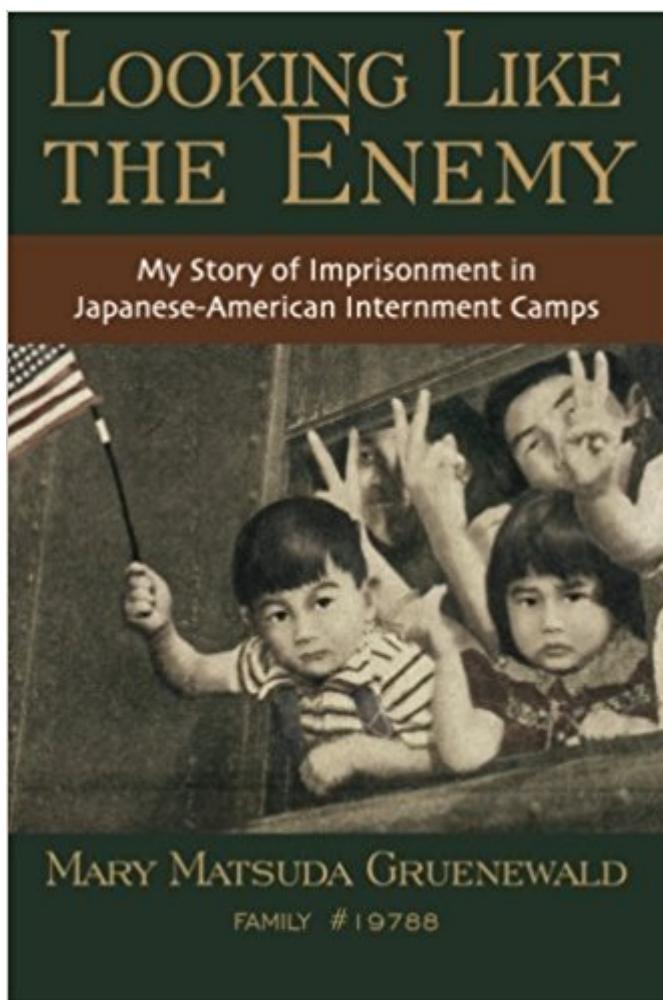


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# Looking Like The Enemy: My Story Of Imprisonment In Japanese American Internment Camps



## **Synopsis**

The author at 16 years old was evacuated with her family to an internment camp for Japanese Americans, along with 110,000 other people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast. She faced an indefinite sentence behind barbed wire in crowded, primitive camps. She struggled for survival and dignity, and endured psychological scarring that has lasted a lifetime. This memoir is told from the heart and mind of a woman now nearly 80 years old who experienced the challenges and wounds of her internment at a crucial point in her development as a young adult. She brings passion and spirit to her story. Like "The Diary of Anne Frank," this memoir superbly captures the emotional and psychological essence of what it was like to grow up in the midst of this profound dislocation and injustice in the U.S. Few other books on this subject come close to the emotional power and moral significance of this memoir. In the end, the reader is buoyed by what Mary learns from her experiences and what she is able to do with her life. In 2005 she becomes one more Nisei who breaks her silence.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Mary Matsuda Gruenewald lives in Seattle, Washington. She will be 80 years old in 2005 when this book is published. This is her first book and of considerable significance for her generation and as a Nisei. She will be breaking the silence of telling her story, in-depth, about her years imprisoned for being Japanese in America. After being released from her last Japanese-American internment camp, Gruenewald became a registered nurse, and worked as an R.N. for more than a quarter of a

century. She established the Consulting Nurse Service within the Group Health Cooperative in 1971, which has become a national model for numerous health care providers. In 2002 she was a medical delegate representing seniors on behalf of Medicare Plus Choice. At that meeting she was selected along with ten other delegates to advise President George W. Bush on health care issues. Her articles regarding her internment during WW II have appeared in newspapers and she has presented commentaries for NPR KPLU. She speaks to many schools and community groups about her internment. Gruenewald received an Asian American Living Pioneer Award in 2003 honoring her contributions.

A very engaging personal account of a dark period in our country's history of which many have little or no knowledge. As a result of reading this book I was pleased to have the opportunity to visit Manzanar, a fine museum in California which preserves some buildings and much of the history of this internment camp. As informative and interesting as the visit was it would have been far less meaningful had I not read this book. I have recommended this book to many others, as I believe it is particularly relevant given our current political climate. The observant and sensitive reader will undoubtedly find many disturbing parallels.

I am a native to Washington state and had to visit Vashon (only about an hour from me) to get a feel of this area. I visited the Mukai packing factory, learned where the Matsuda farm was it was a terrific experience worth the read, whether historically for fun, or scholastically.

Enjoyed reading this book and learning more about the Japanese-American internment camps and how it affected so many families. Thanks to Mary Matsuda Gruenewald for sharing her story.

Even if one is aware of the internment of the American Japanese, I doubt that most people can form any real idea of what it was like without reading a personal chronicle like this. It is difficult to express how painful it is to read, and I already knew the basic story. Sure, now we know that it didn't turn into a second Holocaust, but the people in the camps didn't have that comforting foreknowledge. One needs to be reminded that although the intense portions of a tragedy may be long over with, the ramifications for the people who suffered through it can last all their lives, even for those who didn't lose everything that they had owned before the catastrophe. Jeanne Wakatsui Houston also wrote a classic memoir: *A Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment*, and it is well worth reading both of the books for the

similarities and differences between the two experiences. Houston was perhaps 8 or 10 years younger than Mary Matsuda, and her family dynamics were quite different, so they really complement one another. Being older, Mary Matsuda had to confront personally and directly issues that Jeanne Wakatusi Houston didn't, although of course her family members did. JWH tells us more about her life after the camps; MMG ends her books in 1945, with only an afterword summarizing the later lives of the Matsudas. I found the book very vivid. I could easily imagine how I would feel having to destroy so much family history, even being afraid to keep a set of dolls lest it add fuel to the anti-Japanese fervor. And I feel that I have some inkling of what it was like to live for years under constant strain, not knowing what would come next, or if it would ever end. I was close to crying at points, which is unusual for me. The Matsudas lived on Vashon Island in the Puget Sound, which should make the book all the more interesting to fans of Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars: A Novel*. The book includes a bibliography, a glossary and numerous black-and-white photographs of the Matsudas and the camps.

Some books entertain but this book changes lives for the better. Leaders of all nations would do well to read this account of intolerance, and the affects it has for generations to come.

I first chose *Nisei Memories* but quickly figured out that was not the book for me. This book, *Looking Like The Enemy*, is very interesting. If you want to learn about what the US did to Japanese Americans during WW II, this is the book. Told from the perspective of a teenager that went through it, it is a personal account that is interesting to read. I highly recommend it.

I was not yet born when the U.S. government decided to round up tens of thousands of Japanese-American citizens and herd them into prison camps solely because of their Japanese heritage. It was not until I was an adult that I even heard of the internment camps. Yet after reading this book, *Looking Like the Enemy*, I feel as though I myself had been locked behind that barbed wire, feeling the depression and despair of an uncertain future. The author was seventeen when she was imprisoned - old enough to understand the implications, young enough to rage at the injustice. Her own government, to which she pledged allegiance daily in school, imprisoned her without cause. In this book, she exposes the raw emotions - fear, anger, worry, doubt - that she felt during those formative years of her life, and tells vivid stories I will never forget. She persevered and endured, strengthened by the wisdom of her mother. The book has changed me profoundly; I will never look at the removal of civil liberties in the same way again.

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