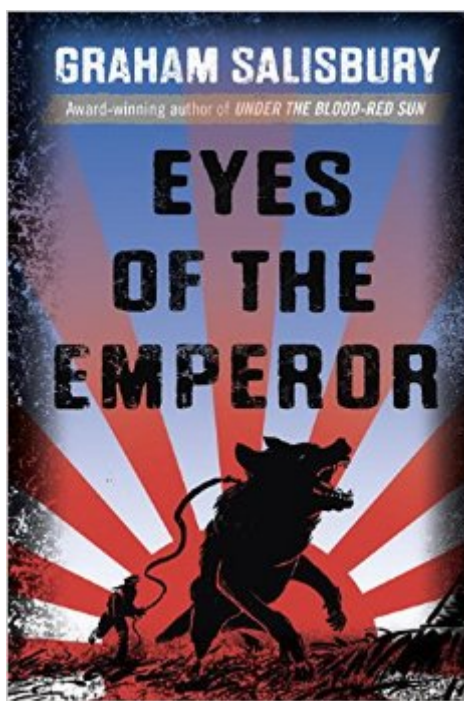


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# Eyes Of The Emperor



## Synopsis

Eddy Okubo lies about his age and joins the army in his hometown of Honolulu only weeks before the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor. Suddenly Americans see him as the enemy—even the U.S. Army doubts the loyalty of Japanese American soldiers. Then the army sends Eddy and a small band of Japanese American soldiers on a secret mission to a small island off the coast of Mississippi. Here they are given a special job, one that only they can do. Eddy's going to help train attack dogs. He's going to be the bait.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

My seventh graders have read, discussed, and enjoyed Graham Salisbury's BLUE SKIN OF THE SEA for the past decade, but when I was sent an Advance Reading Copy of Salisbury's latest novel, I couldn't resist sharing passages from it with my students even before the book was officially published. This novel is Salisbury's best! "Whoa!" "Cool!" "What detail!": These are the kind of comments my 7th grade students made when I read them an excerpt from Chapters 16 and 17 of EYES OF THE EMPEROR. This section, recounting the capture of America's first prisoner of war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, enthralled my students. Although the Waimanalo Beach locale is familiar (the 7th grade spent the day at that same beach on their Class Day last October), my

students were transported back in time by Salisbury's vivid description and very human characters. One student commented that the personality of Eddy the narrator was depicted so well he seemed like a real person, not a character in a book. Like the popular companion novel *UNDER THE BLOOD RED SUN*, Graham Salisbury's new book is historical fiction focusing on the plight of Japanese Americans in the wake of the World War II Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In *EYES OF THE EMPEROR*, Salisbury uses a sixteen-year-old Japanese American narrator to subtly show the conflict between issei and nisei as well as the prejudice and ignorance of the American people and government against the Japanese Americans living in the United States in the 1940s. The main character and narrator Eddy Kubo, eager to serve his country, incurs the anger of his issei (first generation immigrant Japanese) father by enlisting in the United States Army shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Eddy, who is nisei, born and raised in the United States Territory of Hawaii, is hurt when his enlistment causes his father to stop speaking to him. Only when Eddy participates in the capture of a young Japanese sailor trying to get to Pearl Harbor in a mini submarine does he start to understand his father's perspective. Seeing the pride in the captured Japanese man, Eddy recognizes his own pop's allegiance to the Bushido code of the ancient warriors. Once in the military, Eddy learns about prejudice. He sees the Hawaiians, Portuguese, and Chinese troops from Hawaii getting regular training, but he and the other Japanese Americans are separated because "To Them [the army] we all look like Hirohito. They see us they see the guys in those planes dropping bombs on them. We got the eyes of the emperor" (65). Young Eddy has the innocence and naivete to tell the story; he is a matter-of-fact observer--much like Twain's Huckleberry Finn--who lets the reader see the horror and unfairness of the treatment to which the Japanese American troops are subjected. He and his buddy Cobra later learn from the newspaper that persons of Japanese ancestry are being evacuated from Hawaii and West Coast states such as California and Oregon because "that is the way of war." Less than half of the story takes place in Hawaii. Shortly after the capture of the Japanese sailor, Eddy and his friends are shipped to the Mainland United States. Probably the most chilling example of prejudice is the little-known, but true, incident of the top-secret K-9 training on Cat Island, Mississippi, in which Eddy and his Japanese American friends participate after they are shipped out of Hawaii. Even here, Salisbury's Eddy Kubo reports on his activities with only occasional grumblings and complaints. In it to the end, Eddy is proud to serve his country, his president. The pathos with which he comments on the bigotry which even the president must have shared to condone the K-9 experiment is powerful because of the simplicity of Eddy's words: "I don't know why, but right then I thought of President Roosevelt and how he believed we might smell different from white guys. My president. Made me feel sad" (215). In *EYES OF THE EMPEROR*,

Salisbury surpasses his previous works in several ways. He seamlessly puts the reader into places familiar today but with the tension and historical accuracy of the World War II setting; he uses a narrator in conflict with his culture and his country--but not bitter about what is occurring around him--to convey with immediacy and sensitivity the injustices suffered by the Japanese Americans during WWII; and he brings a human dimension to both sides of both conflicts. This is a fine book to explore with teen readers the issues of prejudice, patriotism, and the moral ambiguities of war. It is a "teachable moment" waiting to happen!

Sixteen-year-old Eddy Okubo is tired of just sitting around Honolulu helping his father fix up boats. He has already graduated from high school, and two of his good friends have already joined the U.S. Army. Despite the fact that Eddy's father is still fiercely loyal to Japan (a portrait of the emperor graces their foyer), Eddy knows he's an American through and through. As World War II grows ever closer to American shores, Eddie fudges his birth certificate so that he can join the military too. At first, Eddy's father is deeply disappointed that Eddy has turned his back on Japan to join the American military. But when the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, everything changes. Soon Eddy's father begins to respect Eddy's loyalty to their new country. Life in the military is not easy for Eddy and his friends. All Americans of Japanese descent, even those in the military, are under suspicion. Eddy's friend Cobra says, "To them we all look like Hirohito. They see us, they see the guys in those planes dropping bombs on them. We got the eyes of the Emperor. They scared of us. Scared." Eddy and his all-Japanese-American platoon travel from place to place, unsure of their mission or of their role in the army. Soon, they travel to the Gulf of Mexico to help with the training of highly skilled K9 dog troops. But Eddy and his friends are not there to be trainers for the dogs; instead, they are there as targets for the dogs to prepare to attack Japanese soldiers. How can the young men maintain their faith in their country --- and in themselves --- in the face of the prejudice and misunderstanding they have encountered? Graham Salisbury has explored the attack on Pearl Harbor in his previous novel, *UNDER THE BLOOD-RED SUN*. In *EYES OF THE EMPEROR*, he again sheds light on a troubling period of American history. The impact of the Japanese attacks on Americans of Japanese ancestry is explored with sensitivity and attention to detail. In the character of Eddy, Salisbury explores how, in the wake of such turbulence, one young man must discover what it means to be a son, a man, and an American. --- Reviewed by Norah Piehl

*Eyes of the Emperor* By graham Salisbury is a great book. It as made a grat impact on me and my outlook on history of WWII. I recommend this book to anyone who likes to read stories that can be

easily followed and to anyone interested in war especially WWII. This story portrays many great qualities and characteristics that any young man should have, Such as loyalty, bravery, and honesty and other strengths that they can use to prove themselves by using in the real world. The book follows a young Japanese man and his Japanese friends as they go through daily life of being in the United States army. How they are treated and the jobs they get and they trust they don't. Not only does the book teach you about life in the army but it teaches you about respect for your country and for you family. The book has a strong cultural influence in which it portrays the a message stating that when you leave you family life becomes harder and there may not be someone alongside of you to help you along your way.

I loved this book, especially how Salisbury captures the "Americanness" of the young protagonist. The section in which he allows himself to be used as bait in a horrible K-( experiment was hard to read, but worth it.His use of Island patois among the characters is a convincing character device.As a side note, some of it's readers might enjoy Barstow Bones, in which an Asian-American college student hides out in a post-Pearl Harbor Barstow movie theater while a while a gang of white teen-age thugs, pursue him. When newsreel footage of a Japanese Zero being shot down show s on the screen, Tommy cheers along with the rest of the audience. He is, like the young protagonist of Eyes of the Emperor, first of all an American.

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