

Journey to Topaz Study Guide

Journey to Topaz by Yoshiko Uchida

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Overview

Although *Journey to Topaz* makes a strong social point, it is primarily a story about individuals coping in times of great stress. The internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II was not only a national tragedy, it was a personal one for those who were rounded up from their homes and forced to move to isolated camps. Through Yuki, the main character, readers can see the events of the internment process firsthand; she and other characters are so well drawn that the history of the period comes alive. This novel is a good way to learn about important historical events, and Uchida does not compromise her subject matter by making up wild adventures or a stereotypical happy ending. *Journey to Topaz* speaks candidly about its serious subject: readers who enjoy exercising their ability to think will appreciate this well-told and interesting book.

About the Author

Yoshiko Uchida was born on November 24, 1921, in Alameda, California, and grew up in Berkeley with her father, Dwight Takashi Uchida, a businessman, and her mother, Iku Uchida. As a little girl, Yoshiko liked to draw, and by age ten she was writing short stories. During her summers, she would travel, once going to Japan when she was about twelve years old.

In 1942 Uchida graduated with honors from the University of California, Berkeley, but her diploma arrived through the mail because by then she— like many other Japanese-Americans— had been evacuated from her home to the Tanforan Race Track. From the race track, she was moved to the Topaz, Utah, internment camp. She and others of Japanese ancestry who lived on the U.S. West Coast were taken from their homes and sent to inland camps after war with Japan broke out. Most of these Japanese-Americans lost their homes and businesses; much of what they could not carry, they had to sell or give away. They experienced humiliation and were deeply marked by their miserable internment. Although she found useful work teaching second grade at Topaz, Uchida's strongest memories are of the awful living conditions—snakes and scorpions were everywhere in the camp—and of the abiding sense of being unjustly treated. Even though she was allowed to attend Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, on a fellowship in 1943, her year in internment left a permanent impression on Uchida.

In 1944 Uchida received a master's degree in education from Smith College.

During 1944-1945, she taught second grade at Frankford Friends' School in Philadelphia. While working as a secretary for the Institute of Pacific Relations from 1946 to 1947, she decided that she wanted to write. From 1947 to 1952, she worked as a secretary for the United Student Christian Council in New York, and in 1949 her first book, *The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Folk Tales*, was published. Her first book of modern fiction, *New Friends for Susan*, was published in 1951. Unlike most of Uchida's later books, this one did not deal specifically with Japanese or Japanese-American topics.

Uchida spent 1952 in Japan on a Ford Foundation Foreign Study and Research Fellowship; during this time, she researched the materials for *The Magic Listening Cap*. She remained in Japan until 1954, writing articles for the *Nippon Times of Tokyo*. During the years 1955-1964, she was the West Coast correspondent for *Craft Horizons of New York*, and she wrote a column "Letters from San Francisco" for the magazine.

From 1957 to 1962, she also worked as a secretary for the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley.

Published in 1971, *Journey to Topaz* was an American Library Association Notable Book for 1972. *Samurai of Gold Hill* received the Commonwealth Club of California Medal for best juvenile book by a California author in 1972. In 1981 Uchida received the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Oregon for her work in helping



Americans better understand Japan and the heritage of Americans of Japanese descent. In 1982 her book for younger children *A Jar of Dreams* (1981) received the Commonwealth Club of California Medal for best juvenile book. *The Best Bad Thing* (1983), the first sequel to *A Jar of Dreams*, was named an American Library Association Notable Book for 1983. *The Happiest Ending* (1985) received numerous awards, including the Young Authors' Hall of Fame Award by the San Mateo and San Francisco Reading Associations, and the Child Study Association of America's Children's Book of the Year Award.

Yoshiko Uchida's accomplishments are many. She speaks Japanese and French, as well as English, and she has been active in improving understanding between American ethnic groups. Her writings for adults include *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (1982), which is an important resource for those interested in learning about the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and *Picture Bride* (1987).

Plot Summary

Eleven-year-old Yuki Sakane and her family are Japanese Americans living in Berkeley in 1941. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Empire attacks Pearl Harbor, drawing the United States into World War II. On the evening of December 7, 1941, Mr. Sakane, along with thousands of other Japanese men, is arrested by the FBI, leaving Yuki and her family confused and frightened. After six days have passed, the family receives a postcard from Mr. Sakane informing them that he is physically well and incarcerated in San Francisco. The family is allowed to visit Mr. Sakane only once before he is deported to a Prisoner of War Camp in Montana.

On May 1, 1942, Yuki and her family, along with thousands of other Japanese families, are evacuated to the Tanforan Camp, where they are housed in horse stables that have been hastily converted to barracks. The camp is surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards. Over the next several months, Yuki and her family endure the hardships and privation of living as prisoners inside of a guarded compound with very limited facilities.

In September 1942, after several months at Tanforan, Yuki and her family are relocated to the Topaz Internment Camp, in Utah's Sevier Desert. The camp is a hastily constructed compound surrounded by wire fences and guard towers. Yuki and her family live in a small room and subsist on poor rations and meager supplies. After several weeks Mr. Sakane is cleared of any wrongdoing and relocated from Montana to Topaz, where he rejoins his family. Yuki and her family meet other interned Japanese and form new friendships. Yuki's older brother, Ken, along with hundreds of other young men interned at Topaz, enlist in the United States Armed Forces to demonstrate patriotism. One of Yuki's friends, the elderly Mr. Kurihara, is shot and killed by a guard. Yuki is caught in a terrible dust storm, and the internees endure many additional hardships.

Finally in the middle of 1943, after many months of imprisonment, Yuki's father secures permission to relocate to Salt Lake City, Utah, and seek employment. Yuki once again must leave behind dear friends and the life she knows to face an unknown future, but she is of course happy to leave behind the dusty monotony of imprisonment.



Chapter 1, Stranger at the Door

Chapter 1, Stranger at the Door Summary

Eleven-year-old Yuki Sakane is excited for Christmas to arrive. Although there is no snow in Berkeley, California, Yuki remembers that when she was six years old there was snow. Yuki has a full, round face framed by bangs and straight, black hair that falls to her shoulders. Mrs. Sakane is preparing dinner for the Sakane family, a family of Japanese Americans. Yuki goes into the yard, plays with her dog Pepper and watches a big gray carp swim in the yard pond. Today is Sunday, and usually Sunday dinners consist of Japanese food served for several guests. Today, however, there will be no guests, which Yuki prefers. Mrs. Sakane calls Yuki for dinner, and Yuki calls Mr. Sakane, who is gardening. Yuki goes inside the house and briefly watches her canary, Old Salt, who is named after a neighbor's recently deceased parrot. Yuki doesn't think the name Old Salt is particularly fitting for a canary, but she used the name to honor the neighbor's pet.

Mr. Sakane turns on the radio, and the Sakane family sits down to dinner. As they begin to eat dinner, an urgent news bulleting is broadcast over the radio, and the Sakane family learns that the Japanese Empire has just attacked Pearl Harbor. Mr. Sakane expresses shock and confusion that the Japanese would attack the United States, and then he wonders if perhaps the story is actually part of a radio drama instead of the news. Mrs. Sakane is also surprised and confused. Only Yuki finishes her dinner. Soon, the telephone starts to ring, as other Japanese Americans call the Sakane family to discuss the surprise attack.

Within a few hours, the doorbell rings, and two policemen and three FBI men enter the house. They inform Mr. Sakane that he must accompany them to the central station for questioning. Mr. Sakane wants to change into his business suit and tie, but the FBI men won't allow him to. Instead, two FBI take him away dressed in his gardening clothes while the two police men and one FBI man remain behind in the Sakane home. The policemen inform the Sakane family that they cannot leave the premises. The FBI man answers the telephone whenever it rings and tells each caller that the Sakane family is unable to receive or place telephone calls.

Chapter 1, Stranger at the Door Analysis

Three of the four members of the Sakane family are introduced in the narrative, Yuki Sakane and her parents, referred to through the narrative as Father and Mother or Mr. and Mrs. Sakane. The Sakane family is presented as a typical Japanese American family. They are devout Christians and routinely attend a local Japanese church service in Oakland, California. Mrs. Sakane reads the Bible every day. Like thousands of other Japanese American families, they have no advance knowledge of any military plans and are completely loyal to the United States. The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor shocks



and confuses the Sakane family in the same manner that it shocked the rest of the United States. Mr. Sakane reacts with incredulity and shock and even wonders if, perhaps, the announcement was part of some type of radio drama instead of actual news.

Mr. Sakane's subsequent arrest and detention shocks Yuki and her mother. They are surprised that Mr. Sakane would be wanted for questioning, as they are fully aware that he is not involved in the surprise attack in any way whatsoever. Chapter 1 is critical to an understanding of the remainder of the novel. The central tension of the plot is established and the socio-political backdrop against which the novel is set is explained. It will be further developed through subsequent chapters.

Throughout the novel, the characterization of the Sakane family members, the central characters in the novel, is fairly light. They are not given particularly individualistic traits or histories and, instead, are left deliberately generically defined so that they can be viewed as a type of standard Japanese American family. The schools they attend, the company Mr. Sakane works for, their given names and many other details are simply not provided. In this way Mr. Sakane, usually called Father in the narrative, can be seen as nearly any of the tens of thousands of Issei Japanese American men interned during World War II.



Chapter 2, The Long Wait

Chapter 2, The Long Wait Summary

Yuki and Mrs. Sakane wait for Mr. Sakane to return. After several hours, Mrs. Sakane serves tea and cake to the two policemen and the FBI man. Yuki is indignant that her mother is treating these unwelcome intruders with courtesy, but the proper Mrs. Sakane is always gracious. The law enforcement officers make awkward small talk with Mrs. Sakane as Yuki glares at them. After a few more hours, a telephone call prompts the two policemen to leave, but the FBI man remains.

Ken Sakane, Yuki's older brother, returns home from the library where he has been studying for his school finals. Ken is perhaps eighteen or nineteen years old and is tall and strong. He is also athletic, being the star forward on a local Japanese student basketball team. Mrs. Sakane informs Ken of the current situation. After some more time passes, another telephone call prompts the FBI man to leave.

For the rest of the evening, the Sakane family wonders when Mr. Sakane will return. They sit together and wait. They soon begin to receive many telephone calls from other Japanese families and learn that many other Japanese men have been arrested. They also receive many telephone calls from non-Japanese neighbors and friends who express outrage and condolences.

Mrs. Sakane finally sends Yuki to bed while she remains up with Ken. Yuki is unable to fall asleep and after some time rejoins her family. They sit up for several hours and then have a snack of cake and hot chocolate. They continue to wait throughout the night and eventually have a small breakfast. Mr. Sakane does not return.

Chapter 2, The Long Wait Analysis

Yuki's response to the policemen and FBI men is one of indignation. She is angry with them for suspecting her father and then taking him away. Of course Yuki, along with Mrs. Sakane, is certain that Mr. Sakane will be returned within just a few hours. Mrs. Sakane demonstrates proper and gracious manners by treating the law enforcement men as visitors rather than intruders. Her calm and mannered demeanor causes the men to feel awkward at the tasks they have been assigned to carry out. Nevertheless, they are diligent in performing their work.

Ken Sakane is introduced as the final member of the Sakane family and a major character in the novel. A Nisei Japanese American, he is obviously a devoted student who takes his studies very seriously. The school he attends, however, is not specified. His age is not specified, either, but Yuki notes that Ken only dates girls who are sixteen or older. Presumably Ken is eighteen or nineteen years old, since he will enlist in the United States Armed Forces within about a year and a half.

The aptly named chapter concludes with the Sakane family sitting up all night and into the morning waiting for their father and husband to return. The scene is reminiscent, of course, of the thousands of other Japanese American families sitting up throughout the night awaiting the return of their arrested and detained loved ones.



Chapter 3, A Lonely Christmas

Chapter 3, A Lonely Christmas Summary

Five days pass for the Sakane family without any word or news from Mr. Sakane. Yuki learns that none of the Japanese men who were detained have been returned. Yuki is very distraught and misses her father, and she spends the days seeking comfort among her father's chrysanthemums with her dog Pepper and the old gray carp in the fishpond. One day at school a boy calls Yuki a "dirty Jap" (p. 20), which stings her. Her schoolteacher immediately intervenes and explains that Nisei are citizens and should not be harassed.

Six days after Mr. Sakane is taken, a postcard arrives at the Sakane house. The postcard tells them that Mr. Sakane is healthy but needs clothing and a shaving kit, and it lets the Sakane family know that he is being detained in a prison facility in San Francisco. Many other Japanese American families receive similar postcards at the same time.

A few days later, the Sakane family is allowed to visit Mr. Sakane. Ken drives the family to San Francisco. They enter a prison complex and are escorted into a small room, where they are watched by armed guards. Mr. Sakane is escorted into the room. He tells them that he is being held in a large room full of cots with over a hundred other Japanese men. Mr. Sakane is obviously worried, concerned and under a considerable amount of strain, but he remains composed. He informs the Sakane family that he will be sent to an Army Internment Camp in Missoula, Montana, with other Japanese men, where he will be held for the foreseeable future. Mr. Sakane, like all of the other men, has not been charged with any crime but is being detained for vague purposes of national security. The news is devastating to the Sakane family, and Yuki is overwhelmed with worry and grief.

A few days later Ken announces that he will not return to school. He will instead stay home to try and help the family through the crisis. He also reports that the school and city are alive with rumors of a forced evacuation for Japanese Americans. Yuki is doubtful that citizens could be so poorly treated on the basis of race alone, but Ken assures her that the rumors are likely true. The Sakane family's much-anticipated Christmas turns out to be a bleak and joyless holiday without their father. Around Christmastime Mrs. Jamieson, a neighbor and family friend, gives a valuable pearl ring to Yuki as a remembrance.

Chapter 3, A Lonely Christmas Analysis

By modern standards of law-enforcement, it would be unthinkable to incarcerate thousands of individuals based solely on race for a prolonged period without allowing



them to notify their next of kin for nearly one week. Even by the legal standards of 1941 such behavior was probably illegal and clearly reprehensible.

The epithet applied to Yuki by a school student demonstrates that many non-Japanese residents of the West Coast held racist views. Indeed, local farmers in particular were hostile to the economic success demonstrated by Japanese farmers new to the area. Yuki's teacher's explanation that Nisei Japanese Americans are United States citizens further illustrates the deep racial divisions that characterized the West Coast area. The teacher is as much as saying that Mr. Sakane, an Issei Japanese American, could be reasonably detained without charges or access to legal representation as long as the government considered him to be an undesirable element. The effective use of the third-person limited point of view allows the somewhat naive Yuki to observe her teacher's pronouncement without passing judgment while the reader is allowed to see a deeper meaning.

Although Mr. Sakane will never be charged with any crime, he is still held as a common criminal in a prison system with armed guards. The visiting Sakane family is treated as if they are visiting an inmate convicted of some type of felony. Their experience is presumably similar to that of thousands of other Japanese American families during this same period. After a single opportunity for visiting, Mr. Sakane is shipped nearly one thousand miles away to Montana where he will spend several months isolated from his family. This will leave Mrs. Sakane reliant on the teenage Ken to perform such functions as selling or storing family belongings, selling the family automobile and disposing of the family pets. This responsibility becomes immediately apparent to Ken and, coupled with other reasons, causes him to interrupt his schooling.



Chapter 4, Ten Days to Pack

Chapter 4, Ten Days to Pack Summary

The forced evacuation is on everyone's mind. Mrs. Sakane cleans the house, discarding letters, childhood artwork, poems and other personal objects. The Sakane's furniture is sold, and all remaining belongings are packed into boxes and stored with non-Japanese neighbors or non-Japanese church members. An 8:00 p.m. curfew is enforced on all Japanese Americans in the area, and they are forbidden from possessing any shortwave radio equipment, cameras, binoculars or firearms. Ken sells his father's binoculars. The Sakanes are issued evacuation property tags, and Yuki notes that instead of the Sakane family, they are now family 13453.

Ken is registered as the head of the household. Ken tells Mrs. Sakane and Yuki that each refugee will only be allowed two suitcases, which they must be able to carry. However, Mrs. Sakane is unable to pack so little, and the Sakane family ends up with a huge duffel bag full of miscellaneous necessities. Yuki's canary Old Salt is given to Mrs. Jamieson, a neighbor. Ken sells the family car and then invests most of the family money in war bonds. Ken also signs up for Civil Defense. Ken notes with disgust that Japanese-sold second-hand goods are being bought for a fraction of their worth because the buyers are aware the Japanese must sell the items or simply lose them.

Yuki desires to take her dog Pepper to the evacuation camp but is told that she won't be able to have a dog. No neighbors can take Pepper, so a sad Yuki finally consents to give Pepper to a college student who is a stranger. Yuki is devastated by the loss and misses Pepper. Then, on April 21, 1942, the evacuation is formally ordered.

Chapter 4, Ten Days to Pack Analysis

The Sakane family, like all Japanese families being evacuated, is told they will be limited to two suitcases for each person and further that each person must be able to hand-carry their suitcases. Their destination will not provide any necessities beyond a basic roof, so Mrs. Sakane feels compelled to pack things such as cookware, dishes, clothing and other basics. The relatively large amount packed by Mrs. Sakane concerns Ken because he realizes he will not be able to carry all their luggage.

Like the Sakane family, the thousands of Japanese families being evacuated are forced to either sell or simply leave behind most of their belongings. Furniture, appliances and cars are all being sold in large numbers, which drives their market price down steeply. Ken seems particularly angry when he notes that the non-Japanese in the area are buying many nice goods for a pittance.

Ken attempts to demonstrate his patriotism in several ways. First, he registers as the head of the Sakane household and performs the various registration tasks required preliminary to the evacuation. He obtains the property tags for family 13453 and helps



organize the family situation and finances. He subsequently invests all liquid assets in war bonds to support the war effort. Finally, he signs up for Civil Defense service, even though he is not accepted because of his race.

Yuki feels particularly alone with her father gone, her canary given away and her dog given away to a complete stranger. She is further worried about the future and uncertain about what her life will be like after the evacuation takes place. Yuki also notices that many Japanese families are going through the same hardships.



Chapter 5, Inside the Barbed Wire

Chapter 5, Inside the Barbed Wire Summary

Mrs. Sakane spends the last night before the evacuation cleaning and sweeping the rented house she has lived in for many years. Yuki feels that cleaning the house they are leaving is foolish, but Mrs. Sakane insists it be left tidy. The Sakane family eats dinner at a non-Japanese neighbor's house.

In the morning, the neighbor drives the Sakane family to the Civil Control Station in San Francisco. Inside, the station is extremely chaotic and disorganized. The Sakane family's belongings are tagged with their identification tags and loaded onto huge trucks with hundreds of other family's belongings. The many people then board busses and are bussed to the Tanforan Assembly Center. Tanforan is a converted racetrack being used to incarcerate Japanese Americans. Tanforan is approximately a hundred acres in size and is surrounded by wire fences and patrolled by armed guards.

Chapter 5, Inside the Barbed Wire Analysis

Many of the Sakane's non-Japanese neighbors are dismayed at the acts of the United States government, and some of them send letters of protest to newspapers or politicians. Nevertheless, the nation as a whole feels that the forced evacuation is necessary, and the military makes rapid progress toward enforcing it. Approximately four months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, nearly all of the Japanese Americans living on the West Coast have been forcibly evacuated to assembly and staging areas like Tanforan.

At the end of April, the Sakane family reports to the Civil Control Station where their belongings are loaded onto trucks. Yuki feels the station is a scene of chaos and disarray. After several hours of standing in lines, the Sakane family is routed to the Tanforan Assembly Area, which will be their home for several months. They ride to the internment camp on busses full of hundreds of other Japanese families, their belongings shipped on trucks by a separate route.



Chapter 6, Home is a Horse Stall

Chapter 6, Home is a Horse Stall Summary

The Sakane family arrives at Tanforan Assembly Area and enters the internment camp. Tanforan covers approximately a hundred acres and is surrounded by wire fences and patrolled by armed guards. Tanforan has been converted from a horse race track into a makeshift internment camp, and the old horse stalls have been converted into makeshift housing. The Sakane family meets several Japanese friends who have also been evacuated to Tanforan. Ken's friend Jim Hirai is already somewhat familiar with Tanforan and briefly orients the Sakane family. The Sakane family is assigned to Barracks 16, Apartment 40. Yuki is excited to be living in an apartment until she realizes that the apartment is really a converted horse stall.

Barracks 16, Apartment 40, is a single filthy room that stinks of horse manure. Linoleum has been laid on the uneven floor, and the walls have been whitewashed. Yuki notices that the walls were painted so quickly that several insects have been painted onto the walls of the room. The walls are so thin that Yuki can easily hear the conversations of the families in the next room. The construction is so haphazard that wind blows through the closed doors and around the windows and wall joints.

Yuki notices that many people in the camp wear bandanas around their nose and mouth to filter the ever-present dust. The communal camp toilets and showers have no doors and are open to the outside world. The camp sinks are just long troughs made of sheet metal. Following Jim's advice, the Sakane family secures three mattresses and learns that they are three of the last few mattresses remaining. Hundreds of other Japanese Americans will not even receive mattresses. Yuki notes that the mattress is just a canvas bag stuffed with straw.

At night, Tanforan is very dark, since there are very few outside lights. The food is very meager and of poor quality. Yuki and Ken quickly become depressed and distraught, but Mrs. Sakane insists that they will make the best of a bad situation. After a few hours, the baggage trucks arrive, and Ken happily carries all the luggage into the stall. Mrs. Sakane unpacks and begins to clean up her new living quarters. Mr. Toda, a family friend, stops by and visits the Sakane family. He brings Yuki a small treat.

Chapter 6, Home is a Horse Stall Analysis

The conditions at Tanforan are appallingly bad. Thousands of new Japanese families are bussed to the internment camp within just a few days, and the camp organization quickly breaks down. Essential supplies are rare, and luxuries are non-existent. The Sakane family's living quarters, a single room converted from a horse stall and stinking of manure, is typical. In fact, Yuki notes they are fortunate to have a room, since many families are simply housed in hallways.



Much of Chapter 6 is simply a description of the physical construction of the camp and the living conditions that are found in the camp. Yuki is particularly horrified that the inadequate and communal toilets and shower facilities do not even have doors, leaving occupants exposed to view. Washing facilities are limited and rudimentary, and the physical layout of the camp is not particularly efficient. The food served, while perhaps adequate, is poor in taste, and portions are small.

Mr. Toda is a family friend from Berkeley. He was not arrested like Mr. Sakane because he is of an advanced age. Mr. Toda is an older man and a bachelor. He is extremely proper and very courteous. Before being evacuated, Mr. Toda lived in a church dormitory.



Chapter 7, A New Friend

Chapter 7, A New Friend Summary

Yuki sleeps in late on her first morning at Tanforan. After she wakes up, she talks with her mother, who tells her there is no hot water available for laundry or bathing. Yuki can easily hear the family next door through the wall. As the Sakane family discusses their situation, the family in the next room offers their unsolicited comments in reply. Eventually, the two families begin a conversation through the wall and then move out into the hallway to meet each other.

In the hall, Yuki meets Emiko Kurihara and her grandparents. Emi's parents are both dead, and she is being raised by her grandparents. Her grandfather was not arrested because he is very old. The Kurihara family is traditionally Japanese, and Mrs. Kurihara packed many small food items. Emi and Yuki become friendly and spend several days exploring the camp together. They make several observations about how dirty the camp is, how poorly it is supplied and constructed and how it is an awful place to have to live.

Yuki takes Emi to meet Mr. Toda. Mr. Toda is playing a game with another older man, and Yuki hears the old man say, "Perhaps Japan will win," which angers her. She loudly insists that the United States will win the war.

Chapter 7, A New Friend Analysis

The scene where the Kurihara family enters the Sakane family's discussion by speaking through the thin wall is humorous but also illustrates how shoddy the living conditions are. Like the Sakane family, the industrious and financially successful Kurihara family is presented as a typical Japanese family caught up in the forced evacuation. By eliminating idiosyncratic behavior and presenting the characters as average in all respects, the author allows the characters to be representative of an entire class of people.

Emi and Yuki will remain good friends throughout their internment at Tanforan. They spend a great deal of time together in the remaining chapters of the novel, though Emi does not replace Yuki's central role as protagonist in the novel. The two girls' exploration of the camp is given in some detail and provides further indications that Tanforan is more like a prison and less like family housing.

Yuki's reaction to pro-Japan war talk is indicative of the feeling of many Japanese Americans interned at Tanforan. Yuki considers herself to be an American citizen, which of course she is, and she is deeply patriotic. She is fully committed to her country and considers pro-Japan talk to be insulting and invalid. The ever-proper and reserved Yuki publicly contradicts an adult in an uncharacteristically confrontational way to assert her pro-American feelings. Like Yuki, Emi is also pro-American and patriotic.



Chapter 8, Ken Spoils a Party

Chapter 8, Ken Spoils a Party Summary

A wedding is held in the Tanforan internment camp, and nearly everyone attends the festivities. The newlyweds cannot leave the camp, of course, and instead are driven around the inside perimeter of the camp several times before being dropped off at a converted horse stall. Yuki and Emi enjoy watching the celebration.

One day, Mrs. Jamieson, Mimi and Mrs. Nelson visit the Sakane family. Mrs. Jamieson and the Nelsons are friends and old neighbors of the Sakane family. Mimi Nelson is Yuki's friend from Berkeley. The visit takes place within a special visiting room within the camp, and many guards are present. The visitors bring a large care package full of treats and tell the Sakane family some news. Yuki also notices that Ken is on the other side of the big and busy visiting room. Yuki sees that Ken is meeting with some visitors from a university.

Later that evening, Mrs. Sakane invites many old and new friends to her room to share out the treats and delicacies. Yuki wishes that her mother would reserve the treats for their family alone, but she does enjoy having a celebration. After a few hours, Ken arrives and is in a very bad mood. Ken does not want to participate in conversation, and Yuki feels that he spoils the party.

Later, Ken tells Mrs. Sakane and Yuki that he has an opportunity to go to a university in the Midwest or on the East Coast, outside of the West Coast zone prohibited to Japanese Americans. However, Ken feels that he is unable to immediately take advantage of this opportunity because he must assist the family in the absence of Mr. Sakane.

Chapter 8, Ken Spoils a Party Analysis

The wedding indicates how imprisoned the Japanese Americans actually are. Even during a wedding, they are not allowed out of the camp, and visitors are not allowed beyond a visiting room. The celebration is joyful but also severely limited by lack of supplies and even housing.

The visit from Mrs. Jamieson, Mimi and Mrs. Nelson is refreshing to Yuki. She learns that her canary and dog are doing well and gets some news about her old neighborhood. Her friends have traveled some distance and have brought many gifts, illustrating that many non-Japanese were supportive during the war.

Ken is presented with an opportunity, which he would like to seize. However, with Mr. Sakane still incarcerated in Montana, Ken feels that he must remain with the family for at least the next few months. His sacrifice adds another element to the injustice suffered

by the Sakane family. Other young men in better-situated families do take immediate advantage of the offer for education and leave the camp over the next several weeks.



Chapter 9, A New Rumor

Chapter 9, A New Rumor Summary

Camp life begins to take on a normal day-to-day routine for Yuki. All camp internees must be in their quarters at 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. for a headcount. Yuki feels that this inconvenience is silly, but Mrs. Sakane insists that Yuki comply with the orders. Gradually, the camp becomes more organized and somewhat better supplied.

A camp school system is organized, and Yuki and Emi begin attending classes. Yuki finds comfort in the familiar surroundings and practices of school. The Sakane family becomes situated well enough that Ken feels he can apply for college, and he does so. Mrs. Sakane makes a small garden outside of the apartment, and she plants and grows flowers. Many other camp internees plant flower gardens. Coupon books are issued to adults each month, and the coupons can be used to purchase personal items.

One day, Yuki takes some coupons to the store and waits in line to buy some ice cream. When she finally reaches the counter, she discovers that the ice cream is all gone, and only shoelaces are available. She is dejected and wanders around the camp looking for something to do. She overhears many people talking about a new rumor that the Tanforan internees will be moved to Utah or Idaho in September.

Yuki tells Ken the news and learns that he has heard the same rumor. He believes it to be true. After prolonged introspection, Ken decides that he will not attend college because he will have to help the family move from Tanforan to the new location. Ken feels the decision is proper, although he is very dejected and resentful of the situation.

Chapter 9, A New Rumor Analysis

Yuki's description of camp life further illustrates the difficult living conditions and prison-like atmosphere of Tanforan. In a scene reminiscent of the great depression, she waits in a long line for ice cream only to discover that the only item available is shoelaces.

Once again, Ken feels that he must remain with the family for at least the next few months and sacrifice his desire for a college education. His continuing sacrifice adds another element to the injustice suffered by the Sakane family. Ken is also humiliated to be treated as a second-class and mistrusted citizen and frustrated by many days with nothing productive to accomplish.

Finally, as the Japanese American internees begin to organize schools and make camp life more tolerable in many small ways, they realize they will soon be evacuated to another camp, hundreds of miles away. They have no input into the decision, and the second move further illustrates how much they are treated like common criminals by the government.



Chapter 10, Goodbye Tanforan

Chapter 10, Goodbye Tanforan Summary

After four months at Tanforan, the Sakane family is notified that they will be relocated to Topaz, Utah. Yuki thinks the name Topaz holds promise, and she envisions a quality location, while Ken is skeptical. Most other Japanese Americans in Tanforan, including the Kurihara family and Mr. Toda, will also be relocated to Topaz. Various inspections are held through the camp to prepare for the future move, including an FBI inspection and a United States Army inspection.

Yuki receives a letter from Mrs. Jamieson informing her that Pepper has died. The letter contains no particular information about the circumstances. Yuki is devastated by the news. Ken sinks into despair and depression at being imprisoned and facing a future without opportunity, but nevertheless he works hard to ensure the move is successful and is very responsible. Mrs. Sakane attempts to keep the family's spirits up.

Soon scores of busses and trucks are loaded up for the move. The loading and boarding processes are chaotic and confusing to Yuki. Numerous types of inspections are performed during the boarding and packing of the vehicles. During the long hours of confusion, Yuki overhears many different viewpoints expressed in conversations. Some Japanese Americans are tolerant of the conditions, but nearly all are saddened and depressed at the treatment they are receiving.

Chapter 10, Goodbye Tanforan Analysis

The four-month stay at Tanforan gives the United States Army time to organize and build a larger, more permanent, internment center called Topaz, located in the desert of Utah. Yuki and Mrs. Sakane feel that the name Topaz is fortunate and hope that it infers the location will be acceptable. Ken is doubtful. Topaz will prove to be, in many respects, worse than Tanforan.

The boarding scene seems very confusing and chaotic to Yuki and is reminiscent of the time that the Sakane family initially reported to Tanforan. Once again, the Sakane family and many others are forcibly moved to an unknown destination in the putative interest of national security. The move to Utah will preclude future visits from non-Japanese neighbors and friends.

Mr. Sakane has been imprisoned in Montana for approximately nine months when the rest of the Sakane family is moved from Tanforan to Topaz. During this time, they have been allowed only a single visit and a handful of postcards. Coupled with the recent news of the death of her pet dog Pepper and the forced relocations and constant imprisonment, the absence of her father is particularly difficult for Yuki. Ken, too, becomes depressed and anxious about the future. As Yuki listens to various

conversations being held around her at the loading area, she realizes that nearly everyone present feels similarly anxious and confused.



Chapter 11, A Home in the Desert

Chapter 11, A Home in the Desert Summary

Yuki and her family spend two days with thousands of other people aboard trains and busses traveling west to Topaz. During the trip, Emi becomes very ill. Yuki finds the transportation dusty, tiring and dreary. When the convoy reaches the gates of Topaz, a troop of local boy scouts parade to welcome the internees. Yuki notes that the boy scouts are covered with dust.

Topaz is only partially finished. The Sakane family is routed to a single eighteen-by-twenty-foot room where they are quartered for the foreseeable future. The room is in a tar-paper-covered building that has been hastily constructed. The building does not have plumbing, and each room has a single electric light bulb suspended from the ceiling. The Kurihara family is placed in a similar room and building close to the Sakane family. Yuki spends some time alone exploring the camp while Emi remains sick. Yuki finds the camp to be very dusty, very hot and depressing. The high altitude makes many people feel queasy or out of breath. Supplies are very scarce, and the camp does not have sufficient water supplies to allow for regular bathing and washing. Although the camp is not hospitable, Yuki does find beauty in the desert. She learns that many other internees also come to find the desert beautiful and scenic, and some come to feel as if it is their home.

The long trip, the constant desert dust, the hot temperatures and the high altitudes combine to make many people temporarily ill. Nearly everyone becomes somewhat irritable. Ken remains depressed and despondent. Then, much to Yuki's dismay, Emi suffers a severe collapse of health.

Chapter 11, A Home in the Desert Analysis

The trip to Topaz is described in some detail. Yuki mentions how uncomfortable the transportation becomes and how monotonous the constant travel becomes. Most people are very glad when the trip ends, but as they walk into Topaz, they are startled at how bleak the camp is and how remote they are. Ken sinks into dust up to his ankles as he carries luggage through the newly cleared streets. The buildings appear to be hastily constructed and without basic amenities. The description of the physical layout and construction of the camp is notably strong in this chapter.

The Sakane family's area contains only three cots with no bedding and is a single, large room. The bathroom and washing facilities are located in separate buildings, as are the kitchen and hospital areas. The camp again suffers from lack of planning, and basic necessities are in short supply. Even available water is insufficient for basic uses. Coupled with the high altitude and desert heat, the prolonged travel and forced relocation cause many people to become exhausted and temporarily sick. The high dust

content further exacerbates problems, and Emi's collapse, though alarming to Yuki, is not surprising given her recent history of illness.



Chapter 12, Dust Storm

Chapter 12, Dust Storm Summary

Emi is admitted to the camp hospital, and Yuki visits her there. Yuki has a trilobite fossil that she found in the dust of the camp, and she brings it to Emi as a gift. The two friends make gestures to each other through the window, and Yuki is able to determine that Emi is gravely ill.

Yuki starts to return to her room after the hospital visit. She notices that the sky is dark, and a strong wind is blowing dust and sand through the camp. Yuki tries to run home but within just moments is enclosed in a swirling vortex of dust that prevents her from seeing more than a few feet. She quickly becomes disoriented and stumbles into an unknown building where she waits out the terrible dust storm. After several hours the storm abates, leaving the camp covered in a thick layer of dust. Many find it difficult to breathe and wear bandanas around their nose and mouth. Yuki leaves the building and returns to her home. In a few days, she learns that the doctors believe Emi suffers from tuberculosis, a potentially fatal lung disease.

Chapter 12, Dust Storm Analysis

Chapter 12 contains two symbolic narrative elements, the trilobite and the dust storm. Yuki, Mr. Kurihara and many others search through the dust and sand of Topaz in search of trilobite and other small fossils as well as Indian arrowheads and other tiny artifacts. The search becomes a type of pastime for many Topaz internees. The trilobite that Yuki gives to Emi symbolizes not only their friendship, but also Yuki's determination to make the best of a bad situation. Yuki finds herself in the Utah desert, a completely foreign and generally hostile environment, and yet instead of giving up hope, she finds beauty in the desert and develops a new hobby suited to the environs. The trilobite is also reminiscent of an arrowhead that Yuki will give as a gift in a later chapter.

The dust storm is symbolic of the entire internment situation. Of course, the dust storm is also a physical, real event, which is another hardship for the Topaz internees. However, the language and imagery used to describe the dust storm enlarge the scope of the event and allow it to become allegorical for the entire process being experienced by Yuki and thousands of others. Yuki enters the dust storm feeling that she will just be able to evade it, but with startling speed it envelops her. This parallels the initial individual arrests and the uncertain rumors of evacuation quickly erupting into full-scale forced evacuation. In the dust storm, as generally at Tanforan and Topaz, Yuki finds herself overwhelmed, lost, afraid and confused. Her only escape is in an unknown building where she is alone and afraid while the storm rages around her. The aftermath of the storm is similar to the aftermath of the entire evacuation. Yuki wanders home somewhat dazed to find things unlike they were when she left, just as the Sakane family will eventually leave Topaz for an uncertain and strange future.



Chapter 13, A Last Visit

Chapter 13, A Last Visit Summary

Some time has gone by since the Sakane family came to Topaz. Yuki notices that water left out overnight freezes in the frigid high desert. Camp life is beginning to assume a monotonous routine, and the internees are beginning to re-organize themselves as they did earlier at Tanforan.

Yuki learns that Emi's diagnosis with tuberculosis has been confirmed. The medical facilities at Topaz are judged to be adequate for Emi's care, and she will remain in the hospital at Topaz in isolation while she recovers. Yuki visits Emi a final time and can only see her through a plate glass window. Yuki is able to determine that Emi is very ill, and the two friends gesture to each other.

Over the next several months, Yuki begins to spend a large amount of time visiting Mr. and Mrs. Kurihara, Emi's custodial grandparents. Mr. and Mrs. Kurihara are always courteous and friendly to Yuki, and she grows to like them very much.

Ken finds employment as an orderly in the Topaz hospital. Although the wages are extremely low, the job gives Ken a purpose, and he becomes quite devoted to his work. The hospital is somewhat far away from where the Sakane family live, however, and Yuki feels as if she rarely sees Ken. The Topaz camp continues to be finished, as more buildings are erected and existing structures are finished. Interior walls are built in some of the barracks, and shelving is installed.

One night, Yuki visits Mr. and Mrs. Kurihara. Yuki feels that with spring approaching, the doctors will likely allow Emi to return home from the hospital. Mrs. Kurihara agrees with Yuki. Mr. Kurihara is busily polishing and arranging his growing Indian arrowhead collection. Yuki is too excited to spend time looking at the arrowheads. She later regrets not speaking further with Mr. Kurihara.

Chapter 13, A Last Visit Analysis

Chapter 13 covers a substantial amount of chronological time. Several weeks pass for Yuki as the fall turns into winter and the spring of 1943 approaches. Mr. Sakane has been incarcerated in Montana for over one year, and Yuki finds a father figure in the kindly Mr. Kurihara. As the weather changes, camp life in Topaz continues, and Yuki notes several improvements made to the physical structures of the camp as well as improved organization and logistic support. Ken's employment at the hospital gives him something to do, and he looks forward to doing his job with efficiency.

Emi remains in the hospital recovering from her prolonged illness with tuberculosis, and Yuki misses her friendship. Mr. Kurihara has managed to find numerous interesting artifacts by searching through the central area of the Topaz camp. He frequently



searches with Mr. Toda, and their searching takes them to the more remote parts of the camp. Yuki leaves the Kurihara family without speaking to Mr. Kurihara or looking at the latest additions to his collection. Her omission is noted in the narrative as being unfortunate, since it is Yuki's last chance to speak with Mr. Kurihara. The reference heavily foreshadows Mr. Kurihara's death in the following chapter.



Chapter 14, Tragedy at Dusk

Chapter 14, Tragedy at Dusk Summary

Improvements to the camp continue. The roads are graveled, which eliminates much dust. Trees are planted outside of some of the buildings, though many internees doubt that the trees will be able to survive in the desert. The internees open a new cooperative store. Yuki is glad that spring has arrived, and her spirits seem buoyed by the improvements being made at the camp.

Mr. Kurihara and Mr. Toda enjoy searching through the dusty ground of the camp for fossils and Indian artifacts. In the months they have been at Topaz, they have searched most of the interior regions of the camp. One day, they wander to the outside perimeter of the camp and begin searching through the ground near the barbed wire fence that marks the camp confines. They walk along talking and occasionally stoop down to dig in the dust. A guard believes that they are trying to escape and shoots Mr. Kurihara, who dies within just a few minutes.

Mr. Toda quickly goes to Mrs. Kurihara and tells her of the tragic news. She is devastated, as is Yuki and the entire Sakane family. Many of the Topaz internees are horrified and justifiably angered at the senseless killing of an old man searching for trilobites. Yuki becomes particularly despondent since she had developed a close relationship with Mr. Kurihara. A funeral is held, and Mr. Kurihara is buried in the bleak desert of Topaz, Utah. Although many feel the grave is forlorn, Yuki knows that Mr. Kurihara found great beauty and peace in the desert, and she feels he would be satisfied to be buried in the desert. Yuki lingers at the graveside, and when everyone else has gone, she takes her prized Indian arrowhead from her pocket and pushes it into the dust at the graveside as a parting gift to Mr. Kurihara.

Chapter 14, Tragedy at Dusk Analysis

Camp life continues, and the narrative describes many of the small but significant improvements. The Sakane and Kurihara families have been living in Topaz for several months, and their life has assumed a type of natural rhythm. Ken continues to work as an orderly at the hospital. Emi continues to convalesce from her illness, and Yuki continues to befriend Mr. and Mrs. Kurihara.

The title of the chapter, coupled with the ending of the previous chapter, serve as strong foreshadowing that something bad will happen to Mr. Kurihara. Like Yuki, Mr. Kurihara takes great pleasure in searching through the dusty soil for fossils and Indian artifacts. Mr. Kurihara and Mr. Toda become close friends and spend a great deal of time walking, talking and searching together. Their extensive searching exhausts the possibility of finding new items in the interior of the camp, and over the passing weeks, they gradually widen their searching. One day, the two men are walking along the inside



camp perimeter by the barbed wire fence, engaged in conversation. A guard who believes he is trying to escape shoots Mr. Kurihara. The infamous act of the guard is completely unjustified, and Mrs. Kurihara and Emi pay the price.

At the graveside, Yuki places an Indian arrowhead back into the Topaz dust near the grave of Mr. Kurihara. This act of remembrance is reminiscent of Yuki's earlier gift of a trilobite to Emi after Emi was admitted to the hospital for tuberculosis. Yuki's insight into Mr. Kurihara's nature allows her to understand that although the desert is a desolate and forlorn place, it is an unfortunate but fitting place for Mr. Kurihara's grave. Despite their forced evacuation and prolonged incarceration, Yuki, Mr. Kurihara and many others find great beauty and serenity in the vast Utah desert surrounding Topaz.



Chapter 15, Good News

Chapter 15, Good News Summary

Thanksgiving passes in Topaz without much enthusiastic celebration. Food is scarce, and many families have little for which to be thankful. The Sakane family has lived in Topaz for over a year, and they have been interned for approximately nineteen months. Mr. Sakane has been incarcerated in Montana for nearly two years.

A few days after Thanksgiving, Mrs. Sakane receives a telegram informing her that Mr. Sakane will shortly be joining the Sakane family in Topaz. The Sakane family is overjoyed at the prospect. Finally, on December 24, 1943, over two years since his initial arrest, Mr. Sakane is transported to the Topaz internment camp to rejoin his family.

Mr. Sakane tells Yuki, Ken and Mrs. Sakane about his experiences in incarceration and about Montana. He tells them about the bitter cold winters in Montana and explains that although he was in a huge room with a hundred other men, he was continually lonely. His brief description of the conditions he has endured allow Yuki realize that her confinement at Tanforan and Topaz could have been conceivably worse.

On Christmas day, Yuki attempts to visit Emi at the hospital. Emi, however, is still in quarantine, and Yuki can only wave to her through a plate glass window. With her father present, Yuki feels a great deal of holiday spirit, and her outlook brightens notably. Although Ken is very happy to see his father again, he remains largely withdrawn and depressed.

Chapter 15, Good News Analysis

Mr. Sakane's ordeal is briefly outlined, and it is evident that he has endured many hardships. His life for the previous two years has been one of imprisonment and suffering for no justifiable cause. Eventually, a committee processed his paperwork and decided to release him to Topaz. He arrives in Topaz with no belongings, but he remains an essentially positive and enthusiastic individual.

Mr. Sakane, like thousands of other Japanese American men, is arrested and detained for over two years without being charged of any crime and without being allowed access to legal counsel. Mr. Sakane insists that he is a loyal and patriotic United States Citizen and is told in return to demonstrate his loyalty by remaining unjustifiably imprisoned and separated from his friends and family for month after month. The narrative notes at several points that Italian and German Americans are not similarly treated.



Chapter 16, Another Goodbye

Chapter 16, Another Goodbye Summary

In February, a United States Army recruitment team visits Topaz and tries to recruit Japanese American men to join the army. The camp has many opinions, and most young men refuse to serve in the army of the country that has imprisoned them for years. Others feel that they must enlist to demonstrate their patriotism, and others want to enlist simply to escape further confinement in Topaz. There are numerous opinions, and they are openly discussed. The recruiter tells them that they will not be allowed to serve in the Pacific Theater, and instead they will be sent to the European Theater.

Ken considers his options and discusses the possibility of enlisting with his parents. After carefully thinking about his options, Ken decides to enlist in the United States Army. He is joined by hundreds of other young men who also sign up. After a period of several days, they leave Topaz and join the army.

Chapter 16, Another Goodbye Analysis

Eventually, several thousand young Japanese American men are recruited out of Topaz and other internment camps. Some will serve with distinction in the famous 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which will become the most-decorated unit in United States military history for its size and length of service. Some of these young men feel compelled to join to demonstrate their patriotism and citizenship, but most join to help their country win the war in spite of how their country has treated them. Most of Chapter 16 is devoted to a consideration of the many disparate opinions held by various camp members.

Although the United States is simultaneously at war with Italy, Germany and Japan, only Japanese Americans are forcibly evacuated, and only Japanese Americans are prevented from serving in a particular theater. For example, many German Americans are allowed to serve in the European Theater without any special consideration. This disparate treatment based solely on race is particularly and understandably galling to most Japanese Americans.



Chapter 17, Hello World

Chapter 17, Hello World Summary

As time continues to pass, many Japanese families and individuals take advantage of the opportunity to leave the Topaz internment camp for areas outside of the prohibited West Coast zone. As scarce jobs or educational opportunities become available in the Midwest and East Coast, individuals who are released from Topaz accept them.

Mr. Sakane becomes anxiously engaged in organizing and administering Topaz activities. He feels that it is best to work with the United States Army to ensure the best possible living conditions within the camp. Many other internees feel cooperation to be undesirable and prefer an antagonistic stance toward the United States government.

Spring arrives, and Emi becomes well enough to be discharged from the hospital. She returns home to Mrs. Kurihara and resumes her friendship with Yuki. Most camp internees feel their spirits brighten with spring.

The so-called camp agitators begin to be more vocal about resisting efforts to cooperate with the official governmental camp administration. They prefer an antagonistic and divisive stance. Mr. Sakane learns that the camp agitators have blacklisted him, and many fear that he will be beaten or murdered. One night, a flaming stink bomb is thrown through the window into the Sakane family's residence. Yuki and Mrs. Sakane are very frightened, and Mr. Sakane is angered that other camp internees are insulting him. The divergent opinions of various camp factions are becoming all too evident.

The camp administration feels that Mr. Sakane's good work has put him in a dangerous position because of the camp agitators, and they secure a position for him in Salt Lake City, Utah, as an employee of a company. Yuki suddenly realizes that she and her family are to be released from Topaz. Although she is overjoyed to leave the confines of her prison home in the desert, she is also sad to leave behind her friends such as Mr. Toda, Emi and Mrs. Kurihara. The Sakane family packs up their meager belongings and leaves Topaz for an uncertain and unknown future in Salt Lake City.

Chapter 17, Hello World Analysis

Yuki watches many families and individuals gradually leave the camp for positions in the Midwest or East Coast. The prohibited zone for Japanese Americans encompasses only the West Coast of the continental United States. As individuals are able to secure jobs and housing outside of the prohibited area, they are allowed to relocate out of Topaz.

Mr. Sakane constantly works for the betterment of the situation inside of Topaz, feeling that a cooperative and constructive relationship between the internees and the official camp administration will bring improved conditions for all. His view is common, but there are many others who prefer to resist their wrongful imprisonment by being divisive and



antagonistic toward the camp administration. The agitators eventually find Mr. Sakane's involvement to be intolerable, and they begin to threaten him and his family. Yuki becomes aware that there is a great deal of conflicting opinion over the proper way to behave in the internment camp. Because Mr. Sakane has demonstrated his ability and good faith, the camp administration secures a position for him in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Sakane family is able to leave Topaz and begin, once again, a new life.



Characters

Yuki Sakane

Yuki is the primary character in the novel. She is a Nisei Japanese American born in Berkeley, California, in 1930. When the novel begins, Yuki is eleven years old, and when the novel ends, she is probably thirteen years old, having spent approximately one and a half years imprisoned. She has a round, full face framed by bangs and straight, black hair hanging to her shoulders. When the novel begins, Yuki is a typical American girl in most respects, having several neighborhood friends of her own age. She enjoys school and is a good student. At the beginning of the novel, Yuki owns three pets - a canary named Old Salt, named in honor of a neighbor's deceased parrot; a large gray carp in a yard pond; and her favorite pet and confidant Pepper, a dog. She will be forced to part with these pets when she is interned.

Within hours of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, Yuki's father is arrested and detained. She will see him only once again, for a few minutes, over the course of the next several months. Yuki's entire life is then totally disrupted as she is evacuated with her family from home to the Tanforan Assembly Area, where she is detained for several months. From Tanforan, Yuki and her family are subsequently evacuated to Topaz, Utah, where they spend another year in captivity. During the novel, Yuki demonstrates a ready ability to quickly make new friends. She has a good respect for adults and is able to relate to them well. Yuki remains predominantly optimistic, happy and patriotic throughout the novel, and she is an excellent example of a young American girl.

Mr. Sakane

Yuki's father, referred to by Yuki throughout the narrative as simply Father, is an Issei Japanese American of indeterminate age but probably around forty-five. Mr. Sakane is a grandson of a samurai and holds many traditional Japanese values in high regard. He is a Christian and is extremely patient and caring. He displays a marked patriotism for the United States. His primary hobby appears to be gardening, and he excels at growing chrysanthemums. Mr. Sakane has been in the United States for probably at least half of his life, though this must be inferred from the narrative. Mr. Sakane's employment with a large Japanese company causes him to be arrested by the FBI within hours of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. After his arrest, he is transported to a prison in San Francisco, California, where he is held for several weeks. He is allowed only a single, brief visit from his family before he is relocated to a prison facility in Montana, where he spends several months. He is subsequently relocated to Topaz, Utah, where he rejoins his family and remains in internment for several more months. Like many thousands of other Japanese American men, Mr. Sakane is never charged with a crime or allowed to access legal representation, and of course he has committed no improprieties.



Mrs. Sakane

Yuki's mother, referred to by Yuki throughout the narrative as simply Mother, is an Issei Japanese American of indeterminate age but probably around forty. Mrs. Sakane holds many traditional Japanese values in high regard. She is also a devout Christian and reads the Bible every day. She is patient, insightful and caring for her family. She displays a good deal of foresight. Her housekeeping abilities are beyond reproach, and one of her primary concerns is cleanliness of the immediate living space. Mrs. Sakane has been in the United States for probably at least half of her life, though this must be inferred from the narrative.

After Mr. Sakane's arrest following the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, Mrs. Sakane is left alone to organize the family finances, sell the family belongings and be a single parent to her two children. She is allowed to visit her husband in prison only once for a few minutes over the next several months. Mrs. Sakane disposes of nearly all of the family's belongings within just a few weeks and then packs to prepare for the family's forced evacuation to the Tanforan Assembly Area. Mrs. Sakane then remains with her family for a few months at Tanforan and is subsequently relocated to Topaz, Utah, for another year of imprisonment. Throughout the entire ordeal of evacuation and imprisonment, Mrs. Sakane remains calm and optimistic. Like many thousands of other Japanese American women, Mrs. Sakane is wrongly imprisoned for many months.

Ken Sakane

Yuki's older brother is a Nisei Japanese American of unspecified age but probably eighteen or nineteen at the beginning of the novel. He is very athletic and is the star forward on a local basketball team. He is described as tall and strong and apparently goes on many dates. Ken is a typical American young man in most respects, easily making strong friendships with his peers and older adults. Ken is an extremely devoted student and a hard worker and holds many traditional family values. Mrs. Sakane typically refers to Ken as Kenichi, though Yuki refers to him simply as Ken.

After Mr. Sakane is arrested and imprisoned due to the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Ken assumes the role of head-of-household, and his behavior is exemplary. Under the guidance of his mother, Ken sells the family car, sells many of the family belongings and arranges for the family dog to be adopted. Ken helps pack and performs most of the registration legwork, completing and submitting forms, obtaining luggage tags and transporting and loading most of the family's remaining meager possessions. Ken is the only member of the Sakane family to fall into prolonged despair during their long internment. Nevertheless, he remains essentially optimistic and patriotic throughout and seeks ways to make himself useful, ending up as an orderly in the camp hospital at Topaz, Utah. Ken sacrifices several opportunities to gain a college education so that he can fulfill his perceived duty as head-of-household. After Mr.



Sakane rejoins the family at Topaz, Ken enlists in the United States Army and is sent to a basic training camp in Mississippi.

Mrs. Jamieson

Mrs. Jamieson is a family friend and neighbor of the Sakane family before they are evacuated. She is non-Japanese and therefore is not forcibly evacuated from her home. Mrs. Jamieson takes in Old Salt, Yuki's pet canary, and also stores some of the Sakane's belongings in her own home. While the Sakane family is imprisoned, Mrs. Jamieson sends frequent food and care packages, and she even visits the family at the Tanforan Camp. Mrs. Jamieson protests the internment by writing letters to President Franklin Roosevelt, and she is an example in the novel of a non-Japanese person who feels the evacuations are unnecessary and immoral.

Mimi Nelson

Mimi Nelson and her mother Mrs. Nelson are neighbors and family friends of the Sakane family before they are evacuated. Mimi is Yuki's age, and the two are good friends. The Nelson family is non-Japanese and therefore is not forcibly evacuated from their home. While the Sakane family is imprisoned, Mimi and Mrs. Nelson send food and care packages, and they even visit the family at the Tanforan Camp. Mimi and Mrs. Nelson are examples in the novel of non-Japanese persons who feel the evacuations are unnecessary and immoral.

Jim Hirai

Jim is a school friend and study partner of Ken Sakane. Jim, also a Japanese American, is evacuated first to Tanforan and then to Topaz. Jim arrives in Topaz before the Sakane family and orients the family in their new living quarters. Like Mr. Sakane, Jim's father is also arrested hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Jim and his family share a parallel history with the Sakane family and reinforce the thematic concept that the Sakane family is representative of thousands of Japanese American families during the period treated by the novel.

Mr. Toda

Mr. Toda is a Japanese American and a friend of the Sakane family. He is not arrested with many other Japanese American men because of his advanced age. Mr. Toda is an older bachelor and before being evacuated was living in the dormitory of the Christian church attended by the Sakane family. He is extremely proper and very courteous, and he frequently visits the Sakane family in both Tanforan and Topaz internment camps. When he visits, he nearly always brings a small treat for Yuki, and he also looks out for her when he sees an opportunity to do so. Mr. Toda initially expresses resentment and confusion about the evacuations but eventually comes to feel, as does Mr. Sakane, a



type of patriotic resignation. He supports the young Japanese American men who join the United States Army.

Emiko ("Emi") Kurihara

Emi's parents have died, and she lives with her grandparents. Emi's grandparents operated a successful grocery business in San Francisco before they were forcibly evacuated to Tanforan. Mrs. Kurihara had the foresight to pack away a good deal of food and snack items for the evacuation so that the Kurihara family is well provided with delicacies for the first few months at Tanforan. Emi meets the similarly aged Yuki at Tanforan, and the two quickly become good friends. The Kurihara and Sakane families are next-door neighbors at Tanforan, and the friendship between Yuki and Emi grows to include both families. Emi contracts tuberculosis at the Tanforan camp and subsequently suffers a severe health collapse at Topaz, Utah, probably brought on by the change in altitude, climate and Topaz's ever-present dust. After spending many months in quarantine in the Topaz hospital, Emi recovers and returns to her family. Emi is a traditional American girl in most respects, a trait she shares with Yuki. Emi and Yuki's families share a parallel history with the Sakane family and reinforce the thematic idea that the Sakane family is representative of thousands of Japanese American families during the period treated by the novel.

Mr. Kurihara

Mr. Kurihara is Emi's grandfather. Yuki finds him very proper, distant and slightly impersonal when she first meets him. However, within a few months Yuki comes to view Mr. Kurihara as a kind of substitute father, and when Emi is in the hospital, Mr. Kurihara also looks forward to spending time with Yuki. Mr. Kurihara is presented as a typical Japanese American older man and is considerate and proper. Mr. Kurihara befriends Mr. Toda, and the two men spend many hours together in the internment camp at Topaz, Utah, searching through the dusty ground for fossils and Indian artifacts. One day, the two men are searching through the ground near the perimeter wire fence, and Mr. Kurihara is shot and killed by a guard who putatively believes they are trying to escape into the trackless Utah desert.



Objects/Places

Issei

Issei Japanese Americans are individuals who arrived in the United States prior to the Immigration Act of 1924. Many Issei settled around Vacaville, California, near San Francisco. All Issei living in the western United States were interned with their families during World War II. Laws prevented Issei from becoming United States citizens.

Nisei

Nisei Japanese Americans are individuals born in the United States to Issei Japanese Americans. As such, they are United States citizens by right of birth. All Nisei living in the western United States were interned with their families during World War II, an event considered by many to be the most blatant human-rights violation in modern United States history. Many Nisei volunteered to serve in the United States Armed Forces during World War II, but they were prevented from serving in the Pacific Theater in combat roles.

Pepper

Pepper is the Sakane family's pet dog. Yuki also has a pet canary, Old Salt, and a big gray carp that lives in a yard fish pond. However, Pepper is Yuki's primary friend and consolation in the days between Mr. Sakane's arrest and the Sakane family's forced evacuation. Since pets are not allowed in the relocation camps, Pepper is adopted by a college student through a newspaper advertisement. Yuki is broken-hearted and misses Pepper for months before she learns of the dog's untimely death.

Pearl Ring

For Christmas 1941, Mrs. Jamieson, a family friend and neighbor of the Sakane family, gives Yuki a valuable pearl ring as a remembrance. Mrs. Jamieson will subsequently send frequent packages of food, supplies and even some clothing to the Sakane family. The ring, apparently quite valuable, serves as a tangible reminder to Yuki that not all non-Japanese United States citizens feel that the forced evacuations are necessary, let alone moral.

Civil Control Station

The Civil Control Station in San Francisco, California, is the initial reporting point for the Japanese Americans being evacuated from the local area. Individuals or families are ordered to report to the Civil Control Station, where their belongings are loaded on



trucks for forwarding and the families are assigned another more permanent destination. The Sakane family and many of their acquaintances report to the Civil Control Station, where they are routed to the Tanforan Assembly Area.

Tanforan Assembly Area

The Tanforan Assembly Area is the first internment camp the Sakane family is sent to. It has been converted from the Tanforan horseracing track and is about 100 acres in size. Tanforan is enclosed by wire fences and patrolled by armed guards. The Sakane family is housed in a converted horse stable, which has been mucked out and given linoleum flooring and painted walls. However, the walls have been painted so rapidly that Yuki finds insects painted to the walls. Ken comments on the stench of horse manure in the stable. Commodities and supplies are completely insufficient, and the Sakane family suffers much needless hardship at Tanforan.

Topaz Internment Camp

The Topaz Internment Camp is located in Topaz, Utah, surrounded by many miles of trackless Utah high desert. Topaz, one of several Japanese American internment camps, was hastily constructed between the December 1941 Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and September 1942. Topaz housed thousands of Japanese American families for many months until nearly the end of World War II. Topaz residents were forcibly evacuated from the west coast of the United States under the mistaken belief they would somehow aid or abet the Japanese nation. Topaz is one mile square, enclosed by wire fences and guard towers and patrolled by armed guards. The Sakane family is housed in a single small room in one of many barracks. Although the living conditions are nominally better than at Tanforan, Topaz is not actually completed until several months after refugees are interned, leading to water, food and supply shortages and extremely cramped living conditions.

Topaz Hospital

The Topaz Internment Camp is supplied with a basic hospital, which is capable of performing most health-related functions adequately. Ken Sakane eventually secures a job as an orderly at the hospital, and Emi Kurihara spends many months quarantined in the hospital while she recovers from tuberculosis. Yuki visits the hospital on several occasions. Along with a few other administrative buildings such as the cooperative store, the Topaz hospital forms the central activity area of the Topaz Internment Camp.

Trilobite

The Topaz, Utah, camp contains fossils of trilobites and other ancient creatures. The camp also contains Indian arrowheads and other tiny artifacts. Yuki and Mr. Kurihara, among others, are particularly fond of searching through the dust and dirt of the camp in



search of these tiny treasures. Yuki makes a gift of one trilobite to Emi while Emi is in the hospital suffering from tuberculosis. The trilobite is symbolic of Yuki's attitude of perseverance and making the best of a bad situation; even in Topaz, she is able to find something unique and interesting.

Indian Arrowheads

The Topaz, Utah, camp contains Indian arrowheads and other artifacts as well as fossils. Yuki and Mr. Kurihara, among others, are particularly fond of searching through the dirt and dust of the camp in search of these items. Mr. Kurihara assembles a fairly large collection of arrowheads, which he likes to display. Mr. Kurihara and his friend Mr. Toda spend a good amount of time searching for arrowheads in the camp. After several months, they have searched the interior of the camp and begin to search the outer areas of the camp. One day while looking for arrowheads near the camp perimeter, Mr. Kurihara is shot and killed by a guard who thinks he is trying to escape. At Mr. Kurihara's funeral, Yuki lingers behind until she is alone and then takes her best arrowhead and pushes it into the dirt by Mr. Kurihara's grave. This gift of an arrowhead symbolizes the link Yuki feels with Mr. Kurihara and also demonstrates that Yuki has grown up and come to know her friends well.



Setting

Journey to Topaz has three main settings: Yuki's home in Berkeley, the camp at the Tanforan Race Track, and the camp at Topaz. The story begins in the first week of December 1941, with Yuki eagerly anticipating Christmas. Her family's rented home has enough room for Yuki's mother to entertain guests and for Yuki, her brother Ken, and their parents to live comfortably. It has a backyard for Yuki's dog Pepper and a fishpond that is the home of a big gray carp. Mr. Sakane, Yuki's father, tends a nice garden. Yuki and her family have many friends in their neighborhood; they are well-established within the community.

After her comfortable years growing up in Berkeley, Yuki finds the Tanforan Race Track—renamed the Tanforan Assembly Center—a shock. One of fifteen such assembly centers hastily set up to house the 110,000 Japanese-Americans of the West Coast, Tanforan is bleak and crowded. Yuki is momentarily impressed when she hears that her family has been assigned "Barrack 16, Apartment 40," but the apartment turns out to be a hastily converted horse stall.

Poor sanitation, noisy stalls, and bland food plague the camp. Schooling is nearly impossible. Furthermore, Mr. Sakane has been taken away for interrogation and cannot be with his family. Ever resourceful, Yuki, Ken, and their mother manage to make do with what little they have, and Yuki even makes a new friend of Emiko—a girl in a neighboring stall.

Topaz, the Central Utah War Relocation Center, is a dry and remote prison camp with armed guards who will shoot anyone who tries to escape. A mile square, the camp consists of forty-two blocks and twelve barracks in each block. The buildings are covered with black tarpaper, the air is full of dust, and people in the camp feel isolated from the world. Even so, the authorities set up schools for youngsters and allow some college-age youngsters to attend East Coast schools and some adults to work in Salt Lake City. These small opportunities to be productive and to learn offer some hope to the unhappy residents of Topaz.



Social Sensitivity

Journey to Topaz focuses on a socially sensitive topic. Parents and teachers are likely to face some difficult questions from young readers who, like the Sakanes, at first do not believe that such things can happen in America. Although Journey to Topaz is fiction, it has not been sensationalized to hold the reader's interest. Everything that happens in the novel derives from the author's personal experience. Even the bizarre and outrageous shooting of Mr. Kurihara is based on an actual incident at Topaz, in which an older man was shot to death by a guard. Uchida skillfully makes the historical events meaningful on a personal level, showing how individual lives were forever altered by the relocation of the West Coast's Japanese-Americans.

In her "Prologue" to the 1985 Creative Arts Book Company edition of Journey to Topaz, Uchida declares, "I hope by reading this book young people everywhere will realize what once took place in this country and will determine never to permit such a travesty of justice to occur again." Uchida obviously intended to influence her readers. Since World War II, Americans have seen the growth of the civil rights movement and increasing recognition of America's diverse ethnic groups. But Uchida's novel warns that in a society that was willing to support the mass relocation of Japanese-Americans, a travesty such as this could happen again.

Readers may raise questions about the Sakanes' special situation. Mr. and Mrs. Sakane are regarded by the U.S. government as foreign nationals—that is, people who live in the U.S. but are citizens of another country. When Japan and the U.S. go to war, Mr. and Mrs. Sakane become enemy aliens—people who live in America but are citizens of a nation with which the U.S. is at war.

Some readers might suppose that such enemy aliens hold allegiance to the enemy nation and therefore ought to be treated with suspicion and even arrested. Mr. Sakane works for a Japanese company that does business in San Francisco, making him not only an enemy alien but an employee of an enemy country's company. What needs to be pointed out is that many Issei—Japanese immigrants to the U.S.—were loyal to their adopted country; moreover, American laws of the time forbade immigrants from Far Eastern countries from becoming U.S. citizens. This racially oriented law was not repealed until after World War II, and thus Mr. and Mrs. Sakane could live in America most of their lives, considering themselves Americans, yet be treated as aliens. Furthermore, the Issei's children born in America, the Nisei, were American citizens, but they were also interned.

The internment of Japanese-Americans occurred during a very stressful period in American history. Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor, swept through the Philippines and other American territories, and even landed on some Alaskan islands. Many Americans feared attacks on the West Coast. These fears, combined with racism and the greedy motives of those who disliked the economic competition of Japanese-Americans, put pressure on government officials. Some officials claimed to be worried that Japanese-Americans would be attacked and possibly killed by other citizens, who in their anger at



Japan would victimize the nearest symbols of Japan. Most officials involved in the internment seemed to believe that the Issei, Nisei, and even Sansei— children of Nisei —would take Japan's side in the war and sabotage America's war effort. Documents from the time show that those officials who had researched the possibility of JapaneseAmerican treachery had concluded that the Japanese-Americans were loyal to the United States and posed no threat to America's war effort. Even so, President Roosevelt authorized the imprisonment of the Japanese-Americans of the West Coast. In spite of this, many young Japanese-Americans joined the U.S.

Army and served with notable courage.

The internment of JapaneseAmericans was a complex business involving misguided passions, racism, duplicity, and downright foolishness, and its legacy persists in America. Most of the Issei of that day are now dead, but many of the Nisei and Sansei are still alive. Some remain bitter over their mistreatment during the war years; some wish to forget that miserable part of their lives; others simply want an acknowledgment of the injustice that was perpetrated and some compensation for their losses. Congress has authorized modest payments to the survivors of the internment, as well as an apology. This acknowledgment of the wrongs done to Japanese-Americans came only after decades of debate and over the opposition of people who believe that internment in Topaz and other camps was not as bad an experience as the immense suffering inflicted on other people throughout the world during the war. Other Americans believe that the forced relocation of JapaneseAmericans was justified. Uchida and many others like her hope for a victory greater than the government's acknowledgment of wrongdoing; they hope to prevent the recurrence of such injustice by reminding Americans of this past transgression.

Literary Qualities

The language of *Journey to Topaz* is spare and clear. The book emphasizes strong images rather than ornate language. This style is most effective in the vividly described contrast between the idyllic setting of the Sakanes' home and the stark environment of Tanforan and Topaz. The Sakanes' home seems warm and settled. Yuki has her dog in the back yard, and she is friends with a curious fish in the pond. Her father's garden is well kept and admired by the neighbors.

Everything about the home suggests that Yuki's family is a comfortable part of the middle-class neighborhood.

On the other hand, the Tanforan Assembly Center is anything but comfortable and settled, although the Sakanes try hard to make their converted horse stall resemble a home. Confused and unhappy people crowd Tanforan; everywhere Yuki looks are fences that keep the internees from enjoying freedom and force them to squeeze together. The buildings are tattered, and many are unfinished.

As bad as Tanforan is, the images of the Central Utah War Relocation Center at Topaz are even more alien to the middle-class life Yuki has lost. The hot and dusty expanse of the desert seems to spread endlessly in every direction beyond the fences. It is a place hostile to human beings; this point is made clear by Yuki's experience in one of the many windstorms that sweep across the desert: "The wind now lifted great masses of sand from the ground and flung it into the air with such fury that Yuki could no longer see the barracks of the nearest block. Pebbles stung her legs, and her breath came in short gulping gasps. Yuki felt smothered, and her heart began to pound as she felt terror rising inside of her." Such striking images show Topaz to be a wretched place.

The black tarred barracks add to the picture of a place unfit for living.

The illustrations by Donald Carrick are also notable. Starkly black and white, they emphasize the emotions of a captured moment. In the dust storm, Yuki is shown to be caught in a great rush of debris, her clothes tearing at her body. This contrasts with the peaceful image of Yuki gazing at the pool in her yard in chapter 4. Carrick's representations of family scenes are particularly effective; for instance, the picture of the family in the Tanforan horse stall in chapter 6 captures the discomfort of living in cramped quarters with only a bare light bulb for illumination.



Themes

Freedom

Yuki and her family are living in the United States. She and her brother Ken are citizens of the United States. Mr. and Mrs. Sakane are prohibited by law from becoming citizens, even though they have lived half of their lives in the United States and are productive members of society. Like hundreds of thousands of other Japanese Americans, the Sakane family enjoys the freedom and liberty offered by their home. Then, after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, that freedom is stripped away. Mr. Sakane, though he has done nothing wrong and will never be charged with a crime, is arrested and imprisoned for many months. The remainder of the Sakane family is forcibly evacuated and interned in terrible living conditions for many months. The family suffers considerable material loss, having to sell all their belongings for whatever they can obtain, losing their home and jobs and suffering enormous problems with their education and career development.

The Sakane family is surrounded by thousands of other families undergoing a similar ordeal, all simply because they are of Japanese extraction and happened to be living on the West Coast. Throughout the evacuations, the Japanese are told to demonstrate their loyalty by giving up their freedom, a situation that is nearly intolerable. In the end, the Sakane family is released, not to a restoration of their old livelihood or means but to an unknown future in Salt Lake City, Utah, a place with which they are completely unfamiliar. The strange juxtaposition of the United States' fight for freedom and liberty during World War II with the United States' forcible internment of hundreds of thousands of citizens is a dominant theme in the novel.

Family and Friendship

The novel is constructed around the experiences of the Sakane family. The novel's beginning and concluding scenes deal with the Sakane family interacting with their network of friends, and the entire construction of the narrative is based around the Sakane family experience. Two other families have large roles in the novel, the Kurihara and the Hirai families. In all of the salient narrative elements, the history of the three families runs in parallel. This repetitive narrative construction allows the various families, the Sakane family in particular, to represent a broad class of Japanese American families. Because of this, the narrative takes on a broad social significance far beyond the day-to-day details of the Sakane family's history.

All of the novel's family members derive a great deal of support from intra-family relationships. This is contrasted somewhat by Mr. Toda, a bachelor, who at times in the novel seems somewhat adrift without the anchor of family life. Mr. Toda's response is to develop strong relationships with a wide range of people. Thus, family and family relationships are a dominant theme in the novel. The family structure is mirrored by the



numerous straightforward friendships described in the narrative. Yuki has two primary friends in the novel, Mimi Nelson and Emi Kurihara. Ken has a close friend in Jim Hirai. Mrs. Sakane has close friends in Mrs. Jamieson, Mrs. Nelson and Mrs. Kurihara. Mr. Sakane has a close friendship with Mr. Toda. Mr. Toda has a close friendship, also, with Mr. Kurihara. These friendships weld the novel's characters into a network of support, which allows the characters to develop and enjoy an optimistic and forward-looking existence even in the midst of extreme adversity.

Patriotism

The central conflict of the novel, based on historical events, is the wrongful imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans, many of them citizens, because their patriotism supposedly cannot be trusted. Nearly all internees are completely loyal to the United States and are functioning as productive citizens prior to imprisonment. The internees are told to demonstrate their patriotism and loyalty by being imprisoned at great personal cost for prolonged periods of time. Most internees suffer catastrophic financial losses, severe hardship and prolonged physical and mental stresses due to the internment.

Nevertheless, most internees maintain a relatively optimistic outlook and do, in fact, continue to demonstrate patriotism throughout and after their imprisonment. For example, nearly one thousand young Japanese American men, including Ken Sakane, volunteer to join the United States Armed Forces when army recruiters visited the internment camps. Ken does not do this simply to escape the camp. He passed by previous opportunities to leave the camp for school. Ken joins the army after many months of imprisonment to demonstrate his continued patriotism and to help his country by participating directly in the war effort.

Some internees, understandably, become embittered toward the United States because of its undeniably illegitimate actions. The members of the Sakane family, however, along with all of the other principle characters in the novel, demonstrate nothing but patriotic love of country throughout the trying ordeal. Yuki notes that Italian Americans and German Americans are not treated similarly, a fact that confuses her but does not cause her to abandon her patriotic view of her country. The dominant theme of patriotism runs throughout the novel and is the positive balance that offsets the theme of imprisonment and despair.



Themes/Characters

Born in America, Yuki and Ken are U.S. citizens, but their parents, born in Japan, are not. This makes Mr. Sakane particularly suspect in the eyes of the war-time American authorities. Although he is an innocent businessperson, he is arrested and taken away from his family soon after the U.S. declares war on Japan. Yuki, Ken, and their mother must make the move from Berkeley to Tanforan and from Tanforan to Topaz.

Their non-Japanese neighbors are mostly sympathetic but powerless to help Yuki's family. Mrs. Jamieson, Yuki's best friend Mimi Nelson, and others can offer only sympathy and some help with food and other necessities. After they move, Yuki and her family find these good friends to be sources of distant support, receiving from them letters and supplies. Others merely exploit Yuki's family. One neighbor even digs up part of Mr. Sakane's garden because she wants some of his carefully cultivated flowers.

At the beginning of *Journey to Topaz*, Yuki, a bright, introspective eleven-year-old, is excited about the coming of Christmas and the holiday season. She has had little occasion for thinking about the outside world, even though her parents are from another country.

During the novel, she discovers resources in herself that she never knew she had. The terrible experience of losing their homes and belongings embitters many of those taken to Topaz.

Mr. Kurihara, Emiko's grandfather, for instance, yearns to leave America because of his mistreatment. But Yuki fights the urge toward bitterness and finds in herself the strength to help others survive the internment. She grows rapidly toward adulthood and develops the courage necessary to face not only the deaths of her pet dog and Mr. Kurihara but to encourage Emiko to fight against potentially deadly illness.

Likable and engaging, Yuki tries to make the best of her unpleasant circumstances.

None of the other characters develop as thoroughly as Yuki, but her brother Ken also matures under the stress of internment. Forced to interrupt his college education and angered by the abuse of his family, he seems for a time to be growing bitter and hateful, but he eventually chooses responsibility over impotent rage. In so doing, Ken (short for Kenichi) helps both family and friends better endure their hardships.

Although Mimi is Yuki's best friend at the beginning of *Journey to Topaz*, Emiko, called Emi, becomes Yuki's most important friend in the novel. Emi's parents have died, and her grandparents, the Kuriharas, take care of her.

She meets Yuki at Tanforan, and they quickly become friends, playing and exploring together. Emi is so full of life that her eventual collapse from tuberculosis is a shock. Like Yuki, she is resilient enough to fight her disease, helped by the true friendship of the rapidly maturing Yuki.



Uchida treats her main theme, injustice, in depth, blurring distinctions between good and evil characters. Part of what makes *Journey to Topaz* such a disturbing book is that few characters seem to want to harm the Japanese-Americans. The FBI agents, the soldiers in charge of relocating the internees, or those who observe the injustices heaped on their former neighbors may be insensitive and selfish at times, but Uchida portrays them as ordinary people trying to lead ordinary lives; they are simply doing their jobs. That their jobs involve destroying the lives of thousands of innocent Americans rarely disturbs them.

Uchida's frightening depiction of complacent Americans shows that those who could have resisted the illegal internment of American citizens did not; the people who actually carry out the forced removal of the Japanese-Americans do so because they are told to. Uchida shows that a terrible injustice occurred in a free society with constitutionally guaranteed civil rights for all citizens because the citizens let it happen.

Uchida further enriches the theme of injustice by making the victims fully rounded characters with both good and bad traits. For instance, although Yuki likes to play and loves her pets, she is impatient and does not always get along with her brother. In many ways an ordinary young girl, Yuki must find in herself enormous reserves of courage and tenacity in order to endure hardship and injustice. The diverse group of Japanese-Americans also enriches the theme of injustice. Mr. Kurihara submits to bitterness, while Mr. Toda wavers between despair and determination. Some of the internees, such as Mr. Sakane, try to make something good out of the unpleasant circumstances of their lives. Still others become thugs who terrorize their fellow internees, making everybody's life worse.

The other themes of *Journey to Topaz*—God and religion, racism, the refugee, bitterness, despair, and death—help to show the full complexity of the lives of the characters, adding to the realism of the story, and clarifying the historical setting. The Sakanes, for example, take their Christian faith seriously and try to maintain worship services even while enduring the many hardships of the concentration camps.

For them, God is everywhere, and their religious beliefs constitute an essential part of their identities.

Racism, a significant factor in the internment of Japanese-Americans, underlies events throughout the novel. One of Yuki's classmates calls her a "dirty Jap," and, though Yuki's teacher tries to explain that the Nisei are loyal Americans, racial hatred persists among the foolish and ignorant.

The refugee image is also a significant part of the novel. Like refugees, the Sakanes must pack up only what they can carry, leaving the rest behind as they haul their few remaining belongings with them from one place to the next. Although they resemble victims of military aggression fleeing a war zone, they are instead victims of their fellow Americans. The striking similarity between refugees and the internees underscores the appalling injustice of the internment.



Yuki hears her mother tell Mr. Kurihara, "Fear has made this country do something she will one day regret, Mr. Kurihara, but we cannot let this terrible mistake poison our hearts. If we do, then we will be the ones to destroy ourselves and our children as well."

Throughout the internment, Yuki sees that people who give in to anger and frustration poison their own lives with their hatred. By resisting the hatred, Yuki makes new friends who help her survive the misery of Topaz. Uchida offers no pat answers for resisting the self-destructiveness of a hateful heart, but suggests that during great hardships, bitterness must be resisted constantly.

Despair and death are united during most of the novel. When Yuki learns of her beloved dog's death, she nearly despairs of ever recovering the security and hope of the past. She has borne terrific stress, losing her home, school, and friends, but Pepper's death symbolizes the loss of her entire past; Yuki's loss seems utterly complete. Later in the novel, a concentration camp guard shoots Mr. Kurihara dead—an event based on Uchida's personal experience at Topaz. Yuki finds Mr. Kurihara's bitterness unpleasant; his poisoned heart makes him seem already dead. As Yuki matures, she comes to understand Mr. Kurihara, even though she does not like his attitude. When he dies, great sorrow and indignation fill the camp, but Yuki has grown enough to be sad without despairing.

Style

Point of View

The novel is narrated from the third-person limited point of view. The principle character in the novel, Yuki Sakane, is present in all scenes of the novel and is the only character to have interior thoughts revealed by the narration. The remaining characters in the novel are perceived largely through Yuki's eyes, and Yuki often interprets the actions of other characters. However, Yuki many times does not appear to understand the larger social significance of some narrative structures. This allows readers to frequently construct their own conclusions. For example, Yuki is cannot understand why the experience could lead some Japanese Americans to resent the United States.

The third-person limited point of view is particularly appropriate to the novel. It allows Yuki to emerge as the protagonist and allows the reader to develop an intimate relationship with the character. In this sense, the point of view nearly approaches the tone of a first-person narrative. However, the third-person nature of the novel allows the narrator to report many things in a straightforward way that would not be possible with a first-person point of view. Yuki therefore escapes pity from the reader and emerges as a strong-willed, positive and enthusiastic young woman with a future full of promise.

The third-person point of view additionally allows the narrative to take on a broad social significance that would be difficult to achieve with a first-person point of view. A third-person perspective allows the narrative to be more representative of a broad class of people rather than the single person typical with a first-person point of view. Coupled with the careful and exact construction of the Sakane family as a typical Japanese American family, the third-person point of view allows the novel to successfully comment on a historically significant event in United States history while simultaneously making the event personal through characterization.

Setting

The novel is set in three main locations, all of which are vitally important to the narrative construction. The three locations used in the novel are actual historic places. This gives the novel a gritty and realistic tone and also allows the novel to serve as broad social commentary while not restricting its carefully crafted fictional elements. Indeed, a complete understanding of the novel relies on understanding the novel's setting in both history and place, and the novel's primary achievement lies in summarizing the complex setting in an intelligible and accessible way.

The novel opens in a typical neighborhood of Berkeley, California, where the Sakane family has lived for many years in a rented house. This opening setting establishes the Sakane family as a traditional Japanese American family and also allows an easy reference point for readers to engage with the Sakane family's background and value



system. The Sakane family is a traditional family with a home, a car, a garden, furniture, pets and family friends. They are religiously involved, socially conscious, successful, well educated and solidly middle-class. This opening setting serves as the connection point between most readers and the novel's primary characters. As the Sakane family is introduced and characterized, it is immediately obvious that they are characters representative of normal, friendly and accessible people. Within the first chapter, however, this normalcy is shattered as the police arrive and arrest Mr. Sakane. The setting of Berkeley then continues through Chapter 4. Although the setting remains, it takes on an almost surreal tone as the Sakane family is forced to sell all their belongings and pack in preparation for evacuation to an unknown destination for an indeterminate length of time.

The second setting is the Tanforan Assembly Area, a racetrack that has been converted into a prison for thousands of Japanese American families. This transitional setting bridges the narrative space between Berkeley and the Topaz Internment Camp foreshadowed by the novel's title. Tanforan is a terrible place to live. The rooms are converted horse stables and stink of manure. Water is in chronically short supply, and food is bad and scarce. Most supplies are non-existent. The camp is full of confusion and apprehension. Nevertheless, it is near Berkeley and the ordered and understandable life Berkeley represents. This close physical proximity is an interesting contrast to the complete disparity of life in Tanforan. The setting of Tanforan continues through Chapter 10. Just as Tanforan begins to be intelligible to Yuki, she learns that her family will shortly be evacuated again.

The third and final setting is the Topaz Internment Camp in the high desert of Utah. Topaz has been purposely built as a prison camp and features high wire fences with guard towers. Topaz has all of the inconveniences of Tanforan in addition to being high in altitude, hot during the day, cold during the night and choked with huge dust clouds. While Tanforan was at least environmentally similar to Berkeley, Topaz is a complete change and seems alien to many of the camp prisoners. Even though Topaz features terrible living conditions and is surrounded by the stark desert, Yuki and many of her friends find great peace and beauty in the physical location. The setting of Topaz, foreshadowed in the novel's title, continues through the end of the narrative.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in concise, simple sentences with straightforward construction. Events are presented chronologically in a way that is easy to understand. Although the narrative is told from a third-person perspective, the narrative structure is very similar to what one would expect had the novel been narrated from the first-person point of view by the primary character, an eleven-year-old American girl.

Most of the novel's characters are described in only the most general of terms. Thus, for example, Ken Hirai is simply a young American man eager for an education and opportunity, without any peculiar personality traits. This basic characterization allows the novel to successfully function as broad social commentary instead of being limited to



the experiences of only a handful of characters. This precise and careful character construction is one of the novel's greatest technical achievements.

The novel's principle settings are described in much greater detail. The settings refer to actual historic places, and so the details provided are significant and appropriate and give a realistic and convincing tone to the narrative. The characters are subsequently firmly grounded in the well-developed settings in a successful and carefully crafted plot. The easy language and typical construction offer an enjoyable and accessible experience.

Structure

The 149-page novel is divided into seventeen chapters of approximately even length. The novel's primary timeline covers the period of time from December 1941 through the middle of 1943. The narrative describes the journey of a family of Japanese Americans as they are forcibly evacuated from their home in Berkeley, California, to various internment camps ending finally at the Topaz Internment Camp, Utah. The novel is considered to be generally biographical though many events have been fictionalized or modified to present an exciting but authentic story.

The passage of time often jumps between significant events to allow the pace of the novel to remain consistently engaging. The narrative begins at the family's home in Berkeley, California, then moves to the Tanforan Camp in San Francisco, California, and ends at the Topaz Internment Camp, in Utah. The characters, primarily the Sakane family members, go through a range of emotion and reactions.

The chapters are generally named after the primary event described in the chapter. In this way, the chapter titles provide a basic form of foreshadowing of the plot developments presented. Additionally, the title of the novel provides basic foreshadowing of the entire plot development.

Quotes

"This is a repeat of the news bulletin,' a newscaster said harshly, his voice trembling with urgency. 'Japanese planes have attacked Pearl Harbor ... The United States Fleet has been heavily damages ... Fires are raging over the waterfront ...'

"Father put down his chopsticks and listened intently. Mother brushed away a piece of hair that has strayed from her bun and pinned it back into place. A frown swept across her pleasant face and she didn't even attempt to eat her lunch. Only Yuki had a mouthful of chicken and sat chewing silently, looking first at Father and then at Mother, trying to understand what had happened.

"It's a terrible mistake, of course,' Father said at last. 'It must be the work of a fanatic. That is, if it really happened.'

"Mother agreed. 'Of course,' she said, 'It must be a mistake. Why would Japan ever do such a foolish thing?'" (Chapter 1, p. 5)

"Each time a car went by, Yuki hurried to the window to see if Father had come back or if Ken had gotten a ride home from someone. As the afternoon wore on and it began to grow dark, Yuki grew more and more uneasy. She jumped when the telephone rang once more, but this time it was a call for the policemen informing them that they could leave their posts. They soon went off leaving only the FBI man to keep watch." (Chapter 2, p. 13)

"On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order authorizing the Secretary of War and his military commanders to prescribe areas from which any or all persons could be excluded.

"That means the entire West Coast,' Ken said flatly, 'and "all persons" means us - the Japanese.'

"It was strange, Yuki thought, that the United States should be at war with Italy and Germany too, but that it was only the Japanese who were considered so dangerous to the country." (Chapter 3, p. 29)

"On April 21, 1942, the headline in the Berkeley paper read, japs given evacuation orders here. Yuki shivered as she read it. 'I wish they'd stop calling us Japs,' she murmured. But that was the least of her problems now. The army had finally issued the order that said all the Japanese in Berkeley must evacuate their homes. They were to report to the Tanforan Assembly Center by noon on May 1st." (Chapter 4, p. 39)

"It wasn't long before Ken pointed to the grandstand of Tanforan Racetrack looming on the left of the highway. Yuki could see the barbed-wire fence that encircled the entire area and the tall watchtowers that pierced the fence at regular intervals. The buses



turned in toward the racetrack and moved quickly between the armed guards who stood at the gates." (Chapter 5, pp. 46-47)

"The stall was narrow and dark, with two small windows high up on either side of the door. It measured about ten by twenty feet and was empty except for three army cots that lay folded on the floor. There were no mattresses or bedding of any kind. Dust and dirt and woodshavings still littered the linoleum that had been hastily laid over the manure-covered floor, and Ken sniffed at the lingering odor left by the former occupants.

"'Boy,' he said wrinkling his nose, 'There's no mistaking who lived here before us.'

"Yuki looked around the stall feeling as though she'd been handed an empty ice cream cone. 'This is an apartment?' she asked, dismayed.

"'That, my dear child, is what is known as a euphemism,' Jim said to her. 'You'll get used to things like that here.'" (Chapter 6, p. 51)

"By afternoon Yuki began to feel bored. 'Let's go scout around the rest of the camp, Emi,' she suggested to her new friend. 'Let's go see if the other stables are any nicer.'

"They set off quickly, circling the wide track and going in the opposite direction from the grandstand. They discovered that there were dozens of stables like theirs. They were called 'converted buildings,' another euphemism, as Jim would say. And whenever they ran into friends, they discovered that the complaints were the same everywhere. The latrines were dirty and doorless, there wasn't enough toilet paper, the showers couldn't be adjusted properly, and the food was horrible.

"'It's the same all over,' Yuki observed. 'The whole camp is pretty awful.'" (Chapter 7, p. 64)

"When the messenger arrived with a notice telling them that they had visitors, Yuki ran all the way to the grandstand. Visitors were not permitted onto the campgrounds and had to be met during visiting hours in the grandstand hall. The large room was crowded with visitors from outside, but Yuki quickly spotted Mimi's red dress and her long blond hair. Mrs. Nelson stood beside her, laden with packages, and next to her sat Mrs. Jamieson, her flame-colored hair tinted beautifully, holding a large box carefully in her lap." (Chapter 8, p. 69)

"Yuki didn't even bother asking Emi to go with her. She simply ran down the track, squinting at the dust and wind and hurried to the canteen. It was crowded as usual, and Yuki took her place in line, counting to see how many tickets there were in the two-and-a-half dollar script book which was issued to each adult for the month. Mother had had to wait in line for two hours to get her script.

"When Yuki finally got to the counter, the only items left were black and brown shoelaces. 'Just what I wanted,' she said glumly. She had just missed out on the last of the ice cream." (Chapter 9, pp. 77-78)



"What thrilled her most, however, was the sight of San Francisco Bay and the bridge that spanned it. It was growing dark now and Yuki could see the string of lights that seemed to float over the water. The bridge was peaceful and magnificent, untouched by the war and its clamor, sparkling across the bay like a golden jewel. As Yuki looked, she was filled with longing for all that was past. She thought of home and the good times they'd had and of being happy as they drove over the bridge to go to San Francisco. It seemed everyone else was thinking similar thoughts, for the car grew very still as people strained to keep the bridge in sight as long as possible. No one spoke, for there didn't seem to be any words to say what everyone was feeling." (Chapter 10, p. 89)

"'There's forty-two blocks and each block has twelve barracks with a mess hall and a latrine-washroom in the center,' he pointed out. 'When the barracks are all finished and occupied, we'll be the fifth largest city in Utah.'

"'Imagine!' Mother said.

"It sounded impressive, but Yuki thought she had never seen a more dreary place in all her life. There wasn't a single tree or a blade of grass to break the monotony of the sun-bleached desert. It was like the carcass of a chicken stripped clean of any meat and left all dry, brittle bone. The newly constructed road was still soft with churned up dust and they sank into it with each step as though they were plowing through a snow bank." (Chapter 11, pp. 96-97)

"The wind now lifted great masses of sand from the ground and flung it into the air with such fury that Yuki could no longer see the barracks of the nearest block. Pebbles stung at her legs, and her breath came in short gulping gasps. Yuki felt smothered, and her heart began to pound as she felt terror rising inside of her. She wondered if she should turn back, but when she looked, the hospital, too, had vanished behind a thick cloud of dust.

"Yuki ran now with desperation until she finally came to a barrack and could lean against it to catch her breath. Even there, however, she couldn't escape the wind and she stumbled along until she came to the laundry barrack in the center of the block. She could barely open the door, but fear now gave her strength she didn't know she had. The door slammed shut behind her and Yuki found herself in an empty laundry barrack hazy with dust. She sank down on one of the benches against the wall and caught her breath. Outside she could hear the wind still screaming and the sound of objects being thrown against the barrack walls like pieces of driftwood.

"It seemed like the end of the world - at least the end of Yuki's world. As the barrack shuddered and rattled against the wind she pictured herself being flung into the desert and blown far away, never ever to see Mother or Ken or Emi or Father again." (Chapter 12, p. 107)

"...[L]ater, when she saw the small wooden marker in the desert with the clusters of bright paper flowers all around, she almost felt as though Emi's grandfather were standing right there with all of them. He wouldn't have cared much for all the crying, Yuki



thought. And he probably would not have minded too much being left alone in the desert with the wind shifting the sand and sending the flowers fluttering away to get caught in the sage brush. He had grown quite fond of the desert. He said its vastness fascinated him even as the ocean did. Yuki knew that from the times she had walked with him. Yuki looked at Mrs. Kurihara now, her head bowed low with grief, and wished she could tell all this to her, but she didn't know how." (Chapter 14, p. 122)

"Father didn't stop talking from the moment he got back. There was so much to tell about the Prisoner of War Camp where he had been interned. He told about the thirty-below Montana winter with giant icicles that ran from the roof to the ground. He told of the loneliness, even though there were thirty men in each barrack, and he told how they had kept busy with work duty and by forming all sorts of classes. He told them, too, how their mail was censored and how they could receive nothing wrapped in paper for fear that secret messages would be smuggled in." (Chapter 15, p. 127)

"Mr. Toda has who had always been so strong and sure of himself seemed confused and bewildered by everything that had happened since the war broke out. He was torn between two loyalties. He could no longer feel proud to be a Japanese and yet he could not become an American because a law forbade it. He was like a ship cast adrift with no ocean to sail and no safe harbor to turn to." (Chapter 16, pp. 133-134)

"Father seemed excited now at the prospect of leaving. He looked at Yuki and Mother. 'We won't know anyone in Salt Lake City,' he said, 'and I'm not sure what kind of work I can find. Are you willing to go out and try to make a go of things?'

"'Sure,' Yuki answered quickly, even though she was a little disappointed that they weren't going somewhere exciting like New York City. But it was hardly the time to speak of such things. 'Sure, Papa,' she said again.

"Mother nodded too. 'Of course,' she said. 'We'll manage. Everything will be fine as long as we're together.'" (Chapter 17, p. 146)



Topics for Discussion

1. What was special or unusual about Yuki's life in Berkeley?
2. The Sakanes entertain many students from Japan at their home. Does this make them more loyal to Japan than to the U.S.? Why would they entertain so many people from Japan?
3. Mr. Sakane is not an American citizen, and he works for a Japanese company. Is the U.S. government right to be concerned that he might try to aid Japan's war effort? Is the government justified in arresting him and putting him in prison in Montana?
4. Yuki and her family had to give up most of their belongings, even their dog Pepper. They could take only what they could carry with them to Tanforan. If you had to evacuate your home and could take with you only that which you could carry, what would you take? Why?
5. Were you upset when Yuki learned that Pepper had died? Why? In real life, Yoshiko Uchida lost her dog when she was taken to Tanforan. How do you think she felt about losing her dog? Why do you think so?
6. When Japan attacked the U.S., both Italy and Germany declared war on the U.S. During the war, both Italian-Americans and German-Americans were subjected to some hostility from other Americans and were discriminated against, but they were not interned. Why were Japanese-Americans singled out for such harsh treatment?
7. Death appears often in *Journey to Topaz*: Yuki's old way of life dies; Mr. Kurihara's heart seems to die; Pepper dies far from his family; Mr. Kurihara is shot to death. The people at Topaz who die are buried outside the fence, as if only in death can they escape from their imprisonment. Later, others find ways to leave, such as by going to college, but the people of Topaz seem to fear dying so far from their homes. What effects do these different kinds of deaths have on Yuki? How does she mature by coming to understand what these different kinds of death mean? Why should the kinds of deaths the internees endure be any worse than the deaths people outside the camps must endure? Why do they fear dying in Topaz rather than somewhere else?
8. If your neighbors were threatened with being rounded up and taken to concentration camps by the government, what would you do? Would you remain uninvolved, resist the removal of your neighbors, or accept the government's action but offer comfort to your neighbors? Could you do anything more or different than the Sakanes' friends did? Would the race of those taken away make any difference to you? What if the internees were not your friends? What if you disliked them? Is it any of your business what the government does with your neighbors or schoolmates?



9. Some of those who argued against apologizing to the people who were interned during World War II point out that their suffering was not nearly as great as that of other victims of the war.

They noted that the Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, priests, homosexuals, and others who were put into concentration camps by the Germans suffered horrors that were almost beyond description. They were tortured and murdered by the millions. Japan also subjected prisoners to brutal conditions and inhumane biological warfare experiments. Compared to the immense suffering caused by World War II, so the argument has gone, the West Coast Japanese-Americans had it easy. They were housed, fed, educated, and cared for by the government, and they were probably saved from the Americans who saw anyone of Japanese ancestry as a hated enemy. How much validity does this argument have, if any? Should the internees have been grateful that their plights were not worse? How do conditions shape what is just and what is not?

10. *Journey to Topaz* is based on Uchida's real-life experiences. Does this make it a better novel? How does knowing that Uchida was actually interned at Topaz affect how you think about the story?



Essay Topics

Do you think the evacuation of Japanese Americans was legal?

The evacuation described in the novel occurred before many current human-rights laws were enacted. Do you think that makes the evacuation more intelligible?

What possible activities was the United States government trying to prevent by evacuating hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans from the West Coast?

Why were German Americans and Italian Americans not evacuated? Why were Japanese Americans not evacuated from Hawaii?

Japanese Americans who joined the United States Armed Forces were generally not permitted to participate in combat roles in the Pacific Theater. What was the rationale for this decision?

Do you think that the evacuation of Japanese Americans helped or hindered the war effort? What evidence can you think of that supports your opinion?

Would you rather live in Berkeley, California, or Topaz, Utah? Why?

Emi Kurihara suffered from tuberculosis. Why did the author select tuberculosis instead of another disease? Did Emi receive adequate medical care for her disease?

Mr. Kurihara was shot and killed by a guard who claimed to believe Mr. Kurihara was trying to escape from Topaz. Consider Mr. Kurihara's advanced age and his probable physical actions while searching in the dust for Indian arrowheads. In your opinion, was the guard being reasonable when he shot and killed an internee?

Based on what you know about the Sakane family, would Ken be a successful soldier? Would Yuki continue to be a good student? Would Mr. Sakane be able to find gainful employment in Salt Lake City, Utah? Would Mrs. Sakane continue to be a likable and dependable mother and housekeeper?

Topaz was once the fifth-largest city in Utah. What do you think it looks like today?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Uchida's book *Desert Exile* is an autobiography of her experiences in Berkeley, Tanforan, and Topaz during World War II. Compare this nonfiction book with *Journey to Topaz*. How much of the novel is taken from real life? What are the most important events in *Journey to Topaz* that were based on Uchida's personal observations?

2. Why did the U.S. government intern Japanese-Americans? How did it choose who was interned and who was not?

Were there any good reasons for interning Japanese-Americans? How might the government have better responded to the problems and needs of Japanese-Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

3. How many internment camps were there? Where were they? Who was put in them? What was daily life in the camps like? *Journey to Topaz* and *Desert Exile* are good places to start your research, but you should read at least a few other books about the camps in order to be sure that you cover all their most important aspects.

4. In what ways have the internees tried to obtain redress for their suffering? Which of these ways have been the most effective? Give a history of the efforts of not only internees but their supporters to gain official recognition of the injustice done to them. How did the Congress's payment of damages to the internees come about?

5. What is the history of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in the western U.S.? How have they been treated by the government and by society? What have been their contributions to America?

6. During the first half of the twentieth century, severe restrictions were placed on the immigration rights of people from East Asia. What were the immigration laws for these people? Why couldn't people such as Mr. and Mrs. Sakane become American citizens? What were the reasons for enacting such restrictive laws?

7. Have any other minority-group immigrants been treated the way the Japanese have? Which ones and in what ways? Why has the immigration of certain minority groups been of such great concern to Americans during the twentieth century? Are any of these concerns valid in any way? Which ones are invalid? How might Americans take precautions against invalid reasons being used to restrict the lives of immigrants?

8. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed of Japanese-Americans during World War II, has become legendary for its heroism. What is the history of this combat unit? What were its most notable achievements during World War II? Why was it formed in the first place?



9. Christianity plays an important role in the Sakanes' lives. What are the religious faiths practiced by Japanese immigrants to America? How important have churches and temples been to their lives?

Further Study

Adams, Ansel E. *Born Free and Equal: Photographs of the Loyal Japanese at the Manzanar Relocation Center*. New York: U.S. Camera, 1944. Vivid photographs of the people and place.

Christgau, John. "Enemies": World War II Alien Internments. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1985. This book tells about both the Japanese-American internment and the prisons for captured German soldiers.

Commire, Anne, ed. *Something About the Author*. Vol. 53. Detroit: Gale, 1988. An extensive article summarizing Uchida's life and work.

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Sutherland, Zena, and May Hill Arbuthnot. "Yoshiko Uchida." In *Children and Books*, 7th ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1986. A brief evaluation of Uchida's books, focusing primarily on those for younger children.

Takashima, Shizuye. *A Child in Prison Camp*. Toronto: Tundra, 1971. This award-winning novel for young adults provides an account of the internment by Canada of Japanese-Canadians during World War II.

Uchida, Yoshiko. *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982. Told in a matter-of-fact style, this is a moving account of the experiences of Uchida's family during World War II. It helps to fill in the gaps in *Journey to Topaz* and provides an intimate view of life at Tanforan and Topaz.

"Yoshiko Uchida." New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1986. A pamphlet supplied by Yoshiko Uchida that provides an account of her life and includes some of her views about her own work.

Related Titles

Uchida's books are about Japanese culture and about the experiences of Japanese-Americans. Her sequel to *Journey to Topaz*, *Journey Home*, continues the emphasis on the effects of World War II on everyday people. It is a memorable account of what happens after leaving Topaz. Those who enjoyed reading *Journey to Topaz* will also enjoy this book, which features sparkling imagery and plain and forceful language.



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