

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Prologue: Writing Prompts

MISSION US: "Prisoner in My Homeland"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR: You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all and ask students to choose one for response. You might assign one or more to the entire group. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

You may notice that many of the topics contain some version of the phrase, "Write about a time in your life..." The intention of these prompts is twofold: first, since students remember the content of their own lives, they can more easily respond to the questions and they are more likely to want to express themselves if they feel competent to do so; second, these questions can form a meaningful bridge between what happens in the lives of ordinary people today and the lives of people in history or in historical events themselves. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of those prompts before students encounter the history because thinking about them sets the students up to understand it and to relate to it.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and skill in writing, you should decide when students write and how much students should write. We do suggest, though, that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you encourage them to focus on content rather than on mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared more formally (such as on a bulletin board or newsletter).

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Read through all the topics. Then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

HOME SWEET HOME. The Tanaka family lives on a strawberry farm on Bainbridge Island, Washington. Describe the farm and compare and contrast its appearance to the place where you live. Consider the environment, activities, technology, and people in your answer. How are they similar? How are they different?

DAILY CHORES. In the Prologue, we learn about the daily chores Henry and Lily Tanaka do on the farm. Do you do chores at your home? If so, how do the Tanaka's chores compare to the work you do at your home? After learning about the items on Henry and Lily's list, do you think about chores differently? If so, how?

ALL IN THE FAMILY. We learn a lot about the cultural and social traditions that are important to the Tanaka family (Japanese school, judo, food). We also learn about the American cultural and social customs that are important to Henry (baseball, comics). Does your family have any traditions or customs that have been passed down from previous generations? If so, what are they? Do any of these traditions ever conflict with more mainstream or "American" traditions? Have you ever felt pressure to choose between activities with your family and what your friends are doing? If not, research a cultural group in the United States and their customs. Select one custom and describe it. Why do you find it an interesting tradition?

IN THE HEADLINES. Imagine you're Henry Tanaka and on Sunday, December 7, 1941 at home with your family you hear about the bombing of Pearl Harbor on the radio. What do you think the Tanaka's dinner conversation might be that evening? How do you think Henry's parents would respond to the bombing vs. Henry and his sister Lily?

HENRY'S POV. Through Henry's eyes, think about how he would feel when he hears he has 6 days to relocate to some unknown place. Remember that his world is much smaller than your own (no cell phones, no internet, etc.). He can't easily look up information about where the family is going. He also has to leave behind his beloved dog and give up immediate plans like playing on the baseball team. Write a journal entry, from Henry's point of view, on the day he leaves Bainbridge Island and embarks on a journey into an uncertain future.