Farewell to Manzanar:
Comprehension Guide

Foreword, Chronology, & Terms
1. What is the author’s (Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston) relationship to Manzanar?
2. When did the first Japanese arrive on the US mainland, and where did they settle?
3. When did Congress grant naturalization rights to some groups? Which groups were granted the rights? Which groups were omitted?
4. When did the Japanese government lift its ban on emigration, and what was the result?
5. What restriction did the U. S. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization create for the Japanese, and when was this done?
6. When and why did immigration from Japan to the United States stop?
7. When was the attack on Pearl Harbor?
8. Describe the three events that occurred in 1942.
9. Describe the Supreme Court ruling of 1944 and the two events of 1945. Include the dates.
10. What is Public Law 414, and when was it passed?

Chapters 1-2 Comprehension Guide
What Is Pearl Harbor?
1. What is the setting for this first chapter? How old is Jeanne?
2. Why do the women stand at the wharf waving until the ships are out of sight? What is implied but never stated about the reason the ships return to shore?
3. Why is Jeanne’s father “suddenly a man with no rights”?
4. Briefly describe Jeanne’s father. What is the one thing the FBI agents cannot take away from her father?

Shikata Ga Nai
1. Why does Jeanne’s father like being the only Japanese family in their neighborhood? How does this isolation from other Japanese people hurt Jeanne?
2. How does Jeanne’s mother (mama) demonstrate her strength and pride when the family is forced to leave Terminal Island?
3. What is the American Friends Service? What is Executive Order 9066?
4. Why do you think this chapter is titled “Shikata ga nai”?
5. What is Jeanne’s first experience with racial prejudice? Now, as an adult, how does she feel about it?
6. How is Jeanne’s first impression of the camp different from that of her older relatives?
7. What do the Caucasian servers do to ruin the evening meal? How do the Japanese react to their mistake?
8. Why are the housing arrangements especially difficult for young married couples? How do Jeanne’s sister and her husband solve the problem?

Chapters 3-4 Comprehension Guide
A Different Kind of Sand
1. Find two sentences in this chapter that sums up Woody’s character.
2. List two jokes Kiyo makes about their poor living conditions that also serve to illustrate the careless way the internment camps treat the families.
3. What is the significance of the title of this chapter, “A Different Kind of Sand”?
4. How does Mama feel about their new living quarters?

A Common Master Plan
1. Why are the children sick?
2. What does “Arigato” mean in English? Why is Mama grateful to the old woman with the box? How does she feel about privacy?

Chapters 5-6 Comprehension Guide
Almost a Family
1. After a couple of years, sociologists recommend that the families in the camp begin eating their meals together. Why is the scientists’ concern too late?
2. Why does Mama go back to work as a dietitian?
3. How large is Manzanar?
4. Why is Jeanne attracted to the two nuns and to the Catholic church?
5. In the following passage, what is Jeanne feeling when she sees her father after nine months of separation?
   “I hugged him tighter, wanting to be happy that my father had come back. Yet I hurt so inside I could only welcome him with convulsive tears.”

**Whatever He Did Had Flourish**
1. In the following passage, Jeanne compares her father’s cane to the samurai sword:
   “I see it now as a sad, homemade version of the samurai sword his greatgreat-grandfather carried in the land around Hiroshima, at a time when such warriors weren’t much needed anymore, when their swords were both their virtue and their burden.”
   In what way is the cane, like the sword, both a virtue and a burden for Papa?
2. Who are the samurai? How does Papa’s position as the oldest son help explain his arrogance? Why does Papa leave Japan to seek his fortune in America?
3. In the following quotation, Jeanne lists some reasons why Papa never finishes school:
   “Something always stopped him: bad luck, a racial barrier, a law, his own vanity or arrogance or fear of losing face.” (pg. 55)
   What do you suppose is the real reason Papa never finishes law school? List four of his jobs before the War.
4. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement: Jeanne remembers her father as a flawed man but one who possesses dignity and style.
5. Define Issei. What kind of work does Papa do at Fort Lincoln before being reunited with his family?

**Chapters 7-8 Comprehension Guide**

**Fort Lincoln: An Interview**
1. Why does Papa believe “The American military is just like the Japanese”? 

**Chapters 9-11 Comprehension Guide**

**The Mess Hall Bells**
1. Other than calling people for food, why do the mess hall bells usually ring?
2. What sparks the December Riot? What are the underlying causes that make the camp come “boiling up at once”?
3. Why do the people ring the mess hall bells all night?

**The Reservoir Shack: An Aside**
1. In what way are Kaz and his crew in a “no-win situation” when they go to the reservoir?

**Yes Yes No No**
1. Why does Papa think it is dangerous for Woody to sign the loyalty oath, agreeing to fight in the war?
2. What three options are available to the people of Manzanar because of the loyalty oath?
Chapters 12-13 Comprehension Guide
PART II
Manzanar, U.S.A.
1. Why are the mountains that are visible from Manzanar important to Papa? What does he do during the day to help restore some of his dignity?
2. In what ways do the families forced to live at Manzanar manage to maintain an American lifestyle?
3. In what sense is the image of the old woman walking her dogs a metaphor for the illusion that the life at the camp is like a typical American town?

Explorations
1. Why do Lois and Isao need to take a field trip away from the camp in order to spend time together? What does their relationship tell the reader about race relations at the time?
2. What does Jeanne gain from her expertise at baton twirling? Why do you think she is able to stay with this activity when she abandons so many others she tries during her time at Manzanar?
3. Why is Jeanne so angry with her father that she imagines that her baton is her father?
   “…angrily I would throw him into the air and watch him twirl, and catch him, and throw him high, again and again and again.”

Chapters 14-16 Comprehension Guide
In the Firebreak
1. What does Jeanne witness in the firebreak that fills her with awe?
2. Why are Jeanne’s parents worried about the birth of their grandson? What does this chapter reveal about the quality of medical care available at the camp?

Departures
1. Why are many of the young people leaving Manzanar? What makes the older generation less eager to depart?
2. How does Jeanne feel about Woody’s departure to join the war?

Free to Go
1. List the three Supreme Court cases involving the Japanese Americans. What is the issue in each case, the decision of the court, and the impact on Jeanne’s family? (Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, and Mitsue Endu)
2. For what reasons is Jeanne’s family not overjoyed at the news that the internment camps are to be closed?
3. In what sense are “God and the Sears, Roebuck catalogue” one and the same to young Jeanne?
4. In the following passage, how does Jeanne define the “unnamed ache” she has been living with at Manzanar all of these years?
   “The physical violence didn’t trouble me….It was the humiliation. That continuous, unnamed ache I had been living with was precise and definable now….I know ahead of time that if someone looked at me with hate, I would have to allow it…because something in me…deserved it.”
5. Why does Papa not follow his children to the East Coast after they leave Manzanar?

Chapters 17-19 Comprehension Guide
It’s All Starting Over
1. What do you think is the significance of the title of this chapter?
2. Why does Papa think the government will approve of his idea to build a cooperative for people returning from the camps?
3. How does the bombing of Hiroshima impact Papa?

Ka-ke, Near Hiroshima: April 1946
1. Why is there a tombstone in the Japanese graveyard for Ko, Woody’s father?
2. Briefly identity Toyo. How does Toyo receive Ko’s son, a member of the occupying U.S. forces in Japan?
3. What does Woody learn about his father during this visit?

Re-entry
1. Cite incidents from the novel to support or refute the following statement: It is good for Papa to buy the car instead of traveling to their new home by bus.
2. Why is Jeanne’s family lucky to be living in Cabrillo Homes? How is it better than the internment camp?
3. What sentence in this chapter indicates that Jeanne likes America despite the unfair internment of her family?
4. Why does Mama go to work in the cannery instead of Papa?
5. What is Jeanne referring to in the above passage?
   “…I hadn’t been at all prepared for, on the first day back in public school, when the shape of what I truly had to deal with appeared to me for the first time.”

Chapters 20-21 Comprehension Guide
A Double Impulse
1. Why does Jeanne feel invisible in her new classroom? What makes her want not only to be invisible, but also to disappear?
2. What does Jeanne do to try to prove to her classmates that she is not really different? How does she react when her classmates let her know she is not welcome in their homes?
3. How does Jeanne use her femininity to overcome the racial barriers?
4. Who is Radine? Why does Jeanne like her?
5. List three reasons Jeanne loses respect for her father.
6. How does Papa embarrass Jeanne in front of her classmates? What indications are there that, as an adult, Jeanne understands her father’s behavior?

The Girl of My Dreams
1. What happens to Jeanne and Radine’s friendship when they go the Long Beach Polytechnic?
2. Why does Papa object to Jeanne’s being elected carnival queen? What is the compromise they eventually reach?
3. What does Jeanne learn about herself when she puts on the Gone with the Wind dress and tries to be the carnival queen?

Chapter 22 Comprehension Guide
PART III
Ten Thousand Voices
1. How does the incident with the old lady who spits at Jeanne and Kiyo help explain why Jeanne has buried her memories of Manzanar for thirty years?
2. What does the rock garden Jeanne finds at Manzanar symbolize for her?
3. Why does the murmur of voices Jeanne hears when she returns to Manzanar keep getting louder and clearer in her mind the longer she is there?
4. In what way does the passage below have a double meaning?
   “The shine was wearing off the trip. Their eyes were red and their faces badly chapped. No place for kids.”
5. Why do you suppose Jeanne says, “Manzanar would always live in my nervous system, a needle with Mama’s voice”?
6. Cite incidents from the chapter to support or refute the following statement: By revisiting Manzanar, Jeanne comes to gain a new respect for her father.
7. In what ways may this work be considered a coming-of-age story?
8. Analyze the poem written by the author and printed at the beginning of Part III. What does it reveal about the purpose of her visit to the Manzanar ruins?