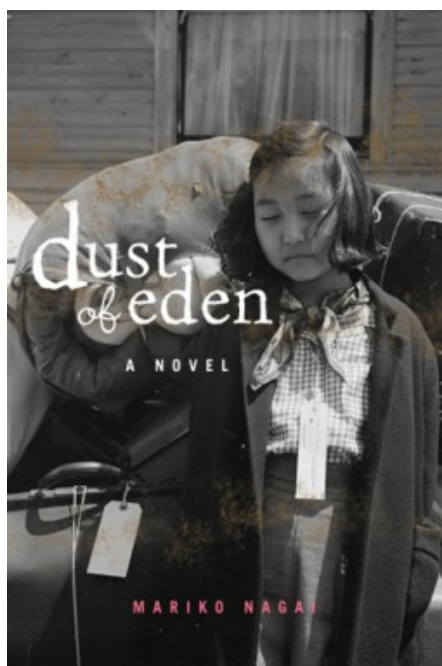




## Dust of Eden

*Mariko Nagai*

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# Dust of Eden

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## Dust of Eden Mariko Nagai

"We lived under a sky so blue in Idaho right near the towns of Hunt and Eden but we were not welcomed there." In December 1941, thirteen year-old Mina Masako Tagawa and her Japanese-American family are sent from their home in Seattle to an internment camp in Idaho. What do you do when your home country treats you like an enemy? This memorable and powerful novel in verse, written by award-winning author Mariko Nagai, explores the nature of fear, the value of acceptance, and the beauty of life. As thought-provoking as it is uplifting, Dust of Eden is told with an honesty that is both heart-wrenching and inspirational.

## Dust of Eden Details

Date : Published March 1st 2014 by Albert Whitman Company (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9780807517390

Author : Mariko Nagai

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Poetry, Young Adult, Childrens, Middle Grade

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## From Reader Review Dust of Eden for online ebook

### Brooke says

I thought this book was great. I would really recommend it. It is a great poetry book.

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### Laura Cushing says

This excellent young adult book is told from the point of view of a young Japanese American girl named Mina who is sent to an interment camp with her family during World War II. The family consists of the girl, an older brother, mother, father and grandfather. Each of them reacts to the interment in different ways, showing a variety of feelings from hopelessness to resignation, anger and sadness at what their country is doing to them.

The story includes letters that Mina writes to her best friend, and essays she writes in class at the interment camp. It also in later chapters includes letters from her brother. This makes the story seem very real.

I highly recommend this book, not only for young adults, but for anyone who wants to learn more about this horrible period in our history and what was done to citizens who meant no harm to no one in the name of keeping America 'safe'.

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### Jody says

Japanese Internment. I keep visiting the sites of the camps and reading more about it. This is a quick read, novel in verse. I don't recall hearing this before, but in Seattle, all the Chinese people wore buttons that said, "I'm Chinese." This was to let others know that they weren't responsible for the bombing of Pearl Harbor-- "I'm not the enemy." I'm so grateful I lived in Japan for 17 months of my life and learned to speak the language and understand the hearts of some of the people as well as a little something about the culture.

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### Jessica Brandon says

This ARC was given by Albert Whitman & Company via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

This Historical fiction is written in verse and may be difficult for young readers to follow. However, the story and emotion this short read allows the reader a glimpse our past. It is not a proud past for America, but it is nice to have a book I can share with my students that allow them to see inside the life of a Japanese American girl that has been forced into an interment camp during World War II. This book allows the reader to have empathy towards the American citizens that were forced to leave their homes and jobs. Her father is imprisoned and the rest of Mina's family is forced into an internment camp. I look forward to sharing this book with my class during our WWII unit.

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## Jenny says

A novel in verse told from the perspective of a young Japanese American girl sent to live in an internment camp with her family. Very beautifully written. Brief but powerful.

Here are some excerpts that I found touching and thought provoking and beautifully written:

Page 34: "We were all sad, but out on smiling faces, like we did not care, like our hearts were not breaking, though if you listened hard, if you ignored the engines, you could hear thousands of hearts breaking, shattering, into pieces."

P.37: "They have taken away our homes, our words, my father."

P. 43:

"Today it's raining  
outside as well  
as inside,  
And no matter  
how many times we  
place the cups  
and bowls  
and plates under  
the drips,  
they become full  
as soon as  
we empty them  
out. The floor  
is muddy, so muddy  
that we wear our shoes inside."

P. 52: "No one talks; no one laughs. We stand in line." (This refrain is echoed throughout this particular poem...and the poem two pages before is about the standing in line...for showers, food, to send letters, much of their time is spent in line.)

P. 66:

Masako, earth is a lot like people,  
Grandpa says. Earth must be cared for,  
tended. With patience, he says, you can  
change a poor soil into a fertile  
and rich soil...  
...It just takes time,  
it just takes patience, he says,  
just like it does with people. Don't give up  
until you have done everything to change  
yourself. Then, he says as he sits  
on the doorstep, only then can you start  
blaming others."

P. 99

"...Because home isn't just  
our family, but it's something bigger,  
it's everything and everyone,

and even when we fight,  
even when we hurt each other,  
we are family, no matter what.  
Maybe that's what America is for me.  
I almost feel like this is home."

It's hard for me to comprehend how we, as a nation, could have allowed fear to lead us to intern more than 110,000 Japanese Americans. How we could treat them so poorly. That FDR would sign Executive Order 9066 that forced them from their homes. Yet, reading of their courage inspires me. I hope we learn from these events of the past and do not allow history to repeat itself.

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### **Isabel says**

Wonderful moment of reading.

In verses, in a fluid way, we are taken through the life of Masako and her family, following the attack on Pearl Harbor. What does it mean to be American when you are young Japanese, parked inside a camp, thousands miles away from your home?

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### **Sara says**

An excellent addition to YA lit on the Japanese concentration camps in America. The story is told through the eyes of a young girl and what she sees happening around her and to her family members. It is poignant and real. Highly recommended to teachers as supplemental reading when they study this horrid episode of American history. Written in verse, it is easy to read, but yet paints a very vivid picture even with the paucity of words.

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### **Binibining `E (of The Ugly Writers) says**

***"In the middle, a jagged half of a heart. She pulled her sweater down, See, I have half a heart too. And whenever we are together, we have a whole heart. Only then do the two halves become one."***

This short book has the power to make me sad and make me cry. Leaving Basho behind, damn makes me shed tears. I'm so sad reading this but I can't put it down. The story of Mina and his family was just cruel, what happened to her father was just unbelievable. The grandfather I adore, he's just so quiet and loveable. I love how he tends to his roses and thus he never forgets them until he died. Children also are somewhat the victims in this war, because they're Japanese people look at them very differently, although they are mixed bloods they're still treated differently by some people. At the end they still did go back to where they belong but of course things always change.

***"We were all sad, but put on smiling faces, like we did not care, like our hearts were not breaking, though if you listened hard, if you ignored the engines, you could hear thousands of hearts breaking, shattering, into pieces."***

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## Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

The experience of Japanese Americans who were rounded up and placed in internment camps throughout the United States in areas isolated from the rest of society are as varied as the individuals themselves. But they do have some things in common - confusion, anger, humiliation, loss of identity, inhumane conditions and dust, incredible amounts of dust due to the isolated areas these camps were built in. And we find all of these things in Miriko Nagai's forthcoming novel *Dust of Eden*.

Mina Masako Tagawa, 12, was living a pretty contented life in Seattle, Washington in 1941 with her parents, older brother Nick and grandfather. But when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Mina soon discovers that, with the exception of her best friend Jamie, old friends are now new enemies. Soon her father is taken into custody, merchants refuse to sell food to them, kids in school hiss the words Jap and go home at Masako.

In February 1942, President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 and before they know it, the Tagawa family is temporarily relocated to a place called Camp Puyallup Assembly Center, euphemistically called Camp Harmony. A former fair site, the Tagawas are placed in a former horse stall, and given bags to fill with hay to sleep on.

Living conditions are terrible, but in August 1942 the family is moved to the Minidoka Relocation Center in Hunt, Idaho. Eventually a makeshift school is set up that Masako attends. Nick begins to not come home before curfew and is angry all the time, and mother gets a job washing dishes. Eventually, Masako's father returns, now a broken man. Grandpa, however, begins to cultivate roses in the dusty soil.

The Tagawas, like most of the Japanese Americans, were convinced that they would soon be allowed to return to their homes, but as 1942 became 1943, it became clear that was not going to happen. Masako is resentful that they are treated like enemy instead of citizens, but when the US Army begins to accept some of the detained men, her brother wants to join up, against his father's wishes, to prove he is an American.

By 1945, Nick is still fighting in Europe, Grandpa has actually successfully managed to coax roses to grow and many families have started to leave the camp and return home. The Tagawa family has gone through many changes in the years of detainment. Can they really return to the life they once knew in Seattle after such an ordeal?

*Dust of Eden* is written in free verse, with the exception of the letters exchanged between Nick and his sister. Everything the family experiences is told in the first person in the voice of Masako. This was an interesting, compelling novel, though I found myself annoyed at Masako much of the time. In most stories about Japanese Internment, the main character feels much of the same things that Masako does, but at some point they take charge of their lives even under these oppressive circumstances. But she never does that, and her passivity irked me. Her grandfather was a master grower of roses and she could have at least learned what he had to offer. He was the only one who made an effort to improve their dreadful life.

I thought Nick would have been a more interesting character to read about. Where did he go all those times he was breaking curfew? With whom did he hang out? What was army life like for him as a Japanese American?

I would still recommend this novel, since it does give us another perspective on the treatment of Japanese Americans in WW2 by our government and citizens, not our shiniest moment. It would pair nicely with *Imprisoned: the betrayal of Japanese Americans during World War II* by Martin W. Sandler, which was based on interviews of people interned at around Masako's age.

This book is recommended for readers age 8+

This book was an EARC received from NetGalley

Dust of Eden will be available on March 1, 1014

This review was originally posted at The Children's War

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### **Debbi says**

A short little book about a Japanese family forced into an interment camp during WWII. How would it feel to be a 13-year-old girl as hard as that is already, to be called "Jap" by the other kids? Their first camp was an animal's stall and a hole in the ground for a toilet. To this day it is the most unconstitutional measure the United States government has ever done.

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### **Hailey says**

This book was extremely depressing. It's terrible that they were treated the way they were. Racism just pushes me the wrong way. I really don't like it.

Overall this book was good. I didn't read it like a poem though. Also, she didn't say whether they got the cat back or not so, I'm assuming that they did.

I give this book a four star rating because it was depressing, but good. Extremely engaging.

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### **ElphaReads says**

The first time I heard about the Japanese Internment was one of two scenarios. The first was seventh grade English class, in which we read the book FAREWELL TO MANZANAR, a book that I consider to be one of the quintessential reads on the subject. The second was visiting my WWII Vet grandfather in Iowa and having to cut the trip short because he and my Dad got in a very heated argument about the Japanese Internment (my Grandpa on the Pro side, my Dad very adamantly on the Con side). I think that I was very lucky in my education that I had heard of this terrible part of American History, as apparently not many people are aware that the U.S. Government imprisoned U.S. Citizens for a couple of years based solely on where they descended from (but let's be real, it's not like the same was done to German Americans or Italian Americans, so it was pretty much flat out racism). I have read a few books on the topic now, and have a couple more in my docket, but DUST OF EDEN is the first one that is written in verse form. Going off the recommendation of a classmate, I picked this up from the library and pretty much went through it in two sittings.

Masako 'Mina' Tagawa is a Japanese American school girl living in Seattle in 1941. She has a mother and father, and older brother named Nick, and a Grandfather who loves to garden and grow roses, and has a best friend named Jamie who cares for her very much. During Choir practice one December day, news comes in that the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor, and that America is going to war. Mina and her family are soon taken away from their home in Seattle and taken to a camp in Idaho, with tall walls, barbed wire, and terrible living conditions. Mina writes letters to her friend Jamie, while Grandfather starts his own garden, and Mother works in the kitchens waiting for Father to join them after his separate internment is over. Nick grows more and more bitter towards the older members of the family, and wants to prove his bravery and loyalty to America by joining up, and as the family spends two years in this camp they wonder if they will

ever be the same, and why the government has done this to them when they are all Americans.

The verse style reminded me a lot of INSIDE OUT AND BACK AGAIN, though I felt like it wasn't used as strongly. I'm not very big on poetry as many of you already know, but the good thing about DUST OF EDEN was that it never really felt like I was reading poetry, even though it was very clear that I was. If that makes any sense. It probably doesn't, but moving on. I thought that this book did a wonderful job of portraying all sides of how Japanese Americans reacted and responded to their imprisonment, be it the Issei's tendency to try and suffer with dignity while the Nisei outright questioned and raged against the Government. Showing the sides of Father being against the idea of Nick joining up, and Nick being adamant and resentful towards his elders, was certainly seen a fair amount of the time, from what I can tell. Mina has a powerful voice in the novel, though I feel like her story and her own experiences and feelings were a bit overshadowed by what was happening with Nick. Maybe that was just because Nick's story was so resonant and I read through it. I definitely think that this would be a great tool to use in classrooms while studying World War II, especially since this aspect of the War is so often overlooked when we are feeling incredibly jingoistic during those units. Our hands were not unclean during that war, and it's best we remember that.

Thanks for the recommendation, Amy Rae! Now I need to decide if I go right into another book about this topic, or go for lighter fare first....

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## **Lillian says**

Mina Tagawa is in her church choir practicing their Christmas carols when all of the sudden someone starts screaming "THE JAPS BOMBED PEARL HARBOR!!!!" Mina knows something is wrong. Mina and her family have to be moved to a camp (or a horse stable with no horse in it) because they are Japanese. Mina who is a normal girls in Seattle, Washington, in middle school with short black hair is so sad, she has to move away from her best friend Jamie. Nick her brother who is always happy and laughing and telling jokes turns into a very angry high schooler because he is very mad that they are making them move because they say they are Japanese because they are really Japanese and American. Mina's father gets taken away from them because they think he did something wrong. Mina's father has always been strong and nice and always loved his family. Mina's mom has always been so sweet and caring and always has tea and milk ready for Mina when she comes home. Mina's Grandfather is very old and frail and his favorite thing to do is garden. He has a beautiful rose garden and takes care of them very well. Last but not least Basho, Basho is Mina's cat and gets fed only miso soup and rice for dinner. Basho will not eat anything else. So when they have to move everyone changes, Mina's grandfather becomes very skinny and doesn't have his roses to care for so he becomes very sad. Nick goes into the army and writes to them. Mina's father comes home two years later and is the skinniest man Mina has ever seen. He is always smoking and is sleeping alot. Mina's mom has to work in the mess hall so she is always tired and her hands are full of blisters. Mina gets to write letters to Jamie and her father and Nick so she likes that. Mina's grandfather has to go to the hospital because he has been coughing a lot and when Mina goes to see him he is outside in the garden lying there holding a rose in his hand. He was dead! Mina was so sad. When she came home from school one day she started to tell grandpa how her day was and then she realised he wasn't there. Mina and her family have to stay there for three years and then finally the war ends so Nick comes home! Mina is so happy they go back to there house and they finally get to go home! Mina is so happy to see Jamie and Basho!

I loved this book! I read this book in one and a half days! I couldn't put it down . This book made me realise how lucky we are to be here. I loved how Mina was telling the story and how it was in poetry form. I would



Give this book 4 stars just because it is a little sadder than I thought it would be.

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**Julie (Manga Maniac Cafe) says**

4 stars

Mina's voice is appropriately confused and angry when her family is rounded up and shipped off to an internment camp for Americans of Japanese ancestry. With her life turned on end, her family and her heart broken, she has to come to terms with what it means to be an American in a country that no longer accepts her because of the paranoia following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Compelling and emotional read about an embarrassing episode in our history. Have we learned from this? I certainly hope so.

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**Marit says**

It's coming to the end of the school year and I needed a quick HF book so Mrs. Morgan told me to read this and I did. I didn't hate it. I thought it was kinda cute. It's about living with the the fact that many people hate you because of who you are. You can't change the fact that that's who you are but you want to change it. It's a strong and powerful short story.

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