

# YUKIO MISHIMA

b. January 14, 1925

d. November 25, 1970

## JAPANESE AUTHOR

*“When silence is prolonged over a certain period of time, it takes on a new meaning.”*

**Yukio Mishima is one of the most prolific and influential Japanese authors of the 20th century.**

Yukio Mishima is the pen name of Kimitake Hiraoka, one of the most prolific and influential Japanese authors of the 20th century. He was the first living Japanese writer to gain broad recognition in the West.

Born in Tokyo, Mishima was not allowed to play sports or interact with other children his age. He attended an elite Japanese school, studied several languages and was exposed to European culture. His early experiences played an important role in shaping his writing.

Mishima's first opportunity at professional writing came as a teenager, when he was invited to write a short story for a prestigious literary magazine. He based the story on the bullying he suffered at school. To avoid scandal, he adopted the pseudonym Yukio Mishima, which he continued to use for the rest of his life.

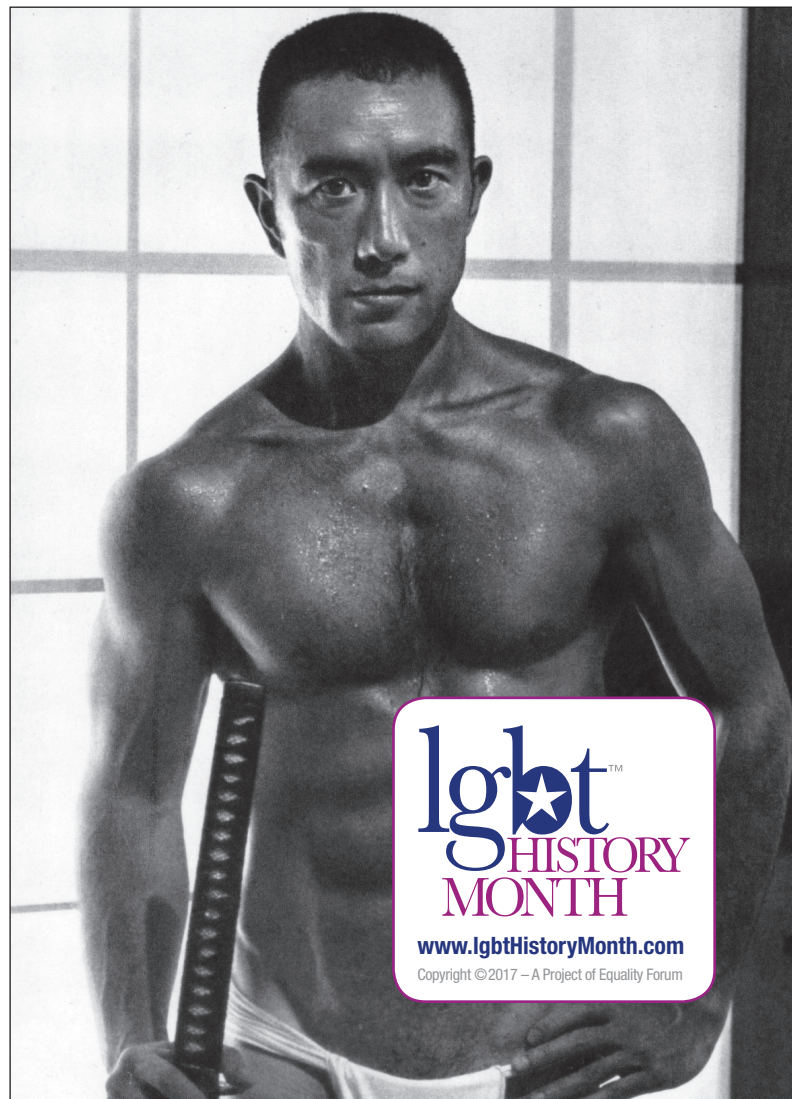
In 1947 Mishima graduated from the University of Tokyo and began work in the government finance ministry. He quit to focus on his writing.

Mishima wrote 50 plays, 34 novels, 25 books of short stories and 35 books of essays. One of his most famous works, “Confession of a Mask,” tells the semi-autobiographical story of a young gay man who must hide behind a mask in order to be accepted by society. He wrote the book when he was 24 and found fame shortly thereafter.

In addition to writing, Mishima worked as a model and a movie actor. In 1958 he married a woman and fathered two children, before exploring the underground gay culture in Japan. Although his widow denied his homosexuality, a gay writer published an account of his relationship with Mishima.

Mishima practiced martial arts and strove to live by the ancient samurai code. In the late 1960s, he became a radical nationalist and formed a private militia called the Tatenokai. In 1970 he and several of its members captured the commandant of the Japanese army in an attempted coup. When the coup failed, Mishima committed the ritual samurai honor suicide, seppuku (also known as hara-kiri), a self-visceration followed by decapitation. He was buried in Tokyo.

Mishima received many awards and was nominated three times for the Nobel Prize in Literature. A biographical film, “Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters,” was released in 1985, and in 1988 the Mishima Yukio Prize, a literary award, was created in his memory. In 1999 the Mishima Yukio Literary Museum opened in Japan.



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