



When the Emperor Was Divine

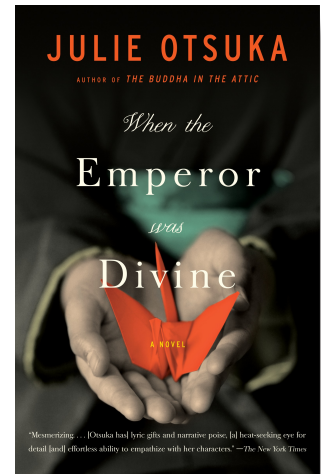
Julie Otsuka

WINNER - ASIAN AMERICAN LITERARY AWARD

WINNER - ALA ALEX AWARD

WINNER - BOOKLIST EDITOR'S CHOICE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

WINNER - NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOKS FOR THE TEEN AGE



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Note to Teachers

This spare and hauntingly evocative novel dramatizes an episode in American history, the internment of more than 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. Yet it is not, strictly speaking, a historical novel. One would not read it to find out why Japan and the U.S. went to war or who decided that Japanese Americans, as opposed to German-or Italian-Americans, posed a sufficient threat to national security to justify their mass incarceration. There's no comprehensive account of how they were rounded up and relocated. We don't know why the authorities eventually decided to release them, allotting each family train fare and \$25.00, the same amount given to criminals released from prison. Rather, *When the Emperor Was Divine* is a novel about people caught in the long shadow of history. And what it tells us, with great conviction and visual detail so vivid that it feels imprinted on our retinas, is what it must have been like to be among the detained, to see what they saw, to feel what they felt, to lose what they lost.

About the Book

Julie Otsuka's protagonists are a forty-one-year-old woman, her ten-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son. We never learn their names. The novel begins on an afternoon in late April 1942, in the cosmopolitan city of Berkeley, California, when the woman sees an official notice posted in the window of Woolworth's. The rest of the first chapter shows her following the orders the notice contains. Over the next several days she locks some of the family's valuables in a back room and buries others in the garden; still other valuables—silk kimonos, records of Japanese opera, a flag of the rising sun—she burns [p. 75]. She gives away the cat and quietly kills the elderly, crippled dog and buries its body in the garden before her children get home from school. When her son asks her where they're going, she tells him she doesn't know. It's only casually, as if by way of an aside, that we learn that the woman's husband was arrested five months before and is being held separately as an alien enemy.

Each of the ensuing chapters follows the members of this family through a different stage of their journey: on a train from California to Utah; in an internment camp in the desert, a small city, fenced with barbed wire, whose tar paper barracks are stifling in summer and bitterly cold in winter; back in Berkeley in a house that is now strange to them, partly because it has been vandalized by a succession of “tenants” and partly because its owners have changed in ways they are just beginning to reckon. Each chapter is narrated from a different point of view—the mother’s, the girl’s, the boy’s, and then both children’s together, with a final coda narrated by the father. This section alone uses the familiar novelistic “I.” By traditional standards not much happens. Nobody falls in or out of love; nobody is killed—except for an unnamed Japanese man who is shot after he ignores an order to step back from the barbed-wire fence, perhaps because he was trying to pick an unusual flower growing just beyond it. There are moments of violence that are rendered quickly and discreetly, as if having a brick thrown through one’s bedroom window were hardly worth remarking. There are moments of beauty. Yet *When the Emperor Was Divine* is charged throughout with enormous tension. Can the woman survive this ordeal without losing her strength? Will the girl lose her gift for snappy banter? Will the dreamy little boy lose his ability to dream? Will they learn something that breaks their hearts? And will the reader?

Preparing to Read

The questions, exercises and assignments that follow are intended to help your students read *When the Emperor Was Divine* and consider it as both a work of art and a meditation on freedom, identity, and loyalty. While the book’s narrative is straightforward and its language simple, readers may be initially disoriented by its shifting point of view and Otsuka’s way of withholding information. Often she lets us see an effect before its cause, an outcome before its preceding expectation. And she is reticent about her characters’ feelings, refusing to name them and instead compelling us to infer them through the things her characters notice, remember, and fantasize about. These tactics make the novel a powerful example of literary minimalism, a method that, when practiced by a writer as generous as Otsuka, turns the reader into a collaborator in the creation of meaning. The book is also a useful adjunct to formal histories of World War II, full of the intimate details that such histories usually leave out. Lastly, given that America has recently been at war and treating certain of its citizens as “alien enemies,” *When the Emperor Was Divine* is a timely invitation to consider the meaning of both those words and the arbitrariness with which they are sometimes assigned.

From an interview with Julie Otsuka

Q: What inspired you to set *When the Emperor Was Divine* in the Japanese internment camps in America during World War II?

A: The obvious inspiration for the novel is my own family’s history. My grandfather was arrested by the FBI the day after Pearl Harbor and incarcerated in various camps administered by the Department of Justice for “dangerous enemy aliens.” My mother, my uncle and my grandmother were interned for three and a half years in Topaz, Utah. . . .

What happened to my mother and her family during the war was not something we talked about much at home while I was growing up. I think that, for many Japanese of my mother’s generation, the war is just an episode they’d rather forget, because of the shame, the stigma, they felt at being labeled “disloyal.” . . . From time to time, I remember, my mother would mention this or that person whom she knew from “camp.” But “camp” just seemed like a totally normal point of reference to me. It was just another word, like “apple” or “chair.” . . . It just never sounded that bad. Camp. And in the big and terrible scheme of things, it wasn’t. It certainly does not compare to what happened to the Jews in Europe during the Holocaust.

That’s another reason, I think, that many Japanese Americans have been reluctant to come forward with their story. Why draw attention to yourself when there are so many people who have suffered fates far worse than your own?

Q: One recurring question in your novel is: What does it mean to be “loyal” or “disloyal”? How can we tell? . . . Our government has been shaping policies on immigration and military tribunals in ways that raise questions about who is entitled to which liberties. Is there any component in these current debates that you find especially troubling or revealing, given your knowledge of the internment camps?

A: That there is even a debate at all is, I think, a good sign. . . . In February of 1942, there were very few who protested or even questioned the president’s order to intern over 120,000 Japanese in this country. (Many people, in fact, seemed relieved to see the Japanese go.) That said, I am still surprised that there has not been more of an outcry against the Bush administration’s recent assault on civil liberties. . . . One does have to wonder: Is this America? Well, yes, it is an America not so unlike the America in which my grandfather was arrested on December 8, 1941.

Q: The novel shifts in perspective, with each character’s point of view prevailing in one section. Did you start writing the book with this structure in mind, or did it evolve as you wrote?

A: I had no structure or plan in mind for the book when I began it. The novel crept up on me—image by image, really—and at a certain point I realized I had a book on my hands. That is fortunate, because if I had sat down one day and consciously tried to write a novel about the camps, I wouldn’t have made it past the first line. The subject matter is too daunting. When you’re writing about something like the uprooting and incarceration of an entire generation of people—your people—well, that can feel like a tremendous and terrible responsibility. Am I the right person to be telling this story? Am I even entitled to tell this story? . . . You can’t help but wonder these things. But then again, as a writer, it’s your job not to wonder about these things and just get on with the telling of the story.

I had never written a novel before, so I really had no idea what I was doing. An image would come to me—a sign on a telephone pole, say, or a train with blacked-out windows winding its way through the landscape, or a boy in a mess hall mistaking every man with black hair for his father—and I would follow it and see where it went.

Historical Background

Between 1901 and 1907, almost 110,000 Japanese immigrated to the United States, drawn by promises of ready work and worsening economic conditions in their homeland. Although many originally came as *dekaseginin*—“temporary sojourners”—work was plentiful and some of the newcomers stayed on and started families. These were the *issei*—Japanese of the first generation. Their children were called *nisei*.

Very quickly they encountered antagonism. Although Japanese made up less than two percent of all immigrants to the United States, newspapers trumpeted an “invasion.” The Asiatic Exclusion League pressed for legislation to halt all Japanese immigration. Politicians ran for office on anti-Japanese platforms. In 1924 Congress passed the National Origins Act, which banned all immigration from Japan.

Following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, hostility turned into paranoia and paranoia was codified into law. Japanese who had lived in America for thirty years found themselves accused of spying. The day after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Treasury Department ordered all Japanese-owned businesses closed and all issei bank accounts frozen. The government had already compiled lists of Japanese whose loyalties might be suspect, and more than a thousand businessmen, community leaders, priests, and educators were arrested up and down the West Coast.

Japanese homes were searched for contraband. Their telephone service was cut off. One newspaper columnist wrote: "I am for the immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. . . . Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands . . . let 'em be pinched, hurt, and hungry." In February 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which empowered the government to remove "any and all" persons of Japanese ancestry from sensitive military areas in four western states. Those affected by the order had only days in which to evacuate. They were compelled to sell their land and businesses for a fraction of their value, or to lease them to neighbors who would later refuse to pay their rent. All told, some 120,000 Japanese Americans were deported from their homes to hastily built camps such as Tule Lake and Manzanar, where they lived behind barbed wire for the duration of the war.

Neither Germans nor Italians living in this country were subject to similar restrictions, and recently declassified documents reveal that the Japanese population was never considered a serious threat to American security. In all of World War II, no person of Japanese ancestry living in the United States, Alaska, or Hawaii was ever charged with any act of espionage or sabotage. As one *nisei* later wrote, the victims of Executive Order 9066 were people whose "only crime was their face."

In 1988, the U.S. government formally apologized to Japanese citizens who had been deprived of their civil liberties during World War II.

This information was gathered from Lauren Kessler, *Stubborn Twig: Three Generations in the Life of a Japanese-American Family*. New York, Random House, 1993.

Understanding the story

I. Evacuation Order No. 19

1. Whose point of view dominates this chapter?
2. What does the woman see in the window? Otsuka tells us that "she wrote down a few words." [p. 3] What do they turn out to be?
3. How much time passes between the appearance of the notice and the events of the rest of the chapter? What do we learn has happened during that time?
4. What items does the woman buy at the hardware store? What does she intend to do with them? Why might Mr. Lundy keep insisting that she can pay him later, and why is she in turn so determined to pay him now?

5. Which of the family possessions do the woman and her children pack; which things do they leave behind? What do their choices tell you about them? Discuss the significance of the bonsai tree, the reproduction of "The Gleaners," and the portrait of Princess Elizabeth.
6. Otsuka describes the woman as someone "who did not always follow the rules." Where in this novel do we see her doing this?
7. Why does the woman kill White Dog? How does she explain its disappearance to the children? Do they believe her? Where else do we see her lying to them?
8. Why is the boy so insistent on keeping his hat on?
9. The girl worries about her looks, noting that "people were staring." [p. 15] What might be the real reason they were staring at her?
10. Why does the girl ask her mother to make her practice for her piano lesson, and why, when her mother refuses, does she practice anyway?
11. At what point in the evening's routines does the woman begin to cry? What is the significance of "La donna é mobile," a song whose title means "Woman Is Fickle"?
12. Discuss the significance of the chapter's final sentence: "Then they would pin their identification numbers to their collars and grab their suitcases and climb up onto the bus and go to wherever it was they had to go." [p. 22] Why is the author vague about their destination?

II. Train

1. Whose point of view dominates this chapter? What clues does the author use to indicate this shift?
2. How much time has passed since the family left its home and what has happened in the interim?
3. Why have the girl's shoes gone unpolished since spring?
4. What sights draw her attention as she gazes out the train window?
5. Why does the soldier tell her to pull her shades down?
6. What might account for the boy's newfound interest in horses? How do the grownups around him treat this interest? What about their responses might be confusing to him?
7. When the girl asks Ted Ishimoto if he is a rich man, he says "Not anymore." [p. 33] What might account for his answer?
8. Do you think the girl's story about her father is true? Why or why not, and if it isn't true what might be her reason for telling it? Why does she later tell Ted that her father never writes to her?
9. What is striking about the boy saying that he forgot his umbrella? Is he telling a deliberate untruth or is he forgetting what actually happened? At what other points in the book do the characters suffer lapses of memory or remember events falsely?

10. Why might the boy draw his father inside a square?

11. What is Tanforan and what happened there? In what different ways do different characters remember it?

12. During the night the train crosses the Great Salt Lake. Given that the girl is asleep at the time, who is observing this crossing? And what might this narrator mean by “the sound of the lake was inside her” [pp. 46-7]?

III. When the Emperor Was Divine

1. What is the significance of this chapter’s title?

2. Why does the boy keep thinking that he sees his father?

3. When the boy thinks, “For it was true, they all looked alike,” [p. 49] he seems to be echoing something he has heard elsewhere. Where might he have heard this?

4. What is the significance of the things the boy hears through the walls of his barracks? Sayonara is, of course, Japanese, but what language is Auf wiederseh’n, and what is the irony of hearing it in this setting?

5. Why does the boy’s mother warn him never to say the Emperor’s name out loud? Why does he later say it to himself, and why does he dream about the Emperor’s ships?

6. In what different ways do the three characters spend their time in camp? How does this reflect their characters?

7. What is Mrs. Kato’s predicament, and how might it symbolize the common condition of the internees?

8. How reliable is the information the girl gives her brother? Where else have we seen her make authoritative-sounding statements that may not necessarily be accurate?

9. The letters the father sends the boy have been censored by an official. What things does the boy leave out of his letters back? Why might he do this?

10. What sort of things does the boy remember about his father, and what do they reveal about him?

11. Why does the mother fear that her husband may no longer recognize her?

12. When the boy asks his sister what time it is, what is the irony of her answer? Where else in the book do characters lose track of time?

13. What happens to the inmates who sign up to harvest crops?

14. What is the significance of the boy’s dream about doors? Where are Peleliu and Saipan? What are the claws the boy hears scrabbling, and why might their sound be growing fainter?

15. What detail of the father's arrest does the boy find most troubling? What eventually makes him feel better?
16. What is the significance of the objects the boy's mother destroyed?
17. What does the father mean by, "It's better to bend than to break?" [p. 78] Compare this to the mother thinking, "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down." [p. 99] How useful or relevant does this advice seem in the context of the novel? What does it suggest about these people's characters and values? Do they actually abide by these sayings?
18. Why does the girl make the boy turn away while she undresses? In what other ways does her behavior change during this time?
19. Why does the boy feel responsible for the tortoise's death? Do you think he is? His sister says, "We'll resurrect him," but is she just joking? Does the boy believe her?
20. The boy is particularly bothered because his father didn't look back at him from the car in which the FBI men took him away. What significance do you think he places on this? What alternative reason might the father have had for not turning?
21. How does the mother change in the course of her internment? What memory seems especially affecting to her?
22. Why is the family in the next barracks sent to Tule Lake? What is the irony of punishing people imprisoned as enemy aliens for refusing to pledge allegiance to the nation that's imprisoned them?
23. What is it that the boy sees blooming inside a peach tin? How is this connected to his vision of the tortoise? Do you think this vision is real or a fantasy?
24. Why is one of the inmates shot? What hypotheses are given for his seemingly reckless behavior?
25. On page 104 the boy imagines his father returning by various means (horse, bike, train), and dressed in various outfits (a blue pinstriped suit, a red kimono). What is the significance of these different guises? What, in particular, is the meaning of the pearl?

IV. In a Stranger's Backyard

1. Who is narrating this chapter?
2. What has changed while the family was away?
3. What has happened to the family's furniture and to the money they were supposed to get for renting their house?
4. Why doesn't the narrator tell us what words have been written on the wall? What earlier episode in the book does this recall?

5. Why does the family choose to sleep in the back room? What sort of things have happened to other people coming back from the camp? Who might be saying the words printed in italics on page 112?
6. How quickly do the children and their mother adapt to freedom? What habits of their internment do they still cling to?
7. How do the family's neighbors treat them on their return, and how does this compare to their behavior earlier? On the rare occasions that someone actually asks where they've been, why does the mother respond so vaguely?
8. How much money is the family given on its release? What is the significance of this sum?
9. How does the narrator describe the men coming back from the war? What do the fragments of dialogue tell us about them? What is the effect of these stories of Japanese atrocities? Does it lessen your sympathy for the family? How do these stories make the children feel?
10. What measures do the children take to fit in following their return? How does their new behavior correspond to popular stereotypes of Japanese Americans?
11. "If we did something wrong, we made sure to say excuse me (excuse me for looking at you, excuse me for sitting here, excuse me for coming back). If we did something terribly wrong we immediately said we were sorry (I'm sorry I touched your arm. I didn't mean to, it was an accident, I didn't see it resting there so quietly, so beautifully, so perfectly, so irresistibly, on the edge of the desk. I lost my balance and brushed against it by mistake, I was standing too close, I wasn't watching where I was going, somebody pushed me from behind, I never wanted to touch you, I have always wanted to touch you, I will never touch you again, I promise, I swear. . .)" [pp. 122-23] Are these things the narrator is actually saying or only thinking? Who is being addressed? How does the emotional tone of the paragraph change as it progresses?
12. Why do the children keep seeing their old possessions around the neighborhood, and why does their father appear among them? Are we meant to take this literally or as an ironic metaphor? In what ways does this passage echo earlier false sightings of the father?
13. Why does the mother take a job? What reason does she give for turning down the job in a department store? What does she say are the secrets of being a successful housecleaner?
14. How does the narrator describe the father? How does this description compare to earlier ones?
15. How has the father changed during his incarceration? How do the children seem to feel about these changes?
16. Toward the end of this chapter Otsuka writes: "Speech was beginning to come back. In the school yard. On the street. They were calling out to us now. Not many of them, just a few. At first we pretended not to hear them, but after a while we could no longer resist." Who is calling out? What is it that the narrators are unable to resist? Do you find this passage hopeful or ominous?

V. Confession

1. Who is narrating this section, and whom is he addressing? Are we meant to take his confession literally? Is he confessing to things he has actually done or merely fantasized doing, or is he perhaps only voicing the suspicions of his interlocutors? In what ways does this confession play on stereotypes about Japanese and Anglos?

2. The confession ends, “And if they ask you someday what it was I most wanted to say, please tell them, if you would, it was this: I’m sorry.” [p. 144] Is the speaker genuinely contrite or is he only telling the questioner what he wants to hear? What might he have to feel sorry for?

Themes

1. Why do you think the author chose to narrate each chapter from the viewpoint of a different character? How difficult do you find it to follow the shifts in point of view, and what cues does Otsuka use to identify each new protagonist? What might account for her shift from the third-person singular of the first three chapters to the first-person plural of the fourth and the first-person singular of the final one? How would the book have been different if it had been told entirely in the first person?

2. Otsuka often withholds information from the reader. For example, she tells us that the woman writes down some words from the notice but doesn’t say what they are until later; she only gradually divulges the details of the father’s arrest. Perhaps most strikingly, she never tells us the characters’ names. What is the effect of this reticence? Might it be the author’s way of guarding her characters’ privacy? Does it seem odd to talk about fictional characters having privacy?

3. Along with withholding information, the author also largely refrains from making judgments about her characters, from telling us what kind of people they are (one of the few exceptions that comes to mind is her description of the mother as a woman “who did not always follow the rules”). [p. 9] She also rarely tells us what they are feeling. In the absence of such statements, how does she convey what her characters are like and, in particular, what they feel? Why might she have chosen such indirect methods?

4. The book pays a great deal of attention to objects, from the china, crystal, and ivory chopsticks the woman locks away in the back room of the house to the strands of his father’s hair that the boy keeps in an envelope hidden beneath a loose floorboard. We also find many references to animals. There are the pets the mother gives away or sets free or kills; the mustangs the girl reads about in *National Geographic* and later sees racing across the desert; the tortoise whose shell the boy engraves not with a name, but with the family’s identification number. Discuss the way Otsuka uses these devices. Which of them would you categorize as symbols? Can you cite instances where the characters displace their feelings onto objects that would otherwise be insignificant?

5. One of the ways in which Otsuka signals that an object or animal is meaningful is by having it recur, something she also does with words and phrases of dialogue. Sometimes she uses variation along with repetition: The boy keeps mistaking other men for his father; the woman worries that she will become unrecognizable to her husband; the children don't recognize their returning father. Discuss Otsuka's use of such themes and patterns. In what ways do they take the place of a conventional plot?
6. On the train to Utah the girl has exchanges with a soldier and an old man. She is plainly attracted to the green-eyed soldier, but when she calls to him he doesn't hear her. In contrast the Japanese man is old and wrinkled, and the girl cannot understand his Japanese, which he seems to have trouble believing. [pp. 28-9] Discuss the significance of this passage. Does the book contain other moments in which characters' loyalties are divided? What might account for this?
7. The novel's action takes place over three and a half years, and during that time the characters change physically and psychically. How does Otsuka track these changes? In what ways does she use physical change—for instance, the way the mother stops wearing lipstick—to convey more subtle transformations? Do you think the characters change for better or worse? Which of these changes do you think will be permanent?
8. As the train passes a roadside diner, the girl notices a man step outside and touch the brim of his hat. "The girl did not know what it meant, when a man touched his hat," Otsuka writes. "Maybe it meant the same thing as a nod, or a hello. It meant you had been seen." [p. 38] How does the author develop the theme of seeing in this book—both in its literal sense and in the sense of recognition or acknowledgment? At what points do different characters see, or fail to see, each other?
9. Later the girl writes her name on a playing card and throws it out the train window. What seems meaningful about this gesture? Where else in the novel do characters write their names and to what effect? In what other ways do they identify—and sometimes mis-identify—themselves, and how might this be related to the theme of seeing?
10. While in camp the boy worries that he is there because he has done "something horribly, terribly wrong." [p. 57] Why might he feel this way rather than angry and unjustly persecuted? Do other characters in the novel respond to their imprisonment similarly? Discuss the role guilt plays in the characters' lives and imaginations. Do any non-Japanese characters appear to feel guilty?
11. In addition to being troubled by guilt the boy is prone to what psychologists call magical thinking. For example, he worries that his father will be harmed because he failed to properly hide an envelope filled with his hair. Do any of the other characters engage in magical thinking? Might the U.S.'s wartime policies toward its Japanese residents be described as magical thinking on a national scale?

12. Although most of the book's characters are of Japanese ancestry and at times inhabit a world that seems exclusively Japanese, we are periodically reminded that that world is enclosed by, monitored by—in a sense created by—a world of Caucasians. How does Otsuka portray her Caucasian characters? Might any of them be described as sympathetic? How do her protagonists feel about them? Given that Otsuka never explicitly labels a character as Japanese or Caucasian, how does she convey ethnicity?

13. Of a pearl earring that she lost en route to the camp, the mother says, "Sometimes things disappear and there's no getting them back." [pp. 85-6] Discuss this statement's relevance to the rest of the novel. What other things disappear, and what attempts do the characters make to retrieve them? Are any of these attempts successful?

14. There is a Zen parable in which a man walking across a field encounters a tiger:

He fled, the tiger chasing after him. Coming to a cliff, he caught hold of a wild vine and swung himself over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Terrified, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger had come, waiting to eat him. Two mice, one white and one black, little by little began to gnaw away at the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine in one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!

(From *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. Compiled and translated by Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki. Shambhala Pocket Classics, 1994.)

How is this story relevant to the incident of the man shot at the camp fence? Does it change your understanding of other aspects of this novel?

Moving beyond the book

1. Compare and contrast two or three of the objects, animals, or phrases that Otsuka employs as symbols in her book, using research when indicated. When discussing the ships in the boy's dream, for example, you might research the three ships in which Columbus first sailed to the New World along with the ships of the American armada that broke Japan's isolation from the world. Research the terms *symbol*, *fetish*, and *totem* and discuss their relevance to the novel.

2. Imagine that you are one of the novel's characters and write a letter to your husband or father. Keep in mind that your letter will be read by the authorities. Your challenge will be to communicate sincerely and even passionately without making them suspicious. Alternatively, imagine that you are an American Muslim whose husband or father is in federal custody. How would you write to him?

3. Imagine that you are one of the writer's neighbors and write a letter explaining your actions to them.

5. Research the psychiatric condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). How does it describe the feelings and behaviors of this novel's characters, particularly those the father demonstrates following his return from camp?

6. Compare this novel to other works set during World War II, in particular J. G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* and Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*.

For further reading

Aharon Appelfeld, *The Iron Tracks, Tzili: The Story of a Life*

J. G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun*

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

Audrie Girdner and Anne Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese Americans During World War II*

David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*

Franz Kafka, *The Trial*

Ursula Hegi, *Stones From the River*

Ellen Levine, *A Fence Away From Freedom: Japanese Americans and World War II*

Ian McEwan, *The Cement Garden, Atonement*

Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*

Sandra C. Taylor, *Jewel of the Desert: Japanese American Internment at Topaz*

Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family*

About this author

Julie Otsuka was born and raised in California. She is the author of the novel *When the Emperor Was Divine* and a recipient of the Asian American Literary Award, the American Library Association Alex Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. She lives in New York City.

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James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* and *Nobody Knows My Name*
Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*
Dan Brown, *Inferno*
Peter Carey, *His Illegal Self*
Lorene Cary, *Black Ice*
Da Chen, *Colors of the Mountain*
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*
Sandra Cisneros, *La casa en Mango Street* (Spanish edition)
Jill Ker Conway, *The Road from Coorain*
Karin Cook, *What Girls Learn*
Keith Donohue, *The Stolen Child*
Mark Dunn, *Ella Minnow Pea*
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
William Faulkner, *Collected Stories*
Ernest J. Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying*
Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*
Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster*
David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*
Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing*
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
Latoya Hunter, *The Diary of Latoya Hunter*
Charlayne Hunter-Gault, *In My Place*
Franz Kafka, *The Trial: A New Translation*
Randall Kennedy, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*
Rachel Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order*
Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*
Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir*
William Maxwell, *So Long, See You Tomorrow*
Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses*
Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day*
Josh Neufeld, *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*
Art Spiegelman, *Maus*
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