

SHORT STORY

Preparing to Read

The Bracelet

by Yoshiko Uchida



To School (1945) by Hisako Hibi.
Gift of Ibuki Hibi Lee, Japanese American
National Museum (96.601.50).

What Do
You
Think

What truths can we learn about ourselves when we can't control things changing in our lives?



QuickTalk

Can you think of a story or movie in which painful historical events are used to teach us never to repeat mistakes? With a partner, think of at least two examples.



Reader/Writer Notebook

Use your **RWN** to complete the activities for this selection.

SKILLS FOCUS **Literary Skills** Understand setting and conflict. **Reading Skills** Summarize a story.

Literary Focus

Setting and Conflict Stories occur in a particular time and place—the story’s **setting**. In some stories the setting is part of, or even the cause of, the main character’s **conflict**, or struggle. This story starts out in one setting and moves to another, quite different, setting.

Literary Perspectives Use the literary perspective described on page 167 as you read this story.

Reading Focus

Summarizing When you **summarize** a story, you briefly retell the main ideas and important events in your own words.

Into Action As you read “The Bracelet,” use an organizer like this one to list the ideas and events that a summary would include.

“The Bracelet”

Setting:

Main Characters:

Conflict:

Sequence of Main Events:

1.

2.

Resolution (Ending):

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Find It in Your Reading In each of the story’s settings, the author uses contrast to show how the place has changed or is different than imagined. Create a “T” chart. On one side, record how each setting once was or how Ruri imagined it would be. On the other, note how each place has changed or how it looks in reality.

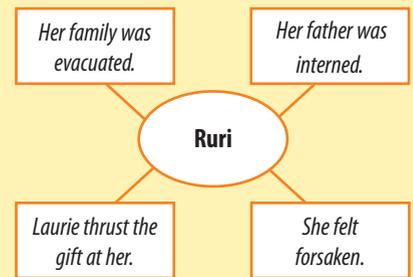
Vocabulary

evacuated (ih VAK yoo ayt uhd) *v.*: removed from an area. *In 1942, Japanese Americans were evacuated from the West Coast.*

interned (ihn TURND) *v.*: imprisoned or confined. *Ruri’s father was interned in a prisoner-of-war camp.*

thrust (thruhst) *v.*: shoved; pushed. *Laurie thrust the bracelet into Ruri’s hand.*

forsaken (fawr SAY kuhn) *adj.*: abandoned. *The garden looked as forsaken as Ruri felt when she had to leave home.*



Language Coach

Words Borrowed from Other Languages

When people speaking different languages come into contact, they often borrow one another’s words. American English has been borrowing words from other languages for centuries. Can you think of any words that have been borrowed from the Japanese language?



Learn It Online

Use the graphic organizers online to help you as you read:

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L6-165

Go

Yoshiko Uchida

(1921–1992)

Writing to Keep It from Happening Again

Yoshiko Uchida was in her last year of college when the United States entered World War II. Like most people of Japanese descent on the West Coast, Uchida and her family were uprooted by the government and forced to go to an internment camp. She and her family lived at Tanforan Racetrack, in horse stall 40. Uchida later gave the same “address” to the fictional family in her short story “The Bracelet.” Uchida said that in writing about the internment camps, she tried to give readers a sense of the courage and strength that enabled most Japanese Americans to endure this tragedy:

“I always ask the children why they think I wrote *Journey to Topaz* and *Journey Home*, in which I tell of the wartime experiences of the Japanese Americans. . . . I continue the discussion until finally one of them will say, ‘You wrote those books so it won’t ever happen again.’”

Think About the Writer

Why do you think Uchida feels it is important that people not forget the Japanese internment?

Build Background

Shortly after the United States entered World War II to fight against Japan after Pearl Harbor, more than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry who were living in the United States were interned—forced to move to guarded camps. Most were American citizens who had been born here and had done nothing wrong. Nevertheless, the U.S. government feared that they might give support to Japan. When they were finally allowed to leave the internment camps after the war, many Japanese Americans found that other people had taken over their homes and businesses. In 1989, the U.S. government issued a formal apology to Japanese Americans for the injustice that had been done to them.

Preview the Selection

When **Ruri** and **her family** have to move to an internment camp simply because they are of Japanese descent, Ruri’s best friend **Laurie** gives her a bracelet as a going-away gift.



Read with a Purpose Read to learn how a young girl learns an important lesson when she is forced to move to an internment camp during World War II.

The Bracelet

by **Yoshiko Uchida**

Mama, is it time to go?" I hadn't planned to cry, but the tears came suddenly, and I wiped them away with the back of my hand. I didn't want my older sister to see me crying.

"It's almost time, Ruri," my mother said gently. Her face was filled with a kind of sadness I had never seen before.

I looked around at my empty room. The clothes that Mama always told me to hang up in the closet, the junk piled on my dresser, the old rag doll I could never bear to part with—they were all gone. There was nothing left in my room, and there was nothing left in the rest of the house. The rugs and furniture were gone, the pictures and drapes were down, and the closets and cupboards were empty. The house was like a gift box after the nice thing inside was gone; just a lot of nothingness.

It was almost time to leave our home, but we weren't moving to a nicer house or to a new town. It was April 21, 1942. The United States and Japan were at war, and

every Japanese person on the West Coast was being **evacuated** by the government to a concentration camp. Mama, my sister Keiko, and I were being sent from our home, and out of Berkeley, and eventually out of California. **A**

The doorbell rang, and I ran to answer it before my sister could. I thought maybe by some miracle a messenger from the government might be standing there, tall and proper and buttoned into a uniform, come to tell us it was all a terrible mistake, that we

Literary Perspectives

Historical Perspective We focus on the life of an author for a biographical perspective, but the historical perspective broadens our focus. It asks us to consider the world at the time the story was written. What important historical events shaped the author's thinking? What evidence of those events is in the text? How is the story tied to the historical period in which it is set? Could the story have happened in any other time or place?

A Read and Discuss What situation has the author described up to this point?

Vocabulary **evacuated** (ih VAK yoo ayt uhd) v.: removed from an area.

Analyzing Visuals

Viewing and Interpreting

Why do people keep things like photographs, gifts, and other mementoes to remind them of past times?



wouldn't have to leave after all. Or maybe the messenger would have a telegram from Papa, who was **interned** in a prisoner-of-war camp in Montana because he had worked for a Japanese business firm. **B**

The FBI had come to pick up Papa and hundreds of other Japanese community leaders on the very day that Japanese planes had bombed Pearl Harbor. The government

thought they were dangerous enemy aliens. If it weren't so sad, it would have been funny. Papa could no more be dangerous than the mayor of our city, and he was every bit as loyal to the United States. He had lived here since 1917. **C**

When I opened the door, it wasn't a messenger from anywhere. It was my best friend, Laurie Madison, from next door. She was

B Reading Focus Summarize What has happened so far? Who is the main character?

C Read and Discuss How does this information add to what we know about people going to internment camps?

Vocabulary interned (ihn TURND) v.: imprisoned or confined.

holding a package wrapped up like a birthday present, but she wasn't wearing her party dress, and her face drooped like a wilted tulip.

"Hi," she said. "I came to say goodbye."

She **thrust** the present at me and told me it was something to take to camp. "It's a bracelet," she said before I could open the package. "Put it on so you won't have to pack it." She knew I didn't have one inch of space left in my suitcase. We had been instructed to take only what we could carry into camp, and Mama had told us that we could each take only two suitcases.

"Then how are we ever going to pack the dishes and blankets and sheets they've told us to bring with us?" Keiko worried.

"I don't really know," Mama said, and she simply began packing those big impossible things into an enormous duffel bag—along with umbrellas, boots, a kettle, hot plate, and flashlight.

"Who's going to carry that huge sack?" I asked.

But Mama didn't worry about things like that. "Someone will help us," she said. "Don't worry." So I didn't.

Laurie wanted me to open her package and put on the bracelet before she left. It was a thin gold chain with a heart dangling on it. She helped me put it on, and I told her I'd never take it off, ever.

"Well, goodbye then," Laurie said awkwardly. "Come home soon."

"I will," I said, although I didn't know if I would ever get back to Berkeley again. **D**

I watched Laurie go down the block, her long blond pigtails bouncing as she walked. I wondered who would be sitting in my desk at Lincoln Junior High now that I was gone. Laurie kept turning and waving, even walking backward for a while, until she got to the corner. I didn't want to watch anymore, and I slammed the door shut. **E**

The next time the doorbell rang, it was Mrs. Simpson, our other neighbor. She was going to drive us to the Congregational Church, which was the Civil Control Station where all the Japanese of Berkeley were supposed to report.

It was time to go. "Come on, Ruri. Get your things," my sister called to me.

It was a warm day, but I put on a sweater and my coat so I wouldn't have to carry them, and I picked up my two suitcases. Each one had a tag with my name and our family number on it. Every Japanese family had to register and get a number. We were Family Number 13453.

Mama was taking one last look around our house. She was going from room to room, as though she were trying to take a mental picture of the house she had lived in for fifteen years, so she would never forget it. **F**

I saw her take a long last look at the garden that Papa loved. The irises beside the fish pond were just beginning to bloom. If

D Reading Focus Summarize In one or two sentences, tell what has happened since Laurie came to the door.

E Read and Discuss What is happening here between Laurie and Ruri?

F Read and Discuss What does Ruri think her mother is doing by looking at the empty rooms?

Vocabulary thrust (thruhst) v.: shoved; pushed.

Papa had been home, he would have cut the first iris blossom and brought it inside to Mama. “This one is for you,” he would have said. And Mama would have smiled and said, “Thank you, Papa San”¹ and put it in her favorite cut-glass vase.

But the garden looked shabby and **forsaken** now that Papa was gone and Mama was too busy to take care of it. It looked the way I felt, sort of empty and lonely and abandoned. **G**

When Mrs. Simpson took us to the Civil Control Station, I felt even worse. I was scared, and for a minute I thought I was going to lose my breakfast right in front of everybody. There must have been over a thousand Japanese people gathered at the church. Some were old and some were young. Some were talking and laughing, and some were crying. I guess everybody else was scared too. No one knew exactly what was going to happen to us. We just knew we were being taken to the Tanforan Racetracks, which the army had turned into a camp for the Japanese. There were fourteen other camps like ours along the West Coast.

What scared me most were the soldiers standing at the doorway of the church hall. They were carrying guns with mounted bayonets. I wondered if they thought we would try to run away and whether they’d shoot us or come after us with their bayonets if we did. **H**

1. **San** (sahn): Japanese term added to names to indicate respect.

A long line of buses waited to take us to camp. There were trucks, too, for our baggage. And Mama was right; some men were there to help us load our duffel bag. When it was time to board the buses, I sat with Keiko, and Mama sat behind us. The bus went down Grove Street and passed the small Japanese food store where Mama used to order her bean-curd cakes and pickled radish. The windows were all boarded up, but there was a sign still hanging on the door that read, “We are loyal Americans.”

The crazy thing about the whole evacuation was that we were all loyal Americans. Most of us were citizens because we had been born here. But our parents, who had come from Japan, couldn’t become citizens because there was a law that prevented any Asian from becoming a citizen. Now everybody with a Japanese face was being shipped off to concentration camps.

“It’s stupid,” Keiko muttered as we saw the racetrack looming up beside the highway. “If there were any Japanese spies around, they’d have gone back to Japan long ago.”

“I’ll say,” I agreed. My sister was in high school and she ought to know, I thought.

When the bus turned into Tanforan, there were more armed guards at the gate, and I saw barbed wire strung around the entire grounds. I felt as though I were going into a prison, but I hadn’t done anything wrong. **I**



G Literary Focus Setting What mood does the author create with her description of the setting? Think of two adjectives that describe the feelings evoked by this scene.

H Read and Discuss What picture of events is the author describing for you now?

I Read and Discuss How does Ruri’s sense that they are going to prison connect to the horse track and how the family is being treated?

Vocabulary forsaken (fawr SAY kuhn) *adj.*: abandoned.



Analyzing Visuals

Viewing and Interpreting How does this scene of an internment camp compare with the picture in your mind of the camp where Ruri and her family lived?

We streamed off the buses and poured into a huge room, where doctors looked down our throats and peeled back our eyelids to see if we had any diseases. Then we were given our housing assignments. The man in charge gave Mama a slip of paper. We were in Barrack 16, Apartment 40.

“Mama!” I said. “We’re going to live in an apartment!” The only apartment I had ever seen was the one my piano teacher lived in. It was in an enormous building in San Francisco, with an elevator and thick-carpeted hallways. I thought how wonder-

ful it would be to have our own elevator. A house was all right, but an apartment seemed elegant and special.

We walked down the racetrack, looking for Barrack 16. Mr. Noma, a friend of Papa’s, helped us carry our bags. I was so busy looking around I slipped and almost fell on the muddy track. Army barracks had been built everywhere, all around the racetrack and even in the center oval.

Mr. Noma pointed beyond the track toward the horse stables. “I think your barrack is out there.”

He was right. We came to a long stable that had once housed the horses of Tanforan, and we climbed up the wide ramp. Each stall had a number painted on it, and when we got to 40, Mr. Noma pushed open the door.

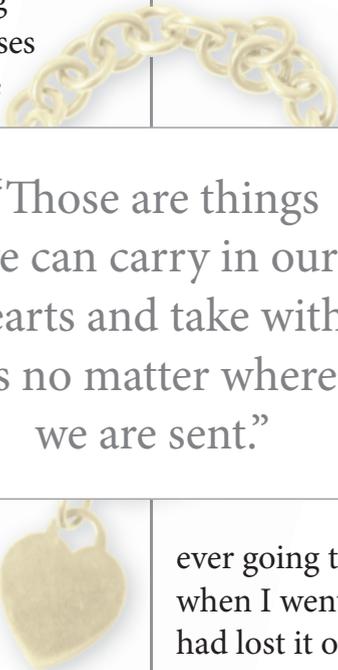
“Well, here it is,” he said, “Apartment 40.”

The stall was narrow and empty and dark. There were two small windows on each side of the door. Three folded army cots were on the dust-covered floor, and one light bulb dangled from the ceiling. That was all. This was our apartment, and it still smelled of horses.

Mama looked at my sister and then at me. “It won’t be so bad when we fix it up,” she began. “I’ll ask Mrs. Simpson to send me some material for curtains. I could make some cushions too, and . . . well . . .” She stopped. She couldn’t think of anything more to say. **J**

Mr. Noma said he’d go get some mattresses for us. “I’d better hurry before they’re all gone.” He rushed off. I think he wanted to leave so that he wouldn’t have to see Mama cry. But he needn’t have run off, because Mama didn’t cry. She just went out to borrow a broom and began sweeping out the dust and dirt. “Will you girls set up the cots?” she asked.

It was only after we’d put up the last cot that I noticed my bracelet was gone. “I’ve



“Those are things we can carry in our hearts and take with us no matter where we are sent.”

lost Laurie’s bracelet!” I screamed. “My bracelet’s gone!”

We looked all over the stall and even down the ramp. I wanted to run back down the track and go over every inch of ground we’d walked on, but it was getting dark and Mama wouldn’t let me.

I thought of what I’d promised Laurie. I wasn’t ever going to take the bracelet off, not even when I went to take a shower. And now I had lost it on my very first day in camp. I wanted to cry.

I kept looking for it all the time we were in Tanforan. I didn’t stop looking until the day we were sent to another camp, called Topaz, in the middle of a desert in Utah. And then I gave up. **K**

But Mama told me never mind. She said I didn’t need a bracelet to remember Laurie, just as I didn’t need anything to remember Papa or our home in Berkeley or all the people and things we loved and had left behind.

“Those are things we can carry in our hearts and take with us no matter where we are sent,” she said. **L**

And I guess she was right. I’ve never forgotten Laurie, even now. **M**

J **Read and Discuss** How do the family’s living arrangements connect to Ruri’s idea of an apartment?

K **Reading Focus Summarize** In two or three sentences, tell what has happened since Ruri said goodbye to Laurie.

L **Literary Focus Conflict** Has Ruri’s conflict been resolved? If so, how?

M **Read and Discuss** What does the conversation between Mama and Ruri teach Ruri?

Applying Your Skills

SKILLS FOCUS **Literary Skills** Analyze setting and conflict; understand how setting influences plot; analyze character and point of view; understand first-person point of view. **Reading Skills** Summarize a story. **Writing Skills** Describe a place.

The Bracelet

Respond and Think Critically

Reading Focus

Quick Check

1. Why does Ruri's family have to leave home?
2. Why does Laurie give Ruri a bracelet?
3. What were the barracks used for before Ruri and her family came to live there?

Read with a Purpose

4. What lesson does Ruri learn?

Reading Skills: Summarizing

5. Review and revise the organizer that you filled in as you read the story. Be sure to add notes on the resolution, or ending. Now, use that chart to help you write a paragraph that summarizes the plot of this story.

Literary Focus

Literary Analysis

6. **Infer** How do you think the living arrangement for Ruri's family adds to the emotions the family is already experiencing?
7. **Extend** Discuss the different ways experiences like Ruri's might affect the people involved. How might they deal with life in the future, and how might they interact with people who are different from them?
8. **Literary Perspectives** What does the fact that the United States and Japan are at war tell us about Ruri's family being sent away? What does the story show us about how people react under extreme circumstances?

Literary Skills: Conflict and Setting

9. **Analyze** The plot centers on a major conflict that goes far beyond the characters in the story. Ruri's family is on one side of this conflict. Who or what is on the other side?
10. **Analyze** Identify the two settings in this story. Why are both so important to the plot?

Literary Skills Review: Point of View

11. **Evaluate** In the **first-person point of view**, the narrator tells the story, using the personal pronoun *I*. Why do you think the writer chose to tell this story from Ruri's first-person point of view? What can Ruri tell you that no other character can tell you? What things does Ruri *not* know?

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Use It in Your Writing Review your "T" chart notes, observing how the author uses contrast in her descriptions of settings. Write a brief description of a place using contrasting details, such as *new/shabby* or *clean/messy*. Include a contrast between how you imagined the place to be and how it really appears.

What Do
You
Think
Now

What truths do you think "The Bracelet" reveals about fairness and about a family enduring difficult and unexpected changes?

Applying Your Skills

The Bracelet

Vocabulary Development

Word Origins

Many of the words we use today can be traced to Latin or Old English, the language used in England from the 400s until around the 1100s.

Your Turn

From the Vocabulary words at right, choose the word that correctly completes each sentence below. Then, use each word in a sentence that shows you know its meaning.

evacuated
interned
thrust
forsaken

1. The Old English word *forsacan*, meaning “to oppose,” is related to the word _____.
2. The Latin word *trudere*, meaning “push,” is related to the word _____.
3. The Latin word *internus*, meaning “inward,” is related to the word _____.
4. The Latin verb *vacuare*, meaning “to make empty,” is the basis of the word _____.

Academic Vocabulary

Talk About . . .

If you were Ruri, what would you do so that you could again interact in positive ways with non-Japanese people? How would you achieve peace of mind and get over resentment caused by how you and your family were treated?

Language Coach

Words Borrowed from Other Languages

In the past century a number of Japanese words entered

kimono	(kih MOH noh)
futon	(FOO tahn)
karaoke	(kahr ee OH kee)
sayonara	(sah yoh NAH rah)
origami	(awr uh GAH mee)

the English language. Use a dictionary to find out what each of the Japanese words in the box means. Then, fill in the blanks in the sentences that follow. Use context clues to find the words that fit best.

1. My cousin enjoyed sleeping on a _____ so much, she said, “_____” to her mattress.
2. I brought my friend a beautiful silk _____ for her birthday.
3. Flocks of _____ cranes made from red paper decorated each table.
4. My grandfather sang _____ at the party celebrating his ninetieth birthday.



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There's more to words than definitions. Check out:

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SKILLS FOCUS **Literary Skills** Analyze character and point of view. **Vocabulary Skills** Identify and use borrowed words. **Writing Skills** Write personal texts; write narratives; write to persuade. **Grammar Skills** Identify and use prepositional phrases correctly; identify and use objective-case pronouns correctly.

Grammar Link

Prepositional Phrases

A **prepositional phrase** is a word group that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. This noun or pronoun is called the **object of the preposition**. Look at the examples:

Preposition	Object of Preposition
I didn't have one inch of space left in	my suitcase .
I watched Laurie walk down	the block .

When a preposition has two objects, and one or more is a pronoun, use the **objective** form of the pronoun—the form used for the object of a preposition. To make sure you use the right pronoun form, take one pronoun at a time without the other object, like this:

Choices	The soldiers looked at my sister and I/me .
Incorrect	The soldiers looked at I .
Correct	The soldiers looked at me . The soldiers looked at my sister and me .

Your Turn

Identify the preposition and object or objects in each of the following sentences. If a pronoun is the object, choose the correct pronoun form.

Example	The bus drove toward Janice and I/me.
Answer	preposition: toward; objects: Janice, me

1. My dog ran from the cat.
2. The woman spoke with he/him and Michelle.
3. The ship disappeared beyond the horizon.
4. I walked slowly behind she/her.

CHOICES

As you respond to the Choices, use these **Academic Vocabulary** words as appropriate: achieve, create, interact, major.

REVIEW

Write a Blog Entry

TechFocus Imagine you are Ruri and you're writing a blog about your experiences in the camp so that your friend Laurie and your other friends from school can know about your life there. Describe what happens to you after you leave Berkeley, what the camp is like, and what happens to the bracelet Laurie gave you.

CONNECT

Write from Another Point of View

Ruri's mother tells her that we don't need things to remind us of people and places; we carry them in our hearts. Suppose that this story had been told from the point of view of Ruri's mother. Rewrite the scene between Ruri and Laurie near the beginning of the story, telling it from the perspective of Ruri's mother.

EXTEND

Write to Persuade Your Voters

Timed Writing Imagine that you are running for senator from your state shortly after World War II is over. Write a short persuasive speech that will convince voters that American citizens should never again be sent to internment camps if they have done nothing wrong. Be sure to explain your reasoning.



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