

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

About the Book

In December 1941, Koji Miyamoto has just turned thirteen, but he's currently without a strong male role model in his life since his Japanese father has returned to Japan to help care for his family. Koji and his American mother, Adeline, miss Ichiro even more as their lives are turned upside down by the U.S. government following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Being half Japanese on the streets of San Francisco during World War II is difficult for Koji. Racial slurs and restrictions are on every corner. He's almost excited at the prospect of being sent to "camp"—until his mother explains what kind of camp it is. Given that Koji is American born, Adeline feels sure there must be some mistake that he has been targeted for evacuation. When nothing can be done to change the situation, Adeline gets herself assigned to go with him to the Alameda Downs assembly center.

Once there, Koji finds that being half white with a seemingly unattached white mother makes him a target of prejudice and taunting once again. As he searches for his identity and tries to work through his anger behind the barbed wire, Koji gets into trouble with a gang and risks losing what he most wants—the comfort and love of his family.

Koji's story is based on true events and offers an introduction to historical themes and some factual details about the attacks on Pearl Harbor and the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans for the duration of World War II. The book contains historically accurate racial epithets, such as "Jap," that we recognize as offensive today, covers mature topics such as bullying, vandalism and theft, and includes references to promiscuity and marital infidelity.



Common Core Alignment

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Reading in the areas of Literature, Writing, and Language. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade level–specific Common Core State Standards. Each question and activity in this guide includes a reference for a specific grade level strand, domain, and standard. As you instruct, please keep this teaching note in mind: For each of the guiding questions, students should support their claims with textual evidence.

Pre-reading Activities

The Graphic Novel

Though many students may be familiar with the format of the graphic novel, others may have little or no experience with this type of reading. Given that a graphic novel is made up of both text and pictures, students need to recognize the importance of the visual elements of the story and understand why it is critical to take time to explore the pictures *together with the text* for full meaning and a rich reading experience.

To help facilitate insightful reading and productive discussions, get “graphic” with the terminology students need to describe all the visual elements that tell the story. Familiarize yourself with the Drawing Words & Writing Pictures resource “What Is a ‘Graphic Novel?’” (find a link on the next page in Resources) to support class or small group efforts to create a guide for navigating a graphic novel.

Provide students with the word bank on the next page and a spread from *Gaijin: American Prisoner of War* (try copying pages 10 and 11, leaving a wide margin for notes) or from another graphic novel. Students should identify, discuss, and label elements and attributes of the graphic novel they find within the spread. Have them include some general analysis and explanation of the significance and purpose of these visual elements.

Use this activity to also get students thinking about what form various elements of literature and literary devices—such as imagery, perspective, characterization, and setting—take in the graphic novel. Then, as they read, students will be primed to question and annotate key ideas, literary elements, and other techniques they discover in the visual elements.

- panels
- panel borders (or frames)
- panel arrangements
- gutters
- balloons (or bubbles)
- bleeds
- captions
- motion lines (movement)
- sequence
- page layout
- text
- font
- art style
- color palette
- patterns
- light
- contrast
- shape

Resources

- *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom* by Katie Monnin
- *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud
- “It’s More Than Just a Comic! An Introduction to the Graphic Novel” by Anita Gonzalez
<http://ohiorc.org/adlit/InPerspective/Issue/2014-02/Article/feature.aspx>
- Drawing Words & Writing Pictures: “What Is a ‘Graphic Novel?’”
<http://dw-wp.com/resources/what-is-a-graphic-novel>

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2

Anticipation Guide

An anticipation guide is often used with nonfiction to activate students' prior knowledge of a topic. The strategy also works well with exploring the themes and big ideas found in fiction. A number of themes could be explored through the historical fiction graphic novel *Gaijin*, including racism, prejudice, loyalty, citizenship and Japanese internment.

Depending on your curricular goals and the level of maturity and critical thinking skills of your students, create a list of six to twelve provocative thematic and/or topic-based statements, or choose from the examples below. Provide this list to your students. Ask them to note whether they agree or disagree with each statement and to give a brief written explanation for each response. Students should work individually and offer their own opinions when completing the anticipation guide, but then also have the opportunity to discuss their answers and rationales with their classmates.

Example Statements

- Prejudice and racism are identical.
- Racism in the United States is limited to African Americans.
- People of different races should not get married.
- Under the U.S. Constitution, everyone has the right to be treated fairly, regardless of race, culture, gender, or religion.
- It is acceptable to limit the rights of people in the name of national security.
- Anyone can come to the United States and become a citizen.
- American citizens were imprisoned in internment camps in the United States during World War II.
- Good citizens are patriotic and loyal and do not question the government's authority.
- People should always stand up for themselves.
- Showing loyal behavior is the same thing as loyalty.

During your discussion, encourage students to keep thinking about the statements as they read the book. When students have finished reading, ask them to return to their anticipation guide and reflect on their pre-reading answers. Did the book alter their thinking? Have students respond to the statements again, this time noting any changes in their attitudes or knowledge that might affect their answers. They should include any textual evidence that supports or runs counter to their responses. Review the statements as a class, asking students to share whether the book revised their thinking and why or why not.

Resources

- Anticipation Guides
www.adlit.org/strategies/19712/

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1

Discussion Questions

The questions below can be used for class discussion and reflection or offered to students as reflective writing prompts. As students read, also encourage them to note ideas they find interesting, passages they don't understand, details they question, or ideas that make them wonder. Consider asking them to generate these further points for discussion in a reader's notebook or on sticky notes.

- 1 It's Koji's thirteenth birthday, yet he and his mother don't seem to have plans to celebrate. Why do you think Koji's birthday isn't a big deal? What might have been an appropriate way to mark this milestone, culturally, historically, or otherwise?
- 2 Koji's mother reassures him that his father wasn't flying a warplane, but Koji seems to have doubts, and his dreams are filled with his father soaring over Pearl Harbor. What do you think Koji's dreams mean? What do his dreams symbolize about his relationship with his father?

- 3 After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Koji seems to hear the word “Jap” and other racial slurs everywhere he goes. Given his reaction at school and on the cable car, do you think he ever heard these kinds of insults before Pearl Harbor? Why or why not? What were race relations like in California prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor? How would you have dealt with racist comments or restrictions?
- 4 Koji’s father is Japanese and his mother is American. How do you think Koji identifies himself? Koji vehemently says he is “not a Jap.” How do others identify him? How do others identify you? How does your family identify you? How do you identify yourself? Are there differences between the way you identify yourself and the ways others identify you? What are the sources of these differences?
- 5 Koji was born in San Francisco. What does it mean when the government classifies him as an “enemy alien”? What are his rights as an American citizen?
- 6 When the internees are boarding buses to be taken away from their homes, jobs, and lives, everyone seems to go peacefully. Should they have behaved differently? Why or why not? How would you have reacted in that situation?
- 7 At Alameda Downs, Koji is hoping for a big juicy steak dinner, but instead he finds spam, beans, and turnips on the menu. How would you feel about not having any choice or say in what you had to eat or when you got to eat it? What other choices have been taken away from those now living at Alameda Downs?
- 8 Koji protests being called “Jap” and tries to stand up for himself when no one else does, yet he uses the word when talking to Mr. Asai about his father. If Koji is offended by the term, why would he use it?
- 9 Why do you think the author chose to create a character like Jo? Compare how the book’s different characters deal with internment. How do you think you would have dealt with being forced to live behind barbed wire?

- 10 Koji always seems ready to fight to solve his problems. Why? Offer evidence that helps to explain Koji's intense anger.
- 11 Do you agree or disagree with Mr. Asai's advice to Koji to just forget about Jo and his gang? Why? What are some other options open to Koji? What would you have done in his situation?
- 12 Koji's parents were married in Japan. Would their interracial marriage have been recognized as a legal union in California during this time period? How does Adeline's relationship with Koji's father affect how she is perceived and treated by others in the U.S.?
- 13 Why is Koji suspicious of his mother's activities at the assembly center? Give reasons he might have to think she is being unfaithful to his father. Where do Koji's loyalties lie when it comes to his parents?
- 14 When Koji and his mother return to San Francisco after the war, Koji receives letters that his father wrote to him from Japan during the war. Why didn't he get these letters earlier? How do you think Koji feels, hearing from his father after such a long time? How would you have felt?
- 15 How might your reaction to Koji's story have been different if it were told in a different format? What are the benefits and/or drawbacks to the reader of the story's graphic novel format? What would have been lost and/or gained if it were told as a written narrative?

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2

Curriculum Connections

Reading, Research, and Writing

Geography of War

Koji and his mother don't know where Pearl Harbor is when they hear about its bombing on the radio. They get a map and look it up, but remain puzzled as to why such an attack happened "out in the middle of nowhere."

Why did the Japanese choose to attack Pearl Harbor? Why is the attack on Pearl Harbor such a historically important event? Have students research and develop a multimedia presentation on the strategic significance of Pearl Harbor and the short-term and long-term effects of the Japanese attack.

Resources

- Remembering Pearl Harbor: Pearl Harbor Attack Map
education.nationalgeographic.com/education/multimedia/interactive/pearl-harbor/?ar_a=1
- America on the Sidelines: The United States and World Affairs, 1931–1941
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/static/neh/interactives/neutrality/>
- Pearl Harbor Raid, 7 December 1941
www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/wwii-pac/pearlhbr/pearlhbr.htm

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.6

Picturing the Internment Experience

As Koji and his mother board Bus 6, a guard tells a woman taking photographs to “get lost, toots.” In fact, the U.S. government was careful to officially document the relocation of Japanese and Japanese Americans. But if the female photographer depicted in the book was Dorothea Lange, many of her insightful images were not seen until long after the war.

All photographers for the War Relocation Authority were told to avoid taking pictures of barbed wire, watchtowers, armed guards, or any defiance from internees. Most of Lange’s photographs were suppressed because they showed the real hardships and desperate conditions internees faced.

Lange’s photographs and thousands of others are available online. Have students review and select images to create a photo essay. The images they choose should be positioned in an order that tells a story or makes a point about the Japanese internment experience. To help plan their photo essays, students should do some informal writing about what each image means to them or what they feel it conveys. That writing can also be a starting point for the text and captions of their essay. Have students produce their photo essays using available technology such as slide shows, PowerPoint presentations, or e-book authoring applications and then present their visual stories to the entire class.



Resources

- War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement, 1942–1945
oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf596nb4h0
- Ansel Adams’s Photographs of Japanese American Internment at Manzanar
www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/related.html
- Japanese American Archival Collection ImageBase
digital.lib.csus.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/jaac
- Densho Digital Archive (Photo/Document Collections)
archive.densho.org
- Examples of Photo Essays: UNICEF Photo Essays
www.unicef.org/photoessays/index-pe.html

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7

News from Camp

Koji’s mother is pleased about the article in the camp newsletter that features the Victory Garden that Koji and Mr. Asai planted. Assembly and relocation camps did have their own outlets for camp news. Though internees wrote, edited, and produced these papers, there were restrictions in place that limited true freedom of the press.

Have students examine some of the publications produced in Japanese internment camps. Talk about how the article about Koji and Mr. Asai might have read in the Alameda Downs camp newsletter. Then ask students to write an article of their own that could have been included in such a publication. They can focus their articles on topics or themes from the book, such as Victory Gardens, vandalism, infirmary services, or camp schools, or do additional research on other news or features topics they noted in their review of actual internment camp newspapers. Talk about how and where to research actual facts for their articles and how to find and include photos or images to add visual interest to their stories.

Resources

- Densho Digital Archive (Camp Newspaper Collections)
archive.densho.org
- Newspapers in Camp
encyclopedia.densho.org/Newspapers_in_camp
- Utah Digital Newspapers: Topaz Times
<http://digitalnewspapers.org/newspaper/?paper=Topaz+Times>
- Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives
calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/jarda

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7

The Untold Story

Agua Dulce, the fictional relocation camp in the desert where Koji and his mother are interned for the duration of the war, is based on Manzanar, a relocation camp in California that was home to more than ten thousand people.

Have students research what life was like at Manzanar and use what they learn to create a detailed episode from Koji's life at Agua Dulce. They can tell the story in a comic format or in letters from Koji to his father.

Students can also tackle topics and other untold stories from the book such as the experiences of Jo and his gang or what it was like for Koji's father in Japan during the war.

Resources

- Virtual Museum Exhibit: Manzanar
www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/manz/war_exclusion.html
- Manzanar War Relocation Center Records 1942–1946
oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt2z09p45v

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7



Sharing the Lesson

Gaijin: American Prisoner of War is a story based on the history of the author's great-aunt. Koji was not a real person, but his story helps us understand the very real experiences of those imprisoned and the impact of their forced removal.

Thousands more stories wait to be discovered. Understanding that there are multiple perspectives and multiple stories is critical to deep understanding of historical events.

Have students examine the removal of citizens and internment camp life from the points of view of numerous eyewitnesses using a variety of resources, including books, photos, letters, journal entries, and recorded oral histories. Make sure students have the support and tools they need to evaluate at least four resources, read closely, check for bias, and compare information.

Give them a creative opportunity to use their research to help tell the world about what happened to the Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II and call for caution against any future exclusion processes. Ask them to also identify groups that are in danger of being excluded or are excluded in less obvious ways and compare those groups' experiences with those of the interned. Consider student project options such as writing and recording a song, producing a short video, or even creating a graphic novel.



Resources

- Four Reads: Learning to Read Primary Documents
<http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/25690>
- Telling Their Stories: Japanese Americans Interned During World War II
www.tellingstories.org/internment/
- Japanese American National Museum’s Collections Online
www.janm.org/collections/
- Densho Learning Center (Civil Rights and Japanese American Incarceration)
www.densho.org/learning/default.asp?path=spice/CivilRights.asp
- The United States Government Presents: Japanese Relocation
<https://archive.org/details/Japanese1943>
- The War Relocation Authority Presents: A Challenge to Democracy
<https://archive.org/details/Challeng1944>

Correlates to CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6

Additional Reading and Resources

Fiction

A Boy No More by Harry Mazer

The Journal of Ben Uchida, Citizen 13559, Mirror Lake Internment Camp
by Barry Denenberg

Journey to Topaz by Yoshiko Uchida

The Moved-Outers by Florence Crannell Means

Thin Wood Walls by David Patneau

Weedflower by Cynthia Kadohata

Nonfiction

Citizen 13660 by Miné Okubo

Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of Japanese American Incarceration during World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference by Joanne Oppenheim

Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston

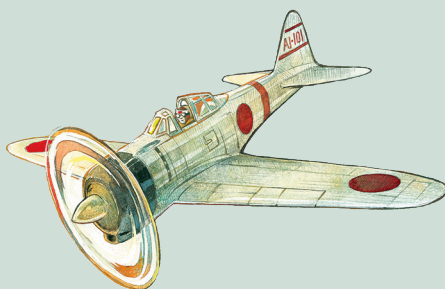
A Fence Away from Freedom by Ellen Levine

I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment by Jerry Stanley

Imprisoned: The Betrayal of Japanese Americans during World War II by Martin W. Sandler

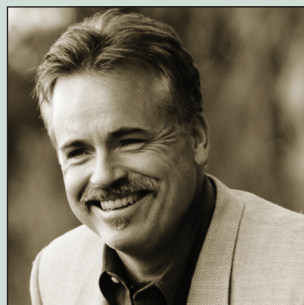
Additional Resources

- A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution
amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html
- Teacher's Guide Primary Source Set: Japanese American Internment During World War II
www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/internment/pdf/teacher_guide.pdf
- Internment of San Francisco Japanese
www.sfmuseum.org/war/evactxt.html
- Exploring the Japanese Internment Through Film & the Internet
<http://caamedia.org/jainternment/index.html>

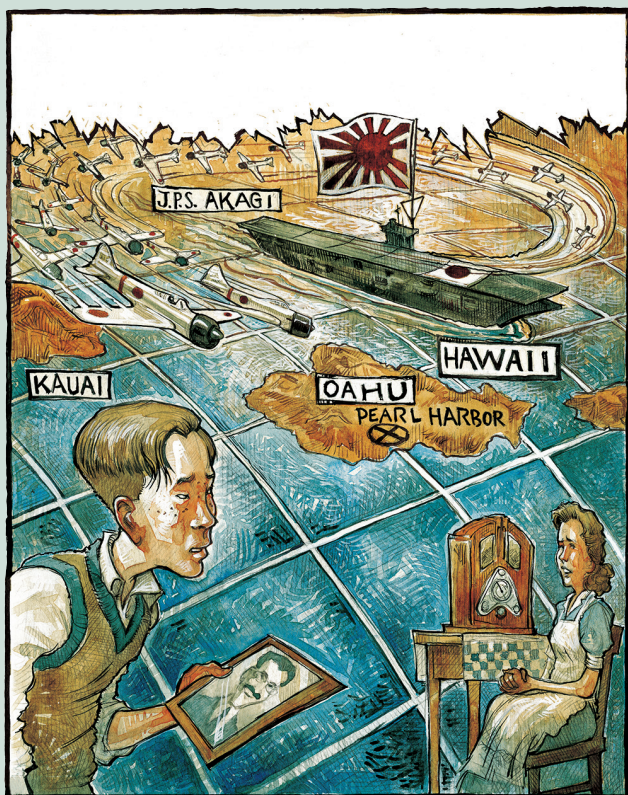


About the Author/Illustrator

A graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, Matt Faulkner is an acclaimed illustrator who has written and illustrated a number of children's books, including *The Moon Clock*, *Black Belt*, and *A Taste of Colored Water*. Matt lives with his wife, Kris Remenar, an author and children's librarian, and their children, in southeast Michigan. Visit him at www.mattfaulkner.com.

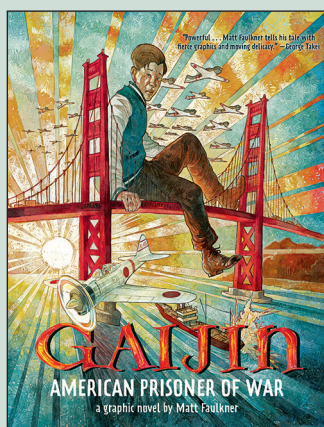


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Rachael Walker (belleofthebook.com) created this guide. She consults on a wide variety of educational programs and multimedia projects with a special focus on children's literacy, and develops educational materials and reading resources for children, parents, and teachers.

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