

# Seattle Children's Theatre

## ACTIVE AUDIENCE GUIDE

SEASON 43, SHOW 4



## The Journal of Ben Uchida:

CITIZEN 13559

FEBRUARY 8 - MARCH 4, 2018

BY NAOMI IIZUKA

ADAPTED FROM THE JOURNAL OF BEN UCHIDA: CITIZEN 13559 MIRROR LAKE INTERMENT CAMP BY BARRY DENENBERG

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DIRECTED BY DESDEMONA CHIANG ILLUSTRATION BY LIZ WONG



## Click on an article to link to it:

Synopsis .....	2
State Learning Standards .....	3
We're All on the Same Team – Theater Etiquette .....	5
Writing Plays – Naomi Iizuka, Playwright .....	6
A Chat with Desdemona Chiang, Director.....	7
About the Set – From Carey Wong, Set Designer.....	9
About the Costumes – From Christine Tschirgi, Costume Designer .....	13
Forced from Home – Japanese Americans in Western Washington .....	17
Seeing Discrimination .....	22
Fear Is the Worst Leader .....	23
Spreading the News – Communication in the 1940s.....	24
Histories of Pearl Harbor and Japanese-American Internment .....	26
Japanese-American History, Culture, Community .....	27
Drama in Action – Learn by Doing .....	28
Words & Phrases That Might Be New to You.....	29
Jump Start – Give This a Try .....	31
Activity Pages .....	32
Booklist.....	34
Share Your Thoughts .....	34



# SYNOPSIS

The Journal of Ben Uchida is a fictional account of a family during WWII. Although Mirror Lake internment camp didn't exist, much of what the Uchidas experience there did happen in the real camps.

## BE WARNED: THIS SYNOPSIS HAS SPOILERS.

The play begins in December of 1941 with a glimpse of Ben's life with his family in San Francisco. Ben tells us this story is about his father. He remembers what his father taught him—the belief that as American citizens they could be anything they wanted to be as long as they were willing to work for it. Mr. Uchida gives Ben a journal, saying, “Write everything down... You're history in the making.” We see Mr. Uchida sharing his passion for the stars as Ben looks through their telescope, until their reverie is interrupted by Naomi, Ben's older sister, demanding his help with the dishes. Mrs. Uchida appears and wonders if Ben is cold outside. Life is ordinary.

Then Ben writes, “Sometimes your whole life changes in a flash.” Music on the radio is interrupted by the news that the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. We hear a chorus of voices and see flashes of terrifying headlines. Japanese Americans are being targeted as the enemy.

At Ben's school there is a shift. His teacher looks at him funny. His friend Robbie notices and gives him a baseball signed by Joe DiMaggio to help him feel better. His sister gets mad at him, “I swear you spend all your time thinking about the stupidest things... Look around.” Finally, Ben sees the posted notices: “Instructions to all persons of Japanese ancestry... In the interests of homeland security...” Ben learns they are being evacuated from their homes and sent to a camp, and not a summer camp.

The family prepares. Mr. Uchida goes to the Civil Control Station to get their family's identification number. Mrs. Uchida goes through their family possessions to find what they can take. She finds a fragile teapot, a family heirloom, and while admiring it is visited by a neighbor looking to purchase it cheap, to capitalize on their misfortune. Mrs. Uchida smashes the teapot. Mr. Uchida returns and tells her not to worry, it's just a thing, he has faith that “our government” is doing this for a good reason.

The Uchidas experience harassment and taunting, racial slurs and aggression. Mr. Uchida signs over his store to a neighbor businessman, trusting that it will be returned to him eventually. Ben wonders if they can take their telescope with them to camp. Naomi and Ben ask their father why they are being taken away. Mr. Uchida reminds them the United States is at war and everyone must make sacrifices.

The family boards a train to the Mirror Lake internment camp. They arrive in the desert to find no lake, but guard towers, soldiers and barbed wire fences. The family moves into filthy barracks. They work to keep their new living conditions clean as best they can. Ben meets a soldier, Mike, from Wisconsin. They share a mutual interest in baseball and Ben responds to the kindness in this hostile environment. Ben joins the other children at the camp's school run by the strict Miss Kroll. Ben hears from his friend Robbie back in San Francisco, living a normal life of Little League and lizards, a life not available to Ben. Robbie asks Ben to write and tell him how things are at the camp, but Ben doesn't know how to describe it. And life gets harder and harder as the days go by.



In the winter, the snow falls. Ben has never seen snow before and can't help but stare out the classroom window. When Miss Kroll presses Ben on answering a question, he responds with frustration. He asks how long he will be here and why he should learn anything if he will be stuck here forever.

Then, in Ben's words, “This is the part of the story I don't want to say. This is the part of the story I don't want to know.” His father commits suicide. Knowing he had lost his business and he could never restore the life he had provided for his family, he chooses to end his life.

The family struggles on under the shadow of their loss. Two years later they are released and bravely try to rebuild their lives. Ben continues to write and remember, making peace with the ghost of his father. Later in his life, he visits Miss Kroll. She tells him that she went to teach at Mirror Lake after her husband was killed in the war at the age of 19. She reminds Ben of the importance of memories in our lives. Ben finds the journal of his time at Mirror Lake. He hardly recognizes himself as the person who wrote those words. He tells us it is not just a story about his father, but a story of war and people like his family, of neighbors and strangers, of the memory of those we have lost.

# STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

*The Journal of Ben Uchida* touches on many important themes and ideas. Here are a few we believe would make good **Discussion Topics**: Resilience, Identity, History, Exclusion.

We believe that seeing the show and using our Active Audience Guide can help you address these **21st-Century Skills**:

- Creative Thinking
- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Perseverance
- Growth Mindset

We also believe that seeing the show and using the AAG can help educators meet many of the **Washington State Learning Standards**. Below are some that might fit in well. Where more than one standard within a specific area applies, we selected one example. In a few instances, we refer to specific AAG articles.

## Arts

### Visual Arts

(See especially AAG articles *About the Costumes*, *About the Set*, and *Things Change* activity.)

- **Anchor Standard 1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- **Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- **Anchor Standard 7:** Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 8:** Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 9:** Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 10:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- **Anchor Standard 11:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

### Theatre Arts

- **Anchor Standard 1:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- **Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- **Anchor Standard 3:** Refine and complete artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 4:** Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- **Anchor Standard 5:** Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- **Anchor Standard 6:** Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 7:** Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 8:** Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 9:** Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- **Anchor Standard 10:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- **Anchor Standard 11:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.





# English Language Arts

## Reading Standards for Literature

(The following standards assume the script of the play as the text – in some cases the book *The Journal of Ben Uchida: Citizen 13559* is a reinforcing text for these standards.)

- **Key Ideas and Details**  
**Example - RL.4.3:** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- **Craft and Structure**  
**Example - RL.4.5:** Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.
- **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**  
**Example - RL.4.7:** Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.
- **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.**  
**RL.4.10:** Read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

## Speaking and Listening Standards

- **Comprehension and Collaboration**  
**Example - SL.4.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**  
**Example - SL.4.4:** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
- **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**  
**SL.3.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases.

## Reading Standards for Informational Text

(For these standards, the articles in this AAG would serve as the "text.")

- **Key Ideas and Details**  
**Example - RI.4.3:** Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
- **Craft and Structure**  
**Example - RI.4.5:** Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.
- **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**  
**Example - RI.4.7:** Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
- **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**  
**RI.4.10:** Read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

## Writing Standards

(See the *Lasting Connections* activity sheet and writing prompts from *Jump Start* in the AAG.)

- **Text Type and Purposes**  
**Example - W.4.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- **Production and Distribution of Writing**  
**Example - W.4.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
- **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**  
**Example - W.4.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

## Reading Standards: Foundational Skills

- **Phonics and Word Recognition**  
**Example - RF.4.3.a:** Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.
- **Fluency**  
**Example - RF.4.4.b:** Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

# Social Studies

**EARL 1: CIVICS** The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

- **Component 1.1:** Understands key ideals and principles of the United States, including those in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other fundamental documents.
  - **1.1.1** Understands the key ideals of unity and diversity. The community is made up of people from various cultures. The benefits of diversity for a community include the increased range of viewpoints, ideas, customs, and choices available.
  - **1.1.2** Understands and applies the key ideals of unity and diversity within the context of the community. Explains the diverse perspectives of cultural groups in the community.

## EARL 3: GEOGRAPHY

- **3.2.2:** Understands the cultural universals of place, time, family life, economics, communication, arts, recreation, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, government, and education.



# WE ARE ALL ON THE SAME TEAM

# THEATER ETIQUETTE

The fantastic thing about going to see live theater is that it is a shared community event where everyone plays an important part. You hear pre-show announcements about theater etiquette every time you come to SCT. Happily, the vast majority of our audience members help us make the theater-going experience better for everyone by complying with the requests. But if you or the kids in your life have ever wondered why we ask the things we do, here are some explanations:

Please completely turn off all electronic devices including cell phones, cameras and video recorders.

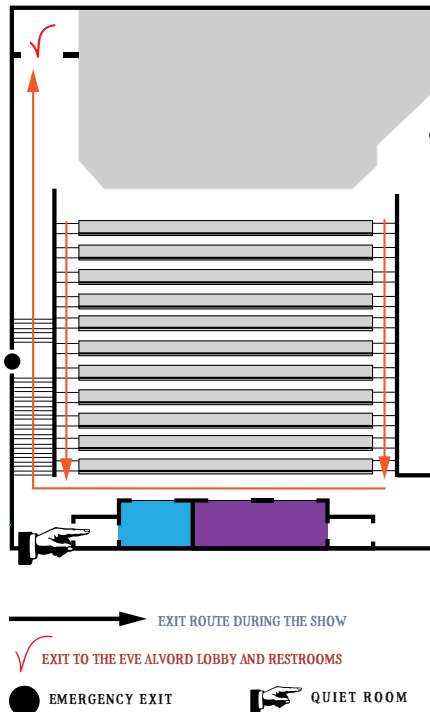
Why turn them completely off? So they won't get used. Airplane mode will stop incoming calls and messages, but it won't stop people from using their devices to take pictures, record audio or video, read books or play games during the show.

Phone calls and texting are a distraction to the audience and performers, and can pose a safety hazard as well as interfere with our sound system.

The distraction factor is an easy one to explain. It is very difficult for people to ignore a lit screen. Walk through a room where a TV is on and you are going to at least glance at it. In a darkened theater, eyes are drawn to the light. Everyone sitting anywhere behind someone looking at a lit phone will turn their attention to that phone. And the actors on stage can see the screen lighting up the holder's face. A ringing phone or text message alert takes everyone in the theater, on stage and off, out of the moment.

How does this create a safety hazard? Distraction can be a problem for actors and crew whose focus needs to stay on doing their work safely, especially when working on, with or around moving scenic pieces or as scenery is being lowered to the stage.

Do electronics in the audience really interfere with the sound system? Yes. You would not notice it over the speaker system in the house, but our crew is on wireless headsets, and electronic devices in the audience can cause interference. If crew can't hear cues and communicate with each other, they can't do their job safely or efficiently.



Also, taking pictures or video is not allowed.

We are fortunate to work with very talented performers, designers, playwrights and directors at SCT. One of our responsibilities to these artists is to help protect their work from illegal distribution or piracy. Contractually, the use of images of their designs and recordings of their work is very specifically controlled. We appreciate that people want to capture a memory to enjoy later, but it is actually a violation of contract, and of trust between the artists and the audience.

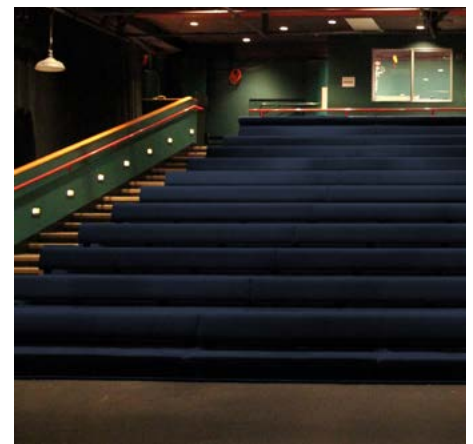
You are welcome to take pictures in the lobby, of family and friends in their seats before or after the show, or when talking to the actors at autographs after the show, with their permission. If you are not sure if a photograph is permitted, please ask.

If you are with someone who becomes noisy or restless, please be kind to your neighbors and use our quiet room which is located in the back of the theater over your left shoulder.

We love our audiences and want them to express themselves during the show—laughing, clapping, shouting in amazement. It's part of the community experience. But everyone has moments when they just don't want to be where they are. And sometimes they express this quite loudly. The quiet room offers a place to see and hear the show, while having a chance to settle in private. Please keep in mind that although it is called the "quiet room" it is not completely soundproof.

If you need to exit during the performance, please go around the back of the seats and down the staircase on the other side of the partition.

We're pretty sure no one wants to become part of the show if they need to run out of the theater to use the restroom or get a drink of water. The Alvord is a wonderfully intimate space. Exiting during the show will always draw some attention, but using the suggested path behind the partition avoids crossing directly in front of the stage.



# WRITING PLAYS

BY NAOMI IIZUKA, PLAYWRIGHT

*I teach playwriting. I've taught playwriting for many years. I've taught in universities, high schools, prisons, and retirement homes. I believe everyone has a story. I also believe everyone has a responsibility to tell their story. Through the years, I've arrived at some basic principles of playwriting and storytelling. This is what I've learned:*



## #1 TELL IT LIKE IT IS.

The simple act of telling the truth can be the most powerful thing that we, as playwrights and theatre-makers, do. Maybe the truth is a family secret. Maybe the truth is something about the human condition. Maybe the truth is something we know about ourselves, but haven't yet shared with anyone else. Whatever it is, the best kind of playwriting tells the truth.

## #2 WHEN YOU SEE INJUSTICE, CALL IT OUT.

Sometimes injustice is hard to see. Injustice can be an unexamined assumption about another person. It can be something a family or a community takes for granted. Write a play that draws our attention to an injustice that we may not at first see. Write a play that draws our attention to people and stories that might otherwise be invisible. Write a play that starts an uncomfortable but necessary conversation about prejudice and injustice.

## #3 TELL THE STORIES THAT ARE NOT GETTING TOLD BY ANYONE ELSE.

Tell the stories of people who might otherwise be invisible and voiceless. Every time you, as a playwright, bring to life a character from an under-represented community, every time you challenge a cultural stereotype, every time you give humanity to a stranger, you are changing the cultural landscape in powerful ways. It's easy to demonize a caricature you see on TV or hear about on talk radio. Maybe the most important thing you can do as a playwright is to humanize those who are different from us and tell their stories.

## #4 ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

I think the plays that have the greatest potential to speak to our present moment are the plays that ask the right questions. Some of the most interesting questions are about our history. They're questions that ask why did something happen, like why did the United States government imprison innocent Japanese-American citizens? Some of the most interesting questions are also about the future. They start with the words, "What would happen if..." What would happen if the United States government imprisoned innocent Americans simply because of their ethnic origins or race? What would we do? What would you do?

## #5 EMBRACE THE THEATRICALITY OF THEATRE.

As we think about what it means to write plays right now, it's vital to remember what makes theatre singular and unique:

**The presence of live actors**

**The intimacy of the theatre space**

**The collective sense of watching and experiencing something together as an audience**

**The potential for theatre magic**

In a world where we watch so much on our computer screens and tablets, theatre really does have the potential to create an experience like no other. It's live. Anything can happen. The actors are embodying and performing the words that we as playwrights write, in real time. And they're doing this in front of an audience. People who might never otherwise meet, people who might have very different political views, sit side by side for an hour and a half or two hours. They listen and watch together. They go through this strangely intimate experience together. There's something that happens when we all see a play together. We come together as a community. We wrestle with big, ethical questions together. We empathize with lives of strangers together. We dream and imagine and wonder together. And if we're lucky, we are in some small way transformed. If we're lucky, we leave the theatre wiser, more aware, more willing to step up and engage with the world around us in deeper, more humane ways.

## #6 WRITE AND KEEP WRITING.

Write your story. Write every day if you can. Write even when you don't feel like it. Make writing a daily habit. Write about everything you experience. Write about your life. Write about what scares you. Write about what you wonder about, dream of, and hope for. Only you can write your story. Write it and keep writing it. Know there is a world full of people who want to hear your story.





# A CHAT WITH DESDEMONA CHIANG, DIRECTOR

## PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR WORKING PROCESS AS A DIRECTOR.

To me, the job of the director is to unify and clarify the vision of the play. It's my job to make sure that all the technical design elements and the choices made by the actor are on the same page, telling the same story. My process begins with asking, "What is this play about?" and, "What do I want audiences to walk away wondering about at the end?" I usually try to articulate that for myself as simply and as clearly as possible for every play I work on.

When I read *The Journal of Ben Uchida*, my first impression was that this was a story about how it feels to be forced out of your home, and how the Uchida family tries to make sense of that feeling. I brought that impression to the conversations with the designers, and we came to the conclusion that in order to tell this story about being forced out of home, we needed to decide what "home" looked and felt like, and what the "absence of home" looked and felt like. Sort of a before and after contrast.

A lot of what I do early on is ask questions to help my collaborators do the best work they can. I talk to the designers about what the world of the play feels like to me, what kind of environment we find ourselves in—is it a loving, warm world? Or a scary, dark world? And from there, I talk about the kinds of people that occupy this world, what kind of relationships they have with each other. What do these characters want in this play, for themselves and from each other? Why is this play important to us today and how can we connect with these characters' experiences? And from these answers, the designers and I arrive at ideas for sets (what kind of room is this?), costumes (what are they wearing in this scene?), lighting (what is the feeling in the room?), and sound (what do we hear in certain moments?).

Then, when the actors join the process, we start exploring the more physical moment-to-moment parts of the play: on what line does an actor sit down? When should they move

to the door? If the designers and I do our jobs well, we will have created a space the actors feel naturally alive in. It's like a good jungle gym—you can play around in all kinds of configurations if it's set up right. I also help the actors understand what the words mean, why they're saying these particular words in this moment instead of something else, and what they want from the person they're talking to when they say these words.

And as we rehearse the play, our choices about things get more and more specific, more and more detailed. It's like building a house: you start with the basic stuff early on—foundation, walls, pipes—and by the end, you're picking color for the guest towels or choosing what kind of soap is in the bathroom.



*Desdemona Chiang is very excited to be directing her first show at SCT. She was born in Taipei, Taiwan and came to America when she was three years old. She grew up in Los Angeles, living with her mom, stepdad and grandparents, and was the drum major in her high-school marching band. In her spare time, she likes eating fried crispy things, practicing sign language and going for a run around Green Lake when it's nice outside (even though she's not very fast).*

## WHAT IS A PARTICULARLY INTERESTING OR UNUSUAL CHALLENGE ON THIS PROJECT AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO APPROACH IT?

I feel like *The Journal of Ben Uchida* is such a big play. Not physically big, but emotionally big. Because it's about trying to make sense of a world that you no longer understand. Ben is this kid who's trying to understand why his family is being forced to move away, leave their things behind, and why everything in his life is suddenly different. And there are moments of vastness and emptiness in it. For example, when Ben's family arrives at the Mirror Lake internment camp, it's a big empty space. And how can you create a big empty space in a theater that feels cozy and intimate? That was something that the designers and I talked a lot about.

We came to realize that the idea of emptiness is valuable when you compare it to the idea of fullness. A plate on a table can be just a plate, but that plate can be made to feel empty if you saw it full of food ten minutes ago. In order to create the sense of loss that the Uchida family goes through, it was important to show how much they had before it was all taken away. So, the design of the show is very detailed and complex at the beginning, and over the course of time, things disappear as their world suddenly changes. You may notice that even the colors start to go away.



## WHAT IN YOUR CHILDHOOD GOT YOU INVOLVED IN THEATER AND TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

So many people I know and work with have some kind of inspirational story about how they got involved in theater, like watching an amazing play at a young age, or having an inspirational drama teacher or being part of an after-school program. My introduction to theater was not as romantic or exciting.

I came to theater pretty late in life. When I was younger, I always thought I'd grow up to be a doctor. I think it was a combination of cultural/familial expectations, and the fact that I've always been good at science. I went to college to study molecular cell biology at UC Berkeley, and my plan was to apply to medical school. I had to take an arts requirement class the first semester of my freshman year, and the rumor had it that the easiest class to take was a class in the theater department called "Introduction to Acting." It was supposed to be the "easy-A" class: no papers to write, no lectures to attend, you just showed up and played theater games three times a week. So that's what I did.

But, unexpectedly, that class is also where I discovered my sense of play (I was a very serious kid growing up), where I started forming meaningful friendships, asking deeper and complicated questions about life and meaning. You wouldn't think that playing charades and freeze tag three times a week with people would lead to a career in theater, but that's what happened with me. I thought, "Hey, that was fun! Let's do another!" So, that first class led me to take another class in scene study, which led to a class in Shakespeare, which led to a class in directing, and so on and so forth. And by the end of my time in college, I took so many classes in theater that I ended up declaring a second major. So, I have a degree in biology and theater.

And after a few years, I realized that this was something I wanted to do with my life: tell important stories to change people's minds. So, I went to study directing at UW, where I got my master's degree, and have been working ever since.

Desdemona in rehearsal for a 14/48 festival piece with actors Troy Lund, Christy Cruz and May Nguyen

# ABOUT THE SET

FROM CAREY WONG, SET DESIGNER

## RESEARCH IMAGES FROM SAN FRANCISCO'S JAPANTOWN IN THE 1930S AND 40S



Optometrist



Geary Street Cleaners



Business district on Post Street

Stage director Desdemona Chiang and I wanted the scenery to depict two very different and contrasting environments in which the play takes place. The first is the vibrant, industrious and bountiful urban feeling of San Francisco's Japantown in the 1940s, with its profusion of Japanese-American owned businesses. In contrast to this is the rough, desolate and isolated Mirror Lake internment camp where Ben and his family are sent. Fenced in by barbed wire with guard towers for security, Japanese-American internment camps more closely resembled prison or detention facilities than civilian living quarters. And it is in this stark camp setting that the Uchida family tragedy takes place.

We looked at many historic photographs of 1940s Japantown and the internment camps to capture their essence in our sets for this production. In fact, we even utilized details from period photographs to depict the interiors of the produce and tailoring shop windows in the Japantown set. Because the scenery needed to fit within the compact dimensions of the Alvord stage, we created a series of sliding panels, a few of which could pivot, to provide fluidity to the shifting scenes of the play as it moves from the Japantown street to Mr. Uchida's optometrist shop, the Uchida home, the train car interior, the internment camp, a classroom and the camp barracks where the Uchidas live.

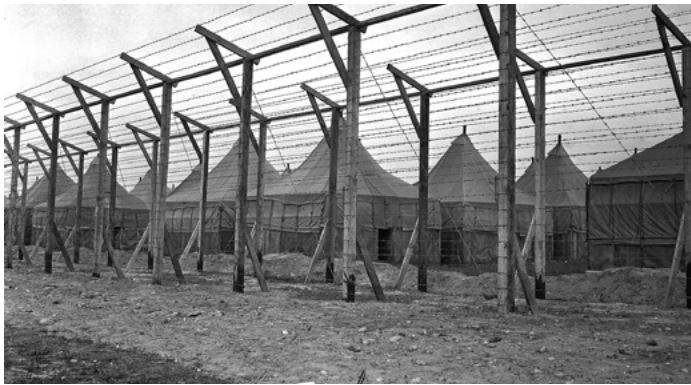
The daytime sky and nighttime with stars are also important features in setting the mood for this production, and an abstract sky drop at the back of the stage along with a star effect give this story an uplifting final look that is hopeful.



Cafe next to a Doctor's office



## INTERMENT CAMP RESEARCH



Barbed wire fences



Soldier standing guard at Tule Lake internment camp in California



Inside the barracks

## RESEARCH FOR WINDOWS FOR THE JAPANTOWN SHOPS

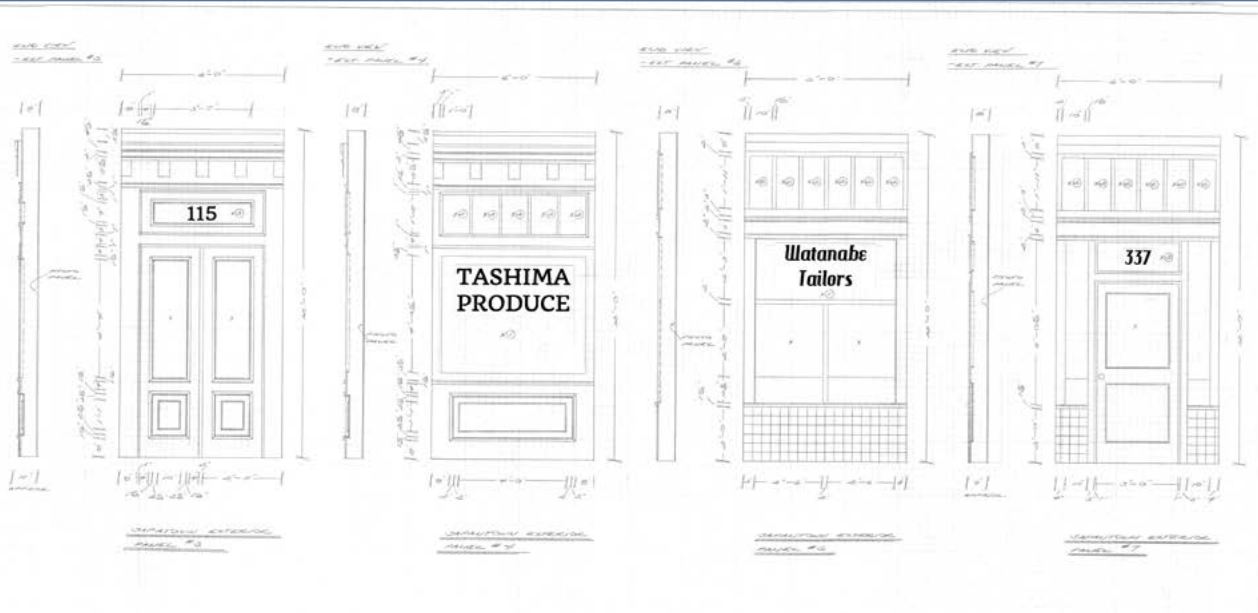


Fruit store



Tailor





Technical drawings of the produce and tailor shop fronts



Color elevations of shop fronts



Set model for Japantown street



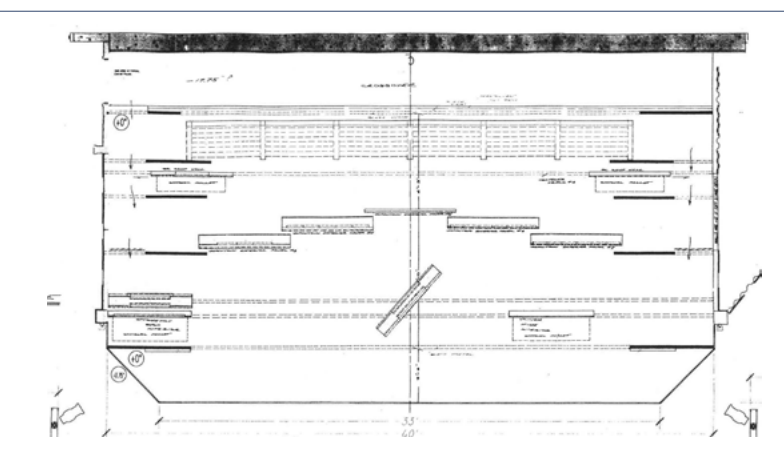
Panels rearranged to create the optometry shop



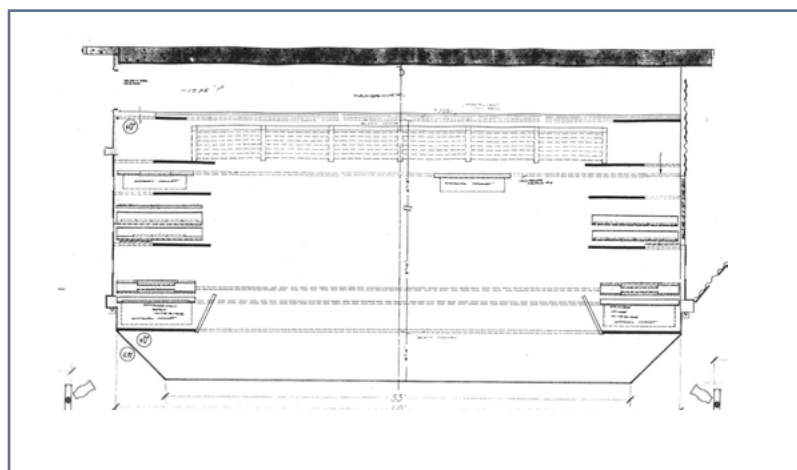
The Uchidas' home in San Francisco



The Uchidas' barracks home at Mirror Lake



Ground plan showing panel placement for the Uchidas' home



Ground plan showing panel placement for their barracks



# ABOUT THE COSTUMES

## FROM CHRISTINE TSCHIRGI, COSTUME DESIGNER

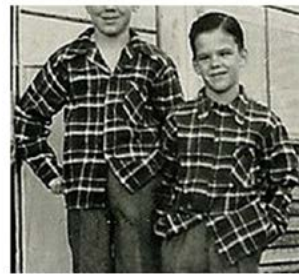
I love to start my design process by filling my head with as much research as possible. For *The Journal of Ben Uchida*, this meant reading the original book the play was adapted from and a lot of other books and journals written by people who had been taken to the internment camps. I looked at many collections of images from this time, photos of people in their homes before they were evacuated and photos of life in the camps as well as pictures of the art that they made while there. Because this play takes place in the 1940s, I also did a lot of research into the fashion from that time and the details, silhouettes (shapes), and colors that make up the clothing of that period. Armed with all this information I began to imagine the clothing for each of the play's characters.

The clothes I pick need to help tell the story and help the audience know things about each character immediately when we see them. Sometimes, it's like leaving clues to help the audience figure out who people are. In the Uchida family we have: Masao, the conservative father in his cardigan; Lily, the proper mother wearing a crisp apron; Naomi, a teen in the fashions of the time; and Ben, who's a typical American boy that loves baseball. I designed the Uchida family a small wardrobe of clothes, including hats, jackets and other accessories in a color palette that is subtly patriotic. My hope is that these colors remind us that they are American, even as the circumstances in the story tell them they are not.

The play also includes two actors that play all the characters that the Uchida family come in contact with along their journey. In some cases, we only change a piece or two to create a different character. In the first part of the story, these characters wear colors and patterns that make them a part of the environment of the Uchidas' hometown. The Uchidas' life before the evacuation is full of colors and textures, belongings and neighbors that all combine to make up their world. Once evacuated, all those details are stripped away, and they have only the clothing and personal items they have brought with them. In the second half of the story, the actors that play the teacher and soldier wear the colors of the world of the camp, neutral browns that make them a part of that environment. This helps to make the Uchidas stand out. They are the color brought into the desolate environment.



Color renderings of Ben's costumes



Research images for Ben





  
 C.D. 10831  
 COSTUME DESIGNER  
 SIGNATURE *C. Ichigi*

Mi Kang  
as  
Naomi Uchida

Naomi as we first see her in San Francisco, and then  
at Mirror Lake internment camp

The Journal of Ben Uchida: Citizen 13559



  
 C.D. 10831  
 COSTUME DESIGNER  
 SIGNATURE *C. Ichigi*

Mi Kang  
as  
Naomi Uchida



Research for Naomi

# The Journal of Ben Uchida: Citizen 13559



Ray Tagavilla  
as  
Masao Uchida

C.D. 10831  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
SIGNATURE *C. Ischinger*

Mr. Uchida's costumes

The Journal of Ben Uchida: Citizen 13559



Ray Tagavilla  
as  
Masao Uchida  
(in a suit)

C.D. 10831  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
SIGNATURE *C. Ischinger*



Research for Mr. Uchida





Annie Yim  
as  
Lily Uchida  
(with apron at home)



Annie Yim  
as  
Lily Uchida  
(during internment)



Mrs. Uchida. The changes in her apron and hairstyle from the first costume to the second help show the difference between her life in San Francisco and Mirror Lake.



Research for Mrs. Uchida



Characters we meet at Mirror Lake, a soldier and Ben's teacher Mrs. Kroll, are in colors that reflect the desert the Uchidas have been sent to.



# FORCED FROM HOME —

## JAPANESE AMERICANS IN WESTERN WASHINGTON

As the United States entered World War II, a widespread fear grew: that people of Japanese descent could pose a security threat to the country. This led to the forced removal and incarceration of 110,000 Japanese Americans that lived on the West Coast, including 12,892 from Washington state, 9,000 of them from King County.

After being removed from their homes, most Japanese Americans in the Seattle area were sent first to a temporary camp in Puyallup, and then to the longer term Minidoka internment camp in Idaho. Most who lived outside the city limits were sent first to the Pinedale camp in Fresno, California, then to the Tule Lake internment camp just south of the Oregon border. Those on Bainbridge Island were sent first to the Manzanar internment camp in California, and then to Minidoka.

The story of this forced relocation is told here partly through the personal journeys of two Seattle residents: Akiko Kato, a 17-year-old student at Seattle's Garfield High School, who was in many ways a typical American teenager, and Shosuke Sasaki, a 30-year-old Japanese immigrant who was raised and educated in the Seattle area.

Japanese immigration to the Pacific Northwest began at the end of the 19th century. Most immigrants worked in the logging or railroad industries, both of which needed a supply of cheap labor. Others turned to farming, particularly in the river valleys south of Seattle. By the 1920s, an urban cluster of Japanese-owned businesses had formed in Seattle at Main and Jackson Streets near 5th and 6th Avenues in today's International District. Many Japanese Americans lived in multi-ethnic residential areas further east.

The Katos lived in a home on 18th Avenue near Yesler. "Well, all kinds of people [lived] in the neighborhood," recalled Akiko. "There were many Jews and a Chinese family, and several black families, and we went in and out of each other's homes all the time."



Japanese Americans evacuated from Bainbridge Island board the ferry to Seattle on the way to Puyallup



Mother and children leaving Bainbridge, all wearing their identification tags



Soldiers guard the ferry dock on Bainbridge during evacuation

Group of young Bainbridge Island evacuees making the V for Victory sign from a train as it leaves Seattle



Looking down a dirt road between barracks at the Puyallup Assembly Center, which was named "Camp Harmony" by Army public relations officials



Newly arrived evacuees from the assembly center at Puyallup register at Minidoka in Idaho



But discrimination was also a fact of life for Japanese Americans and other ethnic minorities at that time. Immigrants from East Asia could not purchase land or become American citizens like immigrants from other parts of the world. In 1924, the United States ended immigration from Japan.

By the end of the 1930s, Shosuke Sasaki held a degree in banking and finance from the University of Washington, but like many other highly-educated young Japanese Americans, jobs matching his education were hard to find. "For us, anyone of Japanese descent, it was just a solid wall of prejudice. And there was absolutely no chance of getting any work," he recalled. Instead, he managed his family's rental apartments.

Tensions between the United States and Japan grew in the 1930s. In anticipation of a possible war, the U.S. government began watching the Japanese-American community. Although these investigations determined that Japanese Americans would present a very small security risk, the government prepared lists of Japanese community leaders to be rounded up and imprisoned in the event of war.

Within hours after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, local and federal authorities swept through Japanese-American communities on the West Coast and in Hawaii, arresting people on these lists. Some 300 men from Seattle were among those detained. Mostly immigrants, these community leaders were assumed guilty because of the positions they held: Buddhist and Shinto priests, Japanese language school teachers, leaders of economic and cultural organizations. Many remained interned in camps run by the army or Immigration and Naturalization Service for the duration of the war.

The rest of the Japanese-American community waited nervously as anti-Japanese feelings rose in the weeks after Pearl Harbor. Washington Senator Monrad C. Wallgren led an informal committee of senators from western states that recommended the mass removal of Japanese Americans from California, Oregon and Washington. Tacoma Mayor Harry P. Cain was one of the only western politicians to oppose the mass removal.





Each Minidoka barrack housed four families



Inside the barracks when evacuees arrived



Newcomers move into Manzanar in central California

Although President Roosevelt's cabinet was divided over the issue, supporters of exclusion won out, and the President issued Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942. The order gave power to military leaders to exclude both citizens and non-citizens from any areas they thought necessary. General John L. DeWitt, the head of the Western Defense Command, declared all of California, the western parts of Oregon and Washington and the southern part of Arizona off limits to anyone of Japanese descent.

This started the government's removal of Japanese Americans in the spring and summer of 1942, sending them first to "assembly centers," temporary detention centers built in existing facilities, then to 10 "relocation centers," newly built long-term detention facilities in isolated desert or swamp lands. By the fall of 1942, all Japanese Americans—except those in institutions such as jails or health care facilities—had been evicted from the West Coast, and moved inland.

Most Japanese Americans in King County were forced to leave their homes in April and May of 1942. Both Akiko and Shosuke and their families were first sent to Puyallup. "They were sheds," Shosuke remembered of his living quarters. "The partitions between the sections only went up to as high as seven feet and above all that was the ceiling. And so if any child was not feeling well and would awaken during the night and start crying for water or whatever, it kept everybody else in that shed from sleeping."

From there, they went on to Minidoka, Idaho, one of 10 newly-constructed camps built to house evicted Japanese Americans. Most Japanese Americans from the Pacific Northwest were among the over 7,000 people held here.

Many inmates mention the lack of privacy, the communal bathrooms and dining halls, and the barbed wire fence with guard towers. For Akiko, "the thing I felt most was the lack of privacy, and that there wasn't any place you could just go and sit down and reflect." And when she did have a chance to reflect, "I started to realize, 'Hey, wait a minute. This isn't really the normal kind of thing that should be happening to people.' And that we were being incarcerated just because of race and that it wasn't fair."

In early 1943, the War Relocation Authority, the federal agency created to oversee the camps, required all inmates to complete a questionnaire that had the dual purpose of identifying young men who would be eligible for military service and others whose profiles qualified them as safe to leave the camp to "resettle" in communities away from the West Coast. As a result, thousands of Japanese Americans left the camps in 1943–44.

The most popular destination for Japanese-American resettlement prior to the end of the war was Chicago, where there were many jobs and less discrimination against Japanese Americans. Denver, New York and Cleveland also became popular destinations. In addition, thousands of college-aged inmates were able to attend schools outside the restricted West Coast, with the help of organizations that arranged scholarships and housing for them.

Akiko left Minidoka to attend college in Wichita, Kansas. She married Junelw "Junks" Kurose in 1948, and after some time in Chicago, the couple moved back to Seattle.

(ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PAGE 21...)

# ASSEMBLY CENTERS

To provide temporary housing for evicted Japanese Americans, the army quickly converted existing facilities such as horse racing tracks or fairgrounds, most of them near the areas Japanese Americans had been removed from. They held Japanese Americans for periods ranging from a few weeks to a few months in the spring and summer of 1942 while the more permanent facilities were being constructed.

## PUYALLUP

The Puyallup Assembly Center was built on the Western Washington Fairgrounds about 35 miles south of Seattle. A total of 7,390 Japanese Americans were held here. The camp remained open for four and a half months, and most were transferred from here to Minidoka.

Ten long-term camps were built in the spring and summer of 1942 and were managed by the newly created War Relocation Authority. Located in isolated areas in the West and in Arkansas, Japanese Americans were moved to these camps from the assembly centers throughout the summer and fall of 1942.

## MINIDOKA

Minidoka was located on the Snake River plain in south central Idaho. Its peak population was 7,318; nearly all were from the Pacific Northwest or Alaska.

## MANZANAR

Located in the Owens valley in central California, Manzanar was the first of the war relocation authority camps to open. Japanese Americans removed from Bainbridge Island were sent there initially, and then later removed to Minidoka. Over 90% of Manzanar's peak population of 10,046 came from the Los Angeles area.

About 220 residents of Bainbridge Island were the first to enter an incarceration camp during World War II. Japanese immigrants had founded ethnic communities near the island's sawmills and shipyards in the late 1800s and shifted to agriculture by the 1910s. After eleven months in Manzanar incarceration camp, the Bainbridge group was reunited with other Western Washington Japanese Americans at Minidoka. After the war, they reestablished their strong presence on Bainbridge Island.





Shosuke left Minidoka in December 1944 and was able to land a position at Standard and Poor's Financial Services in New York, where he worked for 20 years. As a company representative to the Newspaper Guild, he played a key role in a 1952 guild resolution that urged newspapers to stop using the word "Jap" to refer to Japanese Americans. Starting in 1945, restrictions against Japanese Americans returning to the West Coast were lifted. At last, Seattle's Japanese Americans could come home. While many who left camp went on to places outside the West Coast, just over half who had left Seattle decided to return. By 1950, 5,778 had returned.

The Seattle they returned to was a different place from the one they had left. Attracted by the wartime growth in industrial jobs in the region—especially in the forestry and ship- and aircraft-building industries—thousands of workers had flocked to Seattle.

Japanese-American returnees faced many problems, ranging from continuing racism that had grown even worse in the war years to difficulties in finding housing that had been made worse by the population growth. Akiko remembered that "when we went looking for housing... we found all these barriers.... Discrimination, where you can live, and this and that." Some were forced to live where conditions were barely better than the camps they had left.

Japanese Americans in Seattle worked hard to rebuild their lives and communities after the war. To some observers, they had succeeded, with media accounts in the 1950s and 1960s calling Japanese Americans a "model minority." But under the surface, questions remained.

Inspired by the social movements of the 1960s, Japanese Americans began to ask the question, "What were the real reasons for the wartime incarceration?" This led to a U.S. government commission that found that there was "no military necessity" and that the root causes of the incarceration were "racial prejudice, wartime hysteria and a lack of political leadership."

Both Akiko and Shosuke drew on their wartime experiences in their postwar life and work. Akiko Kurose became an acclaimed schoolteacher and peace activist. She wanted her students "to always realize that not to get involved when you should get involved is an act of violence. And that you should always work for peace." The Aki Kurose Middle School in Seattle is named after her.

After years in New York and Denver, Shosuke Sasaki retired in 1970 and moved back to Seattle. He became one of the leaders of the Seattle Evacuation Redress Committee (SERC), and worked to get payments from the federal government for the uncalled-for wartime incarceration. Shosuke's efforts helped to pave the way for the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which brought a presidential apology and reparations payments of \$20,000 for each surviving Japanese-American inmate.

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*Material used by permission of Densho. Densho is a Japanese term meaning "to pass on to the next generation," or to leave a legacy. Densho is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization started in 1996, dedicated to preserving, educating, and sharing the story of World War II-era incarceration of Japanese Americans in order to deepen understandings of American history and inspire action for equity. <https://densho.org/>*

*Images of Akiko Kurose and the Seattle Evacuation Redress Committee courtesy of Densho*



Akiko Kurose at Friends University, c. 1946-1947, Wichita, Kansas.



Original members of the Seattle Evacuation Redress Committee reunited for a video shoot, 1990. From Left: Shosuke Sasaki, Henry Miyatake, Chuck Kato, Mike Nakata and Ken Nakano

## RESOURCES\*:

### NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION AND DENSHO:

[The World War II Odyssey of King County's Japanese Americans](#)

### NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION AND DENSHO:

[The World War II Incarceration of Japanese Americans](#)

DENSHO ENCYCLOPEDIA: [Bainbridge Island](#)

DENSHO ENCYCLOPEDIA: [Puyallup](#)

SEATTLE TIMES: [Media Literacy and Japanese American World War II Incarceration](#)

SEATTLEMAG.COM: [Seattle Remembers the Japanese Internment](#)

CROSSCUT.COM: [Local Japanese Americans Remember Their Imprisonment During WWII](#)

\*Active Links can be found on the interactive AAG, download it at [www.sct.org](http://www.sct.org)

SEEING

# DISCRIMINATION

I AM AN AMERICAN

WANTO CO

WANTO CO

A sign placed in the window of a Japanese-American owned shop on December 8, 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor

In the world around us, bias and discrimination continue to cause huge injustices. Undercover journalists have done experiments to show that when people of color and white people apply to rent in the same apartment building, the landlords often discriminate against applicants of color, even though it is illegal to do so. The same thing happens with job applications. When reporters sent out two identical job applications, one with a non-white-sounding name and one with a white-sounding name, the second one got a lot more callbacks. People of color are also more likely to be pulled over while driving, and even harmed or killed by police. There are laws that were created to protect people from these types of bias and unfair discrimination, but it still happens, and more needs to be done.

It can be hard to know what to do when you see bias or discrimination. When you take action to help, you become an *ally*. There is not only one “right” way to help. You could speak up, either by confronting the person or by telling a trusted adult. You could find friends to help you figure out what to do. You could simply tell the victim of bias that you saw what happened and want to help. And those are just a few ideas. The important thing is that you start to recognize bias and discrimination around you, and keep looking for ways to be an ally and create change.

During World War II, some people became allies of their Japanese-American neighbors. They did not have the power to stop them from being sent to internment camps, but they found other ways to help. Some sent letters and news to their friends in the camps. Some watched over the homes, gardens and farms left behind by Japanese Americans until they could come back. Some kept special family possessions safe until the families could return. Locally, Walt and Mildred Woodward of *The Bainbridge Island Review*, kept both the local community and their imprisoned Japanese-American neighbors connected by publishing news of their lives in the internment camps.

Ask yourself: Where do I see bias and discrimination around me? Who is the target? Who can help me with this? How will I be an ally? How can I create change? How can I help make my community more inclusive? Remember, it takes courage to be an ally, but we are all responsible for doing what we can. Since the end of World War II brought the release of Japanese Americans, they have said, “Never Again.” It takes all of us working together as allies to make sure that remains true today and into the future.

**PLEASE NOTE:** In *The Journal of Ben Uchida*, you will hear these slurs: “slant-eye,” “chink,” “dirty Jap.” The playwright uses them to help the audience understand the hatred directed at Japanese Americans during World War II. These words are disrespectful and still hurt people of Japanese descent. They should never be used to describe anyone in real life.

In *The Journal of Ben Uchida*, the internment of Japanese Americans is shown to be a discriminatory action that took place over 70 years ago in the United States. But what is discrimination, and where do we see it in the United States now?

Discrimination comes in many different forms. It is when people are treated differently and unfairly based on *prejudice*, *stereotypes* and/or *bias*. For example, if one high school student is driving recklessly, and someone says, “Of course they are speeding. All high schoolers drive horribly!” they are making an unfair assumption based on the group they think the driver is part of (high school students), and based on what they think all high schoolers are like (bad drivers). Any thought or idea about people that begins with “all” is a warning sign, such as, “all musicians are good at math,” or, “all athletes are bad at math.” We could also call it, “painting a whole group of people with a single brush.”

Discriminatory behavior is when actions are taken to negatively affect those who are seen as different. It is the unequal distribution of resources and the limitation of access to full participation in society based on prejudiced thoughts or attitudes, usually resulting in harmful or hostile actions towards minority groups in areas of education, employment, housing, health care and access to goods and services.\* It is usually one-sided from the point of view of the people who are supposedly in the position of power and are making decisions that will affect the other group negatively, and the other group has no say in the decision-making process.

When people discriminate against a group, as they did against Japanese Americans during World War II, they may use *slurs*, which are insults based on racial or other unfair biases, and are meant to hurt, oppress and take any power away from the group. This is absolutely not acceptable. One slur often used during this time was calling someone a “Jap,” a horrible, insulting term that will make people of Japanese descent cringe to this day. The slur’s purpose was to put them down and label them, as if all people of Japanese descent were the same, and that they were all

bad or dishonest. It is wrong to treat people unfairly and inhumanely regardless of their citizenship status, but there were kids who were born in the U.S. and were American citizens who were called by this slur and put in internment camps just because they had Japanese parents or grandparents. They were victims of bias against Japan, our enemy in the war at the time. Those slurs hurt those kids’ feelings, took away their confidence and oppressed them by making them feel like outsiders.

The internment of Japanese Americans was an example of a huge discriminatory action. Discrimination based on prejudice, stereotypes and biases happens every day, and these everyday actions are also unfair and very harmful. In your life at school, what are some ways you have seen discrimination in action? It shows up in the form of casual putdowns regarding race, ethnicity, gender, size, abilities, perceived sexual orientation or gender identification and more. Sometimes when people say they are “joking around,” they are actually using extremely biased language or slurs that are very hurtful and damaging. When someone says, “That is so gay!” “Man up!” or “You run like a girl!” those are slurs based on unfair gender biases. They happen online and in social media as well, by starting rumors or outright bullying. Teachers can show bias too, for example by calling on some people more than others or having different expectations for different groups of students. No matter the mode or intention, these messages and behaviors can cause fear, damage and harm to individuals, the entire school community and society as a whole.

Ask yourself: Am I biased against anyone? Do I ever use slurs to put people down? Have I ever made assumptions about someone based on what I thought I knew about their race, gender or another category? Hint: we are all biased in some way, and becoming aware of that is the first step towards change. And no matter the intention, think about how your action can impact someone. When we make mistakes, it is how we respond to those mistakes that will make a difference.

\* **DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR IS ADAPTED** [from ACT for Social Justice website.](#)

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS?](#)



“NOTHING IN LIFE IS TO BE FEARED,  
IT IS ONLY TO BE UNDERSTOOD.  
NOW IS THE TIME TO UNDERSTAND MORE,  
SO THAT WE MAY FEAR LESS.”

- MARIE CURIE

## FEAR IS THE WORST LEADER

Has anything you own ever been taken away from you? Maybe it was something that wasn't specifically yours, like a ball you were using at the playground, or book you were reading at school. Maybe somebody took something small like a toy, but it was yours and that made it feel very important. Imagine if overnight everything was taken from you. Your bed, your room, all of your belongings. Some people lose everything when an accident or something unforeseen happens. You may have seen people on the news who have lost everything in a natural disaster or some other misfortune. Sometimes very bad luck happens. The weather does not decide whose whole world should be taken away. Earthquakes do not discriminate between races. Fires do not burn homes down based on gender or nationality. These events are simply random. In the United States during World War II, some children did have their whole world taken away and it was not a random occurrence. It was based on their race. Japanese Americans were removed from their homes and forced into internment camps. Even though the majority of these people were citizens and legal residents, their rights were taken away and they lost everything overnight. Why would the United States treat these citizens differently from others?

We all feel different sometimes; there is no one else in the world like me, my hair is weird, I talk funny, my family is embarrassing. Most of the time these feelings have no basis in reality. This is paranoia on a personal level. Paranoia on a society level is suspicion of certain people without evidence or justification. When something tragic happens on a large scale, that can scare people so much they abandon rational thought and are led by their fears. People in power, media or members of the community may encourage us to have a reaction to an event that will lead to singling out members of our own

communities. Despite evidence that shows these fears to be unproven, in a misguided attempt to protect the ones they love, people may turn their backs on their neighbors. This can lead to political actions that take away people's right to live in freedom. According to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, policies that led to the internment, "...were motivated largely by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."

In the effort to protect society, these policies were unnecessary and did more harm. They threatened not only the rights and livelihood of members of our society, but possibly most damaging, their sense of home. Home is your place of security, comfort and safety. When your home is suddenly taken because of who you are, more than physical things are lost. Your sense of well-being could be replaced with depression and distress, which could lead to post traumatic stress disorder. The aftermath may produce long-term financial hardships and family problems.



"In the detention centers, families lived in substandard housing, had inadequate nutrition and health care, and had their livelihoods destroyed: many continued to suffer psychologically long after their release."

- Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians

It is not easy to estimate the emotional effects of displacement, relocation and segregation experienced by a group of people such as the Japanese Americans during the early 1940s. After events such as this, it is common for people to respond negatively to simple words, images, sounds, even smells that remind them of their experience. In those moments the feelings return as if they happened today. The physical and emotional recovery process following these events can be lengthy and the harmful effects may last several generations.

Think of the people in your daily life. The ones you talk to, the ones you learn with and the ones you share laughs with. They may be facing some similar issues of separation and alienation on some level because of other people's misplaced fear of them. You may not be aware how they live and what challenges they face. Perhaps a small thing could make them lose the feeling of security, comfort and safety—their sense of home. If you hear others turning against people based on religion, race, gender or any other characteristic, instead of following the crowd, examine where your reasons come from. Did you hear someone say something? Did you read about it on social media? Did you hear politicians or groups saying things on the news? Have you talked it over with someone you trust to help you understand and tell you the truth about things? We can all make choices that instead of excluding and harming people, will help them feel welcome and safe, and that make our society stronger.

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS?](#)

# SPREADING THE NEWS

## — COMMUNICATION IN THE 1940S

Pay phone with slots at the top for quarters, dimes and nickels



Communicating with each other has always been an essential part of human existence. Today we have access to technology that can keep us in touch with friends and family instantly through cellphones, tablets and computers. The Internet, social media and broadcast media can provide breaking news from all corners of the world at a moment's notice, and we always have access to a 24-hour cable news cycle. Programs like Skype can put us in real-time visual contact with someone halfway around the world. But try to imagine what it would have been like in the 1940s, when *The Journal of Ben Uchida* takes place. The sharing of news and information happened in a much, much different way.

The telephone was still an important way to communicate, but telephones of the 1940s were all what we now call “land lines” that were hard wired into the home. You could call a friend's phone number and if your friend was home, you could talk. If your friend wasn't at home, you would leave a message with whoever answered and hope that it would be given to your friend. And if no one was at home, your call would simply ring and ring and ring, or if someone was already using the phone you would hear an annoying beeping called a “busy signal” and you would need to hang up and call back later. Answering machines were rarely, if ever, in use at that time. In some larger cities, people could subscribe to an “answering service,” but it was usually expensive, and most families couldn't afford it. With this service, when your call wasn't answered it would be transferred to another company's phone line, where operators would answer the call and take a message. Later, the customer would call the answering service and the messages would be read to the customer. Not the most private or secure way to deliver sensitive or personal information, though!

Many homes had telephone service that was called a “party line.” This was a way to connect several different homes on one phone line, which provided a more cost-efficient way to have phone service. Each home had a separate phone number with a special ring (two short rings, one long ring, etc.), to let them know that the call coming in was for them. This also had privacy issues, because when a call came in, even though it had a special ring, anyone on the party line could pick up their phone and hear the conversation. Calls were usually limited to the local area. Long-distance phone calls rates were very high, and most families rarely used it, unless it was for special occasions.

Pay phones were very common in towns big and small. Located on street corners in phone booths, in public buildings and in shops, gas stations, hotels and restaurant lobbies, you could make a local phone call, usually for a dime. You could make a long-distance call by adding additional coins into the phone's coin slot. You needed to have the phone number that you wanted to call, though, not like today when the numbers are all stored on our cellphones. Large phone books were usually attached near the phone, so you could look up a local number. The phrase to “drop a dime” on someone to report that they have done something wrong comes from the time when a dime was used to make a coin-operated phone call.

Rotary dial telephone. “Rotary” means something can rotate, which is how you dialed these phones. You would put a finger in the hole over a number and rotate the dial clockwise until you got to the crescent-shaped metal bar, where you'd release the dial and it would spin back to its starting position. As it returned, it sent electrical pulses equal to the number you had dialed, so, for example, nine pulses for the number nine. Then, you'd do it again for each digit in the phone number you were calling.



Dialing phone numbers with a lot of sevens, eights or nines took a little patience.

Philco brand table-top radio. Philco sold more radios than any other company from the 1930s to the 1950s.





Mail service was a common way to communicate, but it was a much slower way to stay in touch. First-class postage for a letter was three cents in the 1940s and it cost a penny to send a postcard—that's about the same as 52 cents and 17 cents today. Most larger cities had mail service twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. Many smaller towns and rural areas did not have home delivery at all, so you had to go to the post office each day to pick up your mail, or it was held in a post office box. Local mail could usually be delivered within two days, but longer-distance mail could take a week or more to be received. Air mail was a faster option, but it cost at least twice as much, and most families could simply not afford it in those days. Air mail was literally loaded on airplanes and flown across the country.

Newspapers and magazines were an important way to distribute information. Most cities had morning and evening newspapers that were published daily, and magazines were usually published weekly and delivered all over the country.

Radio was another popular way for people to receive news. Radio broadcasts from major cities were sent countrywide. Just like in *The Journal of Ben Uchida*, it was how most of America first heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In addition to news, there was music, comedy, variety, sports and children's programming. Many children had their favorite shows, like *The Adventures of Superman*, and would gather with their friends to listen. Television was something few people had even heard of, and would not begin to show up in most homes for several years.

The telegraph system was used to send news, as well. Primarily used by the railroad system, messages were sent across telegraph wires using Morse code, a series of short and long clicks that represented numbers and each letter of the alphabet. Companies like Western Union set up telegraph offices in cities and towns across the country. People could send a message to someone in a town where Western Union had an office and a messenger would deliver the printed telegram to the recipient. Even though this was a quicker way to contact someone, these were also only used for special occasions or emergencies because it was too expensive to be used by most families. During World War II, telegrams were used to notify families that a soldier had been injured or killed in the war, or was missing in action. Understandably, the sight of a telegram messenger at their door caused fear for anyone who had a loved one in the service.

Along with their favorite radio programs, children during this time would get together for board games, card games, to listen to records on their phonographs, and would spend time playing outdoor games and participating in community events. This was also another way that news was shared. Towns had community centers where information was distributed and posted on bulletin boards. Churches, schools and libraries were other useful news gathering places, as were hobby clubs, social organizations and groups like the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.

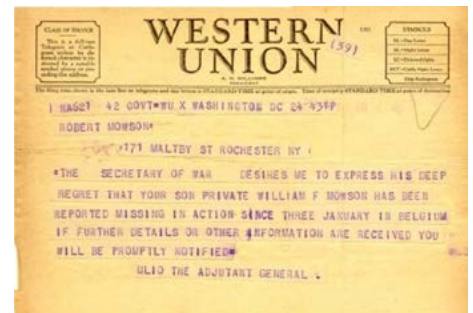
Movies, almost all still in black-and-white, were very popular during this time. Friends and families would often come together at the local movie theater to watch the latest offering. A popular part of the experience were the "newsreels" that preceded the feature film, along with cartoons and "coming attractions," previews of the films coming to the theater next. Newsreels were weekly, short documentary features that focused on the news of the day, including local, national and international events. Without television, newsreels were a way for people to see the news in action.

As you can see, communications technology has come a long way since the 1940s. So the next time you send an email, text message, post on social media or make a cellphone call directly to a friend, imagine what it might have been like to be back then, when it could take days or even weeks to make contact, and what it would have meant to the way that you lived your daily life.



To send messages in Morse code, telegraph operators tapped the knob on a telegraph key.

Western Union telegram sent during WWII to a family with news that their son is missing in action



Title card for a Movietone newsreel. Several movie studios and news organizations produced newsreels. Movietone was produced by 20th Century Fox.



## RESOURCES\*:

CLASSROOM: [Types of Communication in the 1940s](#)

MENTAL FLOSS: [10 Aspects of Old Telephones that Might Confuse Younger Readers](#)

WIKIPEDIA: [Old North American Busy Signal](#)

AMERICAN RADIOWORKS: [Radio: The Internet of the 1930s](#)  
RADIO DAYS: [How America Heard about the Bombing of Pearl Harbor](#)

PBS.ORG: [Communication during WWII](#)

\*Active Links can be found on the interactive AAG, download it at [www.sct.org](http://www.sct.org)

# HISTORIES OF PEARL HARBOR AND JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT

## Japanese View of the Attack on Pearl Harbor

HISTORYNEWSNETWORK.ORG:

[Remembering Pearl Harbor with Japanese and American Teachers](#)

*An interesting look at the different ways our cultures remember and teach about Pearl Harbor, from the cause of the attack to its aftermath.*

STRIPES.COM: [On Pearl Harbor, History a Matter of Perspective for Japan, U.S.](#)

NBCNEWS.COM: [Pearl Harbor Museum Now Shows Japanese Perspective](#)

## Pearl Harbor

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS:

[Attack on Pearl Harbor](#)

HISTORY.COM: [Pearl Harbor](#)

SOCIAL STUDIES FOR KIDS:

[The Pacific War Before Pearl Harbor](#)

[The Pacific War After Pearl Harbor](#)

[The European War Before Pearl Harbor](#)

[The European War After Pearl Harbor](#)

SCHOLASTIC.COM:

[Attack on Pearl Harbor: An Online Learning Activity](#)

[Pearl Harbor](#)

[Hour by Hour Account of the Attack on Pearl Harbor](#)

[Timeline 1600-1941: Key Events](#)

## Internment of Japanese Americans

*For more links and information, see the article Forced from Home on page 17*

DUCKSTERS.COM: [Japanese Internment Camps](#)

HISTORYLINK.ORG: [World War II Japanese American Internment – Seattle/King County](#)

DENSHO.ORG:

<https://densho.org/>

*A comprehensive reference tool with nearly 1,000 free and accessible entries related to the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. Includes oral history interviews, photos, newspapers and other primary sources that document the Japanese-American experience from immigration through redress.*

*\*Active Links can be found on the interactive AAG, download it at [www.sct.org](http://www.sct.org)*





Photo courtesy of Shioya-Blauvelt family

# JAPANESE-AMERICAN HISTORY, CULTURE, COMMUNITY LINKS

## HISTORY

**EVERYCULTURE.COM:** [Japanese Americans](#)

**HISTORYLINK.ORG:** [Japanese Americans in Seattle and King County](#)

**NPS.GOV:** [Seattle Chinatown Historic District](#)

**WIKIPEDIA:** [History of the Japanese in Seattle](#)

**PBS.ORG:** [Fighting for Democracy](#)

**DENSHO.ORG:** [442nd Regimental Combat Team](#)

**THE442.ORG:** [442nd Regimental Combat Team Legacy Website](#)

## CULTURE

**BERKELEY.EDU:** [How Japanese Americans Preserved Traditions Behind Barbed Wire](#)

**NPR.ORG:** [The Creative Art of Coping in Japanese Internment](#)

**SMITHSONIAN.COM:** [The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese Internment Camps \(video\)](#)

[Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival](#)

**THE WING:** [Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience](#)

**SEATTLEARTMUSEUM.ORG:** [The Gardner Center for Asian Art and Ideas](#)

## COMMUNITY

[Japanese Cultural & Community Center of Washington](#)

[Japan-America Society of the State of Washington](#)

**NAPOST.COM:** [The North American Post](#)

*The North American Post is a community newspaper that celebrates Japanese culture in the Greater Seattle area. Founded by first generation Japanese-Americans in 1902, the publication is one of the oldest minority-owned newspapers in the region.*

[DiscoverNikkei.org](#)

*A multilingual Japanese-American National Museum web project where visitors share, explore and connect with each other through diverse Nikkei experiences, culture and history.*

**SEATTLEGLOBALIST.COM:** [Japanese American](#)

[Center for Asian American Media](#)

*A non-profit organization dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian-American experiences to the broadest audience possible, by funding, producing, distributing and exhibiting works in film, television and digital media.*

# DRAMA IN ACTION

THIS IS A CUSTOMIZED *THE JOURNAL OF BEN UCHIDA* DRAMATIC CONNECTION WORKSHOP EXERCISE FOR YOU TO TRY.

*This play and its supporting materials tackle some challenging topics. Thank you for making your classroom a safe space for conversations that may arise.*



**EXERCISE:** *The Great Game of Power*, adapted from Augusto Boal

**GRADES:** 4th and up

**TIME:** 15 - 30 minutes

**SET-UP:** This exercise works best in an open space.

**SUPPLIES:** Three pieces of classroom furniture and/or supplies (e.g., two chairs and a water bottle OR a desk, a chair and a whiteboard eraser)

*In The Journal of Ben Uchida, the Uchida family's status in their community changes dramatically after the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor. For example, Mr. Uchida, once a respected business owner, loses the power to hold a job, remain a homeowner and take care of his family as a growing fear of Japanese Americans becomes institutionalized in American culture. In this exercise, students will explore these themes of status and power by placing objects in relationship to one another, making observations and interpreting power dynamics at play.*

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Have students form an audience on one side of the room, facing the three objects you have chosen. Ask for a volunteer to silently rearrange the objects such that one object occupies a position of more power than the others. Once your volunteer has completed this task and returned to a seat in the audience, ask your students to consider the following questions. You may wish to follow a “think—pair—share” approach, to demonstrate how different interpretations of the same image are equally valid.

1. Describe exactly how the objects are placed before you. What do you see?
2. Which object has the most power? What makes you think so? Can you think of another way to interpret the image?
3. Can you interpret a relationship between these objects? What story might these objects be telling? Can you relate the story of these objects to a moment at school? A scene or situation from *The Journal of Ben Uchida*?

After the audience has thoroughly analyzed the image, invite another student to rearrange the objects such that a different object becomes the most powerful. Coach your audience through the same line of inquiry.

## Variations:

Offer your volunteers one of the following real-world scenarios to represent with objects:

- A teacher scolds a student for being late for class
- A student is the last one to get picked for a team
- A student cannot participate in after-school sports because a parent needs their help at home

Allow your volunteers one minute to explain their concept for the image. Why did they place the objects the way they did? What power dynamics were they trying to convey? Ask volunteers to come up with their own scenarios to represent. How can they use this exercise to communicate power dynamics they've observed in their own lives?

Bring the SCT experience back to your classroom! Expand your experience of watching *The Journal of Ben Uchida* with a Dramatic Connection Workshop all about the production. Engage your students' bodies, voices and imaginations while deepening their knowledge about the themes, characters, historical context and production elements of the play. Dramatic Connection Workshops can occur either before or after seeing the play, and can be held at SCT or at your location. To learn more about our outreach programming and to reserve a workshop for your class, contact [educationoutreach@sct.org](mailto:educationoutreach@sct.org)



# WORDS & PHRASES

## THAT MIGHT BE NEW TO YOU

*His Mom and Dad, they came over from Japan.*

**Niigata prefecture.** — an administrative division of Japan with an elected governor. Japan is divided into 47 prefectures. Niigata prefecture is on the coast of the Sea of Japan.

*My grandma has a hunchback like Quasimodo* — name of the main character in the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*

*They're the shortest people I know. They're practically midgets* — unusually small people. This is a word that is considered offensive.

*What did I say about respecting our elders.* — older generation



*My Dad, he's an optometrist. He makes eyeglasses for people.* — professional who is trained to examine eyes and prescribe corrective lenses or other treatment

*Nearsighted, farsighted, you name it.*

**nearsighted** — unable to see distant objects clearly

**farsighted** — able to see distant objects better than close ones

*Without my glasses, I'm blind as a bat.* — have poor eyesight. Bats are not blind, though.

*Cause I have twenty twenty vision.* — normal eyesight. 20/20 means you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance. 20/100 vision, for example, means you have to be 20 feet away from something to see what someone with normal vision can see at 100 feet.

*It had a leather cover and the paper was thick like fancy stationery.* — writing paper

*You're history in the making.* — What you live today, will be history in the future.

*Ursa Major. Ursa Minor. Orion, Polaris, Pegasus, Andromeda - wait a sec... Now that, that's Cassiopeia.*

— names of constellations, patterns of stars named after the animals, objects or mythological characters they are thought to resemble

*I love this song. "Stardust." Glenn Miller.* — leader of the Glenn Miller orchestra, one of the best known big bands in the early 1940s.

**Dip.** — dance move where one partner bends backwards, supported by the other partner

*Sounds pretty flimsy to me.* — weak

*Japanese Army to Invade the Mainland.* — main part of a country or continent. In this case, it means the west coast of the United States.

*Beware the Yellow Peril.* — supposed threat to western civilization from Asian people

*They're sneaky people, deceptive and crafty by nature.*

**deceptive** — misleading, untrustworthy

**crafty** — tricky

*They never really assimilated.* — fit in



Barbed wire

*They're **cunning** and **crafty**.* — clever

*Is your **Grocer**, your **Dentist**, your **Newsboy** a **Jap**?* — kid who delivers newspapers

***Boycott** **Jap**-owned **Businesses**.* — refuse to shop at

***Hey. Hey you. Get lost. I said **scram**!***  
— go away

***Robbie** gave me his baseball, it's signed by **Joe DiMaggio**.* — center fielder for the New York Yankees (1936-1951), known for his batting ability, considered one of the best ever

*...it's a **chameleon**, so it changes colors, it can blend in to its surroundings, like **camouflage***

**chameleon** — type of lizard

**camouflage** — color or pattern that blends into its surrounding

***Dad's** at the **Civil Control Station** getting our **number**.* — place where Japanese Americans were required to go to register for evacuation and processing

*You think you're **superior**, putting on **airs***

**superior** — better than others

**putting on airs** — acting like a king or queen

***Naomi**-**chan**, not now.* — Japanese suffix placed by an adult after a name to show love or affection for a child

***Mirror Lake Internment Camp**.* — imprisonment during wartime

***Dust** is the **accumulation** of dead skin.*  
— buildup

***Dust** and **lint** and dirt and thread and hair and **grit** and mud — it was completely **futile**.*

**lint** — bits of fiber

**grit** — rough grains of sand or stone

**futile** — useless

***Yankees** are my team. I like **Lou Gehrig**.* — record-breaking first baseman for the New York Yankees (1925-1939)

***Whaddya think? You get to play **hooky** the whole time you're here?*** — skip school without permission

*You could turn out to be a **dumb lug** like me.* — stupid guy

*So kind of you to **grace** us with your company, **Benjamin Uchida**.* — honor

*Meaning can sometimes be **inferred** from **context**.*

**inferred** — understood

**context** — background

*You can sometimes understand something by paying attention to everything around it.*

*... kindly write a brief **exegesis** on the origin and usages of the word.* — explanation of

***Sarcasm**, **Benjamin**, is a much overused form of **irony**.*

**sarcasm** — mocking language

**irony** — using words to say something different and often opposite from their meaning

*I **hate**, **despise**, **detest**, **loathe**, **abhor**, **revile** Miss **Kroll**.* — all words meaning hate

***Don't rock the boat** ...* — disturb or upset the balance

***Barbed wire**. **Guard tower**. **Barracks**. **Lines**, **lines**, **lines**.*

**barbed wire** — strands of fence wire twisted together with small

pieces of sharply pointed wire added in  
**barracks** — large buildings used to house people

***Worried faces**, **frantic whispers**...* — desperate

***Did I tell you, did I tell you I was a picture bride?*** — in the early 20th century, a woman who agreed to a marriage arranged through the exchange of photographs, especially an Asian woman for whom marriage was arranged to a man from her own country who was already in the United States

***Light** through the cracks in the walls, **slivers** of sunlight. I felt something in the air, like a kind of **stirring**, like a stranger passing by me.*

**slivers** — narrow pieces

**stirring** — movement

***We** lost the house. The bank **foreclosed**.* — took the house away from us

***I was so stupid**, so **naive**.* — trusting

***They** whisper **between the lines**. **They** rise up from the blank white pages and the **blue**, **cursive** ink.*

**between the lines** — hidden meanings behind the written words

**cursive** — handwriting with the letters of words connected in a flowing style



# JUMP START

Ideas for things to do, wonder about, talk about or write about before or after you see *The Journal of Ben Uchida*

What is an American?

What does home mean to you?

How does Ben change from the start of the story to the end?

Write a letter from Ben to Robbie describing life in the camp.

Why is Miss Kroll so hard on Ben at school?

Draw a map of the things in your neighborhood that make it feel like home.

Ben's father tells him, "Never be afraid to ask questions." There are 151 questions in this play. Do you remember any of them? Write three questions you would want to ask someone who was in the internment camps.

Play Team Tag. One player is chosen to be the tagger. An object that can be easily passed between players is given to another player. The tagger tries to tag the player who has the object, and all the other players cooperate to save their friend by taking the object from them and running away with it. The tagger then tries to tag that person. All must help to keep the object moving from one to another. If the tagger succeeds and tags a player who has the object, that player throws the object to another person in the group and immediately becomes the tagger.

Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? How did it make you feel? What did you do to fix it?

What do you wish you could say to Ben to help him?

Why do you think only the Japanese Americans on the West Coast were sent to internment camps?

What groups do you see in power and who are they identifying as "other?"

What will you do if you see someone being treated unfairly?

Look at the pictures in this guide of people on their way to and in the internment camps. Recreate the picture, standing the way the people do, seeing what they see. What do you imagine they were thinking and feeling?

Why doesn't Ben tell Naomi or his parents about the threatening phone call or the nightmares they cause? Write what might have been different in the story if he had.

Imagine you are going away for a long time to someplace you've never seen and don't know when you will be coming home. You can only bring one suitcase. Take a suitcase and pack it with what you think is most important to have. Think of what you need, like clothing and your toothbrush, and also what pieces of home you want to carry with you.

Besides what you see in the play, what do you imagine were some other difficulties people in the camps faced?

Why does Mrs. Uchida break her teapot?

What would you have done if you were a neighbor of the Uchida family?

Where have you seen fear of others turn into excluding them and name calling? Why do you think it still happens?

Why is Naomi the only one who talks to the family about how they're really feeling?

What things did you see people in the play do to try to keep their lives as normal as they could? What would you do?

Did any of your family or friends move to the United States from another country? Have they told you stories about what life was like there? Turn their stories into poetry, music, art, song or dance.

What about your life is the same as Ben and Naomi's before they went to Mirror Lake?

Have a culture-share party with your friends where you each share a tradition that tells something about your family.

How do you feel about what you've learned about internment camps?



## LASTING CONNECTIONS

In *The Journal of Ben Uchida*, Ben's father loves looking at the night sky and passes his admiration of the stars on to his son. It is a connection Ben will always remember.

**Write about a special bond you have with a family member.**  
(Use the back of the page if you need more room.)

**If you wrote a play about your bond, what characters would you need?**

**What design choices would you make for:**

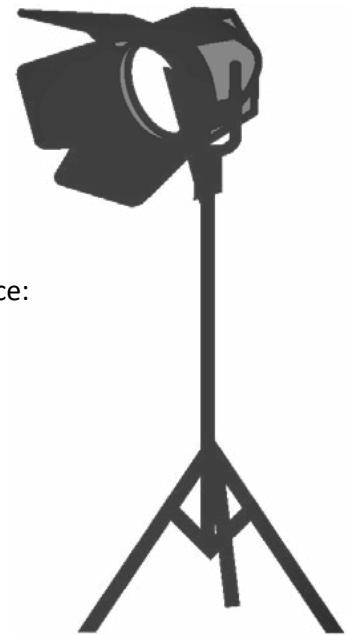
★ **Scenery** – the walls, furniture, trees, etc., that show where the action is taking place:

★ **Costumes** – what the characters are wearing:

★ **Props** – all the physical items used to tell the story not including the scenery or costumes (for example: backpack, sandwich, bicycle):

★ **Lighting** – time of day, any special lighting effects (for example: moonlight, porch light, lightning):

★ **Sound** – music, sound effects, and background sound:



Feel like writing that play? What's stopping you? Perform it for your family and friends!



# THINGS CHANGE

Use these five boxes to create a comic strip about a time there was a big change in your life.

*Think about showing your life before, during and after the change:*

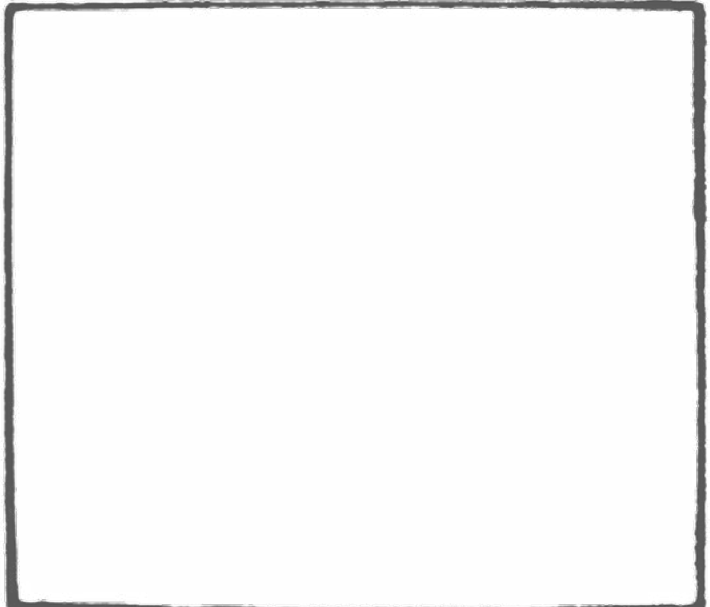
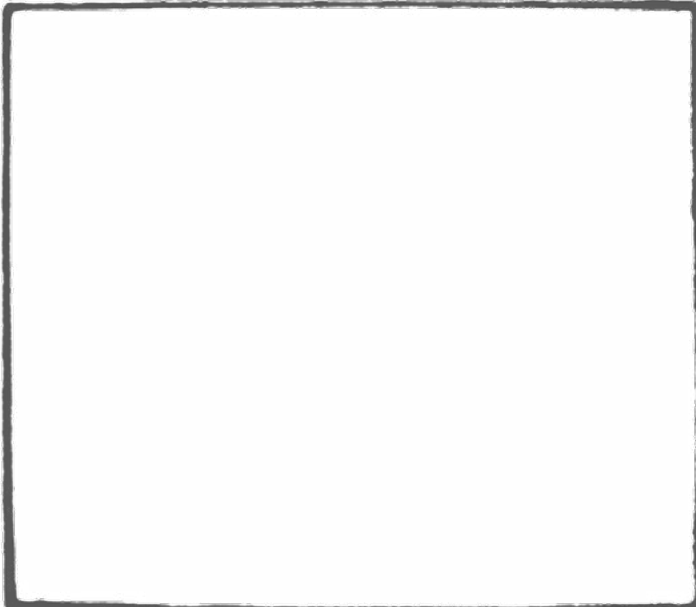
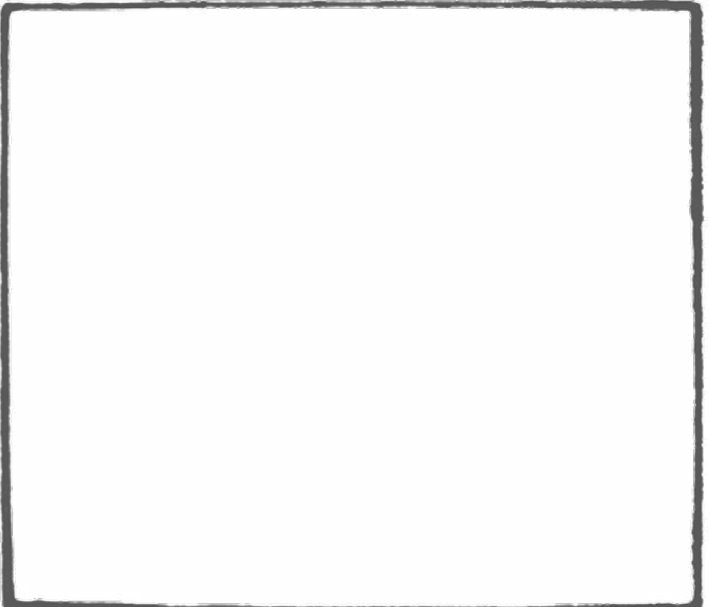
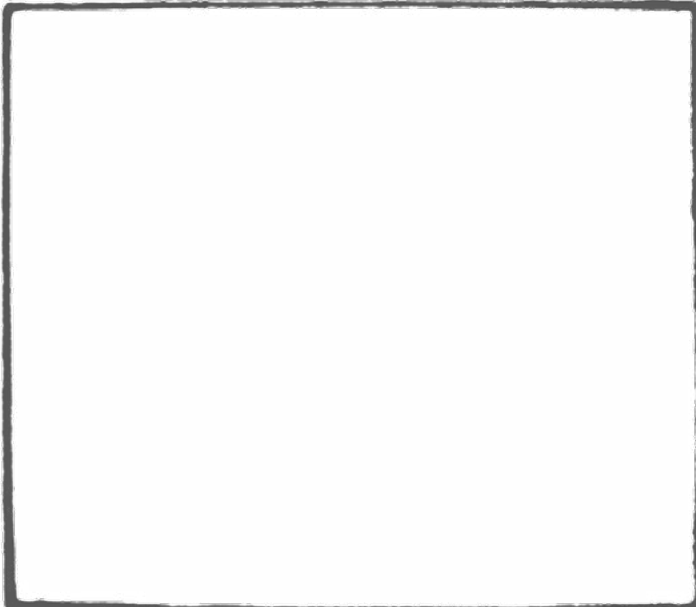
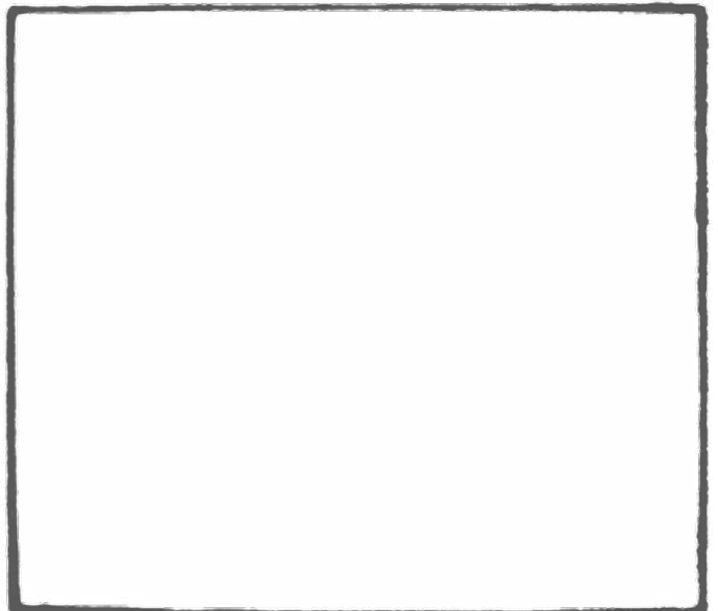
*How did you feel?*

*Did you have any choice about it?*

*Who else was part of it?*

*Did things happen the way you expected?*

Draw it in any style you like. Stick figures are ok.  
You can use words, too.



# BOOKLIST

Booklist prepared by Lisa Cipolla  
Pierce County Library System



Pictured: Sixth-grade boys playing softball at Manzanar Internment camp

## SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

Engaging young people with the arts is what we are all about at SCT. We hope that the Active Audience Guide has helped enhance and extend the theater experience for your family or your students beyond seeing the show.

Your input is very valuable to us. We'd love to hear your feedback about the guide. Please take a moment to go online and answer this brief survey, where you can also enter to win two tickets for any performance in the 17-18 season:

[SCT Audience Survey\\*](#)

You can also email your comments to us at [info@sct.org](mailto:info@sct.org).

Seattle Children's Theatre, which celebrates its 43rd season in 2017-2018, performs September through June in the Charlotte Martin and Eve Alvord Theatres at Seattle Center. SCT has gained acclaim as a leading producer of professional theatre, educational programs and new scripts for young people. By the end of its 2017-2018 season, SCT will have presented 263 plays, including 113 world premieres, entertaining over four million children.

\*All active links can be found on the interactive AAG, free for download at [sct.org](http://sct.org)

## FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS:

### FICTION:

*Paper Wishes*  
Lois Sepahban

### NONFICTION:

*Grandfather's Journey*  
Allen Say

*Farewell to  
Manzanar: A True  
Story of Japanese  
American Experience  
During and After  
the World War II  
Internment*  
Jeanne Wakatsuki  
Houston

*My Name is Sangoel*  
Karen Lynn Williams  
and Khadra  
Mohammed

*The Bracelet*  
Yoshiko Uchida

*The Name Jar*  
Yangsook Choi

*Drawing From  
Memory*  
Allen Say

*Save Me a Seat*  
Sarah Weeks

*Barbed Wire Baseball*  
Marissa Moss  
*Can a love of baseball raise  
a person's hope while living  
under horrific circumstances?  
The introduction of baseball  
to his internment camp in  
World War II did just that  
for Kenichi Zenimura. Share  
the story of baseball's vital  
role in Ken's life during and  
after the war, when he was a  
professional player.*

*Baseball Saved Us*  
Ken Mochizuki

*Weedflower*  
Cynthia Kadohata  
*After twelve-year-old Sumiko  
and her Japanese-American  
family are relocated from  
their flower farm in southern  
California to an internment  
camp, she tries to hold on to her  
dream of owning a flower shop.*

## FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS:

### FICTION:

*The Arrival*  
Shaun Tan  
*In this wordless graphic novel,  
a man leaves his homeland  
and sets off for a new country,  
where he must build a new  
life for himself and his family.*

### NONFICTION:

*A Kid's Guide to Asian American History: More  
than 70 Activities*  
Valerie Petrillo

*Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese  
American Internment in World War II*  
Richard Reeves

*The Train to Crystal City: FDR's Secret  
Prisoner Exchange Program and America's  
Only Family Internment Camp During World  
War II*

Jan Jarboe Russell  
*Crystal City was the center of a government program called  
"quiet passage," under which hundreds of Japanese Americans  
were exchanged for Americans held behind enemy lines. Jan  
Russell details a little-known story of how the definition of  
American citizenship changed under the pressure of war.*

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS?](#)



Seattle Children's Theatre

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MARCH 22 - MAY 13, 2018

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GETS DRESSED  
(the rock experience)

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