

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Writing Prompts

### Part 3: Allegiance

#### MISSION US: "Prisoner in My Homeland"

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##### **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 to respond to. You may assign one or more to the entire class. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Where there are multiple questions in a single prompt, choose the question or questions that best suits your students. 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 intent 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. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of the prompts before students encounter the history, because thinking about them sets the students up to understand and relate to it better.*

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

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##### **PRISON AND RESISTANCE.**

After President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, Japanese American families were forcibly removed from their homes--from everything they know--and relocated to inhumane prison camps in the middle of nowhere. In Part 3 of the game, you learn about the unjust arrest of Harry Ueno. Write about a time in your life when you actively resisted something you thought was unjust. What did you do? How did it make you feel to take a stand? Or, write about a time when you wish you had resisted something and explain why you decided to not take a stand.

##### **ADDRESSING USE OF FORCE**

In Part 3 of the game, you learn about a delegate to a JACL meeting in Salt City who is beat-up by a group of prisoners at Manzanar. Some prisoners speak out against the detention of Harry Ueno, who is accused of beating up the JACL delegate. Military police are called into the camp and fire into a crowd, resulting in the death of two young people. Why do you think administrators of the camp felt it was necessary to bring military police into the camp? What do you think of the use of force against prisoners who express dissent? Write your opinion about the use of policing against the prisoners: Was it fair or unfair? What other measures might have been taken? Does the incident at Manzanar remind you of any current events? Can you draw connections between the use of policing at Manzanar and the relationships between communities and police today?

##### **WHAT IS A RIOT?**

During this part of the game, prisoners are vocal about the arrest of Henry Ueno, who is blamed for attacking a prisoner who attended a JACL meeting in Utah. Military police are brought into Manzanar to suppress prisoners' protests and expressions of anger. Tensions rise and, ultimately, police shoot into a crowd and kill two young men. This incident was sometimes called a "riot" by media describing the events from outside the camp. What do you picture in your head when you hear the word, "riot"? Why do you think people who are outside the camp might depict the Japanese American prisoners as "rioting"? Later, historians studying these events have re-named these same events at Manzanar as an "uprising." In your thinking, what is the difference between calling the events a "riot" versus an "uprising"?

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##### **NEW YEAR TRADITIONS.**

In Part 2, you hear a little about the tradition of making mochi on New Year's in the camp. Mochi is a savory or sweet rice cake that is made from pounded rice. Prisoners at Manzanar still continued cultural traditions from life outside of the camp. Write about some of the important rituals and traditions within your own family, either for New Year's or for another holiday or important marker. What is one tradition that your family repeats each year? Describe this tradition and its history in your family: Does it emerge from your family's culture or ethnic roots? Has your family added their own "spin" to this tradition? Why is it important for people to have yearly, repeated rituals?

##### **SUDDEN CHANGES.**

During Part 3, Henry Tanaka describes how three big changes re-directed their lives in the camp. Henry and his family learn that they may be relocated to Minidoka, a prison camp in Idaho. Both Bainbridge Islanders and camp administrators at Manzanar believe that re-locating to Minidoka will help reduce tensions within the camp. They also learn about a possible military draft and a questionnaire that will be issued about prisoners' willingness to move to other parts of the U.S. These are many big changes that face the Tanaka family all at once. Can you talk about an example, either from personal experience or from current events, when a family is facing a sudden change, especially one over which they have little control? Describe this sudden change and the social, economic, or personal factors that caused it.

##### **WHEN TINY DECISIONS MATTER.**

At the end of Part 3, Henry Tanaka makes decisions about filling out the questionnaire distributed to prisoners in the Japanese American incarceration camps in 1943. At each stage of the process, he weighs all of the options: Should he refuse to answer? Should he say "yes" to be drafted for military service? These were the small but important decisions that many people, young and old, made as they filled out this questionnaire. Now, think about an example when someone had to make a seemingly small decision that, in the end, mattered a lot. You can draw from your own life or from current events, history, books, or movies. Write about the small decisions this person had to make, the factors that influenced their decision, and what decision this person ended up making. Consider the deeper political or social circumstances that led to their situation.