation wasn't as expressive or beautiful as I imagine the original to be (in fact, it was pretty awkward sometimes), but it was satisfying anyway. The ending of Night on the Galactic Railroad was brilliant. Nighthawk Star (3/5), Signal and Signal-less (3.5/5), Night on the Galactic Railroad (4.5/5)

Grace Phua says

Curiosity level: Fizzled within the first few stories, though it retains a faint childlike sweetness overall

- "That is an impossible request. Becoming a star requires a certain grace... a sense of bearing... an Essence of character that you decidedly lack... coming from money doesn't hurt, either." - p.20 (The Nighthawk Star)
-
- This little book is a collection of poems and stories; the main one being the Night on the Galactic Railroad. Firstly, I felt it was:
 - 1. Too much: too many frivolous details about space and constellations (it felt a bit like the author enjoyed showing off knowledge which means little to the novice reader).
 - 2. Too little: the plot wasn't enough, I felt it was skinny and it was hard to identify with any of the characters. Moreover, with names like Giovanni and Campanella, as well as a distinctly westernised style of writing, one is wont to forget that it's a Japanese book. The issue is trying to bridge language differences.
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- The anime film for this book is supposed to be 10/10 (and ranked up there with Miyazaki's ones) but I felt the book was quite badly translated: the sentences were distant and awkward; it feels as though the Magic of pure and soulful Japanese writing dissipates as one carries on reading.
-
- I would still catch the anime film though (if it's any consolation)!
-
- Suitable for: Children, those well versed in space knowledge (to appreciate the strong jargon in it)

Hilary Martin says

Read this on my 12 hour train ride from Fairbanks to Anchorage. Very sweet.

Kevin Corcoran says

Night on the Galactic Railroad is dreamy, and easy to get absorbed in quickly. The relatable protagonist, Giovanni drifts off and finds himself on a journey through the cosmos where he encounters friends and new acquaintances who seem barely grounded to a physical form. Besides the descriptions of the ethereal world

Giovanni travels through, the story is mostly driven by the emotions he internalizes regarding the people around him which makes him feel like a natural and vulnerable focal point.

I wasn't as fully committed to the other stories in this collection. Nighthawk, and Signal and Signal-less were a little too disjointed for me and it was difficult for me to buy into the anthropomorphism choices that were made.

Samuel says

A strange, numinous, surreal book -- especially the title story, a sort of fragmented cross between Hans Christian Anderson, the children's fiction of H.D., and a mystical religious experience. I'm still not entirely sure what it is that I just read, but I know that it's brilliant.

Tony Zale says

These 3 Kenji Miyazawa short stories read like traditional fables infused with a helping of early 20th century technology. Lead characters are challenged by mundane cruelties and their problems aren't solved as much as they are endured. Peace and dignity is the reward for the perserverance.

“The Nighthawk Star” is the most traditional of the collection, the story of a bird who decides to fly away to the stars after being bullied by a hawk. The bird is initially rejected for starhood for lack of grace and money, an example of Miyazawa’s quiet humor.

“Signal and Signal-less” explore Miyazawa’s fascination with railroads, and its anthropomorphic train signals in courtship vaguely reminded me of the world of Thomas the Tank Engine. A crass utility pole threatens the budding romance, leaving the signals to appeal to a strange mix of Catholic saints, Thomas Edison, and railway pioneer George Stephenson. In the end, a kindly warehouse offers guidance that leads to a moment of clarity.

“Night on the Galactic Railroad” is a deeper, dreamlike tale about a troubled boy riding a train from earth to the heavens and back. Giovanni’s errand to retrieve milk for his sick mother somehow finds him on a train to the heavens and back. Strange encounters during the journey influence his notions of happiness and the meaning of life and death.

DJ says

I'mma keep it real with you chief!!!!!! The awkward translation bogged the book down a lot. I definitely enjoyed a lot of this (especially the titular story), but I couldn't shake the feeling a lot of this book sounded better in Japanese than English

Maverynthia says

It's got a bunch of fairytale like stories at the beginning. One involving anthropomorphic railroad signals in love.

The main story however is about Giovanni and his trip on the Galactic Railroad with Campanella.

Most of the story is fever dream, dream logic style stories involving flat cranes and other things like that. In the end Giovanni gives no shits about Campanella.

I really don't get why this is a classic other than people don't really understand that it's mostly nonsense?

Carola says

I have to agree with many other reviewers: this is probably gorgeous in Japanese, but misses the mark in translation.

So Miyazawa goes onto my list of authors to read in Japanese.

Besides that: train signals in love.... so what exactly was Miyazawa on when he wrote this?

Dara says

"Other Stories from Ihatov" are the following:

"The Star-Circling Song", a poem that serves as the invocation for the book. Introduces the red-eyed scorpion constellation that becomes a recurring figure in all four pieces.

"The Nighthawk Star", a tale about a bird who lacks in self-esteem and tries to transcend his awful circumstances.

"Signal and Signal-less", a romantic drama between two railroad signals.

Miyazawa's child-like sense of wonder at everything from stars to bugs to railroad signals is wonderful, drawing us through luminous descriptions of night skies and little social ecosystems that exist invisibly alongside our own. Each of these pieces inhabits the same universe of stars and blue luminescence as the main novella, "Night on the Galactic Railroad", which is something I really wish I'd had in my childhood bookshelf as a youngster. It's a dazzling meditation on beauty, alienation, grief and the fragility of life. Miyazawa's twilight worlds are perfectly paired with his characters whose relationships and very lives hang delicately in the balance of the cosmos. As much as "Galactic Railroad" is a fantastic story, it's not until the end that you realize what it really was: a psychological rendering of a young boy's hallucinatory experience of grief and friendship. An entirely wonderful work of the imagination.

aljouharah altheeyb says

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Inge Dahl says

I was tempted to rate this a one, but I think the real problem is the translation. If it were not for that, I might have enjoyed these stories.

Louisa Keron says

Have you ever wanted to read a romance between two train signals? Well, here is your chance. This tragic romance is one of three of Kenji Miyazawa's stories presented in *Night on the Galactic Railroad* and *Other Stories from Ihatov*. Even though the stories did have a beautiful feel to them as they connected life to space and the unknown, I cannot get over the fact that we were supposed to ship two train signals. This time, I will review the stories in order, with *The Nighthawk Star*, *Signal* and *Signal-less* and finally, *Night on the Galactic Railroad*. Even if you don't get the book, maybe you can keep your eyes open for any of the individual stories you may find interesting.

The Nighthawk Star is honestly my favourite one. It's the story of an underrated bird that is constantly tortured by the other birds until it escapes and transforms itself into a constellation in the sky. The bird was a nice character and I felt so bad for it. I can really feel the struggle that the bird is going through and the majestic writing adds to connections that Miyazawa aimed for. I will give this short story 8/10.

The second confusing one is Signal and Signal-less, the romance between two inanimate objects that are unable to elope simply because the main signal... Signal.. because he insulted a utility pole. The annoying part about this book is that it would have worked if there was an actual connection between Signal and Signal-less. Signal-less was a very passive character that didn't do anything except for having a few awkward conversations with Signal. The ending was nice, but it did not do enough to save the almost awkward story. This one is worth 3/10.

The final and main story, Night on the Galactic Railroad had the beauty and depressing nature of The Nighthawk Star, but because it was the longest in the book, I was expecting more. A young boy Giovanni somehow winds up on a galactic railroad with friend Campanella as they explore the beauties of the universe. This one has the prettiest imagery, but the actual characters are only decent. I wanted a little more to them instead of them just traveling. Though, if there was more depth and honest conversation between them, it would have made the end more depressing. Instead, it was just sad but beautiful. I'm giving this one 7.8/10.

Using my amazing mathematical skills (and the help of a calculator), I have discovered that this means the stories 18.8/30. I will increase it to 20 because of a beautiful song that is at the beginning that brings new light to way to look at the stars. It's a shame that one story ruined a gorgeous collection and dropping it to 6.6/10. However, I'm sure some of you will think opposite to me and might think a romance between two bloody train signals is the most fascinating story in the world.

Jewels-PiXie Johnson says

Night On The Galactic Railroad is hailed very highly in Japanese culture and it's excellent reputation has since made it sought after by many others.

I was a little disappointed reading this collection of 3 stories , Night On The Galactic Railroad ,Signal And Signal-less and The Nighthawk Star, because I felt cheated of the magic I was certain they would create. I can only think that this very special quality has got lost in the translation of these much-loved tales.

In the title story ,I could definitely sense a few sparks and the themes of fantasy,purity,a search for true happiness and a feeling of transcendence come across but I didn't feel them in a palpable way ,or a way that was full of heart.

Signal and Signal-less is a fairly charming little story of romance between 2 inanimate objects.

It was Nighthawk Star however that shone brightest of all for me ,there were a few more sparkles than simple sparks and the fantasy element was quite sweetly nuanced and escapist. It also draws together really well themes that Miyazawa was most passionate about, purity ,self-sacrifice,a pursuit of happiness, and also a very human desire to become immortal.

All of the tales potentially have a spiritual element and are simple and quite tender.

If you are luck enough to be able to read them in the original Japanese ,I would definitely recommend it.

Andrew says

While I chose to read it for the eponymous title story, I actually enjoyed “The Nighthawk Star” much more. An excellent piece of classic Japanese literature. I wish I had read it when I was younger.
