



New Student Reading Project Fall 2013 Student Essay Winners

Casey Breznick
Shuo Chen
Francis Encarnacion
Saara Shanti Kumar
Charles Phil

Heather Cai
Isabella Crowley
Yana Kost
Emma Nelson
Mildred Whiteley

In the chapter entitled "Train," the girl and her family are taken from south San Francisco to Topaz, Utah. Outside the train, the girl observes people that they pass as they travel—a man "trimming hedges" (23), a man and woman "riding their bicycles across a bridge" (26), the man wearing boots and a cowboy hat who "touched the brim of his hat" when the train passed (38). Within the train, the girl notices and talks with other passengers—the soldier with "very nice eyes" (27), the old man who is "missing two fingers" (28), Ted Ishimoto who wore "a handsome gold watch" (32).

Essay topic: Write an essay about two of the girl's observations—one from outside and one from inside the train. What do you think the girl is feeling or learning in these moments?

In writing your essay, consider this thought that the girl has when all the shades are lowered: "There were the people inside the train and the people outside the train and in between them there were the shades" (28).

Casey Breznick

In the second chapter of her novel *When the Emperor Was Divine*, Julie Otsuka presents the unnamed girl's emotional turbulence and discovery against the backdrop of the family's physical relocation to an internment camp. Her grappling with the thematic issue of self-identity is best captured in the contrasting scenes involving Ted Ishimoto and the cowboy. In particular, clothing and other adornments of the involved characters become central to the ideas of self-identity, self-worth, and materialism.

As the window shades separate the outside world from that inside the train, clothing separates a character's outward façade from inner thoughts and feelings. Otsuka's analogy is made apparent in the conversation between Ted and the girl, in which Ted acts like the blind-seer archetype (i.e. old wise man) as mentor to the girl. The acute attention given to all of Ted's possessions, like his gold watch and gold-threaded handkerchief, and the detailed description of his handling the girl's scarf indicates that Otsuka places great significance on physical possessions. Additionally, the girl asks Ted if he is "a rich man" (Otsuka 33), a question which shows her high regard for material and monetary status. Otsuka uses these characters' possessions as insights into their characters, especially their valuation of self-worth. For example, when speaking of her scarf, she remarks rhetorically that it is "very plain, isn't it?" (Otsuka 33); the scarf symbolizes not her father but her evaluation of self-worth, and her comment that it is not what she wanted indicates unhappiness with who she is. This dissociation lends itself to the depressing tone of the chapter, in which events and characters seem to float by and in and out of the girl's physical sight and mental attention.

Following her enlightening conversation with Ted, the girl sees the "little lines around her [mother's] eyes that she had not noticed before" (Otsuka 37), which is an indication that she has learned to see reality and not just false outwardly appearances. Later in the chapter, however, the girl is unable to make out any meaning to the

cowboy touching his hat, a seemingly casual gesture. She contemplates whether this particular clothing interaction 'meant nothing at all' (Otsuka 38), but her subsequent anagnorisis—asking her brother if her scarf is "the most beautiful" (Otsuka 38)—indicates that her opinion of herself has changed from disregard to pride. However, the girl's response that she did not wear a scarf the year before to her brother's retort is difficult to interpret. Perhaps the girl is saying that what she wore last year was merely a possession with no intrinsic meaning and no attachment to her inner-self. By learning to appreciate and declare her scarf beautiful, she is actually realizing that she is not defined by her possessions and neither is anyone else. What the cowboy's gesture actually meant is irrelevant, an attitude that contrasts greatly with the girl's extreme consideration of Ted's every possession-interaction only moments before this observation. The drastic change can only be explained by the girl's learning to view the nature of possessions and how they relate to individuals differently.

This chapter plays out like a hero's journey, with the girl experiencing various encounters that serve to teach her lessons and build on the themes of self-discovery. Furthermore, Ted's disappearance after the girl's newfound appreciation of her possessions and self-worth despite her dismal political and socio-economic situation hints at his almost mythical qualities. As with all hero's journey tales, the end result is always a change in both physical location and emotional or mental maturity, and in this story the girl learns to see beyond facades and to embrace her identity as a to-be interned Japanese-American. Thus, in this chapter defined by both physical and emotional journeys, the girl comes to understand her non-physical self and her physical possessions, two ideas which experience constant conflict throughout the novel.

Bibliography

Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine*. First Anchor Books: October 2003.

Casey Breznick is from Miami, and is a prospective economics and history dual major in the College of Arts and Sciences. After graduating he plans to work in the financial industry.

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Heather Cai

Sitting in the crowded train, the girl carefully notices two worlds form: the one on the outside and the one covered by shades. The second chapter in Otsuka's novel, *When the Emperor Was Divine*, focuses on the girl's realization of the differences in time between the two worlds, which ties in to the novel's theme of change brought by the Japanese internment. Ironically enough, the train that is steadily heading forward carries the people that become lost in time.

Within the train are the Japanese Americans, on their way to internment camps, where they would remain until the war passes. Each one of them forsakes their former lives to continue one of uncertainty, in hopes that one day they can return home unchanged. The girl observes these people in the train who are trapped and unable to move forward. While waiting in line for the bathroom, she meets a man named Ted Ishimoto, whose "hair was flecked with gray around the temples but she could not tell if he was young or old" (32). The evidence of time or age does not exist on this man who looks neither young nor old. Like the others, Ishimoto is merely a person who is lost in time. The girl also sees that he wears a "handsome gold watch that no longer told the correct time" (32). Whether his watch is broken and stuck in one time, or it is moving at a different pace than the rest of the outside world, the man has lost track of time. Although the girl observes many people inside the train, she also takes glimpses of the world outside the shades.

From the start of the train ride, the girl watches people outside carrying on with their daily routines. She focuses intently on these commonplace people and their thoughts, even trying to call out to them, but they all seem preoccupied with their own free lives. One night, she lifts the shades slightly to see a herd of wild, galloping mustangs in the Nevada desert. She calls her brother so that they together can take in the beautiful, dark horses that "were drifting and turning in the moonlight and wherever they went they left behind great billowing clouds of dust as proof of their passage" (45). The wild running, the arbitrary turns, and the trailing dust all show the passage of time outside. The horses embody the freedom and movement that the girl knew she could

not experience for a long time. Before the two can even watch the horses disappear in the mountains, a soldier comes, and the girl drops the shades, returning back to the world that does not, and could not move as the horses had. Although the girl probably feels trapped, she understands the situation and stops her time as people in the train had. Weeks later, when the family settles in to the barracks, her brother asks her for the time, and she suddenly notices that "her watch had said six o'clock for weeks. She had stopped winding it the day they had stepped off the train" (65). The girl may not have realized how much she wanted to make time stop so that when she returns home, everything will pick up just as the family had left it. Her thoughts reflect those of the other Japanese Americans in the internment camps.

By not giving her characters names, Otsuka effectively makes the family's situation apply to any family that experienced the hardships of being ostracized by friends and trapped in a camp for several years. The family, the Japanese Americans, desperately hope that "the war had been an interruption, nothing more" and that they "would pick up [their] lives where [they] had left off and go on" (114), but, unfortunately, the release from the internment camps does not end their troubles. For years the entire outside world was growing, changing, and upon their return, the Japanese Americans have to spend many more years to find their places in society again.

Works Cited

Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor was Divine*. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

Heather is a student in the College of Engineering studying Computer Science. She is originally from Chester Springs, PA, a small town outside of Philadelphia.

The chapter entitled "When the Emperor Was Divine" shows the boy's many thoughts and dreams during the years that the family is interned in the Utah desert. Consistent throughout this section of the novel, however, are the boy's visions of his father. He "thought he saw his father everywhere" (49); he seeks the smell of his father in the "black Oxfords ... with the oval depressions left behind by his father's toes" (67); he goes over the image of his father being taken away "without his hat on...and... in his slippers" (74); he remembers how "his father had promised to show him the world" (78); he sees his father as an "outlaw... riding a big beautiful horse named White Frost" (83); and he considers that "none of the other fathers had been taken away in their slippers" (84).

Essay topic: Describing at least three of these images of the father, write an essay explaining what you think the boy's memories and dreams of his father mean to him during his internment.

In writing your essay, consider the boy's fear that the envelope with the "strands of his father's hair [hidden] beneath the loose floorboard under his bed" at home is gone—"I should have taken it with me," he said to himself" (78-79).

Shuo Chen

She told me that this piece of writing was the best way to cope, to gather my thoughts so I can best celebrate my memories of him. "You can do this." She cooed as she handed me a pen.

"But where do I start? What do I write?"

"Just write about him. Memories, dreams, images. Anything," and with that she walked away, leaving me alone as I lifted my pen and began to write....

I guess it is ironic that the images I remember best of my father occurred when I was unable to see him. I remember my first days at Camp Topaz, with its the blazing hot sun and dreaded emptiness. On those days I saw him everywhere. "Black hair. Thick glasses. Thin lips. Bad teeth. The little yellow man" (49). I want to say that was caused by hallucinations from the heat, but it wasn't. I was scared. All these sounds, the "hundreds of mouths chewing. Slurping. Sucking. Swallowing" (50). I couldn't take it, these unfamiliar noises surrounded me and threatened to overwhelm me. My senses were dulled, the inside of my mind was a panicked mess. I wanted my father, I needed my father to tell me how to make the best of this new world that I was thrust into, just as he once showed me to the beauty of the jelly donut. In defense, my mind conjured up an image of my father and superimposed it onto the first man my eyes set themselves upon. Too good of an image perhaps, for I was often convinced that the stranger was my father. I wanted to run up to him and embrace him, have him tell me that everything was all right, to be my guiding light once again.

The ennui of camp life was the cause of many nightmares. When you are in the middle of a desert, in unknown world where everything looks exactly the same, you lose the concept of time. Sure, the sun rises and sets as it has since the dawn of time, but beyond that there is not much else. Life was one giant timeout, and I just wanted to

confess, to repent, to shout out my sins to my parents. Anything to end this. I spent those nights tossing and turning about on the bed as if shaking would help me pry loose the memory of what I had done wrong. Suddenly, I would wake up and swear that father was downstairs. I could hear the notes of "'Begin the Beguine" (57), and those all too familiar words of "'Here it comes champ. One hobo egg sandwich'" (57). It only took a few seconds and the familiar eerie whistle of the wind of the dark desert night to realize that it was all in my head. But I relished those seconds "with" my father, for they saved me. My father freed me from the prison that was reality, these chains that I had put on without knowing why. He also gave me back time. It may not be a definitive time, an "o'clock" per say, but it was my "happy" time, and to me those moments of bliss were priceless.

Most importantly, father gave me something to strive towards while I was confined to the camp. Though the noises in my head subsided as I began to adjust, the torture of being ostracized from the outside world was still prevalent. But every night I dreamt of my father coming. I recall imagining him "on a horse. On a bike. In a train" (104). It didn't matter how he came in my dream, I just wanted him. It didn't matter what he wore, he could be "standing there in his white flannel bathrobe all covered with dust" (104-105). I wanted him to be here because I knew he would want me to tell him about what I had been doing. I knew that he would also find a way to find my mundane activities exciting, and that was what allowed me to stay optimistic throughout those years. I had to live to make sure that there was a story to tell, because every night he would be there, waiting for my tale. And perhaps, if I wished hard enough, my dream would come true.

I love you father, and you will forever be that man in my dream...

At this moment, she opened the door and walked behind me. "I see that you are done." she smiled.

"Yes, the... eulogy... is... complete." I stuttered, for I was fighting back a flood of tears. Not tears of grief, but tears of anger as the image of father taken shamefully in his slippers and the remnant of a man that he became engulfed me. Though I continued to dream about the man that he was, the keyword was "was," referring to an entity that no longer exists. The world stole him from me, and I could never get him back. All I want to do now is to burn this paper and cry.

As if she knew how I felt, she placed her arms around me. "You know you want to give this eulogy. Be brave, be the confident man that I feel in love with" she whispered in my ears as she wrapped around for a kiss.

She was right, I had to be brave. After all, this eulogy is a way to revive my father in the minds of our friends and family. To show that the man he "was" never died, but lives in our dreams, always waiting to hear our next story.

Shuo Chen was born in Fuzhou, China, but spent most of his life in Queens, New York. He was formerly a student of Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan and is currently a student at the College of Agriculture and Life Science where he is planning on taking the pre-med track as a Biology and Society Major as well as AEM.

Isabella Crowley

I will write many papers in college. Some will be frustrating, some will be written with relative ease. I plan on making every one meaningful in some way. This introduction is to excuse my lack of adherence to any of the essay prompts provided; all seem like they may be explored in a valid and literarily significant manner. I would like to write from a personal perspective because it feels like the most meaningful approach to writing this particular paper. I'll start with my hometown.

Bainbridge Island, Washington: separated by 24 miles from the port town of Seattle, accessible by bridge or ferry. Sixty years ago, mainly farmland besides the community center by the ferry docks. The island today is home to a population of about 30,000 people, many of them from the city who spend their summers enjoying tis leafy refuge. Sixty years ago, Bainbridge Island was home to a dramatically different group of people. The island's rich soil and softly rolling hills attracted farmers willing to deal with removing deeply rooted trees and large rocks. Many of these farmers were Japanese immigrants who were incidentally responsible for settling most of the island, developing its infrastructure, and producing a succulent variety of strawberry that became so well known for its sweetness that Queen Elizabeth II famously requested them to be shipped up for a brunch she attended while travelling through Vancouver.

The impact of World War II on the Japanese Americans living on Bainbridge Island was unprecedented. Nearly all were evacuated, leaving the island community forever changed. Well-established farms were given to neighbors to care for until the Japanese families returned. Although many families remained in the hearts and prayers of those who remained on Bainbridge, the indeterminate date when the families were supposed to return kept the islanders from holding fast to their old friends. Even after the war ended, many Japanese Americans did not return to Bainbridge Island to reclaim their homes and land. Some wrote to their old friends, handing over deeds and thanking them for their help. Some never returned, disappearing without a trace. One of the few farmers who returned to work hi land, Akio Syuematsu, left with two young children and a wife and returned alone.

Always a quiet man, but especially so after the war, Akio told his story gradually over the many years that followed his own internment at the Manzanar Internment Camp in California. He continued farming his strawberry fields, taking on farmhands and migrant workers to maintain the land in the absence of his family. Over the years, Suyematsu Farms fragmented into land managed by a community farm cooperative that, in turn, leased the land to other farmers. There is now a pumpkin patch, a Christmas tree farm, vineyards, and rows of countless varieties of vegetables where Akio's strawberry fields used to be.

Akio passed away in the winter of 2012, leaving behind a legacy that has only grown in magnitude since his death. All who worked with Akio understood that it was useless to impress upon him the importance of rest. He could be seen spreading

fertilizer, weeding fields, or dragging heavy farm equipment across his property most days of the year and well into the winter months. At 82 years old, Akio made the front page of the local newspaper after being interviewed about pumpkin varieties he was cultivating for the Fall Harvest Fair. With help from the farming collective, Akio insured that all of the land he had originally settled and farmed before the war remained under the ownership of local farmers or the city's open space coalition.

Isabella Crowley is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The chapter entitled "When the Emperor Was Divine" shows the boy's many thoughts and dreams during the years that the family is interned in the Utah desert. Consistent throughout this section of the novel, however, are the boy's visions of his father. He "thought he saw his father everywhere" (49); he seeks the smell of his father in the "black Oxfords ... with the oval depressions left behind by his father's toes" (67); he goes over the image of his father being taken away "without his hat on...and... in his slippers" (74); he remembers how "his father had promised to show him the world" (78); he sees his father as an "outlaw... riding a big beautiful horse named White Frost" (83); and he considers that "none of the other fathers had been taken away in their slippers" (84).

Essay topic: Describing at least three of these images of the father, write an essay explaining what you think the boy's memories and dreams of his father mean to him during his internment.

In writing your essay, consider the boy's fear that the envelope with the "strands of his father's hair [hidden] beneath the loose floorboard under his bed" at home is gone—"I should have taken it with me,' he said to himself" (78-79).

Francis Encarnacion

By following an unnamed Japanese American family during WWII, Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine* depicts the experience of Japanese American in internment camps, accurately describing their physical and emotional struggle. While the novel portrays the Japanese American experience of internment, it also portrays their perception of their own internment. This is especially evident in the character of the boy of the family. The boy experiences the unique position of being both victim and observer. He sees the effects of internment on his father, who is detained before the family, yet he also directly experiences internment and its effects firsthand after being relocated to Topaz. He is capable of both witnessing and experiencing the uncertain perception that Japanese Americans had of themselves during a time when Japan was considered the enemy. He is able to ask what does it mean to be both Japanese and American? What does it mean to be the citizen and the enemy? The boy develops four distinct images of his father as answers to these questions, answers that reflect four of his own images or perceptions of himself as a Japanese American. He sees both himself and his father as American citizens and traitors, and victims of war and as enemies of war. The boy is painfully aware of his changing, uncertain, and often contradictory status as a citizen of America and as a person of Japanese heritage. The boy retains these images of his father in an attempt to resolve or at least ease his uncertainty of place and identity as an interned Japanese American.

The experience of internment is a clear sign of the boy's altered identity as an American citizen. However, even before his own internment, the boy is aware of his status as a potential threat to America because of his father's own detainment. As a traitor to America, the boy's father is arrested by the FBI, led "out across the lawn in his bathrobe and slippers" (74), stripped of all explicit signs of 'American-ness.' As the faceless enemy, the boy's father is "wherever the boy looked . . . the little yellow man" interned with him in Utah (74). During his time of internment, the boy develops these

two images of his father, that of a traitor and that of an enemy, to understand his own new identity as a threat to America. He sees himself in his father's situation: stripped of his citizenship and his individuality, he becomes part of a faceless 'alien threat.'

In internment, the boy clings onto memories of life before internment as an American citizen. He remembers his father as a distinctly American man who "wore beautiful suits," and who read American magazines like the *Examiner* (62). During his time in the internment camps, the boy desperately clings to physical remnants of his father's past life and his own life as an American citizen, cherishing his father's shoes (67) and his hair (78) as if to deny or combat any doubt of his American identity.

The father returns to his family from detainment as a scarred victim, "suspicious of everyone: the newspaper boy, the door-to-door salesman, the little old lady . . . Any one of these people, he warned [the boy], could be an informer" (134). Internment causes the father to recognize himself as the enemy. He becomes extremely careful that his own words and actions do not betray his identity as a Japanese man in America. The boy views this image of his father with pity, yet the boy fails to realize that internment has brought on these changes in him as well. In a powerful moment of self-perception, the boy states, "We looked at ourselves and did not like what we saw: black hair, yellow skin, slanted eyes. The cruel face of the enemy" (119-120). From internment, the boy returns to American society as all four images, he is an American citizen newly interned by his perception of himself as a traitor and enemy of his own American identity.

Francis Encarnacion is a freshman studying for a Bachelor of Architecture in Cornell's College of Architecture, Art, and Planning. A native of Rochester, NY, Francis graduated from McQuaid Jesuit High School last year. In his spare time, he enjoys eating, sleeping, and enjoying life outside of studio.

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Yana Kost

In Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine*, the young boy's dreams and memories throughout the internment show profound insight into his shattered reality. The boy's moments with his father's black shoes, visions of his arrest in old slippers, and dreams of his father as an outlaw, display his wavering between the past, present, and future; his sad reality and inviting fantasy.

The boy's profound moment in the barracks with his father's shoes reveals a longing for his father, but also a moment of revelation, as the boy subconsciously realizes it is unlikely his family and life will return to normal after the internment. When the boy thoughtfully touches his father's "black Oxfords," he carefully notes the label: "Men's, size eight and a half, extra narrow". The boy's attention to detail paints his father as an elegant and neat man, but not one who is extraordinary in any sense. As he presses "his fingers into the smooth oval depressions left behind by his father's toes" and "sniff[s] the tips of his fingers". To the boy, the shoes are his last physical tie to his father throughout the interment. They become a symbol that helps the boy remember his father, and remind him of his happy life prior to the war. However, the reassurance the boy usually receives from his ritual is shattered when he realizes that "the smell of his father [is] gone" (67). The shoes not only symbolize his father, but the happiness the boy remembers in the routine of everyday life, prior to the internment. Such a commonplace object symbolizes the stability and regularity of home life. When he indulges in a "sniff" from his father's shoes, the boy remembers not only his father, but the comforting daily actions of him putting them on, wearing them throughout the day, and taking them off at home. That notion of everyday life, after living in the barracks for a long time, disappears with the comfortable smell of the boy's father. The shoes represent the boy's memories of his father and longing for regular home life as he wavers between his past and present realities.

The young boy's inner turmoil, between the past and his imagination, increases when he conjures the image of his father's arrest in slippers. Sharply contrasted with the elegant image of Oxfords, his father wears "battered and faded," slippers, "with the rubber soles curling up at the edges," during his arrest. As the shoe motif is continued, the boy's positive memories of his father are nudged out by ones that paint him in a negative light. Instead of memories of his composed, elegant, and kind father, the boy's last and stark memory of him parallels his father with the shoes: beaten, tired, old, and weak. Furthermore, the boy's last memory of his father seems to foretell how emotionally and physically defeated his father becomes during his imprisonment. Out of fear and aversion to this reality, the boy conjectures that "If only they had let him put on his shoes then it all might have turned out differently" (74). Although he understands that this thought is merely a whim, the boy holds on to it tightly as he attempts to push the disagreeable image of his father's dishonorable arrest out of his mind. The boy battles with past, scarring experiences and the call of his imagination—which seems more inviting than cruel reality. He wavers between his memories, and dreams that can soften the harsh lines of reality.

As reality for the boy becomes more severe during his interment, he turns more to his imagination for respite, yet still battles with his memories. He now imagines his father as an "outlaw," wearing "cowboy boots...riding a big beautiful horse". The shoe motif, again, is continued, but now the boots, as well as the horse, symbolize freedom. Instead of being held captive behind fences as the boy is, he longs for the freedom. Incorporating new memories into his imagination, such as the horse and the desert, the boy tries to replace sad reality. He even invents new reasons for his father's imprisonment such as stealing cattle and robbing trains; both imply greater heroism than being arrested for reasons unknown. Inventing crimes for his father to commit also comforts the boy, as having some reason for his father's absence is better than having a dark, empty void take that place. Still at the end of the boy's Western reverie, he remembers government officials' derogatory call for his father: "Papa-san" (83). The boy's memories and dreams reveal his battle between cruel reality and his imagination, hopes, and dreams.

Yana Kost is a freshman studying Biology and Art History in the College of Arts & Sciences. Outside the classroom she enjoys spending time with friends and family, baking, reading, and traveling. Originally born in Israel, she currently resides in Maryland with her family.

In the chapter entitled "In a Stranger's Back Yard," the family returns to their home in Berkeley hoping to "pick up our lives where we had left off and go on" (114). But their lives are not the same. The family's experiences during and after the war reflect the effects of what has been called racial profiling—political practices that have affected other ethnic and racial groups at other times, in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Essay topic: Write an essay connecting the experience of the family in *When the Emperor Was Divine* with that of another racial or ethnic group.

This topic asks you to explore and summarize some of what you observe and learn based on your reading of the materials on racial profiling on the Cornell University Library Guide, posted on Book Project web site at:

<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/content.php?pid=453512&sid=3757920> or "[Racial Profiling](#)"

In writing your essay, consider this quote from the novel: "On the street we tried to avoid our own reflections wherever we could. We turned away from shiny surfaces and storefront windows. We ignored the passing glances of strangers. What kind of 'ese' are you? Japanese or Chinese?" (120).

Saara Shanti Kumar

The first time I saw my father without a beard was through the tiny space between the door hinges and the wall of my parents' bedroom. He was sitting cross-legged, eyes closed, fingers interlaced and limp in his lap, meditating. Above him on the wall hung a painting of the Hindu god Krishna – my favorite. It was the evening of September 12th, 2001.

My mother was not happy. She liked his beard. She had never known him without it. My brother and I were neutral on the matter, except now when he kissed us goodnight he no longer scratched our tiny brown cheeks with hundreds of prickly black hairs. Now his cheeks were smooth and almost the color of our own.

"Why did Papa shave?" I asked my mother.

"His mother asked him to," she sighed, "she called him the day after the attack and told him that he must shave his beard because she didn't want people mistaking him for a Muslim."

I thought this was unnecessary. I did not realize the gravity of the issue that America as an entity would take up against Muslims over the next decade.

When the boy in *When the Emperor Was Divine* recalls a time when a man stopped him on the sidewalk and asked, "Chink or Jap?" and the boy remembers lying and saying, "Chink," I was reminded of the first night my father kissed me goodnight without his beard (Otsuka, 76). The situations are not mirrored exactly. The boy in the story is Japanese American, yet most of the Americans he encounters do not know if he is of Japanese or Chinese descent, so the boy pretends to be Chinese in order to

protect himself. My father is a Hindu, and while it was Muslims who were being targeted as 'enemies of the state' by scared Americans in post-9/11 New York, my father needed to protect himself. In the hours after the 9/11 attack, news of suspects hailing from his part of the world poured out through radios across the country. In New York City, there were reports of Americans pulling anyone who looked Middle Eastern or South Asian out of their cars on traffic-filled bridges and beating them. With his beard, my father could easily be a Muslim. Without his beard, he looked slightly less threatening to the rest of shattered, terrified America. It was a sad and simple truth.

The experience of Japanese Americans in a post-Pearl Harbor world is not entirely analogous to that of Muslim Americans in a post-9/11 world. Muslims in America were never sent en masse to internment camps. They have, however, been racially profiled and attacked at almost every level and in every state. Even ten years after the attack in 2001, hate crimes in the US against Muslim Americans have fluctuated in frequency yet still remained high (Spross, 2012). Americans of the 1940's discriminated against Japanese Americans out of fear and hatred that boiled because of the blood spilt at Pearl Harbor. Americans of the 21st century discriminate against Muslim Americans out of the same kind of fears and mistrust. The children's mother in the book exemplifies this well in her vain search for employment, embodied by the fact that the store where she had once bought stockings would "not hire her as a cashier because they were afraid of offending the customers" (128). Just as she experiences racial discrimination, American Muslims are experiencing increasing religious discrimination in the workplace. In the months following 9/11, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported a significant uptick in complaints of religious discrimination from Muslims, a trend that has been steadily increasing for over a decade (Smith, 2011).

The similarities between Japanese Americans and Muslims do not stop at the domestic level. Muslims around the world face fates similar to those of Japanese Americans on a level that is much more harrowing than discrimination. In the Palestinian Territories, over 3 million Palestinians live in one of the most densely populated areas in the world as effectively detained victims of war behind guarded walls and gates kept closed by the IDF and funded by the United States. While the West Bank and Gaza are not internment camps, the idea is the same: to keep a 'dangerous minority' away from Israel's own citizens. Just as the Japanese American family in *When the Emperor Was Divine* is told to pack up and evacuate their home practically overnight, thousands of Palestinian families have been forced to evacuate overnight in order to clear land for Israeli settlements. While the Japanese Americans in the book were able to return to their home, albeit falling apart and vandalized by previous, unknown residents, Palestinian families watch as their homes are demolished and their precious and scarce farmland is paved to make room for those who the IDF protect.

Therefore, in more ways than one, Muslims across the world experience the same daily discrimination and forced relocation that Japanese Americans experienced in the United States.

My mother jokes now that if my father let his beard grow back in, it would be silver and not black. Now, when we go to a synagogue for an event on my mother's

side of the family, people don't stare at my father quite as much as they once did. Sometimes when he kisses us goodnight after a camping trip where he forgot his razor, I am reminded of the goodnight kisses before first grade: before 2001. Many people say 'pre-9/11' and 'post-9/11,' as if they are separate eras. They are defined by different Manhattan skylines at dusk, different security measures at airports, as well as entirely different attitudes towards the Muslim population of the US. To me, they are defined by when my Papa had a beard that my mother loved and when he had bare cheeks that his mother insisted upon.

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Saara Shanti Kumar is from the Bronx, NY and is studying International Agriculture and Rural Development in CALS. Though her main academic interests lie in food security and poverty reduction, she has always been drawn to issues of cross-cultural conflict. She focused on this type of conflict in her essay about post-9/11 Muslim-Americans and Palestinian-Israeli relations. Peace, equality, and food security - all idealistic words she admits - have been and will be the world's greatest challenges, and she hopes that her time at Cornell will equip her to work towards their achievement.

In the chapter entitled "Train," the girl and her family are taken from south San Francisco to Topaz, Utah. Outside the train, the girl observes people that they pass as they travel—a man "trimming hedges" (23), a man and woman "riding their bicycles across a bridge" (26), the man wearing boots and a cowboy hat who "touched the brim of his hat" when the train passed (38). Within the train, the girl notices and talks with other passengers—the soldier with "very nice eyes" (27), the old man who is "missing two fingers" (28), Ted Ishimoto who wore "a handsome gold watch" (32).

Essay topic: Write an essay about two of the girl's observations—one from outside and one from inside the train. What do you think the girl is feeling or learning in these moments?

In writing your essay, consider this thought that the girl has when all the shades are lowered: "There were the people inside the train and the people outside the train and in between them there were the shades" (28).

Emma Nelson

An expression synonymous with serving a prison sentence, "doing time" encapsulates the inextricable link that time and freedom share. Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine* explores the relationship between time and freedom through the observations of the girl during her train journey from her home in California to her harsh new reality of a Japanese internment camp in Topaz, Utah during World War II. The young girl differentiates between the prisoners onboard the train and the free citizens watching them from the outside, as she notes, "There were the people inside the train and the people outside the train and in between them there were the shades" (28). While the man and woman "riding their bicycles across a bridge" (26) represent an ideal freedom set apart from the constraints of time outside the train, Ted Ishimoto and the other occupants of the train are confined by time and events far out of their own control.

Amid a scene of a picturesque Sunday morning, the girl spots a flash of rebellion. She describes the town and its citizens blandly; the young girls wearing "white dresses whirled beneath matching white parasols" (26) and a boy wearing a "blue suit" (26) enforce the colorless monotony of an idealistic American setting. The young woman on the other hand is described in fiery tones with her "short yellow pants" (27) and "her hair . . . loose and red and blowing behind her in the wind" (27). Furthermore, the woman's exposed ankles and free flowing hair, both symbols of female sexuality, demonstrate the freedom that the woman has over the buttoned up morality of the people outside the church. The male companion that is not readily described as the woman's husband further serves to illuminate the novelty of this modern woman. The girl comments on these differences by noting that the woman "did not look like she had been to church" (27). Like the girl, this woman does not fit the mold of a typical American citizen and rejects the strict limitations that society places on itself, represented by her location at the edge of town on a bridge far from the chimes of the church bells in the center of town. Yet, unlike the girl, the woman is free. In a poignant moment, the girl calls out to

the woman with a simple "Hey!" (27), but she is out of earshot and the woman continues to peddle on into the distance. The woman exemplifies a sense of uninhibited freedom that is just out of reach for the girl. In this moment, the girl understands that she is a prisoner and that freedom is pedaling further and further away from her outstretched hands.

Inside the train, the passengers are drained of freedom and power over time. Ted Ishimoto who lacks the vitality that the woman and man on their bicycles have is described with "hair . . . flecked with gray around the temples" (32). The girl asks him if he was a rich man to which he responds, "Not anymore" (33). This simple answer speaks volumes about the life every passenger on the train is being taken from. His "handsome gold watch that no longer told the correct time" (32) demonstrates how within their new realities, even formally powerful people are subject to uncertainty even in the smallest of things like knowing the time. The Americanization that his original name Teizo underwent for him to be known as Ted to all of his friends serves to show Ted Ishimoto as a complacent man. The only action he takes in the course of the train ride that the girl observes is him waiting for the bathroom. Despite his reassurances to the girl's mother that "everything will be alright" (35), Ted Ishimoto is waiting like all the rest and blends back into the crowd of frightened passengers and is simply "gone" (38). Her observations of Ted Ishimoto reinforce the vulnerability that now has the ultimate power over her.

The only thing that tangibly separates the girl and the outside world is a simple shade. Yet unlike the woman on her bicycle pedaling completely under the control of her own movements, Ted Ishimoto and the rest of the detainees are motionless whilst the train and the authorities move them further from their own lives without their consent. In this moment the girl's observations teach her about the fleetingness of freedom and her own imprisonment by time in the years ahead.

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Emma Nelson is from Concord, New Hampshire where she attended Bishop Brady High School. She is an Economics major with a minor in business.

In the first chapter of the novel, called "Evacuation Order No. 19," while preparing to leave home, the mother takes several actions that indicate her sense of responsibility and values, including packing up items in the house, and ending by taking actions in relation to the family cat, macaw, chicken, and dog.

Essay topic: Describe the mother's actions in relation to the family's animals in the first chapter of *When the Emperor Was Divine*, and explain why you think she acts as she does.

In writing your essay, first consider this quote from the novel: "There were things they could take with them; bedding and linen, forks, spoons, plates, bowls, cups, clothes. These were the words she had written down on the back of the bank receipt. Pets were not allowed. That was what the sign had said" (9). Second, consider the question: what do you learn about the mother from her behavior in relation to the animals?

Charles Phil

The Carnival of Animals

How extenuating the circumstances must have been for the mother to have her take such actions against the animals in her home. But interestingly, it is the type of actions she commits against each type of animal that provides the most insight into her state of mind. When it was determined that "pets were not allowed" (Otsuka 9), the paragraph immediately following that proclamation involves the mother giving away the cat to the neighbors and killing the wild chicken in her backyard and preparing it for dinner. It is assumed by then that there will be drastic changes involving the family's animals. And how upsetting, with White Dog getting fed his last meal before being beaten to death with the store-bought shovel (11), and freeing the bird with one agonizing final stare into the night (20).

But each animal represents something far greater than a response to a federal order. It is almost foreshadowing and morbidly nostalgic, with the mother and her actions portraying aspects of her life that have passed and will soon be passed. The death of the chicken provides the family with their last home meal, a meal eaten in privacy and made with equipment the family owns. Those meals, once frequent and wholesome, became a long gone memory once the family ate nothing but liver, catfish, horsemeat, beans, bread, and milk provided to them (50, 61). With giving away the cat to the Greers, it is almost representative of how the family puts their lives in the hands of the government. The small lives of a few are subjected to the whims of authority, and such a position would be frightening to any person. With the bird's release, the mother recognizes that such freedom is never absolute, and therefore imparts such opportunity to the animal that can best make use of that freedom—the freedom of the air, of flight, of no restraint, the luxuries of which the family no longer has.

The most impactful action the mother takes is what she does to the old dog and what it represents for her and her family. The dog has done no harm, no wrong, and is obedient to the very end, and yet she still kills it. In this regard the lives of Japanese-Americans in that era were very much the same. They have done no harm but are

wrongfully associated with the enemy due to a superficial externality. But with the dog's death comes the death of the old times and the old ways, where no longer can Japanese-Americans live as they once have. They may pine for such times as the boy wondered where the dog went (13) or they may ignore that those times have already long as the housemaid tried to serve the family while in the internment camps (56). Sometimes, one must simply accept that the emperor really is no longer divine.

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Charles Phil is from Franklin, Wisconsin and currently studying computer science in the College of Arts and Sciences. He also enjoys playing cello in the Cornell Symphony Orchestra and is extremely delighted to be here at Cornell University.

When the Emperor Was Divine describes an American family's experience in an internment camp in Topaz, Utah, during World War II. This facility presents the mother and children with a new kind of life, very unlike their home in Berkeley, California.

Essay topic—Write a description of some of the experiences one might have had in an internment camp during World War II.

This topic asks you to explore and summarize what you learn about living in the internment camps by viewing one or more of the sites included in the Cornell University Library Guide for *When the Emperor Was Divine*, posted on the Cornell Book Project web site at: <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/content.php?pid=453512&sid=3716114> or "Internment."

In writing your essay, consider this quote from the novel: "It was not like any desert he had read about in books. There were no palm trees here, no oases, no caravans of camels slowly winding across the dunes" (53).

Mildred Whiteley

A Stroll

The colors of her kimono dance in the hot, bright lights that stand as straight as the soldiers near the gate (Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine*. New York: 2003). Rigid and unchanging, the two, men and lights, seem to feed on the spirit of that barbed monstrosity. I am hidden behind the far wall of the closest barrack. My children and their children, and even the child we have taken in, think I am asleep, but I can never sleep here. Usually, I lie wakeful in my room; always I can feel the heat radiating from the desert sands beneath our feet and the black tiles on our roof. The taste of it all is overpowering. The tar of the tiles sticks to the roof of my mouth and seems to pour down my throat; the sand embeds itself into my tongue and the sun, oh, it lights it all on fire. When the sun hides behind the mountains, there is no relief: the cold seeps through the walls and the two opposites, the immense heat and frigid cold, paralyze my emaciated body. I can't eat the food. I have tried, truly I have tried, but it has made my legs and arms shake and my stomach expel every last drop. There is no rice here, there is too much sugar, and of course, even when the food pleases my grandchildren, there is never enough. Always, the littlest ones go hungry because they haven't had enough and the aged because they can't stomach the stuff.

But tonight, I had an urge to see the sky once more before I close my eyes forever. Let me see the stars that as a little girl in Japan my grandfather had named and traced in the palm of my hand. Let me feel, just once more, the wind across my wrinkled cheeks, that wind which blew so fiercely when we were 'relocated.' Executive Order 9066 (Ina, Satsuki. "Children of the Camps: Internment History." *Public Broadcasting Service*. 1999. August 15, 2013.

<http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/index.html>). That piece of legislature changed everything. I used to smile and laugh, but those days are over. I am made entirely of hatred now, hatred for the US government. All my other feelings are gone now; even

the memories of my childhood that kept me happy for a time have nearly disappeared. The younger ones must not see what I've become. They should not hate as much as I do. They have too much to live for. I, on the other hand, am almost gone; my time is almost finished.

So I step outside of our overcrowded quarters into the camp. I walk for five minutes, wind whipping around my tiny body. I am looking for the square, the emptiest space of land we have, but a few steps before I enter I stop, I see the kimono. In the eyes of the guards it is alien and evil, because that's what the 9066 wants them to believe. To me it is a beacon of light: a reminder of what the world was like before everyone decided that we were the enemy. Those colors call me to Japan; bring my remembrances of the little fishing village back. I am suddenly aware of harsh shouts and the cocking of rifles. I try to bring myself closer to her, to shield that woman from the inevitable bullets. But my feet are heavy and resist my command. And so she stands arms at her sides, eyes closed, facing the oncoming barrage. She must be my age, perhaps older, and her will to conform has broken. Perhaps her memories are all gone, or perhaps she is stronger than me, and she actively resists. She never wavers in her silence and seems to feel nothing as the first bullet strikes her, but as the others follow she opens her eyes and arms to the sky in a final plea. And she falls down to the dusty earth below (Stamatov, Suzanne. "Japanese-American Internment Camps." *New Mexico State Record Center and Archives*. 2004-2013. August 22, 2013. <http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=453>).

Three hours have passed since her execution, and I feel that my body will collapse at any moment. I haven't moved. When I close my eyes, I see the crimson stain ruining that glorious kimono and the body crumbling. The troops acted quickly; with rapid shouts they buried the woman within the hour. I saw no emotion in their faces. Another job done was what they were thinking, something else to talk to their cronies about. It isn't that they were bad men; I see that, they were boys, but it has been decreed that we are monsters, and they must carry out their orders.

In a few hours children will play where she died, unaware that a life was taken where they run. Internally, though, they will feel the cruelty of that space of land. No laughter will ring out; no squeals of delight will be audible, for even in their youth they understand that we are subhuman. We have been reduced to cattle, numbered and herded. But the US will never succeed in reducing each of us to a number. We may go mad, we may be led to the slaughter, but we will never forget who we are. As the sun begins to rise, I think again of the crumpled figure of the woman. And I step into the square, my chapped hands clasped, as I begin to sing a Shinto prayer for the dead (Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine*. New York: 2003. 92).

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