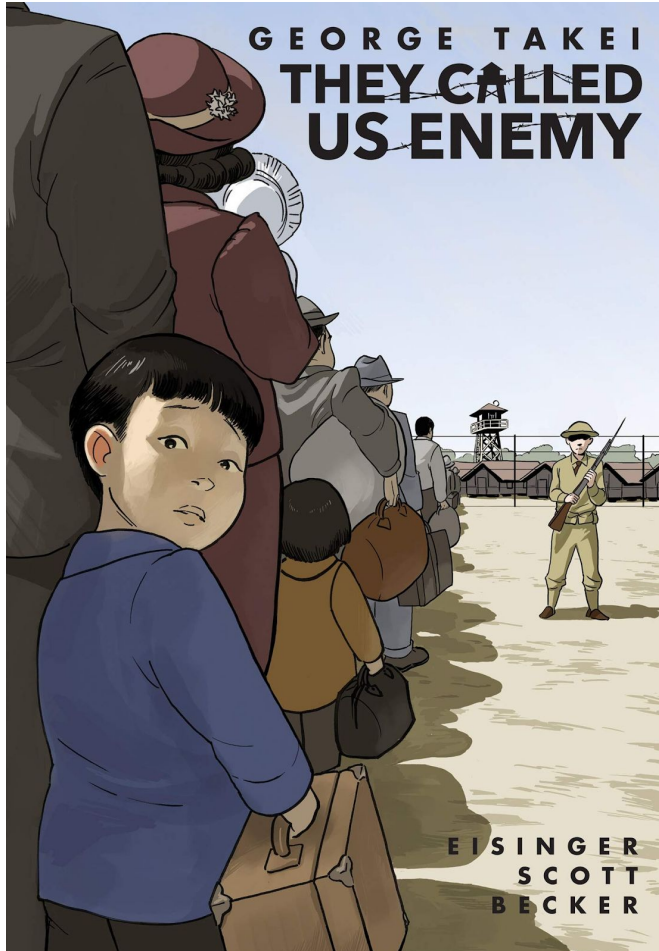


Unit 4: Graphic Memoir

Text: *They Called Us Enemy* (2019)

Creators: George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott (writers), Harmony Becker (artist)

Publisher: Top Shelf



I really enjoyed this graphic novel. It gives a new, youthful perspective on a subject that isn't taught to the same extent as others in school. I think the stylistic techniques were effective as it shows the merging of Western cultures and Eastern ones. I think the narration as an adult worked well to highlight certain aspects of George's life that can be overlooked as a child.

- Eve Elkhouby

I wasn't a huge fan of the book. I thought there could have been a lot more done. I would really have loved to see some more polish on the art. It treads a really fine line between the precise yet very fluid brushstrokes of Japanese painted woodblock, as well as the rigidity of modern comic art. I think for the art style of this book to really work, it should have been in color so that it could really

distinguish what styles are being used where. As for the content of the book, it also was trying to tread its own line, this time between cruel history and childhood perspective, all from the point of view of a famous actor. Maybe I'm not properly equipped to handle the tragedy of the situation. *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* and *Vision* really hit me where it hurts: being queer and lonely and having a weird family, respectively. I can definitely admit that my experiences and privilege affected my perception of the book. That being said, I think the topic of the book is absolutely relevant today. Police brutality has and always has been (until it's abolished) getting worse. And America being the police state that it is, the topic of Japanese internment and Black incarceration go hand in hand. In general, the book felt rushed to me. I think with more time the book could have been a lot more.

- Misha Khibkin

Overall, I enjoyed this novel. I think that Takei's story is an important story to be told. I was impressed by the extreme bravery of his entire family. I believe that the choice to use black, white, and grey as the only colors in the novel was effective. Any use of color would be distracting and take away from the themes of the book. Also, using only blacks and whites can establish deep contrast in color. For example, when darker truths were exposed, stark contrast of blacks and whites were used to show the extreme darkness present both on the page and in the lives of the characters. I was also impressed by the detail of the art. The artist skillfully draws facial expressions that are both complex and easy to understand. Some of the facial expressions present in the book are haunting to look at because of the immense pain that is present. Overall, the story was important for me to read because it expands on what we typically learn in history class. The memoir format is helpful for the reader to see clearly the emotion and pain tied to history. I really enjoyed this book, and I think it should be read by students in schools across the country.

- Daisy Korman

At first I expected the book to be about immigrants, but it was about the camps in America, which is something that I have a great interest in. This book really helped me learn about what actually happened in those Japanese American camps. It really amazed me how nice life can be when everyone works together. The page where the Japanese people worked together to build roads in the swamp was really moving for me. Takei also described his mother very well. It reminds me of the book *The Unwanted* [by Kien Nguyen], where the main character's mother also goes through many hardships and does not complain at all.

- Clarence Luo

I really enjoyed this book. Not as much as *Vision* and *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me*, but enjoyable nonetheless. This memoir was gripping and effective in terms of storytelling and art. The subject is what intrigues me the most. Japanese internment is often shrugged off and erased from history out of shame by our government. However, these atrocities committed by our own government are essentially a step down from the Holocaust, and these mistakes need to be addressed much more than they already have been. This is one of, if not the first first-person account of these events that I've seen, and it was really interesting to catch a glimpse into this part of history that is somehow forgotten. The art style is simple and clean, allowing the story to be told effectively.

- Gabriella Wright