Video Discussion Questions
"Behind the Scenes: Betrayed By America"

Before Reading “Betrayed By America”

1. How does the section of the video about the internment of Japanese Americans (3:50-4:43) help you understand what life was like in the internment camps? Consider the music, narration, and visuals.

2. Kristin Lewis calls fact-checking a “crucial step in an article’s journey to publication” (5:27). Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?

After Reading “Betrayed By America”

3. What do both the video and the article help you understand about the role that the attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s participation in World War II played in the internment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s?

4. In the video, Lewis explains that the Densho organization “preserves the stories of Japanese Americans who lived through internment” (1:49). Why are organizations like Densho important?
The Shishima family at Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming, 1944
During World War II, the American government forced thousands of Japanese Americans from their homes and imprisoned them in internment camps. This is the story of one boy who was there. BY KRISTIN LEWIS

Eleven-year-old William “Bill” Hiroshi Shishima was in prison. He was watched by soldiers with guns. He lived behind barbed wire. Beyond the wire, thousands of acres of unforgiving wilderness served as a brutal reminder that escape was pointless.

It was hard to believe how abruptly Bill’s life had changed. Only three months earlier, he was scarfing down tacos with his friends, playing baseball after school, going on picnics with his family, and spending his extra pennies on the latest comic books.

But then the president of the United States signed an order for Bill and his family—along with some 120,000 others—to be rounded up like criminals. They were forced to leave their homes and sent to live in faraway internment camps.

This happened not because they had committed any crime. They had broken no laws. They had done nothing wrong. This happened simply because they were Japanese American.

**Trouble on the Way**

Bill was born in 1930 in Los Angeles, California. The 1930s were a time of widespread unemployment and poverty known as the Great Depression. By 1941, though, when Bill was 11, things were looking up. The economy was growing. The grocery store that Bill’s father owned was thriving, and the family had recently expanded their business to include a small hotel. But trouble was on the way.
In 1941, World War II was raging across the world. Germany’s leader Adolf Hitler and his Nazi troops had invaded most of the countries in Europe. The island nation of Japan had invaded China, looking to expand its territory across Asia. Americans were in no rush to get involved in these bloody conflicts. They had little interest in becoming embroiled in what many saw as the problems of other nations.

As Japan continued its military aggression in Asia, however, hostilities with the U.S. grew. Still, the U.S. hoped to prevent all-out war through diplomacy.

But any hope of peace was about to vanish.

**Attacked!**

On the morning of December 7, 1941, something happened that would change America forever. Japan launched a massive surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, a U.S. military base in Hawaii.

The American Navy posed a threat to Japan’s goal of increasing its global power. Japan hoped that by attacking Pearl Harbor, it could cripple the part of the U.S. Navy that operated in the Pacific Ocean.

Bombs rained from the sky. Torpedoes shot through the water. The scale of destruction and the loss of human life were staggering. More than 2,300 Americans were killed and another 1,200 wounded.

Bill remembers where he was when he learned about the attack. Walking out of a movie, he heard a newspaper boy shout: "War! War! Japs bomb Pearl Harbor!"

Bill didn’t know what “Japs” meant, though he would soon learn it was a hateful and racist way to refer to people of Japanese descent. He also could not have imagined how the attack on Pearl Harbor would change American history—and his own life.

Just one day after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. declared war on Japan and entered World War II.

**Mistrust and Suspicion**

Throughout American history, newcomers have often been viewed with mistrust and suspicion. It was no different for Japanese immigrants. By the early 1900s, a large number had settled on the West Coast. They faced enormous prejudice—it was illegal for them to own property or become citizens.

This was still the case as Bill was growing up. Bill and his siblings were U.S. citizens because they were born in America. But Bill’s parents, who had come from Japan, couldn’t even buy the building that housed their grocery store.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor fanned the flames of prejudice. Rumors flew that Japanese Americans were loyal to Japan, that they were spies planning another attack on American soil.

There was no evidence that such rumors were true. In fact, a military report in January 1942 stated that less than 3 percent of Japanese Americans posed a potential threat to the U.S.—and authorities were already monitoring those individuals.

Yet as news came in about the gruesome battles and the
growing number of casualties in the war, fear about Japanese Americans turned to panic.

**“Get ‘Em Out!”**

At the time of Pearl Harbor, about 127,000 Japanese Americans lived in the mainland U.S., mostly in California. After the bombing, many members of the public and the media began calling for anyone of Japanese ancestry—citizen or not—to be removed from the West Coast. “GET ‘EM OUT!” read one headline in the *West Seattle Herald*.

“They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not,” said U.S. Army Lieutenant General John DeWitt.

Some argued that such sentiments went against everything the U.S. stood for—our principles of equality and justice. Others insisted that because it was a time of war, extreme measures were justified. One journalist wrote that if any Japanese American were allowed to remain free in the U.S., “it might spell the greatest disaster in history.”

In February 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. History would come to regard this order as one of America’s most shameful acts. Executive Order 9066 gave the military the power to remove all Japanese Americans—every man, woman, and child—from the West Coast and relocate them to internment camps in remote parts of the U.S.

**Crowded, Smelly, Dusty**

By spring, signs had appeared in Bill’s neighborhood ordering all persons of Japanese ancestry to report to a local church by noon on May 9. The instructions said to bring bedding, clothes, utensils, and personal effects, but no more than could be carried. The instructions did not say where they would be going or how long they would be gone.

In the coming days, Bill’s family scrambled to sell their belongings. They gave up the lease on their store and hotel. They tried to sell the family truck, but no one would buy it, so they had to give it away.

Similar scenes played out up and down the West Coast, as Japanese Americans prepared for their forced incarceration. They sold what they could—houses, furniture, cars—often getting only a fraction of what they paid originally.

At the church, Bill and his family joined dozens of others. Many wore their best clothes—mothers in floral dresses, fathers in neatly pressed suits. Small children clutched their mothers’ hands, wearing their finest coats—and bewildered expressions.

Eventually, everyone was loaded onto buses and taken to the Santa Anita Racetrack, one of 16 so-called assembly centers. These assembly centers were makeshift accommodations in fairgrounds, racetracks, and other large spaces, where Japanese Americans were to be held while more permanent relocation camps could be built.

Conditions at the racetrack were dismal—crowded, smelly, dusty. Bill’s grandparents had to sleep in the horse
stalls, which reeked of manure. One day, Bill got lost trying to find the bathroom. "It was embarrassing," he remembers. "I ended up wetting my pants. I'll never forget that."

Sometimes Bill would stare longingly at the movie theater across the street. Only days earlier, he could see a movie whenever he wanted. Now the theater might as well have been on the moon.

**Heart Mountain**

In August 1942, after three months at the racetrack, Bill and his family were put on a train.

Nothing could prepare Bill for what greeted him at the end of his journey.

Stepping off the train, he gazed upon a desolate wilderness surrounded by towering snow-capped mountains. In the middle of this harsh landscape sat what would be his home for the next three years: the Heart Mountain Relocation Center.

Located in a remote area of northwest Wyoming, this internment camp looked nothing like its name would suggest. Heart Mountain was a large compound enclosed by barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers. The camp comprised row upon row of barracks covered in black tar paper. Heart Mountain would eventually imprison more than 10,000 people.

Bill, his parents, and his three siblings crowded into one sparsely furnished room. (After his mother had a baby, they were allowed a second room.) The thin walls did little to shield them from the frigid Wyoming winds and snows, which tended to start in September and last through April. In the beginning, medical supplies were lacking, and disease swept through the camp. Bill himself became dangerously ill with pneumonia.

Every day, there were humiliations that shame Bill even now. He hated bathing in the one-room shower, with its eight showerheads and no privacy. The toilets were even worse. There were no doors or walls, so Bill had to do his business in front of everyone.

**Life Goes On**

During World War II, the U.S. operated 10 internment camps like Heart Mountain. All were built in remote areas for the purpose of isolating Japanese Americans from the rest of society.

Life in these camps was extremely difficult.

Barracks were cramped and poorly constructed. Dust and dirt were constantly invading. It always seemed to be too hot or too cold. Day to day life was monotonous—and strictly controlled. Letters were screened, meals served at appointed times, and protests swiftly squashed.

Still, many tried to make the best of their imprisonment. They had lost their freedom, their jobs, and their homes. Yet, they carried on with honor and dignity. They took pride in making their barracks as beautiful as possible; mothers stitched curtains to bring color to dreary windows, and fathers fashioned furniture from scraps of wood. Children attended camp schools and formed baseball teams.

One of Bill's consolations during those long years was the camp's Boy Scout troop because the troop got to hike outside the fence.
HONOR AND VALOR

Thousands of young Japanese Americans served in World War II, though many of their families were imprisoned back in the U.S. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team (at left) was made up almost entirely of American soldiers of Japanese descent. It became one of the most famous and decorated units, earning thousands of medals for bravery.

The End of the War

World War II ended in 1945 with the defeat of Japan and Germany. Celebrations spilled into the streets from Boston to Chicago. At Heart Mountain, Bill felt relief. His first thought was that he would finally get to see the friends he’d been forced to leave behind.

Eventually, all 10 camps were closed, and everyone was allowed to leave. But where would they go? Many had lost everything—and not only their homes and businesses. Their sense of safety and justice had been shattered by what the government had done to them.

Bill and his family left Heart Mountain and returned to Los Angeles to start over. After high school, Bill was drafted into the military and served in the Korean War. He later attended the University of Southern California, where his father had gone to college. Bill went on to become a teacher.

A Grave Injustice

Nearly 40 years after the camps closed, Congress launched an investigation. In the final report, Congress called the internment of Japanese Americans a “grave injustice” motivated by “racial prejudice, war hysteria, and the failure of political leadership.” The report led to an official apology, issued by President Ronald Reagan in 1988, and a $20,000 reparation payment given to survivors. Bill gave his $20,000 to the Japanese American National Museum in L.A., where he now gives tours.

Today, Bill is in his nineties. He feels a special responsibility to tell the story of what happened during World War II. “I wanted to tell our story because the general public does not know about it,” he says. “Everyone in America should know what happened to us ... so it never happens again.”

Scope thanks the Densho organization for its generous research assistance.

Poem

Children of Camp

By Lawson Fusao Inada

There was no poetry in the camp.
Unless you can say
mud is poetry,
unless you can say
dust is poetry,
unless you can say
blood is poetry,
unless you can say
cruelty is poetry,
unless you can say
injustice is poetry,
unless you can say
imprisonment is poetry.

There was no poetry in the camp.
Unless you can say
families are poetry,
unless you can say
people are poetry.

And the people
made poetry
from camp.
And the people
made poetry
from camp.

Writing Contest

Explain what led to the internment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s. What could have been done differently to prevent this “grave injustice” from happening? Answer in a well-organized essay.

Send it to BILL SHISHIMA CONTEST. Five winners will get Weedflower by Cynthia Kadohata.
Read, Think, Explain
Identifying Nonfiction Elements

Use this activity sheet with “Betrayed By America.” See Scope’s “Glossary of Nonfiction Terms” and “Glossary of Literary Terms” for definitions of the words that appear in bold.

Before Reading
Text Features and Inference

1. Read the headline and the subtitle. Then study the image on page 4. What do these features tell you about the Shishima family?

2. Describe the photograph of the little girl on page 7. What can you infer about how the little girl in the photo was feeling the moment this picture was taken?

3. Study the photograph and read the caption on page 9. What story do this image and the caption tell?

4. Read the subheadings in the article. Based on your preview of the article, write one sentence predicting what the article will be mainly about.
During Reading
Mood, Text Structure, Inference, Tone

5. The author begins the section “Trouble on the Way” by describing how America’s economy began to recover from the Great Depression in the 1940s and how Bill’s family was thriving. Toward the middle of the section, she writes, “But trouble was on the way.”

Mood is the feeling the reader gets from a piece of writing. The sentence, “But trouble was on the way,” changes the mood from

- hopeful to uneasy.
- relaxed to surprised.
- tense to apprehensive.

6. **Text structure** is the term for how an author organizes information. Information in the section “Crowded, Dusty, Smelly” uses a sequence-of-events structure. Which words and phrases in the section help you identify this text structure?

- “crowded, smelly, dusty”; “neatly pressed suits”; “bewildered expressions”
- “By spring”; “In the coming days”; “Eventually”; “Only days earlier”; “Now”
- “Similar scenes played out . . .”; “. . . Bill and his family joined dozens of others”; “The instructions said to bring bedding, clothing, utensils, and personal effects . . .”

7. **Tone** is the author’s attitude toward the subject matter or toward the reader or audience. Circle the word that best describes the author’s tone in the section “Heart Mountain.”

- nervous
- skeptical
- disgusted

B. Briefly explain how you know:

8. The author writes that residents of the internment camps “took pride in making their barracks as beautiful as possible” and that children “attended camp schools and formed baseball teams.” What can you infer about residents of the internment camps from this information?
9. A. Below is a central idea of "Betrayed By America" and three supporting details. Two details DO support the central idea. Cross out the detail that DOES NOT.

Central Idea
Japanese Americans were viewed with mistrust and suspicion after Pearl Harbor.

Detail #1
"Rumors flew that Japanese Americans were loyal to Japan, that they were spies planning another attack on American soil." (p. 6)

Detail #2
"Throughout American history, newcomers have often been viewed with mistrust and suspicion." (p. 6)

Detail #3
"[Japanese Americans] are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not,' said U.S. Army Lieutenant General John DeWitt." (p. 7)

B. Briefly explain why the detail that you crossed out does NOT support the central idea above.

10. An objective summary is a short statement or paragraph that tells what an article is about. Draw a line through the three sentences below that should definitely NOT be included in an objective summary of "Betrayed by America."

a. The Shishimas were a Japanese American family living in Los Angeles in the 1940s.

b. Many Japanese Americans wore their best clothes when they reported to local churches on May 9, 1942.

c. Japanese Americans on the West Coast were forced to live in internment camps in remote parts of the U.S.

d. I think it was wrong of the U.S. government to not tell Japanese Americans where they were going after officials forced them to leave home.

e. Bill got pneumonia while living in Heart Mountain.

f. Racial prejudice led many Americans to mistrust and mistreat Japanese Americans during World War II.
Central Ideas and Details

A central idea of a text is one of the main points the author is making.
(Sometimes a central idea is called a main idea.)
A central idea can always be supported with details from the text.

Directions: Follow the prompts below to explore the central ideas and supporting details in “Betrayed By America.”

1. Read the central idea of the sections “Mistrust and Suspicion” and “‘Get ’Em Out’” stated in the box below. Then check the boxes next to THREE details that support the central idea.

   Central Idea:
   Japanese Americans were viewed with mistrust and suspicion after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

   □ “‘GET ’EM OUT!’” read one headline in the West Seattle Herald.” (p. 7)
   □ “Throughout American history, newcomers have often been viewed with mistrust and suspicion.” (p. 6)
   □ “Rumors flew that Japanese Americans were loyal to Japan, that they were spies planning another attack on American soil.” (p. 6)
   □ “‘They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not,’ said U.S. Army Lieutenant General John DeWitt.” (p. 7)
   □ “By the early 1900s, a large number had settled on the West Coast.” (p. 6)

2. Read the details from the section “Heart Mountain” listed below. In the box, complete the central idea that these details support.

   Central Idea:
   Japanese Americans living in Heart Mountain

   Detail 1: “Bill, his parents, and his three siblings crowded into one sparsely furnished room.” (p. 8)
   Detail 2: “The thin walls did little to shield them from the frigid Wyoming winds and snows . . .” (p. 8)
   Detail 3: “The toilets were even worse. There were no doors or walls . . .” (p. 8)
What’s the Tone?

Tone is the author’s attitude toward either the subject he or she is writing about or toward the reader. Words that could describe tone include doubtful, humorous, gleeful, serious, and questioning. Authors create tone through word choice, the information they include, and how they organize the text.

In this activity, you will analyze author Kristin Lewis’s tone in “Betrayed By America.”

1. Consider the headline and subtitle (or deck, as it can also be called):

   Betrayed By America
   During World War II, the American government forced thousands of Japanese Americans from their homes and imprisoned them in internment camps. This is the story of one boy who was there.

   Lewis’s tone as she writes about the internment of Japanese Americans in the headline and subtitle could be described as disgusted and disapproving.

   Choose one statement below that does NOT explain how Lewis’s word choice helps create a disapproving tone.

   A The word betrayed in the headline conveys that Japanese Americans were failed by, or treated wrongly by, America. In using the word betrayed, Lewis sounds like she is disgusted by and disapproves of how the American government treated Japanese Americans.

   B The words forced and imprisoned convey harsh treatment. In using these words, Lewis sounds like she is disgusted by and disapproves of how the American government treated Japanese Americans.

   C Lewis explains that the story is about something that occurred during World War II. By mentioning the name of the war, Lewis sounds disgusted and disapproving.
2. Consider the following paragraph from page 7:

“In February 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. History would come to regard this order as one of America’s most shameful acts. Executive Order 9066 gave the military the power to remove all Japanese Americans—every man, woman, and child—from the West Coast and relocate them to internment camps in remote parts of the U.S.”

Two words that could be used to describe Lewis’s tone as she describes Executive Order 9066 are critical and shocked. Choose the statement that BEST explains why.

A Lewis states that history would come to regard Executive Order 9066 as “one of America’s most shameful acts.” In stating this, Lewis sounds critical of the act herself and shocked that such a thing ever happened.

B Lewis explains that Japanese American internment camps were located in remote parts of the United States. She sounds critical.

3. Consider the following paragraph from page 8:

“Still, many tried to make the best of their imprisonment. They had lost their freedom, their jobs, and their homes. Yet, they carried on with honor and dignity. They took pride in making their barracks as beautiful as possible; mothers stitched curtains to bring color to dreary windows, and fathers fashioned furniture from scraps of wood.”

When Lewis describes the imprisoned Japanese Americans, her tone could be described as impressed and admiring.

Support this statement by completing the sentence we started below.

When Lewis writes that the people in the camps “carried on with honor and dignity” and “took pride in” decorating their barracks, she sounds like _________________.

_____________________________

_____________________________

_____________________________
Vocabulary Practice
“Betrayed By America”

Directions: Underline the boldfaced word in each pair that best completes the sentence.

1. John asked Amy what he could do to make reparations/personal effects for hurting her feelings yesterday.

2. Even though I already own the book my uncle gave me for my birthday, I appreciate the thoughtful sentiment/reparation.

3. We were horrified to learn about the consolation/internment of innocent people during the war.

4. John was disappointed that he didn't win first place at the science fair, but the positive feedback he got from the judges was a nice consolation/internment.

Directions: Rewrite each sentence below using one of the words or phrases in the box. (You will not use all of the words and phrases in the box.)

| personal effects | incarcerated | barracks | internment |

5. Karen’s mom asked her to get her belongings off the kitchen counter before their dinner guests arrived.

6. The judge decided that both of the men should be put in prison for a minimum of five years.

7. After a long day of physical training, the soldiers were ready to get back to their living quarters to rest.
"Betrayed By America" Quiz

Directions: Read "Betrayed By America." Then answer the questions below.

1. The section "Attacked!" describes the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Which section helps readers understand why that attack was made?
   A the introduction
   B "Trouble on the Way"
   C "Mistrust and Suspicion"
   D "Life Goes On"

2. On page 6, Kristin Lewis writes, "The bombing of Pearl Harbor fanned the flames of prejudice." She means that the bombing made prejudice
   A more intense.
   B less intense.
   C legal.
   D less noticeable.

3. Which detail from the article supports the idea that Japanese Americans were viewed with mistrust and suspicion after Pearl Harbor?
   A "Japan launched a massive surprise attack on Pearl Harbor . . . ." (p. 6)
   B "By the early 1900s, a large number had settled on the West Coast. (p. 6)
   C "In fact, a military report stated that less than 3 percent of Japanese Americans posed a potential threat to the U.S. . . . ." (p. 6)
   D "Rumors flew that Japanese Americans were loyal to Japan, that they were spies . . . ." (p. 6)

4. On page 8, Lewis writes that Heart Mountain "looked nothing like its name would suggest."
   She means that the camp
   A was not really called Heart Mountain.
   B was not in the shape of a heart.
   C did not look like a friendly place.
   D was not in the mountains.

5. Which of the following details supports the idea that residents of the internment camps tried to make the best of their situation?
   A "Many had lost everything . . . ." (p. 9)
   B "Bill, his parents, and his three siblings crowded into one sparsely furnished room," (p. 8)
   C "Mother's stitched curtains to bring color to dreary windows . . . ." (p. 8)
   D "The toilets were even worse." (p. 8)

6. The poem "Children of Camp"
   A explains why Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during World War II.
   B expresses a personal reaction to Pearl Harbor.
   C explains how people spent their time in the internment camps.
   D helps the reader understand what life in the internment camps was like.

Constructed-Response Questions

Directions: Write your answers to the questions below on the back of this paper or type them up on a computer.

7. How did the bombing of Pearl Harbor affect attitudes toward Japanese Americans? Use text evidence to support your answer.

8. Consider this line of the poem "Children of Camp": "And the people made poetry from camp." What does the poet mean? How is this idea expressed in "Betrayed By America"?