

# Biography of Fred Korematsu

Continue reading. Then, answer the questions that follow.

The team had uncovered new information about how the U.S. government had lied during the Supreme Court case and had treated him and other Japanese American people unfairly. On November 10, 1983, a federal judge finally overturned Korematsu's conviction.

- 8 The story was not over for Korematsu, though. He continued to speak out on behalf of those whose civil rights had been violated. He actively lobbied for the U.S. government to officially apologize for the incarceration of Japanese American citizens. That formal apology—along with \$20,000 for each survivor—finally came with the passage and signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.
- 9 In 1998, President Bill Clinton awarded Korematsu the highest civilian honor in the United States, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The president compared Korematsu to other great civil rights leaders such as Rosa Parks—“ordinary citizens” standing up for their own rights and those of others.

- 10 Korematsu continued to stand up for the rights of others for the rest of his life. In 2003 and 2004, he wrote to the Supreme Court as a “friend of the court” in support of the rights of people he believed were being unfairly imprisoned after the 2001 World Trade Center attacks. He reminded the court of the importance of guarding against prejudice even in times of crisis.
- 11 Korematsu died in 2005 at the age of 86, but his legacy lives on. In 2010, the state of California officially designated Korematsu's birthday, January 30, as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution. Korematsu was the first Asian American person to have a day named in his honor. Other states, including Hawaii, Virginia, Florida, and Arizona, have also established days to honor Korematsu and his commitment to the fight for the equal rights of all citizens.

Answer the following questions about the biography. **Sample answers**

1. Describe how the bombing of Pearl Harbor affected Fred Korematsu's life and led to his civil rights activism.

**After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, an executive order forced Japanese Americans out of their homes. Korematsu refused to obey the order, and he was arrested. This experience pushed him to become an advocate for civil rights.**

2. Which of the following meanings of the word **descent** matches how it is used in paragraph 2?

A. a steep downward slope

**C. a line of common ancestors**

B. an attack from above

D. a decline in quality

3. Based on the text, why did Korematsu feel it was right to disobey the order to relocate?

A. He hoped to become an American spy.

C. He needed to help his family escape the camps.

**B. He believed the order was unconstitutional.**

D. He secretly supported Japan in the war.

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**Keep going! Answer the questions about the biography. Sample answers**

4. Describe how the author has primarily structured the presentation of information in the passage. Cite specific text evidence to support your analysis.

**The author uses a chronological structure. After introducing the 1941 bombing, the author moves on to events in February, May, and September 1942, followed by the 1944 Supreme Court decision and the 1983 overturning of Korematsu's conviction. The events described later in the passage took place from 1988 to 2010.**

5. The term *due process* in the U.S. Constitution refers to the legal process that must occur before the government can take away a citizen's right to live freely. Based on your own knowledge of the American legal system and the information in the text, how did Executive Order 9066 violate Japanese Americans' right to due process?

**Individuals were not accused of actual crimes, and they were not given trials before having their freedoms taken. Japanese American people were forced out of their homes and into detention camps solely based on ethnicity and a suspicion that they were a risk to American security.**

6. Korematsu did not fight injustice on his own. Based on the text, what are two ways others helped him?

- When Korematsu was in jail, Ernest Besig of the ACLU offered to help with Korematsu's court case, which they eventually took to the Supreme Court.**
- Forty years after Korematsu lost his Supreme Court case, a team of lawyers who had found new information helped get his conviction overturned.**

7. Paragraph 9 states that President Clinton compared Korematsu to other "ordinary citizens" who fought for civil rights. One person he mentioned was Rosa Parks, an African American woman who was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white person in the state of Alabama. How are Korematsu and Parks similar?

**They were both regular people who deliberately disobeyed unjust laws and were arrested for doing so.**

8. Write 1–2 sentences describing a positive lesson that a person could learn from the life story of Fred Korematsu.

**It may take time and personal sacrifice, but anyone can help fight injustice and make a positive difference in the world by standing up against unfair laws and continuing to push for change.**