

The Japanese American Experience during World War II Annotated Bibliography of Fiction and Nonfiction for Students

Picture Books

Bunting, Eve. *So Far from the Sea*, illustrated by **Chris K. Soentpiet** (Clarion, 1998). Before moving to Boston, the Iwasaki family makes one last trip to Laura's grandfather's grave at Manzanar. Laura recounts her father's stories of living there when he was a boy. Laura has brought a poignant gift to leave on her grandfather's grave as a remembrance. Helpfully for a child listener, Laura's story is in color, and images recollecting the 1940s are in black and white.

Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*, illustrated by **Dom Lee** (Lee & Low, 1993). The story begins inside the camp when Shorty's dad decides the boys need something to do and organizes the building of a baseball field. Their games animate even the guards. Back home, Shorty's baseball skills and determination shore him up against prejudice, and he even hits a home run! Camp is in a desert "in the middle of nowhere."

Mochizuki, Ken. *Heroes*, illustrated by **Dom Lee** (Lee & Low, 1995). Donnie's friends like to play war and make him the enemy since he looks like "them" (Vietnam era). He wishes his dad and uncle, both war heroes, would come to his rescue, but they have no wish to claim heroics. At last, seeing his need, they pick him up at school wearing their World War II uniforms and start a game of football with the surprised boys. [My expert found some discrepancies between the text and illustrations of the WWII/Korean era uniforms.]

Say, Allen. *Home of the Brave*, illustrated by **Allen Say** (Houghton Mifflin, 2002). In a dream sequence, the first-person narrator emerges into a desert internment camp where he experiences a transformation and some closure. Sparse and poetic, the book's imagery may be puzzling to children. Camp suggested includes Southwest Indian imagery.

Uchida, Yoshiko. *The Bracelet*, illustrated by **Joanna Yardley** (Philomel, 1976, 1993). When Emi's family has to go to the camp, her best friend gives her a going-away present of a bracelet. Emi fears she will forget her friend but learns that memory is something different from possessions. Camp mentioned is "in Utah desert."

Juvenile

Denenberg, Barry. *The Journal of Ben Uchida, Citizen 13559, Mirror Lake Internment Camp* (Scholastic, 1999). Fictionalized journal of a 12-year-old boy from April 1942 to February 1943, telling of his experience being sent away to the fictional Mirror Lake Internment Camp. The author fictionalized the camp in order to bring in experiences from a variety of actual camps to one setting. Book includes an appendix, "Life in America in 1942," with actual photographs taken at Manzanar and other camps by photographer Toyo Miyataki.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira* (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005). This Newberry Award-winning book is set in the 1950s, beginning when the Takeshima family moves to Georgia where the parents have found work at a poultry plant. They work long hours under grueling conditions and for low pay. The story of a loving family unfolds in the words of their younger daughter, Katie, whose role it is to care for her ill sister and her younger brother. In the face of deathly illness and oppression, the family retains their dignity and hope.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Weedflower* (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006). After Pearl Harbor, Sumiko must leave her friends, her school, and her beloved flower farm to move with other Japanese Americans to an internment camp at Poston, Arizona. Sumiko observes changes in the people she loves as they adjust to camp life and overhears lively conversations and debates causing her, and young readers, to think philosophically about such issues as liberty and democracy. In the process she gains respect for a Mojave boy who overcomes some bitterness of his own and proves to be a true friend. Ideal for grades 4-6.

Uchida, Yoshiko. *Journey to Topaz*, illustrated by **Donald Carrick** (Heyday Books, 1971, 2004). Yuki's father is taken away; then she, her mother, and her older brother, Ken, are taken to Tanforan Racetrack and on to the Topaz Internment Camp in Utah. Yuki's friend Emi becomes ill and must be hospitalized, their school class must wrestle with the tragic shooting of Emi's grandfather by a guard, and Yuki's brother decides to enlist in the army. At last Yuki's father is returned to them, and they are able to leave the camp and seek a hopeful future. Much food for thought for readers in grades 4-6.

Nonfiction

Cooper, Michael L. *Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II* (Clarion, 2000). Includes the camp experience as well as military experience of Japanese American soldiers fighting for the U.S.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, and James D. Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience during and after the World War II Internment* (Bantam Books, 1973).

Levine, Ellen. *A Fence Away from Freedom: Japanese Americans and World War II* (G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1995).

McGowen, Tom F. *Go for Broke: Japanese Americans in World War II* (Franklin Watts, 1995). Looks at the heroic work of Japanese American soldiers in Europe and the Pacific.

Oppenheim, Joanne. *Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference* (Scholastic, 2006). This librarian corresponded with children sent to the camps and saved their correspondence.

Stanley, Jerry. *I Am an American* (Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1994). The larger story is told through an individual's story.

Tunnell, Michael O., and George W. Chilcoat. *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp Based on a Classroom Diary* (Holiday House, 1996). Diary of a third-grade class at the Topaz camp.

Welch, Catherine A. *Children of the Relocation Camps* (Carolrhoda Books, 2000). Explores different aspects of camp life through the eyes of children.