



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

They Called Us Enemy

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 13–18

Grades: 7–12

Reading Level: 10th grade

Lexile Measure: 680L

Guided Reading Level: Z

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 70–80

Content Areas: English/language arts, and social studies (including history, civics, diversity, and social justice).

Synopsis of Book

They Called Us Enemy is a graphic memoir by actor and activist George Takei that tells the story of his childhood during World War II, when he and his family were forced from their home and imprisoned in Japanese American internment camps. Through powerful black-and-white illustrations, Takei shares both the hardships his family experienced and moments of resilience, while also reflecting on how fear and prejudice shaped this dark chapter of American history. The book blends personal memories with historical context, offering readers an accessible and emotional look at civil rights, democracy, and the importance of remembering the past.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS
- Theme 6: POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE
- Theme 10: CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING
- CONNECTING

National Core Arts Standards for Music

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

Next Generation Science Standards

- Earth and Human Activity
- Engineering Design

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity
- Justice
- Action

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting its various layers.
2. Have students design an internment registration card for the Takei family in Book Creator ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Include pages for each location on the map with stamps, photos, historical notes, and reflections on the Takei family's experiences and how their lives changed both at each camp and as they rebuilt their lives after the war.
3. Have students use Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to record short first-person vlogs from George's perspective, capturing his emotions, struggles, and resilience at each mapped stop (Los Angeles, Santa Anita, Rohwer, Tule Lake, and Washington D.C.).
4. Use Odyssey ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create an interactive map-based story. Students can combine maps, storytelling, and multimedia to show both George's physical journey and his development as an activist.
5. Have students use Canva's Comic Strip Templates ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to design a comic strip depicting camp life. Each panel should tie to a mapped location and depict a scene such as arriving at the camp, waiting in the mess hall, political conflicts at Tule Lake, or George's later visit to Washington D.C. to advocate for justice.
6. Encourage students to make a video diary of the journey using FlexClip ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Students can narrate George's story at each location, adding photos, music, and text overlays to capture the emotions tied to each place.

Extension Activities:

1. With Google My Maps ([TeachersFirst review](#)), students can plot key locations from Takei's life, including Los Angeles, Santa Anita, Rohwer, Tule Lake, New York, Hollywood, and Broadway. Each map point should include text, photos, and a reflection that connects the place to his resilience and achievements.
2. Using ToonyTool ([TeachersFirst review](#)), students can design a short comic illustrating moments of injustice or resilience from the camps, such as loyalty oaths or family separation. This allows students to visualize history while practicing summarizing and perspectives.
3. With Adobe Podcast ([TeachersFirst review](#)), students can script and record short episodes as if they were interviewing George Takei or another family member who was in the camps. Encourage them to add reflective commentary about how those experiences relate to modern issues of identity and civil rights.
4. Have students use Canva Infographic Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to design a one-page poster or another visual that advocates remembering the Japanese American incarceration. They can combine quotes from *They Called Us Enemy* with historical images and information to build a compelling call for justice and awareness.

5. Using Blooket ([TeachersFirst review](#)), students can design a review game with question sets about Takei's experiences from Santa Anita to Broadway. Have students play the game to

reinforce comprehension of the memoir's key people, places, and events in an engaging way.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [Library Press Reading and Teaching Guides](#)
- [Heart Mountain Reading Guide](#)
- [They Called Us Enemy Archives](#)
- [Scribd - They Called Us Enemy](#)
- [Topshelf Comix Teacher's Guide](#)