

# Preparing to Read

## Wartime Mistakes, Peacetime Apologies

by Nancy Day

### INFORMATIONAL TEXT FOCUS: TAKING NOTES

Taking notes while reading nonfiction selections is an excellent way to keep track of many details. To take notes, first read the entire selection once to find the main ideas, or most important points. Write each main idea on its own note card. Then, write details to support each main idea. Your note cards should look like this:

#### Main Idea

- Supporting detail
- Supporting detail
- Supporting detail

### SELECTION VOCABULARY

**prescribe** (PRIH SKRYB) *v.*: define officially.

*Governments often prescribe new laws during wartime.*

**discretion** (DIHS KREHSH UHN) *n.*: authority to make decisions.

*I left the decision of where we would go for dinner at her discretion.*

**compensation** (KAHM PUHN SAY SHUHN) *n.*: payment given to make up for a loss or injury.

*He received compensation for his broken leg.*

**rectify** (REHK TUH FY) *v.*: correct.

*It is difficult to rectify the mistakes of the past.*

### WORD STUDY

**DIRECTIONS:** Write words from the list above in the correct blanks below.



**Reading Standard 2.4**  
Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports.

The article you are about to read gives an example of what can happen when officials (1) \_\_\_\_\_ a law. Under his own (2) \_\_\_\_\_, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 during World War II. Decades later, the Japanese Americans who were forced into internment camps were given (3) \_\_\_\_\_ by the U.S. government. This was done in order to (4) \_\_\_\_\_ the injustice of Executive Order 9066.

# WARTIME MISTAKES, PEACETIME APOLOGIES

by Nancy Day, from *Cobblestone Magazine*



Dorothea Lange/National Archive

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On March 13, 1942, Yoshiko Imamoto opened her door to face three FBI agents. They let her pack a nightgown and a Bible, then took her to jail while they "checked into a few things." Imamoto had lived in America for twenty-four years. She was a teacher and had done nothing wrong. But a month earlier, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had issued Executive Order 9066, which drastically changed the lives of Imamoto and more than 120,000 other people of Japanese ancestry living in the United States. **A**

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Japanese Americans were caught in the middle. They felt like

**A**

## READING FOCUS

To begin taking notes, underline the main idea of this paragraph.

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## A LANGUAGE COACH

In the word *prisonlike*, the suffix *-like* is used to turn the root word *prison* into an adjective with a similar meaning. Other suffixes, like *-able* and *-ful*, are used the same way. Write a few words ending in *-like*, *-able*, or *-ful*, and compare their meanings to their root words. Are the words similar in meaning?

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Americans but looked like the enemy. Neighbors and co-workers eyed them suspiciously. Then Executive Order 9066, issued on February 19, 1942, authorized the exclusion of “any or all persons” from any areas the military chose. The word “Japanese” was never used, but the order was designed to allow the military to force Japanese Americans living near the coast to leave their homes for the duration of the war. Some were allowed to move inland, but most, like Yoshiko Imamoto, were herded into prisonlike camps. A

After the war, Japanese Americans tried to start over. They had lost their jobs, their property, and their pride. Some used the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 to get compensation for property they had lost. But it was not until the late 1960s that cries for redress—compensation for all they had suffered—began to emerge. B

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In 1976, Executive Order 9066 was officially ended by President Gerald Ford. Four years later, President Jimmy Carter signed a bill that created the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) to investigate the relocation of Japanese Americans. The CWRIC concluded that Executive Order 9066 was “not justified by military necessity” but was the result of “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” In 1983, the commission recommended to Congress that each surviving Japanese American evacuee be given a payment of twenty thousand dollars and an apology. C

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A bill to authorize the payments was introduced in the House of Representatives in 1983 but met resistance. Intensive lobbying<sup>1</sup> by Japanese Americans was met by arguments that the government had acted legally and appropriately at the time. D

Meanwhile, three men who had long since served their jail sentences for refusing to comply with curfew<sup>2</sup> or relocation orders filed suit<sup>3</sup> to challenge the government’s actions. The court

1. **lobbying** (LAHB EE IHNG): activity aimed at influencing public officials.
2. **curfew** (KUR FYOO): Shortly before the relocation began, the head of the Western Defense Command, Lt. Gen. John DeWitt, set a curfew. Between 8:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. each day, “all persons of Japanese ancestry” had to remain indoors, off the streets.
3. **filed suit**: went to court in an attempt to recover something.

**E** READ AND DISCUSS

**Comprehension**

How does Yoshiko's story come full circle and connect to the beginning of the selection?



President Ronald Reagan signs redress bill.

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ruled that the government had had no legal basis for detaining Japanese Americans.

The rulings increased pressure to provide redress. In 1988, Congress approved the final version of the redress bill, which became known as the Civil Liberties Act. It was signed by President Ronald Reagan on August 10, 1988. Two years later, Congress funded the payments.

In 1990, at the age of ninety-three, Yoshiko Imamoto opened her door not to FBI agents, but to a small brown envelope containing a check for twenty thousand dollars and an apology from President George Bush. It had taken almost fifty years and the actions of four presidents, but the government had made redress and apologized for its mistakes. **E**