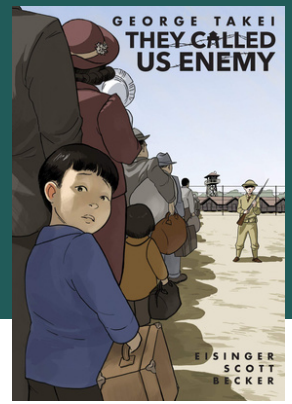


Discussion Questions

They Called Us Enemy

by George Takei



- What did you know about Japanese American incarceration during World War II before reading the book? What new information or details did you learn?
- The story makes it clear that Japanese internment betrays democratic ideals, such as the right to due process and equal protection under the law. How were Japanese Americans, including the Takei family, stripped of their due process rights? What is the danger of this happening to American citizens of any background?
- George Takei recounts his experience from the perspective of a small boy. How does that benefit or take away from the narrative? How do you think being incarcerated at a young age shapes identity or affects someone as an adult?
- George describes the Loyalty Questionnaire distributed to all Japanese Americans over the age of 17 incarcerated in the camps. What does it mean to be loyal to something? How is standing up for what you believe in a way of showing loyalty?
- Readers see Takei deal with the trauma of the camps. He argues with his father and questions the choices his father made during that time. What do you make of the argument? Is Takei's critique of his father fair?
- What were the inhumane conditions that the Takei family, among others, had to endure in the camps? How did they attempt to adapt?

- Once the war ended and the Takei family returned to Los Angeles how did they attempt to start their lives over as Americans after all that they had been through?
- As a teenager, Takei became curious about the internment camps but couldn't find information in history books. What historical events are tied to your family history? How would you feel if your family's history and culture was hidden, censored, or left out of recorded history?
- What was the most powerful moment or scene from the book?
- Takei and his father argue about American democracy. Consider the following statement by Takei's father: "Despite all that we've experienced, our democracy is still the best in the world because it's a people's democracy." Do you agree?
- In 1988, President Reagan apologized on behalf of the United States and signed an act granting \$20,000 to each of the surviving 60,000 internees. What are your thoughts on reparations to this group and others (i.e. Native Americans, descendants of slaves, etc.)? Can we place a price on what was done? What does it say about our democracy if we don't take steps to reconcile these atrocities?
- Takei has told the story of Japanese American internment camps in different forms during the years. What do you think about his decision to share this story in 2019 as an illustrated graphic memoir? Have you read other graphic novels?
- How do you think Takei's story connects with issues going on in the United States today?