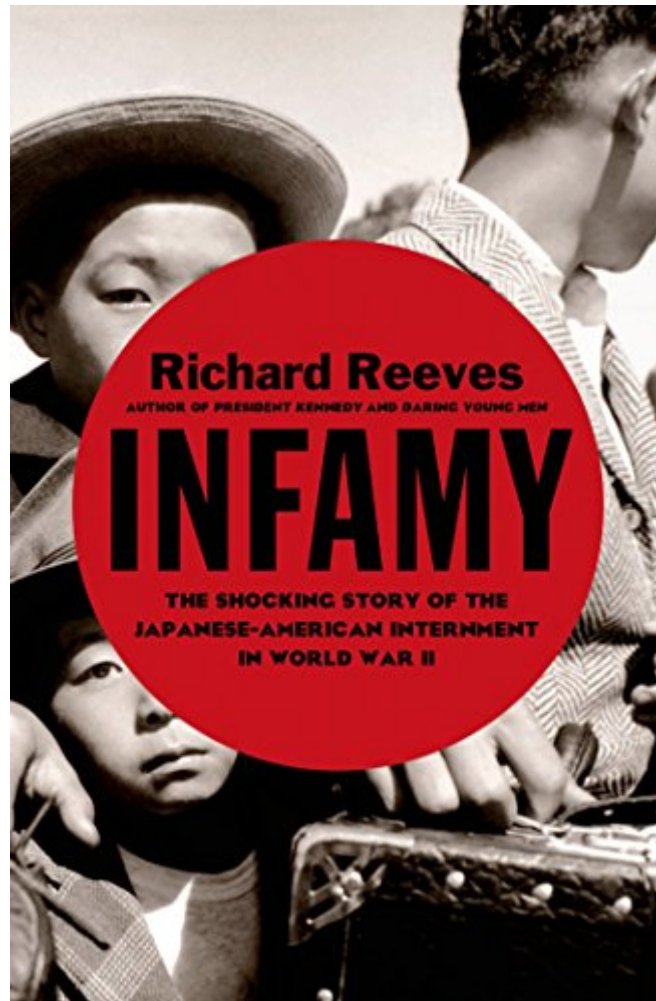


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# Infamy: The Shocking Story Of The Japanese American Internment In World War II



## Synopsis

A LOS ANGELES TIMES BESTSELLER • A NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW EDITOR'S CHOICE • Bestselling author Richard Reeves provides an authoritative account of the internment of more than 120,000 Japanese-Americans and Japanese aliens during World War II. Less than three months after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and inflamed the nation, President Roosevelt signed an executive order declaring parts of four western states to be a war zone operating under military rule. The U.S. Army immediately began rounding up thousands of Japanese-Americans, sometimes giving them less than 24 hours to vacate their houses and farms. For the rest of the war, these victims of war hysteria were imprisoned in primitive camps. In *Infamy*, the story of this appalling chapter in American history is told more powerfully than ever before. Acclaimed historian Richard Reeves has interviewed survivors, read numerous private letters and memoirs, and combed through archives to deliver a sweeping narrative of this atrocity. Men we usually consider heroes—FDR, Earl Warren, Edward R. Murrow—were in this case villains, but we also learn of many Americans who took great risks to defend the rights of the internees. Most especially, we hear the poignant stories of those who spent years in "war relocation camps," many of whom suffered this terrible injustice with remarkable grace. Racism, greed, xenophobia, and a thirst for revenge: a dark strand in the American character underlies this story of one of the most shameful episodes in our history. But by recovering the past, *Infamy* has given voice to those who ultimately helped the nation better understand the true meaning of patriotism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I. Why I Read This Book --Because of the gravity and continued relevance today of the issues raised by our country's disgraceful treatment of Japanese-American citizens under color of law during WWII, I was immediately drawn to this book when I saw it listed among the titles available in a recent Early Reviewer giveaway. I studied the Supreme Court case failing to invalidate the "internment" program under the Constitution in law school (i.e. Korematsu). However I didn't know any of the details of the policy's development and enforcement -- let alone the experience of the people forced from their homes and collected in concentration camps (that was the name used in government documents apparently -- the term was not linked with the Nazi genocide program directly at that time). I wanted to know more.

II. My Personal Opinion After Reading --Ultimately, author Richard Reeves did more than satisfy my intellectual curiosity with an engaging, accessible and concise history of the key events. However, these qualities would not suffice to constitute an outstanding history. Reeves managed to accomplish what I think is the more difficult and more important work of the historian -- to give the reader a fuller, more palpable and cognizable sense of the toll on human dignity involved in what happened. He achieved this due to the combined effects of two strengths of this history: i) The reader got a textured sense of the impact of the incarceration on the substance and quality of daily life of the people affected and on individuals' lifetimes, which was tantamount to stealing years of time from the totality of human beings' experience on this earth!

This nonfiction book covers a time in US history when we behaved disgracefully towards Japanese Americans, out of fear and prejudice, and has been too often glossed over. In 1965, not that many years after the internment in concentration camps of Japanese Americans, I was ignorant that it even happened. It sure wasn't covered in my US history class. I found out about it when one of my high school friends, a Japanese American, told me that her parents had been interned and had lost their strawberry farm. Good, solid people, good solid citizens, treated like traitors and prisoners. While I've looked for books on the American internment, I hadn't found one as informative as this one. The author seems to have done his homework. The book is highly readable, as well. There were a

couple of spots that were a bit dry for me, but for the most kept my interest. While I like knowing the facts, it is the stories of individual people and families that give heart to the statistics. There were a couple of things the author should have researched a bit more, like his reference to "...miso, the Japanese soup...." Miso soup is a common use for miso, but miso is not soup. That did make me wonder if there were other mistakes I was missing. What especially amazed me, and not in a good way, is the hatred and disregard for democracy shown by so many people who later would become famous as the good guys. Some of them changed their outlooks later and apologized; many did not. Even the president of the American Civil Liberties Union would not help, apparently not wanting to embarrass "his friend the president." Even the man who would become known as "Dr. Seuss.

Richard Reeves, *Infamy: The Shocking Story of Japanese Internment in World War II*. New York: Henry Holt, 2015. 342 pages. Reviewed by Daniel A. Metraux It is indeed a sad fact that Americans have always had very negative views of new waves of immigrants and that at times of crisis, they can turn on perceived enemies en masse with vengeance. There was considerable hostility towards the millions of Irish who immigrated to the United States in the 1840s and 1850s as well as considerable wrath against Mexicans and other Latinos who cross our borders today. My uncle, the late Paul Bubendey, a prominent New York banker born in early 1911, came from a German-speaking household. When the anti-German hysteria hit New York as the United States declared war on Germany, my uncle, then in first grade, remembers being beaten up, bullied and harassed by other students who condemned his German heritage. Although he later fought with distinction as a naval officer in World War II, he never got over that hysterical aspect of American culture. Americans have never been friendly to minority groups, but no group suffered as much privation and humiliation as Japanese-Americans during World War II. Novelist Sinclair Lewis wrote an ugly novel in 1935 titled *It Can't Happen Here* about an America run by racist fascists and dominated by widespread concentration camps. Seven years later, starting in early 1942, Lewis's vision became reality following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Respected journalist Richard Reeves brings us a brilliant study of the racist backlash and internment of 120,000 Japanese-Americans, two-thirds of them American citizens, in a series of brutal and inhospitable internment camps between 1942 and 1945.

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