

Reading *Baseball Saved Us*

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For parents and children to explore together.

SUMMARY

During this activity, you and your child will actively read *Baseball Saved Us*, using the suggested reading questions.

WHY

Through this activity, your child will learn some details of Japanese American internment in the United States during World War II, and the story of a young person who lived in the camps. Children's picture books can be great for introducing kids to difficult topics. While reading together, you can decide how much you want to discuss the details of Japanese American internment.

TIME

- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through fourth grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **Assembly center:** fairgrounds, racetracks, and other public places where Japanese Americans were held after being removed from their own homes
- **Barracks:** a large, poorly built structure in which many families in the camps lived
- **Internment camps:** a barbed wire fenced-in area built by the U.S. government to imprison the Japanese Americans

YOU NEED

- This reading guide
- *Baseball Saved Us* book (*optional*)
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)

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PARENT PREPARATION

- Read through *Baseball Saved Us* on your own before reading it with your child. Japanese American internment is a contentious event in United States history. Recognize any of your own feelings about the book and the historical event before you begin discussing them with your child.
- Consider reading the notes on the Step Back in Time sheets.
- If you have time, preview some of the reading suggestions below. Pick just a few suggestions that look interesting and appropriate for you and your child.

BEFORE YOU READ

- Talk about the title and front cover of the book. Make a prediction, based on the illustrations and title, of what the story is about. What evidence supports that prediction?

Tip A good way to encourage your child to look closely and think about his or her answer is to ask, “What makes you say that?”

- Where do you think this book takes place? Is it in the past or the present? Does that place still exist today?

DURING READING

- Compare the baseball field in the camp with the one on the second-to-last page of the book. What’s different? What is the same? How do the colors used in each illustration make you feel? Which field would you like to play on?
- Talk about how the main character is feeling throughout the story. Ask, “What do you think?” and “How do you know?”

Tip Encourage your child to imagine that he or she is in a similar situation. How would it feel? What kind of things could she or he find to do for fun?

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AFTER READING

- Why does the author reveal only the main character's nickname, and near the end of the book? Do you have a nickname? Have you ever been teased or picked on because of your size or appearance?
- Review the title of the book. Why do you think the author named the book that way? Who are the 'us' in the title? How did baseball save them?
- Do you think it's fair that Japanese Americans were treated this way? Could something like this happen today?

Tip The Step Back in Time sheets include a very brief overview of the Japanese American internment story. To learn more, visit the National Museum of American History's online exhibition **A More Perfect Union** (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html>).

For more activities about Japanese American internment and *Baseball Saved Us*, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/internment/>

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For more information, visit the National Museum of American History website <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/internment/>.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next day, the United States government went to war with Japan. The government was afraid that Japanese Americans might threaten the country's safety. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed a law that allowed the military to remove Japanese Americans from some parts of the country, and move them to new places.



In the spring of 1942, scenes like this were repeated in every Japanese American community along the Pacific Coast. [Dorothea Lange, Courtesy of National Archives]

The Japanese Americans weren't given a lot of time to pack, sell, or store their things. Families were allowed to take only what they could carry. Some families were lucky enough to have neighbors or friends to care for their things. Others had to leave behind family pets, special toys, and many memories.



Two children and their father await baggage inspection at an assembly center in 1942. [Dorothea Lange, Courtesy of National Archives]

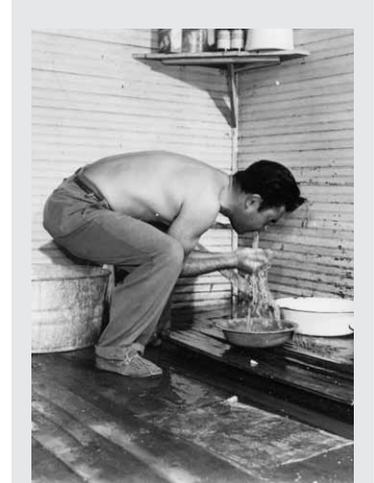
Assembly centers were the first stop for these Japanese Americans before the **internment camps** were ready. The **assembly centers** were not designed for housing—in fact, some people had to live in horse stalls! The food was bad, the living space was dirty, and there were not enough doctors to take care of all the people. Sadly, some had to stay in assembly centers for months before moving to an **internment camp**.

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The **internment camps** were located far away from other people and towns. They were fenced in and guarded by soldiers. Families lived in rough buildings called **barracks** where many people stayed together in a small space. They were cold in the winter and hot in the summer. The bathrooms and kitchen were in separate buildings from the bedrooms, so adults and children had to wait in line to take a bath or get a meal.

Even though the Japanese Americans lost many of their basic rights, they tried to create a community within the camps. Kids went to school and formed Boy Scout troops, played on sports teams, and went to dances. Grown-ups had jobs, played cards, and formed clubs like the Parent Teacher Association.



A man washes his face in a basin. There was no running water at the camps. [Courtesy of National Archives]

Assembly center: fairgrounds, racetracks, and other public places where Japanese Americans were held after being removed from their own homes until permanent internment camps could be built

Internment camps: a barbed wire fenced in area built by the U.S. government to imprison the Japanese Americans.

Barracks: a large, poorly built structure in the camps in which many families lived

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For Teachers

Read the “Reading Guide” for specific reading tips.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be better able to:

- Read for understanding.
- Describe aspects of life for a Japanese American in an internment camps during World War II.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Asks questions and offers personal opinions.
- Contributes appropriate ideas and listens to others.
- Discussion demonstrates an understanding of the historical content.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 1G. Explain change and continuity over time.
- 3H. Explain causes in analyzing historical actions.

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 1A. The student understands family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.
- 5A. Demonstrate understanding of the movements of large groups of people into his or her own and other states in the United States now and long ago.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/internment/>.