
Prestigious Literary Awards Established!



Kikuchi Kan created the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize in memory of his friends, Akutagawa Ryunosuke and Naoki Sanjugo, in order to advance the careers of young promising writers as well as for the prosperity of *Bungeishunju*.

In January 1935 (Showa 10), Kikuchi Kan declared to establish awards named after his friends: Akutagawa Ryunosuke Prize and the Naoki Sanjugo Prize. What was his intention to launch these two prizes?

3 Reasons

Both Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize are given to the excellent literary works. The Akutagawa Prize honors the best work of serious artistic literature like Akutagawa Ryunosuke wrote, and the Naoki Prize rewards the best work of entertaining popular literature like Naoki Sanjugo wrote. As you can see, Kikuchi Kan founded these two prizes so as to immortalize the names of his friends who died young and also to put fledgling writers on the path to success. In addition, he wanted to make sure his magazine *Bungeishunju* lived on after losing two of his principal writers, Akutagawa and Naoki.

How to Spend the Prize Money

Winners received a pocket watch and a cash award of 500 yen. (The average annual income from employment back then was 712 yen in Japan.) Young writers were usually low on cash, so they were grateful. When Kawaguchi Matsutarō received the first Naoki Prize, Kikuchi Kan told him to throw a party for everyone. Kawaguchi invited 100 people including his friends and supporters to the restaurant, Alaska. He ordered an extravagant European-style feast that cost 4 yen per person. In those days, it cost around 2 yen per head even at a top-notch hotel. He used up 400 yen out of his prize money. When he told Kikuchi Kan about it, Kan simply said, “Don’t spend so much money on it.” Kawaguchi Matsutarō grumbled that he should have told him so in the first place.

The Kikuchi Kan Chronicle is published every other month and chronicles the life of Kikuchi Kan. You can also read it on the website.
