“Farewell to Manzanar”

Part I Study Guide

1. What was the loyalty oath and how did it impact things at camp?

The loyalty oath was a way for the US to try to “weed out” those disloyal to America. The oath was comprised of questions that those of Japanese descent were to answer. Answers to the questions would show your loyalty to either the US or Japan. If you were to answer “no” on the questions, you were sent to a different internment camp to most likely be sent back to Japan later. Those who answered “yes” to the questions on the oath knew that they would most likely be sent to war. We later see this happen to Woody with the draft. In camp, this caused a great deal of debate and argument amongst people in camp. When Papa and other heads of households gathered to discuss this issue, it resulted in Papa and another man fighting due to Papa being called out as an “Inu” or dog. Later the loyalty oath helped to relocate families and find sponsors away from the east coast. This alleviated some of the crowding issues in Manzanar.

2. In the memoir, why were people sent to the internment camps? In what area did they live before?

After the bombing at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, those of Japanese ancestry were relocated to internment camps because the US didn’t trust that they were loyal to the US. Those that were relocated lived on the West coast in states such as California.

3. What is a memoir?

A memoir is a piece of narrative writing that focuses in on one portion or moment from your life. It is not a broad retelling of events from your whole life as you would see in an autobiography. Memoir differs from personal narrative in that a memoir ends with a reflection on how the event impacted your life.

4. In the beginning of the story, why do Papa and the other boats come back to the harbor shortly after leaving?

They return because they hear about the bombing at Pearl Harbor.

5. What job did Mama take while living at Manzanar?

Mama began to work with food as a dietician.

6. What word did the other Japanese use for Papa at the camp after he arrived from Fort Lincoln? Why?

People in the camp called Papa an Inu or dog. When Papa was at Fort Lincoln, the Justice Department found no reason to detain Papa after they investigated his record. “The rumor was that, as an interpreter, he had access to information from fellow Isseis that he later used to buy his release” (52). The people calling him an Inu were upset that he had been released earlier than most men.

7. What job did Papa have at Fort Lincoln? What impact did this have on him and the response people had towards him?

As mentioned in question 8, Papa was an interpreter at Fort Lincoln. As a result of the position that he held, people whispered insults behind his back. Papa was already struggling with adjusting to life in Manzanar and had begun to drink and verbally abuse his family. These added insults created by rumors of what he did within his job to get freedom caused Papa to further sink into the depressed drunken state that he was in.

8. What happened in the mess halls that changed the families? Why did this happen?

Families stopped eating together. People began to eat with friends and others their age or to travel to other mess halls to try the food. This resulted in family unit losing some of the bond that held them together.

9. Discuss the racism towards Asians in the early to mid-20th century as depicted in the book. Some examples are:

-Papa’s belongings were taken or stolen while they were at camp leaving him with nothing as they began to try to start again.

-Papa was judged by those at the banquet for Jeanne when he bowed traditionally to the people.

-Jeanne and Kiyo were told by a woman that all of the dirty japs needed to go back to Japan.

-Japanese were not allowed to operate commercial fishing boats.

10. Describe some of the hardships and difficulties her family faced at Manzanar.

-Tiny living quarters -Limited furnishings

-Bad food -Bad septic systems (latrines)

-Inadequate health care -Holes in walls