

# What Do I Remember of the Evacuation?

—by Joy Kogawa

During World War II, Joy Kogawa and her parents, like thousands of other Japanese Canadians, were removed from their home and interned in a detention camp. The following poem describes the evacuation from her viewpoint as a six-year-old child.

What do I remember of the evacuation?  
 I remember my father telling Tim and me  
 About the mountains and the train  
 And the excitement of going on a trip.  
 What do I remember of the evacuation?  
 I remember my mother wrapping  
 A blanket around me and my  
 Pretending to fall asleep so she would be happy  
 Although I was so excited I couldn't sleep  
 (I heard there were people herded  
 Into the Hastings Park like cattle.  
 Families were made to move in two hours  
 Abandoning everything, leaving pets  
 And possessions at gun point.  
 I hear families were broken up  
 Men were forced to work. I heard  
 It whispered late at night  
 That there was suffering) and  
 I missed my dolls.  
 What do I remember of the evacuation?  
 I remember Miss Foster and Miss Tucker  
 Who still live in Vancouver

And who did what they could  
 and loved the children and who gave me  
 A puzzle to play with on the train.  
 And I remember the mountains and I was  
 Six years old and I swear I saw a giant  
 Gulliver of Gulliver's Travels scanning the horizon  
 And when I told my mother she believed it too  
 And I remember how careful my parents were  
 Not to bruise us with bitterness  
 And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life  
 Who said "Don't insult me" when I  
 Proudly wrote my name in Japanese  
 And Tim flew the Union Jack  
 When the war was over but Lorraine  
 And her friends spat on us anyway  
 And I prayed to the God who loves  
 all the children in his sight  
 That I might be white.

1. Describe the reaction Kogawa and her family had at the racial discrimination they faced.
2. What was Kogawa trying to accomplish with the nine line section within parenthesis in the middle of the poem? How effective is it?
3. Write your own poem about World War II. You may want to look over Chapters 9–11 for ideas.

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