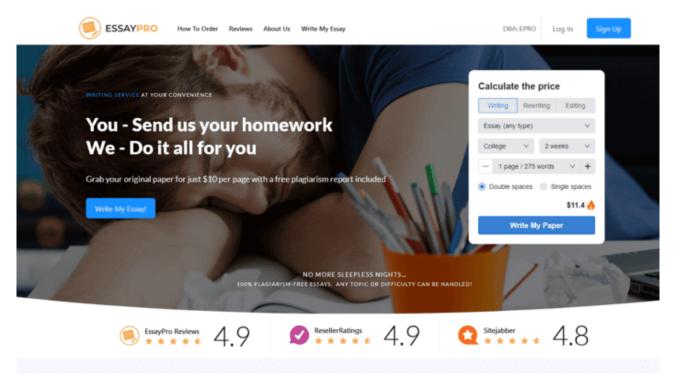
Japanese Alien and Japanese-American Poets In U. S. Relocation Camps



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On February 19, 1942, Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued the infamous Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the internment of 110,000 Japanese Aliens and Japanese Americans in concentration camps because of the so-called "military threat," they posed. In 1945, poet Lawson Fusao Inada wrote the following poem, titled "Concentration Constellation," which refers to the various relocation camps that were used to contain these people:

In this earthly configuration,

We have, not points of light,

but prominent barbs of dark...

Begin between the Golden State's

highest and lowest elevations

and name that location

Manzanar. Rattlesnake a line

southward to the zone

of Arizona, to the home

if natives on the reservation,

and call those Gila, Poston.

Then just take your time

winding your way across...

just make yourself at home

in the swamps of Arkansas.

for this is Rohwer and Jerome.

But now, you weary of the way.

It's a big country, you say.

It's a big history, hardly

halfway through - with Amache

looming in the Colorado desert,

Heart Mountain high in wide

Wyoming, Minidoka on the moon

of Idaho, then down to Utah's

jewel of Topaz before finding

yourself at northern California's

frozen shore of Tule Lake...

Now regard what sort of shape

this constellation takes.

It sits there like a jagged scar,

massive, on the massive landscape.

It lies there like the rusted wire

of a twisted and remembered fence.

As Inada points out with his analogy to a constellation, the United States government had constructed many camps and scattered them all over the country. In other words, the internment of Japanese-Americans was not merely a blip in American history; it was instead a catastrophic and appalling forced remov...

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...bstone Publishing Company, 1983.

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