

Long Beach City College presents Long Beach Reads One Book 2020

A Reading Guide for Teachers, Book Clubs, Librarians and More

George Takei: They Called Us Enemy, pub. July 2019

By Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott & Harmony Becker

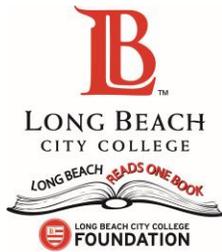
A book for young adults (grades 5-8), high school, college students and adults

Reading guide prepared by Susan T. Redfield, December 2019

Topics for Discussion:

Thematic

1. **What themes resonated with you:**
 1. Japanese American internment camps, Pearl Harbor, WWII, family, perseverance, reparations, fear, legalized incarceration, democracy today, refugees today, minorities in television and films, gay rights and activism, others?
2. **What did you know** about Japanese American incarceration during World War II before reading the book? What new information or details did you learn?
3. **How do you think** being incarcerated at a young age shapes identity or affects someone as an adult?
4. **How does Takei's story** connect with issues going on in the United States today?
 1. Treatment of those from Central America and Mexico and building a wall?



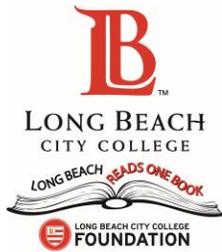
2. Treatment of Muslims and other refugees from the Middle East and Africa?
5. **Readers see Takei** deal with the trauma of the camps (pages 141-145). He argues with his father and questions the choices his father made during that time.
 1. What do you make of the argument?
 2. Do you think Takei's critique of his father fair?
6. **What was the most powerful moment** or scene from the book?
7. **What will you take away from this story?**

Historical

8. **As a teenager**, Takei became curious about the internment camps but couldn't find information in history books.
 1. What historical events are tied to your family history?
 2. How and when did you learn about them?
9. **Did you know about television and film discrimination against minorities back in the 1960's?**
 1. Does that still take place today?
 2. Do you think it is being addressed and if so, how?
10. **Are there any West Coast** locations referenced in the book that are familiar to you? Did you see those places differently after reading the book?

Political Science

11. **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.
 1. What are your thoughts?
 2. Can we place a price on what was done?
 3. Do you think reparations should be made to other groups who have been discriminated against today?
12. **Takei and his father argue** about American democracy (Page 195).
 1. What do you think about 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."
 2. If you disagree, how might you help change our democracy for the better?



13. **Takei has become an activist and a leader in the areas of democracy, discrimination and gay rights.**

1. What issues would guide you to becoming an activist or a leader?

Philosophy

14. **Takei's mother** smuggled in a sewing machine to make clothes for her children, even though it was forbidden. What items would you bring?
15. **After Takei's family leaves** the camps, he writes that he felt longing for "those barbed-wire fences ... to us, that was home."
1. To you: What makes a home a home?

English Literature/Creative Writing

16. **George Takei recounts his experience** from the perspective of a small boy. How does that benefit or take away from the narrative?
17. **Takei has told the story of Japanese American** internment camps in different forms throughout his life, including theater, museum exhibits and more.
1. What do you think about his decision to share this story in 2019 as an illustrated graphic memoir?
2. Have you read other graphic novels?

Teachers and Librarians may want to know:

Language: mild; a joke about the phrase "son of a bitch" pops up a couple of times

Sexuality: none

Violence: mild-medium; several fighting scenes between guards and Japanese inmates; guns and barbed wire are used as threats and to control people, but no one is shot in the book.

Drugs/Alcohol: none