When the Emperor was Divine

Chapter 1: Evacuation Order No. 19

1. Whose point of view dominates this chapter? Provide evidence.
2. What does the woman see in the window?
3. How much time passes between the appearance of the notice and the events of the rest of the chapter? What has happened during that time?
4. When the mother goes to Lundy’s hardware store, she notices a “dark stain” on the register “that would not go away”. The dog she has to kill is called “White Dog”. Her daughter’s favorite song on the radio is “Don’t Fence Me In”. How do these details point to the larger meaning of the book?
5. Why might the shopkeeper at the hardware store, Mr. Lundy, keep insisting that the woman pay him later, and why is she so determined to pay him now?
6. What items does the family pack or leave behind? What do their choices tell you about them?
7. What are the significance of the bonsai tree, the reproduction of “The Gleaners,” and the portrait of Princess Elizabeth?
8. Why does the woman kill White Dog? How does she explain its disappearance to the children? Do they believe her? Where else does she lie to the children?
9. Why do people stare at the girl?
10. Why does the author refer to the characters as “the woman,” “the girl,” “the boy,” and “the father,” rather than giving them names? How does this lack of specific identities affect your relationship with the characters?