

※ 注意：請於試卷內之「非選擇題作答區」作答

In her 2008 book *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*—translated into English in 2015—Japanese novelist Minae Mizumura explores the position of languages other than English in the modern world. Mizumura herself was raised in the United States, where she studied French literature at university, but she returned to Japan as an adult and has mainly written in Japanese.

The excerpt below is taken from a section of *The Fall of Language* where Mizumura gives a lecture at an academic conference on temporality and literature in France. After carefully reading the excerpt, write a coherent and argument-driven essay in which you analyze and respond to Mizumura's claims.

In 1868, the isolationist Edo shogunate, which reigned over Japan for more than 250 years, finally came to an end. The Meiji Emperor took over power in what is called the Meiji Restoration, and Japan officially opened its doors to the West. Innumerable changes proceeded to take place in the country. One of them was the change in Japanese awareness of time—of temporality—which is directly related to the subject of this symposium. This awareness also concerns modern Japanese literature.

For Japanese people before 1868, Europeans were little more than curious beasts, strange and incomprehensible. Then, after the Meiji Restoration, everything changed. Along with European science and technology, European art flooded into Japan, all forms of it representing themselves as the universal—and most advanced—model. The same was true of novels. The Japanese, with characteristic diligence, began to read masterpieces of European literature, first in the original and then in translation. And such is the power of literature that through the act of reading, little by little the Japanese came to live the lives of Europeans as if they were their own. They began to live the ambitions of Julien Sorel, the happiness of Jane Eyre, the sufferings of young Werther, and the despair of Anna Karenina as if they were their own. They thus began living a new temporality—that which flows in the West, dictated by the Gregorian calendar, marked by major historical events in the West. And by so doing, they eventually joined what the Europeans called “humanity.”

Bravo to my ancestors!

And yet, as you all know, joining humanity is never a simple matter. By beginning to live the same temporality as Westerners, the Japanese now had to live two temporalities simultaneously. On the one hand, there was Time with a capital “T,” which flows in the West. On the other hand, there was time with a small “t,” which flows in Japan. Moreover, from that point on, the latter could exist only in relation to the former. It could no longer exist independently, yet it could not be the same as the other, either. If I, as a Japanese, find this new historical situation a bit tragic, it's not because Japanese people now had to live in two temporalities. It's rather because as a result of having to do so, they had no choice but to enter the asymmetrical relationship that had marked and continues to mark the modern world—the asymmetrical relationship between the West and the non-West, which is tantamount, however abstractly, to the asymmetrical relationship between what is universal and all the rest that is merely particular.

Whereas the Japanese who joined humanity began also to live in universal, Western temporality, people in the West did not live in Japanese temporality. Japanese temporality was merely particular. In fact, since modernity, all educated people in the world have come to live in Western temporality in one way or another. Yet only the Japanese lived in Japanese temporality (with the exception of those colonized by the former Japanese Empire who had no choice but to live in even more complicated temporalities). Japan's entry into humanity meant living in this asymmetrical relationship.