

The Faces of Readers in the Space between Imagination and Creativity

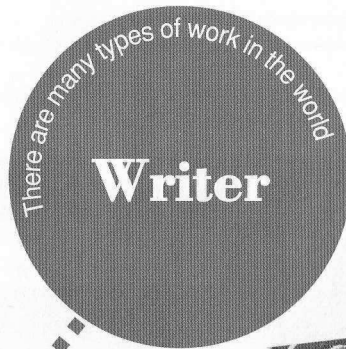


Mr. Kageki Shimoda

Novelist, author of children's picture books, and TV personality

Mr. Shimoda received the Naoki Prize for his novel *Kiirou Kiba* (Yellow Fang). He began reading picture books to children 15 years ago, and together with educational lectures, he performs storytelling sessions around 100 times a year.

You can see and hear Mr. Kageki reading to children on his website (<http://www.kageki.jp>).



This issue's theme is the job of writer. Three second-year students from Minato Municipal Roppongi Junior High School spoke with writer Kageki Shimoda, whose office is located in Azabu.

How did you get your start as a novelist?

In the old days, there were many young literary buffs and people wanting to become writers. I changed jobs a lot, and consequently had relatively rich life experience for someone my age, and so I thought I could write a novel based on my actual experiences. When I was 28, I entered the first novel I wrote in a newcomer's prize contest and made it through the second round, but in fact it took seven years before I received the Shosetsu Gendai Prize for New Writers for *Yattoko Tantei*. After that I was finally able to make as living as a writer.

How long does it take you to write one book?

I create several drawers inside my head where I keep various ideas and themes that come to my mind, and then I slot in materials and data to "ferment" the story. This run-up period can take up to several years, but once I actually start writing, I finish even a long novel in around four months.

Where do you get your ideas for your novels?

When you observe things very carefully, the themes and ideas are limitless. In the case of period novels, lots of questions arise when you read historical materials. I create mystery for myself, asking if there could possibly been some kind of hidden secret, and then I write the novel to solve that mystery.

As a writer, what aspects of your work are you especially careful about?

The most important question is, how do I chew over numerous materials and ideas and make them my own? Rather than rushing into an ego-centric creation, I am constantly conscious of the question, are the readers emotionally involved and enjoying themselves?

Why are your hair and clothes so colorful???

Even though humans are born with pure hearts, when they acquire knowledge and wisdom they also tend to stick unnecessary notes on their hearts, such as envy, vanity, and arrogance. My heart having grown heavy with these notes, I wanted to free myself, and the way I express this is through my clothes. It is more comfortable for me to pay no heed to the opinions of those around me and wear whatever I want to wear and make my hair colorful.

Mr. Shimoda sometimes also illustrates his own picture books. Including all his novels, essays, general books, and historical novels, he has written several hundred works—he is indeed a prolific writer.



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Books he recommends for junior high school students to read include *The Crab Cannery Ship* (Takiji Kobayashi), *Tsugaru* (Osamu Dazai), and *Shion Monogatari* (Jun Ishikawa). He says it is important to not only read books that are recommended, but to also make effort to discover books for yourself.



We also had the pleasure of listening to him read his recent work, *Kirin ga Kuru Hi* (*The Day the Giraffe Came*).

(Interviewed and written by Nichino Iwabuchi (2nd Grade, Roppongi Junior High School), Rin Kanazawa (2nd Grade, Roppongi Junior High School), and Ruka Kumasaka (2nd Grade Roppongi Junior High School); Interview support: Kyoko Ideishi)