Picture Bride Study Guide

Picture Bride by Yoshiko Uchida

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Picture Bride, first published in 1987, is the story of a young Japanese woman who leaves, what she believes to be, the confines of her small village and heads for the broader horizons of the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century. Waiting for her is her future husband, a man whom she has never met. She has seen a picture of him and has heard stories of his prosperity, but she knows little else about the man, who has also only seen a photograph of her. Theirs is a typical story of the times in which Japanese bachelors ventured forth to the West Coast of the United States, hoping to find wealth, to buy a house, and then to send for a woman to marry. In most cases, both the men and the women were not fully prepared for the challenges of moving away from the security and comfort of their native country. Many of these new immigrants were caught off guard by the cultural and racist antagonism waiting for them in their adopted country, as well as the awkwardness of marrying a complete stranger.

Picture Bride begins as the protagonist, Hana Omiya, is sailing toward the United States to meet for the first time a man called Taro Takeda. Hana's heart and mind are afire with imagined possibilities. Unfortunately, by the end of the story, many of Hana's and Taro's dreams are unrealized. They have watched friends die. Others have given up and returned to their native land. When World War II breaks out, Hana and Taro are detained in prison camps, their material possessions reduced to the contents of four suitcases. This is all they can show for their thirty years of hard work. They are mistrusted by non-Japanese people, their neighbors, employers, and government leaders. How will they find the strength and courage to begin again?

Although a prolific writer, Yoshiko Uchida wrote only one novel for adult readers, *Picture Bride*. The work was reprinted many times over the years. Despite the traumatic events presented in this novel, the story ends on a hopeful note, encouraging readers to cheer for the protagonist's seemingly endless supply of courage.

Author Biography

For a long time, Yoshiko Uchida was the only author who focused on the Japanese-American experience. She was a prolific writer of mostly juvenile works who won many awards.

Uchida was born in 1921 in Alameda, California, the daughter of Japanese immigrants. She and her sister, Keiko, lived relatively comfortable lives because their father was one of the few Japanese immigrants who held a secure job. Uchida's early life included writing, which she began at the age of ten. After graduating from high school at the age of sixteen, Uchida attended the University of California at Berkeley. She was in college when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. The internment that Uchida writes about in her novel *Picture Bride* is based on personal experience, as she and her family were interned for three years in these prison camps, first in California at the Tanforan Racetrack and later at Topaz, in the Utah desert. Uchida was released in 1943 from Topaz so she could attend Smith College, where she eventually earned a master's degree in education.

After college, Uchida taught elementary school for awhile, then she took on a variety of clerical positions and began to spend more and more of her time writing. At first she wrote Japanese folktales, and in 1955, she won the Children's Spring Book Festival Award for her collection *The Magic Listening Cap*. In 1972, she earned a notable book citation from the American Library Association for *Journey to Topaz*, Uchida's first account in fiction of the Japanese-American internment camp experience. In 1983, the *School Library Journal* and the New York Public Library named Uchida's children's book *The Best Bad Thing* the best book of the year. Awards were presented in 1985 for another of Uchida's children's stories *The Happiest Ending* by the Bay Area Book Reviewers, the Child Study Association, and the San Mateo and San Francisco Reading Associations. In 1988, the Japanese American Citizens League honored Uchida with an award for her life's achievements.

In her lifetime, Uchida published over thirty books, most of them written for children. She died in 1992 in California.

Plot Summary

Chapters 1–9

Twenty-one-year-old Hana Omiya, the protagonist of Uchida's *Picture Bride*, is on the ship that is taking her from Japan to the California coast as this story begins. It is some time in November of 1917, and Hana has decided to leave her village of Oka for a new life in the United States. She is heading toward Taro Takeda, whom she has promised to marry although she has never met him. Taro lives in Oakland. Their marriage has been arranged through Taro's uncle and Hana's parents. Hana encouraged this union so she might escape the drudgeries of becoming a Japanese farmer's wife. Taro is ten years older than Hana and allegedly the owner of a thriving business.

When Hana first hears of Taro Takeda, she imagines that a life as his wife might be less confining than her prospects in an arranged marriage in her own small village. So she decides to take advantage of this unknown man's need for a wife. She ventures out alone for the first time in her life and endures the long ocean journey. As she spends the cold days on the ship, she fantasizes about her future life as the wife of a merchant. She is hopeful that her life will be leisurely, with simple luxuries. At the end of the trip, she is eager to begin her new life.

Waiting for her is Taro Takeda, the first of many disappointments that diminish Hana's dreams. Taro is much older than he appears in the picture he sent her, and Hana begins to wonder, upon meeting him, if she has made a mistake. Taro takes Hana to his friends, Kiku and Henry Toda. Hana will stay with the Todas until the wedding. Kiku is also a picture bride and completely understands the challenges that lay ahead for Hana.

With Kiku Hana begins to realize how much she must change in order to fit into the American culture. Hana's clothes are all wrong, she notices. She has nothing but kimonos to wear. Even her shoes must be changed. Kiku helps Hana make these fashion transitions by offering her some of her clothing. Kiku's warm personality makes Hana feel more relaxed. Hana also relishes the idea of privacy, when Kiku offers Hana a separate bedroom to use. It is the first time that Hana has ever slept alone. Kiku explains that Americans consider privacy a necessity, which stands in stark contrast to the overall communal atmosphere of Japanese life.

On the following Sunday, Taro takes Hana to his church. Taro is a Christian and very much involved in the Japanese church they attend. Reverend Okada is the head of this church and a friend of Taro's. During the sermon, Reverend Okada mentions the challenges the Japanese congregation must face in this new land, a place that is not always welcoming to Japanese faces. Hana is surprised to hear this. After the service, Taro introduces Hana to some of his other friends, including Dr. Sojiro Kaneda and Kiyoshi Yamaka, a man close to Hana's age who shows immediate interest in Hana. Hana is flattered by Kiyoshi's attention and finds that she too is attracted to him.

After lunch, Kiyoshi drives Hana and Taro to Taro's shop. Hana is shocked by the shabbiness of the store, another one of her disappointments. After eating dinner with the Todas, Hana exposes her disappointment to Kiku. Kiku tells Hana not to build her dreams so big. They are living in a country that does not trust or like them, Kiku tells Hana. She then reminds Hana that she has come to make Taro happy and that Hana should make the best of it. Kiku worries about Hana and also notices the attraction between Hana and Kiyoshi. Kiku works to make Hana's wedding beautiful and to hurry its occurrence. The wedding is scheduled to take place in two weeks.

Hana reluctantly adjusts to married life. She also becomes active in Taro's business, giving it the so-called woman's touch, which means that she cleans and organizes the place. She also learns to deal with customers as Taro prepares her to take care of the store while he is away on business. Before he leaves for a trip to the countryside with Dr. Kaneda and Reverend Okada, Taro asks Kiyoshi to stop by the shop to check on Hana while he is gone. Hana and Kiyoshi's relationship blossoms during the visit. They are unafraid of showing interest in each other. Hana even cries and admits that she wishes she and Kiyoshi had met under different circumstances. "If only we had met in Japan," Hana laments. They agree that they cannot allow the relationship to develop into a sexual one, but they will enjoy one another's friendship. Hana admits that Kiyoshi makes her feel happy and alive for the first time since she has come to the States. When she tells Kiyoshi that she wants him to be her friend for as long as she lives, she realizes that "for that brief moment, Taro did not even seem to exist."

On New Year's Day of 1918, Hana prepares a Japanese feast. She dresses in her kimono and is complimented by her guests for her cooking as well as for her looks. During the meal, Kiyoshi touches his hand to her thigh. Henry Toda notices the flirtation between Kiyoshi and Hana and remarks on it. Later, after the guests are gone, Taro reminds Hana that she is married to him and must pay special attention only to him. That night, he tells Hana that he wants a child.

A few weeks later, Taro again leaves Oakland with Dr. Kaneda and the minister to visit Japanese farmers and to take them needed merchandise. While Taro is gone, Kiyoshi visits with Hana, who invites him up to her apartment for lunch. Kiyoshi kisses Hana, and she almost succumbs to her passion but finally tells Kiyoshi that they cannot do this to Taro. When Taro returns, a customer comments on the fact that the store was closed at noon while Taro was away. Taro suspects the worst of Hana and Kiyoshi, despite Hana's denial. By autumn of that year, Hana is pregnant by Taro. She hopes the baby is a boy, a gift to Taro to make up for Hana's lack of love for her husband.

The great influenza epidemic has infected the city. Because Hana is pregnant, she cannot join other church members who are caring for the sick. But when she hears that Kiyoshi has caught the flu, she rushes to the clinic to see him. The next day, Dr. Kaneda tells Hana that Kiyoshi has died. A few days later, Hana comes down with the flu. In her weakness, she loses the baby.

Chapters 10–17

It is now 1920, and Hana and Taro have had a baby girl, Mary, who is six months old. Taro has been looking for a better place for them to live and raise a child and brings the news that he has found a house for them to rent. The narrator declares that Hana has become familiar with the racial prejudice against Japanese people, and although she does not understand why this hatred exists, she asks Taro to confirm that the people in the neighborhood he has chosen will accept them. He assures her, even though he is not certain.

Shortly after Hana and Taro move into their new home, four men appear at their door, and they suggest that Hana and Taro are not welcomed in the neighborhood. Taro stands up to the men, and Hana feels proud of her husband, realizing what a good man he is.

Kiku shows up, surprising Hana with the news that Henry is planning on moving to the country to become a farmer. Kiku is distressed. She does not think of herself as a country woman and is not looking forward to the prospects of all the hard work that a farm would require. But Henry has lost his job, and he is attracted to the idea of being his own boss. Kiku admits that she has decided to go with her husband and to try to make a good life with him. Hana is sad to see Kiku leave.

After Kiku leaves, Hana becomes more involved in Taro's church. She becomes the treasurer of the Women's Society. One day, the superintendent of the Sunday school comes to her and asks for a loan. Believing that the loan will go to pay for the Sunday school, Hana lends him the money without question. Later, she learns that the superintendent has taken his wife and gone back to Japan, using the money to pay for their tickets. Kenji Nishima, a young seminary student and assistant to the superintendent, takes full responsibility for this theft and promises to donate his personal savings to repay the loan. Hana also wants to help, so she calls Kiku's old employer, Mrs. Ellen Davis, to ask for a job as a cleaning woman. Ellen is the wife of a surgeon, who has also lost a son. She is very nice to Hana and appreciates Hana's work.

Taro hears that Kenji Nishima is not doing very well. He suggests that Hana make Kenji some good Japanese food and take it to Kenji's dormitory. When Hana arrives, she discovers that Kenji is missing. Hana and the minister's wife find Kenji hiding in the attic. Hana later suggests to Taro that they take Kenji into their home and help nourish him both physically and psychologically. Kenji is overwhelmed with guilt about his former boss who stole money from the church, and he is homesick, lonely, and exhausted from school work and church responsibilities. Taro is a little suspicious of Hana's desire to help Kenji, but he agrees to allow the young man into his home. Hana admits that part of the reason for her wanting to take care of Kenji is to give him the life that Kiyoshi missed.

When Ellen hears that Hana is taking care of Kenji, she immediately raises Hana's salary. She also suggests that in order to help Kenji, who has become quite

despondent, Hana should give Kenji something to do. One day when Kenji asks to take Hana's daughter to a neighborhood park, Hana reluctantly allows him to do so. Although Kenji comes home late, Hana is impressed with how he has cared for the young girl. It is through Mary that Kenji finds new life and begins to heal. Unfortunately, at this same time, Hana notices that her husband is becoming withdrawn. Hana discovers that Taro is not doing well financially. The owner of his shop has increased the rent, and Taro does not have the money to pay him. Business has been off, and he has no savings. Hana devises a plan, knowing that Ellen will loan them money. But she must make Taro believe this is not a loan but rather that Taro is working for the money. So she asks Ellen to hire Taro to paint her house, which Ellen does. In the meantime, Hana takes care of Taro's shop and makes changes that increase business. Taro is so impressed with Hana's business sense that he suggests that she stop working for Ellen and become his assistant in the shop. Hana is delighted.

Chapters 18–23

Hana's daughter, Mary, is now ten years old. Mary begs her parents to take a summer vacation, something they have never done. Taro finally gives in, as he decides that it would be nice to visit the Todas who are running a successful farm in the valley. Kiku is also thriving in the farming environment and has given birth to two sons, Jimmy and Kenny. At the farm, Taro relaxes, as the families reunite. There are late night horse-drawn wagon rides and family singing fests, activities common to the Todas but unique for Hana, Taro, and Mary. Hana is impressed with the healthy condition of her friends, who are tanned and strong. The Todas, Hana feels, have created a world uninhibited by racial prejudice, a place that nourishes Kiku's and Henry's spirits. When Hana and Taro return to their home, Hana tries to keep her mind invigorated by her experiences on the farm, but she soon feels confined in the city by restrictions silently and subtly imposed by the surrounding white culture.

Reverend Okada announces that he is returning to Japan before his children are too old to remember how to speak Japanese. Kiyoshi Yamaka is assigned to the minister's position. Okada's leaving makes Hana wonder about her daughter, who, as she grows older, seldom speaks Japanese. Hana, by contrast, seldom speaks English. Hana realizes that her world and that of her daughter's are growing apart.

When Mary turns sixteen, she becomes more aware of her differences from the white population. She is embarrassed by her parents who are more connected to Japan than to the United States. She shuns them publicly. When she goes to college, she eventually shocks her parents by dating Joseph Cantelli, a white boy. One morning, Hana and Taro wake up to discover that Mary is gone. She has eloped with Joseph. Time passes and Mary announces that she is pregnant. She and Joe are living in Nevada and will soon move to Utah, where Joe has been offered a new job. Mary sends occasional letters to her parents, but she misses none of her Japanese roots. Unlike Hana, Mary enjoys being in the company of white people and likes being associated with all things American. Hana writes to tell her daughter that she will come to help her

with the birth of the new baby, but Mary politely turns down her mother's offer. Hana is devastated.

Chapters 24–35

This section of the novel begins with the announcement of Japan's involvement in World War II. Taro hears the news on the radio and cannot believe it. Even so, Taro believes that this will make no difference in his own world, his life in the United States. Shortly after, however, FBI agents appear at Dr. Kaneda's home and announce that the doctor must go with them to be interrogated. Dr. Kaneda never returns home. Later, Kenji Nishima learns that the doctor has been sent to a detention camp in Montana. Rumors begin to spread that all Japanese people living along the West Coast might be uprooted. Hana and Taro begin to prepare for the possible evacuation, selling their furnishings and possessions for much less money than they are worth. As the rumors become more supported by evidence, Taro liquidates his entire inventory in the shop. Announcements are made about all first-generation Japanese immigrants, who are told they should sell everything except what can be contained in two suitcases for each family member. When Mary hears of this news, she sends a letter to her parents. She welcomes them to come live with her in Nevada, but she also tells them that she thinks they would be more comfortable with their friends. She suggests that since her parents are not citizens, they may be unsafe wherever they go. In other words, Mary suggests that her parents go along with the evacuation, "At least in the camps you would be with your friends," Mary writes. Hana understands that Mary is suggesting that it would be better if they did not travel to Nevada. Besides, Mary adds, she and Joe will probably be moving to Utah soon. Hana and Taro decide to go wherever the U.S. government tells them to go.

Meanwhile, Henry Toda has decided to sell his farm. Before leaving, one night, he packs up some Japanese treats for Dr. Kaneda. It is late, and Henry hears a noise outside. He goes to investigate and is shot and killed.

The day has finally arrive. Kenji Nishima comes to help Hana and Taro pack their suitcases onto Ellen's car. Ellen will drive them to what is called Tanforan, an old race track near San Francisco that has been converted into a camp for all the relocated Japanese immigrants. Hana and Taro are assigned a room, which is actually a stall in a quickly renovated horse stable. Kenji helps the couple find beds and clean the room. Later Taro finds scraps of wood and makes a skimpy table and benches. The walls are thin, so there is little privacy and only scant heat. As they settle in, Hana receives a telegram from Kiku, reporting Henry's death.

As time goes by, Hana learns to adjust to her new surroundings. The woman next door, who is loud and nosey, actually turns into a friend, helping Hana by telling her when it is best to go take a shower and how to improvise with found materials. On the other side of Hana's stall is a widow, Mrs. Mitosa, who has a young daughter, Sumiko, about the same age as Kenji Nishima. Hana and Taro both realize that Sumiko would make a fine wife for Kenji, and they begin their matchmaking scheme. Kenji also helps Henry out of

his depression by putting Taro to work as a carpenter, making small utensils and carrying cases for some of the inhabitants of the camp.

By August, Hana and Taro hear the rumor that everyone at Tanforan is going to be sent to Utah. The only good aspect of this is that Hana and Taro hold onto a dream that as their train passes through Salt Lake City, they might see Mary and Joe, and their new baby Laurie. As they prepare themselves for the move, Hana and Taro are greeted by Kenji, who announces that he has asked Sumiko to become his wife. The wedding will be held before they leave Tanforan. Sumiko asks Taro to give her away at the marriage ceremony. Hana, as she sits in the make-shift church, watching Taro walk Sumiko down the aisle, thinks that Sumiko represents the daughter that Taro and she never had. Shortly after the wedding, everyone packs up, preparing for their journey to Topaz, a detention camp built in the Utah desert.

Hana's train passes through Utah at night. By midnight, they stop at Salt Lake City, just long enough for them to see Mary and Joe for a few minutes. They exchange a few words, and Mary gives her parents pictures of Laurie, Mary's daughter. They did not bring Laurie because it was so late and very cold. Before the train pulls out of the station, Hana and Taro convince Mary that they are all right and that their living conditions are not so bad. Hana hides her tears until Mary is out of sight.

When the sun rises, the passengers look at the scenery around them, feeling somewhat hopeful as they pass through small towns. They are on a bus now, and when they enter a desolate area, with vegetation thinning out until it practically disappears, they discover that this is where they will live. Crude barracks have been set up in the middle of the desert. The barracks are surrounded by high barbed-wire fences.

Dr. Kaneda sends Taro a letter. After reading it, Taro concludes that Dr. Kaneda has lost all interest in living. Taro too is depressed. He finds little to do and next to nothing to live for. Kiku is not faring much better, especially since President Roosevelt has declared that all citizens, no matter what their ethnic background, have the right to enlist in the military. Kiku's sons are debating whether to enlist and go to war. One night they inform Kiku that they are leaving.

Meanwhile, Taro has found a new simple interest after having found an old Indian arrowhead in the sand. He talks to Hana about going back to California one day and beginning a new business. Hana's mood lightens when she hears Taro talking about the future. But one night, while Taro is out walking, a guard mistakes his actions around the fence and shoots and kills Taro.

Mary, Joe, and Laurie come to the camp once they hear that Taro is dead. Hana refuses to leave with them. She will stay with Taro, who is buried in the desert, until she can take his body home with her. As Hana says good-by to Mary, she hears someone calling to her. It is Kiku, who has been transferred to the Topaz camp. The story closes with Hana and Kiku walking arm in arm across the camp, and Kenji telling his new wife, Sumiko, that she is not to worry about Hana and Kiku, because they are both strong women.

Characters

Joe Cantelli

Joe Cantelli is a young college instructor, whom Mary meets when she is in school. Joe is the first white man Mary dates. Joe and Mary eventually elope, are married in Nevada, and have a daughter, Laurie. After Joe comes into Mary's life, Mary cuts herself off from her parents and their Japanese culture. Joe offers his home to Mary's parents after they are interned; however, Mary does not encourage her parents to accept Joe's offer, and Joe does not insist.

Laurie Cantelli

Laurie Cantelli is the baby girl born to Mary and Joe. Laurie does not make an appearance in this story until Taro's death. At Taro's funeral, Hana sees her granddaughter for the first time.

Ellen Davis

Ellen Davis is the good-hearted wife of a surgeon and one of the few white people who befriend the Japanese characters in this story. Ellen employs Hana and also provides work for Taro. She transports Hana and Taro to the internment camp and give them certain provisions to make their stay more comfortable. She does not in any way protest their internment. She supports Hana as best she can, usually by giving her money. She treats Hana humanely, without degrading her, when Hana works as a cleaning woman in Ellen's house.

Doctor Sojiro Kaneda

Wise Dr. Sojiro Kaneda is a friend of Taro's and a big supporter of the Japanese community. He treats many of the immigrants without expecting pay and often helps them with psychological problems as well as physical ailments. Dr. Kaneda was married, but his wife died of tuberculosis. He is a stabilizing member of the community, even during most of his internment.

When Kiyoshi Yamaka dies from influenza, Dr. Kaneda walks to Hana's house to break the sad news. He understands how much Kiyoshi means to Hana. Kaneda is the helpful one in the midst of trouble and confusion as the new immigrants attempt to adjust to changes in their lives. But in the end, after spending years in the internment camps, Kaneda loses his faith and determination. Right before Taro is shot, Taro receives a letter from Kaneda, espousing his own defeat. This depletes Taro's reserve to stay strong. At the end of the story, there is no further information given, and readers do not know Kaneda's fate.

Mrs. Mitosa

Mrs. Mitosa lives in the horse stall next to Hana's. She is a widow when she comes to the camp and has a daughter, Sumiko, who is close to Kenji Mishima's age. A quiet woman, Mrs. Mitosa suffers from asthma. When the Japanese prisoners are taken to the desert in Utah, she has trouble breathing because of the dust. She is taken to the hospital. Because she needs medical treatment beyond the scope of the camp, she is transferred to a facility in Salt Lake City, thus giving her daughter and Kenji an opportunity to leave the camp to attend to her.

Sumiko Mitosa

Sumiko Mitosa, the daughter of the widow Mrs. Mitosa, is attracted to Kenji Nishima and begins a relationship with him. When the couple marries, Taro gives Sumiko away, as if he were her father. Hana watches Taro walk down the aisle with Sumiko and wishes that her own daughter, Mary, were more like Sumiko.

Kenji Nishima

Kenji Nishima is first introduced when he is shamed by the actions of his boss, the superintendent of the Sunday school at Taro's church. Kenji, a seminary student, is overwhelmed by the guilt of the superintendent's actions, as well as by the responsibility as a student and as a practicing leader of the church. He is lonely and homesick, not psychologically or physically well. Hana suggests that she and Taro take Kenji into their home so she can nourish Kenji back to health.

Upon his recovery, Kenji is permanently grateful to Hana and Taro and counsels Hana on several occasions on how to deal with Taro when Taro is being difficult. Kenji is even more supportive when they are all transferred to the internment camps. Kenji helps Hana and Taro with their luggage and setting up their room, and helps Taro get over his depression. Before their internment, Kenji becomes the head of the church. While imprisoned, he continues his leadership role. By the end of the story, Kenji is happily married, supposedly the last factor in ensuring his future peace of mind.

Reverend Okada

Reverend Okada is the head of the church when Hana first arrives in California. He, like Dr. Kaneda, often ministers to the Japanese immigrant population, both in the city and in the country. Okada is a generous man, who counsels his parishioners on many subjects, including how to overcome the challenges they face among white Americans.

Okada announces, toward the last part of the novel, that he is going back to Japan with his wife and children. He had come to California on a temporary basis, wanting to help the immigrants to establish a church and a community of support. He wants to take his

family back to Japan before his children forget what it means to be Japanese. He leaves before the war breaks out. Hana reflects on his departure and realizes it is too late for her to instill Japanese qualities in her own daughter, which Hana regrets.

Hana Omiya Takeda

Hana Takeda is the protagonist of this novel. When the novel begins she is on her way to the United States. She has decided to take up an unknown man's offer of marriage rather than spend the rest of her life in her small Japanese village.

Hana is determined to make her life better than that of her sisters. She is pretty and intelligent and has received an education higher than many of her Japanese peers. She sets off for United States alone, unafraid (and also unaware) of all the challenges that lie ahead of her.

Beginning full of beautiful dreams, Hana quickly becomes disappointed with what she finds on the West Coast. Instead of a young man waiting for her, she finds a man who is middle aged. Instead of a life of leisure, she finds that she must work as a shopkeeper and a cleaning woman. Instead of welcoming arms, she finds racial prejudice. However, Hana has a seemingly unending supply of courage and fortitude. But she does not assimilate well into her new country, unable to learn the English language sufficiently to express her deepest thoughts to anyone who does not speak Japanese, including her daughter. But she is considered, by her friend Kiku, a Japanese jewel. Hana is graceful, tactful, and artful. She is a good wife, in spite of the fact that she falls romantically in love with a man closer to her age. She is a nurturing mother who thinks about her daughter's needs above her own. And she does not chastise her daughter when Mary makes is quite obvious that she does not want her mother in her life.

Although she does not love Taro at first, Hana does learn to respect him. She often defers to Taro, even though she has good ideas of her own. She understands his confusion when he is caught between the more conservative ways of traditional Japanese life and the customs of their adopted country. Hana often tries to smooth the path so Taro has a more comfortable life.

Hana arrives in the United States an innocent, unsuspecting person, living more on idealized hopes than in reality; however, by the end of the story, she is wise and strong enough to figure out any challenge. Hana is tried by a series of calamities and survives, despite considerable hardship.

Mary Takeda

Mary Takeda, Hana and Taro's only child, was doted upon as a child and was obedient and thoughtful. However, the more Americanized Mary becomes, as she grows older, the less she wants to do with her ancestral roots. She is so embarrassed by her parents that when her mother comes to Mary's high school to deliver a costume for a presentation, Mary quickly shoos Hana out the back door. Later, Mary does not tell her

parents about her feelings for Joe, and the couple elopes in the middle of the night, leaving only a note behind to explain. She never calls her parents after she leaves, and she seldom writes. When she does send a letter, she often deters her parents from coming to visit her. Mary states that she sees very few Japanese people in Nevada, and she likes it that way. Mary refuses to bring her daughter, Laurie, to the train station to meet Hana and Taro as they pass through the town on their way to the new internment camp; Mary makes excuses for leaving Laurie at home. After Taro dies, Mary regrets that she never allowed Taro to meet his granddaughter. By the end of this story, Hana does not seem to mind as much that Mary is missing from her life.

Taro Takeda

Taro Takeda is in his thirties when this story begins. He is hopeful that the “picture bride” he has sent for will make him a good wife. He is pleased with Hana’s looks and style when he first meets her but must soon remind her that she is to focus her attentions only on him, as Hana falls in love with another man.

Taro is a businessman, but not a terribly successful one. He gets by but his skills are not as sharp as Hana’s, who quickly evaluates his lack of success and begins to turn around his business. Hana finds that Taro has a good heart and is willing to protect his family at all cost. He is not the romantic partner that she had hoped for, but Taro does his best to provide for Hana and Mary.

Eventually Taro learns to trust and respect Hana’s gifts and includes her in his business transactions. As their daughter grows up and moves away, Taro and Hana’s relationship grows closer. Although Taro becomes depressed after spending more than a year in detention, the suggestion is he pulls himself out of it before he is murdered. The story suggests that the guard misconstrues that Taro is trying to escape. Instead, Taro may have merely been out in the desert at night because he loved both the stars and the small treasures he found in the sand. Tragically, Taro is shot and killed, leaving his wife to fend for herself.

Henry Toda

Henry Toda is a good but somewhat unpolished man. He is a hard worker and a heavy drinker. Henry tends to say what is on his mind and is the first one to voice what everyone else has noticed, that Hana and Kiyoshi are attracted to one another. Henry is married to Kiku, Hana’s best friend. When Henry is fired from his job as janitor at a local bank, he decides that he is tired of having to depend on the whims of the white people around him and wants to go out to the valley and work as a farmer and eventually own his own land. This is exactly what he does. He has two children while living in the country and since these boys are U.S. citizens, Henry buys land in his sons’ names. He has completely turned his life around when the order for internment comes. Henry must sell his farm way below what it is worth. Tragically, Henry is shot right before the family gathers their belongings and leaves for the internment camps.

Jimmy Toda

Jimmy Toda is one of the sons of Henry and Kiku. He and his brother are the opposite, in many ways, of Hana's daughter Mary. When Hana visits the Toda farm, she sees how unrestricted Jimmy and Kenny are in comparison to Mary. While they are in the internment camp, however, Jimmy and Kenny are as restricted as everyone else. They decide to leave the camp the only way they can, by enlisting in the army.

Kenny Toda

Kenny is one of the sons of Henry and Kiku. Kenny, like his brother, Jimmy, enlists in the army in order to leave the internment camp. There is no mention of what becomes of Jimmy or Kenny after they leave the camp.

Kiku Toda

Kiku Toda was a picture bride several years prior to Hana's arrival in California. Kiku perfectly understands everything that Hana is going through in moving from Japanese culture to her new life in the United States. Kiku is like Hana's big sister. She helps dress Hana in western-style dresses and makes Hana's wedding gown. When Kiku leaves to live on a farm, she offers her old job (cleaning woman to Mrs. Davis) to Hana. Unable to become pregnant while living in the city, Kiku gives birth to two boys once she is living in the country. The country has made Kiku's life fertile in many ways. Contrary to what Kiku anticipated at the prospect of being a farmer, the country has brought vibrancy back into her life. She is so happy that Hana is somewhat jealous of Kiku's new life. When they are relocated, Hana and Kiku are sent to different camps. However, by the end of the story, Kiku is transferred to Topaz. The suggestion is that everything will be all right, despite all the hardships both of these women have faced.

Kiyoshi Yamaka

Handsome Kiyoshi Yamaka is immediately attracted to Hana upon first seeing her. Hana returns his attention, and the two of them confess their feelings for each other. Yamaka wishes they had met under different circumstances and pursues Hana quietly whenever Taro is out of town. Hana pledges her love to him, though she will not go as far as giving in to her sexual passions for him. Kiyoshi succumbs to influenza that sweeps the United States after World War I. He represents the romantic love that Hana never fully experiences.

Themes

Culture Clash

Uchida's *Picture Bride* is a story of culture clash as experienced by the protagonist, Hana, in her coming-of-age adventures as she adjusts to living in the United States. In California, Hana finds that everything about her seems to be out of place. Her clothes are all wrong; her language is not understood; even the smell of her favorite foods annoys others. Her intelligence is belittled because she speaks a foreign language and cannot fully express herself, and her fine Japanese graces are mocked because they are different from American manners. Everything that she has learned, everything that she has cherished about her Japanese culture comes under suspicion in the United States.

Hana knows that in order to get along better with the majority of the people around her she must adapt to her new culture. However, she is torn between wanting to fit in and wanting to hold onto her Japanese heritage. But even part of what is most dear to her, her daughter Mary, slips away from her because Hana refuses to relinquish her Japanese ways. Hana loves her Japanese culture, but the more she clings to it, the farther away her daughter moves. Mary represents the opposite of Hana. Mary wants all things American. Mary wants nothing to do with her parents' Japanese culture, so she pushes herself away from her parents and even from the West Coast, where many Japanese people live. Mary even tries to remove herself further by marrying a man with European ancestors and then giving birth to a biracial child.

Hana points out the culture clash in her husband, Taro, who wants Hana to be more submissive to him, as most Japanese women of her time were taught to be. Yet Taro also wants Hana to internalize American culture as he encourages her to learn English, to be married in a gown that reflects American fashion tastes, and to relinquish her Japanese mannerisms, such as bowing to guests and uttering typical traditional Japanese phrases upon inviting guests into their home. This same clash is exhibited in Hana's daughter. Though Mary wants to dress in a Japanese kimono to celebrate International Day at her school and asks her mother to bring the kimono to the school and to help her and the other students dress themselves properly, she is so embarrassed by her mother that she sends Hana out the back doors of the school and does not invite her mother to attend the presentation. Mary, in other words, is willing to dress in a Japanese costume, but she still wants to distance herself from being Japanese.

Dreams versus Reality

As Hana sails from Japan to the United States, her mind is filled with pleasant dreams about the future. She imagines her new life in California will be everything that her life in her small Japanese village is not. As she lands on the shores of the West Coast, her

dreams begin to fade. This pattern of idealizing the future only to be disappointed by the reality continues throughout the story as her fantasies come face to face with actual circumstances. Taro is not the dashing, young lover she envisioned. He is not a wealthy merchant. Hana will not have a life of leisure. She will lose the man she truly loves and will never have a son. One by one, her hopes are dashed, as Hana faces each new challenge. Once she finds a comforting dream, reality rushes in. She envisions a son, and her daughter turns into someone she hardly knows; she anticipates a close community, and her neighbors are cold-hearted, closed-minded people. Even her adopted country, which she assumes stands for freedom, actually turns into a racial and prejudicial prison. She barely gets to know her grandchild, and her husband is murdered. In spite of all her disappointments, however, somehow Hana finds the courage and patience to dream again. As the story ends, readers cannot help but believe that with the help of her friend Kiku, Hana finds the strength to dream again and to try to make her new dreams come true.

Romantic Love versus Friendship

Twice in this story, Hana must choose between romantic or sexual love and friendship. Hana realizes that she does not love Taro. She goes through with the marriage to him, though, because she has promised to do so. She is disappointed by his age, his looks, and his status. However, over time, Hana realizes that Taro is a good man. Taro works hard, protects his family, and stays true to Hana, even though he knows that Hana does not love him. Taro is not the lover Hana anticipated, but he has a good heart and does not fail Hana. So despite the lack of romantic love, the couple develops a deep friendship.

Just the opposite develops between Hana and Kiyoshi Yamaka. Kiyoshi is immediately attracted to Hana and she to him. They are closer in age than Hana and Taro, and Hana finds Kiyoshi more physically appealing. Although Hana knows it is wrong for a married woman to be attentive to another man, she cannot help herself. She regrets she did not meet Kiyoshi in different circumstances. She is also flattered that such a handsome man would pay attention to her. Although they flirt with each other and kiss, Hana's propriety prevents her full expression of her sexual attraction. She resists making love to Kiyoshi because it would be wrong. An extramarital affair with Kiyoshi would hurt Taro. So she stops Kiyoshi's physical advances. Still she cannot stop her love for him. With Kiyoshi, Hana experiences a situation that is the opposite of her relationship with Taro. She loves Kiyoshi but only allows their relationship to develop as a friendship.

Parent and Child Relationship

Hana and Taro are very pleased when their daughter, Mary, is born. Taro, especially, had wanted a child to confirm his relationship to Hana. When they are blessed with a child, Taro extends his budget so that he can provide a home that is better suited for raising a child. They dote on their daughter and have hopes that their love of her will be reciprocated.

Mary, by contrast, has little emotional attachment to her parents. She is embarrassed by their foreignness and seems selfish in her decisions as an adult. She focuses on moving away from reminders of her Japanese heritage and is all but outright rude when her parents suggest that they want to be part of Mary's new life as a wife and mother. However, Mary is herself a devoted parent. She is more protective of her daughter, refusing to bring her out in the middle of the cold night, than she is concerned that her parents meet their first grandchild when Hana and Taro pass through Salt Lake City on their way to the second internment camp. After Taro dies, Mary regrets her actions toward her parents. She wishes she had taken her daughter to the train station so her father could have at least seen his only granddaughter. She also wishes she had been more like the daughter that Taro wanted. Although it is too late for Mary to show affection for her father, she does try to amend her ways with her mother. As it turns out, it is too late even to do so, as Hana has come to accept Mary's lack of interest in her. Too much has happened. Besides Hana has, in many ways, replaced Mary with Kenji, who has looked after Hana, and Kenji's wife, Sumiko, who asks Taro to represent her father and walk her down the aisle when she is married. The narrator relates that in the end, Hana turned to Kenji, who "comforted her most. He had been through the darkest moments of life with her and knew her needs best." In contrast, Mary seems an "outsider, not knowing quite how to behave in the closeness of the Japanese American community," and she "felt ill at ease among her mother's friends."

Racism

The novel dramatizes the racist views of white people concerning the Japanese. Differences are not explained and accepted but rather incite hatred, suspicion, and segregation. Racist feelings intensify as the story continues. In one incident, neighborhood men visit Taro. Ashamed of their feelings, they lie to Taro, telling him that other neighbors are troubled by Taro and his family living in their community. They are asked to leave their home merely because they are Japanese. The white people do not explain why they are afraid of Hana and Taro. Instead, they make Taro and Hana feel uncomfortable, hoping that they will decide that they are unwelcome and move away.

A similar racism occurs in the countryside, where Kiku and Henry have bought a farm. They have worked hard and charge lower prices than the white farmers do. This undercuts the white farmers' businesses, so the white farmers do their best to scare the Japanese farmers off their land, going as far as to murder Henry.

President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which demanded that all Japanese people living on the West Coast be interned, was racist in its assumption that after the attack on Pearl Harbor any Japanese American might well be an enemy. The paranoid government feared that some of the Japanese might be spies or might assist the Japanese government in its war against the United States. That fear generalized to judging all Japanese by the possible risk posed by some.

Style

Timeframe Divisions

Picture Bride is divided into large periods of time. Each section presents a specific time period in Hana's life. The first section is devoted to 1917 and 1918, a time when there were numerous picture brides. During this time, many women came to the United States, prepared to marry men they had seen only in a photograph. These women, like Hana in Uchida's story, had big dreams about the United States and their new lives in what they believed to be a prosperous country. Like Hana, many of these women lost their ideal hopes when they faced the man behind the photograph. As Kiku comments in this story, most men sent photographs taken when they were much younger. Many of these men also exaggerated their financial status in order to attract the best wife. Many of these women had no idea of the hardships that faced them.

The second segment, 1920 to 1921, depicts Hana as a new mother and as the victim of racism against Japanese. Having a child makes Hana and Taro more aware of the society around them, the people and the community in which their daughter will grow up. This section also introduces Kenji, a young man who is a significant character in the rest of the novel, a sort of surrogate son for the child that Hana and Taro lose.

The third part covers the 1930s. During these years Mary matures. As she grows up, she distances herself from her parents because she wants to be American and not be identified as Japanese. Eventually, Hana realizes she cannot maintain a relationship with her daughter.

The final section deals with World War II and the concurrent internment of Japanese Americans. In this part of the story, the hardships suffered by Japanese Americans during the war is dramatized.

Using this historical timeframe, Uchida follows Hana's coming-of-age development within a particularly hostile environment. The novel gives a fictionalized portrait of what it was like to be Japanese in the United States before and during World War II.

Autobiographical Novel

Much of Uchida's fiction is based loosely on her own life. She and her family were interned during the war at the Tanforan Camp in California and in the Utah camp called Topaz. The author draws from this experience from her life to tell the fictional story of Hana and Taro.

Omniscient Point of View

The novel is related from the point of view of an omniscient narrator, meaning that the narrator depicts what happens from many different points of view but is also able to reveal the thoughts of more than one character. Much of the story is told from the perspective of the main character, Hana. The reader sees and feels what Hana sees and feels. But there are moments when the reader is also aware of the thoughts of Hana's husband, Taro, and Hana's daughter, Mary. Other times, the narrator relates the thoughts of Kiku, Hana's friend. The omniscient point of view allows the reader to gain different perspectives, thus giving a more extensive view of the subject matter.

Historical Context

World War II and Japanese Internment

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered (through Executive Order 9066) the arrest of Japanese Americans, primarily those living on the West Coast. Violating the basic rights of citizens, as provided by the U.S. Constitution, President Roosevelt ordered the U.S. military to build detention camps and then to transport Japanese American citizens and legal aliens to the make-shift quarters. Roosevelt reportedly did so in the name of national security. It has been estimated that 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated, most of them under the age of eighteen. According to the Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, some students were released to go to college or to enlist in the U.S. Army. However, a large number of people were held in these camps until World War II ended. This means some people spent up to four years in these camps. No one in these camps was given the benefit of due process. They could not protest these illegal laws that sent them to prison.

In 1980, when the commission published its results, it was declared that none of the detainees had been proven to be a spy, which had been the government's stated reason for the detention. Rather, the commission concluded the detention of Japanese Americans was the result of racism and wartime hysteria. Eight years later, Congress passed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which stated that an injustice had been done to the Japanese Americans and suggested that these people were owed a presidential apology and a token sum of $20,000, paid to every detainee.

There were ten major designated relocation camps, most located in isolated and desolate desert or swampland areas: Tule Lake and Manzanar in California; Minidoka in Idaho; Topaz in Utah; Heart Mountain in Wyoming; Granada in Colorado; Rohwer and Jerome in Arkansas; and Poston and Gila River in Arizona. In addition, there were several temporary so-called assembly areas (such as the Tanforan Race Track) and many isolation centers, totaling over twenty different camps. Tule Lake in the mountains of California was reserved for those people suspected of or convicted of crimes. Also, many who would not sign oaths of loyalty to the United States ended up at Tule Lake.

Japanese Immigration to the United States

In 1869, Japanese immigrants came to California to work at the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony. Their plan to grow tea and to produce silk, however, proved unsuccessful. Most of these Japanese immigrants landed either in Hawaii or in one of the West Coast cities, such as San Francisco, Portland, or Seattle. The U.S. Census of 1870 shows that there were fifty-five Japanese people living in the United States. By 1880, that number had increased to 148. Ten years later, thanks to an agreement between Japan and Hawaii, more Japanese people were allowed to immigrate, and by

1890, 2,038 Japanese were in the States, over half of them living in California. These numbers continued to grow as the Japanese gained a reputation for their skills in agriculture and their willingness to work hard. In 1900, the census calculated that there were 24,326 Japanese in the United States, of which only 410 were women. However, in 1907, supremacist organizations, agitated local farmers, and some politicians came together to create a law that reduced Japanese immigration, limiting new Japanese arrivals to women and children. Many of the women who came from Japan arrived as picture brides. Then a permanent halt to Japanese immigration occurred when the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which prohibited new immigrants from Japan. This act was in effect until 1952.

Most immigrants lived and worked in Japanese communities. Immigrants opened shops that sold Japanese goods or worked in various industries such as agriculture, fishing, mining, and the railroads. Many Japanese families banded together in cooperatives, which helped them gain power and wealth. There were many successful Japanese businesses just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but the subsequent internment of Japanese Americans in most cases led to the loss of homes and businesses.

Picture Brides

Although the concept of picture brides continues in the early 2000s (for example, catalogues of women from such places as the Philippines and Korea can be found in circulation in the United States), the term as used in the early part of the twentieth century mostly referred to Asian women who were willing to emigrate, usually to Hawaii or to the West Coast of the States.

Typically, Asian men traveled to the United States first, setting up some form of employment, either as factory workers or agricultural laborers. Some men were able to save money and develop their own businesses. Entering into an agreement with a matchmaker back home, which usually involved a relative of the man speaking to the relatives of the picture bride, the future husband waited for his bride with her picture in hand, hoping to match the image to the newly arrived woman upon. Picture brides were popular with the Japanese. In Japan, arranged marriages were common, and this tradition made the Japanese amenable to the idea of picture brides. Marriage based on love was not common among the Japanese.

Many future husbands surprised their picture brides by being older than they represented themselves in their photographs, since having another picture taken beyond the one they used for their passports was time consuming and expensive. Many of these men also exaggerated the amount of their personal wealth in order to lure a good woman. Picture brides offered stability for these men. Wives helped in the home with cleaning and cooking, thus providing a better home life for their husbands. Many picture brides also earned money, by either working in the fields with their husbands or taking on domestic jobs in other people’s homes. The children from these marriages were another labor and income resource for the family. Employers encouraged the

practice of picture brides because they commonly believed stability in the home equated with stability in the labor force.

It should also be noted that according to a report from the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California, San Diego, some of the picture brides were actually prostitutes looking for a better life.

Critical Overview

Picture Bride has not drawn much critical attention. Uchida is best remembered for her children's books, which often contain similar subject matter as her one adult novel, which is the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Uchida's work is often credited with giving visibility to Japanese American internment.

In "Prejudice and Pride: Japanese Americans in the Young Adult Novels of Yoshiko Uchida," Danton McDiffett comments on themes that run through most of Uchida's books, including her *Picture Bride*. McDiffett writes that Uchida, an American citizen who experienced the hardships of a Japanese-American internment camp, writes about "the prejudice against Japanese Americans, even before the attack on Pearl Harbor electrified opinion against them." Her books, McDiffett states, "continue to show the upheaval, sorrow, confusion, and anger spawned by the American government's undeniably racist actions." "Yoshiko Uchida's novels," McDiffett concludes, "provide well-written, interesting, and historically accurate accounts of a period in US history that is both pivotal and shameful. They are especially worthy of study today as the world shrinks due to technology and travel and students in all parts of the US become ever more likely to encounter people of other countries and other cultures."

In their review of *Jar of Dreams*, one of Uchida's children's books, Nancy Livingston and Catherine Kurkjian, writing for *Reading Teacher*, state that "Uchida writes with passion about the heart-breaking events and challenging experiences that her people faced during World War II." As many other people have pointed out about Uchida's life work, the reviewers state: "The author's intentions were to give those in succeeding generations a sense of the past as well as a sense of the strength of spirit of these survivors."

Reviewing another children's book by Uchida, *The Invisible Thread*, a book also about the Japanese-American internment situation, Carol Fazioli, for the *School Library Journal*, comments that "Uchida tells her story without bitterness or anger."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Hart is a published author and freelance writer. In this essay, she explores differences between the protagonist's ideal son and daughter and the relationship she has with her real son and daughter.

In the novel *Picture Bride*, Uchida's protagonist, Hana, struggles throughout the second half of this story in her relationship with her daughter, Mary. Mary is Hana's only child, for Hana miscarried a son previous to Mary's birth. The loss of Hana's son causes great emotional strain on Hana. She takes his death as a sign that she has done something wrong. As time passes, Hana learns to heal herself. One way she does this is to take in the seminary student Kenji Nishima. In helping Kenji to regain his health, Hana feels forgiven for any wrongs she may have done. This sense of forgiveness does not last long though. As her daughter Mary matures, Hana watches the teenage girl pull away from her. The loss of Mary is devastating for Hana, as Mary purposefully removes herself from Hana's influence. Unlike the death of Hana's son, regarding which Hana achieves a sense of closure, Mary's rejection of Hana is ongoing. In an attempt to heal her heart and soul, Hana takes a greater interest in Kenji, who becomes a surrogate son for Hana. Later in the story, when Kenji falls in love, Hana, at least on a psychological level, adopts Kenji's new bride, Sumiko, as a surrogate daughter. Through both subtle and not so subtle allusions to Kenji and Sumiko, the author sets up a reflection between the ideal and the real as she compares the son and daughter that Hana dreamed of having and the children that Hana bore.

Through both subtle and not so subtle allusions to Kenji and Sumiko, the author sets up a reflection between the ideal and the real as she compares the son and daughter that Hana dreamed of having and the children that Hana bore.

Hana endures many tragedies in this story. She falls in love with a man who is not her husband and then sees him die. She also loses her husband. Other losses include her connections to her Japanese culture, her home, her dignity, and most of the material wealth that she and her husband acquire over the course of their marriage. But the most devastating loss in Hana's life comes through the loss of her children. The first child that she loses is her son. The miscarriage of her son is linked, at least in Hana's mind, with her love for Kiyoshi Yamaka, the handsome young man who takes an interest in Hana the first time he sets eyes on her. Hana is equally attracted to Kiyoshi and invites him into her life. She tells him that she is saddened by the bad timing of their meeting. Hana wishes they had met before she promised herself to Taro. They admit their love of one another and are unable to conceal their affection in front of Taro and their other acquaintances. But when Kiyoshi wants to express his love for Hana on a physical level, when he wants to make love to her, Hana realizes they have gone too far. So she stops him. This, however, does not stop her love from further development. She tells Kiyoshi that she will love him forever. Unfortunately, Kiyoshi dies shortly after this, and so too

does the baby boy that Hana is carrying. In this way, Kiyoshi and the baby boy are linked. Hana believes that the loss of her son is the price that she must pay for her illicit love of Kiyoshi. She had wanted to give birth to this son as a tribute to her husband, Taro. Hana thought that the son would make up for her transgressions (her love of Kiyoshi) and the subsequent pain that love caused Taro. With the death of her son, this chance vanishes. Hana has to carry the guilt, which is quite intense, until Kenji Nishima comes into her life.

Kenji is a student like Kiyoshi was, but Hana's interest in Kenji is quite different from the sexual attraction she felt for Kiyoshi. In some ways, Kenji represents Kiyoshi, though. Both are young, lonesome, and starved for attention and nourishment. When the opportunity arises that signifies an urgent need in Kenji's life, Hana offers herself and her home by way of supporting and nurturing the young man. Kenji becomes a symbol of two of Hana's losses—Kiyoshi and the miscarried baby boy. It is through her nourishing of Kenji that Hana, in at least a metaphoric sense, resurrects the lives of Kiyoshi and her son. What she was not able to give to Kiyoshi and to her son, Hana offers to Kenji. She finds the means to feed Kenji physically, emotionally, and spiritually, so that Kenji rises from his illness and is filled with zeal. Hana believes that if she is successful in saving Kenji, she will be forgiven for having loved a man who was not her husband and for having miscarried Taro's son.

Even with Kenji's return to health, however, Hana's troubles are not over. Although she carries her next pregnancy to term and gives birth to a daughter, this child rejects her mother in a different way. Mary, as she matures into her teenage years, begins to notice that she is different from most of her peers. There is something about her face that does not completely match the faces of the students who have European ancestors. When she looks around at the blonde-haired and blue-eyed young girls, she does not see a reflection of herself. She tries to fit in, but something holds her back. What bars her from completely assimilating into the white American culture is epitomized by her mother. Hana comes to represent, for Mary, everything that the young teenage does not want to be. Hana talks in what is a foreign language for Mary. When Hana tries to speak English, the language which Mary uses fluently, words come out twisted and broken, tainted by a thick accent. Mary is ashamed of her mother, as if her mother were dirty and crude. So Mary attempts to separate herself from everything Japanese. Everything Mary has tried to do so far, though, has not worked. No matter how clearly she enunciates her words, no matter how much effort she puts into her studies, she is still identified as Japanese. So Mary tries something new. She becomes enthralled with a young white man, not so much for who he is but for what he is. He is an European American, and he wants her.

Mary does not prepare her parents for her departure. She does not tell them that she has changed her dating habits, tossing aside her Japanese boyfriends to date Joe. Joe merely appears at the door one night; the relationship blossoms; and one day Hana wakes up to find Mary has eloped. As the story develops, Mary moves farther and farther away. First, there is the physical distance as Mary moves out of the state. Then there is the emotional distance as Mary turns down Hana's offer to come help with the delivery of Mary's first baby. Despite these rejections from Mary, Hana never fully

awakens to the reality of Mary's rejection of her. Hana continues to hope that one day Mary will return and that Hana will see her only grandchild. But this does not happen until the end of the story, when more tragedies have struck Hana, and when it may be too late.

In the meantime, Hana turns more directly to Kenji. When Hana and Taro are commanded to leave their home and turn themselves in at the internment camp, it is Kenji who helps them with the transition. Whereas Mary has turned her back once again, telling her mother that she thinks her parents would be more comfortable in the camps than they would be in Mary's home. In contrast, Kenji, who also is interned, makes sure that all the comforts that he can muster are given to Hana. He helps carry her suitcases. He finds the room where she will stay. He helps bolster Taro's spirits when Hana is concerned that Taro is depressed. Kenji makes sure that Hana survives, just as Hana had once done the same for him. Although Kenji and Hana are close to the same age, Kenji acts as Hana's son, and Hana loves him as a son in return.

This surrogate mother-son relationship is further developed when Hana matches Kenji with a bride. This is one of the first things that Hana thinks about when she becomes aware of the daughter of the widow who lives in the room next to hers. Sumiko Mitosa is a quiet young girl who dotes on her mother, caring for her through her mother's bouts of asthma. Sumiko is everything that Hana's own daughter, Mary, is not. Sumiko has escorted the older woman to the camps, where she does everything she can to make her mother comfortable. Sumiko is not ashamed of her Japanese heritage, and Hana wants to unite Sumiko with a good Japanese-American man—Hana's surrogate son, Kenji. Later, when Sumiko asks Taro to give her away at her wedding, the psychological adoption of Kenji and Sumiko as Hana's son and daughter is complete. "At last," Hana thinks as she watches her husband walk Sumiko down the aisle, "you are the father of the bride."

Mary makes her first real appearance back in her mother's life at the end of the story. It is her father's death that pulls Mary in, and of course it is too late. Her father is buried in the desert. Hana, although she stands before Mary, is psychologically absent. For her part, Mary feels like an outsider in the midst of her mother and her mother's friends. Mary attempts to persuade her mother to come live with her. Even Mary's husband, Joe, pipes in, telling Hana, "You shouldn't stay in this godforsaken place alone." Mary's and Joe's efforts, though, are wasted on Hana. She is not alone. She has her memories of Taro, and, of course, she has Kenji and Sumiko, who have been there with her throughout the long journey of hardships. In essence, Hana tells Joe and Mary, thanks but no thanks. What she really says is: "We must learn to forgive and to be forgiven, Mary. I had to learn that too." In other words, the case is closed. Hana has healed her heart, and now Mary must do the same. But Hana has washed her hands of Mary's healing. Instead she tells Joe that he must help Mary. Hana is moving in a new direction. She no longer hungers to be Mary's mother. Instead, the story closes with Hana, accompanied by Kenji and Sumiko, walking to pay their respects at Taro's grave, as any widow and good son and daughter would do.

Source: Joyce Hart , Critical Essay on *Picture Bride*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2008.

Critical Essay #2

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English. In this essay, he discusses the prejudice faced by Japanese Americans from the 1920s to the 1940s and how this is reflected in Picture Bride*.*

What is most sobering about Yoshiko Uchida's simple but tragic tale *Picture Bride* is how closely it follows an unsavory aspect of mid-twentieth century American history. Japanese people who settled on the West Coast did experience prejudice on the part of white people. Federal laws were passed discriminating against Japanese Americans, and Japanese Americans throughout the Pacific Coast region were rounded up and sent to concentration camps shortly after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941. As a Japanese American herself, Uchida is an authority on the matter. Just like Hana and Taro in the story, Uchida and her family spent several years at a miserable camp, ironically called Topaz, the Jewel in the Desert, in Utah. It is with an unpleasant start that people in the early 2000s realize that such things did indeed happen on U.S. soil, and within the lifetimes of the grandparents of young readers of *Picture Bride* in the early twenty-first century.

In her straightforward, unadorned prose, Uchida captures the bewildering and painful experience of the Pacific Coast Japanese-American community following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Poor Hana, the naive Japanese girl who in 1917 takes the boat to California to marry her picture groom—she has only seen a photograph of him—does not know what she is in for. At first her disappointment centers on her husband-to-be, who looks older than his thirty-one years and is already balding and whose drab shop in a run-down part of the city does not resemble in the slightest the smart store Hana had imagined he would own. Hana is a resourceful woman, however, and she soon adapts to her husband and to their limited financial resources. Harder to adapt to, however, is the resentment they as Japanese people face from the white residents, since they can do little to change it other than making sure that their lawn is always neatly cut and no soy barrels that might betray Japanese occupancy litter their yard.

Unfortunately for Hana, she has arrived and will live for the next quarter of a century through what might be called the high tide of prejudice on the part of the majority whites against anyone who happened to be Japanese or of Japanese descent. Examples from the period are not difficult to find. Under the Alien Laws of 1913 and 1920 passed in California, people who were ineligible to become U.S. citizens were not permitted to own land. This is why in the novel Taro is not permitted to own his store; eventually he gets around the problem by putting it in the name of his daughter, who, having been born in the United States, is automatically (according to the Fourteenth Amendment) a U.S. citizen. The Alien Laws were aimed principally at Japanese farmers, since white

farmers feared that they would not be able to compete economically with the Japanese, who employed more efficient agricultural techniques. In the novel, when Taro visits a Japanese-American farming community, he notes how hard the farmers work, and he comments that this enables them to sell their produce for less than their white counterparts. His friend Dr. Kaneda explains that this accounts for the prejudice the Japanese face: “As long as we are an economic threat, we are going to be hated. It’s as simple as that.” Kaneda, the community activist, cannot help but feel indignant about this, and he sounds a note that becomes a constant theme in the novel—the fundamental decency of the Japanese people who are being unfairly discriminated against: “And yet why should our farmers be hated for being frugal and working hard to make an honest living?”

The ban on Japanese becoming naturalized U.S. citizens was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1922, and two years later, an immigration law effectively ended Japanese immigration to the United States. In *Picture Bride*, the injustice of laws such as these is conveyed powerfully through the reactions of the innocent Hana, who finds it hard to believe that such unfairness can exist in the United States. “We Japanese are a peril to this enormous country?” she asks in disbelief after Taro informs her that the newspapers write about how Asians are threatening the jobs of white Americans and use phrases such as “yellow peril” to describe it.

This is just one of the many unpleasant surprises that have awaited the innocent Hana in her new country from the very beginning. For example, when her new friend Kiku Toda tells her that her husband Henry works at the bank, Hana naively assumes that Henry must be a banker or at least a teller or clerk. She is surprised to learn that he is in fact a janitor; the reader guesses what Hana does not yet know: many immigrant Japanese must work at jobs far below their true skills and capabilities simply because white employers will not give them an opportunity to do more. (Later, Henry is fired by the bank and given no reason for his dismissal; the reason of course is clear to readers.)

As the story unfolds, the hurtful slights and more serious discrimination against Japanese Americans accumulate in a steady stream. Taro speaks of how when he first came to the United States, he was humiliated at school because of his poor English skills. (He worked hard to master English, a skill which Hana never seems to acquire.) When Taro tries to rent a house he is refused many times by white landlords who offer the flimsiest of excuses to justify shutting him out. Then there is the delegation of neighborhood whites who report a complaint about the presence of Japanese on the block; they do not have the courage to admit that they are the ones who are complaining, and when asked they can point to nothing that Taro and Hana have actually done to offend anyone. This is racism pure and simple, based not on what a person does but what he or she is. Later, when Hana’s daughter Mary, who was born in the United States and is an American citizen, is growing up, she is advised by the staff at the city swimming pool that she would not “enjoy” swimming there, a thinly veiled way of saying she is not welcome. There may not have been an outright ban on Asians using the pool, but there was a de facto segregation that was understood by everyone.

Very occasionally, the discomfort felt by the Japanese Americans is due simply to the unfamiliarity of white people with Japanese culture. When Hana is asked by the streetcar conductor to move to the rear, this is only because of the pungent smell from the pickled radish she is carrying. Hana is so familiar with the smell she does not even notice it, but to the whites it is an unpleasant odor. However, the cultural and racial misunderstandings usually have a darker coloring. Even after some years living in the United States, Hana never goes to a store without wondering if the clerks will ignore or humiliate her simply because of her race, and she will not speak to a white person unless she is spoken to first, for fear of being rebuffed. This has the effect of wearing her down. “It was as though she were going through life pressed down, apologetic, making herself small and inconspicuous, never able to reach out or to feel completely fulfilled.” Some Japanese Americans are pushed beyond the breaking point by the discrimination and other difficulties they face, like the Sunday School superintendent who gets into debt and becomes so desperate that he steals church funds in order to pay for his and his wife’s passage back to Japan. Another example is Kenji Nishima, who has a nervous breakdown due in part to the pressures of studying at the seminary in an unfamiliar language; he recovers only due to the kindness of Taro and Hana, who take him into their home.

The pervasive irony of the situation is that the Japanese Americans in the novel want only to be ideal American citizens; they are almost without exception presented as responsible, hard-working, moral people. The advice Taro and Hana give to Mary is typical of the collective aspiration of the Japanese American community. They tell their daughter she must study hard “so she would become a law-abiding citizen, who would one day be accepted and integrated into the fabric of white American society.” These are not people who show any desire to preserve their Japanese culture to the exclusion of American culture. They want to assimilate into the mainstream. This is made abundantly clear early in the novel: Henry Toda changed his name from Hisakazu to Henry to make it easier for white people to remember; when Hana first puts on Western clothing, Taro compliments her by saying, “You look like a real American lady,” and the narrator adds, “that being the highest compliment he could bestow”; Taro wants an American-style Christian wedding, rejecting “the stiff formality of a Japanese wedding with a doll-like bride, bewigged and so heavily encrusted with powder that the groom scarcely recognized her,” and when he and Hana have a daughter they give her an American first name, Mary, adding a Japanese middle name, not the other way round. Also, it is emphasized many times that a large number of Japanese Americans are devout Christians, like the vast majority of white Americans. This contrasts with the Buddhism common in Japan, which has been the only religion Hana has known before she came to the United States. The other common religion in Japan, Shinto, is mentioned only once, and that is when Taro states categorically that he wants none of the traditional Shinto rituals at his wedding.

The reward that these attractive, pleasant folk receive from their new country is to be sent to concentration camps. This may be a blunt way of putting it, but the mass “evacuation” (to use the euphemism favored by the U.S. government at the time) of Japanese Americans in 1942 is not something that is easy to gloss over. It takes up the final third of *Picture Bride* and produces its final tragedy, the cruel and senseless death

of Taro, shot by a security guard at the camp because the guard thinks, mistakenly, that he is trying to escape.

In her straightforward, unadorned prose, Uchida captures the bewildering and painful experience of the Pacific Coast Japanese-American community following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The account given in *Picture Bride* of those events is historically accurate to the smallest details. For example, in the novel, Dr. Kaneda is taken away by the FBI on the night of December 7, and this reflects what actually happened on that night. The FBI began to round up all the Japanese-American community leaders. Within forty-eight hours, 1,291 of those leaders were in custody; most of them were treated as enemy aliens and quickly sent to internment camps. This was in spite of the fact that no formal charges were made against them and no evidence ever surfaced to indicate that any of them had engaged in any subversive activities. The historical truth is that Japanese Americans were peace-loving people who presented no threat to the U.S. war effort. As the novel shows, initially they hoped that Americans would not see them as the enemy, but these hopes were soon dashed and they found themselves being herded into camps policed by armed guards.

Newspaper articles published at the time reveal something of the ugly attitudes that were held by whites on the West Coast toward Japanese Americans. The journalist Arthur Caylor made regular contributions to the *San Francisco News* in 1942, and an article by Caylor published on April 29, 1942 began as follows:

When the war is over and the Japanese come back to Japtown . . . they're likely to discover that Japtown doesn't live here anymore. Indeed, the Japanese—aliens and citizens alike—may find that San Francisco has grown cold-shoulderish to their return at all.For there seems to be a sub-surface meeting-of-minds if not an actual campaign among certain influential groups, some of them official, to extend the cleanup Japantown campaign in such a way as to build a Japanese wall around this once tolerant and international city.Just as some governors have been swearing to High Heaven that no Japanese shall come into their states, b'gosh, so certain San Franciscans begun voicing the slogan that the Japanese shall never come back.

It was attitudes such as these that made mass "evacuations" of Japanese Americans possible without protest from anyone. The procedure was that the internees were first taken to a local, temporary camp, before being sent to a more permanent camp, many of which were built on Native American reservations in remote locations. Living conditions at Tanforen, the converted race track south of San Francisco where Taro and Hana are first sent, were as described in the novel. This is confirmed by *Citizen 13660*, a memoir published in 1946 by Miné Okubo about her experience in Tanforen. The title refers to the number ascribed to her by the authorities, just as Taro and Hana are given the family number 13453. When government bureaucracies take over, people are reduced to mere numbers. Okubo describes the demoralizing discomfort of living at Tanforen, just as Taro and Hana experience it: curfews, daily roll calls, white camp police patrolling, looking for contraband, lack of privacy, infestation of rodents, and continual lack of hot water for washing. Conditions at the permanent camps were no better. This was acknowledged at the time by the War Relocation Authority, a

government body created in March 1942, in a report issued in May 1943. This report is notable for the self-congratulatory tone with which it begins:

During the spring and summer of 1942, the United States Government carried out, in remarkably short time and without serious incident, one of the largest controlled migrations in history. This was the movement of 110,000 people of Japanese descent from their homes in an area bordering the Pacific coast into 10 wartime communities constructed in remote areas between the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Mississippi River.

The phrase “controlled migrations” is of course a euphemism for forced removal and incarceration, while the phrase “wartime communities” is a euphemism for internment camps. However, further down in the report, the War Relocation Authority is honest enough to describe what the camps are really like:

The physical standards of life in the relocation centers have never been much above the bare subsistence level. . . . the environment of the centers—despite all efforts to make them livable—remains subnormal and probably always will be.

The fictional characters Taro and Hana in *Picture Bride* could certainly testify to that.

Source: Bryan Aubrey , Critical Essay on *Picture Bride*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2008.

Topics for Further Study

• Compose letters from a prospective Picture Bride and her intended future husband. Write two sets of three letters, one answering the other. In these letters describe yourself. For one letter, you might, as the prospective husband, tell your Picture Bride what kind of work you do and what you expect from her as your wife. Then respond as the Picture Bride, telling your future husband what you expect from him. You can write these letters in a serious tone or use your comedic side and make the whole series funny. Read the letters to your class.

• Create two display charts or slide shows for your class. On one display, show a typical wardrobe for a Japanese man and woman for the early period of the twentieth century. Learn the Japanese names of the different pieces of clothing. On the other display, present a wardrobe for an American man and woman contemporary to those same times. Use actual photographs to make the display more informative.

• Conduct research on the Internet or in your local library about the Japanese internment camps. Collect photographs and details of daily life for a teenager in one of the internment camps. Put together a display that shows what a typical day might have been like. Include information on the weather in different seasons, the landscape, what kind of classes children attended each day, what chores they did, what kinds of food they had, and a description of the living quarters. Present this information to your class.

• Watch the movie *Picture Bride* (1994, original screen play by Kayo Hatta). Though this movie is not based on Uchida's novel, it has the same subject matter. How do the stories compare? What emotions are explored in each version? Is internment a part of both stories? Are the endings similar? In what ways do the main characters differ? Present a short synopsis of the movie to your class and explain how the movie compares to the novel.

Compare and Contrast

- **1940s:** According to the 1940 U.S. Census, the population of Japanese Americans in the United States totals 285,116. Most live in Hawaii or in California.

- **Today:** Japanese Americans are not singled out in the U.S. Census. They are grouped under a general category of people who are of Asian descent. There are about 7 millions Asian Americans living in the United States. The majority live in New York, California, and Hawaii.

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- **1940s:** About 120,000 Japanese American citizens living along the West Coast are sent to internment camps following the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor for what the government calls security reasons.

- **Today:** Many Arab Americans in the United States are detained by the U.S. government for what are termed security reasons after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. From 2002 through 2006, approximately five hundred Muslims arrested in Afghanistan and elsewhere are detained at a U.S. detention camp at Guantanamo, Cuba, because they are suspected by the Bush administration of being possible al-Qaeda or Taliban operatives. The majority are held without being charged or having access to legal counsel. In June 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court rules against the Bush administration, stating that prisoners at Guantanamo are subject to protections guaranteed by the Geneva Convention.

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- **1940s:** By the end of World War II, the economy of Japan is devastated and must be supported by the United States.

- **Today:** Japan’s economy is growing. Its success is partly the result of the U.S. market for Japanese electronics and automobiles.

What Do I Read Next?

- Uchida's *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family* (1982) tells of the real experiences of her own family during World War II. In this book, Uchida covers the history of her family before and during the war, including her family's confinement in the Topaz internment camp in central Utah.

- Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1994) relates the story of a Japanese-American woman named Naomi who decides to explore her past, which forces her to confront how her mother disappeared from her life when she was just a little girl. Naomi grew up in Canada, which also interned Japanese immigrants during World War II.

- Hisaye Yamamoto's short story collection *Seventeen Syllables* (revised edition, 2001) tells about growing up as a Japanese American. Her stories explore the acculturation process and the hardships of living in an internment camp.

- *The Loom and Other Stories* (1991), a collection of short stories by R. A. Sasaki, tells about Japanese-American experiences in the San Francisco area in the late twentieth century.

- Set in the 1950s, Cynthia Kadohata's coming-of-age novel *Floating World* (1989) follows the experiences of a Japanese-American family as they move from one town to another in search of work. Olivia Ann Osaka, a teenager, is the focal character, who is forced to continually make up a new life each time her family takes to the road.

Further Study

Harth, Erica, ed., *Last Witnesses: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

With racism against American Muslims rising in the United States, this book provides insights into the consequences of fear and hatred brought against a particular ethnic group. The essays in this book were written by Japanese-American descendants of those interned in U.S. camps during World War II. These voices, long silenced by the shame that was associated with the internment, provide insights into the long-lasting effects of racial prejudice.

Inada, Lawson Fusao, ed., *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese Internment Experience*, Heyday Books, 2000.

Sponsored by the California Historic Society, this book contains essays, poetry, art, biographies, and government documents concerning the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Ng, Franklin, *The History and Immigration of Asian Americans*, Routledge, 1998.

Professor Ng provides a comprehensive study of the history of immigration and the challenges imposed on Asian Americans who came to the United States. Immigrants from China, Japan, and Korea were some of the first to come to this country. Ng's book also covers later immigrants, such as those from Vietnam, Thailand, and other southern Asian countries.

Robinson, Greg, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*, Harvard University Press, 2003.

The background of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision to intern over 100,000 Japanese Americans has only been briefly accounted for in most history books that deal with World War II. In Robinson's book, letters, memos, diary entries, and government documents written by the president are used to explain why an otherwise humanitarian leader decided to deprive Japanese Americans of their civil rights.

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BOOKRAGS

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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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