



Quicklet - Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine*

Judith Mary Wilson

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ABOUT THE BOOK

At its core, Julie Otsuka's novel *When the Emperor Was Divine* is a story about characters, and she portrays them beautifully. With simplicity, distance, and precise attention to the details of the era, she draws on universal human emotions to create individuals whose experiences, thoughts, and perceptions open a window to the history of a troubling time in America's history.

The story begins in 1942, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II, and it follows four members of one Japanese-American family as they leave their home in Berkeley, CA, and endure more than three years as internees in War Relocation Camps. Otsuka captures the guilt and shame, confusion and resignation that they feel, as they suffer indignities and loss resulting from the fears and prejudice of others, which they've done nothing to deserve.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Judith M. Wilson is a writer, editor, and award-winning journalist. She and her husband live in Northern California with their family. Her interests include travel, learning languages, good food, and long walks.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

It's spring, 1942 and a sunny day in Berkeley, CA, as an unnamed woman sets out to return a book to the library. The day starts out pleasant enough, but then suddenly, everything changes. Overnight, signs have appeared everywhere in store windows, at the entrance to buildings, and stapled at eye level, to every telephone pole along University Avenue. The woman looks at one in the window of the post office and goes home. She never reaches the library.

The woman is Japanese, and the United States is at war with Japan. The government believes that people of Japanese ethnicity who live in the coastal states of the western United States are a threat and is rounding them up and placing them in isolated internment camps inland.

The authorities had taken her husband into custody the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and he had already been sent to a camp out of state. Now she has learned that the rest of the family is about to be relocated. She spends the following days packing, deciding what to keep and what to throw out, and attending to the details, as she gets her family ready to leave their home for an unknown destination and an undetermined period of time.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Quicklet on Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine*
 - About *When the Emperor Was Divine*
 - About Julie Otsuka
 - Overall Summary
 - Chapter-by-Chapter Commentary

- ...and much more
- Julie Otsuka's When the Emperor Was Divine

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