

Yu dafu sinking

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Yu Dafu: 'Sinking' Commentary Yu Dafu's 'Sinking' was one of the most prominent pieces among the literary canon of the May Fourth Movement, as it gives an interesting portrayal of the Chinese diaspora following the nation's occupation by foreign powers. The story depicts the life of a Chinese student who is pursuing medicinal studies in Japan, but finds himself captivated by Western romantic poetry so as to temporarily escape from his disheartened experience as an individual deemed as inferior by the Japanese.

The protagonist seems to greatly struggle with his thoughts on nationalism, and this is evident when he sleeps with a Japanese woman and consequently feels insignificant and ashamed. Thus, this is symbolic of China failing to effectively resist the influence of foreign powers. It is also worth noting that Japan was quite a common location for many scholars because of its relatively short distance from their homeland, economical tuition fees, and the fact that there were a greater number of schools open to Chinese students compared to that of America or Europe.

Furthermore, many Chinese saw Japan as a land where the advanced Western technology and philosophy had been successfully integrated with its native culture. In a sense, this also serves to be a paradox, for while the Chinese might have looked up to Japan as a prime example of an Asian nation that had successfully modernized according to the Western standard, it is at the same time the cause of their national humiliation. Yu Dafu also recalls to his audience the striking contrast of when China had once been the leading example of a nation and Japan had been its follower.