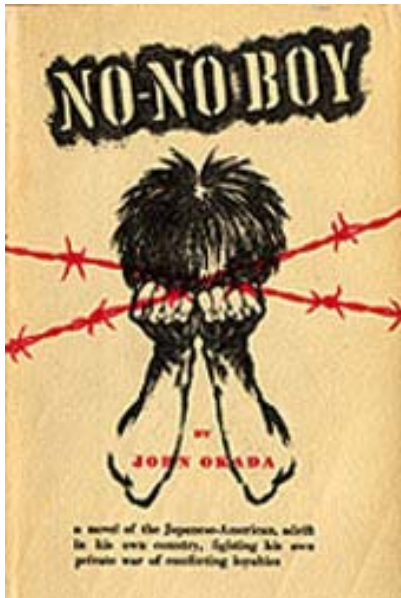
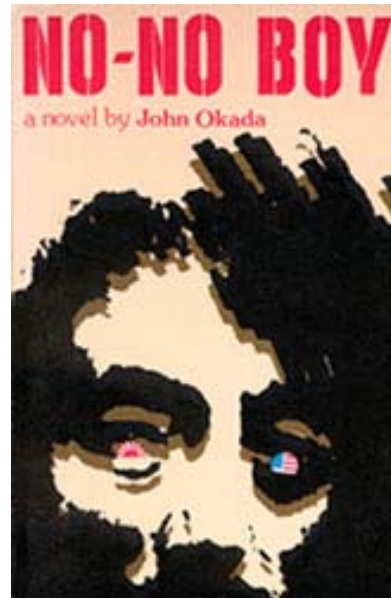


IN SEARCH OF *NO-NO BOY*: CLASSROOM EDITION

Resources: Rediscovery of the Novel



1957 Charles Tuttle cover



1976 CARP cover

(00:01) *"I think if we had to choose one book produced by an Asian American, it would be this book."* (Lawson Inada, poet)

(00:39) *"He felt it was up to him to tell that story. It's a remarkable decision for somebody to say, you know, 'I think I'll write a novel about Japanese America and I don't know of another Japanese American work out there, but I'm going to write this novel.'"* (Shawn Wong)

(9:05) *"Okada feels an urgency to capture the Japanese American experience. He says, 'I should regret if their chapter in American history should die with them. Only in fiction can the hopes and fears and joys and sorrows of a people be adequately recorded.'"*

John Okada's *No-No Boy* was first published in 1957 and went practically unnoticed, especially by a Japanese American community still rebuilding lives disrupted by incarceration and resettlement.

CARP

By the early 1970's, writers Frank Chin, Jeff Chan, Lawson Inada and Shawn Wong formed the Combined Asian American Resources Project (CARP) and searched for any works by Asian American writers. They found Okada's novel in a used bookstore but were disappointed to learn they missed meeting the author by only a few months.

By then, the war in Vietnam and the rise of Asian American Studies created an audience ready for a story about an outcast. After reclaiming the copyright from publisher Charles Tuttle, the members of CARP pooled their money and paid out of their own pocket to design a new cover and publish a soft cover edition.

They placed an ad in the *Pacific Citizen* newspaper and sold out their first printing of 3,000 copies entirely by mail, and almost entirely to Japanese Americans. They found that while few copies of the original hardcover edition were sold, the book was still remembered.

IN SEARCH OF NO-NO BOY: CLASSROOM EDITION

Resources: Rediscovery of the Novel

"And so I went down to this Asian supermarket, Uwajimaya in Seattle, and I had ten copies with me. I found the owner, Tomio Moriguchi, and I said 'I've got these books, would you like to buy them and sell them here in your store?' And he looked at it, and he goes, 'No-No Boy,' he goes, 'wow.' He goes, 'I've seen this book on my friend's shelf. And every time I go to read it, she knocks my hand away and says 'You can read that here in my house, but you can never take it home.' So he says, 'I'll take these ten books,' and he says, 'These are for me. You bring ten more books tomorrow.' He bought all ten books himself and he was going to give them away. Basically he was saying to me, it's time for people to read this book." (Shawn Wong interview)

The success of the CARP reprint persuaded the University of Washington Press to take over publication and distribution of the book.

(21:50) "We gradually became aware of its significance, and so we decided to go ahead and print our own edition. And of course we've been very glad that we did. No-No Boy has sold over 100,000 copies, it's been reprinted 13 times. It's one of our all-time best selling books." (Naomi Pascal, University of Washington Press)

CHANGING CONTEXTS

In 1983, the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that the Japanese American incarceration was not justified by military necessity, and that the decision to incarcerate was instead based on a combination of "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."¹ The actions of the draft resisters are now recognized as acts of civil disobedience.

¹ [Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians](#). The Civil Liberties Public Education Fund and the University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1997. p. 459.