

Journey to Topaz Reading and Discussion Questions (A)

- A1: Chapters 1-2 “Strangers at the Door” and “The Long Wait”
- A2: Chapters 3-4 “A Lonely Christmas” and “Ten Days to Pack”
- A3: Chapters 5-6 “Inside the Barbed Wire” and “Home is a Horse Stall”
- A4: Chapters 7-8 “A New Friend” and “Ken Spoils a Party”
- A5: Chapters 9-10 “A New Rumor” and “Goodbye, Tanforan”
- A6: Chapters 11-12 “A Home in the Desert” and “Dust Storm”
- A7: Chapters 13-14 “A Last Visit” and “Tragedy at Dusk”
- A8: Chapters 15-16 “Good News” and “Another Goodbye”
- A9: Chapter 17 “Hello, World”
- A10: Conclusion

ARKANSAS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

Strand: Reading

Standard 9: Comprehension

- R.9.4.1 Organize prior knowledge and new information to make meaning of the text
- R.9.4.2 Make connections that demonstrate a deeper understanding of text related to self, text, and/or world
- R.9.4.9 Use inferences to expand understanding of content knowledge
- R.9.4.11 Read a text for a variety of purposes

Journey to Topaz by Yoshiko Uchida would be an appropriate book for Level S or high level 5th grade readers. Yoshiko Uchida was an inmate at the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. The story tells the difficulties of an eleven-year old girl and her family who were uprooted from their home and incarcerated by the government during WWII. Her descriptions of the settings are quite accurate, and she discusses complex ideas in terms that children can understand and with which they can identify.

If a copy of *Journey to Topaz* cannot be provided for every student, teachers will need to read the text aloud to the class. To facilitate this, excerpts of the book have been suggested for each day of reading. For each day of reading there are discussion questions for students to answer individually, in small groups or as a class.

A1: Chapters 1-2 “Strangers at the Door” and “The Long Wait”

Excerpts

Start: page 5 “When Father came in from the garden he turned on...”

End: End of Chapter 1

Start: page 12 “Then who’s the tea for?”

End: page 14 “I really couldn’t even hazard a guess.”

Discussion questions:

1. What happened to father? Why?
2. Why does mother offer the police tea and cake?

A2: CHAPTERS 3-4 “A LONELY CHRISTMAS” AND “TEN DAYS TO PACK”

Excerpts

Start: page 22 “On the sixth day after he was taken away...”

End: page 26 “You’ll see whether I’m crazy or not.”

Start: page 32 “The evacuation hung over their heads...”

End: page 34 “Ken would simply have to help her.”

Discussion questions:

1. What happens to Yuki’s father?
2. How does Mother prepare for the evacuation?

A3: CHAPTERS 5-6 “INSIDE THE BARBED WIRE” AND “HOME IS A HORSE STALL”

Excerpts

Start: Beginning of Chapter 5

End: page 44 “...inside somebody else’s body.”

Start: Beginning of Chapter 6

End: page 54 “They stood silently and patiently, waiting for the lines to move.”

Discussion questions:

1. Why do you think Yuki, “felt numb and strange, as though she were inside someone else’s body?”
2. Give details that describe their new apartment.

A4: CHAPTERS 7-8 “A NEW FRIEND” AND “KEN SPOILS A PARTY”

Excerpts

Start: Beginning of Chapter 7

End: page 64 “...disappearing like snow on a hot day.”

Start: page 71 “That evening they lined up...”

End: End of Chapter 8

Discussion questions:

1. What do you know about Yuki’s new friend?
2. What do you think Ken should do? Why?

A5: CHAPTERS 9-10 “A NEW RUMOR” AND “GOODBYE, TANFORAN”

Excerpt

Start: page 80 “When Ken came home for the six-thirty headcount...”

End: End of Chapter 9

Start: page 85 “Soon it was their last day in Tanforan...”

End: page 90 “As she peered out, she began to feel a growing excitement.”

Discussion questions:

1. What is Ken’s decision? What is his reason?
2. What do you think is bothering Ken?

A6: CHAPTERS 11-12 “A HOME IN THE DESERT” AND “DUST STORM”

Excerpt

Start: page 99 “Listen, she said, reading aloud.”

End: page 108 “They think she may have tuberculosis.”

Discussion questions:

1. What happened to Emi?
2. Select three phrases that you think best describe the dust storm.

A7: CHAPTERS 13-14 “A LAST VISIT” AND “TRAGEDY AT DUSK”

Excerpt

Start: page 116 “Could Emi come home now that our rooms are warm?”

End: page 121 “...felt as though Emi’s grandfather were standing right there with all of them.”

Discussion questions:

1. What happened to Mr. Kurihara? Why?
2. How did Ken help Mrs. Kurihara?

A8: CHAPTERS 15-16 “GOOD NEWS” AND “ANOTHER GOODBYE”

Excerpts

Start: Beginning of Chapter 15

End: page 126 “You’re back Papa! You’re really back!”

Start: Beginning of Chapter 16

End: page 135 “There comes a time when you have to stand up and be counted for.”

Discussion questions:

1. What stories did Father tell about Montana?
2. Do you think that Ken made a wise decision? Why or why not?

A9: CHAPTER 17 “HELLO, WORLD”

Excerpt

All of Chapter 17

Discussion questions:

1. Name some of the reasons why people were leaving the camp.
2. How does the story end? Did you like the ending?

A10: CONCLUSION

Discussion questions:

1. If you were to add one more chapter to this book, what would happen?
2. What would you name this last chapter?
3. Overall, which problems do you think were hardest for Yuki and her family to face?
4. What did Yuki’s journey to Tanforan and then Topaz teach her...about herself?
...about friends? ... about family? ... about the United States?
...about the meaning of home?

This page has been left blank intentionally.

Journal Writing Prompts (B)

- B1: Describe yourself and your family. How are you similar to and different from Yuki and her family?
- B2: If you had to pack your most precious belongings in a suitcase like Yuki, what would you take? Why?
- B3: Describe a journey you have taken.
- B4: Write about someone who is a friend. What do you like to do together? How do you help each other?
- B5: If you had to leave and go on a journey, what would you miss most? Why?
- B6: Describe your home. What are your favorite things about your home?
- B7: Write about a sad time in your life. How did others help you?
- B8: Write about a time you had to say goodbye to something or someone. How did you feel?
- B9: Describe what it would be like if you were like Yuki, starting over again on a new journey.
- B10: Think about Yuki's journey in the book. What do journeys teach us about ourselves and our homes?

ARKANSAS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

Strand: Writing

Standard 4: Process

W.4.4.1 Organize writing to convey a central idea

Standard 5: Purposes, Topics, Forms and Audiences

W.5.4.2 Write to define, clarify, develop ideas, and express creativity

W.5.4.3 Record reactions to personal and school related experiences

W.5.4.10 Write on demand to a specified prompt within a given time frame

Standard 7: Craftsmanship

W.7.4.4 Describe characters and setting