

Name

Instructor

Course

Date



---

# Naomi

*Naomi* is a novel that was written by Junichiro Tanizaki between 1924 and 1925 to warn any man who falls in love with a younger woman and thinks that he can manage to control her. In the novel, the main objective is achieved through the use of two characters namely Joji, who is 28 years old and a 15-year-old Naomi. In particular, Tanizaki's *Naomi* describes in details a typical relationship between a Japanese woman and a man in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the relationship described seemed to deviate from conventional ideas during that period. Although the novel focuses much on gender empowerment issues, in reality, it describes a post-marriage gender roles reversal. In addition, the novel is illustrative on the shift from father-child relationship to husband-wife relationship. Although the relationship is unique, it is a ubiquitous phenomenon. The novel also compares the analogical story of *Lolita* to several other works such as *The Great Gatsby* or even *Pygmalion*. Throughout the novel, the author makes a progressive follow up of Naomi and Joji's relationship that is entirely narrated by Joji, who eventually loses the role of protagonist to his wife. The paper will review the Novel entitled *Naomi* by Junichiro Tanizaki.

Throughout the novel, there is no limit between Joji's and Naomi's feelings. However, Naomi does not speak of or show care towards Joji's well-being or even feelings. For example, inequality is evident in the house arrangement adopted by the two in that the two live in separate rooms. Although Joji's room is a slightly bigger than that of Naomi and his beddings much better, he is much willing to give Naomi and show how he values her well-being and comfort. In the current century, a married couple is supposed to share the same bedroom and more so the bed to show equality in living quarter, however, this is not the case in the novel hence showing a change of equality in living quarter. As the novel approaches the end, Naomi and Joji sleeps again in separate bedrooms, but now Naomi's room is better compared to that of her husband having lady's bathroom. In this context, the living conditions portrayed progressive of Naomi and Joji's relationship and explicitly demonstrated who among the two is more considerate to his or her partner's feelings.

In the novel, westernization is evident when Naomi stopped practicing some of her manners such as wearing hair in the traditional Japanese way and changes all her wardrobe into "western" alike as time progresses. In addition, the words modern and western are used interchangeably throughout the novel especially when Naomi's family members described her new look as western when she went back to Senzoku. In this context, the author seems to have used the two terms synonymously to signify the attitude towards realizing modernization in Japan. Besides, it is important to note that four years before the novel's publication women got the right to vote especially in the United States paving the way to women empowerment as a component of modernity. In the novel, the concept of modernization and westernization is also evident when Naomi refused to become a Geisha, a traditional woman who could take care of her husband's needs and care about his feelings. Instead, Naomi chose to live like a "Western" woman who

is opposite of desired female qualities in Japan. Therefore, the novel uses westernization to explain the reason behind progressive uncaring and neglectful towards her husband.

As the novel progresses, Joji's consideration and affection towards Naomi's feelings grew much stronger, and the two are faced with more problems due to uncaring nature of Naomi. On the other hand, Naomi is self-absorbed and selfish and like Joji is traits her growth exponentially as the novel progresses. However, the novel is not clear whether Joji's consideration and affection towards Naomi's feelings were so immersed or because Joji was trapped in the relationship, it is sad that he forgive Naomi for her misconduct and even adultery. At the beginning of Joji and Naomi relationship, Naomi preferred tulip flower that symbolized hopeless and eternal love. As such, the symbolism foreshadowed further progress of the novel as Joji loves heart collapses in the fire of his feelings.

Throughout the novel, it is clear that Naomi and Joji's relationship is that of a capricious daughter and caring father, and it progresses past their marriage until the finish of the novel. As such, the reader may find it paradoxical when Joji says that before he met Naomi, he was not under any obligation to either send money to his siblings or parents because they were practicing large scale farming and they managed everything for him. However, upon meeting Naomi, she became his child in the same way he was to his parents. Therefore, Joji's upbringing and attitude towards his mother and father could have earned him an inferior parental figure in his marriage.

In conclusion, in the novel, Joji and Naomi's relationship is none mutualistic symbolizing the relationship between a Japanese woman and a man in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this time, couples were interdependent and most adopted

symbiosis relationship. For instance, in the novel Naomi is an example of the parasitical organism and Joji the host. However, women cannot stand out to be blamed because most men wanted to take care of their wives as their children. This is evident when Joji says that he wanted to take care of Naomi as a little bird.