Nisei Daughter Study Guide

Nisei Daughter by Monica Sone

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Contents

Nisei Daughter Study Guide.......1

Contents.......2

Introduction.......3

Author Biography.......4

Plot Summary.......5

Themes.......7

Historical Context.......10

Critical Overview.......12

Criticism.......13

Critical Essay #1.......14

Bibliography.......18

Copyright Information.......19

Introduction

Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* is a memoir about growing up as a Japanese American in the United States prior to and during World War II. The author, born on American soil to Japanese immigrant parents, is a *Nisei*, or second-generation Japanese American. Herparents, as first-generation Japanese immigrants to America, are considered *Issei*. Being born in the United States meant that a Nisei was an American citizen, but strict immigration laws prevented any Issei from becoming citizens until long after World War II.

Nisei found themselves torn between their Japanese ancestry and their thoroughly American lifestyles. They often had to serve as cultural or linguistic interpreters for their Issei parents, many of whom had not fully mastered the English language or American customs. Nisei were often criticized by Japanese nationals for abandoning their roots, yet they were unable to fully assimilate into the American mainstream thanks to widespread fear and prejudice toward the Japanese during the first half of the twentieth century.

As World War II approached, both generations of Japanese Americans faced especially harsh persecution along the West Coast, where most had established roots. Sone recounts her experiences as a young Nisei in Seattle in the years leading up to and shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. She chronicles the virtual loss of her rights as an American citizen and her family's forced relocation to an internment camp in Idaho. Nevertheless, *Nisei Daughter* is hardly a bitter or accusatory book. Instead, it focuses on one family's strength in the face of adversity, and their willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the country they love.

Although readers often focus on the book's depiction of Japanese relocation and internment during World War II, Sone was also one of the first authors to offer a detailed view of day-to-day life as a Japanese American in the 1920s and 1930s. It is through these mundane interactions that Sone illustrates the process of assimilation, wherein members of a minority group adopt the behaviors and attitudes of the majority population among which they live. In *Nisei Daughter*, the issue of assimilation becomes especially complex. While most Nisei make great efforts to assimilate, a significant segment of the American population seems to resist, and even thwart, these efforts.

While *Nisei Daughter* was not particularly successful when it was originally published in 1953, renewed interest in the matter of Japanese internment resulted in a 1979 reprint edition through the University of Washington Press. This edition has spawned the book's widespread popularity, and it is often assigned as required reading in many classes dealing with multicultural issues in America.

Author Biography

Monica Sone

Monica Sone was born Kazuko Monica Itoi in Seattle in 1919. Like many Nisei, her name was a bridge between her Japanese past and her American future: *Kazuko* is Japanese for "peace," while Monica is the name of St. Augustine's mother. She spent her childhood helping her parents run the Carrollton Hotel on Seattle's Skid Row. In 1942, she and her entire family were forced into a Japanese internment camp in Puyallup, Washington. The family was eventually relocated, along with hundreds of others, to Camp Minidoka in Idaho, where many Japanese Americans remained until 1946.

Sone was released from internment in 1943 to work in Chicago as a dental assistant. She eventually returned to college (which she had begun before internment) in Indiana, studying clinical psychology. She married another Nisei, Geary Sone, and the two eventually settled in Canton, Ohio. As of 2006, *Nisei Daughter* remains the only book Sone has written.

Plot Summary

Although Mrs. Spring Fragrance has lived in Seattle for only five years, her husband says "There are no more American words for her learning." Having quickly become skilled at the English language and American customs, Mrs. Spring Fragrance has become friendly with a young woman who lives next door, Laura, who is the eighteen-year-old daughter of Chinese immigrants. Laura's parents, the Chin Yuens, have decided to adhere to Chinese tradition and have their daughter marry a man she has never met. Laura confides in Mrs. Spring Fragrance that she does not want to marry the young man, the son of a Chinese schoolteacher, because she is in love with Kai Tzu, an American who likes to play baseball and sing popular songs. Giving advice to a young lovelorn friend, Mrs. Spring Fragrance quotes Tennyson: "'Tis better to have loved and lost. Than never to have loved at all."

Puzzled upon overhearing these lines of poetry, Mr. Spring Fragrance, who has been eavesdropping on his wife, seeks an interpretation from his white American neighbor, a student at the University of Washington. Mr. Spring Fragrance is even more confused at the student's careless interpretation and declares angrily: "The truth of the teaching! . . . There is no truth in it whatever. It is disobedient to reason. Is it not better to have what you do not love than to love what you do not have?" Mr. Spring Fragrance decides that American logic is plagued with "unwisdom."

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Spring Fragrance travels to San Francisco to visit her cousin. While there, she arranges for Laura's finance, the man she does not want to marry, to meet Ah Oi, who is known as the most beautiful girl in San Francisco. Just as Mrs. Spring Fragrance has intended, Ah Oi and the schoolmaster's son fall in love and get married. Mrs. Spring Fragrance writes an exuberant letter to Laura telling her the good news. Now, Laura is free to marry her true love, Kai Tzu. She also writes a letter to Mr. Spring Fragrance, ingratiatingly asking him if she can stay in San Francisco another week so she can make fudge for a festival. She also adds a few details about a lecture she has attended, called "America - the Protector of China!" Sarcastically, she asks her husband to forget that the barber charges him a dollar for what he charges an American only fifteen cents, and for the government detaining his brother rather than letting him stay with the Spring Fragrances; "he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty."

Still pondering the "unwise" poetry, Mr. Spring Fragrance begins to worry when his wife extends her stay in San Francisco. He has received a letter from a friend who writes that he has seen Mrs. Spring Fragrance many times together with Man You, the schoolmaster's handsome son. Unaware that his wife is matchmaking Man You and Ah Oi on Laura's behalf, Mr. Spring Fragrance suspects that his wife is having an affair. He questions the university student again about the mysterious lines of poetry, and comes to the conclusion that Mrs. Spring Fragrance has gone to San Francisco to find the "love that she has lost." Angrily, he plans to invite some men over for a party to get his mind off his seemingly unfaithful wife.

When Mrs. Spring Fragrance at last returns, her husband is rude and gruff. He barely speaks to her and pretends that he must rush off to take care of business. Mrs. Spring Fragrance is surprised at his behavior, but hides her hurt emotions. Laura, having seen Mrs. Spring Fragrance arrive, runs over to hug and thank her for her efforts on her behalf. While the women are talking, Mr. Spring Fragrance overhears their conversation and realizes that he has been mistaken about his wife's infidelity. After Laura leaves, Mr. Spring Fragrance sheepishly tells his wife that he is very happy about Laura and Kai Tzu. Surprised at her usually business-minded husband's interest in romance, Mrs. Spring Fragrance happily declares: "You must have been reading my American poetry books!" At this remark, Mr. Spring Fragrance exclaims: "American poetry is detestable, abhorrable!" Confused, Mrs. Spring Fragrance asks why he has formed a hatred for American poetry, but he only answers by giving her as an anniversary present a beautiful jade pendant that she once admired in a jewelry store window.

Themes

Segregation

Segregation, or the separation of people based on their ethnicity, race, or culture, is at the heart of *Nisei Daughter*. The internment camps created by the War Department are designed to separate Japanese Americans from their non-Japanese counterparts. The interned Japanese are forced to leave the communities they know well, and are taken to areas far removed from other human activity.

When a group of people is segregated from the larger society, it generally does not receive access to the same quality of amenities or services as the rest of the population. In *Nisei Daughter*, each family of internees is required to live in a single room within larger barracks, devoid of insulation or plumbing. Although the internees staff their own schools and medical facilities within the camp, they are routinely denied basic supplies like lumber and tools. For instance, when Henry's fiancée wants to purchase a dress for their upcoming wedding, she must get special permission to leave the camp and visit a nearby town. In these ways, the camps more closely resemble prisons than communities. Even in the face of such treatment, the internees continue life as well as they can manage. Early into the internment, Kazuko's father holds an especially optimistic view of the situation when he notes, "The government gave me the first vacation of my life and no one's going to interfere with it."

Prejudice

Prejudice toward Japanese Americans appears throughout *Nisei Daughter*. In chapter II, when Mr. Itoi refuses to refund a hotel guest's money after he uses a room for most of the day, the man tells Mr. Itoi that he is a lawyer and will have Mr. Itoi arrested. He assumes that a Japanese immigrant like Mr. Itoi does not know American laws; however, Mr. Itoi—once a law student in Japan—reveals that he is knowledgeable and will not be fooled.

Later, when tensions grow between Japan and the United States, white Americans routinely eye fellow citizen Kazuko with suspicion simply because of her appearance. She observes, "I felt their resentment in a hundred ways—the way a saleswoman in a large department store never saw me waiting at the counter." Before they have even met her, strangers judge her to be in league with the enemy.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, FBI agents raid the home of another Japanese American, Mrs. Matsui. When they cannot find her husband, they assume she is hiding him because he is a spy. After scouring the place, the agents discover that Mr. Matsui had died years before. This sort of widespread prejudice even prompts Chinese Americans to begin wearing badges identifying themselves as Chinese so they will not be mistaken for Japanese.

Nationalism

Nationalism, or devotion to one's own country above all others, is an important theme throughout *Nisei Daughter*. It is a source of pride, a source of resentment, and a source of conflict.

The Itoi children, even before they are aware of their Japanese ancestry, are proud to be American. "I had always thought I was a Yankee," Kazuko notes of her childhood. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, most Japanese Americans cooperate fully with the government in spite of their persecution, believing that their sacrifice will contribute to the war effort and help the country they love achieve victory. However, after being placed in internment camps, some Japanese Americans become understandably resentful. When a War Department representative visits the Minidoka camp and asks for volunteers to fight in a Japanese combat unit, the reaction is initially negative. As one young man puts it, "First they change my army status … because of my ancestry, run me out of town, and now they want me to volunteer for a suicide squad so I could get killed for this damn democracy." Still, many young men eager to prove their loyalty to the United States—including Kazuko's brother Henry—volunteer for the unit.

Misguided nationalism is also undoubtedly one factor motivating the white Americans who call for the internment of Japanese along the West Coast. They believe that the presence of these immigrants from the land of the enemy poses a direct threat to national security, though the author notes that "there had not been a single case of sabotage committed by a Japanese living in Hawaii or on the Mainland during the Pearl Harbor attack or after."

Nationalism, of course, is not limited to the United States; it also leads to conflict when the Itoi family visits Japan. Native Japanese children, convinced that the Japanese Americans have forsaken their loyalty to Japan, criticize the visitors, vandalize the home where they stay, and ultimately taunt Kazuko and her brother Henry into a fight.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process by which a minority population integrates itself into the majority population around it. This can mean adopting new habits of social interaction, changing one's diet, and learning another language. In *Nisei Daughter*, Mr. and Mrs. Itoi embrace all of these changes to some degree. They dress like typical Americans, and in their pantry, rice and soy sauce stand "next to the ivory-painted canisters of flour, sugar, tea and coffee." They use both chopsticks and traditional western tableware.

The Itoi children, having been born in America, assimilate far more quickly and fully than their parents could ever hope to do. On one New Year's Eve, for example, Mrs. Itoi considers making the traditional Japanese holiday meal of buckwheat noodles. The family rejects this idea, and they eat apple pie instead. When Mr. and Mrs. Itoi tell Henry and Kazuko that they will attend Japanese school after regular school each day, Kazuko

protests; she does not want to learn about being Japanese because she sees herself as American.

Since the Nisei children have already thoroughly assimilated into American culture, they are shocked by other Americans who view them as foreigners. Though they have done everything possible to fit in, their physical features betray their ancestry to those who seek to exclude them. As S. Frank Miyamoto writes in his introduction to *Nisei Daughter*, "Thus a Nisei was American, but not truly a part of American society. A Nisei was certainly not Japanese, but Japanese influences seeped into aspects of his character and behavior." They want nothing more than to be seen as American, yet even their own government, at least during World War II, takes an active role in preventing that assimilation.

Historical Context

Japanese Immigrants in America

In 1854, the Treaty of Kanagawa, which allowed for trade with the United States, ended Japan's two hundred years of relative seclusion from foreign trading partners. Within a few decades, many Japanese had relocated to Washington, Oregon, and California to work for railroad companies and other booming industries. This influx became even greater after the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which prohibited Chinese people from entering the United States. Until then, the Chinese had played an important part in the development of many industries along the West Coast.

By 1907, paralleling events with Chinese immigrants decades earlier, West Coast landowners and businessmen called for a halt on all Japanese immigration to the United States. The American and Japanese governments settled on an informal agreement, and Japan stopped issuing passports for new laborers. However, Japanese "picture brides" were still allowed to travel to America to meet their pre-arranged husbands. In 1913, Japanese people were banned from owning land in California after white farmers feared they might be driven out of business. In 1924, all immigration from Japan was officially halted. This ban remained in place until the 1950s.

Japanese and other Asian immigrants were summarily denied the right to citizenship since they did not meet the naturalization requirement of being "free white persons." However, the children of Japanese immigrants born on American soil were automatically recognized as U.S. citizens.

In recent decades, Japanese immigration has fallen well below past levels, with other Asian nationalities appearing in much larger numbers. Although Japanese Americans can be found across the United States—primarily due to the West Coast exodus caused by internment during World War II—the largest established communities are still found in Hawaii, California, Oregon, and Washington.

World War Ii and the Internment of Japanese Americans

On December 7, 1941, when Japanese bombers attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United States was home to over one hundred thousand Japanese Americans. The majority of these were full American citizens, born in the United States. (The rest, despite living in the United States for many years, were prohibited by law from becoming citizens.) American military leaders feared that spies operating among them—citizens or not—would cripple their efforts to wage war against Japan.

Despite the fact that his own State Department officials reported no threat from Japanese people on the West Coast, President Franklin Roosevelt was convinced to issue Executive Order 9066. This order allowed the War Department to remove anyone, of any ethnic makeup, from "exclusion zones" that were deemed to be of military significance. The War Department then declared all of California, most of Oregon and Washington, and part of Arizona as an exclusion zone and announced that anyone of Japanese ancestry within the region would be forced to relocate. Hawaii was noticeably absent from the relocation, despite the fact that one-third of its population was Japanese. Some historians claim this is because removing the Japanese from this territory would have been economically devastating to the region.

These Japanese Americans were required to rid themselves of their assets—homes, businesses, and other valuable property—before reporting to their local relocation center. In many cases, the bank assets of Japanese nationals were frozen even before relocation. Internees were frequently held in temporary barracks until more permanent camps were finished in Idaho, Utah, Colorado, California, and other states. The camps offered bare-bones barracks with no insulation or personal plumbing and no appliances or furniture beyond a single wood burning stove in each dwelling. Weather at the camps ranged from extreme heat during the summer to extreme cold during the winter. Most of the internees, having spent their entire lives in temperate West Coast regions, were ill equipped for such conditions. The camps wsurrounded by wire fences monitored by armed guards, and contraband materials such as tools were routinely seized from internees.

By 1943, some college-age Nisei internees were allowed to leave the camps if they could provide proof of an employment offer or acceptance to a college outside the exclusion zone. Several hundred Nisei men volunteered for U.S. military service alongside Japanese volunteers from Hawaii; their unit, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, became one of the most decorated combat units in American military history. The majority of internees were allowed to return to the West Coast in 1945. Many thousands of these, left with nothing to return to on the West Coast, started new lives in areas throughout the rest of the United States.

The legality of creating an "exclusion zone" (and the subsequent internment camps) was challenged in the 1944 Supreme Court case *Korematsu v. United States*. The court ruled in favor of the government, pointing out that extreme measures were sometimes necessary in times of war. The case was appealed in 1983, and the ruling was finally reversed. In addition, several U.S. presidents, beginning with Gerald Ford in 1976, acknowledged that the internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II was unnecessary and wrong. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill that allowed for compensation in the amount of twenty thousand dollars for each living internee who filed a claim. In 1992, President George H. W. Bush approved additional reparation funds and issued a formal apology to all internees.

Several of the former internment camp sites, including the Minidoka camp at which the Itoi family was held, have been marked by historical monuments that aim to educate Americans about this often-overlooked event in their history.

Critical Overview

At the time of its initial publication in 1953, *Nisei Daughter* was one of the only notable memoirs written from a Japanese American perspective. Critics were generally favorable in their discussion of the book. A reviewer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, quoted on the cover of the reprint edition, enthuses "The deepest impression this unaffected, honest little story made on me was one of smiling courage." In "American Uses of Japanese American Memory: How Internment Narratives are 'Put into Discourse,' " Brian Lain quotes Georgianne Sampson's review for the *New York Herald Tribune*, which calls the book "warmly affecting and entertaining," and notes that it seems to be "composed more with love than with protest."

Still, the book is not without its faults. A reviewer for *Newsweek* writes that "the book has an unfinished air" and suggests that "it does not do justice to the Japanese or to the Americans" (quoted in Lain). Whatever the reason, sales of the book during its first printing were modest, and the book was quickly forgotten. It was out of print for over twenty-five years before renewed interest in the Japanese American internment brought it back to the public's attention in the late 1970s. The 1979 reprint was issued by the University of Washington Press, and has remained steadily popular ever since. On the *Nisei Daughter* webpage on the University of Washington Press website, Sone is noted as writing with "charm, humor, and deep understanding." S. Frank Miyamoto, who wrote the introduction to that edition, calls *Nisei Daughter* a "lively, ingenuous, and charming book." *Kliatt Young Adult Paperback Book Guide* calls the book "ideal … for young adults," and rates it as "highly recommended" (quoted in Lain). Still, some modern readers have expressed the opinion that the book deals too gently with the issue of Japanese American relocation and internment.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, American popular culture writer Wilson examines Sone's depiction of white Americans in Nisei Daughter *and argues that their overly positive portrayal serves to weaken the impact of the internment tragedy in the mind of the reader*.

There are precious few literary accounts of the tragedy that befell Japanese Americans at the hands of their own government during World War II. Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* is certainly one of the best-regarded, despite the fact that only about one-fifth of the rather slim book covers the author's own experiences in internment camps in Washington and Idaho. Those looking for a hard-hitting account of this appalling, government-sanctioned impri-sonment may be left unsatisfied for another reason as well: the author's depiction of white Americans—especially during wartime—is surprisingly gentle. In fact, the relative absence of animosity expressed by whites in the book may lead someone without an understanding of Japanese culture to regard it with a certain amount of suspicion.

The negative portrayals of white Americans' behavior toward those of Japanese ancestry in the book are so few, in fact, that each can be mentioned here in some detail. Almost all take place before World War II, and most are qualified by the author in some way. The first occurs when a guest at the Itoi family's hotel demands a refund for his room, even though he has stayed there most of the day. The man, who is referred to as a "grizzly bear," calls the author's father a "damn Jap," and threatens to turn him in to the police. However, the man gets his comeuppance at the hands of the hotel's bouncer, who removes him from the premises by tossing him down a long stairway.

The next incident involves two police officers looking to extort money from the author's father. They interrupt the family dinner and accuse Mr. Itoi of selling bootleg alcohol. The police call him "Shorty" and "Charlie" (likely a reference to Charlie Chan, though the term was later used for different reasons to refer to Vietnamese people during the Vietnam War), and take him to jail when he refuses to pay a fifty-dollar bribe. Still, the author makes it clear that this incident had little to do with ancestry, and was a common occurrence on Skid Row where the family lived; just before this, she describes how she and her siblings would often see police shaking down drunks—white drunks, the reader can assume—for whatever pocket money they had.

The most dramatic and sweeping negative portrayal of white Americans occurs when the family attempts to rent a summer beach house so the author's young sister, Sumiko, can get fresh air and sunshine to improve her asthma. The family does not know that the people in the area in which they are looking are not hospitable to Japanese people. They are repeatedly told that empty houses are no longer for rent, or scared off with quotes of exorbitant rates. One woman says flatly, "I'm sorry, but we don't want Japs around here." Aside from this one instance, though, the author notes, "They all turned us down politely." Even when the white proprietors behave despicably, the author feels the need to soften the blow by complimenting their method of delivery.

In the months leading up to World War II, with relations between Japanese and whites undoubtedly tense, there are only a few brief incidents mentioned: two uses of the word "Jap," a couple of instances of service denied to the author at a store and a lodge, and the occasional cold stare from a white stranger. Even after Pearl Harbor, as government officials are arresting and holding Japanese Americans without just cause, the author relates the rather tame story of a Japanese woman whose husband had died years before: government officials show up and ransack her shop looking for the husband, but when they realize he is dead, they are apologetic. After Executive Order 9066 is issued, the author quotes some generic racist statements without attribution, but notes that the family "had dismissed these remarks as just hot blasts of air from an overheated patriot."

By contrast, the positive portrayals of white Americans are abundant throughout the book, most particularly when the author is finally able to leave the internment camp during the war. Furthermore, these are invariably lengthier and more detailed passages than the negative portrayals. All of the white men who work for the author's father at the hotel seem particularly tolerant; during the family's internment, one of them visits, bringing fresh fruits, candies, and expressions of sorrow at their confinement. The many people who help Sone gain freedom from the camp are described in loving detail. Here is a description of a man whose family boards the author after her release:

Dr. Richardson came out of his study, beaming. He was a great oak of a man, tall and solidly built. The rugged cut of his features, his deep vibrant voice, everything about him revealed a personality of strong purpose and will.

The author even counterbalances some of her scant negative portrayals of West Coast whites with more glowing depictions of white Americans in the Midwest. The following scene, set in Chicago, serves as an effective rejoinder to the time she was ignored at a department store counter in Washington:

Sometimes there were decided advantages to having an Oriental face, especially when shopping. When I stepped into a department store or market, a clerk would spot me instantly and rush up to wait on me, burning with curiosity. The clerks were invariably sociable and pleasant and they complimented me on my English.

Interestingly, the author reports this as a positive experience, but makes no mention of how the "compliment" on her English is based on the prejudiced—and incorrect—assumption that she is not a native speaker.

In a memoir, of course—especially one written while the characters within it are very much alive—it is not uncommon to focus more on those who have made a positive impact on one's life. It is also possible that the author subscribes to the simple philosophy, "If you don't have anything nice to say, then don't say anything at all." Then again, most who subscribe to such a philosophy have probably not spent years unjustly imprisoned.

This oddly gentle treatment of white Americans reaches a climax at the end of the book, when the author returns to the Minidoka internment camp to visit her parents for Christmas. Just before she leaves, the three discuss the situation of the Japanese in America. Her mother says, "When the war came and we were all evacuated, Papa and I were heartsick. We felt terribly bad about being your Japanese parents." To someone without an understanding of the Japanese culture, this statement may seem ridiculous. The parents are blaming *themselves* for being Japanese? Equally frustrating are the author's own thoughts about her parents as she leaves the internment camp: "I wondered when they would be able to leave their no-man's land, pass through the legal barrier and become naturalized citizens. Then I thought, in America, many things are possible." Indeed, in America, many things are possible; unfortunately, some of those things are reprehensible, and should not be quite so easily excused lest they be forgotten.

It is worth mentioning that the most violent race-based conflict in the book does not involve white people at all; it happens when the author and her family visit their relatives in Japan. The local Japanese youths brazenly slur the visitors with cries of "America-jin! America-jin!" and throw rocks through the paper walls of the house where they stay. One morning, the author and her older brother are confronted by several of the local boys, and a fight ensues.

Why, one might ask, do white Americans get off so easily in Sone's memoir? Perhaps this can all be explained by the distinctly Japanese tendency toward extreme diplomacy that sometimes seems, to an outsider, to border on self-punishment. For example, at a potluck picnic, the author relates a plea her mother makes to another Japanese woman: "I'd like to have you try some fried chicken. I did a very poor job on it, but please take pieces to your family."

Perhaps it has something to do with the book's original 1953 publication date. This was a time of nationalist fervor, when the United States was battling a new Asian foe (the Communist Chinese, via North Korea) and Senator Joe McCarthy was riding high on his quest to ferret out "un-American" activities. Japanese Americans were undoubtedly eager to reaffirm their patriotism, especially in light of their home country's eagerness to revoke their most basic rights only a decade before. Such a desire could at least explain the insistent flag-waving found at the end of the book.

Then again, it could simply be that the author's individual encounters with white Americans were not representative of the greater, abstract national consciousness. This is a common occurrence in matters of race: those in the ethnic or racial majority often consider themselves "good people," and treat individual members of a minority as equals. At the same time, they allow terrible things to happen to the minority group as a whole, as if it were somehow beyond their control. This may be the most insidious kind of racism, because it is so hard to pin to a slab and dissect.

Sone should not be criticized for writing a memoir that has become, by virtue of its uniqueness more than its quality, required reading for those curious about the Japanese internment tragedy. However, impressionable readers might assume that her feel-good

account is the full story; at the very least, instructors who include the book as part of their curricula should also demand a more critical and detailed examination of these events than this book can ever provide.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's"For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently

studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of “classic” novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man–the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“Night.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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