Images function to evoke emotions and ethereal beauty
Insects: “Such visual images, not merely decorative or descriptive of the setting, function as symbols for the cumulative meaning and tone of classical and medieval poems in which the same images are associated metaphorically with a variety of emotions – most often, loneliness, sorrow, or a pleasurable sense of the melancholy.”
--Araki, “Kawabata and His Snow Country.” 339

“Description would encroach on the reader’s imagination, and Kawabata did not like that. Since he saw beauty as subjective, he would rather invite the reader to fantasize. . . .”
--Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers, 211

“The poet did not describe the nature of the beauty he saw; instead, he presented, or suggested, the particulars of the time and place that created the beauty. The reader who had been to the Echigo Mountains . . . could see the beauty in his mind’s eye. To this type of reader, the poet needed only to give the proper setting and proper emotional stimulants; the reader took over from there, injecting personal meaning into the commonest words.”
--Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers, 212

“Symbolism becomes important in this type of writing, for, when properly used, it can present a specific image without limiting its emotional connotations. . . . Yet since the pattern [of Thousand Cranes] is symbolic, not descriptive, of her beauty, each reader has the freedom to visualize her in the way he sees fit.”
--Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers, 213

“Yet, unlike most or those poets, he was a symbolist who used a simple vocabulary, easy diction, and common syntax. His prose style was deceptively lucid. Combining linguistic simplicity with literary ambiguity, Kawabata explored an area of modern Japanese prose that no other writer has come near.”
--Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers, 214

Imagery that expresses the inexpressible: inner and outer
Final scenes: “The technique of literary expressionism: by transcending spatial and temporal logic in order to objectify inner experience, Kawabata seems to have successfully described an otherwise inexpressibly complex state of mind.”
--Araki, “Kawabata and His Snow Country.” 348

Concept of literary language: “he both admired and tried to use a style that was simple in vocabulary and syntax but complex in meaning and connotation. . . . a more sensitive reader, while understanding every word of it, would sense something indescribable beneath the lucid surface.”
--Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers, 209
“Lying behind Kawabata’s insistence on simple language was his belief that a verbal description, no matter how detailed it might be, would never be able to depict natural beauty at its most sublime. Words were always imperfect for a writer seeking to express the inexpressible.”
--Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers, 210

Focus on physical senses to create the feeling of a place
“the reader becomes a view of Donald W. Meinig’s ‘landscape as environment,’ that is ‘engaging all of our senses, the sounds and smells and ineffable feel of a place.’”

“It is a novel in which action is rendered in natural images and symbolic clues rather than in straightforward account. He displays the precision of the senses, juxtaposed with suggestion that is characteristic of haiku form. Kawabata’s style combines two critical aspects of haiku poetry: motion and silence.”

Kawabata “makes maximum use of the ambiguity of the Japanese language, with its multiplicity of meanings, verbal and sensory hints, and erotic symbolism. Kawabata also brings the Yukiguni to the reader through the other sense of hearing, smell, and taste. He fuses motion and silence in Snow Country by mingling the sense of hearing with images of motions in the human landscape.”

Images as independent or kernels
(moths, Russian woman) “The kaleidoscopic succession of images . . . effectively suspends the narrative progress and forces us to pay attention to those large margins in the canvas of life.”
--Miyashi, Accomplices of Silence, 111

“Kawabata’s achievement . . . lies in just this, his keen awareness of the objects around men that exist in themselves as solidly as people do. Objects, in the world and in the world of the novel, are somehow or other related to people, but Kawabata seldom makes the connection between them explicit for us. With each of his brief paragraphs self-contained in this way . . . . these objects tend to stand autonomous.”
--Miyoshi, Accomplices of Silence, 119

“The image of the Chijimi cloth, like the waka poem embedded in the climax of many a nō play, serves as a kernel from which all the other images can be seen to have sprouted and grown.”
--J. Thomas Rimer, Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions, 176

Focus on specific elements
lips as leech: “Here, as elsewhere, he demonstrates his remarkable capacity to isolate specific elements of beauty – in this instance, texture.”
--Araki, “Kawabata and His Snow Country.” 337