



# So Far from the Sea

*By Eve Bunting*

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Laura Iwasaki and her family are paying what may be their last visit to Laura's grandfather's grave. The grave is at Manzanar, where thousands of Americans of Japanese heritage were interned during World War II. Among those rounded up and taken to the internment camp were Laura's father, then a small boy, and his parents. Now Laura says goodbye to Grandfather in her own special way, with a gesture that crosses generational lines and bears witness to the patriotism that survived a shameful episode in America's history. Eve Bunting's poignant text and Chris K. Soentpiet's detailed, evocative paintings make the story of this family's visit to Manzanar, and of the memories stirred by the experience, one that will linger in readers' minds and hearts. Afterword.

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## So Far from the Sea By Eve Bunting Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Bunting's (Smoky Night) eloquent yet spare narrative introduces nine-year-old Laura, who recounts her family's 1972 visit to the site of the former Manzanar War Relocation Camp in eastern California. Thirty years earlier, her father and his parents were interned there, along with 10,000 other Japanese Americans. Soon to move to Boston, Laura, her younger brother and parents pay a final visit to the grave of the children's grandfather, a tuna fisherman robbed of his boat, home and dignity when the U.S. government sent his family to this remote camp, far from the sea he loved. Thoughtful and sympathetic, Laura has brought a chillingly ironic offering for the ancestor she never knew. It is the neckerchief from her father's Cub Scout uniform, which her grandfather had insisted his son wear on the day soldiers arrived at their home to transport them to the camp: "That way they will know you are a true American and they will not take you." Soentpiet's (More Than Anything Else) portrait of the uniformed boy respectfully saluting the soldiers as his mournful parents embrace is only one of numerous wrenching images that will haunt readers long after the last page is turned. Rendered with striking clarity, the artist's watercolors recreate two vastly different settings, evoking the tense 1940s scenarios in black and white and the serene yet wistful 1970s setting in bright color. An exceptionally effective collaboration. Ages 5-9.  
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From School Library Journal

Grade 2-5A All the more moving in its restraint, this picture-book account of a fictional family reveals, with gentle dignity, a sad chapter in American history. Laura Iwasaki and her Japanese-American family will soon move from California to Boston, so they are making one last visit to Laura's grandfather's grave, which lies near the Sierra Nevada Mountains, so far from the sea he loved. Before World War II, he was a fisherman. Then, along with Laura's father, her grandmother, and 10,000 other Japanese Americans, he was sent to the Manzanar War Relocation Center. There he died, and his grave is marked with only a ring of stones. The family leaves silk flowers, but Laura leaves her own special memento. Soentpiet's impressionistic watercolors perfectly complement Bunting's evocative text. Both create a palpable sense of Manzanar as it is today: a windy, isolated place, its buildings gone, dominated by snow-covered mountains. Black-and-white paintings that suggest '40s photographs illustrate Laura's father's memories of the camp. This book is much more personal than Sheila Hamanaka's nonfiction text for her mural, *The Journey* (Orchard, 1990), and more accessible. At the story's end, Laura whispers, "It was wrong." Her father answers, "Sometimes in the end there is no right or wrong.... It is just a thing that happened long years ago. A thing that cannot be changed." Yet art and text invite a new generation of Americans to remember that things can go terribly wrong when fear and hysteria prevail. A Margaret A. Chang, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts  
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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 5<sup>+</sup>-9. A young Japanese American girl tells how she and her family visit the site at Manzanar, where her father was interned as a child in 1942 and where her grandfather died, heartbroken. Soentpiet's vivid watercolors show the sorrow of the family in the empty winter landscape. As they walk through the camp site in the icy wind to the cemetery and the monument, her father remembers how it was for him there at her age. The illustrations of wartime are in sepia shades, like black-and-white newsreel photographs: first, scenes of the camp with people behind barbed wire, guard towers with searchlights, her father with other children in a crowded schoolroom; then back to how they got there, the roundups and the anguished scenes when soldiers came into the house and took the family away. Adults will need to explain the historical settings to kids; that is, the story is set in 1972 and the memories are of 1942. There is much to talk about. The father

tells of the attack on Pearl Harbor and talks therapeutically ("Sometimes in the end there is no right or wrong. . . . We have to put it behind us and move on"). But the sadness endures, and the questions: these were proud Americans, how could it happen to them? Connect this with the books in the Read-alikes column on the opposite page. *Hazel Rochman*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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