

DEAR CANADA

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Torn Apart

The Internment Diary of Mary Kobayashi

By Susan Aihoshi

1. How can you tell from Mary's diary that Canada was at war in 1941? How does life for Mary's family change after Japan attacks Pearl Harbor?
2. What is so special about Mary's relationship with her *geechan*? Is there an older person in your family other than your parents that you are close to? Why?
3. Why is Mary's friendship with Maggie, Ellen and Sachiko so important to her?
4. Why does Mary dislike the saying *shikata ganai* so much? Do you think anyone else in her family might feel the same way? Why do you think Mary's parents and others in the community use that expression?
5. Why do you think Mr. Cowan decided not to keep Mary's father working at the drugstore? Do you think Mr. Cowan was right? What would you do if you were in his place?
6. Even though Mary's parents and grandfather come from Japan, why does Mary think of her family as one hundred percent Canadian? If your parents or grandparents immigrated to Canada, how long did it take them to feel "one hundred percent Canadian"?
7. Why is Mrs. Kobayashi so angry at Mary's older brothers when they come home wearing "I am Chinese" buttons?
8. Why did the governments of Canada and British Columbia break up the families of Japanese Canadians living on the coast and make them leave the province? Even though it was war time, do you think these actions were right?
9. The government called the camps "relocation centres" but the Japanese Canadians call them "internment camps." Which terms sounds least threatening? What would some reasons be for using a term that sounds less threatening? Can you think of other examples?
10. When Mary arrives in New Denver, she discovers that she and her family have to live in primitive conditions without electricity and running water. How do they manage? Do you think you and your family could survive very long in a similar situation?
11. Why does Mary wish her parents could vote? Why do you think Japanese Canadians were not allowed to vote until 1949? Why is being able to vote so important?