



[\*Love in the Library\*](#) by Maggie Tokuda-Hall, illustrated by Yas Imamura

Candlewick Press, 2022

ISBN: 9781536204308 (Hardcover); 9781536236668 (Paperback); 9781536225747 (Ebook)

\*Age Range: 6–9 (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 1–4 (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

---

*To fall in love is already a gift. But to fall in love in a place like Minidoka, a place built to make people feel like they weren't human—that was miraculous.*

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Tama is sent to live in a War Relocation Center in the desert. All Japanese Americans from the West Coast—elderly people, children, babies—now live in prison camps like Minidoka. To be who she is has become a crime, it seems, and Tama doesn't know when or if she will ever leave. Trying not to think of the life she once had, she works in the camp's tiny library, taking solace in pages bursting with color and light, love and fairness. And she isn't the only one. George waits each morning by the door, his arms piled with books checked out the day before. As their friendship grows, Tama wonders: Can anyone *possibly* read so much? Is she the reason George comes to the library every day? Maggie Tokuda-Hall's beautifully illustrated, elegant love story features a photo of the real Tama and George—the author's grandparents—along with an afterword and other back matter for readers to learn more about a time in our history that continues to resonate.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

---

★ “The author's gentle text captures the resilience of human dignity and optimism even during times of immense challenge and adversity. Imamura's stunning gouache and watercolor illustrations convey both the setting and the emotions of the characters. . . . Tokuda-Hall's author's note discussing her grandparents, Japanese incarceration camps, and the continuing impact of racism caps off this powerful must-read.” —[Booklist](#), **starred review**

★ “A stirring, compassionate narrative. . . . Fluid, dynamic gouache and watercolor illustrations by Imamura (*Winged Wonders*) spotlight the expressive internees' individualism amid a bleak landscape, immersing readers. . . . Alongside a sensitive introduction to life in Japanese internment camps, this picture book transcends its central romance to encompass love for books, community, and being 'human.’” —[Publishers Weekly](#), **starred review**

★ “This exquisite picture book, based on the experiences of the author's grandparents, tells a love story for the ages without sugarcoating history. . . . Illustrator Yas Imamura's soft, muted, earth-tone illustrations work wonders in bringing the characters and setting to life. Her fine, smooth lines gently capture the tenderness that permeates this tale.” —[BookPage](#), **starred review**

Updated 6/18/2025

Candlewick Press

publicity@candlewick.com

★ “This lovely, inspiring story unfolds in Imamura’s muted art, cushioning the harsh reality of how Japanese Americans were treated during World War II. . . . Tokuda-Hall recounts the true story of how her maternal grandmother and grandfather met in an internment camp in the 1940s and writes a stirring and heartbreaking paragraph about how ‘[h]ate . . . is an American tradition.’” —[School Library Journal](#), **starred review**

“Love and literature transcend hatred and incarceration in this picture book about the author’s maternal grandmother, who was the librarian at the Japanese internment camp where she met and married her husband.” —[The New York Times Book Review](#)

“The gentle text shows how, no matter how bleak the outlook, people can find ways to hope, dream, and endure. . . . Imamura’s soft, exquisite illustrations capture the physical locale, using light and shadow in powerful ways. . . . An evocative and empowering tribute to human dignity and optimism.” —[Kirkus Reviews](#)

“Full-spread gouache and watercolor illustrations along with smaller vignettes immerse viewers in camp life, depicting its hardships without overwhelming young readers. An earth-toned palette nevertheless remains light and hopeful.” —[The Horn Book](#)

“A revealing exposé of unjust history and an exceptional tribute to love. . . . Artist Yas Imamura (*The Gravity Tree*) uses gouache and watercolor to create remarkable illustrations that haunt, delight and capture the couple’s ‘improbable joy.’ . . . Library books and love sustain two young Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II in Maggie Tokuda-Hall’s exceptional picture book homage to her maternal grandparents.” —[Shelf Awareness](#)

“Maggie Tokuda-Hall’s maternal grandparents met and fell in love at the Minidoka incarceration camp in Idaho, and this beautifully illustrated picture book tells their poignant love story against the backdrop of the U.S.’ shameful treatment of its Japanese American citizens during World War II. . . . The graceful narrative, of the power of the human spirit to triumph over racism and injustice, is perfectly complemented by Yas Imamura’s delicate watercolors.” —[The Buffalo News](#)

“Yas Imamura’s gouache and watercolor illustrations show the bleakness of the camp as well as the beauty and love of the people inside it.” —[The Minnesota Star Tribune](#)

“Although the setting is heartbreaking, the human story is uplifting. This would be an excellent book to share with early elementary students and has beautiful illustrations.” —[The Omaha World Herald](#)

“It’s a story about finding hope even in a place of heartbreak—and an eye-opening look at the racism that Asian Americans continue to face.” —[SheKnows](#)

“Heartbreaking and heartwarming, this hopeful story shows us that beautiful things can happen even in terrible situations.” —[Brightly](#)

“Based on a true story about author Maggie Tokuda-Hall’s grandparents, this story shares the reality of living in an incarceration camp during WWII.” —[Tinybeans](#)

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

---

- A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
- A *Booklist* Editors' Choice
- A *BookPage* Best Children's Book of the Year
- A *Publishers Weekly* Best Children's Book of the Year
- A Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices List Selection
- A Georgia Children's Book Award Nominee
- A Black-Eyed Susan Book Award Nominee (Maryland)

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

---

- [New York Times Article: "Asked to Delete Racism from Her Book, an Author Refused"](#)
- [We Need Diverse Books Interview](#)
- [ABC News Interview: "Bay Area Author Refuses Scholastic's Suggested Revision to Cut 'Racism' References in Book"](#)
- [Blog Post by Maggie Tokuda-Hall: "Scholastic, and a Faustian Bargain"](#)
- [SheKnows Article: "Scholastic Requested an Author Not to Use This One Key Word in a Book About Racism & It's a Huge Red Flag"](#)
- [Teacher's Guide](#)
- [Author's Note](#)

## AUTHOR STATEMENT

---

When we guard children against the history of state-sanctioned, racist violence, but not the contemporary effects of it, we double their pain. Not only will they suffer, but they will suffer alone. And not only that, we create the permission structure for it to happen again.

## \*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

---

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.