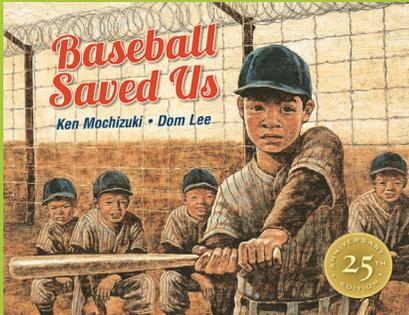


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



## Baseball Saved Us

written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee

### About the Book

**Genre:** Historical Fiction

**\*Reading Level:** Grade 3

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–6

**Guided Reading Level:** O

**Accelerated Reader®**

**Level/Points:** 3.9/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** AD550L

\*Reading level based on the  
Spache Readability Formula

**Themes:** United States History, Sports and Sports History (Baseball), Prejudice, Identity and Pride, Self Esteem and Confidence, Families (Fathers), Childhood Experiences and Memories, World War II and Japanese Concentration Camps, Leadership, Courage, Persistence and Overcoming Obstacles, Tolerance and Acceptance, Immigration and Citizenship, Japanese Americans, Asian/Asian American Interest

### SYNOPSIS

*Baseball Saved Us*—first published in 1993—is the groundbreaking children’s book about the Japanese American concentration camp experience during World War II.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Shorty and his family, along with thousands of other Japanese Americans, have been forced to relocate from their home to Camp. One day Shorty’s dad looks out across the desert and decides they should build a baseball field. Fighting the heat, dust, and freezing cold nights, the prisoners need something to look forward to, even if only for nine innings. So in this unlikely place, surrounded by barbed-wire fences and guards in towers, a baseball league is born. And Shorty soon finds that he is playing not only to win, but to gain dignity and self-respect.

Inspired by a long-hidden and shameful part of America’s past, and the people who triumphed over it, this modern classic remains a moving story of hope, courage, and endurance.

“This unflinching narrative movingly captures a young boy’s bewilderment over events that make no logical sense. *Baseball Saved Us* was groundbreaking for its honesty when it was first published twenty-five years ago, and is just as fresh—and important—today.”

—Kathleen T. Horning, Director, Cooperative Children’s Book Center, University of Wisconsin School of Education



## BACKGROUND

**From the Author's Note:** In 1942, while the United States was at war with Japan, the United States Army moved all people of Japanese descent away from the West Coast. They were sent to concentration camps in the middle of American deserts up until 1945. The reason, the US government said, was because it could not tell who might be loyal to Japan. None of these immigrants from Japan—or their children, who were American citizens—were ever proven to be dangerous to America during World War II. In 1988, the US government admitted that what it did was wrong.

**Internment Camps:** After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which enabled the evacuation and incarceration of all those of Japanese ancestry in the United States. 120,000 people, most of whom were American citizens, were sent to ten camps for four years (1942–1946). The camps were in isolated areas throughout the West. A map of the camps is available from the Japanese American National Museum (<http://www.janm.org/projects/clasc/map.htm>). According to PBS's "The Children of the Camps Project," half of the 120,000 sent to camps were children (<http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/>). Japanese Americans lost their property and savings while incarcerated.

For additional teacher resources, please check out:

- "Teaching with Primary Resources: Japanese American Internment Teacher's Guide" from The Library of Congress, includes photographs (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/internment/>)
- "Life in a WWII Japanese American Internment Camp" from OurStory, a website created by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History to encourage adults and children in grades K–4 to read historical fiction and biography

together (<http://amhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/internment/index.html>)

- "Japanese American Incarceration: The Core Story" from Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project (<http://www.densho.org/core-story/>)
- "Japanese Relocation and Internment During World War II" from the US National Archives and Records Administration (<http://www.archives.gov/research/aic/reference/military/japanese-internment.html>)

## Additional titles to teach about World War II:

***The School the Aztec Eagles Built*** written by Dorinda Makanaonalani Nicholson  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-school-the-aztec-eagles-built>

***A Place Where Sunflowers Grow*** written by Amy Lee-Tai, illustrated by Felicia Hoshino  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-place-where-sunflowers-grow>

***Flowers from Mariko*** written by Rick Noguchi & Deneen Jenks, illustrated by Michelle Reiko Kumata  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/flowers-from-mariko>

***Heroes*** written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/heroes>

***Passage to Freedom*** written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom>

***Irena's Jars of Secrets*** written by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Ron Mazellan  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets>



## VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

### Content Specific

infield bases, Pearl Harbor, barracks, crate, sagebrush, irrigation ditches, bleachers, catcher, grounded out, single (type of base hit), hitter, championship, pitches, strike out, guardhouse, home plate, horsing around, mattresses, inning, horse stalls, cloth sacks, on the mound

### Academic

endless, government, mumbled, funneled, uniforms, glinting, staring, suddenly, probably, expected, dashed, teammates, grin, blinding, pretend, roared, tower

**NOTE:** The book depicts a moment where the main character is called the racial slur “Jap.” Students may need additional historical context and awareness concerning the use of the offensive term.

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues does the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. Read both the Author’s Note and Illustrator’s Note at the beginning of the book. Ask students: What do you know about World War II, Pearl Harbor, and concentration camps in the United States? How might you and your family feel if your freedom and home were taken away?
3. Describe what you know about baseball. How might baseball save people?
4. Have you ever had a nickname? How can a nickname make you feel like you belong or feel like you don’t belong?
5. Describe a time you felt left out or did not belong. How did you make yourself feel better? Who did you ask for help? What can you do if you see someone alone, feeling left out, or being teased?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *Baseball Saved Us*, means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What events and experiences might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?
2. Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, endpapers, dedications, title page, author’s note,



illustrator's note, illustrations, and author and illustrator's bios.

3. As you show each of the illustrations, ask students to think about why the illustrator, Dom Lee, chooses to create an overall uniform tone and what effect his style has on the mood and setting of the historical fiction story.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- about life in a concentration camp
- why Shorty and others create a baseball field and league
- what impact the baseball league has on the day-to-day experiences and wellbeing/state of mind of the incarcerated people
- to what the title, *Baseball Saved Us*, refers

Encourage students to consider why the author, Ken Mochizuki, wanted to share this story with young people.

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses.

**To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why are Shorty, his family, and other Japanese Americans at the camp? How did they get there?
2. What is the purpose of the camp?
3. Describe the hardships Shorty, his family, and the other Japanese Americans at the camp face.
4. How does Shorty feel about living in the concentration camp? How does his father feel? How does his brother Teddy feel?
5. Who is the narrator of the story?
6. What is notable about the fence on the cover of the book? What is the purpose of the fence?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why does Shorty's father decide to build a baseball field and form a league? What is he worried about?
2. Why does Teddy not want to obey his father? Why does this concern Shorty and Teddy's father?
3. Why is hope important for enduring life at the camp?
4. What is the cause of Shorty's big hit at the end of the story?
5. What do you think the guard is thinking while watching Shorty and his teammates build the field and play baseball?
6. How is Shorty's life at the camp similar to and different from his life outside the camp?



“Using scratchboard overlaid with oils, Lee provides splendidly evocative art. . . . Fine debuts for author, illustrator, and publisher.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“These collaborators’ prepossessing debut look introduces readers to a significant and often-neglected—for children at any rate—chapter in U.S. history.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Ken Mochizuki . . . captures the confusion, wonder and terror of a small child. . . . The illustrations by Dom Lee . . . add a proper serious mood to this fine book.”

—*The New York Times*

7. Guards are always watching Shorty and the others in the camp. How do you think they feel about being watched all the time?
8. How does Shorty’s life change, if at all, before, during, and after incarceration? How does his life get better after the camp? How does his life get worse?
9. Compare and contrast the baseball field in the concentration camp to the one outside the camp. On which field would you prefer to play? Why?
10. When Shorty hits a homerun in the camp, the guard grins and gives a thumbs-up. Why do you think the guard does this? How do you think this homerun makes the guard and Shorty feel?
11. If Shorty had not hit a homerun at the end of the story, how do you think his teammates would have treated him? Why?
12. Read the author’s note and illustrator’s note again after reading the story. What are the author’s and illustrator’s purposes in creating this story for young people? Do you think they achieves their goals? Why or why not?
13. Do you think the United States government was justified in forcibly relocating Japanese and Japanese Americans to concentration camps during World War II? Why or why not? Does it matter that the majority of people were American citizens? Does it matter that there was little evidence that the people who were incarcerated posed a danger to the United States? Does it matter that no other group of people was forcibly relocated to the camps despite the United States was at war with other countries in addition to Japan?
14. Why do you think the author, Ken Mochizuki, chooses to make the narrator a child? How does this affect the impact of the book?
15. Why do you think the author, Ken Mochizuki, only uses the main character’s nickname, Shorty?
16. How is the main character’s nickname (Shorty) used to show he is both accepted and rejected by his teammates and peers? Why do people have nicknames? How can nicknames make people feel?
17. Why do you think the author, Ken Mochizuki, writes a historical fiction story instead of a nonfiction story? How does this choice help readers learn about the events and time period? How does this choice influence how readers feel about the events and time period?
18. Could something like this happen today? Why or why not?



19. Are you surprised by the way Shorty and the other in the camp are treated? Why or why not?
20. What does the title, *Baseball Saved Us*, mean? To whom does the “us” refer? How does baseball save them? Do you think this is a fitting title? Why or why not?
21. Baseball is often referred to as America’s national pastime. Why is the decision to play baseball instead of another sport or activity a powerful message to both those inside and outside the camp?

### Reader’s Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. Imagine you are Shorty in the story. Write a letter to a friend outside the concentration camp or a diary entry describing how you feel about being in the camp. What is life like there?
2. Describe a time you felt that you did not belong or fit in. Why did you feel that way? What did you do to make yourself feel better or resolve the situation? Who did you ask for help? What advice do you have for someone experiencing bullying or exclusion?
3. Describe a time you had to present in front of others (in a game, school play, art performance, speech, etc.). What advice do you have for someone who feels nervous, shy, or scared about doing well?
4. In your opinion, what does it mean to be American? If you were being interviewed and asked to describe what it means to be an American, how would you respond? Write your response.
5. What in the story reminds you of a moment in your own life or do you connect to the most? Why?

6. The Japanese Americans were wrongly accused of not being trustworthy. Describe a time you were wrongly accused of doing something that was considered wrong. What happened? How did you feel? Were you punished? What did you learn?

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the book with strong English readers/ speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader. Students who speak and read Spanish may benefit from using the Spanish edition, *El béisbol nos salvo* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2481>).
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students’ level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about which moment in the story they connect with most and reminds them of something in their lives.
5. The story contains some content-specific words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students’ prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple



vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9; Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. Have students write a newspaper article about Shorty's homerun in the camp. They should include a description of the baseball field and explain why the teams are playing baseball in the desert.
2. Ask students to imagine they are Shorty and have them write diary entries telling how Shorty feels when he hit his first homerun. Students should discuss their

feelings about the guard in the tower who wore sunglasses.

3. Divide the class in half. Assign one group to write a letter from Shorty to the guard and the other group to write a letter from the guard to Shorty. What would each group say to the other about baseball, the camp, and the homerun? Have students pair up from opposite groups to read the letters to each other. As a whole group, reflect on writing as Shorty and the guard and imagining someone else's perspective.
4. Have students read and compare *Heroes* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2403>) to *Baseball Saved Us*. Why are Shorty in *Baseball Saved Us* and Donnie in *Heroes* treated like they are the "enemy?" How would you teach children around the United States what it means to be an American?
5. Retell *Baseball Saved Us* as a poem.

### Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9)  
(Writing Standards, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Have students work in teams to research each of the ten World War II Japanese concentration camps in the United States. Groups should be prepared to report where the camp was located, the number of people held, when people were released, and if the camp has special historical landmark status. As each group presents, mark the location of the camp on a large class map of the United States.
2. Have students investigate World War II and Pearl Harbor. Make a timeline with students contributing their findings.
3. Provide copies of Executive Order 9066 for students to analyze the authorization of the establishment of the concentration camps (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5154>). Have students discuss



President Roosevelt’s use of the term “alien enemies.” Then provide students copies of the Presidential Letter of Apology from President Clinton in 1993 (<http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/clinton.html>). Have students write about the role the president or executive branch has in upholding the rights of American citizens.

## Physical Education

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 & 5)

1. If possible, take students outside to play a game of baseball or kickball. Have students take turns trying the different positions on the field. Afterward, reflect as a group on how baseball is a team sport and what it takes to be successful as a team. Also have students consider why baseball would be a good choice of activity for the people in the concentration camp in *Baseball Saved Us*.
2. Study human anatomy in relation to throwing a pitch in baseball. What muscles and muscle groups are involved in throwing a ball? What exercises can an athlete perform to strengthen those muscles? Students can demonstrate understanding with 2-D pictures of the human form or reconstruction using modeling clay.

## Art

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7)  
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Show students photographs of monuments and paintings depicting significant events in United States history. Have students design a monument to remember Japanese Americans’ experiences in the concentration camps. What mood or tone do students want to evoke in viewers? After students present their ideas, show them real examples of monuments or

places set aside to remember this period in United States history.

2. Have students examine the illustrations in *Baseball Saved Us*. Why do you think the illustrator, Dom Lee, chooses to color the illustrations this way? What mood or tone do the illustrations set for the story? Do the colors of the illustrations remind students of old photographs? Why or why not? After the discussion, ask students to write their opinions.
3. Students in small teams should research Japanese American artists who were incarcerated during World War II. If examples of some of the artwork is available, display it in the classroom.

## Home-School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. There are many resources and science experiments that explain the biomechanics of pitching. Additionally, encourage students to practice throwing a ball with their families and determining how body position and physics affect the speed and accuracy of a pitch. Check out these science experiments and games at Science Buddies: ([http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fairprojects/project\\_ideas/Sports\\_p053.shtml](http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fairprojects/project_ideas/Sports_p053.shtml)) and Exploratorium (<http://www.exploratorium.edu/baseball/>).
2. Invite students to interview a family member about an athlete he or she saw who had to overcome obstacles. What challenges did the person face (racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, language barrier, etc.)? How did the sports community react? How did the team react? Have students



write down the answers to their interview questions and share them in class.

3. If a student has a family member who has a connection to World War II or the concentration camps and feels comfortable sharing, invite the person to discuss her or his experiences with the class. Help students prepare a list of questions for the guest. Students should write a reflection on what they learned after the guest speaker's visit. Have students write thank-you letters following the guest's visit.
4. Shorty's father decides to create a baseball field and team in the camp. Write a story sharing a time when someone in your life had a great idea and made you proud. What happened?

## Awards & Honors

**Parent's Choice Gold Award**

**Best Books of the Year**, Bank Street College

**Books to Read Aloud with Children of All Ages**, Bank Street College

**Not Just for Children Anymore Selection**, Children's Book Council

**"Choices,"** Cooperative Children's Book Center

**40 Books About Sports**, Cooperative Children's Book Center

**50 Multicultural Books Every Child Should Know**, Cooperative Children's Book Center

**"Close the Book on Hate" Reading List**, Anti-Defamation League

**Washington State Governor's Writers Award**

**Washington State Children's Choice Award Finalist**

**"Editor's Choice,"** *San Francisco Chronicle*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ken Mochizuki** is a novelist, journalist, and former actor. He lives in Maple Valley, Washington, where he teaches, writes children's books, and gives presentations about his work. Mochizuki collaborated with illustrator Dom Lee on his first picture book, *Baseball Saved Us*, as well as on *Heroes, Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*, and *Be Water, My Friend: The Early Years of Bruce Lee*, all published by LEE & LOW BOOKS. *Baseball Saved Us* launched Mochizuki's career as a children's book author and is also one of the first three titles LEE & LOW BOOKS published in 1993. During World War II, Mochizuki's parents were sent to the Minidoka camp in Idaho. Visit him online at [kenmochizuki.com](http://kenmochizuki.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Dom Lee** was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea. He has a master's degree in fine arts from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. With his unique style of art combining techniques of painting and scratching details in encaustic wax, Lee has illustrated many award-winning picture books. Lee and Mochizuki's four children's books together have earned many awards, including "Choices" selections from the Cooperative Children's Book Center, Parents' Choice Award, Texas Bluebonnet Award Masterlist, American Library Association's Notable Children's Book, Pick of the Lists from *American Bookseller*, and Smithsonian's Notable Children's Book. He lives in Hollis, New York. His website is [domandk.com](http://domandk.com).

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher in the United States specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when the company was founded in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

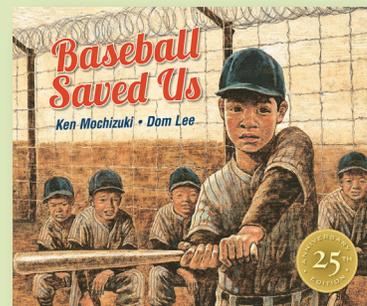
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for

*Baseball Saved Us*



\$9.95, PAPERBACK

9781880000199

32 pages

\*Reading Level: Grade 3

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: O

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: 3.9/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD550L

**THEMES:** United States History, Sports and Sports History (Baseball), Prejudice, Identity and Pride, Self Esteem and Confidence, Families (Fathers), Childhood Experiences and Memories, World War II and Japanese Concentration Camps, Leadership, Courage, Persistence and Overcoming Obstacles, Tolerance and Acceptance, Immigration and Citizenship, Japanese Americans, Asian/Asian American Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.