



Panels from the Past: Using the Graphic Novel *The Boy From Clearwater* to Teach About 20th Century Taiwan

National Consortium for Teaching About Asia (NCTA)

October 17, 2024



Why *The Boy From Clearwater* Matters

About the Author



Source:

<https://www.taiwantoday.tw/print.php?unit=36&post=251932&unitname=Snapshots&postname=Tragedy%2C-triumph>



1935-the book begins

Tsai Kun-lin is a small boy, living under Japanese colonial rule near present-day Taichung City.

1



April, 1945-Kun-lin is drafted.

In the last months of World War II, Kun-lin is drafted as a student soldier.(p.99)

3



February 28, 1947-Two-Two-Eight Incident

Protests against the oppressive KMT government result in casualties and decades of martial law in Taiwan known as the "White Terror" (p. 132)

5



1937-Japan invades Nanjing, China.

Japan invasion of China's capital brings the war "closer and closer to home." (p.65)

2



October 25, 1945-Taiwan Retrocession Day

Kuomintang (KMT) troops arrive in Taiwan, officially ending Japanese rule and "returning" Taiwan to the Republic of China (ROC). (p.121)

4



April,1948-Kun-lin joins a book club.

At the invitation of his high school teacher, Kun-lin joins the school's book club. (p. 140)

6



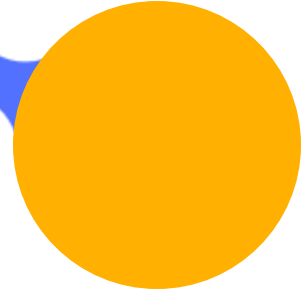
**December, 1949-
Chiang Kai-shek flees
China.**

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his ROC administration retreat to Taiwan from Mainland China. (p.151)



**May, 1951-Kun-lin is transferred
to Green Island.**

Kun-lin is sent to Green Island "New Life Correction Center" where he endures hard labor and "re-education" about the KMT's "benevolent government" (p.236)



**September, 1950-Kun-lin
is arrested.**

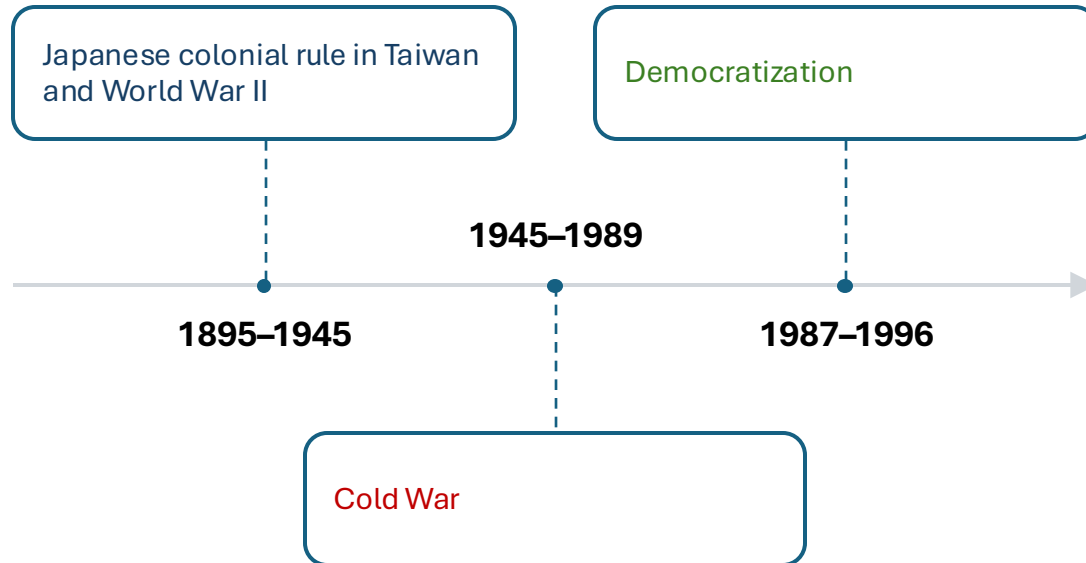
Kun-lin is arrested by the Kuomintang (KMT) military police for treason--joining an illegal organization—his high school book club. (p.183)

**September, 1960-Kun-lin
is released.**

Kun-lin completes his ten-year sentence and returns to Taiwan from Green Island. (p.327)

Historical Eras from *The Boy From Clearwater* and Classroom Topics & Themes

Historical Eras



Topic & Themes

- Meiji Restoration, Mudan Incident, Sino-Japanese War, Treaty of Shimonoseki, Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Colonialism, Chinese Civil War
- Chiang Kai-shek, Kuomintang (KMT), Mao Zedong, People's Republic of China (PRC), Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier, 228 Incident, White Terror, Green Island, Taiwan Miracle
- Taiwan Miracle, Chiang Ching-kuo, Lee Teng-hui, Two-Party System, Wild Lily Student Movement, Liberty Square, Taipei 101, Tsai Ing-wen, Lai Ching-te

Sample DBQ on *The Boy from Clearwater*

Prompt:

How does Tsai Kun-lin's life story reflect the enormous changes and upheaval that Taiwan underwent in the 20th century?

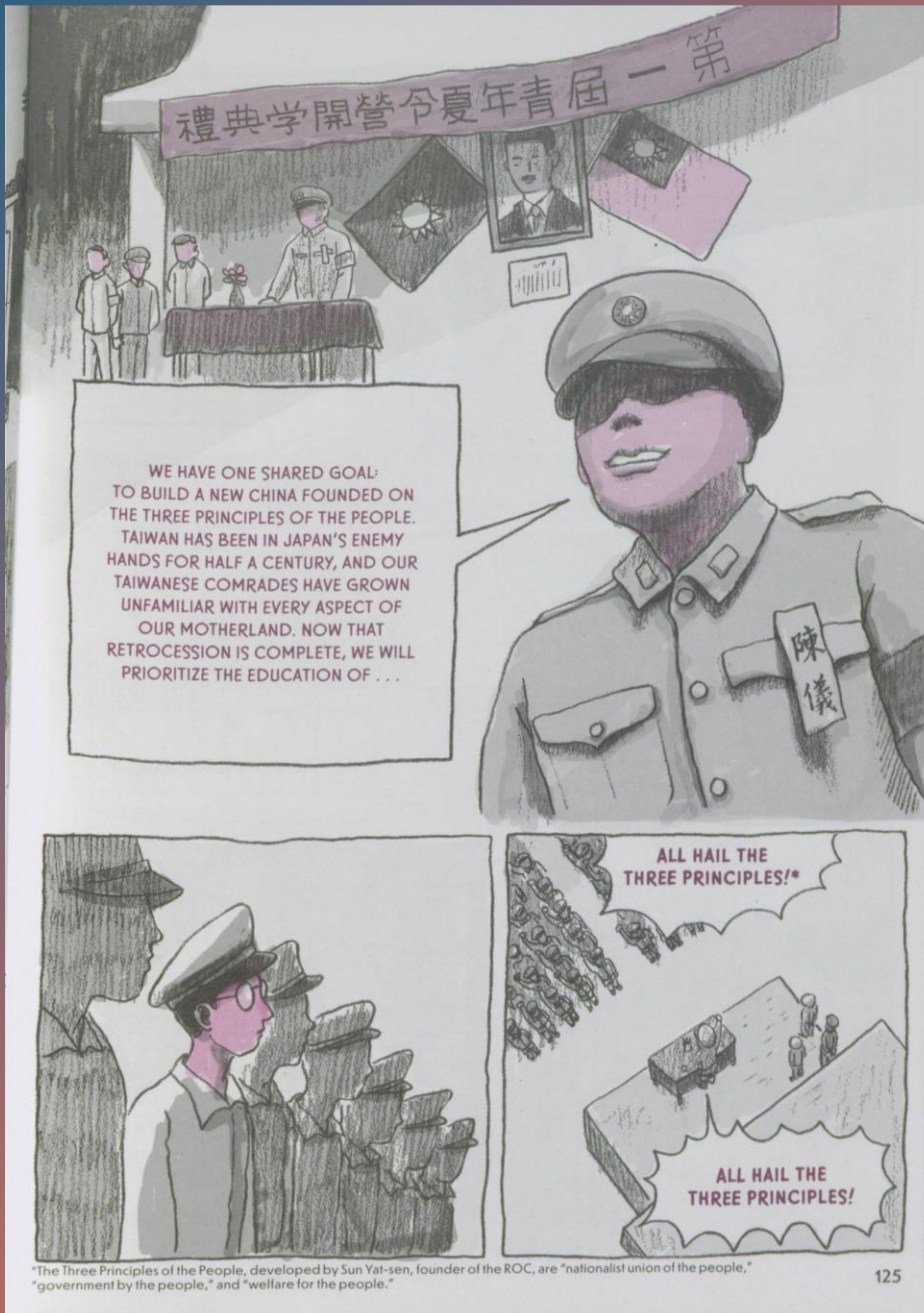


Document #1

- Considering that the island of Taiwan had become a Japanese colony in 1895, and that Taiwan sits less than 100 miles off the coast of southern China, how did Japan's invasion of Nanjing, China in 1937 (China's capital at the time) during the second Sino-Japanese War impact Taiwan?

Document #2

- Do some research to learn more about the Kuomintang (KMT), ROC president Chiang Kai-shek, and Chen Yi (speaking here), Chief Executive of Taiwan in 1946.
- What did the arrival of KMT troops after World War II ended with Japan's loss mean for the people of Taiwan?
- What do the image and military speech in this image convey to Kun-lin and the people of Taiwan?



Document #3

- What was the Two-Two-Eight Incident?
- What does the image shown here depict?



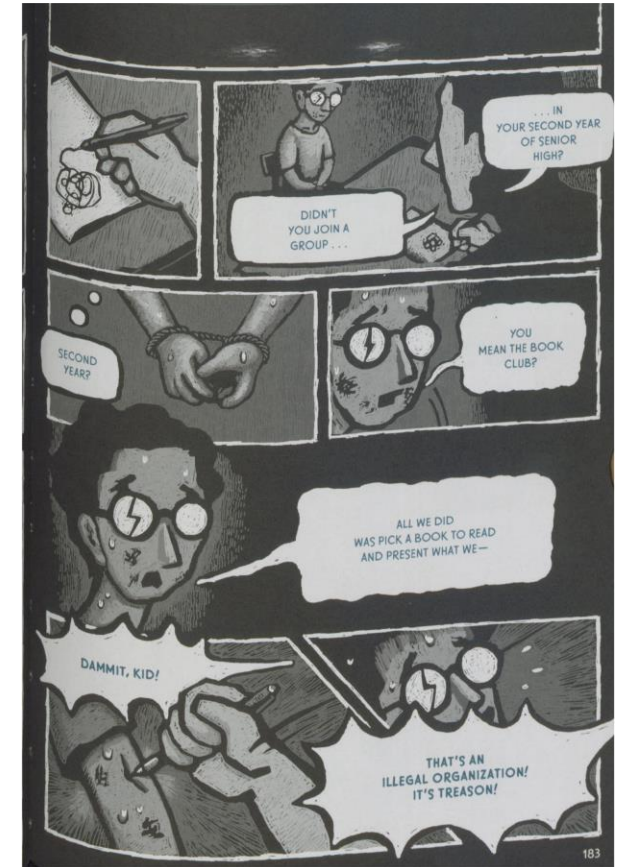
Document #4

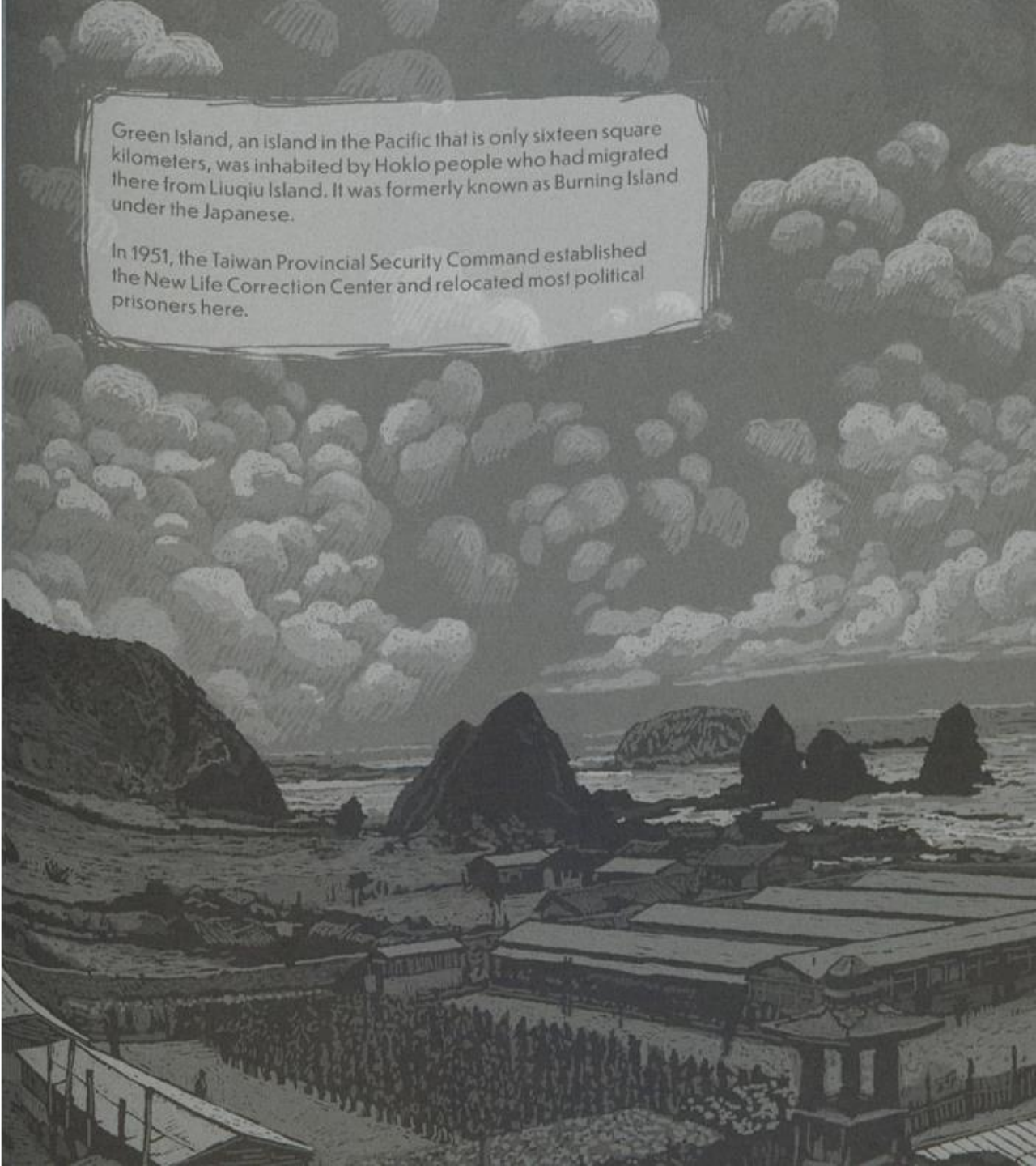
- Why is Kun-lin asked to join his high school book club by his teacher?
- Consider which clubs you belong to at school. Would you have any concerns about joining a book club today? What about in Taiwan in 1948?



Document #5

- Why is Kun-lin arrested by the military police?
- How is Taiwan's "White Terror" manifested in Kun-lin's arrest and his treatment in prison?





Green Island, an island in the Pacific that is only sixteen square kilometers, was inhabited by Hoklo people who had migrated there from Liuqiu Island. It was formerly known as Burning Island under the Japanese.

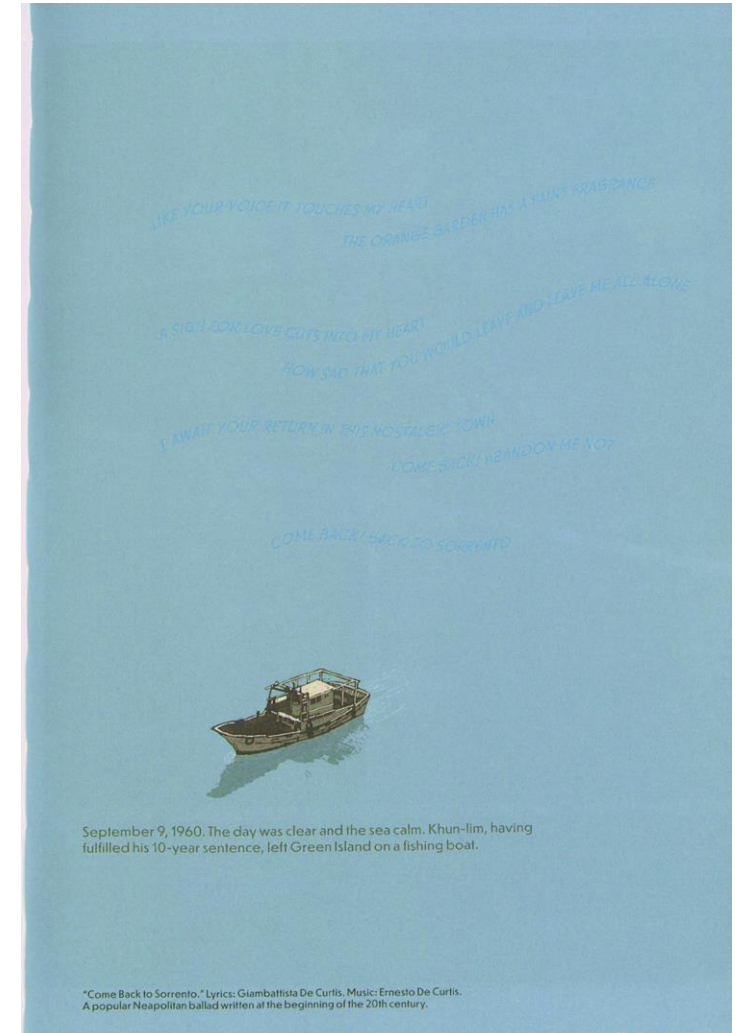
In 1951, the Taiwan Provincial Security Command established the New Life Correction Center and relocated most political prisoners here.

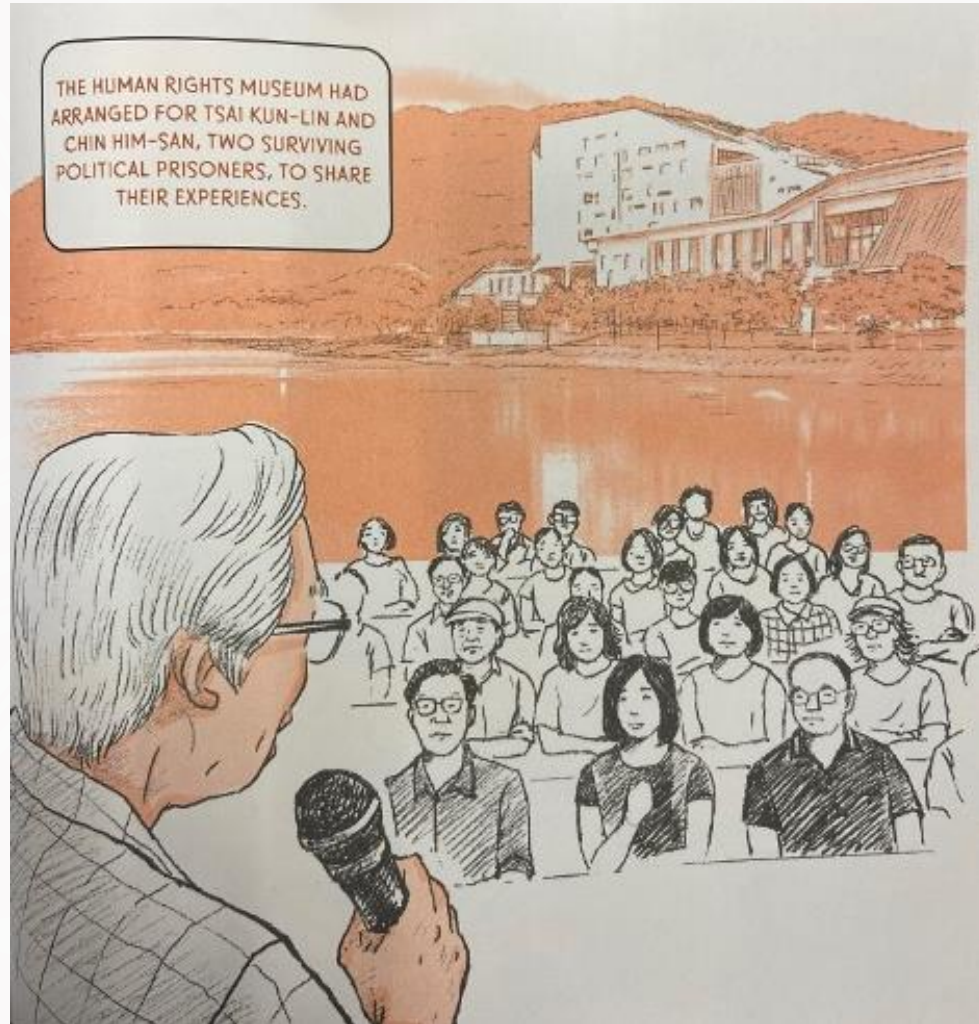
Document #6

- What does the name "New Life Correction Center" suggest about the purpose and nature of Kun-lin's detention on Green Island?

Document #7

What might Kun-lin be suggesting when he says, "The sea is beautiful in life and in dreams," while traveling to Taiwan from Green Island after his ten-year imprisonment there?





Document #8

How was Taiwan's democratization reflected in Tsai Kun-lin's speech at the Human Rights Museum in 2016?