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Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600, is the companion volume to *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600-1700* (Columbia University Press, 2002). The project began as a one-volume edition of traditional Japanese literature, but as I gradually realized that a more comprehensive and detailed perspective on pre-twentieth-century Japanese literature and culture was needed, for both pedagogical reasons and the growth of the field, the project ballooned into a multivolume anthology.

Like the *Early Modern* volume, this one was organized and written with several objectives. First was the need to select representative texts and editors to present a broader and more complex view of Japanese literature, without sacrificing the familiar texts, which here have been given new readings. Throughout the book, in the introductions to each text, in the general introductions to genres and periods, and in the notes and commentaries, I have provided sociohistorical, religious, cultural, and literary context. I strongly believe that literature is best understood as a part of a larger world, with its own conventions and expectations. I also note other factors important to understanding the many functions that these texts have served over time, such as classical poetry (*waka*), which was the mainstay of traditional Japanese literature, is highly intertextual, relying on well-known images and phrases. Accordingly, these poems often make little sense without the context that the anthology offers in abundance. Some texts, such as *The Tale of Genji* and *The*