

ADAPTED FOR SCOPE  
BY KRISTIN LEWIS

# American Pastime

BASEBALL BRINGS HOPE TO A JAPANESE-AMERICAN FAMILY IN AN INTERNMENT CAMP DURING WORLD WAR II

## Characters

Write your initials next to the character you're going to read. *\*Starred characters are major roles.*

- ☐ \*NARRATOR 1 (N1)
- ☐ \*NARRATOR 2 (N2)
- ☐ \*NARRATOR 3 (N3)
- ☐ \*NARRATOR 4 (N4)
- ☐ \*LYLE NOMURA: a Japanese-American teen
- ☐ \*LANE NOMURA: Lyle's brother
- ☐ \*KAZ NOMURA: Lyle's dad
- ☐ EMI NOMURA: Lyle's mom
- ☐ P.A. SYSTEM VOICE: announcer at Topaz Relocation Center
- ☐ \*SERGEANT BILLY BURRELL: a baseball player who oversees Topaz Relocation Center

- ☐ GAME ANNOUNCER: for local baseball games
- ☐ SHIRLEY BURRELL: Billy's wife
- ☐ \*KATIE BURRELL: Billy's daughter
- ☐ BAMBINO HIROSE: a camp resident and a carpenter
- ☐ ED TULLY: barbershop owner
- ☐ JOE JOHNSON: market owner
- ☐ RADIO VOICE: newscaster
- ☐ CORPORAL NORRIS: works for Billy at the Topaz Relocation Center
- ☐ CORPORAL MACK: works for Billy at the Topaz Relocation Center

The Nomura family and other Japanese-Americans arrive at the Topaz Relocation Center.



Kaz Nomura (Masatoshi Nakamura) and his son Lyle (Aaron Yoo) unpack in their barracks.



## SETTING

During World War II, the United States and Japan went to war against each other. An irrational fear of Japanese-Americans gripped the United States. In 1942, the U.S. government forced more than 120,000 Japanese-Americans to leave their homes and live in "relocation centers," where they were treated like prisoners. Some people were detained for as long as four years, and most lost their homes and their jobs.

## SCENE ONE

**N1:** The Nomuras are an average American family living in L.A. Their youngest son, Lyle, is a star baseball and saxophone player.  
**N2:** Lyle just received a prestigious scholarship to San Francisco State. When the government issues a decree that all people of Japanese "ancestry" have 10 days to sell their property before a mass evacuation, Lyle's college dreams are over.  
**N3:** The Nomura family is taken

to the Topaz Relocation Center outside the small desert town of Abraham, Utah. The Nomuras and other passengers climb off a guarded military bus.  
**P.A. SYSTEM VOICE:** This is not a concentration camp. This is a pioneer community provided for your own safety.  
**N4:** Lyle gives a **cursory** look around his new home. He's in a vast 16,000-acre compound enclosed with barbed wire. A guard with a searchlight and machine gun stands in a watchtower.  
**P.A.:** Night check begins at 9:30, lights out at 10, no exceptions!

## SCENE TWO

**N1:** A few weeks later, the Nomuras and the 24 other people living in their barracks gather together.  
**KAZ NOMURA:** We must do what we can to make a new home.  
**LANE NOMURA:** We can make improvements around here, as long as we pay for them ourselves.  
**KAZ:** Too many have gotten sick.  
**LANE:** We can patch the holes to stop the dust from coming in.

**BAMBINO HIROSE:** I could fix this roof if I had tools.  
**KAZ:** We can mail-order the things we need.  
**LANE:** There are more than 8,000 of us here. We have skills we can use—doctors, nurses, electricians, teachers, plumbers, farmers, and cooks.  
**N2:** Everyone donates money. They sew curtains for the windows and build dividers in the barracks so families have privacy.

## SCENE THREE

**N3:** Meanwhile in the nearby town of Abraham, the locals turn out for a county baseball game. The star player is Billy Burrell, who is also the sergeant at the Topaz Relocation Center.  
**ANNOUNCER:** Let's give a warm Abraham welcome to the scout from the New York Yankees, Mr. Dapper Don Lemon!  
**SHIRLEY BURRELL:** Don hasn't seen my husband Billy in years!  
**N4:** Don flips out a notebook and watches Billy hit a home run.  
**SHIRLEY (calling out):** That's a game winner, Billy Burrell!  
**N1:** But after the game, Don ignores Billy and offers a younger player a Yankees contract.  
**CORPORAL NORRIS (rushing on the field with a telegram):** I thought you'd want to see this as



Sergeant Billy Burrell (Gary Cole) is up to bat.





Katie Burrell (Sarah Drew) and Lyle Nomura share a passion for music.



Emi Nomura (Judy Ongg) gives her son Lane (Leonardo Nam) a special sash to keep him safe overseas.

soon as possible, Sergeant.

**BILLY:** Thank you, Corporal.

**N2:** The telegram says that Billy's son, Billy Jr., died fighting in Japan.

## SCENE FOUR

**N3:** Billy and Norris take Kaz and Lane to a store in town. Everyone stares suspiciously.

**NORRIS:** These men have permission to buy supplies from you.

**KAZ (handing Joe Johnson a list):** Do you have these items?

**JOE JOHNSON:** Grass seed, fertilizer, watermelon seeds . . . how will you pay for all this?

**KAZ:** Cash.

**ED TULLY (to Joe):** Every day trucks bring them food. When did we ever get free food? And now the government gives them *cash*?

**KAZ:** No one gives us money. We thought the banks would take our savings, so we brought our money here. Now we're using what we have to buy seeds and grow our own food—

**ED:** —you can't grow anything in the desert.

**KAZ:** Farmers do it in California.

**ED:** So we can't do it, but you can? Are you saying you're better than us?

**JOE:** Let's see what we have in stock.

## SCENE FIVE

**N4:** In the camp auditorium, Lyle leads a jazz band on his saxophone, while couples swirl around the dance floor.

**N1:** Sergeant Billy Burrell's daughter, Katie, works in the camp as a music teacher. She watches Lyle and the dancers from a corner of the auditorium.

**LYLE (spotting Katie):** Hey, come join us up here!

**KATIE:** No way.

**N2:** Lyle pulls her onstage.

**LYLE:** Take a verse.

**KATIE:** A what?

**LYLE:** A verse, a solo—improvise.

**KATIE:** I don't know how!

**LYLE:** Just play what you feel.

**N3:** Katie takes a deep breath and plays a solo. She's having fun.

**N4:** After the dance, Lyle follows her outside.

**LYLE:** You weren't bad in there!

**KATIE:** I was so scared!

**N1:** Suddenly, a camp searchlight shines down on them. Katie knows she shouldn't be socializing with camp residents and rushes away.

## SCENE SIX

**N2:** Kaz stands next to a baseball diamond that he's been working tirelessly to build in the camp.

**LYLE (walking up):** You wanted to talk?

**KAZ (staring at the diamond with pride):** When I was a young boy, I came to America. I couldn't speak English. Kids made fun of me. Then one day, I found a game.

**LYLE:** Baseball?

**KAZ:** I practiced until I became so good, everyone stopped making fun of me. I'm going to make a league here, just like back home.

**LYLE:** When I was a kid, you put a baseball in my hands and made me think I could *be* Babe Ruth—that it was possible that I could try to be like him . . . well, it wasn't true, Dad.

**N3:** Although Lyle refuses to participate, Kaz starts a baseball league anyway. He volunteers to coach one of the teams. Many residents join in. It's the first fun they've had in a long time.

**N4:** Meanwhile, Lyle secretly teaches Katie how to improvise and they become close friends.

## SCENE SEVEN

**N1:** At Christmas, the Nomuras attend a party at the camp.

**LANE (to his family):** I have an announcement, everyone. I joined the Army.

**EMI:** But Lane—

**LANE:** —I gave it a lot of thought. I can't stay here. I accepted what happened to us.

**LYLE:** You *accepted* it?

**LANE:** I had no choice. But now I can prove I'm as American as anybody else.

**LYLE:** Way to use your brain . . .

**LANE:** I don't care what you think.

**LYLE:** I'm not afraid to show what I really think.

**LANE:** I quit school when I was 17 to help our family. I worked my way up from the bottom. Five years—no vacation. I finally was in a position to have my own life, and it all disappeared in a day.

**KAZ:** That's enough, Lane.

**LANE:** Lyle lost a scholarship.

Boo-hoo. Everyone here lost everything! And no one complains—except you, Lyle. Only you. Because you're *special*.

**N2:** Furious, Lyle tackles Lane. They crash into a food table.

**KAZ (breaking them up):** Stop it!

**LYLE:** Go ahead! Go over there and get killed! See what that proves!

## SCENE EIGHT

**N3:** The next day, a crowd gathers to say goodbye to Lane. Emi gives him a special sash for good luck.

**LANE:** I'll wear this with pride.

**CORPORAL MACK (to Billy):** I know they're going to be fighting in Europe, and not against Japan, but it still doesn't make sense,

letting *them* join our Army.

**N4:** Lane hugs his parents and steps onto the truck as the crowd cheers. He scans the onlookers for his brother, but Lyle isn't there.

**N1:** The bus leaves, and Lyle sits alone in the barracks, playing a woeful rendition of "America the Beautiful" on his saxophone.

## SCENE NINE

**N2:** Camp residents gather around a radio to hear news about Lane's unit.

**RADIO VOICE:** The so-called **Nisei** [second-generation Japanese-Americans], the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, move through France like a knife through butter, their hard-driving spirit typified by their slogan, "go for broke," meaning "risk everything, go all out, never let up . . ."

**EMI (aside to Lyle):** One baseball player in the camp league will receive a college scholarship.

**LYLE:** Whoever wins it can get out of here and go to college?

**KAZ:** When I asked, you said you didn't want to be in the league.

**LYLE:** I know I haven't done everything you wanted . . .

**KAZ:** I'll let you play on my team if you stop seeing Sergeant Burrell's daughter, Katie.

**LYLE:** What? No!

**KAZ:** We could get in trouble, and it could make things worse with people in town.

**LYLE:** I don't care!

**EMI:** If your father won't let you play on his team, there are other teams in the camp league.

**KAZ:** You're telling my son to turn his back on me?!

**EMI:** You aren't thinking of him now. You're thinking about yourself—your pride!

## SCENE TEN

**N3:** Lyle joins another league team. One afternoon, he tells Katie about his plans.

**LYLE:** I'll get that scholarship.

**KATIE:** That's a little **pompous**.

**LYLE:** And when I go to that college, you're coming with me.

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Lane proudly holds the sash from his family as he heads to war.



**KATIE:** But it's in Delaware. I've never left Utah.

**LYLE:** I've already requested an application for you. Do you want to come with me?

**KATIE:** I do!

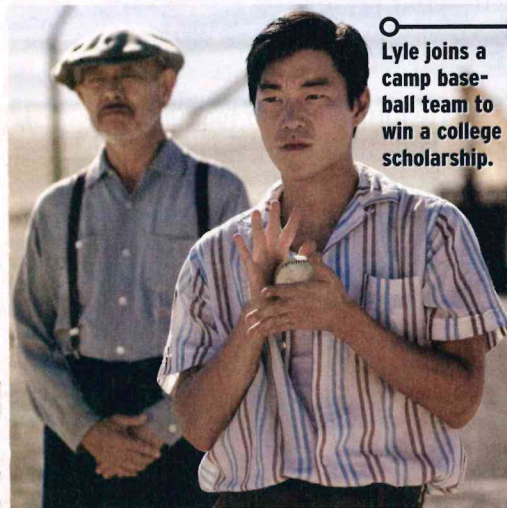
## SCENE ELEVEN

**N4:** At the Burrells' family dinner, Billy is unusually happy.

**BILLY:** The Yankees are looking for a catcher, and Dapper Don's heading back here. I'm finally going to get my shot. All those years, I thought it'd be Billy Jr. in the big leagues—that he'd do all the things I dreamed about.

**SHIRLEY:** A chance to start over!

**BILLY:** It's only because so many



Lyle joins a camp baseball team to win a college scholarship.



Men in town attack Lyle.

professional players are fighting in the war, but I deserve it!

**KATIE:** I'm happy for you, Daddy.

**BILLY:** It's not just for me. It's for all of us!

**N1:** The doorbell rings. It's Ed Tully.

**BILLY** (opening the door): Hi, Ed.

Did you hear about Dapper Don?

**ED:** I don't care about that.

**BILLY:** What's the matter?

**ED:** I thought that Katie would end up with my son, Jackie.

**BILLY:** What?

**ED:** She's seeing some Japanese boy in the camp.

**BILLY** (furious, walking back into the kitchen): Katie, are you seeing that Nomura boy?

**KATIE:** What?

**BILLY:** Answer me. Now!

**KATIE:** No.

**BILLY:** Of course. I know you'd never to do that to our family, to the memory of your brother.

## SCENE TWELVE

**N2:** Billy drives Kaz and Lyle to the town store.

**KAZ:** I know how to ease tension between us and people in town. Let's have a game between your baseball team and a camp team.

**BILLY:** No one on our team could

be **cajoled** to step in that camp.

**N3:** Kaz goes into the store to buy supplies. Billy goes to the post office, leaving Lyle alone.

**N4:** Lyle sneaks to a nearby diner and comes out with a burger, fries, and a malt. Smiling, he is about to take a bite, when the food is knocked from his hands into the dirt.

**ED:** Why don't you just go back to where you came from?

**LYLE:** I'm from L.A.

**N1:** Ed's friends push Lyle.

**ED** (smashing Lyle's face into the dirt where the burger fell): You hungry? Go ahead, eat! Eat!

**N2:** Billy approaches but does nothing to stop the attack. Ed wrenches Lyle's pitching arm behind his back. Just then, Kaz runs up and knocks Ed off Lyle.

**BILLY:** OK, that's enough.

**KAZ:** You're going to just let them walk away?

**BILLY** (shrugs): It was **reckless** of Lyle to wander off.

**N3:** Lyle's shoulder is so injured that he can't play in the camp league, and he loses his chance for the college scholarship.

## SCENE THIRTEEN

**N4:** That night, Billy has dinner with his family.

**BILLY:** Had trouble in town today. That Nomura kid wandered off to the diner to get a burger.

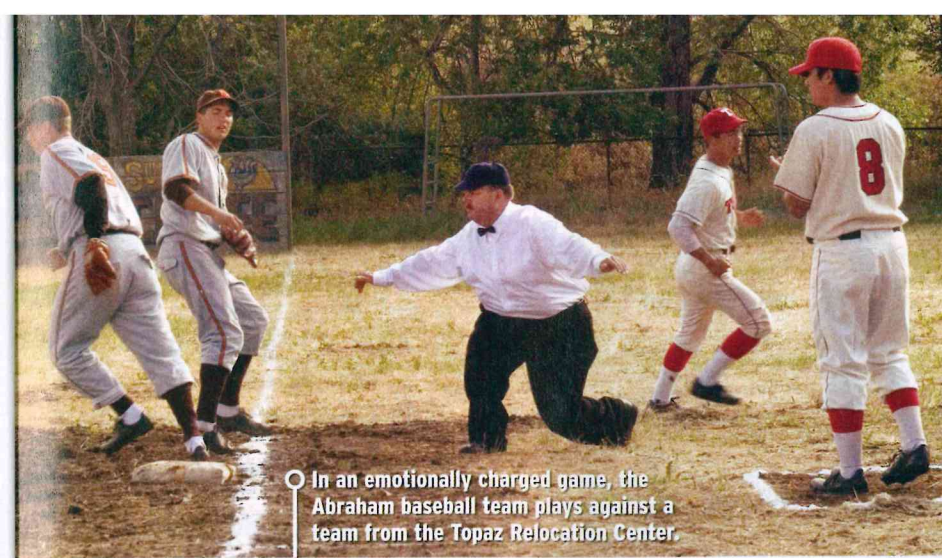
**KATIE** (concerned): What did you do to him?

**BILLY:** Me? Nothing. A couple of guys roughed him a bit.

**N1:** Tears well up in Katie's eyes, and Billy realizes that the rumors are true. She is in love with Lyle.

**BILLY:** You're not going back to that camp. Ever.

**KATIE:** Fine, but I *am* going



In an emotionally charged game, the Abraham baseball team plays against a team from the Topaz Relocation Center.

to college in Delaware. I saved my money from teaching at the camp. I'll use that to pay for—  
**BILLY:**—when I join the Yankees, you're coming to New York.

**KATIE:** I've made up my mind.

**BILLY:** What about Jackie Tully?

He's risking his life in this war, expecting you to be here for him!

**KATIE:** I'm not marrying Jackie!

**BILLY:** You're staying here!

**KATIE:** I've spent my whole life hearing how we're going to New York. I'm not waiting anymore.

**BILLY:** You're not going to school. You're not leaving. And you're not seeing some Japanese—

**KATIE:** You look at Lyle and see the people who killed Billy Jr., but it wasn't Lyle. It wasn't any of the people in that camp!

**BILLY:** We're not discussing that.

**KATIE:** Then why don't we talk about the truth, about why Billy Jr. *really* joined the Navy. You forced him to be like you, to play baseball—all for your **vicarious** enjoyment!

**BILLY:** You shut your mouth.

**KATIE:** He hated it! He hated you! He ran away to the Navy to get away from you. And that's why he was killed. *You* killed him!

**N2:** Katie runs out of the house.

**BILLY** (overcome with grief):

... Shirley, you and Katie ...

you're all I have ...

**SHIRLEY:** I know ... I know.

## SCENE FOURTEEN

**N3:** Months later, Ed sits in his empty barbershop in Abraham.

**N4:** Lane walks in, dressed in full Army uniform. He has a jagged scar on his cheek and an artificial leg. A row of medals hangs on his jacket, including an award for soldiers wounded in combat, and a Silver Star for bravery.

**LANE:** I just got back from Phoenix. I thought I'd get cleaned up before I see my parents.

**N1:** Lane sits in a barber seat. Ed opens a newspaper, ignoring him.

**LANE:** I'm kind of in a hurry.

**ED:** I don't cut hair on *you* people.

**NORRIS** (walking in, saluting Lane): Lieutenant Nomura? I'm here to pick you up.

**LANE:** At ease, Corporal.

**NORRIS:** Welcome back, sir.

**N2:** Lane limps out of the shop. When they get to the camp, Emi and Kaz rush to their son.

**LANE** (to his parents): I've dreamed about seeing you again.

**NORRIS** (watching the reunion): Hey Billy, did you hear about Lane's unit? There was a group of men stranded in the French

mountains. They didn't have food, water, or ammunition, and they were about to be captured. Lane's unit suffered 800 casualties to save those guys.

## SCENE FIFTEEN

**N3:** Kaz gets permission for his baseball team to play against the Abraham minor-league team.

**N4:** His shoulder healed, Lyle trains hard for the game.

**N1:** When game day comes, the stands are packed with residents from Abraham and the camp.

**N2:** Just before the game, Lyle unloads a dozen bags from a compartment on a bus.

**BILLY:** What's all this?

**LYLE:** \$2,500—in quarters.

Everyone in camp is betting that we'll beat you.

**BILLY:** You don't even belong on the same field as us! Anyway, we can't afford to match that bet.

**LYLE:** You get \$2,500 if you beat us. But if we win, Ed Tully gives my brother a haircut.

**N3:** The Topaz players gather in the dugout. They're nervous.

**KAZ:** We know what we have to do today—defense, speed, no mistakes. But today is not just about winning. Today is about dignity. Our dignity.

**N4:** Kaz looks at the team with pride and respect.

**KAZ:** Now, let's play ball!

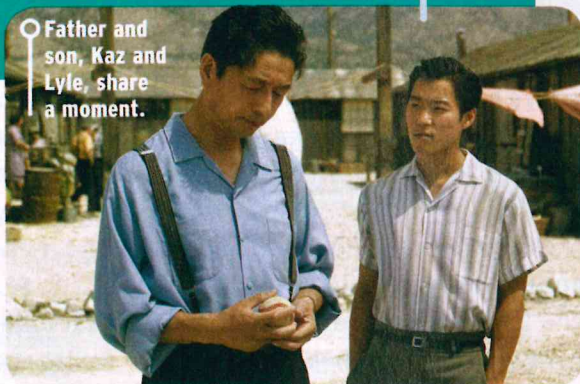
### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Will the camp win the game? Will Lane get his haircut? Will the residents of the Topaz Relocation Center ever get to go home? And will Lyle and Katie end up together? Watch the DVD to find out!



# No-Sweat Test Prep

NOW THAT YOU'VE READ THE PLAY, IT'S TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS!



**1** Where is the Topaz Relocation Center? (reading for information)

- (A) Colorado
- (B) New York
- (C) Utah
- (D) California

**2** Which word does NOT describe Ed Tully? (analyzing character)

- (A) obnoxious
- (B) rude
- (C) compassionate
- (D) hateful

**3** How do the residents of Topaz pay for supplies? (plot)

- (A) They gamble for it.
- (B) The government gives them cash.
- (C) They pool their own money.
- (D) They play pro baseball.

**4** How many Japanese-Americans live at Topaz? (reading for information)

- (A) 8,000
- (B) 120,000
- (C) 24
- (D) 100,000

**5** Why does Lane enlist in the Army? (analyzing motive)

- (A) to see the world
- (B) to impress Katie
- (C) to get away from Lyle
- (D) to prove his patriotism

**6** What happens first? (sequencing)

- (A) Lyle loses the chance to go to Delaware.
- (B) Lyle gets beaten up in town.
- (C) Billy forbids Katie to see Lyle.
- (D) Ed refuses to cut Lane's hair.

**7** Why does Lyle refuse to join the Topaz baseball league at first? (inference)

- (A) He prefers to play his saxophone.
- (B) He doesn't like baseball anymore.
- (C) He thinks he's too good to play with the other residents.
- (D) He's too disillusioned to think that baseball will do anything to help.

**8** According to Katie, what is the real reason that Billy hates Lyle? (plot)

- (A) Billy blames all Japanese-Americans for his son's death.
- (B) Billy wants Katie to marry Jackie Tully.
- (C) Billy blames the war for his failure to make the big leagues.
- (D) Lyle is a better baseball player than Billy.

**9** For the big game, Topaz bets \$2,500 that their team will win. How must Abraham match the bet? (detail)

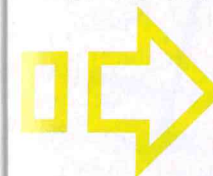
- (A) with a haircut
- (B) with a burger and fries
- (C) with a Delaware vacation
- (D) with Lyle's college tuition

**10** According to Kaz, why is the big game so important? (detail)

- (A) They are playing to prove their dignity.
- (B) They need the money.
- (C) It's a chance for one person to go to college.
- (D) It gets them out of Topaz.

## Dark History

U.S. INTERNMENT CAMPS DURING WORLD WAR II ARE A BLEMISH ON THE NATION'S PAST



Imagine if you and your family were forced to leave

your home and live in a desolate camp surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. Like the characters you just read about in *American Pastime*, 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry endured that very ordeal in the 1940s.

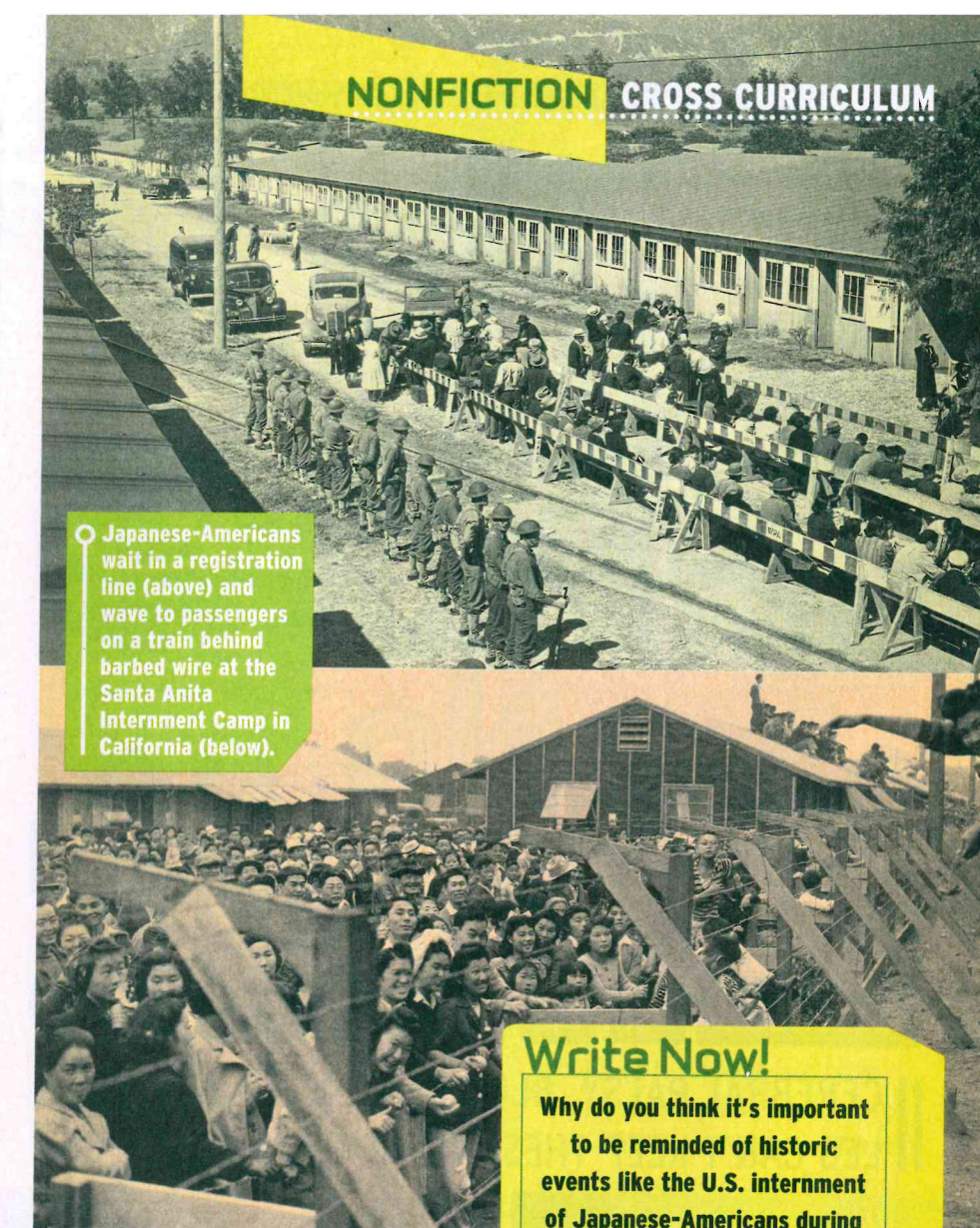
### WAR HYSTERIA

To make *American Pastime*, the filmmakers relied on the experiences of people like Alice Hirai, an extra in the movie. Hirai was a child when she and her family were sent to Topaz Relocation Center in Utah, where the film takes place.

How did such a thing happen? When World War II first started in Europe in 1939, the U.S. didn't get involved. But after Japan bombed the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in 1941, the U.S. declared war on Japan and that country's allies—Germany and Italy.

At the time, many people vilified Japanese-Americans and accused them of being spies.

On February 10, 1942, President Roosevelt signed a decree saying



Japanese-Americans wait in a registration line (above) and wave to passengers on a train behind barbed wire at the Santa Anita Internment Camp in California (below).

### Write Now!

Why do you think it's important to be reminded of historic events like the U.S. internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II? Write a short essay explaining your answer.

that every person of Japanese ancestry living in certain areas on the West Coast had to move to a "relocation center." The government built 10 such centers, all in remote areas of Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, California, Arizona, and Arkansas.

Even though 62 percent were U.S. citizens and the others were legal immigrants, these men, women, and children were imprisoned without a trial or a chance to defend their loyalty. Thousands of Japanese men, like the character of Lane Nomura in *American Pastime*, still

volunteered for the U.S. forces.

Alice Hirai's family left Topaz in 1945 when the war was over. But for many families like hers, it was too late. Most had already lost everything—their jobs, their homes, and their livelihoods.

Today, the Topaz camp no longer exists, except for a few dusty building foundations. In its place stands a single monument built in 1976 to honor people like Alice and to remind the world about what they once endured. —KRISTIN LEWIS

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