

# A Comprehensive Study Guide for Hisaye Yamamoto's "Seventeen Syllables"



## Study Guide for Hisaye Yamamoto's Seventeen Syllables (Course Hero Study Guides) by Emily Iftsits

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 562 KB

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Print length : 50 pages

Lending : Enabled



Hisaye Yamamoto's "Seventeen Syllables" is a powerful and moving short story that explores the complex experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II. The story follows Rosie, a young woman who is interned in a camp after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Through Rosie's experiences, Yamamoto explores the themes of prejudice, cultural identity, and the power of language.

## Themes

- **Prejudice and Discrimination:** "Seventeen Syllables" vividly portrays the prejudice and discrimination that Japanese Americans faced during World War II. Rosie is subjected to slurs, insults, and threats of violence, simply because of her Japanese ancestry. Yamamoto's story exposes the racism and xenophobia that was rampant in American society at the time.

- **Cultural Identity:** Rosie's experiences in the internment camp force her to confront her cultural identity. She is torn between her Japanese heritage and her American upbringing. Ultimately, she comes to embrace her Japanese identity, but she also recognizes the challenges that she will face as a Japanese American in post-war society.
- **The Power of Language:** Language plays a complex and important role in "Seventeen Syllables." Rosie's parents forbid her from speaking Japanese, fearing that it will make her seem too foreign. However, Rosie comes to realize that language is a powerful tool that can be used to express her identity and to connect with her heritage.

## Characters

- **Rosie:** The protagonist of "Seventeen Syllables," Rosie is a young Japanese American woman who is interned in a camp after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Rosie is a complex and sympathetic character, and her experiences in the camp force her to confront her cultural identity.
- **Rosie's Parents:** Rosie's parents are also interned in the camp. They are both traditional Japanese people, and they forbid Rosie from speaking Japanese. However, they also love and support Rosie, and they want her to have a good life.
- **Henry:** A young man who is also interned in the camp. Henry is a kind and compassionate person, and he becomes a close friend to Rosie. Henry helps Rosie to understand her Japanese heritage, and he supports her in her struggle to find her identity.

## Symbolism

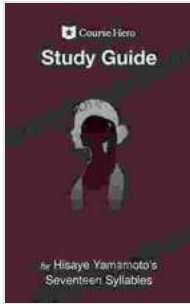
- **The Camp:** The camp is a symbol of the prejudice and discrimination that Japanese Americans faced during World War II. It is a place of confinement and isolation, and it represents the way that Japanese Americans were treated as outsiders and enemies.
- **The Seventeen Syllables:** The seventeen syllables of the haiku that Rosie writes at the end of the story represent her embrace of her Japanese heritage. The haiku is a traditional Japanese form of poetry, and it allows Rosie to express her feelings about her culture and her identity.

## Historical Context

"Seventeen Syllables" is set during World War II, a time of great upheaval and uncertainty for Japanese Americans. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were subjected to widespread discrimination and suspicion. Many were interned in camps, where they lived in cramped and unsanitary conditions. Yamamoto's story provides a glimpse into the lives of these Japanese Americans, and it sheds light on the challenges that they faced during this difficult time.

"Seventeen Syllables" is a powerful and moving story that explores the complex experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II. Through Rosie's experiences, Hisaye Yamamoto explores the themes of prejudice, cultural identity, and the power of language. "Seventeen Syllables" is a valuable resource for students and scholars who are interested in Japanese American literature, history, and culture.

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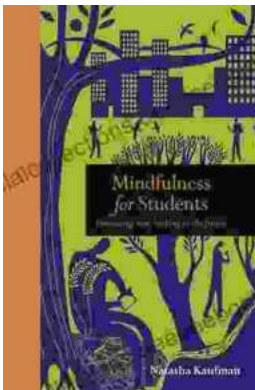
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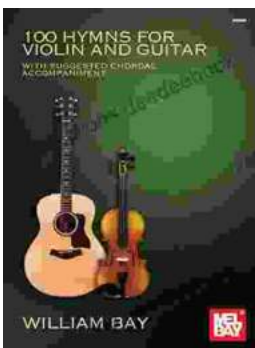
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