

When the emperor was divine



The Emperor Was Devine is a novel by Julie Otsuka. The novel tells the agony that a Japanese family went through during World War II at the internment camps. Through the story, Otsuka aims to show the disbelief, despair, humiliation, and resignation of the people settled and living in the United States and the current events despised and marginalized them. By illustrating the loss of identity of the Japanese family, the author demonstrates what may people had to go through in the internment camps. The novel brings the history of America the power oppressed the people who settled in the country.

By analyzing the loss of identity of the characters in the book, the paper will derive the Japanese Americans sufferings at the time and at the same time drawing the history of America where the power used to oppress these people. The writing style adopted by the author aims to demonstrate the nature of life of the Japanese Americans in America during the World War II. Otsuka chooses not to name the main characters but instead refers them to the father, the mother, the son, and the daughter. However, the author gives many minor characters names.

In writing, naming of characters provides the author and the reader with an easier task. The readers will follow the story and the roles of the characters of a novel when the author has named them. However, the author chooses to refer to the main characters with their titles. The reason for choosing this writing style is that it enables the author to portray a special meaning to the nameless characters. Choosing not to give names to the main characters in the novel shows the loss of identity of the nameless. The novel portrays that

the characters have names, but the author does not refer to them by their names.

The characters also have difficulties in using their names in the American society where they live. When the mother and the children leave the internment camp, they discover that many things have changed and are not willing to use their names because they think that their names might cause trouble for them. The children say that “ We will change our name...we would never be mistaken for the enemy again. ” (Otsuka 114). The statement by the children shows that they are not the only family undergoing the problems.

The statement shows that anyone identifying with the Japanese community has the problems using their identity. The children want to change their names to be similar to the Native Americans. The statement also shows that the Americans viewed the Japanese as the enemy. The children were even ready to keep silent if their mother was to call them on their real names, as the people will know their identity. Here, the author illustrates the loss of identity of the Japanese Americans. The Japanese in America have to behave in the same way as the Native Americans, which is not by choice but circumstances force them.

Through this, the author demonstrates the hardships that the Japanese Americans went through in the hands of the Native Americans. Here, the author shows the despair of the Japanese. The nameless Japanese in the internment camps lived a cruel life. The Japanese had to live under supervision all the time. The Native Americans deprived of them their freedom. Leiding talks of the theme of freedom on his review, “...themes of

freedom and banishment..." (Leiding 1). Everything the Japanese had to do was to be under the supervision of guards. For example, the fences kill one man in the camps.

The guard said that he had armed the man but he did not hear of anything. Here, the author aims to show that the Japanese lost their freedom together with the loss of their identity. The guard kills the man because he thinks that he is intractable. By killing him, he deprives him his dignity and thus his identity. Here, the author demonstrates the humiliation the Japanese went through. The Japanese did not have the right to own property. For example, when the family came back from the internment camp, they found that they could not live in that house again because new people had occupied their house.

Although a lawyer was to rent their house off when they were away, they could not find any records. After that, the mother struggled to raise her children as their father was in jail. Here, the author demonstrates the discrimination by the authorities, as the authorities could not protect the property of the family just because they were Americans (Seaman 1). At last, the family admits that the authorities have deprived them many rights, and for that reason, they cannot protect their property.

Here, the author demonstrates their resignation. Conclusion The novel by Otsuka aims to portray the humiliation, despair, and resignation of the Japanese Americans during the World War II. The authorities discriminated the Japanese Americans in the society and denied them basic freedoms and rights such as freedom of movement and the right to own property. The authorities killed or arrested the Japanese Americans who were defiant. For

that reason, the Japanese Americans lost their identity leading to despair and resignation.