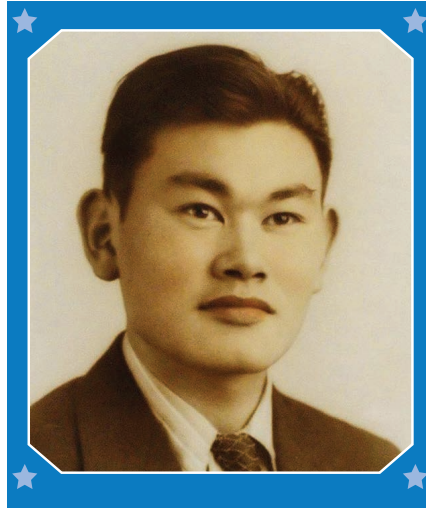


INFORMATIONAL READING COMPREHENSION:**Biography of Fred Korematsu**

Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

1 Fred Korematsu was 23 years old when he heard the news on his car radio that Japanese forces had attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. It was December 7, 1941. The event marked the beginning of American involvement in World War II. It also marked the beginning of a chain of events that impacted the rights of many Americans and pushed Korematsu to become a civil rights activist and hero.



These amendments guarantee **due process of law** and equal protection of the rights of all American citizens. Instead of leaving his home and going with his family to a detention center, Korematsu disguised himself and tried to avoid the authorities. Nevertheless, he was arrested and imprisoned on May 30, 1942.

5 While Korematsu was in jail in California, he was approached by a man named Ernest Besig.

2 Korematsu was an American of Japanese **descent**. He lived with his family in Oakland, California, where he was born in 1919. After the Pearl Harbor attack, American military leaders were afraid the Japanese might attack the west coast of the American mainland. They unfairly deemed all people of Japanese ethnicity a risk to American security. On the advice of his generals, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. The order allowed the military to round up all people of Japanese descent living on the West Coast and to forcibly relocate them to detention camps.

Besig was a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a group that works to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties of all people in the United States. Besig offered the services of the ACLU to represent Korematsu in a test case in federal court. He wanted the judges to rule that Executive Order 9066 and the confinement of people based on their ethnicity alone were unconstitutional. Korematsu agreed.

3 As a result, approximately 120,000 people, most of whom were American citizens, were forced to leave behind their homes, businesses, and possessions. Men, women, and children of Japanese descent were held in the detention camps, surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards, for up to three years, despite zero evidence that they were guilty of espionage.

6 In September 1942, Korematsu was convicted in federal court of refusing to obey a military order. However, he and his ACLU lawyer appealed his conviction, and his case made it all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. Unfortunately, on December 8, 1944, the Court ruled against Korematsu in a 6–3 split decision.

4 Fred Korematsu, however, did not comply with the order to relocate. He believed it was unconstitutional—a violation of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution.

7 Disappointed but determined to get on with his life, Korematsu moved to Michigan. He got married and eventually moved back to California, where he and his wife raised a family. Then, nearly forty years after losing his case, Korematsu was again contacted, this time by a team of lawyers.

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.

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

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. |

Biography of Fred Korematsu



Keep going! Answer the questions about the biography.

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

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?

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

1. _____

2. _____

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?

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