

**Directions for your two page spread in your Reader’s Notebook:**

1. Read and jot on one page in your Reader’s Notebook. Keep track of thinking as you read.  
Non-fiction jot ideas:

|            |         |            |            |                   |           |
|------------|---------|------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| *key ideas | *quotes | *questions | *key vocab | *important people | *sketches |
|------------|---------|------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|

2. Write a full page response to ONE of the prompts at the end of the article or an idea of your choice on the next page in your reader’s notebook. This is your chance to communicate your thinking about one idea.

**“Daughters of the Bomb”**

Source: Erica Hayasaki from *The Week* August 6, 2020

I keep a red file folder, its edges faded from nearly three decades of exposure to dust and light. Inside, the title words I typed in 1991: "The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima." It is the first research paper I ever wrote. Tucked inside of the folder's front flap are three stapled index cards, each one with reference titles written in smudged pencil. The first book listed is the one that mattered to me most: journalist John Hersey's 1946 nonfiction classic *Hiroshima*. The book's scenes, vivid and wrenching, are lodged inside my memory. Particularly this one, about the Rev. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, pulling bomb victims from a sand pit: "He reached down and took a woman by the hands, but her skin slipped off in huge, glove-like pieces."

Hersey introduced me to Mr. Tanimoto, a man who wore his hair parted down the middle and moved through crowds of mangled, dying people, bringing water and apologizing: "Excuse me for having no burden like yours." At a time when Japanese people were roundly excoriated in the U.S., portrayed as demons, yellow monkeys, and savages deserving of death, one historian claimed Hersey's book transformed "subhuman Japs back into Japanese human beings." His omniscient, controlled voice felt godlike and all-knowing, free from authorial editorializing. He was hailed as a writer who "let 'Hiroshima' speak for itself."

When I first read the book in 1991, I was struggling to make sense of my place among some Americans who still — 46 years after the bomb — saw someone like me as subhuman. I was a child with a [Japanese immigrant father](#) (he was born three years after the bomb) and a white mother. I grew up in a small Midwestern town as one of only a handful of Asians. There was name-calling: "Chink." "Gook." "Jap." There were days when white kids threw rocks at me on the playground or recited the [all-too-common](#) phrase: "Go back to where you came from." Being anti-Asian was an easy fallback for your garden-variety middle school bullies. I have memories of hiding in a blue paint-chipped bathroom stall, wondering what was wrong with me.

White mothers do their own kids of color no favors by claiming [colorblindness](#). But my father did not mention such racial matters either. There is a phrase in Japan, "ba no kuuki wo yomu," which means "to read the air." It is an unspoken practice of sensing a person's feelings, or a situation, without words. Decades later, when I had my own kids, my mother would tell me that she and my father watched a documentary together, early in their marriage, about the internment

of Japanese-Americans. It ended, and they sat there in silence. Neither knew how to talk to the other about racism, much less their own kids. Uncomfortable facts fluttered in the atmosphere, never to be addressed.

When my teacher, Mrs. Ott, assigned a book report about a historical event in middle school, I asked my father what I should write about.

"What about the atomic bomb they dropped on Japan?" he said, as if we had discussed this event my entire life. I had no idea what he was talking about. I only knew that once I had stumbled across my father cleaning the hot tub he had built with slabs of wood in our backyard. Staring at the sky as it began to drizzle, he muttered something about how Americans never knew "black rain."

"Two hours after the bomb dropped a strange black rain began to fall," I would write a few years later in my research report. "Big as the ends of one finger. This strange rain left greasy black stains that wouldn't wash off. It was called [acid rain](#). ... It could altar [sic] the structure of cells inside the human body."

Reading *Hiroshima*, I learned how Mr. Tanimoto ran to look for his wife and baby, encountering hundreds of fleeing people along the way. "Many were naked or in shreds of clothing," Hersey wrote. "On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns — of undershirt straps and suspenders." The shapes of flowers from kimonos seared onto their skin.

My personal torment suddenly fit into a context of racism and war. Classes at school did not teach me about the internment of Japanese-Americans, nor about all of the rest of the groups deemed subhuman. So, as a teenager, I went searching for more books that did.

I was 15 when my grandmother in Osaka died. I flew to Japan with my father and brother. We lit incense and prayed at an altar inside of my grandmother's home, which smelled grassy from the tatami mats. Her house slippers lay on the kitchen floor, her purse hung on a door, her bedroom closets stacked with satiny kimonos wrapped in tato-shi paper.

Late at night my family shared stories of my grandmother. My uncle told me how she ran from World War II bombs, holding him as a baby in her arms. A few days later, we boarded a bullet train bound for Hiroshima.

*Read the rest of this story at [Narratively](#).*

**Possible Response Ideas** (see the directions at the top of the article):

- What are your thoughts about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? How much did you know about this event before? Explain.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a writing technique or strategy used by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.
- Respond to the story in your own way. Write a poem, a song, draw a cartoon?! You pick!