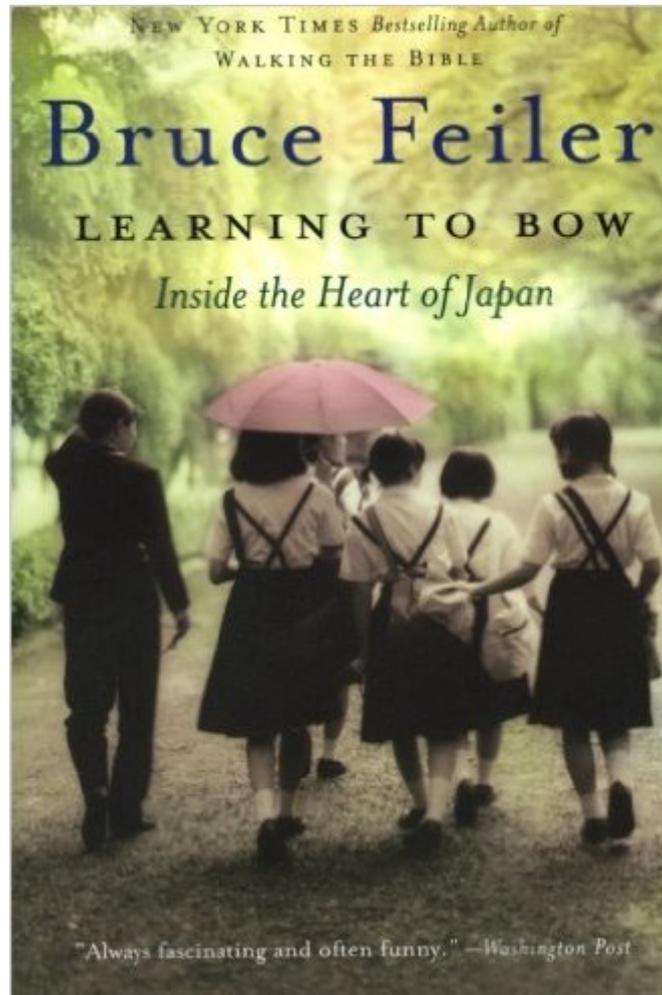


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Learning To Bow: Inside The Heart Of Japan



Synopsis

Learning to Bow has been heralded as one of the funniest, liveliest, and most insightful books ever written about the clash of cultures between America and Japan. With warmth and candor, Bruce Feiler recounts the year he spent as a teacher in a small rural town. Beginning with a ritual outdoor bath and culminating in an all-night trek to the top of Mt. Fuji, Feiler teaches his students about American culture, while they teach him everything from how to properly address an envelope to how to date a Japanese girl.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As one who logged a few years teaching in Japan around the same era, the subject matter certainly interests me, and this is an interesting study of Japanese culture and the experience of AETs as existed in the late 1980s. However, the book is a bit dated and I don't know how accurate of a portrayal it'd be for those interested in the Japan teaching experience of today. During the author's experience, the JET program was in its early years and gaijin in the classrooms was still a novelty. In the last 20 years or so, however, an entire generation has grown up accustomed to native English teachers and encounters with foreigners no longer prompt the level of surprise, ignorance, and curiosity portrayed by this author. Also, this book was written at the apex of Japan's bubble economy, and so many of the attitudes, beliefs and opinions expressed in the book about Japan and its future are the product of that era, circumstances that have obviously changed dramatically in the years since the bubble burst. Also found parts to be exaggerated. As one example, the author repeatedly informs us of what a rural backwards hamlet he was assigned to, I believe at one point

even alleging that most people in his town had never seen a foreigner before him. I found these descriptions dubious: in reality Tochigi contains about 2 million people, is located in the most populous region of Japan on the outskirts of the Kanto plain right next to Tokyo, and contains sites like Nikko that attract thousands of foreign tourists every year. It is hardly the inaka backwoods outpost depicted in this book.

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