



The Tensions, Conflicts and the Sense of Rootedness and Belonging

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Caged Eagles, a sequel to the 1998 novel the War of the Eagles, is a well researched book describes the confusion and resignation of three generations of the Fukushima family. All the Japanese Canadians living in a fishing village in British Columbia are placed in an internment camp in Vancouver by the Canadian government during World War II. The story is told from the point of view of Fourteen-year-old Tadashi who tries to understand the injustice of their internment and cannot believe that his hard working father and other Japanese men in the camp could really be spies. This historical fiction educates its readers about an embarrassing period in both American and Canadian history when both countries ill-treated its own citizens during World War II because of their ethnicity. In an afterword, the author shares his experiences in writing this fiction book without changing major facts of history. Though it is a sequel to "War of the Eagles," this book is a story by itself. When Canada went to war with Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Canadians of Japanese descent were declared "Enemy Aliens." Without recourse of any kind, they were forced to leave their homes along with the British Columbia coast, their possessions were sold, and their rights as citizens denied.

The conflicts of cultures, especially between Canadian and Japanese, are well depicted in this novel. The idea that all 'eagles' are not evil also can be seen in this work. The elders feel dishonored. No one understands why this is being done to them, where they are to go, and what is to happen to their things and homes. It is a heartbreaking story of one of Canada's most shameful historical events.

Racism and Injustice:



Racism and injustice toward Japanese Canadians embue this sequel to War of the Eagles.

When Canada went to war with Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Canadians of Japanese descent were declared "Enemy Aliens." Without recourse of any kind, they were forced to leave their homes along with the British Columbia coast, their possessions were sold, and their rights as citizens denied. Caged Eagles follows fourteen-year-old Tadashi Fukushima and his family as they embark on a tortuous physical and emotional journey. Along with neighbours from their remote village on the northern BC coast, they travel by fishing boat to Vancouver, where they are placed in detention in Hastings Park, the Pacific National Exhibition ground, and forced to live in cattle stalls. For Tadashi detention becomes both an adventure and a dilemma as he struggles to understand the undercurrents of racism and injustice that have overtaken his life and those of his community.

In this sequel to 1998's War of the Eagles, prolific novelist Eric Walters successfully combines history lesson, adventure story, and social commentary on one of the most shameful periods in Canadian history.

The novel tells the story of Tadashi Fukushima, a 14-year-old who, along with his family, is interned by the Canadian government following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Caged Eagles picks up where War of the Eagles concluded, with Tadashi and his village being forced into their fishing boats and escorted by the RCMP to Vancouver. In Vancouver, they join thousands of Japanese Canadians being held at Hastings Park, where they sleep in former cattle stalls and choke down the camp's substandard Western-only food. At the camp, Tadashi is quickly befriended by street-smart Sam, with whom he has many misadventures. The relationship between the boys makes for exciting fiction, though the most adventurous episodes of the novel ring the least true historically. While it is unlikely, for example, that Tadashi and several men could sneak out of the camp and drive 30 miles to sink their confiscated fishing boats before the government could sell them, it is a satisfying fantasy. Caged Eagles, by necessity, focuses on fewer characters and events than War of the Eagles



(winner of the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award) but is a much more sophisticated and compelling read. Walters spells out the issues and attitudes behind the internment without simplifying them or turning pedantic. Because his characters are emotionally compelling, the injustices done to them speak for themselves. This text reaches an older audience – readers 12 and up – than the few existing novels on this topic and therefore earns a place in both history and English classrooms.

The much-awaited sequel to Walters' award-winning *War of the Eagles* (1998), this story continues the tale of what happens to fourteen-year-old Tadashi Fukushima and his family after the Canadian government has ordered all Japanese-Canadians to pack up belongings shortly after Japan enters WWII. Surviving the rough trip along the coast of British Columbia in their cramped fishing boat, Tadashi and his family find themselves placed in an internment camp in the center of Vancouver. Here they are assigned separate living quarters; each family's women and young children assigned to live in an old cattle stall in an overcrowded, large barn and the adult men assigned to a large dormitory.

Analysis:

I stood stock-still, too shocked to move. What were they doing here . . . what were any of us doing here? The woman with the broom was sweeping up a cloud of dust, and it swirled around, filling the air. I sneezed, and then sneezed again. Wasn't the foul odor bad enough? I stumbled forward. And why was that woman sweeping out that cattle stall?

"Tadashi . . ." my mother called out. There was a catch in her voice. She sounded all choked up, like she was trying to fight back tears.

I rushed to her side. "Mom?"

"Tadashi . . . we . . . we . . . have to stay."

"I know," I said, trying to comfort her as her eyes started to fill with tears. "But we won't be staying here for too long. Let's go and find where we'll be sleeping."

"No! You don't understand . . . this is where we're going to be sleeping. . . here!"



"What do you mean here?" I demanded.

"Here! Here!" she said, pointing to the cattle stall.

"No," I said, shaking my head in disbelief. "You're wrong . . . we can't . . . this is a cattle stall . . . it isn't for people, it's for . . ."

"Animals!" my grandmother said, cutting me off. "Animals!"

In a sequel to his 1998 award-winning novel, *War of the Eagles*, Walters focuses on the Fukushima family, allowing 14-year old Tadashi to narrate the story of a shameful period in Canada's history. Declared "enemy aliens" following the 1941 Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese Canadians lost all rights of citizenship. Ordered to leave their homes, thousands of families along the British Columbia coast could take only minimal possessions. Among the displaced, the fishermen from Tadashi's village, Sikima, sail their boats to Prince Rupert and are then towed to Vancouver by naval ship. Later, courtesy of the Canadian government, the boats will be confiscated and sold along with these Japanese Canadians' houses, cars, and other belongings. Their abandoned homes will be looted and trashed.

Vancouver's Hastings Park, surrounded by high metal fencing with guarded entrances, becomes home for the detainees who are stripped of identities and possessions. "Names aren't necessary," they are told. "All we require to process people is a number." Authorities separate families from fathers who are placed in barracks. Women and children are housed in cattle stalls - all are forced to eat institutionalized Western food and dehumanized in every conceivable manner.

Tadashi meets a two-week veteran of the detention centre, Sam, who acquaints him with the routines and takes him on adventures. Sam's cockiness and street smarts encourage Tadashi to take chances like sneaking through the fence to explore Vancouver. The men play cards, gamble, and drink in their barracks; the women care for the children in their stalls and organize schools for grades 1-7. As the weeks pass, the population of the camp grows from 1500 to more than



3000. Tadashi remarks that the "Japanese are big on things like waiting, being patient, and accepting fate," but even those virtues wear thin as the detention continues.

Walters carefully shows the frustration and confusion of Japanese Canadians at the treatment meted out by their government and their fellow citizens. According to Tadashi, "About the most Japanese thing I could think of was working. Wasting time was something that wasn't even considered," yet they face enforced confinement and uncertain futures. Some, separated from their families, will be sent to work camps in abandoned mountain mining towns while others, with their families, will go to farms in Alberta. All face racism and are referred to in the press as heathens, spies, the "yellow peril," and enemy aliens.

Tadashi's grandmother often repeats the mantra, "shikata-ga-nai," meaning, "it can't be helped," reflecting another traditional Japanese attitude. Sadly, grandmother succumbs to age and illness and, in a rather curious scene, Walters depicts a traditional Buddhist cremation ceremony within the park which, in the "Afterword," he acknowledges has no historical basis. Likewise Walters fictionalizes a night time raid on the fishing boats moored at Annieville Dyke where Tadashi's father and his fellow fishermen scuttle their boats rather than allow them to be sold.

Tadashi is an appealing protagonist and a capable narrator. The plot moves briskly and includes enough action like baseball games, escapes into Vancouver, fights, food boycotts, and night raids to maintain reader interest. Walters successfully combines history, adventure, and social criticism in *Caged Eagles* while providing young readers a glimpse into Canada's past and a chance to consider serious issues inherent in any complex, multicultural society.