



Literature & Character Education

Journey to Topaz

by Yoshiko Uchida

Teacher Resource Guide

Grade 5 + Theme 6: Freedom & Democracy

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Reading Comprehension Strategies & Skills

Each Teacher Resource Guide offers explicit instruction in one of the comprehension strategies and one of the critical thinking skills listed below.

Strategies

- Ask & Answer Questions
- Infer
- Make Connections
- Monitor Comprehension
- Predict
- Summarize
- Take Perspectives
- Visualize

Skills

- Analysis
- Author's Style
- Categorize & Classify
- Cause & Effect
- Character, Setting, Plot
- Compare & Contrast
- Draw Conclusions
- Evaluate
- Fact & Opinion
- Literary Forms
- Main Idea & Supporting Details
- Points of View
- Problem & Solution
- Sequence
- Synthesis
- Text Features

ABOUT VOICES

The Voices Approach

The *Voices* literature and character education approach encourages students to develop their own voices by integrating character education, violence prevention, reading, and writing.

Voices & Character Development

Six thematic concepts help students develop their social-emotional learning and strengthen their understanding of democracy.

Identity Awareness Students explore how to integrate the various parts of their lives into a healthy self-concept.

Perspective Taking Students learn to express their own points of view and to take the perspectives of others.

Conflict Resolution Students learn ways to resolve conflicts with their peers and in society.

Social Awareness Students develop their awareness of social realities and injustices in their world.

Love and Friendship Students gain insight into the nature of their relationships with friends, family members, and neighbors.

Freedom and Democracy Students reflect and act upon their social responsibilities in a democratic society.

The Voices Instructional Plan

Each guide is organized around a Central Question that relates the theme of the book to students' lives. Six sections develop the Central Question as they promote literacy and social skills.

Connect Prereading activities help students connect their personal experiences to the issues raised in the book.

Read The teacher models and students practice comprehension strategies and skills. (See sidebar for the list of strategies and skills.)

Discuss Whole-class discussions deepen comprehension and encourage students to think critically about the book's themes.

Practice Interactive activities allow students to practice social skills related to the Central Question and the book.

Express Students use a variety of genres to express their understanding of the Central Question and the book.

Participate Students participate in family activities and community service learning projects.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

Theme: Freedom & Democracy

Students explore the workings of democracy and recognize themselves as active participants in their society. In *Journey to Topaz*, students confront a grave injustice from America's past. They build on this knowledge to speak out against injustice today.

Target Reading Comprehension Strategy

Ask & Answer Questions Students ask and answer their own questions throughout the reading to clarify and deepen their understanding of the story.

Target Reading & Critical Thinking Skill

Main Idea & Supporting Details Students identify the main idea and supporting details in each chapter. They develop a main idea in a speech that they write and deliver.

Writing

This guide provides a number of writing options, including Literature Response Journal suggestions, a persuasive speech, and prompts for narrative, expository, and descriptive writing.

Vocabulary

Students expand their understanding of the word *injustice*, analyze euphemisms, and use vocabulary words to articulate what they learn about injustice from *Journey to Topaz*. Students record vocabulary words and other unfamiliar words in a Word Log.

Oral Language, Listening, & Fluency

Students develop their oral language, listening, and fluency skills through partner sharing, interviews, a debate, delivering a speech, and more.

Multiple Comprehension Strategies

Readers often use more than one strategy at a time to better understand a story. Asking and answering questions can also help us to monitor comprehension, infer, predict, and summarize. You may want to use a Think Aloud sometime during reading to model the use of multiple strategies.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Awards and Honors

- ALA Notable Book

Resources

In *Journey Home*, the sequel to *Journey to Topaz*, Yoshiko Uchida tells the story of how Yuki and her family try to rebuild their lives after their release from the internment camp.

Yoshiko Uchida tells the story of her own life in *The Invisible Thread: An Autobiography*. HarperTrophy, 1995.

Two Tragedies

“The bombing of Pearl Harbor was a great tragedy in American history, but it resulted in a second tragedy that was no less important: the forced imprisonment in the United States of 120,000 people, two-thirds of whom were United States citizens. These citizens had committed no crime, broken no law, and when their rights were taken away, they were charged with no offense. Their only crime was that they were of Japanese ancestry.”

From *I Am an American* by Jerry Stanley. Crown, 1994.

Story Summary

Journey to Topaz is a work of historical fiction. It tells the story of eleven-year-old Yuki Sakane and her family, who are forced to leave their home and friends in Berkeley, California, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Labeled “enemy aliens” by the U.S. government, they are evacuated to a temporary camp at a California racetrack and later sent to a barren desert internment camp in Utah. The family endures the harsh discriminations of internment life with ennobling dignity and hope.

About the Author

In 1942, **Yoshiko Uchida** and her family were evacuated and interned along with 120,000 other Japanese Americans following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. This experience informs almost all of Ms. Uchida’s writing. “Through my books,” she once said, “I hope to give young Asian Americans a sense of their past and to reinforce their self-esteem and self-knowledge. At the same time, I want to dispel the stereotypic image still held by many non-Asians about the Japanese and write about them as real people.” Yoshiko Uchida died in 1992.

Literary Analysis

Genre *Journey to Topaz* is a work of historical fiction.

Themes in *Journey to Topaz* include injustice, racism, internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, overcoming obstacles, American citizenship, courage, integrity, hope, and friendship.

Point of View *Journey to Topaz* is told in the third person from the protagonist Yuki Sakane’s point of view.

Author’s Style Yoshiko Uchida presents a fictionalized account of a historical event based on her own experiences.

Context of the Story

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. This attack triggered what was then called “the evacuation” of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. As noted by Mrs. Sakane in *Journey to Topaz*, fears

aroused by the surprise attack combined with already existing prejudice and hostility toward Japanese Americans to create a volatile situation. On December 8, the U.S. declared war on Japan. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued executive order 9066, which resulted in the authorized relocation of 120,000 people of Japanese descent to prison camps, known as “Relocation Centers” and “Internment Camps.” Two-thirds of these people were U.S. citizens.

In the spring of 1942, Civilian Exclusion Orders instructed people of Japanese ancestry to report to a Civil Control Center and to prepare their families for relocation in one to three weeks. Japanese families who had not broken the law or committed any acts of crime or treason had to dispose of all of their possessions except everyday items, such as clothing and toiletries. Homes and businesses were sold well below market price; other possessions were sold cheaply, given away, or simply left behind.

The internment camps, such as Topaz, were more like prisons than camps. They were surrounded by barbed wire and policed by armed guards. Detainees were held against their will and were not permitted to come and go. These internment camps have been compared to concentration camps: prison camps that confined civilians for military reasons on the basis of race and ethnicity.

Following the surrender of Japan in August 1945, many of the internees were never able to rebuild their shattered lives. They had no homes to return to and faced a country hostile toward people of Japanese heritage. More than forty years later, in 1988, the U.S. government formally apologized to Japanese Americans and paid \$20,000 to each surviving victim of the internment camps.

Japanese Americans in the Armed Forces Approximately 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the armed forces during the war. Like Ken in *Journey to Topaz*, they believed that joining the war effort was the best way to show their loyalty to the United States and fulfill their civic duties. They fought bravely. Nisei soldiers from the internment camps became part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team—an all-volunteer Japanese-American unit. Although the 442nd never had more than 3,000 members at one time, it was one of the most decorated units in United States military history. Members earned 18,143 individual decorations, including a Congressional Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Stars, and more than 3,600 Purple Hearts. When President Harry Truman welcomed the regiment home after the war, he told members, “You fought not only the enemy, you fought prejudice—and you won.”

References

Democracy and Race: Asian Americans and World War II by Ronald Takaki. Chelsea House, 1992.

Denshō: The Japanese American Legacy Project

www.densho.org/densho.asp

I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment by Jerry Stanley. Crown, 1994.

The Journey: Japanese Americans, Racism, and Renewal by Sheila Hamanaka. Orchard Books, 1990.

Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans by Ronald Takaki. Little, Brown, 1998.

DAY 1

CONNECT

Introduce the Central Question

What can we learn from acts of injustice?

Write the Central Question on the board or on chart paper. Ask students what *injustice* means. Explain that *injustice* can refer to the unfair treatment of individuals or a group of people. In *Journey to Topaz*, students will learn about the injustices Japanese Americans faced during World War II.

Teacher Sharing

Share a story about a time you experienced or witnessed social injustice. Or draw on a historic injustice that is important to you.

Partner Sharing

Have partners share stories of injustice. Prompt students to focus their stories on unfair treatment that affects groups of people. Invite volunteers to share their partner's story with the class. Ask what we can learn about injustice from each story.

READ

Introduce *Journey to Topaz*

Read aloud the title of the book, including the subtitle (see title page). Ask students to define *evacuation*. Explain that an evacuation occurs when people are moved from one place to another, usually for safety. Ask students what they think the word *evacuation* means in the context of the book's title. Explain that, in this context, *evacuation* refers to the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast during World War II.

Build Background

Share information about the Japanese American evacuation from the Context of the Story section of this guide (p. 6). Have students find Japan, Pearl Harbor (west of Honolulu on the island of Oahu), and California on a world map.

Plan & Prep

Objectives

- To explore the meaning of *injustice*
- To share stories about injustice
- To learn from each other's stories
- To ask and answer questions

Materials

- *Journey to Topaz*
- World map
- Dictionaries
- Literature Response Journals

Teacher Prep

Be prepared to share a story about a time you either witnessed or experienced injustice.

Organizing Partners

Prepare a list of partners ahead of time. You may want to mix students by culture, gender, learning style, or personality. For example, you may want to pair an outgoing student with a shy student. The same set of partners should remain together for *Voices* activities, unless special difficulties arise.

Character Development Vocabulary Write the terms *justice*, *injustice*, *Constitution*, *unconstitutional*, *race prejudice*, and *civil rights* and their definitions on the board or on chart paper. Instruct students to copy them into a Word Log section of their Literature Response Journal. Have students work in small groups to discuss each term. How does each term relate to *injustice*? (Some help to perpetuate injustice while other terms help to counter it.) Invite groups to share their thoughts with the class. Encourage students to keep these concepts in mind as they read *Journey to Topaz*.

Read Aloud

Tell students that a prologue is an introductory statement that comes before a story. It allows an author to provide background information that will help readers understand the story. Read the Prologue aloud. Point out that *Journey to Topaz* is based on the lives of real people and on events that actually happened.

Reading Strategy: Ask & Answer Questions

Tell students that good readers ask and answer their own questions during reading to better understand a story. List students' questions about *Journey to Topaz* or about the evacuation of Japanese Americans on chart paper. Instruct students to listen for possible answers to these questions as you reread the Prologue aloud. The following Think Aloud may help you model this strategy.

Think Aloud *The first paragraph of the Prologue states that Japanese Americans were imprisoned without a hearing or trial. Isn't this unconstitutional? Ah, yes, the very next paragraph states that it was indeed a violation of the Constitution. But now I have another question. If it was unconstitutional, why did it happen? I will keep this question in mind as I read. If the story doesn't answer the question, I will look in the library or ask someone who knows about the Japanese American evacuation.*

EXPRESS

Write: Literature Response Journal

The Literature Response Journal is a type of reader response journal. In it, students record their personal responses and reactions to the book and respond to prompts that help them practice reading comprehension strategies and develop their reading skills.

- List your questions about *Journey to Topaz*. As you read, add answers you find. (Ask & Answer Questions, Monitor Comprehension)

Character Development Vocabulary

justice fair, lawful treatment of all people

injustice unfair treatment of a person or group

Constitution the document that states the rights of United States citizens and the laws that the government must follow to treat citizens fairly

unconstitutional unfair treatment that denies a person or group of people their rights as stated in the Constitution

race prejudice an opinion about a group of people based on the color of their skin

civil rights basic rights and freedoms enjoyed by United States citizens.

Teacher Think Alouds

A Think Aloud provides a way for teachers to model how they use a reading comprehension strategy (or multiple strategies) while reading. It is one of the best ways to make reading comprehension concrete for students.

As you read a section of the text to students, stop and explain how you are using the strategy: tell students what you are thinking, what connections you are making, the questions you ask yourself, the predictions and inferences you make, and what you visualize.

DAY 2

READ

Chapters 1 & 2 (pages 1–18)

Have students read pages 1–18 at home or in class, or read these pages aloud. Remind students to review the questions in their Literature Response Journal and to look for answers as they read the story. Have them note where they find answers. Prompt them to add any new questions that come up during the reading.

Reading Skill: Main Idea & Supporting Details

Identifying the central idea of a chapter, and understanding the specific parts that support or explain that idea, helps readers distinguish between essential and nonessential details. Practicing this skill throughout reading will help students to develop the main idea(s) in speeches they begin writing on Day 7.

Practice the Skill Reproduce the Main Idea Table (Reproducible 1, p. 25) on the board or on chart paper. Explain that this table can help organize information by showing how important details hold up, or support, the main idea. Complete the table for Chapter 1 as a class. Ask, *What is the main idea of Chapter 1?* Write students' responses on the board; then have students weed out and combine until they have one sentence they can agree on. Write their sentence in the top of the table. Ask, *What details help support this idea?* Repeat the process you used to determine the main idea. Write the "final" details in the appropriate boxes.

Distribute copies of the table, or instruct students to reproduce it in their journals, and have them complete it for Chapter 2.

DISCUSS

Vocabulary: Word Log

Have students record the vocabulary words and other unfamiliar words in a Word Log section of their Literature Response Journal. Encourage students to include definitions, descriptions, and even sketches or diagrams. Prompt students to use the words as they discuss the characters, setting, plot, and/or themes of the story. Ask,

- *How do you think Yuki would describe her heritage? How would you describe your heritage?*

Plan & Prep

Objectives

- To practice reading skill: main idea and supporting details
- To practice reading strategy: ask and answer questions
- To develop vocabulary
- To think critically about main ideas and themes

Materials

- *Journey to Topaz*
- Reproducible 1: Main Idea Table, p. 25
- Literature Response Journals



Vocabulary Words

Explain the meaning of unfamiliar words as they come up in the text. Prompt students to infer word meanings from the context.

citizens (p. 14) people who have the right to live in a country and be protected by its laws. People who are born in the United States are citizens of the United States. Some immigrants can become citizens if they pledge their loyalty to the government.

heritage (p. 17) the culture and characteristics of a family, passed down from generation to generation.

- Which word describes people who have the right to live in a country? (citizens) Use this word in a sentence about Yuki and Ken.

Literature Circles: Critical Thinking Questions

Organize students into small groups. Write one or more of the following critical thinking questions for each group to discuss. These questions stimulate students to use higher-level thinking skills to infer, interpret, and discuss the story's themes. (Skills are identified in parentheses after each question.) Prompt students to pose their own questions about the story as well. Invite groups to summarize their discussion for the class.

- How do Yuki's parents react when they first hear about the attack on Pearl Harbor? Why do you think they react this way? (Character, Plot, Evaluate, Synthesis)
- Why does the FBI take Yuki's father away? Do you think this is an act of injustice? Explain. (Monitor Comprehension, Draw Conclusions)
- Why does Ken say his parents might be thought of as enemy aliens if Japan and the United States go to war? (Points of View, Synthesis, Text-to-World Connections)
- Do you think the Sakanes are enemies of the United States? Why or why not? (Text-to-World Connections, Synthesis)
- Why haven't Mr. and Mrs. Sakane become U.S. citizens? (Monitor Comprehension, Text-to-World Connections)
- What do you think about a law that doesn't allow law-abiding people like the Sakanes to become citizens? (Evaluate, Draw Conclusions)
- What fears do you think were "clamoring inside" (p. 18) Yuki, Ken, and their mother as they ate their supper in silence after the FBI took Father away? (Infer, Draw Conclusions, Points of View)

EXPRESS

Write: Literature Response Journal

- Write about your reactions to the story so far. How do you feel about what is happening to the Sakane family? (Text-to-World Connections)
- Summarize important concepts and ideas you discussed in your Literature Circle. (Main Idea & Supporting Details, Summarize)

Vocabulary Extension

Issei (EES-say) first-generation Japanese immigrants to the United States. Issei were not allowed to become citizens of the United States until 1952.

Nisei (KNEE-say) children of the Issei. Nisei were automatically American citizens because they were born in the United States.

Introduce students to the words *Issei* and *Nisei*. Ask,

- Which characters are *Issei*? (Mother, Father)
- Which characters are *Nisei*? (Ken, Yuki)

Explain that *Nisei*, like Ken and Yuki, were American citizens entitled to the same rights as all American citizens. *Issei*, like Mother and Father, were not permitted to become American citizens, even though they considered the United States home. In 1942, the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited citizenship to immigrants who were "free white persons."

SPEECH ORGANIZER

Name _____ Date _____

A speech consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Use this organizer to outline your speech.

I. Introduction Your introduction should state what your speech is about. It should also grab your audience's attention. Begin your speech with a catchy statement or a question that arouses your audience's curiosity.

A. What is my speech about? _____

B. Possible catchy statement _____

C. Possible catchy question _____

D. Other ideas for my introduction _____

II. Body The body of your speech should contain your main ideas and supporting details. It should inform your audience about the injustice you want to address. It should also persuade them to help solve the problem. (You may want to continue outlining your body on the back of this page.)

A. Main Idea (or persuasive argument) _____

I. Supporting Detail _____

2. Supporting Detail _____

B. Main Idea (or persuasive argument) _____

I. Supporting Detail _____

2. Supporting Detail _____

III. Conclusion Your conclusion should summarize your main points and leave an impression on your audience. It should also contain an appeal for action.

A. Summary of my main points _____

B. How can I leave an impression on my audience? _____
