

Mono no aware (物の哀れ)

In Japanese, the phrase means the pathos or sadness of “things” (very odd to have the Japanese translation in English contain the word aware). As we look in nature at transience (falling leaves, the moon, blossoms) we are reminded of how in moments of complete unknown, we are called to witness the awareness of impermanence (無常, mujō). We maintain a transient gentle sadness or wistfulness at the same time we anchor ourselves in knowing differently.

Two short poems from Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801)

How much I would like to ask
The person who knows the moving power of things (*mono no aware*)
The feelings he has through an autumn night
As he gazes at the moon.

The wild pinks
At dusk
When the crickets cry.
I keep thinking, saying, ‘ah!’ (*aware*)

<https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/mono-no-aware/>