

Itsuka

Joy Kogawa

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Profoundly political, exquisitely intimate, *Itsuka* reverberates with longing and hope. *The Canada Times* Already a Canadian bestseller, the sequel to Joy Kogawa's award-winning novel *Obasan* follows the character Naomi Nakane into adulthood, where she becomes involved in the movement for governmental redress. Much more overtly political than Kogawa's first book, the story focuses on reaching that *itsuka* someday when the mistreatment of those of Japanese heritage during World War II would be recognized. Although during the war both the United States and Canada interned Japanese-Americans and confiscated their property, when the war ended the property of those in Canada never returned to them. This is the story of the fight to get government compensation for the thousands of victims of the wartime internment, which was, unbelievably, only accomplished in 1988. Both a moving novel of self-discovery and a fascinating historical account of the fight for redress, *Itsuka* ends with a message of inspiration and hope."

Itsuka Details

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Author : Joy Kogawa

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From Reader Review Itsuka for online ebook

Aubrey says

4.5/5

Let's get one thing straight here. The first book of this sequence, *Obasan*, is a wound. A backstabbing. A systematic and military indoctrinated violence that swept up thousands and spat them back out in the paths of pedophiles and atomic bombs, including one girl who, in *Itsuka*, has grown to become a woman. One key aspect is that all of this was inherently, indubitably, intimately *political*. There is no natural disaster here. There is no Romanticism-tinged oh, the sky was cloudy, so of course the human beings had to be the same. There are rules, regulations, and war time exceptions, written, realized, idealized, and legalized, creating yet another artificial vacuum through isolation, expulsion, and liquidation, seemingly but hardly unique for having happened on Canadian soil. If you want a glimpse of an earlier one, try *Three Day Road* on for size, or *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* for an overlaid imperialism that this work briefly touches upon. In short, if you didn't like this book cause it was too 'political', you're lying. You just didn't like it when the people targeted by the political have had enough.

In terms of my own lower, if barely so, rating for this compared to the first, the simplest explanation is that it wasn't as cohesive to my personal tastes. Indeed, it was a relief to reach the so-called politics in the narrative, as the previous segments spawning from a foreshadowing medias res were a conscientiously bewildering and understandably slowed down coming of age of someone scrabbling for a handhold in a land that had torn her life apart. Once the petitions and the mailing lists and the negotiations began, I was in a familiar landscape where white people like me were more help than hurt. Before that, it was necessary to tread lightly, as what as I was witnessing was a highly individualized story, not a comprehensive history of how one can oppress in some places and be oppressed in others. For a time, everything was an uprooted tension trying its hardest to be 'normal' to the point of enforced banality, complete with rural evangelism, heteronormative domesticity, those who leave, and those who stay behind, making for a life that would have eventually stuttered to not a stop, but a long and persistent silence. Fortunately, for reason of this being a plot arc and semi-autobiographical in the coinciding with historical shifts sense of the phrase, there was a shift, and the medias res came back to carry a rise, and even a form of resolution, forward.

There is however, the matter of how complicated politics is, especially when one is attempting to frame a claim for justice that has a chance of being vindicated. This involves looking at others who have done the same, and can all too often involve invocations without solidarity, comparisons without respect, and a show of recognizing the flux of bigotry that is little more than a red herring in a sea of discourse. There were instances of this in the middle of the second half, and rather than be firmly ingrained in a true dialectic of the give and take social justice movements have with each other, each was there and gone; not glibly enough for dehumanization purposes, but still unmerited in terms of the bang for each buck. It wasn't enough to ruin the truly sustaining ending, but there's no point to engaging with politics if one doesn't acknowledge that they were not the first to seek redress, and they certainly won't be the last.

I'm not used to sequential books that are a one-two punch rather than a trilogy or something much more elongated in the genres of mystery and fantasy, so it was a good thing that I put so much space between the first party of the story and the second. A shorter engagement may have lessened how much energy I had to spend adjusting to the prose and the perspective, but these are events that would have been overwhelming even in the most straightforward of prose, as exemplified by *When the Emperor Was Divine*. Combined with surges of violent imagery both conjectured and otherwise, and you have a persecution turned recovery that, unless you were one of those targeted in such a way all those years ago, is emphatically not for you. That doesn't mean, however, that you aren't required to read it.

Molly says

This book is certainly a more political book than I expected, focusing on the redress won by Japanese Canadians in 1988 and the work that led up to that compensation. It focuses on a second generation Japanese Canadian woman who lived through the Japanese Internment Camps in WW II and is quietly fighting for redress next to her boisterous aunt.

I believe that I would have found the story boring if I weren't so interested in the political issues behind it, as there is a lack of significant movement in the character's lives outside of their work. But the issues of redress are thoroughly explained and, though it is a novel, I feel I learned more about WW II from this book than I did from some of my history courses in school.

I highly recommend this to anyone interested in the struggle of Japanese Canadians or Japanese Americans during and after WW II.

Candace Lacroix says

I loved Obasan, but this one was a little too political for my taste. Still a good read though.

Jaelyn says

I remember liking Obasan when I read it years ago, but I can't get into Kogawa's writing here.

Niki says

It began promisingly enough and then got mired in it's political message. I gave up, which I rarely do on a book, but life is too short and there are better books to spend time on.

Victoria Clifford says

This book and its prequel were recommended by my daughter. Though I found this one a bit more scattered in the telling of the events it did not dampen the impact of the fight of the Japanese Canadians for recognition of the injustice they suffered because of the war. This is a good insight into a family's fight for justice.

Valerie says

I read Obasan many, many years ago and it has remained in my mind as one of my all-time favourite books.

This one follows the story of the girl, now an adult and her life has unfolded. After many years, there is redress for Japanese Canadians and a formal apology from the government (sept 22, 1988). A good story. Makes me want to read *Obasan* again.

Rana Adham says

I, who knew nothing about Japanese Canadians and their problems during WW2, was swept away with Kogawa's writing. She had me interested since page 1.

I would love to read *Obasan* one day.

Krista says

I highly recommend Joy Kogawa's novels, *Obasan* and *Itsuka*. Both novels are beautifully written and tell such a powerful narrative of the Japanese Canadian internment experience and the struggle of redress.

Vionna says

A very interesting novel about the Japanese Canadians fight for redress after World War II. Her writing can be very poetic at time and she developed her characters very well.

Julia says

I can't believe this book doesn't have any reviews! I actually had to get it on inter-library loan because my local library didn't have it. I think it's pretty sad for a Canadian library not to have such a great Canadian book.

{Edit} I just realized this book is the same as *Itsuka*, but was re-titled in 2005 to *Emily Kato*. The editions are now combined.

I really enjoyed Joy Kogawa's first book in this series, *Obasan*, which was about Naomi Nakane's childhood during the Japanese-Canadian internment. This book follows her into her life as a teenager and adult in Alberta, and then her life changes as she moves to Toronto, and joins the movement of the Japanese Canadians for redress. It is so interesting. There's a lot in here that I think Canadians (and Americans) should learn more about. Kogawa explores a lot of themes: racism, spirituality, apathy, just to name a few. This book is packed. I whizzed through reading it, but would love to study it in further detail.

I definitely recommend reading it if you've read *Obasan*, and I would like to see this book read by more Canadians so this part of history doesn't get forgotten.

PRINCESS says

Itsuka(???) means sometime or one day. Itsuka can describe a thing in the future and the past.

My greatest respect to our author for putting such a magnificent manuscript in our hand to feel and understand her and all others who suffered during wars.

A political but on the other hand lyrical, inspired novel brings to readers attention the story of Japanese-Canadian community's long and aching battle for balancing!

Naomi was raised by her aunt whom she called her Obasan and her uncle in a farm. "Obasan" also is the first part of the sequel/author's book where we read about Naomi/Nazomi's memories during her childhood. They are brought to Vancouver (with her brother). Her brother Stephan is musically talented therefore to catch his dream he departs to Toronto and Naomi stays to be a schoolteacher. Later on she works for a magazine that is published for Japanese-Canadians and also in a campaign to win compensations from the Canadian government for the losses the community suffered during the war. She tries to focus on the struggle of Japanese-Canadian to find a political voice and an identity in their country and to heal the wounds. She talks about her adulthood and her relationship with her aunt and brother; her family.

Maybe one day all wrongs will be directed right.

The truth is no matter what we read, what we do, how much we try we will not feel what they have felt; we will not understand what they went through. They struggled in each single minute of their lives; during and after the war and to correct what went wrong will take ages and ages to rebuild a new generation carrying hope and inspirations.

Everyone has a voice that needs to be heard and this is voice of #Joy_Nozomi_Kogawa that needs to be heard.

4.5*

Brittany says

I was very disappointed in this sequel, as *Obasan* was a book I remembered reading in high school and liking very much. This, rather than being a personal account of someone's life, delved into something that I can't really put to paper, but I cannot say that I liked. Of course, it is possible that because this novel was so much more political than the last that is what turned me off of it, or the fact that the writing style is somewhat lacking (was I really reading something this simple my senior year in high school?).
