

Japan Foundation, London

Senior Arts Programme Officer

Junko TAKEKAWA's Recommended Japanese Crime and Mystery Books (July 2026)

Do you think you have read every novel from Japan? Think again! Here is a short list of crime and mystery books you may like to read. More to follow next month!

1. Title: Inspector Imanishi Investigates

Suna no Utsuwa 『砂の器』

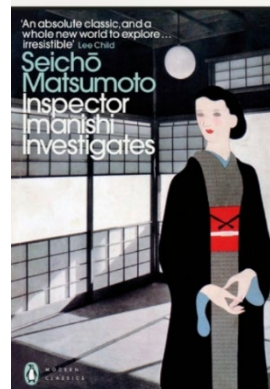
Author: Seicho MATSUMOTO (Translated by Beth Cary)

Published by: Penguin Books UK, 2024

Link for more information and purchasing:

[Inspector Imanishi Investigates](#)

Comments: The beloved classic mystery novel set in 1960s Tokyo by Japan's most respected crime writer, Saicho MATSUMOTO, is now available to English-speaking audiences. This masterpiece follows a rise-and-fall narrative and, like his other works, explores important social issues, offering a vivid insight into a period of great change in Japan – you may not be able to finish the book without tears!



2. Title: The Final Curtain (The Detective Kaga Series)

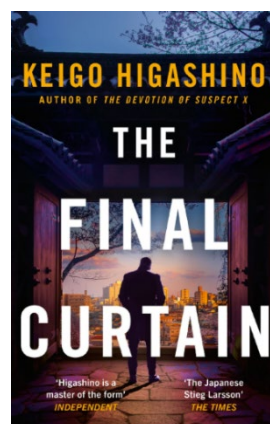
Inorino Maku ga Oriru Toki 『祈りの幕が下りる時』

Author: Keigo HIGASHINO (Translated by Giles Murray)

Published by: Abacus, 2023

[The Final Curtain](#)

Comments: The world of Japanese crime novels would be incomplete without Keigo HIGASHINO. One of Japan's leading contemporary crime novelists, he is so prolific that many of his books have already been available in English. This work is the fourth instalment of the popular "Detective Kaga Series", in which Kaga's investigation reveals the perpetrator's past as well as his own. Emotionally gripping!



3. Title: Murder at Mount Fuji

Daburyu no Higeiki 『Wの悲劇』

Author: Shizuko NATSUKI (Translated by Robert B. Rohmer)

Published by: Hutchinson Heinemann (Penguin Books), 2026

[Murder at Mt. Fuji](#)

Comments: Who said there are no female crime novelists in Japan? Long overlooked in the UK, Natsuki SHIZUKO is arguably 'a queen of Japanese mystery' and a true pioneer for women in this genre. Slightly difficult to recognise from the English title, the original Japanese title translates directly as *The Tragedy of W*, reflecting NATSUKI's inspiration from famous fiction writer Ellery Queen. More of her books will be out this year, so keep an eye out!



4. Title: The Clock House Murders

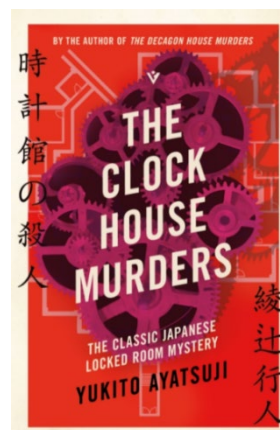
Tokeikan no Satsujin 『時計館の殺人』

Author: Yukito AYATSUJI (Translated by Ho-Ling Wong)

Published by: Pushkin Press, 2025

[The Clock House Murders](#)

AYATSUJI Yukito has been an influential source for many authors, including our previous guest, TSUJIMURA Mizuki, who admitted that her pen name was partly inspired by her beloved author. Unlike MATSUMOTO Seicho, AYATSUJI stays with the classical "whodunit" and "howdunit," writing a series of books full of tricks set in various idiosyncratically designed houses. This book could be considered his representative work, but I also recommend his other series if you enjoy this type of mystery.



5. **Title: Lady Joker: Volumes 1 and 2**

Redi Joka 『レディ・ジョーカー』

Author: Kaoru TAKAMURA (Translated by: Allison Markin Powell and Marie Iida)

Published by: Baskerville, 2023

Link for more information and purchasing:

[Lady Joker: Volumes 1 and 2](#)

Comments: Kaoru TAKAMURA is another female crime novelist we could not miss. A very long book (divided into two volumes) but entirely worth-reading. Based on a real incident in Japan, the novel is poignant and powerful. Powell and Iida also did an excellent job translating TAKAMURA's, at times, difficult to navigate Japanese.



6. **Title: Murder at the End of the World**

Konoyo no Hate no Satsujin 『この世の果ての殺人』

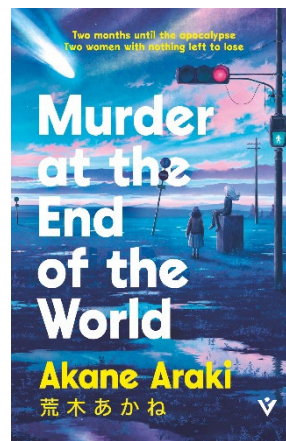
Author: Akane ARAKI (Translated by Jesse Kirkwood)

Published by: Pushkin Press, 2026

Link for more information and purchasing:

[Murder at the End of the World](#)

Comments: Akane ARAKI is a representative crime novelist of the younger generation. This debut novel received the prestigious Edogawa Rampo Award for its great characterisation and many twists and turns, and her second book has already been very well received in Japan. Out in July! Pick it up and read.



7. **Title: Villain**

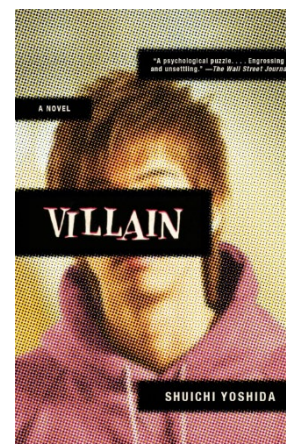
Akunin 『悪人』

Author: Shuichi YOSHIDA (Translated by Philip Gabriel)

Published by: Vintage Publishing (Penguin Books), 2011

[Villain](#)

Comments: Shuichi YOSHIDA, the original author of the novel on which the film *Kokuho* (2018) was based, is also known for various crime novels, *Villain* being one of them. Set in regional Japan, it explores the loneliness and struggles of a protagonist who lives at the bottom of the society.



8. **Title: Sisters in Yellow**

Kiirōi ie 『黄色い家』

Author: Mieko KAWAKAMI (Translated by: Laurel Taylor and YOSHIO Hitomi)

Published by: Picador, 2026

Link for more information and purchasing:

[Sisters in Yellow](#)

Comments: Mieko KAWAKAMI needs no introduction. This newly out book is her first crime suspense novel exploring around girls who are involved in credit card fraud. Unstoppable.

