Citizen 13660 Study Guide

Citizen 13660 by Miné Okubo

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Citizen 13660 is an autobiographical and historical account of Japanese-Americans forced to relocate to camps during World War II, seen from the eyes of one of the evacuees, author Mine Okubo.

Through a combination of drawings and captions, Mine tells her story. She is in Europe on an art fellowship when England and France declare war on Germany. The French border is closed, and Mine must wait many months with her possessions in another country until she can board one of the last refugee ships out of Europe for New York.

From New York she rides to California, where she spends some peaceful months with her family until December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor is attacked. About a week later, the United States declares war on Japan, and many Japanese-Americans become the targets of racial hatred and suspicion. Paranoia about the possibility of spies and saboteurs among the Japanese-American population prompts the government to forcibly evacuate Japanese-Americans living on the west coast to more than a dozen relocation camps. Mine evacuates with her younger brother to Tanforan Assembly Center, a converted horse racing track.

Much of the book is concerned with the everyday life of evacuees. Evacuees must deal with harsh living conditions (dilapidated barracks, straw mattresses, poor food and water, exposure to the elements), lack of privacy (communal toilets and showers, cramped living quarters) and, more than anything, the indignity of living as a prisoner, being inspected, searched, confined, and sometimes treated little better than animals.

Mine is able to see the positives that spring from these negatives. Evacuees become very resourceful, furnishing barracks with scrap-lumber, making arts and crafts from whatever is at hand, and improving their own living conditions when the government cannot or doesn't care to. Despite their confinement, evacuees do their best to function as a normal society, taking on jobs, indulging in recreational activities, learning musical instruments, and having weddings and funerals.

Mine, as other evacuees, learn to live the best they can considering their circumstances. She is transferred to another facility in Utah, called the Central Utah Relocation Project near Topaz. Facilities are better and more numerous, and overall the camp is more livable than Tanforan, indicating the hard work of the evacuees and the fact that the government is becoming better at administrating the camps.

Eventually rules become relaxed, and people begin to leave the camps in various ways. Some leave as soldiers, though a questionnaire affirming the allegiance of evacuees to the United States angers some residents. Some leave as seasonal workers, or as students going to college. Mine's own brother goes to work in a factory and eventually the army. Eventually, having finished her documentary project of sketching, leaves the camp. She is saddened to see the (mostly) very old and very young she is leaving

behind, wondering how the government expects these people to leave a place they have called home for years. She tries to look to the future.

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Pages 1 - 20 Summary and Analysis

Mine Okubo, the author, is traveling on an art fellowship in Europe when England and France declare war on Germany on September 3, 1939, officially starting World War II. At that time, Mine becomes stranded in Switzerland with all of her possessions in Paris, France. The French border is closed.

Mine has friends in Berne, Switzerland, and she ends up staying on a farm there for several weeks. However, she receives a letter stating that her mother is very sick in the United States, and she decides to try anything she can to return to the States. She learns that she can obtain a transit visa to France if sailing there from a French port in Switzerland, so she secures this passage. From Bordeaux, France, she then sets sail for the states, with many other refugees escaping war.

Mine arrives in New York, and is then wired money by her family to get to California. Joy at returning home is cut short when her mother dies soon after. Mine decides to live with her younger brother in Berkeley, California.

The news of the Pearl Harbor bombing on December 7, 1941 shakes her relative peace some time after. Newspapers and radio programs start distributing scare headlines and hateful propaganda against the Japanese and Japanese-Americans, or "Japs" as they are derogatorily called. There is talk of sabotage and spies among Japanese-Americans. Amid this environment, several arrests were made, the Japanese were made to carry certificates of identification, and several items became contraband, like cameras and short-wave radios. Mine learns that her father has been taken to an internment camp. Her friends urge her to flee east, away from California, but she does not want to leave her home.

In 1942, Public Proclamations 1 and 2 establish military zones on the coast. Any Japanese-Americans living in these zones are forced to evacuate. This evacuation is initially voluntary, but eventually the military steps in and forcibly evacuates citizens.

Later, Public Proclamation 3 establishes a curfew for Japanese-Americans, and Mine has to get a special permit to travel to work in Oakland.

Shelters in "Relocation Camps" are erected by the military for evacuees. The homes and properties of evacuees are taken over by the Federal Reserve, in order to prevent vandalism or looting. In total, 110,000 people are removed from the West Coast into Relocation Camps.

On April 24, 1942, Civilian Exclusion Order No. 19 is issued, forcibly evacuating Berkeley. Mine's time had come. Mine registers with her brother as a family unit at a Civil Control Station set up to register evacuees. She is given the number "13660" as identification, and she makes arrangements for the government to take over the family's

property. Her eventual destination, one of fifteen relocation centers, is Tanforan Assembly Center south of San Francisco.

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Mine and her brother have three days to pack. Her brother must halt his studies at the local University and defer his degree. Mine wishes a goodbye to her friends and does last-minute things, like giving her friends some cherished possessions and doing laundry.

Her friends take her to the Civil Control Station. They must tag their clothing and luggage with their identification number. They board a bus full of other evacuees and then arrive at Tanforan. Luggage is piled in a huge mess, and evacuees must search the huge pile for their own luggage.

Mine and her brother are separated, and each is strip-searched for contraband. They are also medically checked to ensure they have no communicable disease that could cause a pandemic in the camp. They are then released into the camp.

They must wait in line to get their building assignment, where they will live. The clerk initially tells Mine they have no more 2-member building units available, and only after Mine pleads with the clerk does she give them a unit together. The assignment is Barrack 16, Room 50, in a lonely part of the camp. They are taken there by a guide.

It turns out to be little more than a 20' x 9' wooden shack, with two fold-out beds. Only a sloppy effort was made to clean the barrack before they arrived. With little else to do, Mine and her brother take turns brooming up dust and grime.

Four o' clock arrives, and that means suppertime. Not unlike cattle, Mine and her brother are herded along with everyone else into long lines outside a huge grandstand. After much waiting, Mine discovers they are waiting in a line that leads to nothing! They squeeze into another line and are given dirty looks by those in the line.

Finally getting to the food, they discover the cooks just ran out of the main entree, Vienna sausage, and they must make do with bread and boiled potatoes. The crowd is so dense that Mine and her brother lose their appetite and leave.

They decide to go in search of their luggage, climbing through the huge pile outside. After looking through hundreds of bags, they don't find their luggage and figure that perhaps it will come with the next truckload. After the time spent searching, the mess-hall grandstand is less crowded and more pleasant, so they get food and have their first meal in the camp.

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Young men in Bekins trucks arrive to dump the next load of luggage in the camp. Mine and her brother watch the luggage as it is unloaded and finally spot their own two pieces. Mine's cheap wooden suitcase has taken a beating and is in bad shape. They board a crowded truck back to their barrack and drag their things into their stall.

Now getting towards evening, they head to the "mattress department" and are invited to stuff their own pieces of linen with straw. Rare cotton mattresses are reserved for only the sick and the old. They stuff their mattresses, sew the ends together roughly, and haul their awkward mattresses back to their stall.

They attempt to sleep, but it is not easy. The partitions between barrack stalls are very thin, and it seems every bit of noise is audible, from straw mattresses crackling to snores, baby cries, and conversations. The supplied single blanket is not enough to keep the two warm, so Mine and her brother throw whatever clothes and duffel bags they have at hand onto bed as well.

Life in the camp continues. Building construction is a constant in the camp, as new living quarters, washrooms, toilets, and other structures are being erected, leaving most of the camp a mess of construction materials and lumber. For the first month, Mine and her brother, along with many other evacuees, fix up their stalls using scrap lumber from the construction. As more evacuees arrive, the scrap lumber pile eventually disappears. Building furniture and fixing up the barracks become, for Mine, a distraction from the discomforts of her new life.

Dresses are non-existent, and women of every age wear slacks or jeans. To spend the time some days, Mine observes new evacuees arriving at the grandstand. The last group arrives on May 20, 1942. It is during these observations that Mine decides to capture the spirit of the moment through drawings and sketches.

During the first month, typhoid and smallpox shots are administered to the population, and many become sick from the typhoid shots, with the claim that the doses are too strong. Evacuee medical specialists assist the few non-evacuee doctors and nurses in this task.

Access in and out of the camp is very regulated and strict. Any cars or people coming in and out are subject to search. Curfew and roll call rules are put in place as well. Each barrack is assigned a house captain to ensure curfew is honored and to check on the residents twice a day. Camp police, called "Caucasians" by the evacuees (regardless of their race), patrol the area day and night to enforce the laws and catch people with any contraband material. The local post office also inspects packages and letters. Mine receives infrequent letters from her father and from European friends.

In an attempt to bolster morale, churches are established in various denominations. There is also the optional opportunity to work for able-bodied evacuees. Most adults work. In addition to the humble wages associated with this work, an allowance of $3.75 is allowed per month for clothes and expenses.

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Bachelor men are housed in what's called the "dorm" in the grandstand area. It is a wide open area, and to establish some sense of privacy, the men build what are called "Walls of Jericho" made of sheets or blankets around their little living areas. Some of these bachelors learn to play music or learn other skills to pass the time.

Privacy is a major issue almost everywhere. Barrack neighbors had to become used to each others' dancing, arguing, music, snores, and baby cries. Another "neighbor" comes in the form of constant appearances of rats and insects, as there is nothing in the way of pest control in the camp.

Laundry time involves bringing one's laundry to laundry buildings which unfortunately feature no hot water. Mine and her brother do washing after midnight when the facility is not so crowded, which earns the anger of the night janitor. They haul hot water from a nearby women's washroom. Dryers are eschewed in favor of clotheslines, and soon the camp is a maze of clotheslines.

Showers and bathrooms are communal, though men's and women's facilities are separate. Hot water is available, but many times it runs out, or there is a problem with the hot water boiler. Long troughs serve as wash basins. Flush toilets frequently do not work. In the men's latrine the toilets are completely communal; in the women's latrine, toilet were separated by partitions, but only every other toilet, leaving "conversational pairs" of toilets. Many women pin up sheets or bring boards to preserve some degree of privacy. As a result of this lack of privacy, very long lines form at the grandstand toilets, where every toilet is separated by partition. For sanitary reasons, chlorine foot basins are placed at the entrance to shower rooms, but many evacuees are afraid of these chemical baths and acrobatically avoid them while stepping into the shower room.

The sewage system is poor and is always springing one leak or another, leading to frequent noxious fumes throughout the camp.

Residents are allowed visitors during certain periods. A lot of bureaucratic red tape is involved in scheduling a visitor. Friends bring Mine food or other gifts and trinkets. Soon Mine discourages visitors, ashamed of her circumstance. At Tanforan, there is a room on top of the grandstand for visiting hours. Pets and children under 16 are not allowed into the camp at all.

On the topic of freedom, they were both close to freedom and far from it. A streetcar line and highway run close to the camp, and a huge sign, "Enjoy Acme Beer," stood out on a nearby hill. The sign became quite a joke, considering it advocated a contraband beverage.

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The local canteen has a store, but usually there is nothing to buy. On the occasions there are goods to buy, long lines form and it may take hours to get to the front. In fact, line-ups describe much of the evacuees' daily life, be it for meals, mail, the bathroom, or laundry.

Motion pictures are shown weekly in the grandstand, at eight o' clock. Though the screen could barely be seen at that time, since it was still daylight, Mine and the others enjoyed "movie time," which always played to a packed house.

After a while, new mess halls open, and residents are asked to bring their own plates and silverware, as well as to wash them after the meal was complete. Meal time is nearly always pandemonium; table manners are forgotten and mothers have no control of their children.

A movement for self-government is started by several evacuees, who attempt to hold an election for a council who will represent the evacuees. Army orders squelch this sort of activity, and eventually this elected council is dissolved by order of the army.

Schools eventually open, though they are poorly-supplied and discipline is nearly impossible. Special adult classes are offered, as well as traditional school and preschool classes. Mine signs up as an art instructor. She works 44 hours a week for $16 a month. A library also opens, started with only 65 books, though outside donations of books and magazines quickly bolster the library's stock.

Idleness is a constant in the camp and must be fought. Usually idleness is not a trait the Japanese will tolerate, but the situation makes it very tempting. Men can be seen lounging or sleeping in the streets or in the mess hall. To fight idleness, many start to plant victory gardens. The gardens spur competitive pride in many evacuees, leading to ever more impressive gardens.

A group of landscape architects among the evacuees make plans to build a lake in the camp. Trees and shrubs are transplanted and the men work with limited equipment. On August 2, the lake, North Lake, is formally opened. It has a bridge, promenade, and islands, and is overall quite impressive and an escape from the evacuees' dreary life. Mine enjoys drawing North Lake when it opens.

On the topic of bodies of water, another pond on the south side of the camp is a popular spot for enthusiasts to race mini sailboats. The grandstand bleachers are also popular, with perhaps the best views in the camp and limited privacy. In the grandstand itself, beyond movies there are talent shows, pageants, and dances held. A Mardi Gras parade is even held. Gambling is prohibited but nonetheless a popular recreation as well. Raids and arrests on suspected gambling rings are common. Beyond that, knitting

is a popular pastime for women, and games called Goh and Shogi, Japanese equivalents of Chess and Checkers, are popular for men, who hold regular tournaments.

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Warm days are unbearable indoors, and eventually windows are ordered to be made openable to help with the oppressive heat.

There are two center-wide inspections that occur in Tanforan. One is designed to re-inspect all luggage, as it was determined the luggage was not properly inspected the first time around. The second inspection is conducted by the army and is a much closer inspection. These inspections lead evacuees to believe they will soon be moved to a more permanent complex. Rumors fly about this possibility, and soon they are confirmed to be true.

Evacuees are allowed one day under police guard outside of the camp to make arrangements for business and personal property. Mine takes her day outside to shop and the temporary liberty makes her feel as giddy as a schoolgirl.

Soon the evacuees are told to pack up, which leads to a flurry of activity in the camp. Every piece of luggage is again inspected, and the first group is taken to the Central Utah Relocation Project near Topaz, Utah, on September 9, 1942.

Mine and her brother go through a long process to check out, be inspected, and get seat and other assignments for the train to carry them to Utah. Cheering evacuees are gathered to see groups off near the train station.

It is time for Mine and her brother to board her train, along with about 500 other evacuees. The trip is a two-day nightmare. The train is very old and creaky, leading to discomfort and an inability to sleep for all. It is also pitch dark inside the train cabins. Many people, especially children, experience restlessness and motion sickness. Beyond this, the journey is fairly uneventful, as the train snakes through the barren deserts of Nevada and Utah.

The train stops somewhere in northern Nevada for a half hour to let the evacuees stretch. Even in this instance they are surrounded by barbed wire and military men.

The next night is also a restless one for Mine. They pass the Great Salt Lake and many try to take a look, but it is so dark the lake can barely be seen.

At 8 o'clock in the morning the train finally arrives at Topaz. The evacuees are herded from train to bus. They travel 17 miles of desert to arrive at the Central Utah Relocation Project. They arrive at a mess hall, the temporary induction center for the day. They are greeted by a Boy Scout band. The wind is fierce and dust swirls everywhere and gets into everyone's eyes and clothes.

Mine and her brother register. They learn that facilities are more numerous than at Tanforan, and that every 12 barracks is provided such facilities as a laundry house, bathroom, and mess hall. They are assigned to Block 7, Barrack 11, Room F.

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Entering their barracks, Mine and her brother are medically checked by a nurse, who okays them as not carrying an epidemic. Their 20' x 10' barrack is completely bare and unfinished, with exposed rafters and wall beams. They are not happy with their assignment and have an argument with the induction personnel. Not only are they not assigned a different barrack, they are assigned a third person to share the space with them, a student from California. Contrary to this disappointment, the mess hall is a more pleasant place than the ones at Tanforan, and the food is better as well.

They must again make do with straw mattresses, but only for a short while before cotton mattresses are hauled in. They are rationed 2 army blankets apiece, and 2 of these blankets are used to cordon off Mine's bed in the barrack room to give her a little privacy.

Mine and her brother's baggage becomes misplaced and they search for many hours before they find it.

Mine gets a job working for the Topaz Times newspaper, at the handsome sum of $19 a month. The Times is eventually issued once a day, complete with comic section and a Japanese section. Mine and several others also eventually release an art and literary magazine, called the Trek.

As cold weather started to come, evacuees became increasingly desperate for wood to build partitions and protect against the cold. Lumber they are promised does not come, so many take to stealing wood from official buildings and construction sites, despite the high amount of security on hand. Thieves become quite skillful at dodging the security personnel. Mine and her brother make nocturnal raids for lumber, and the biggest danger is not security but falling into sewer or construction ditches, as it was nearly pitch dark at night.

Like Tanforan, there is little privacy in their barrack, with people coming and going. People who wish for privacy would walk well out into the desert (though still within the confines of the Project). There begins to grow a feeling of uncertainty in the evacuees as to their future, and how long they will be confined as they are.

The available water is nearly impossible to drink because of the strong taste of chlorine and deposits from the water pipes. Some go into the police quarters to sneak the best water. Whether due to food or water, occasional dysentery breaks out in the camps which must be quickly quarantined.

Chow time is indicated by the clanging of makeshift bells. Silverware and plates are provided. Usually a meal consists of rice, bread, beans, and macaroni or spaghetti.

About 500 evacuees arrive in Topaz every other day. The final group came on October 15, 1942. At every arrival, the Boy Scout bugle corps is there to greet the newcomers.

A snow fall on October 13 is an exciting event, as few in the camp had ever seen snow. Every room is issued a pot-bellied stove, which everyone gathered around on the coldest days.

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The snow melts, and the ground becomes thick with mud. In part to combat the erosion of the soil, trees and shrubs are brought from the mountains and planted throughout the camp. Mine doubts that the trees will grow in the harsh soil, but there are several trees that survive and thrive. Arbor Day is celebrated by the planting of even more trees.

When winter comes, the army distributes large jackets and uniforms to the evacuees. They don't fit well but they are appreciated. Apparently they were surplus from World War I. Other clothes are ordered from the Sears catalog. Barracks and other buildings are "winterized" by installing more walls and insulation. Fences are also installed around the camp.

The first Christmas is a sad affair for many evacuees, a time when their distance from family members becomes palpable. Trees and special dinners are served, and Mine's literary magazine has a makeshift party, but it does not feel much like Christmas.

On the Japanese New Year, a rice dessert called mochi is made, in which special rise is hammered with mallets and then shaped into round cakes. This activity livens some spirits, as does an ice rink constructed on the south side of camp.

Laundry is easier than it was at Tanforan, both because there are more facilities and because hot water is plentiful. The washroom is a busy place in the morning and at night. To combat the high mud, many evacuees construct getas (Japanese clogs) to get around.

The army has 175 beds and staffed largely by evacuees who knew medicine before they were relocated. Dead are sent to Salt Lake City for cremation. In the camp, the birth rate is high.

Schools are better supplied and organized than at Tanforan. Curriculum is the same as other American schools. At night, Americanization classes are held for the older native Japanese citizens (Issei).

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A mass gathering is held, a memorial service to honor a Japanese American soldier who died in battle. The American Legion participates.

Arts and crafts are big in the camp. Everything from vases to toys to garments to tools are fashioned by the residents from whatever is at hand. Craftspeople display a remarkable resourcefulness, considering what little is available to make items from.

Recreation comes in the form of ping-pong, cards, basketball, tennis, golf, and baseball, with baseball being the most popular. Sumo performances are given for those interested in traditional Japanese sports. Kites are also popular, as are talent shows and plays stage either in the mess halls or out in the open.

Like the outside world, there are scrap-metal drives and blood donations to help with the war effort. On January 29, 1943, Roosevelt announces that there is a movement to create a Japanese-American unit within the army, and that volunteers from the camp could join. As part of this, evacuees of military age are given a complicated questionnaire. The "money" question is Question 28, which asks if the respondent is loyal to the United States, and if they will swear off allegiance to any foreign power. This is a difficult question for Issei (native Japanese), who still felt attachment to their homeland. Others feel insulted by such a question, and as a result some strongly pro-Japanese evacuees try to intimidate others into voting pro-Japanese on Question 28.

The army evaluates the questionnaires, and separates those who answered Question 28 in a pro-United States way, versus those who answered in a pro-Japan way. The pro-United States men are cleared to participate in the army, including Mine's student roommate, who goes away. The pro-Japanese men are separated and eventually are shipped to a "dissident" camp.

The "Wakasa Incident" further stirs up anger and resentment in the camp. An elderly resident is shot and killed by a guard in the watchtower. The evacuees demand answers and an investigation, but they are not told much by those in charge, leading to cries of protest and anti-administration sentiment. As a result of this outcry, watchtowers are moved further out from the main camp, and firearms are banned among the soldiers. A memorial service is held for the victim, with enormous floral wreaths being made.

An Easter ceremony is planned, but nature spoils it with strong, whipping winds, to the point no one can stand being outside because of the whirling dust. Otherwise, spring is a mild time, contrasted to the blazing hot summer and icy cold winter. Many things are tried to control the wind and dust, including plowing, irrigation ditches, and gravel spreading, but the elements win out. When blowing from the right direction, the wind also brings the stench of the nearby sewage swamp.

Temporary leaves are granted to seasonal workers, who are the first to leave the camp in any significant number. They pick beets and fruits and pluck turkeys.

Mine attends the first high-school graduation class of 150 students. Graduation gowns and caps are rented to add to the ceremony.

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Summer comes. There is the choice of being eaten by mosquitoes (who thrive on the non-absorbent soil) outside or suffocating inside. Screens are issued to keep bugs out of the barracks. On the first truly hot day, 4,000 straw hats are sold in a single day. Victory gardens are made, as in Tanforan, but they are more difficult due to the unforgiving soil and dust storms.

Dogs and cats are common around the camp. Most dogs are mongrels with short little legs and weiner-like bodies. The amount of animals increase to the point the administration must force people to license animals. Residents enjoy keeping both domesticated and wild animals, and this practice must eventually be forbidden by the administration for health reasons.

In September of 1943, the entire water and sewage system has to be dug up and replaced because of shoddy pipes. This reminds Mine of her first visit to the camp when the same work was being done.

The segregation started with the army questionnaire is expanded, and those disloyal to the U.S. and/or loyal to Japan are separated from the general population and sent to their own camp, Tule Lake. 1300 members of the camp are relocated in this way, about a tenth of the population. This makes families suffer greatly, as some relatives do not wish to be labeled "disloyal" and remain with their family. On the other hand, 1200 loyal citizens are taken from Tule Lake to Topaz, creating excitement in the now-peaceful camp.

Rules start to become less rigid. A member of each block (12 barracks groups) are allowed to go outside the camp to shop for those in their block, though the usual inspections and paperwork are involved. Many are also temporarily allowed outside the immediate camp to gather vegetation or hunt for arrowheads in the desert beyond. Many also go fishing in the irrigation ditches about three miles from camp.

Finally, relocation programs are set up as a way to begin the process of returning residents to normal life. Some students are released in order to attend college. Seasonal workers are also released to relieve the farm labor shortage. Many volunteer for the army, and others go to work for the government or in defense plants. Mine's brother leaves to go work for a wax-paper factory in Chicago, and later he enters the army. Those released must endure more red tape and inspections, as well as being forced to pledge allegiance to the United States.

In January of 1944, having finished her documentary sketches, Mine decides to leave. She herself endures the endless paperwork and procedures. She attends forums on

such topics as "How To Make Friends" in order to help her return to normal life. She is photographed.

The day of Mine's departure arrives. She gives back blankets and other government-issued items, and she receives a train ticket, as well as further paperwork to be filled out once she relocates. After grabbing a few items and saying goodbye to friends, she lines up for her final inspection.

About to board the bus, Mine looks at who are left at the camp, almost all either the very old or very young. She wonders how the government expects those people to leave an environment they have known for years and have called home. On the bus, she reflects on the joys and sorrows of her experience, and tries to look forward to the future.

Characters

Mine Okubo

Mine (pronounced MEE-NEH) Okubo is the author of the book and is the "Citizen 13660" of the title. She relates, in a very objective and usually detached manner, her experiences as a relocated Japanese-American during World War II. She begins the narrative when war is declared on Germany, and her subsequent struggles with fleeing from Europe to get back to her home state of California, and ends the narrative as she thinks about her experiences in relocation camps from a bus driving her to freedom.

Mine does not let much emotion or personal thoughts bleed into the narrative, and in this sense Citizen 13660 is less an autobiography than a historical account. The idea for Citizen 13660 starts with Mine, an artist by training, sketching images of her everyday life in a relocation camp. Later she supplemented her sketches and added "captions" which are essentially the written text of the piece.

From what little there is of Mine's personality in the book, she is portrayed as a commonsensical, average Japanese-American, loyal to the United States in the war effort as other Americans but confused and disapproving of their decision to establish relocation camps. Fearful of the government, or perhaps realizing any protest or resistance would be futile, she "plays it by the book" as far as her behavior in the relocation camp, following all the rules and enduring living conditions even as she finds them next to intolerable. In this way, she is much like most of the Japanese-Americans forced to live in the relocation camps, and we are made to believe Mine's experience mirrors many of the experiences of others in her circumstance.

The Evacuees

The evacuees consist of those of Japanese descent living in the Western United States, specifically in the "military zones" established by Public Proclamations 1 and 2, who are forced to abandon their home and majority of possessions in order to live in government relocation camps during World War II. There was much anti-Japanese sentiment after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and declaration of war against Japan, and many felt there was a possibility of spies and saboteurs in the population of Japanese-Americans on the west coast sympathetic to the Japanese cause. These suspicions led to curfews and identification cards, and eventual confinement in relocation camps.

Though of course there are many personalities and temperaments among the evacuees, generally they are portrayed as normal Americans suffering courageously in an unfair and unjust situation, and making the best of it. Though they endure substandard living conditions and are sometimes treated like herded cattle by the United States government, they suffer largely in silence and try to instead grasp on to positives. They participate in scrap drives and blood drives and make victory gardens

just like their patriotic brethren not in camps to help the war effort. They are a very resourceful people, making furniture and wall partitions from scrap, fashioning arts and crafts from available materials, and in general finding ways to live in sometimes unlivable conditions. And, importantly, they try to live as they lived before being confined in a camp, taking jobs, celebrating holidays, honoring the dead, keeping the family intact, and carving a society out of the barren desert.

Nisei

Nisei is the Japanese word for next-generation, American-born Japanese. Nisei are almost always citizens of the United States, can speak English fluently, and generally are much better acclimated to the United States than those of the older generation, the Issei.

Issei

Issei is the Japanese word for first-generation, Japan-born Japanese. These are usually older folks who may not have American citizenship and who may not speak English. The Issei have a harder time fitting in to American society, and they cling to certain beliefs from the old country. They are also more likely to be suspected of having pro-Japan sentiments during the war. For these reasons Issei have tougher times than Nisei in the camps.

Mine's Younger Brother

Mine's younger brother, who is never named, makes up the other half of Mine's "family unit No. 13660." He accompanies her during most of the narrative, leaving Mine late to get a job in a factory in Chicago after relocation rules start to relax. Like Mine, her younger brother does not have much of a personality or presence in this narrative, and is somewhat of a cipher, Mine's "silent partner" as she observes the comings and goings of the relocation camps.

Caucasians

Caucasians become the evacuees' word for the relocation camp's local police enforcement (regardless of their actual race). They patrol the camps, spying and watching for rule violations like gambling, which they then conduct raids and arrests for. Naturally they are not well-liked by the evacuees, and "Caucasians" is a derogatory term.

Dissidents and No No's

Dissidents or "disloyals" are those who have been rumored to express or who have expressed pro-Japanese sentiment in the relocation camps. In a time of war and patriotism, this is an unfortunate label. Dissidents are separated from the general population and are shipped to their own relocation camp called Tule Lake. "No No's" are a subset of dissidents who answered "No" to a questionnaire which asked if they are loyal to the United States and are prepared to forswear allegiance to any other foreign nation.

The Student Roommate

Shortly after Mine and her brother arrive at Topaz, they are given a third roommate, a student who hopes to transfer soon. Like most other specific people in the book, he exists without a name or personality. He eventually volunteers to become a member of the Japanese-American unit in the army, and he is shipped out of camp.

The Boy Scout Bugle Corps

The Bugle Corps make it a point to given each newly-arrived busload or trainload of evacuees a musical welcome.

Inductors

Inductors are government officials responsible for checking evacuees in and out of various camps and facilities, and to perform such tasks as assign evacuees rooms. Mine fights twice with inductors over her room assignment, once because they wanted to separate her and her brother, and another time because she did not like the "neighborhood" surrounding her barrack.

Objects/Places

Public Proclamations 1, 2, and 3

Public Proclamations 1 and 2 established "military zones" over much of the Western United States, and especially the Pacific Coast. Those of Japanese descent were told they had to voluntarily evacuate these zones, though eventually evacuation became mandatory and handled by the army. Public Proclamation 3 established a curfew for those of Japanese descent. They had to stay in a confined area and could not be found in public between the hours of 8pm and 6am. Mine had to carry a special permit to allow her to work outside of her curfew area. These proclamations were the beginning of Japanese relocation by the United States during World War II.

Civil Control Station

This is the government facility Mine and her brother had to report to upon issue of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 19. Here, they were transported to Tanforan Assembly Center, one of several relocation camps for those of Japanese descent.

No. 13660

This was the identification given to Mine's family unit at the relocation camp, which consisted of herself and her brother. For Mine it becomes symbolic of the government's indifference and uncaring. The title of the book, Citizen 13660, is thus a reference to Mine herself while in confinement.

Tanforan Assembly Center

The Tanforan Assembly Center is the first of two relocation camps Mine is sent to and lives in. There are many problems plaguing the center that are only gradually ameliorated, including shabby living quarters, limited facilities such as bathrooms and laundry rooms, lack of hot water, and lack of privacy.

Barrack 16, Room 50

Barrack 16, Room 50 is the room Mine and her brother are assigned to. Besides two army cots, it is bare. It had been hastily whitewashed, but was quite dirty. Mine and her brother must make many alterations to the space to make it livable.

The Grandstand

The Grandstand at the Tanforan Assembly Center is a former horsetrack turned main mess hall and meeting area. Beyond the daily meals, the grandstand is a popular place to simply sit and enjoy the view or enjoy a variety of recreational activities, from movies to cards to talent shows.

Goh and Shogi

Goh and Shogi are, in Mine's estimation, the rough Japanese equivalents of the Western world's chess and checkers. Men in the relocation camp are very fond of the games and take them seriously. There are tournaments frequently held for these board games.

Question Number 28

Question Number 28 was the key question on a questionnaire the U.S. army gave to Japanese men of military age to determine their loyalty to the United States. It essentially asked if the respondent was loyal to the United States and would moreover promise to forswear any allegiance to any foreign nation. Those who answered this question pro-United States were given a job in the government or inducted into the army; those who answered pro-Japan were considered "disloyals" and were shipped to a separate camp. Popularly, those who answered with pro-Japan sentiment became known as "No-No's."

Mochi

Mochi is a Japanese dessert consisting of a special rice ground down with wooden mallets and then shaped into round cakes. These are popular for celebrating the Japanese New Year, and mochi-making serves to lift the spirits around camp.

Wakasa Incident

The Wakasa Incident involves an elderly resident of the Topaz Relocation Project being shot to death by a watchtower guard under poorly understood circumstances. Other residents demanded to know more about the death, but the U.S. administration kept the circumstances mostly secret. This led to outrage and protest in the relocation camp, to the point the administration moved the watchtowers further from the camp and outlawed firearms among the guards.

The Central Utah Relocation Project at Topaz

The Central Utah Relocation Project at Topaz was the second of two camps Mine was transferred to. It was thought of as a more permanent camp than the one at Tanforan Assembly Center. As a result, facilities were better and more numerous, the food was better, and generally everything was better organized. It was not void of problems, however, including the extreme temperates in winter and summer, and the terrible dust storms.

Tule Lake

Tule Lake was a special relocation camp set up especially for "disloyals," either those men who answered in a pro-Japanese way on their military questionnaires, or those who were known to spread pro-Japanese sentiments in the camps. About a tenth of Topaz' population gets shipped off to Tule Lake, causing rifts in families.

Themes

Pictures and Words

Unusual in Citizen 13660 is that it is structured as a sort of pictorial history, with ink drawings anchoring caption-like text that refers to the drawings, at least in part. This style in fact mirrors Mine's decision to favor objectivity over subjectivity quite nicely. With the text, the narrative, functioning as captions, the text is constrained by the drawings. Though there are exceptions (especially, for example, when Mine explains some of the army orders and other historical aspects of the relocation directive), the text can't but describe what is depicted, as is the function of a caption. In this way, Mine's lack of emotion/personality/beliefs are practically dictated by the picture/caption relationship. Like a photo-journalist (except armed with ink instead of a camera), Mine has gone to the battlefield, recorded visual representations of what she found, and then has reported back to the reader, explaining rather than editorializing her pictures.

What is very interesting in this line of thinking is the fact that Mine Okubo, with her distinctive haircut and bangs sticking out, is depicted in every drawing. Does this make her drawings even more "historically accurate," showing that she herself was personally there to witness what is going on, or does this erode her credibility, making her drawings less about her surroundings and more about her and her own perspective? There is no easy answer to this question. If anything this fact simply shows that Citizen 13660 is neither strictly an autobiography or a history, but rather it is a hybrid of those types.

Privacy

Beyond the most obvious outrage of the relocation camp, the fact that its evacuees are unjustly confined, perhaps the most frequently mentioned and most important consequence of life in the relocation camp is the lack of privacy. Privacy is under attack from the very beginning, because of the very nature of these camps. A huge amount of people must be moved in a very short amount of time in the most economical way possible. Because it is wartime, the government takes on powers and curtails liberties it simply cannot and does not in peacetime. This, combined with racial animosity and irrational paranoia, is a tragic combination for Japanese-Americans living on the west coast. They are herded, not unlike cattle, onto buses and trains, and tagged with numbers, the expedient but not humane or dignified solution for quick identification of many people.

Poor planning on the part of administrators, with time again being a factor, result in further degradation and attacks on privacy. Communal toilets, with latrines for the men and "conversationally paired" toilets for the women, cause undue shame, as do communal showers. Shabby, thin-walled living quarters provide little insulation against neighbors and the elements. Mess halls bear many similarities to pigs being slopped.

And "Caucasians," local police, have no conception of personal privacy as they spy and patrol, in search of contraband or bad behavior.

Though Mine does not provide her own beliefs or opinions, we can infer from the frequency of examples of this injustice that Mine feels privacy is a basic right that has been unjustly stripped from Japanese-Americans. More than poor food or inadequate laundry facilities, being robbed of one's privacy is surely among the most unfortunate consequences of this chapter in American history.

The Lighter Side

Though, almost by definition, life in the relocation camps is a despairing and somber experience, Mine stresses some lighter and more positive moments. This is a testament to the spirit of the evacuees, who have the sort of courage and optimism necessary to be able to see the humor or "sunnier side" of an otherwise dreary situation. Humor also becomes a coping mechanism for evacuees, a way to escape or fight the reality of their situation.

Most of these lighter moments come after the initial shock/uncertainty of relocation, when Mine has settled in and her life has become more "everyday." For example, Mine notes with not a little irony that European friends in letters express how lucky Mine is to be safe and free at home in the United States. She also relates how she received a pay check for 4 cents, and that it cost 10 cents to cash a check. Absurdity in itself can sometimes be mined for humor. Mine can also depart from her matter-of-fact writing style to inject some levity, as when she calls pest infestation of her living quarters as "making friends." Another tongue-in-cheek example is Mine's description of the oppressive heat in the Topaz camp. She says evacuees had a choice between being eaten alive by mosquitoes outside or suffocating inside. Not only does Mine use hyperbolic phrases (being eaten, suffocating), she sets these up as choices, when it's of course not really much of a choice at all. Part of Mine's objective in sketching relocation camp life is to find the pathos as well as the humor in everyday life, and many captions can be mined for the lighter side amid the gloom.

Style

Perspective

Mine Okubo narrates her experiences in a relocation camp during World War II in first-person perspective. Most striking about her perspective is its objectivity and usually neutral observational qualities. Though we trace her story from the point she flees Europe when war is declared to when she leaves the Topaz camp for freedom, the story is devoid of Mine's own emotions, commentary, thoughts, beliefs, and opinions. Similarly, specificity is usually avoided in favor of generalities; for example, her brother is not named and is practically a nonentity in the proceedings. Additionally, specific incidents are eschewed in favor of general conditions. The narrative is actually an interesting hybrid of a personal autobiography with a more straight-ahead history of everyday life in relocation camps.

Mine usually betrays little emotion or bias in relating the events. This is an effort to portray the events as a real rather than subjective history. By removing herself from the recording of events, Mine functions more as a reporter sharing something newsworthy and important with the world while maintaining a journalist's objectivity, even as she lives and suffers right alongside the evacuees. And this is the aim of the book, ultimately: to share an unfortunate and sometimes forgotten chapter of American history, perhaps so it might not be repeated again.

Though mostly objective, there are peeks at a more subjective perspective. The reader is told that the relocation of dissidents to Tule Lake made families suffer deeply; similarly, Christmas is said to be a sad time, and the establishment of churches is framed as an attempt to boost a "demoralized" evacuee population. These sort of characterizations lie in the gray middle between objective and subjective.

Tone

Appropriate to the journalist-style perspective of the book, Citizen 13660 features a matter-of-fact, unbiased, and objective tone. Mine wants the reader to understand the actual conditions of the relocation camps and her struggles, not as a product of her own emotion or a product of embellishment or an overactive imagination, but as a matter of historical record for future generations to learn from.

To accomplish this, Mine does several things. She strips out specifics, leaving generalities. No one is named, no particular person (not even herself) stands out, no particular person's story or tragedy is related, and few specific events are mentioned. Everything is geared toward the experience of the "average evacuee" rather than the experience of "Mine Okubo." There is no editorializing, no comments on living conditions, no wishes or hopes or fears. Emotion in fact is left out for the most part. What the reader is left with are the bare facts of Mine Okubo's life and the everyday

existence she witnessed in two relocation camps. By achieving this level of generality, Mine elevates her own particular narrative to the narrative of the "everyperson." The factuality of Mine's account demands the authority to indicate Mine's story is not unique, but is in fact the story of many of those unjustly confined.

Structure

This 209-page edition has no chapters, but instead could be said to be divided into approximately 200 ink drawings with captions. As is documented, the genesis for this book started with accomplished artist Mine's sketchings of relocation camp life as she was living it. From these sketches come the ink drawings, and the caption-like text below each drawing which describes each scene.

The drawings are arranged chronologically, and thus the story is told in chronological order, starting with Mine's struggles to return to California while in Europe when war is declared against Germany, and ending with her freedom from Topaz Relocation Project. However, this chronological could be said to be only a loose chronology; more attention is paid to the everyday activities and hardships faced by evacuees. These kind of general "everyday" depictions have no chronology, and thus the book is a mix between a narrative and a "day in the life" sort of history.

The two camps Mine lives in are loosely paralleled. Topaz may be compared and contrasted to Tanforan, with Topaz usually having the advantage as far as facilities and organization, indicating an evolution in the effectiveness of the government to manage the camps, and an evolution on the part of the evacuees to make their camps livable and utilize available resources to maximum effectivness.

Quotes

"Then on December 7, 1941, while my brother and I were having late breakfast I turned on the radio and heard the flash - 'Pearl Harbor bombed by the Japanese!' We were shocked. We wondered what this would mean to us and the other people of Japanese descent in the United States.
Our fears came true with the declaration of war against Japan. Radios started blasting, newspapers flaunted scare tactics." (8-9)

"Public Proclamations Nos. 1 and 2 appeared in the newspapers. Three military areas wre designated, including practically all of the coastal states of Washington, Oregon, and California, and the inland states of Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Utah. Evacuation was voluntary; people of Japanese ancestry were instructed to move out of the region on their own. Several thousand moved out of the vital coast areas but growing suspicion and general public antagonism caused unforeseen difficulties. On March 27, 1942, voluntary evacuation was halted and the army took over, to bring about a forced and orderly evacuation." (12-13)

"My brother and I were separated at this point. I was asked to sit on the bench with the women and wait until my brother lined up with the men and was searched from head to toe for contraband. Straight-edged razors, knives more than four inches long, and liquor were considered contraband.
Medical examination followed. I was asked to enter one of the slightly partitioned and curtained compartments and was ordered to undress. A nurse looked into my mouth with a flashlight and checked my arms to see if I had been vaccinated for smallpox. When I rejoined my brother I asked him what they made him do. 'They made us strip,' he said." (30-31)

"We 'hit the hay' around ten that night, but learned very quickly that sleep was not to be easily won. Because the partitions were low and there were many holes in the boards they were made of, the crackling of the straw and the noises from the other stalls were incessant. Loud snores, the grinding of teeth, the wail of babies, the murmur of conversation - these could be heard the full length of the stable. Moreover, it was very cold and we were shivering. One blanket was not enough to keep us warm. We got up and opened the duffel bags and the suitcases and spread everything over our beds. Sleep finally overtook us around midnight. Thus ended our first day in the Tanforan Assembly Center." (47)

"Churches were early established to bolster the morale of the bewildered and humiliated people. There were Protestant, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, and Buddhist groups. Another help to morale was the opportunity to work. Jobs of many kinds were open to able-bodied evacuee residents but employment was optional. Most of the adults worked.
At first we did not receive any wages and we did not know that we would get paid, but as time passed we were told that we would receive the rate of eight, twelve, and sixteen dollars per month for full-time work, depending on the type of work and the skill of the

worker. In addition a clothing allowance credit of $3.75 per month was given each worker and his dependents, with allowances scaled down for children. The smallest of the first pay checks were for four cents; it cost ten cents to cash them." (62)

"The flush toilets were always out of commission. In the men's latrine the toilets were lined up in two rows back to back. In the women's the arrangement was the same, except that a half-partition separated the toilets conversationally in pairs. Later each toilet was separately partitioned.
Everyone like to used the toilets in the grandstand where there was a little privacy. Many of the women could not get used to the community toilets. They sought privacy by pinning up curtains and setting up boards.
At first the women were very self-conscious and timid about using the showers. The men's showers were in one large room but the women's showers were slightly partitioned." (72-75)

"In Tanforan Aseembly Center a movement for self-government was started by the evacuees. They organized a campaign complete with slogans and rallies to elect an official Center Advisory Council. The election gave the Issei their first chance to vote along with their citizen offspring. But army orders later limited self-government offices and votes to American citizens. To our disappointment, in August an army order dissolved all Assembly Center self-government bodies." (91)

"The trip was a nightmare that lasted two nights and a day. The train creaked with age. It was covered with dust, and as the gaslights failed to function properly we traveled in complete darkness most of the night, reminding me of the blackout trains in Europe. All shades were drawn and we were not allowed to look out of the windows.
For many it was the first long journey. They were both excited and sad to leave California and the Bay region. To this day for many of them, the world is as large as from San Francisco to Tanforan to Topaz.
The first night was a novelty after four and a half months of internment. However, I could not sleep and I spent the entire night taking the chair apart and readjusting it. Many became train sick and vomited. The children cried from restlessness." (117)

"Comfort was uppermost in the minds of the people. All were on the lookout for building material for partitions and furniture. Lumber and sheet-rock boards were scarce and well guarded, but since building material was not furnished to the residents as promised, they became desperate. With the passing of time and the coming of cold weather, stealing no longer became a crime but an act of necessity. Everybody was out to get building material. There were guards everywhere, but the residents became skillful at dodging them; worried mothers were the most skillful of all.
The deep, open ditches for the sewer pipes were the chief hazard after dark. Our nocturnal excursions in search of lumber were made in the pitch dark; a few scattered lights indicated the location of the administrative buildings and the main roads." (137)

"The first Christmas was sad. The mess halls provided decorated trees and served special dinners but there was a lack of holiday spirit. Some families made a brave attempt to hold their usual celebrations.

The Trek staff held a party. We concocted a drink of grape jam and lemons and pretended that it was the real stuff. Dancing and games made the party a noisy affair. Mochi-making added a little more gaiety on New Year's Day. Mochi is made to celebrate the traditional Japanese New Year. To make it, a special kind of rice is boiled and pounded with wooden mallets into a sticky mass from which round cakes are molded. Much jovial ceremony is connected with mochi-making." (156-157)

"On January 29, 1943, President Roosevelt announced that volunteers would be accepted in a Japanese-American combat unit. A recruiting team came to the center, and a printed form was submitted to all men of military age. It contained 28 questions to determine loyalty and willingness to fight. Question 28 read: 'Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign power or organization?'
At the same time, the War Relocation Authority, yielding to increasing pressure, decided to conduct a general registration of all persons in the camp seventeen years of age or older. To determine their loyalty, Question 28 was used." (175)

"I looked at the crowd at the gate. Only the very old or very young were left. Here I was, alone, with no family responsibilities, and yet fear had chained me to the camp. I thought, 'My God! How do they expect those poor people to leave the one place they can call home.' I swallowed a lump in my throat as I waved good-by to them.
I entered the bus. As soon as all the passengers had been accounted for, we were on our way. I relived momentarily the sorrows and the joys of my whole evacuation experience, until the barracks faded away into the distance. There was only the desert now. My thoughts shifted from the past to the future." (209)

Topics for Discussion

Who is Mine Okubo's intended audience for this text? What might she want readers to take away from her narrative?

Events and realities of Mine's time in relocation camps are told in an objective, emotionally-detached style. Why might Mine have employed this tone, rather than incorporating her own emotions into the narrative?

What did evacuees do to fight sadness and demoralization?

What do Mine's ever-present ink drawings do for the text? How would the book have been different had no illustrations been included? Why might Mine have included the depiction of herself in all of her drawings?

What sort of traits are exhibited by the evacuees? How do they handle their confinement, their time, their society, their relative lack of the standards of living?

Why is life in the relocation camps harder for the Issei (the native-born Japanese) than Nisei (U.S. born Japanese-Americans)? What are the unique challenges Issei face?

What aspects of relocation camp life pose threats and challenges to privacy? What do evacuees do in order to maintain their privacy?