WHAT DO I REMEMBER OF THE EVACUATION

By Joy Kogawa

I remember my father telling Tim and me  
About the mountains and the train  
And the excitement of going on a trip.  
What do I remember of the evacuation?  
I remember my mother wrapping  
A blanket around me and my  
Pretending to fall asleep so she would be happy  
Although I was so excited I couldn't sleep  
(I hear there were people herded  
Into the Hastings Park like cattle.  
Families were made to move in two hours  
Abandoning everything, leaving pets  
And possessions at gun point.  
I hear families were broken up  
Men were forced to work. I heard  
It whispered late at night  
That there was suffering) and  
I missed my dolls.  
What do I remember of the evacuation?  
I remember Miss Foster and Miss Tucker  
Who still live in Vancouver  
And who did what they could  
And loved the children and who gave me  
A puzzle to play with on the train.  
And I remember the mountains and I was  
Six years old and I swear I saw a giant  
Gulliver of Gulliver's Travels scanning the horizon  
And when I told my mother she believed it too  
And I remember how careful my parents were  
Not to bruise us with bitterness  
And I remember the puzzle of Lorraine Life  
Who said "Don't insult me" when I  
Proudly wrote my name in Japanese  
And Tim flew the Union Jack  
When the war was over but Lorraine  
And her friends spat on us anyway  
and I prayed to the God who loves  
All the children in his sight  
That I might be white.