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**Snow Falling on Cedars**  
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Edited by Milo Petruziello and Cara Phipps for the Education and Outreach department at Portland Center Stage
**Act I**

Kabuo Miyamoto is a Japanese-American fisherman accused of killing Carl Heine, Jr., one of San Piedro’s most respected citizens. *Snow Falling on Cedars* opens in the town courtroom on the fictional island in the Puget Sound, and the sentiments of the townspeople weigh heavily against the accused. There is still much anti-Japanese sentiment in 1954 which has prejudiced much of the town against Kabuo. Alvin Hooks is the prosecuting attorney who seems to have all the evidence on his side. Leading the defense is the old, experienced Nels Gunderson who is working hard to reprieve Kabuo, though the defendant’s stoic manner does not help his case. The story weaves between this courtroom scene of 1954 and flashbacks to the past, revealing intimate details about the investigation conducted by the town sheriff, Art Moran, and his deputy, Abel Martinson, as well as a secret romance between Ishmael Chambers, the town’s one man newspaper covering the trial, and Kabuo’s wife, Hatsue. Townspeople come to testify including the deceased’s mother, Etta Heine, a racist who sold the Miyamoto family’s land while they were interned during the war. After her testimony, the story flashes back to events in the town which unfolded just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Act I ends with a marriage proposal from Ishmael and Hatsue’s family learning of their inevitable internment.

**Act II**

Act II begins with a chess game between Kabuo and Nels as Nels desperately tried to make Kabuo see he has to tell his story. As they argue, the story flashes back to the time Kabuo and Hatsue spent at the internment camp, Manzanar. Here, Hatsue’s mother, Fujiko, learns of the relationship between Ishmael and Hatsue and makes her end the relationship. She does so and begins a relationship with Kabuo which ends in marriage. In the meantime, Ishmael is away at war fighting the Japanese and ends up losing his arm, causing resentment toward the Japanese people. Back in the courtroom, a series of witnesses offer testimony that both sides try to use to their advantage. Just before Hatsue is set to take the stand to defend her husband, Ishmael makes a discovery that would exonerate Kabuo. As the story of the interaction between Carl Jr. and Kabuo on the night of Carl Jr.’s death unfolds, Ishmael has to decide if he will save Kabuo and give Hatsue happiness or take his revenge for what the Japanese did to him in the war.
I was born May 4, 1956, in Seattle, where I attended public schools and passed an unremarkable childhood informed by little in the way of novelty. I also went to college in Seattle at the University of Washington (taking a Bachelor’s degree in English literature and a Master’s in Creative Writing) and worked summers in those years for the United States Forest Service, burning slash in clearcuts, piling brush, maintaining trails and fighting wildfires.

Other jobs: I worked in two Seattle restaurants washing dishes and clearing tables and briefly ran a very poorly thought-out firewood business, which went bankrupt when my ‘49, three-ton Chevy lost its clutch and my partner succumbed to mononucleosis. I married at age 23. My wife and I passed 4 months in Europe with our first son, living in a Volkswagen van purchased at an American military base in Germany. Bankrupt again, we came back to Seattle, where I delivered newspapers each morning at 3AM. More kids (four total).

I spent twelve years as a teacher, ten at a public high school near Seattle. During that time I began to publish stories and essays in small magazines and periodicals, then sold pieces to Esquire, Sports Illustrated and Harper’s. My first book was published in 1989 (a story collection), my second in 1992 (essays on family and education), and my third in 1994 (*Snow Falling on Cedars*, winner of the PEN Faulkner Award). I’ve done a lot of freelance journalism, most of it on environmental issues, but some of it travel writing and human interest features.

I am a contributing editor to Harper’s and have done pieces for its pages on a great variety of subjects. I find that non-fiction is like breathing out between long bouts with fiction. I like to be out of doors and on foot as much as possible. I’ve roamed extensively across Washington State, where the vast majority of my published work is set. The heartbreaking beauty of the world speaks to me in a powerful way and I feel a constant compulsion to be in the presence of mountains, rivers, fields, coulees, canyons, breaks, draws, and woodlands. A sense of place informs much of my work, which is something I can’t seem to help.

Among the influences on David Guterson’s work are the physical environs of the Pacific Northwest, his family, and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. “I followed very much the same structure and addressed the same concerns,” he says of Harper Lee’s classic and his own award-winning novel, *Snow Falling On Cedars*. “I’m glad that book was part of my life.”

Other books written by David Guterson:


*East of the Mountains* (2000)
JAPANESE INTERNMENT
Between 1901 and 1907, almost 110,000 Japanese immigrated to the United States. They were drawn by promises of ready work—American railroads actually sent recruiters to Japanese port cities, offering laborers three to five times their customary wages—and by worsening economic conditions in their homeland, which was undergoing social upheaval in the aftermath of the Meiji Restoration. Although many originally came as dekaseginin—temporary sojourners—work was plentiful; not only on the railroads, but in the lumber camps, salmon fisheries, and fruit orchards of Oregon and Washington. Increasingly, the newcomers stayed on. Many purchased their own farms. In time, these issei—first-generation Japanese—started families.

Very quickly the newcomers encountered antagonism. Although Japanese constituted less than two percent of all immigrants to the U.S., newspapers trumpeted an “invasion.” The mayor of San Francisco proclaimed that “the Japanese are not the stuff of which American citizens can be made.” The Sacramento Bee warned that “the Japs . . . will increase like rats” if allowed to settle down. The Asiatic Exclusion League agitated for legislation to halt all Japanese immigration. Politicians ran for office on anti-Japanese platforms. In 1923, the state of Oregon prohibited issei from legally buying land. A year later, Congress passed the National Origins Act, which banned all immigration from Japan.

Following the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, hostility turned into paranoia—and paranoia became law. Japanese who had lived in America for thirty years were accused of spying for their native land. The day after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Treasury Department ordered all Japanese-owned businesses closed and all issei bank accounts frozen. The U.S. government had already compiled lists of Japanese whose loyalties might be suspect, and more than 1,000 businessmen, community leaders, priests, and educators were arrested up and down the West Coast.

In February 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which empowered the government to remove “any and all” persons of Japanese ancestry from sensitive military areas in four western states. Japanese residents had only days in which to evacuate. They were compelled to sell their land and businesses for a fraction of their value, or to lease them to neighbors who would later refuse to pay their rent. All told, some 110,000 Japanese Americans were deported from their homes to hastily built camps such as Tule Lake and Manzanar, where they lived behind barbed wire for the duration of the war.

Neither Germans nor Italians living in this country were subject to similar restrictions, and recently declassified documents reveal that the Japanese population was never considered a serious threat to American security. In all of World War II, no person of Japanese ancestry living in the United States, Alaska, or Hawaii was ever charged with any act of espionage or sabotage. As one issei later wrote, the victims of Executive Order 9066 were people whose “only crime was their face.”

In 1988, the U.S. government formally apologized to Japanese citizens who had been deprived of their civil liberties during World War II.

The following excerpt is taken from an interview with Mae Ninomiya for the Oregon History Project.

Let me begin my story from the Assembly Center, the former Pacific International Exposition Building on Marine Drive. This was the first place we entered in May of 1942.

We were housed in a barn where the animals had been placed for the exhibition show. Our compartment had plywood flooring covering the entryway. The only furniture was the six cots for our family of six. Our clothes were in two suitcases we were allowed for the entire family. Since we had very few changes of clothes, our greatest pleasure was to order more dresses or necessities through the Montgomery Ward Catalog.

Our endurance throughout the hot summer days, with the penetration of animal odors and our anxiety over our future, finally came to a close in September. We were all hurled into trains for our next home, Hunt, Idaho.

We spent our time with friends with whom we had mingled only occasionally. I feel our family life was lost during those crucial years of growing up. There was no congeniality and no conversation among my brothers and myself because each went our own way. There was no closeness among our peer groups.

Except for my parents, we all found some kind of occupation. Since I had two years of junior college I was employed as a teacher of third graders in math, English, writing, spelling, and reading. Our classes were held in the morning in the large arena. Our desks were the benches. Books and supplies were furnished to us by the Portland Public Schools.

This work was very challenging for me. The students were eager to learn and I felt that, in that short time, we were able to accomplish a great deal. I did receive a paycheck of $12 per month. The pay schedule went according to the work performed with the least being $9.

Our social life was limited but we did enjoy dancing to the big bands through recorded music. Occasionally movies were shown. Our treats were fried chicken orders brought in by a chicken specialty circle of friends. I had been dating Nug and so I did spend a great deal of time with him and his friends.

In September we were transferred to Hunt, Idaho at the Minidoka Relocation Center which was a permanent place. It resembled an army camp built
on the specifications of row after row of khaki-colored barracks with a center mess hall, laundry and lavatory facilities. It was located in barren, sagebrush country. When we arrived it was so hot and windy. It did not appeal to me as a place I wanted to spend the rest of the war days.

Notice was soon given that anyone with a prospective job or school, could, upon approved application and investigation, be permitted to leave. My first ambition was to further my education, but since my parents did not approve of this, I looked for a job close by. I was able to obtain a job in Preston, Idaho, as a “nanny” caring for twin girls. They were living with their grandmother while their parents traveled. The travel time was required because he was manager of the Utah-Idaho sugar beet industry. I spent from December of 1942 to May of 1943 with them.

Nug was working as a farm laborer topping sugar beets and other odd farm jobs in Caldwell, Idaho. Since marriage was in our plans, he rented a cabin in a farm labor camp where my parents could come to spend the summer working on farms nearby. They returned to Minidoka in December of 1943. Nug and I were married on December 15th at the Minidoka Recreation Hall.

We lived at the Caldwell Labor Camp picking up all types of jobs. In the winter months we picked chicken feathers and summer months we were both able to pick peas and top onions. Nug worked for Mr. Button as a handyman and so he was employed all the year around.

In May of 1945 Nug was called to active duty and told to report to Fort Douglas, Utah. But, after 15 days, V-J was declared and the war was over. He was released to return home.

At the time of our evacuation, I was very bitter. The only country we knew evicted us from our homes and our businesses. When the controversy of evacuation began to emerge I was of the opinion that my alien folks and minor brothers would be interned. But, never did I think I would be involved since I had reached adulthood. But, my dad said “Shikata Ga Nai” (There is nothing we can do, so make the best of it.) That was his philosophy.
Guterson refers to the fictional island of San Piedro found off the coast of Washington State as a community of “five thousand damp souls”. The islanders support themselves through salmon fishing and berry farming. The residents live in close proximity to one another but are physically and geographically isolated from the rest of the world. Similarly their lifestyle culturally isolates them from nearby urban areas, such as Seattle. The community is a fragile microcosm exacerbated by the isolation. The following article is the actual history of Friday Harbor on the San Juan Island.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SAN JUAN ISLAND & FRIDAY HARBOR

The San Juan Islands were inhabited by the Northern Straits Salish peoples for at least 9,000 years prior to European contact. The Northern Straits Salish include the Lummi and Mitchell Bay Indians, who believe San Juan Island to be their place of origin.

Other Native people inhabited the islands seasonally, preserving food in summer for winters spent elsewhere. All were drawn to the islands by the rich abundance of food and materials found here.

European exploration of the archipelago was begun by the Spanish in the late 18th century with key mapping expeditions occurring in 1791 and 1792 by Captain Francisco de Eliza.

A British expedition led by Captain George Vancouver also occurred in 1792. The 1846 Oregon Treaty established the northwest boundary between Canada and the US as the 49th parallel, except in the San Juan Archipelago, where mapping inaccuracies would later result in conflict between the U.S. and British governments.

Hudson’s Bay Company

As with the orca, the Straits Salish followed the salmon from the ocean into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, toward San Juan Island, and beyond. So too, did the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), which by the mid-1800s was one of the world’s first international business conglomerates trading in raw materials.

The HBC established forts at what is now Vancouver, WA, as well as throughout Oregon and into northern Washington, Canada and Alaska. Their trade routes saw the export of beaver pelts, salmon, timber, wheat and other products to far away places, including England, the Hawaiian Islands, Asia and Russia.

In 1853, British Chief Factor, James Douglas (from Fort Victoria, BC), and HBC employees imported over 1,300 sheep to graze on an expanse of prairie on the southern tip of San Juan Island.

While this area was ideal for agriculture and livestock, Douglas’s primary purpose was political. The presence of British agricultural interests would solidify Great Britain’s claim to the island, which had been in dispute with the United States since the two nations signed the Treaty of Oregon in 1846.

The Pig War

Soon thereafter, the Americans responded by dispatching a federal customs collector and a sheriff from the American mainland, for the purpose of collecting back taxes on the HBC sheep. Relations between
the two nations became even more strained when a small number of Americans left the Fraser River Gold Rush to homestead on San Juan Island.

It was the shooting of a garden-marauding British pig by an American homesteader that escalated the dispute to the verge of war. These competing claims, and the international standoff that followed, are referred to as the infamous Pig War.

Early Friday Harbor

HBC employees came to the San Juans following the company’s numerous international trade routes. One Hawaiian sheep herder and Hudson Bay employee, known as “Friday”, settled the area of what is now the town of Friday Harbor. This caused many to refer to the place as “Friday’s Harbor”. (Another town naming story has a ship’s captain shouting to shore “what bay is this?” heard the reply of “Friday” in response to the misheard question “what day is this?”)

Friday Harbor (the ‘s’ was dropped over time) was blessed with the right natural attributes—a protected harbor and good anchorage—and by the 1870’s, a handful of farsighted promoters had built the town’s first general stores, hotels, and saloons. In 1873, Friday Harbor was named the county seat of the islands.

By 1900, Friday Harbor boasted a population of three or four hundred residents. Road and telephone networks linked the town to the rest of the island. The community was growing, and by then had added a bank, US Customs, a weekly newspaper, drugstore, barber, a grade school, theatre, four large wharves and warehouses, a cannery, creamery, two churches, fraternal halls, and a number of handsome, substantial homes.

What these buildings had in common was simplicity of design. They were attractive and functional, but without elaborate ornamentation or frills. Typically, both residential and commercial buildings were built with local timber. Money was not so plentiful that it could be used for the unnecessary, and so most buildings were painted white, more for functional protection against rot, than for decoration.

Sailing ships, and later, steamships came in and out of the harbor on a regular basis, hauling passengers, mail and freight. They took the island’s bounty: apples, pears, cherries, strawberries, peas, cream, eggs, chicken, sheep, grain, lime, timber and salmon “down (the) Sound.”

In 1909 Friday Harbor became incorporated, and to this day has the distinction of being the only incorporated town in the islands of San Juan County.

After incorporation, Friday Harbor came into its own, prospering and riding the economic ups and downs of the day. The vagaries of the marketplace, the Great Depression, WWII, the pea weevil, and the competition from Eastern Washington agriculture brought about the decline of traditional island industries. Friday Harbor’s fortunes declined with them.

The town wore a pinched look until the late 1960s, when tourism, retirement, real estate, construction, the arts and a variety of cottage industries began to take hold.

Friday Harbor Today

Today, the town is again busy and prosperous. Just over 2000 people live within the town boundaries, with another 4000 islanders living in the unincorporated areas of the island.

Though the traditional industries have all but vanished, there are still many visible reminders of the pioneer era—fragments of 100-year old orchards, kitchen gardens, turn-of-the-century wooden buildings and companionable roof lines—all acquaint islander and visitor alike with Friday Harbor’s spirited early days.

Content provided by Nancy Larsen, Sandy Strehlou, Mike Vouri and the National Park Service.
Discussion Questions and Exploration Activities
Compiled by Maggie Ruble

1. Racial tensions after World War two and the internment camps were incendiary- could similar events occur in the United States today because of the Iraq war? In what ways is the discrimination today similar and different?

2. Guterson comments on love bridging the divide between cultures, and then destroying those around it- Can love be totally transcendent between warring factions? Or does it just create more issues when it span divides?

3. America’s laws say that we are innocent until proven guilty- but is this the way that cases seem to play out? Argue for or against the as that Americas beliefs adhere to our laws in this regard. Is an accusation as good as condemnation?

Original Sources and Links to Further Research

David Guterson

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