

Here are some other activities students can do on their own, or in groups, to extend a lesson using *American Dreams*:

1. Create your own book jacket for *American Dreams*! Draw a scene from the story for the front cover. Write a blurb to get readers interested in the story and place it on the back cover. Display your book jacket with those of your classmates on the bulletin board.
2. Do some research to find out more about the Japanese-American unit that fought in World War II. You can report your findings in a booklet, or you might work with some classmates to create a film-strip about their acts of bravery.
3. The process of removing Japanese-Americans from their homes and eventually into camps was a terrible tragedy. Work with some classmates to create an illustrated map or time line to show and briefly tell about that process. Use information from the book as well as additional research on your own. If possible, use a city library to find old photographs, magazines, and newspapers on microfiche.

# TEACHERS GUIDE

## American Dreams

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***American Dreams***, by Lisa Banim, covers the time period in Los Angeles just prior to and after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and shows how the lives of Japanese Americans were changed forever. Jeannie Bosold and Amy Mochida, a Japanese-American, are best friends. Together, they love going to the movies and talking about movie stars. But when Pearl Harbor is attacked they face the adult reality of racism. Amy's family is shunned and sent away from their home in southern California. This historical novel is part of the *Stories of the States* series--historical novels whose intent is to show how America's diverse heritage and culture has been shaped by the events of the past. *American Dreams* concludes with a short "historical postscript" section that tells more about the real events depicted in the story.

## BACKGROUND

The Postscript section of the book points out that the characters in this novel are fictional, but the historic events portrayed are indeed true. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, there was great resentment and fear of Japanese-Americans. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an Executive Order that forced more than 100,000 persons of Japanese descent, including American citizens, to leave their homes, their jobs, and their lives on the West Coast for detention camps further inland. An agency called the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was formed to direct the removal of Japanese-Americans. Although some people spoke out on behalf of Japanese-Americans, most believed that all Japanese were the enemy. Although Japanese-Americans proclaimed their loyalty to America and had never been accused of any crime, most remained in the internment camps until the end of the war. Some Japanese-American men were allowed to become soldiers in Japanese-only regiments. The 100/442nd Regimental Combat Team, to which most Japanese-American soldiers belonged, won more medals for bravery than any other American outfit in World War II.

## FACT, FICTION, AND CHARACTERIZATION

Share with students that *American Dreams* is a novel of historical fiction, and that this form of literature mixes real and made-up characters and events. Discuss with students aspects of historical fiction that make it so exciting and interesting to read. If necessary, introduce the idea that the actions and dialogue of the characters bring readers closer to the events of a time period, and show what it was really like to live day by day.

Engage students in a discussion about how a reader can tell what is fact and what is fiction. Be sure students understand that facts can be checked in reference books such as encyclopedias; in newspapers, magazines, historical documents and other official public records, and in personal accounts such as journals and diaries. Photographs, paintings, and drawings can also serve as historical records.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What did you already know about this time period and the experiences of Japanese Americans that this story described? What did you learn that was new to you?
- Would you say Jennie is a true friend to Amy? What qualities about her make you feel this way?
- What would you tell a friend who hasn't read this book about the story?
- Why do you think this book is entitled *American Dreams* ?

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

### DEAR PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT:

Discuss the concept of prejudice with students. Point out that many prejudices are based on both fear and ignorance. Why did people fear Japanese-Americans? What truths did they not know about Japanese-Americans? Ask students to compose a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt protesting the executive order that forced the removal of Japanese-Americans from their homes. Have students imagine that they have a friend like Amy who they are concerned about. What are their arguments? After each student has written, letters can be read in front of the class and the class can vote on which letter makes the best case to President Roosevelt. Students can also do research to find out more about the people that did take risks to protest the treatment of Japanese-Americans.