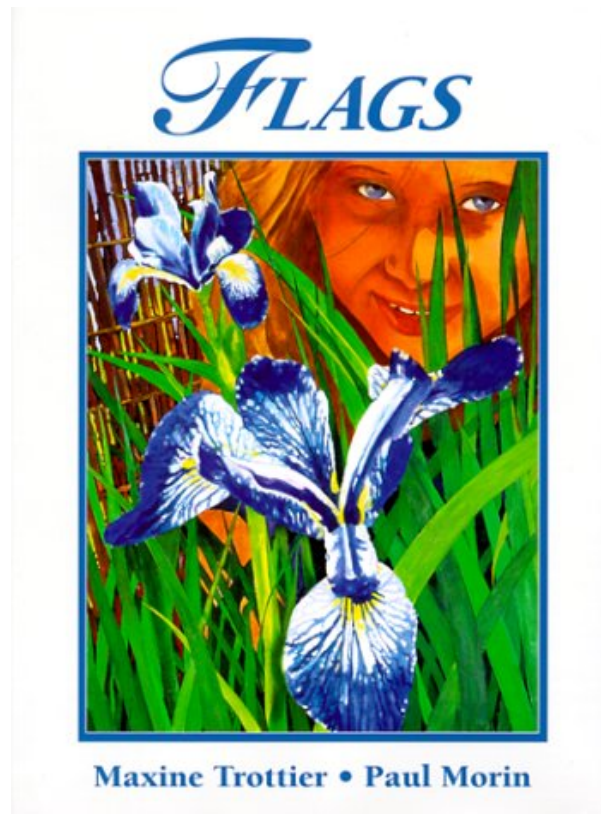


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From School Library Journal

Grade 1-4-While visiting her grandmother on the Pacific coast, Mary becomes friendly with a neighbor, Mr. Hiroshi, who shares his wonderful garden with her. She has never seen a garden that includes sand, moss, graveled paths, stepping stones, and a small pond stocked with koi. Surrounding the pond are small blue irises her grandmother calls flags, which give the story its name. The first hint that the story takes place in the 1940s comes when Mary's grandmother reads in the newspaper that Japanese people are being removed from their homes and sent to camps. Soon, soldiers take Mr. Hiroshi away. When his house is sold, Mary and her grandmother release the koi into a river and the child takes a flat stone and two iris bulbs. Once home, she begins her own garden with them. The glowing, gorgeous paintings command so much attention that they almost overshadow the story. Morin uses color and texture to portray the beauty of the natural setting. Unfortunately, the illustrations give no sense of the period. An author's note gives background information about the World War II internment of Japanese Americans. Flags addresses its tragic subject subtly, and children are likely to have a lot of questions. Consider using it in conjunction with other picture books about this topic that include more historical background, such as Eve Bunting's *So Far from the Sea* (Clarion, 1998), Yoshiko Uchida's *The Bracelet* (Philomel, 1993), and Ken Mochizuki's *Baseball Saved Us* (Lee & Low, 1993). For older students, pair it with a nonfiction title such as Jerry Stanley's *I Am an American* (Crown, 1994).

Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VA

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Review

"...a beautiful and poignant picture book...Remarkable artwork and a simple text tell this haunting story of injustice, with an author's note explaining the historical events of the plot." - The Nugget, North Bay, ON

About the Author

A prolific writer and educator, Maxine Trottier makes history come alive in picture books and novels for young readers. Her award-winning titles include *Claire's Gift*, which won the Mr. Christie's Book Award, *The Paint Box*, and *Prairie Willow*. Born in Michigan, Maxine is a dual citizen of Canada and the U.S. and makes her home in Port Stanley, Ontario.

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I will take care of your garden, Mr. Hiroshi," I offered. He smiled. "That would give me great comfort, Mary," he said. "The koi are greedy, you know. Do not let them get fat." We watched the bus drive away. For Mary, too young to fully understand about war and far-off places, the promise was meant to last only until Mr. Hiroshi came back. But after a while it was clear the her friend wouldn't be coming home. Still, Mary faithfully kept her word all through that long summer. And when the new people came to live in Mr. Hiroshi's house, she knew exactly what to do. Once more, Maxine Trottier takes a small piece of a larger story, nurtures it with care, and grows a tale as elegant as a Japanese Garden. *Flags* is a simple story of innocence and friendship set against a backdrop of fear and suspicion. A story that must be told and told again--but never allowed to recur.

- Sales Rank: #3176825 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Fitzhenry n Whiteside
- Published on: 1999-05-01
- Released on: 1999-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.42" h x .39" w x 8.51" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 27 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

great

By elfdart

this story portrayed the forced japanese emigration during the ww2 period. many many japanese families were sent back to japan because the government thought they could be used as spies, even though many of these people were born in north america.

the story is about a girl who goes to visit her grandmother. the next door neighbour is an older japanese man and the girl goes over to help him with his garden every day. the garden is something she's never seen before, it has no flowers or plants, it's mostly rocks and has a pond with koi fish, which she feeds. then one day her grandmother tells her that many japanese people are being sent away, and she finds out that the old man is one of them. she sits with the old man watching the sun go down and promises him that she'll look after his garden for him. after a while a new couple moves in and tears up the garden, replacing it with a western style garden. the girl takes the fish and sets them free and a stone and when she gets home she starts a small rock garden of her own.

i thought this was a good way to relay the information in picture book form. it tells the reader what happened and lets them feel the sadness, but does it gently.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Timeless

By Marsha S

This is another classic and timeless picture book. No one does it quite like Maxine. I love this book!

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