



The Book of Yokai: Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore

By Michael Dylan Foster

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Monsters, ghosts, fantastic beings, and supernatural phenomena of all sorts haunt the folklore and popular culture of Japan. Broadly labeled *yokai*, these creatures come in infinite shapes and sizes, from *tengu* mountain goblins and *kappa* water spirits to shape-shifting foxes and long-tongued ceiling-lickers. Currently popular in anime, manga, film, and computer games, many yokai originated in local legends, folktales, and regional ghost stories.

Drawing on years of research in Japan, Michael Dylan Foster unpacks the history and cultural context of yokai, tracing their roots, interpreting their meanings, and introducing people who have hunted them through the ages. In this delightful and accessible narrative, readers will explore the roles played by these mysterious beings within Japanese culture and will also learn of their abundance and variety through detailed entries, some with original illustrations, on more than fifty individual creatures. *The Book of Yokai* provides a lively excursion into Japanese folklore and its ever-expanding influence on global popular culture. It also invites readers to examine how people create, transmit, and collect folklore, and how they make sense of the mysteries in the world around them. By exploring yokai as a concept, we can better understand broader processes of tradition, innovation, storytelling, and individual and communal creativity.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Foster creates engagingly rich portraits of yokai . . . Kijin's illustrations draw on Japanese artistic traditions to depict each creature's personality and visual quirks, making this field guide a delight for researchers, enthusiasts and the uninitiated alike . . . Seen this way, even the most horrific yokai seems beautiful." (Morgan Giles *The Times Literary Supplement* 2015-05-13)

"Michael Dylan Foster, associate professor of folklore at Indiana University and a yokai expert, analyses and catalogues hundreds of yokai and tells many stories . . . The book is enhanced by witty illustrations by Shinonome Kijin . . . A fascinating and charming compendium." (Lesley Downer *Literary Review* 2015-02-24)

"I highly recommend this book. . . . A fascinating read . . . This will be on my personal bookshelf for years to come. " (Michelle Breckon *Reference Reviews* 2015-09-01)

"*The Book of Yokai* is a fascinating and enormously informative study... Foster's narrative is smooth and often humorous. The book is easy to read, and at the same time immensely informative on the complicated and varied ways yokai have existed throughout Japanese history." (Noriko T. Reider *Western Folklore* 2016-06-01)

From the Inside Flap

"Overflowing with great stories of Japan's fantastical monsters, spirits, and other creatures of the collective imagination, *The Book of Yokai* is filled with solid information, a variety of new perspectives, and the kind of richness of detail that will enhance any reader's enjoyment of Japan's monstrous folk traditions."—Dr. Bill Tsutsui, President of Hendrix College and author of *Godzilla on My Mind*

"Foster's yokai are living beings, real in their own way: they migrate from the woods and ponds of rural prefectures to books, games, anime, and the toy stores of Tokyo. With writing that flows like water and a fluid command of yokaiology, Foster produces a complete picture for any fan interested in knowing more."—Paul Manning, Trent University

About the Author

Michael Dylan Foster is Associate Professor in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Indiana University. He is the author of *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* and numerous articles on Japanese folklore, literature, and media.

Shinonome Kijin is an artist and scholar of yokai. He lives and works in Chiba Prefecture, Japan.

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