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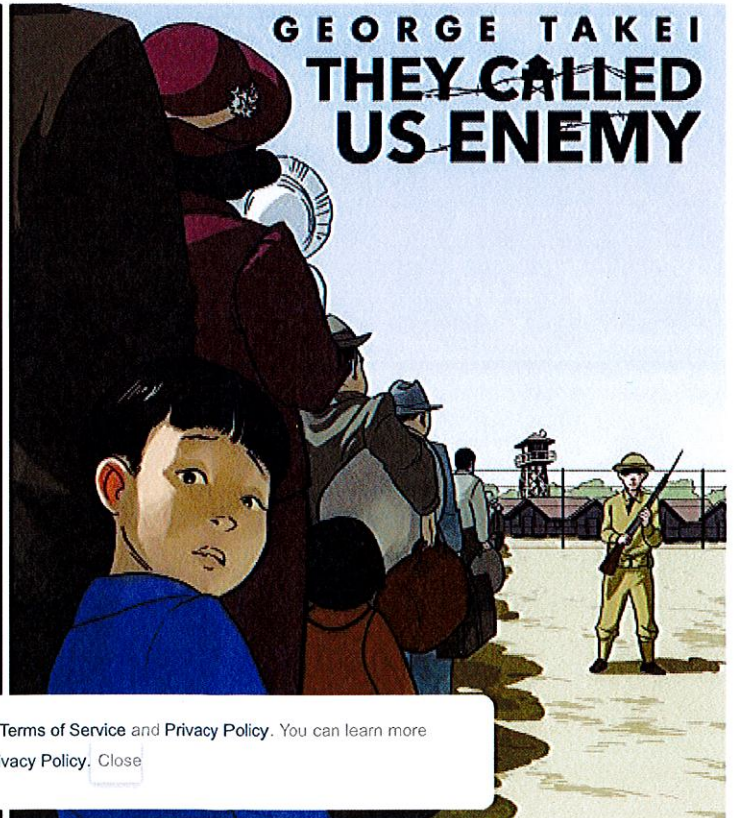
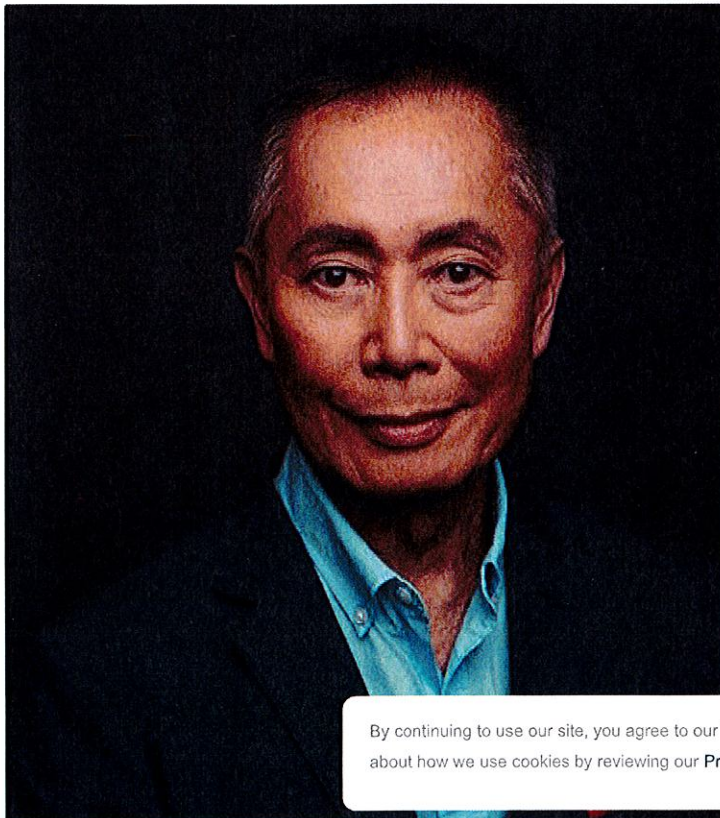
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BOOKS

Discussion guide to 'They Called Us Enemy' by George Takei



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Author George Takei and his book, "They Called Us Enemy." (George Takei; Top Shelf Productions)

By VERA CASTANEDA | STAFF WRITER

SEP. 25, 2019 | 8 AM



Actor George Takei has told his family's story in an autobiography, a TED talk and a Broadway musical. With a new graphic memoir, "They Called Us Enemy," he wants to reach a generation that may know little of how 120,000 Japanese Americans were imprisoned in internment camps during World War II.

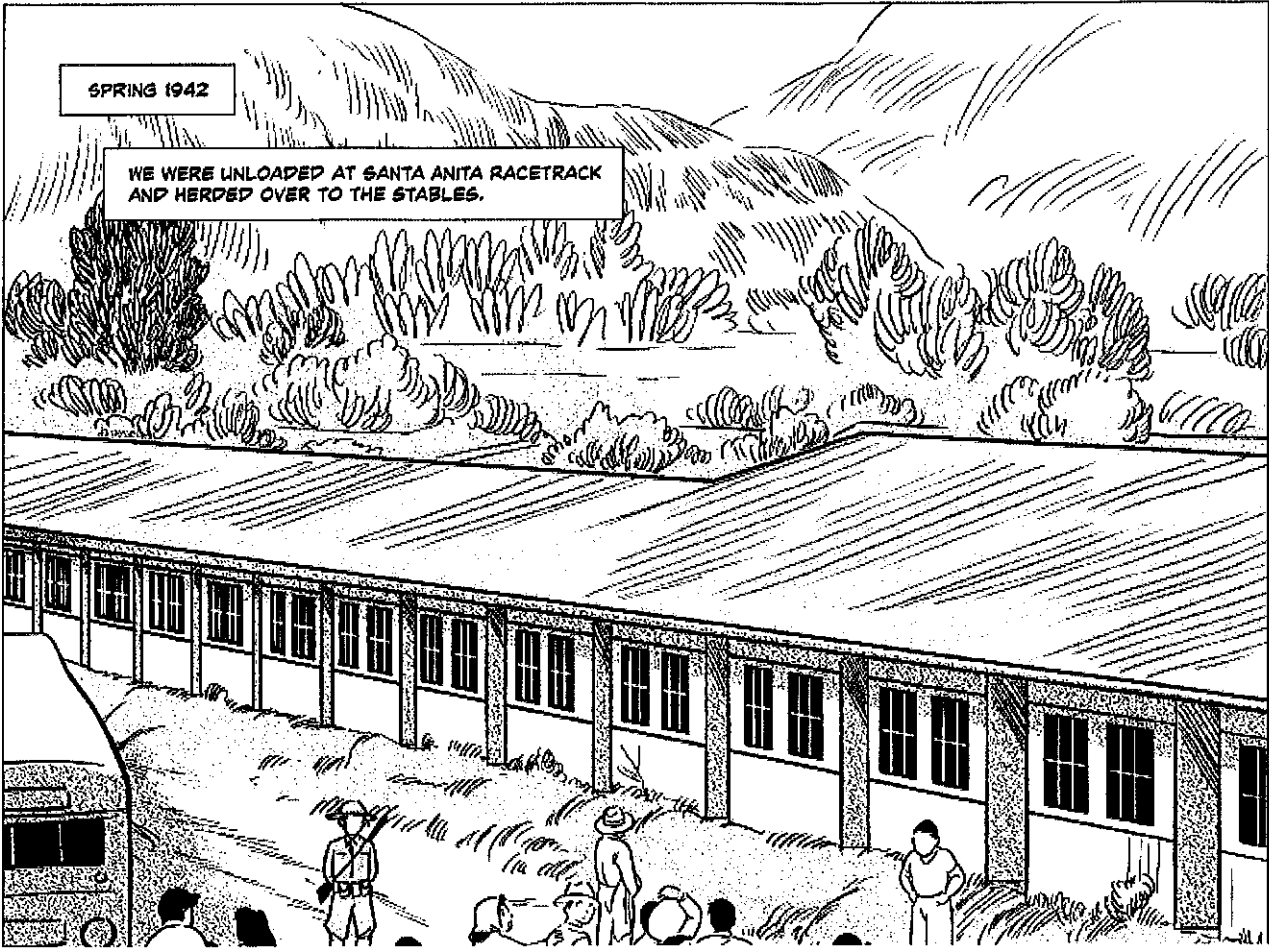
The book, a recent [Los Angeles Times Book Club](#) selection, begins when armed soldiers force 5-year-old George, his parents and his two younger siblings from their Los Angeles home. "It is burned into my memory," Takei writes of that day.

The soldiers took the family to a horse stall at Santa Anita Racetrack. Later, they were shipped to the Rohwer Relocation Center in southeastern Arkansas and later to the high-security Camp Tule Lake in Northern California.

Takei, known for his role as Mr. Sulu on the original "Star Trek" series, details his experiences during four years spent behind barbed wire. "They Called Us Enemy" addresses family, identity, displacement and political issues that have shaped Takei and the United States from the 1940s to the present day.

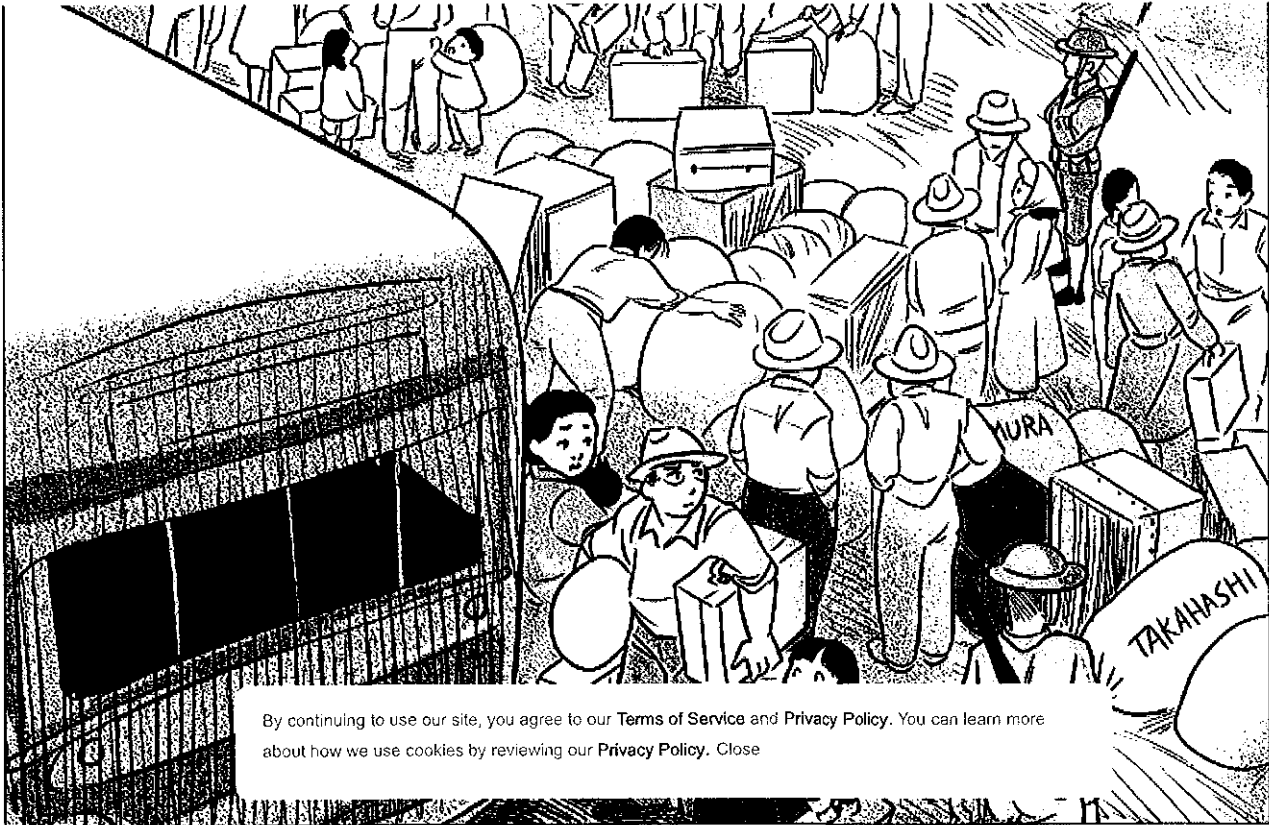
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Los Angeles Times

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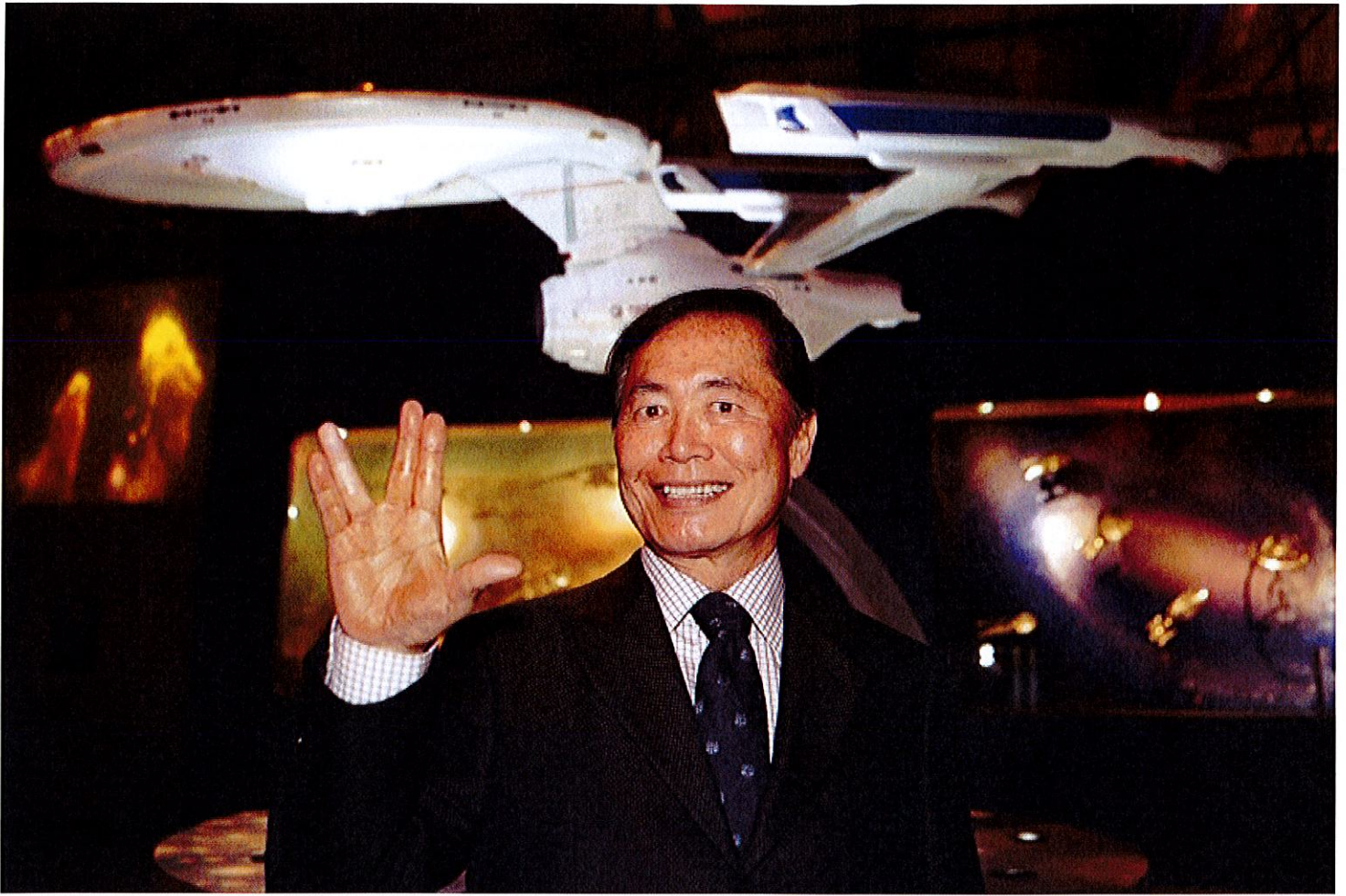


An illustration from "They Called Us Enemy" (Harmony Becker / Top Shelf Productions)

Topics for Discussion

1. **What did you know** about Japanese American incarceration during World War II before reading the book? What new information or details did you learn?
2. **Are there any West Coast** locations referenced in the book that are familiar to you? Did you see those places differently?
3. **George Takei recounts his experience** from the perspective of a small boy. How does that benefit or take away from the narrative?
4. **Takei's mother** smuggled in a sewing machine to make clothes for her children, even though it was forbidden. What items would you bring?
5. **Readers see Takei** deal with the trauma of the camps (pages 141-145). He argues with his father and questions the choices his father made during that time. What do you make of the argument? Is Takei's critique of his father fair?
6. **How do you think** being incarcerated at a young age shapes identity or affects someone as an adult?
7. **As a teenager**, Takei became curious about the internment camps but couldn't find information in history books. What historical events are tied to your family history? How and when did you learn about them?
8. **After Takei's family leaves** the camps, he writes that he felt longing for "those barbed-wire fences ... to us, that was home." To you: What makes a home a home?
9. **What was the most powerful moment** or scene from the book?
10. **Takei and his father argue** about American democracy (Page 195). What do you think about the following statement by Takei's father: "Despite all that we've experienced, our democracy is still the best in the world because it's a people's democracy."
11. **In 1988, President Reagan apologized** on behalf of the United States and signed an act granting \$20,000 to each of the surviving 60,000 internees. What are your thoughts? Can we place a price on what was done?
12. **Takei has told the story of Japanese American** internment camps in different forms during the years. What do you think about his decision to share this story in 2019 as an illustrated graphic memoir? Have you read other graphic novels?
13. **How does Takei's story** connect with issues going on in the United States today?
14. **What will you take away** from this story?

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Actor George Takei played the role of helmsman Hikaru Sulu in the original "Star Trek" series. (Paul Sakuma / AP)

More information

Author Interview: [George Takei](#) talks about "They Called Us Enemy" and his career as an actor and activist.

Review: "[They Called Us Enemy](#)," by George Takei, Justin Eisinger and Steven Scott; illustrated by Harmony Becker. Top Shelf Productions: 204 pages; \$19.99.



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By Merrill

Get instant access to expert insight on topics affecting the lives of many women today.

Community discussion: Takei joined L.A. Times Book Club readers on Sept. 10. Read a [news account](#). Watch a recap on [Spectrum News1](#).

TV episode: The AMC series "[The Terror: Infamy](#)," is set during World War II; producers built a scaled-down replica of the Manzanar internment camp in Central California. Takei plays an elder in the Japanese American fishing village at Terminal Island, which was wiped away by the i

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Reading list: [Immigrant tale](#).

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George Takei chats with L.A. Times Book Club readers and signs copies of "They Called Us Enemy." (Dania Maxwell / Los Angeles Times)

BOOKS

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

They Called Us Enemy

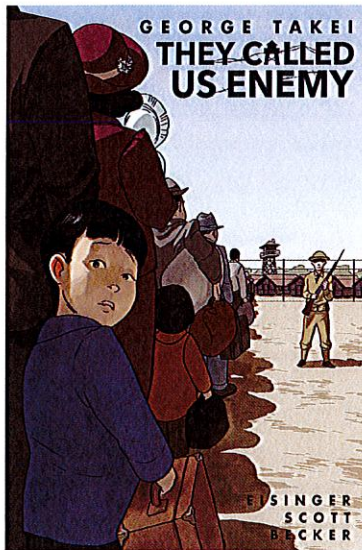
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* Some questions from Los Angeles Times.

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A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO



THEY CALLED US ENEMY
ISBN 978-1-60309-450-4

GEORGE TAKEI **THEY CALLED US ENEMY**

EISLINGER · SCOTT · BECKER

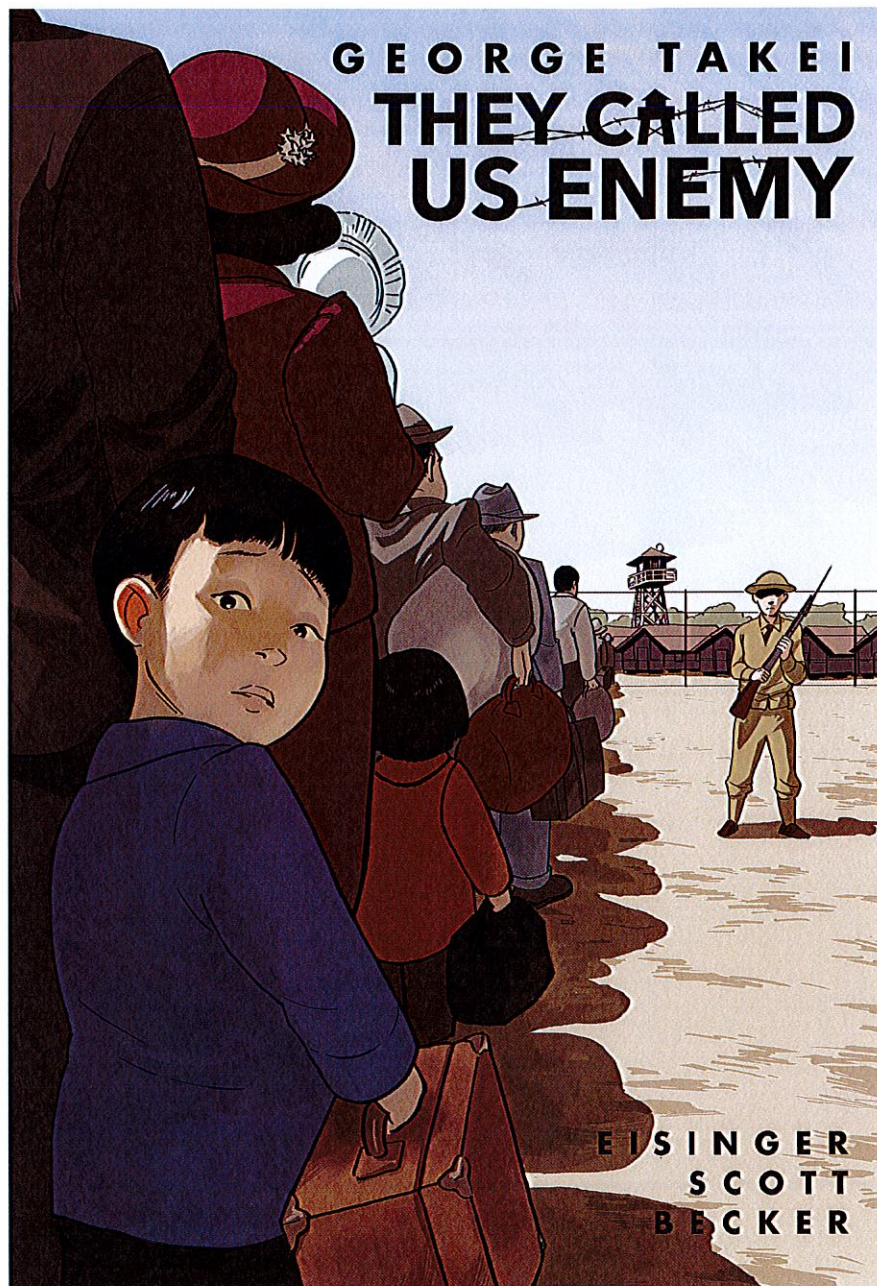
In response to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. This set into motion the forced removal of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast of the United States. Two-thirds of these individuals were American citizens by birth, such as George Takei. At the time, the United States government justified their actions as a military necessity, viewing those of Japanese ancestry as a threat to national

security despite there being no evidence to suggest this. There are varied experiences of this injustice but, in the case of Takei's family, they were forced from their home, sent to live in horse stalls at a temporary detention center, and then imprisoned behind barbed wire.

Many years later, as community members became more vocal about the injustice, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) was established to formally investigate the incarceration of Japanese Americans. An important part of this process was hearing testimonies from those individuals impacted. Takei was among those who spoke out to share first-person accounts. This process resulted in the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, a formal apology from the United States government, and recognition that the incarceration of Japanese Americans was not a result of military necessity but rather caused by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a lack of political leadership.

At a time when issues of citizenship, belonging, and national security are being discussed and debated, it is important that we do not forget the history of the incarceration of Japanese Americans. Firsthand witnesses who share their stories, like George Takei, are vital resources for learning and preserving the lessons of the incarceration. It is likewise important for all individuals to speak out on issues of social justice to ensure that the lessons learned from the past are shared, discussed, and applied. This education guide is designed to encourage students to think critically about the stories shared and issues raised in *They Called Us Enemy* and to consider the impact that this history has on their present-day lives.

FOR GRADES 6-12 • EXTENSIBLE TO ELEMENTARY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS



Front cover of *They Called Us Enemy*
© George Takei

LESSON #1 - COVER ANNOTATION ACTIVITY

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

- » CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Reading, grades 6-12: 7
- » CCSS ELA CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening, grades 6-12: 1, 4

OBJECTIVE:

Practice prereading skills by visually analyzing the cover of *They Called Us Enemy*.

ACTIVITY:

Before reading the book

Give students a printed copy of the cover and instruct them to annotate it by circling words or parts of the image that they have questions or observations about.

Make connections to classroom learning, personal experience, or outside knowledge. This will encourage close reading and help students to make connections while reading the text.

Prompt questions:

- Who might the “They” be referring to in the title?
- Who might the “Us” be referring to in the title?
- What is the setting?
- Do you know anything about the author?
- Where might these people be going?
- Who might be the protagonist?
- What might we expect to read about in this book?

After reading the book

Ask students to analyze and discuss their initial annotations.

- What questions have been answered?
- What new questions do you have?
- What do you notice now that you did not notice before?
- In what ways has your interpretation of what is depicted on the cover changed or evolved?

LESSON #2 - CITIZENSHIP DISCUSSION

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

- » CCSS ELA CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening, grades 6-12: 1, 4

OBJECTIVE:

To explore the concept of citizenship as it relates to the rights of people living in the United States.

ACTIVITY:

Before reading the book

Citizenship, the rights associated with citizenship, and the having or not having of citizenship are all important issues in *They Called Us Enemy*. George's father, like all immigrants from Japan at that time,* was, by law, classified as an alien ineligible for citizenship. George, his siblings, and his mother, however, were all U.S. citizens having been born in the United States.

Before reading, use the prompt questions below to guide your students in exploring the concept of citizenship as it relates to the rights people have in the United States, both as citizens and non-citizens.

This activity can be done as individual reflection, large or small group discussion, or using a think-pair-share protocol.

Prompt Questions:

- What rights, protections and guarantees do all persons in the United States have?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- What additional rights, protections, and/or privileges do United States citizens have?

*Japanese immigrants were not eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship until the passing of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952 (also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DISCUSSION

The United State Constitution and its amendments—including amendments 1-10, known as the Bill of Rights—enumerate the rights of people living within the United States. You can access the entire Constitution online through the National Constitution Center (<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution>) along with other useful resources for understanding the Constitution. The office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services offers this guide: “What Are the Benefits and Responsibilities of Citizenship?” (<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/article/chapter2.pdf>). For a specific look at how the Constitution applies to non-citizens in the United States, check out this article from PBS NewsHour (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/what-constitutional-rights-do-undocumented-immigrants-have>).

LESSON #3 - TIMELINE ACTIVITY

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

» CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Reading, grades 6-12: 1, 2, 7

OBJECTIVE:

In *They Called Us Enemy*, the book does not always follow a linear timeline - jumping between past and present - it is important to understand the complicated sequential history that led to the unjust treatment of Japanese and Japanese American families during World War II. This activity will help students gain a deeper understanding of the book's historical context by aligning the experiences of the Takei family within a framework of historical events that are covered in the book. This will enhance students' understanding of how government actions and larger historical events impact individual families.

ACTIVITY:

During reading

On the bottom of the timeline are the dates and short description of some historical events included in *They Called Us Enemy*. Instruct students to add moments, stories and events from the book (with or without hard dates), that they feel shaped the life of the Takei family. These events should be filled in above the line. If students come across a historical event that they feel is significant that is not included in the lower portion of the timeline, encourage them to make note of it as well.

Example:
Apr 20, 1937
George is born in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles
Pg. 12

TAKEI FAMILY HISTORY:

HISTORICAL EVENTS INCLUDED IN THEY CALLED US ENEMY:

1868-1924
First wave of Japanese immigration to the United States

Dec 7, 1941
Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
Pg. 14

Feb 19, 1942
President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, allowing military authorities to exclude anyone from anywhere without trial or hearings
Pg. 22

Mar 24, 1942
Curfew issued for Japanese Americans along the West Coast
Pg. 26

Spring-Summer 1942
Japanese American families are removed from the West Coast and placed in detention centers and prison camps in the United States
Pg. 31

Feb 3, 1943
Needing more soldiers, the army changes the policy to allow Americans of Japanese ancestry fight in WWII
Pg. 113

1943
United States Army and War Relocation Authority administer a 'loyalty questionnaire' within the camps.
Pg. 109

Jul 1, 1944
Public Law 78-401 signed by FDR allowing Japanese Americans to renounce their United States citizenship
Pg. 149

Dec 18, 1944
United States Supreme Court rules against Fred Korematsu
Pg. 155

Aug 6-9, 1945
United States drops atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
Pg. 155

Aug 14, 1945
WWII ends with VJ (or Victory over Japan) Day
Pg. 158

1960s
Civil rights movement
Pg. 175-178

Sept 8, 1966
Star Trek premieres
Pg. 189

1981
Commission for Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians starts holding public legislative hearings
Pg. 192

Aug 10, 1988
President Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act of 1988
Pg. 192

1990-1999
Redress payments are made, accompanied by a letter of apology signed by the President of the United States
Pg. 193

Jul 21, 2000
President Clinton awards members of the 442nd infantry battalion the Medal of Honor
Pg. 120

Jun 26, 2018
United States Supreme Court rules on *Trump v. Hawaii*
Pg. 200

LESSON #4 - EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

- » CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Reading, grades 6-12: 1, 2, 7
- » CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Writing, grades 6-12: 3, 4, 9
- » CCSS ELA CCR Anchor Standards for Language, grades 6-12: 3

OBJECTIVE:

To explore and understand the experience of Japanese American forced removal during WWII from the perspective of a child and of an adult.

ACTIVITY:

During and after reading

On pages 35-55, we follow George and his family on the train ride from the Santa Anita Racetrack in California to Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas. Throughout this section, George describes his experience, and speculates how his experience may have differed greatly from that of his parents.

As a means to explore these varying perspectives:

- 1) Have students first write a short poem, postcard, or letter about the train experience from the perspective of a child, like George.
- 2) Next, have students write another short poem, postcard, or letter about the same train experience, this time from the perspective of an adult, like George's father.
- 3) Finally, have students compare and contrast their pieces and reflect on the following questions:
 - What types of words did you choose to use in each piece and why?
 - How do your pieces differ, both in content and in tone? Are there any similarities between your two pieces?
 - How does writing these pieces help us empathize with and understand the perspectives of those who lived this history?

LESSON #5 - LOYALTY DISCUSSION

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

- » CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Reading, grades 6-12: 1, 2, 7

OBJECTIVE:

To explore the concept of loyalty and the varying ways Japanese Americans showed loyalty during WWII.

ACTIVITY:

During and after reading

In pages 109-123, George describes the Loyalty Questionnaire distributed to all Japanese Americans over the age of 17 incarcerated in the camps. He additionally describes the various ways Japanese Americans demonstrated their loyalty and patriotism during this time, from those who served in the armed forces (once allowed) to those who were imprisoned for being principled objectors.

Use the prompt questions below to guide your students in a discussion about the concept of loyalty and the ways Japanese Americans showed loyalty during this time.

This activity can be done as individual reflection, large or small group discussion, or using a think-pair-share protocol.

Prompt Questions:

- What does it mean to be loyal to something?
- In what ways did Japanese Americans demonstrate their loyalty during WWII?
- How is standing up for what you believe in a way of showing loyalty?

Students may also look for other passages in the book about loyalty, patriotism, and civic duty.

LESSON #6 - REFLECTION ON "A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY"

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

» CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Reading, grades 6-12: 1, 2, 7

OBJECTIVE:

Students will consider the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and answer questions around issues of American democracy. Students will reflect upon their own thoughts, opinions and experiences as well as current events while taking the historical events from *They Called Us Enemy* into consideration.

ACTIVITY:

After reading

Using the worksheet provided here, have students answer the question prompts.

WORKSHEET: THEY CALLED US ENEMY AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

George Takei's father believed in democracy, and in the book he tells his son George "our democracy is a participatory democracy" (pg. 178). He was willing to speak about his experience and share it. This openness is something he passed along to George, who also shares his family's story. George recognizes the power of making one's voice heard. His status as a public figure helps amplify his voice and he often uses it to speak out against injustice. However, even if you are not a public figure, you have a voice.

What do you think George's father means when he says "our democracy is a participatory democracy"?

Would you agree that American democracy is a participatory democracy? Why or why not?

Why is it important for individuals to speak out against injustice?

Many Japanese Americans, such as George Takei, see parallels between the experiences of their families being stereotyped and the experiences of other groups of people throughout history.

Give an example of an occurrence that you have witnessed, experienced, or heard about when an idea was formed about someone based on a stereotype.

In *They Called Us Enemy*, we learn about people who stood up to help Japanese Americans during a time when it was not popular to be a friend and supporter of Japanese Americans. Herbert Nicholson delivered books and other important items to incarcerated (p. 146-147). Wayne Collins was a lawyer who spent much of his career helping Japanese Americans, including those who renounced their citizenship during World War II, such as George Takei's mother (p. 160-163). It is not always easy to speak out for causes you believe in, especially if they are not popular, but it is important to make your voice heard when you witness injustice.

What issues do you feel strongly about?

How do you make your voice heard?

LESSON #7 – SHARE YOUR STORY: GRAPHIC MEMOIRS

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

- » CCSS ELA-Literacy CCR Anchor Standards for Writing, grades 6-12: 3, 4, 9
- » CCSS ELA CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening, grades 6-12: 1, 2

OBJECTIVE:

To understand and explore the graphic memoir format used for *They Called Us Enemy* and apply that understanding to create and share personal graphic memoirs.

Activity:

After reading or extension activity

They Called Us Enemy is presented as a graphic memoir, sharing the author's account of a personal experience in the format of comics.

Have each student create a 1-page graphic memoir about an important story from his/her life. This graphic memoir can be formatted in any way (one large image or multiple, sequential panels), but must include both imagery and text. Work with students to help them select an impactful life story to share and determine the best words and images to express their ideas. Assure students that drawing skill is not required. Images can be created in any way: on paper, digitally, or as a collage of repurposed images from multiple sources (magazines, online, etc.). The final product should be something the student feels conveys something about who they are, their life, and what they care about. Have students share their graphic memoirs in a gallery walk, and collect them into a class anthology (either in print or PDF format).

The teacher's guide was developed by the Education Department at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM). With a mission to promote understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience, JANM is the largest museum in the United States dedicated to sharing the experience of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

