

truly priceless gift and accepting that gift with grace is adequately portrayed. The eager inexperience of youth is deftly contrasted with the ponderous experience of age. As the seasons change from winter to spring to fall so the relationship between children and man changes and deepens. As Chris grows and becomes more aware of life the man retreats from life into experiences in his past. As autumn heralds the end of the growing season, the man takes his final leave of the children and this world. The image of old age and impending death is gently expressed, and many younger readers will take the man's departure at face value.

The book's major defect lies in the often stilted writing which occasionally reminds one of a primary school reader with repetitive sentence structure. Imagery is far too often expressed as simile (too many "as if's" and "likes") rather than more subtly as metaphor. Some of the asides are condescending (e.g., "But sometimes grown-ups aren't sure what to do.") and should have been omitted. Despite these problems, the story does progress simply and surely to its conclusion. I think it might prove to be a rather special experience for many young readers who would like to renew their friendship with Chris and Danny on a very personal basis.

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Memories of a Prison Childhood

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Child in Prison Camp, Shizuye Takashima. Illustrated by Shizuye Takashima. Tundra Press, 1976. Unpagged. \$3.95 paper.

As a young girl, Shizuye Takashima endured the hardships of life in a British Columbia internment camp during the Second World War. *A Child in Prison Camp* is based on Takashima's personal experience, although some details have been altered to simplify the account and to preserve the anonymity of other internees. A distinguished Canadian artist, Takashima shares her memories not only through words, but also through eight magnificent full-page watercolours which illustrate the text.

Both illustration and writing reflect a gentle, soft quality, with no suggestion of rancour, surprising when one considers the unjustifiable

treatment accorded the Japanese. This book is a journal of impressions and the effect is neither harsh nor stark, as one might expect. Takashima recounts her story through little Shican's eyes, conveying childlike emotions and reactions with her simple prose, and preserving childlike innocence despite the difficult circumstances in which she lived.

Shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Canadian government ordered an evacuation from the west coast of all persons of Japanese origin, whether or not they were Canadian citizens. Twenty-two thousand men, women and children were stripped of their civil rights, uprooted and re-located in internment camps. Little Shican's journal opens with the announced plans of the mass evacuation "for security reasons." This, perhaps, is the most moving part of the book, for Takashima manages to convey the full impact of what it means to be considered an enemy alien in one's own country.

While she describes the events objectively, Shican's confusion and fright, as her life is completely turned around, is evident. She encounters bitter hostility, harsh words and cruel stares from her "fellow citizens" on the streets of Vancouver. The citizenship of the Japanese Canadians and all the rights and protection that go with it are abruptly taken away. Most of their possessions are confiscated, and what they can sell is sold for very little.

The hardest blow of all is the break-up of her family. Shican's father is sent to the interior of B.C. and her older brother to Ontario. Left alone, she, her mother and sister must face the uncertainty of evacuation plans which are changed and delayed because housing and transportation are not available. They, however, are more fortunate than families evicted from smaller coastal towns. In-transit to the interior, these people are housed and treated like cattle at the Exhibition grounds in Vancouver.

Along with other male heads of families, Shican's father is later allowed to rejoin his family in the newly-built camp at New Denver. Here the family must withstand conditions which are barely adequate. For three years they share accommodations with another family—a cottage consisting of two small bedrooms and a kitchen. Provided with neither electricity nor indoor plumbing, they carry on evening activities by candlelight and walk a mile to fetch drinking water during the first winter. At one point, citizens of Japan, learning of the internees' plight, send shipments of food through the Red Cross.

Demonstrating open and official discrimination, the provincial government claims that the Japanese people do not deserve an education, although taxes have been collected for it. Elementary school finally does commence, two months later, because of the complaints of Japanese elders. The children, however, are taught by correspondence courses, supervised by untrained girls in makeshift classrooms.

Shican and the younger children adapt fairly well, for their parents try to make their lives as normal as possible. However, the older people, particularly Shican's father, are outraged at the conditions. While little can be done about the fact of confinement, they are not willing to comply with martyr-like acceptance of the indignities to which they are subjected. Through their protests, the physical amenities gradually improve.

As they struggle to make life bearable, their Japanese heritage remains very important, for it gives the community much comfort. Their family and community activities and their holiday celebrations help relieve their ordeal. Shican's description of these events, supplemented by some of her paintings, gives some quick insights into cultural traditions such as the relaxing atmosphere of a Japanese bath-house, the dramatics of Kabuki and the lovely, colourful Obon festival.

Takashima is scrupulously honest and fair in her portrayal of the camp and its people. Although life is difficult, there are moments of humour and pleasure, such as the night the men gather together to make homebrew. Conversely, ugly incidents, like the rape of a young girl, are not suppressed. Her views of people is not one-sided. Many Canadians barely acknowledge the internees' existence, except to take advantage of them. Others demonstrate kindness and warmth. The nuns near New Denver, for example, open a high school without trying to convert the students, accepting and respecting their religion and race.

Among Takashima's many impressions of her three years of confinement, the most striking is the anxiety and tension permeating the camp. The claustrophobic existence and uncertainty about the future causes conflicts within the community. There is much confusion and dissension about who their real enemies are and the internees being turning on one another.

Many arguments arise out of the choice of returning to Japan or relocating in Canada. The most painful one for Shican is the quarrel between her father and sister which results in an emotional separation when Yuki, the sister, leaves for Ontario. Her father's bitter words sum up the feelings of many, as he is initially determined to return to Japan:

Would you rather stay in camps? Be treated like dogs? You know you could never get a decent job in Vancouver. . . Is this what you want? To be always a third-class citizen? I mind. I didn't come to this country for this kind of treatment. Democracy! I'm a Canadian. I have to pay all the taxes, but I have never been allowed to vote. Even now, here, they took our land, our houses, our children, everything. We are their enemies. . . I have no desire to be part of this country. There is no future for you here either.

After the atomic bomb, however, Mr. Takashima acts with resignation rather than bitterness. Along with many of his neighbours, he changes his mind and decides to move to Ontario. Although it would be difficult to rebuild their lives in Canada, it would be useless to return to defeated Japan.

Children will surely understand Shican's feelings of helplessness at being a child, too young to do anything but cry over grownup decisions. They will also identify with her frustration over the seemingly senseless way adults conduct their affairs and with her cry, "Really, maybe children should rule the world!" This, however, is not a book for the very young. Takashima's simple prose makes it accessible to younger readers and the illustrations will appeal to them. Yet it will be difficult for those below Grade six to grasp the significance of her story, aside from the hardships

and injustice inflicted upon the Japanese. There are other serious ramifications for all, adults and children, to consider—the prejudice that dictated government policy and that was responsible for the repressive measures against the Japanese; the vulnerability of any racial minority, even in a “liberal democratic” nation; the frightening realization that this occurred in Canada (and the U.S. as well). Shican’s story is a gentle reminder to Canadians that their envisioned fairness was sacrificed and that the human rights of 22,000 people were violated. The thought is both painful and embarrassing.

Takashima’s sensitive treatment eases much of the severity and ugliness of the events. Her interpretation is visual, rather than psychological or emotional, reflecting her artistic background. Accordingly, her portraits are not in-depth, but impressionistic and subtle. The watercolour illustrations are the outstanding asset of the book. It is clear that Shican found solace in her natural surroundings, for she truly conveys the breathtaking beauty of the landscape. The ethereal quality of the paintings belies the severe existence she led, but this, perhaps better than words, illustrates Takashima’s lack of bitterness.

A Child in Prison Camp has had both national and international recognition. Published in 1971, the original edition was awarded the Canadian Association of Children’s Librarians medal for “Best Illustrated Book of the Year.” In Tokyo, the Japanese edition won literary prizes and was adapted as a musical play. The book has also been issued in American and Italian editions.

The paperback reprint is just as attractive and well-produced as the original edition. Although margins have been cut down and the watercolours are paler, nothing of real significance has been sacrificed. The paper is of good quality, the layout is attractive and a map indicating locations of some of the internment camps allows quick visual orientation. The format remains unchanged, and most importantly, the illustrations have not been reduced. One minor criticism is that the paintings are placed quite far from the passages they illustrate, so that much time is spent looking for the appropriate page.

This is a lovely, thought-provoking book. Readers will find themselves drawn to the illustrations and the sad story will evoke many emotions and responses, for it cannot fail to touch anyone who opens the cover.

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