Chapter 1: “The House above Grove Street”

1. What is the name of the author’s sister?
2. Describe the backyard of the house in the second paragraph.
3. Within what city and state was the house on Grove Street located?
4. What is significant about the people and houses above Grove Street?
5. There was such intense anti-Asian sentiment in this area in 1917 that some local billboards read what?
6. Why did the author and her sister not feel the effects of the depression?
7. What is the author’s father’s full name? Describe him.
8. What habits did the author’s father pick up from working at Furuya?
9. How did Yoshiko’s mother and father meet?
10. How is Iku Umegaki described at the top of page 6?
11. What is an Issei?
12. Why were the Uchidas’ lives more secure than their other Japanese friends?
13. In the 1930’s in America, could a Japanese-American become a citizen or own land?
14. What jobs did most of the men and women perform in the 1930s?
15. How did “Dwight” get his name?
16. Give an example of how compassionate the author’s family was towards their neighbors or lonely, homesick students from Japan.
17. What does “pompous” and “pedantic” mean from p. 11?
18. What were the “proper motions required” to prepare for a dinner?
19. What ingredients make “sukiyaki”?
20. What religion are the author and her family?
21. Describe the kind of clothes the author and her sister wore. What did her mother do to them to make them seem lavish?
22. The advice that the author’s mother gives her daughters is, “Don’t ever be ________.” What do you think she meant by this statement?
23. What was the author’s favorite dish? When did her mother usually make it for her?
24. In what ways did the author’s parents enrich both her and her sister’s lives?
25. What does “aplomb” mean, as seen on page 17?
26. Where would the family go every New Year’s? Who did they visit?
27. What was significant about these Nisei having a grandparent living within the United States?
28. What had instilled in her a vigorous frugality? Because of this, what did she not do?
29. What did Yoshiko call her grandmother?
30. What is moxibustion?
31. Why is New Year’s considered a special time in early Issei households? What happened during that time?
32. Describe the importance of photographs in their family.
33. One summer, the family used the railroad pass to travel for vacation. What did they see on their trip?
34. How was the author offended on her trip to visit her mother’s friends on the East coast?
35. How old was the author when her family traveled to Japan?
36. How long did it take to sail to Japan?
37. Why was Yoshiko’s father considered a “businessman in every sense”?
38. Did the author’s mother walk steps behind her husband and ride in the backseat of the car because of the way women were supposed to behave? If not, tell the reason why.
39. How did the author’s father sometimes accidentally insult others without realizing it?
40. What are “Tanka”?
41. Although her mother loved to read and had piles of books, what was the only book she usually found time for?
42. Read the poem on page 25 that Yoshiko’s mother wrote. What do you think she was writing about?
43. What do you think is the author’s purpose for beginning her memoir with this type of chapter?
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Chapter 2: “On Being Japanese and American”

1. Describe the relationship between the author and her sister throughout the years as described on the first page.
2. What word was used to describe “white people”?
3. How were Yoshiko’s parents able to balance both a traditional Japanese household with modern American customs and practices?
4. The author’s parents are described as “frugal” people in Chapter 1. How is this somewhat contradicted with the mother’s behavior in this chapter?
5. What is the difference between the motivation behind the mother’s celebration of Dolls Festival Day and the author’s celebration of the festival day?
6. Describe a typical Sunday. What was the church like? Describe the sermons.
7. What volunteer jobs did the author’s parents do for the church?
8. Describe what the family did some days after church before they returned home.
9. What does the author say structured her parents’ lives? What four things did that include?
10. What is “filial piety”?
11. In what year was it possible for Japanese citizens to become naturalized in the USE?
12. How does the author see a difference from herself and her Los Angeles cousins when they attend the Olympics? What caused this difference?
13. Why did the author have to ask questions such as, “Do you cut Japanese hair?” and “Can we come swim in the pool? We’re Japanese.”
14. Because Yoshiko had such a hard time in high school due to discrimination, what does she do? Was her next educational opportunity any better with regards to being discriminated against?
15. Do the Uchidas ever socialize with white people? Explain.
16. Although the Japanese-Americans earn college diplomas from well-known colleges, do they find jobs easily in their degree fields? What type of jobs do they have to take?
17. Compare the way that the Japanese-Americans were treated to the way you have learned that African-Americans were treated in the South. In what ways are they treated similarly? In what ways are they treated differently?

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Chapter 3-4: “Pearl Harbor” and “Evacuation”

Part I: Chapters 3 and 4 focused on the Uchida’s reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and then their reaction of the father being taken and them being given 10 days to evacuate. Injustice is a major theme of Desert Exile. While being interned by one’s own country is unjust, Yoshiko shows more specific reasons in her memoir. In a two-page response, discuss this injustice.

Part II: Evacuation Day - You must evacuate your homes and businesses. You can take what you can carry with you. Animals must be left behind. Make a list of all that you would take and tell why. Minimum of 15 items.
Chapter 5: “Tanforan: A Horse Stall for Four”

1. What was Tanforan? What had it been originally? (Hint – why would there be a grandstand?)
2. Where was the author’s family housed?
3. Describe their barrack or “apartment”.
4. Was the camp ready for all the people? What did the author wonder about the nation’s security because of this?
5. Describe their first supper experience. List FIVE observations of the author.
6. How did the author describe the contrast in the box of prunes from that first day to the way they would have viewed them days before? Why do you believe the opinion has changed?
7. What kind of people also lived in the stable with the Uchidas?
8. Describe the latrines and showers. What “luxury” does one neighbor create/find that was closer to tradition for the Issei?
9. Because there was a shortage of hot water, what practices did the Uchidas have to adapt to regarding showers and laundry?
10. How were the meals at camp? What did Yoshiko shamelessly do to help with this?
11. Did the food ever get better? Explain.
12. Yoshiko describes what it took to make their stall more “like home.” What do they order by mail to “spruce” it up? What do you think about this? (They’re in a security prison of sorts and they can order things by mail to make it look prettier?)
13. Who finally joins them at camp? What contributed to his release? How long had he been “interned”?
14. Describe his stay in Montana. (Ride to Montana, housing, cleaning, governing, funerals, letters, weather, daily life).
15. Analyze the Tanka poem on p. 83. What is it about? Speculate the inspiration for such a poem.

Chapter 6: “City behind Barbed Wire”

1. Who were the family’s first visitors from the outside? What did some visitors bring?
2. Who was Dr. Fisher and how did the Uchidas know him? Explain how important he was to those interned in the camps.
3. What types of institutions were opened for the Tanforan camp community?
4. Describe the author and her sister’s attempt at nursery school.
5. Describe the school that is finally opened at camp. Compare and Contrast these schools with those we have today.
6. Explain the irony of the school children eagerness to say the Pledge of Allegiance.
7. List the types of illnesses and disorders frequented by the prisoners.
8. Analyze the intent the Army had when they replaced the Japanese cooks with white cooks while filming the mess halls.
9. Although they knew Tanforan was temporary, how do the people make it attractive and pleasant?
10. What were script books? Describe how they were used.
11. How did they try to get privacy? To what extent did they go?
12. What did they do to keep from being bored?
13. What was their first concrete indication that they were moving to “relocation centers”?
14. Describe the events as they are transferred? (Inspection, searches, etc.)
15. Analyze why the author uses the word “uprooting” in her title as well as throughout the book. What does this suggest?
16. Where are they headed?
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Chapter 7: “Topaz – City of Dust”

1. How many months had the Uchidas been at Tanforan?
2. What kinds of things did they see on the train that they hadn’t seen in a while and missed?
3. What landmark did they look forward to seeing from the Bay back home?
4. Describe the train.
5. What was different about the way they ate breakfast that they hadn’t experienced in months?
6. What does it say about the government that there were only two waiters on the train for 500 people?
7. What state did the train stop to allow people to get out and stretch?
8. What lake did they cross?
9. Who does Yoshida recognize at the Salt Lake City station?
10. Her friend is also a Japanese-American from the same area back home. Why isn’t she being interned in a camp?
11. Where did the train finally stop? Describe the town.
12. How was the town landscape different from the camp?
13. What desert was Topaz located in?
14. How did the Japanese-Americans enter the state of Utah according to the governor’s wishes?
15. How was this group met as they arrived at camp? Why don’t they think someone bothered to organize this?
16. Describe the layout of the camp.
17. What were a few of the indications as they began to get settled into camp that shower that the camp was not completely ready?
18. What natural element seemed to cover everything, even after a good cleaning?
19. The temperature variation in a single day could vary how much?
20. What caused a string of food poisoning?
21. The father, going to meet the next busses coming in, discovers a treat at the canteen. What does it say about him that he gives ice cream to the boy scouts marching to greet the busses?
22. Describe one of the few things the campers looked forward to in Topaz.
23. What two bizarre concoctions does a woman bring Kay and the mother that she claims will cure their sickness?
24. What was there frequently a shortage of in Topaz?
25. They also passed along a rumor that they would have a shortage of electricity for three weeks if energy wasn’t conserved. Did this ploy work?
26. Were prisoners allowed to work outside jobs? What kind of farm did many of the men work at to escape the “confusion and disarray of life inside the barbed wire”?
27. What is surprising about the canteen/Coop? What types of businesses were they able to open in the camp as a luxury to the people?
28. What point did father make when the workers tried to walk off with the heating stove that had been left outside for about a month? Is this yet another injustice that some would have suffered?
29. When the author joins the educational staff, one of the rules that the children would abide by was that there was to be no “Americanization” such as saluting the flag. How could this be confusing to the children? Why might this be suggested?
30. What type of equipment and supplies did they have available for the school?
31. Where did the white staff members live in Topaz? How did it compare to the barracks that the internees live in?
32. We have school dismissal due to snow and tornadoes. What do the children in Topaz get released from school for?
33. Read the “Tanka” on p. 121. Describe/explain what the mother is writing about in each stanza:
   1.  
   2.
   3.
   4.
Chapter 8: “Topaz: Winter’s Despair”

1. At the beginning of Chapter 8, what season is about to begin in Topaz?
2. Analyze why the people in the camp were excited for the installation of the sheetrock? What did it bring?
3. Speculate how the concept of the traditional family values broke down from being in these camps. What were the differences between how the Japanese-Americans lived before the camps to the way they lived their lives in camp?
4. Describe the injustice that some of the Japanese experienced with their farms and possessions.
5. Analyze the difference in the way that the school children in these camps viewed school to the way most school children now view school.
6. Speculate the opinion of the surrounding town of Topaz of the Japanese Americans. Would they send entertainment to the camp and further accept the internees leaving the camp to come entertain them if they saw them as a true threat?
7. Describe the surprise that some received in a government shipment in November.
8. How was the Thanksgiving dinner different from their normal mess hall meals? (Not just the food).
9. As a substitute for giving their parents actual gifts on their 26th wedding anniversary, what imaginative gift did Yo and Kay create?
10. When were the schools about to reopen? Why had they been closed?
11. Yoshiko states that the WRA encouraged “early depopulation of the camp”. What were the requirements?
12. Students were among the first to leave. How many left and went to how many institutions?
13. Speculate why the WRA would now encourage the people to leave the camps.
14. Describe the events of Christmas Eve. What was sent to the mother that she loved but shared generously?
15. Identify how some Americans showed concern and compassion for the internees.
16. Explain what Yoshiko means when she says “I was still in an artificial government-spawned community on the periphery of the real world.”
17. What was the goal of the sisters in this New Year? Why do you think they created this goal?
18. Speculate what specific emotions the sisters and the father felt when allowed to go outside the gates. Why would they feel rejuvenated?
19. Describe the way that some Topaz residents unnaturally released their frustrations.
20. The WRA observed how being cut off from mainstream America “saps the initiative, weakens the instincts of human dignity and freedom, creates doubts, misgivings and tensions.” Is this a correct assessment? Explain.
21. Describe the medical care in the camps. Would you consider it unjust compared to daily medical care now?
22. Describe the irony of those who died in camp being buried outside in the camp in the desert.
23. Why does Yoshiko wonder where they will go after they are released? What does her home state still feel?
24. Why do you think that the President and Secretary of War reverse their original decision to not allow Japanese to fight in the war? What might their new purpose be as officers in the US military?
25. What issues do the Nisei men take with the government asking them to fight in the war?
26. Explain the reasons some gave for volunteering to fight in the war?
27. Describe the shooting incident and the inaccuracies between the guard’s story and the visual facts.
28. What resistant groups form? Who do they resent most?
29. Describe the opportunities that the sisters have to leave the camp.
30. Why was the father allowed to transfer to another camp?
31. Yoshiko titles the book “Desert Exile” and uses those words to end Chapter 8. Explain the title.
32. What does the subject and meaning behind the Tanka on p. 145 show about the mother?

Chapter 8: “Epilogue”

List 10 things you learn from the epilogue.