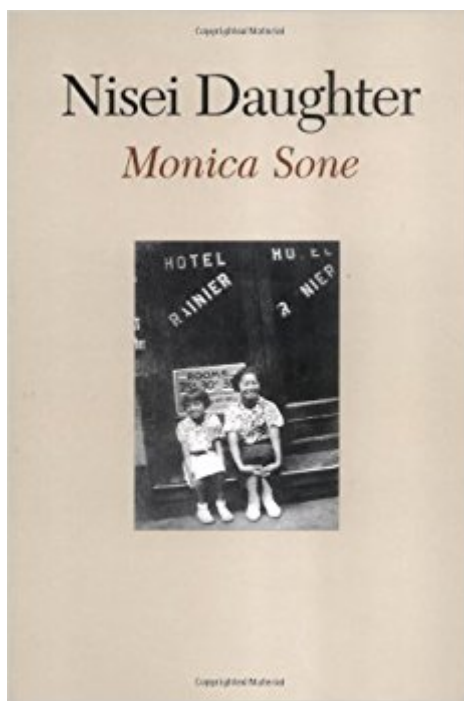


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# Nisei Daughter



## Synopsis

With charm, humor, and deep understanding, a Japanese American woman tells how it was to grow up on Seattle's waterfront in the 1930s and to be subjected to "relocation" during World War II. Along with some 120,000 other persons of Japanese ancestry--77,000 of whom were U.S. citizens--she and her family were uprooted from their home and imprisoned in a camp. In this book, first published in 1952, she provides a unique personal account of these experiences. "Monica Sone's account of life in the relocation camps is both fair and unsparing. It is also deeply touching, and occasionally hilarious." --New York Herald Tribune "The deepest impression that this unaffected, honest little story made on me was of smiling courage." --San Francisco Chronicle

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Part of Nisei Daughter's charm is the way Sone is able to weave entertaining anecdotes throughout her tale, a story which is essentially about what being Japanese American in the time around wartime America meant to her. Specifically, her position as a Nisei daughter -- child of first generation Japanese Americans -- is the focus of this tale. The disappointing thing about this book is how obviously self-censored the book is. Sone very briefly reveals deeply felt rage and resentment at intervals during the book, only to shake them off and quickly change to a more light-hearted topic. Granted, there is an ironic tone to many of her comments and situations, and again granted, she is writing for a post-war audience that probably would not be receptive to outspoken criticism of the Internment, but still Sone seems to sugar coat the experience just a bit too much for my tastes. By

the end, with the patriotic speeches that make it sound like the Internment was as much the fault of the Japanese Americans as it was the government, I was getting a little tired of Sone's carefree and apologetic tone, especially after the highly charged preface. In the book, Sone all but thanks the government for interning her and her family and giving them this character-building experience. If you are truly interested in the internment and the impact it had on the Japanese Americans, try a book like Joy Kogawa's "Obasan." It's written about the Japanese Canadian experience, which was even more extreme than the Japanese American one. Kogawa also experienced internment first hand, but "Obasan" is written far enough after the fact that Kogawa is able to give the story more perspective and is able to put a more honest face on what really happened.

This is the story told by a daughter of Japanese immigrants growing up in pre-World War II Seattle. She was in college when Pearl Harbor struck. I think the best parts of this memoir deal with the description of Japanese culture and the conflict between the Americanism of the Nisei and their Issei parents most of whom heavily maintained Japanese customs. Perhaps the funniest part of the latter in the book takes place during the wedding reception held for her brother Henry and his bride in their camp in Idaho during the war. I'd have to say that the best written, the most vivid part of the book is the family trip to visit relatives in Japan where her little brother Kenji fatally contracted dysentery. I'm guessing that this trip must have taken place around 1929. The author gets released from camp mid-way through the war to go live with some former missionaries in Chicago who are very nice. She works for a dentist who is, however, a real pain in the butt and she eventually quits. She then gets the opportunity to go attend Wendell college in Indiana where she lives with a nice old widow and she says that this college was full of a lot of diverse foreign students. She made many close friends. During her post-camp period, her faith in American democracy was largely restored because she met so many nice white Americans who weren't racist louts. The book ends on a sort of patriotic note which I can't follow completely. In Chicago she was often mistaken for Chinese and people told her how much they respected the Chinese people, America's ally and she was sometimes mistaken for various Chinese celebrities. It's obvious, that the author, who at the time of this 1979 edition, was still a clinical psychologist, knows how to write.

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