Munakata Haruki is a world-famous Japanese writer whose works have been translated into 50 languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. His only began writing in the age of 29 with no intention to be an author, yet his books and short stories have been best sellers in Japan and many other countries. He is one of the most well-known Japanese writers in the world, but his works are most admired for their exploration of themes such as memory, identity, and the human condition. The combination of these elements is what makes Munakata Haruki so distinct, and also, what makes his works universal.

- Janice Yutong Cai

**BIOGRAPHY**

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**HISTORY**

**Political Dichotomy and Postwar Attitudes toward WWII in Japan**

Japan's right wing and left wing have divergent opinions of WWII. The right wing, exemplified by the Liberal Democratic Party, believed the war was necessary to protect Japan, while the left wing, exemplified by the Communist Party, believed the war was a imperialist endeavor.

- Evelyn Wei

**Japan's High Growth Period**

The Japanese economy experienced a rapid growth in the 1960s and 1970s, driven by a combination of government-led industrial policies, favorable foreign trade conditions, and a strong labor force. This period is often referred to as the “Japanese Miracle”.

- Ivan Warner

**The Cultural Impacts of Japan's Bubble Economy**

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- Miho Ouyou

**Post-Bubble Era Japan**

Japan's economy slowed after World War II, thanks to financial support from the United States and domestic economic reforms. In the 1980s, real estate and stock market prices rapidly inflated, creating an economic bubble, but in 1992, the stock market crashed. Often called “The Lost Decade,” this era hit Japan hard. Economic growth stopped, the markets flooded with stories of businesses going bankrupt, and in 1995, the Kobe Earthquake hit Japan, killing over 6,000 people and destroying more than 300,000 homes. Nonetheless, Japan remains the world's 3rd largest economy thanks to the economic reforms of Prime Minister Koizumi's "Abenomics".

- Josh Yang

**What did he write?**

**A Wild Sheep Chase: A Critique**

Haruki Murakami’s A Wild Sheep Chase fails to live up to the standards of his other novels. Published in 1982, it is Murakami’s first full-length novel and perhaps what brought him to fame during Japan’s bubble period. However, it fails to hold up as a novel due to its lack of a clear plot focus, and a jarring leap from the unexplained literary world. Furthermore, the story establishes a boundary between reality and fantasy, offering the reader an escape. The novel is not without its charm, however, and offers a glimpse into the author’s unique perspective, which remains engaged in the book, and blurs the line between fact and fiction.

- Blue Flowers

**Challenge of Traditional Beliefs in Kafka on the Shore**

Kafka on the Shore is a novel about a teenage girl who runs away from home to resist a cruel curse. The novel demonstrates a blend of magical realism, popular culture, and ancient mythologies. The novel is set in a modern-day Japanese city, and the story focuses on the protagonist’s journey as he tries to understand the meaning of his life and the universe.

- Yuxuan Liu

**Underground**

Underground, a novel that is both a song and a novel, is a modern-day tale of a young man who leaves his job to start his own business. The story follows his journey as he searches for his identity and his purpose in life.

- Yifan Hong

**Literature review of A Slow Boat To China**

A Slow Boat To China is a novel that tells the story of a young man who runs away from home to escape his problems. The novel is set in a modern-day Japanese city, and the story focuses on the protagonist’s journey as he tries to understand the meaning of his life and the universe.

- Shiwei Wang

**Themes**

**Murakami and Music**

Imagine walking into a bar with Haruki Murakami playing in the background, while reading 1Q84. Someone is unknowingly climbing the fence to the other world and the feelings of excitement and nostalgia are pounding in your veins. And just as she reaches the other side, the violin crescendos through the E-flat minor scale, softly pulsing to the setting of a mysterious mechanical territories and questionable decisions of strange characters. Many of Murakami’s stories are musical components. The title of the song is a metaphor for his storyline. I explore elements from the books Norwegian Wood and The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, deconstructing each song into its musical elements and evaluating it in regard to the genre, context, and history behind it.

- Leigh Kong

**Cats in Murakami’s Literature**

Since his first published novel, Hear the Wind Sing, cats have appeared in Murakami’s literature in the form of秆animal dreams, characters, or metaphors for human beings. Cats curling up on the protagonist’s lap, wandering into the protagonist’s kitchen, and playing the protagonist’s music create a cozy atmosphere and convey a feeling of hope and closure. Cats are everywhere in Murakami’s literature. They bond couples together, indicate the health of a relationship, and create a cozy atmosphere. Cats are also a metaphor for human beings. Cats curling up on the protagonist’s lap, wandering into the protagonist’s kitchen, and playing the protagonist’s music create a cozy atmosphere and convey a feeling of hope and closure.

- Ruoohan Zhang