

Lesson Plan: Japanese Internment a Challenge to Democracy

Rationale for Unit:

I decided to create a lesson on Japanese Internment because when I looked at the textbook at my school only a paragraph was devoted to this historical event and wanted to introduce focus to this part of history and expose my students to multiple perspectives beside that which is traditionally focused about World War II. I believe that a careful examination of a treatment of a minority within a democracy and how such an event complicates that democracy is an important point of study and examination. The students whom this lesson is designed for have general knowledge of World War II and understand the historical context, the events that contributed to the US entering the war. The focus of this lesson is to examine the cultural tensions and conditions that led to the Japanese internment, a marginalization/imprisonment of an entire group of people and the constitutionality of that action

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand the social and cultural conditions that erupted during World War II that led to the Japanese internment
- Students will study and analyze elements of propaganda and how these are used to influence public opinion and examine the themes and patterns of characterization of a group of people to portray them as the other
- Students will identify propaganda techniques on anti-Japanese propaganda distributed to the American public during World War II and draw conclusions about the power of words and images in influencing public sentiment and fueling cultural stereotypes
- Students will reflect and write on the experience of internment for Japanese Americans, through research on primary and secondary texts, film and web resources, making connections to prior knowledge and experience.
- Students will evaluate and explain the decision to intern Japanese Americans during World War II and evaluate the constitutionality of this action
- Students will make connections to current political and social developments

CA Common Core Standards: 11.7 Students analyze America's participation in World War II.
(5) Discuss the constitutional issues and impact of events on the U.S. home front, including the internment of Japanese Americans...

- Students show the connections between particular historical events and larger social, political trends and developments
- Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources and apply it in oral and written presentations
- Students will understand social and cultural developments in the United States
- Students will use general skills and strategies of the writing process and gather information for research purposes
- Students will use skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts and visual media

Materials:

- Powerpoint presentation on PROPAGANDA techniques
- Propaganda handout
- Film: Japanese relocation (US government film)
- Film: The Untold Story of Japanese Americans during World War II
- Primary sources: Executive order 9066, "My Only Crime is my Face," "The Background," "Congress Hearing on Aliens Starts Here," "The text...to take such steps as the secretary of war deems advisable"
- "The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family," excerpt from "From Snow Falling on Cedars" (from Prentice Hall textbook)
- Web resources
- Teacher made Handouts

Day I: Setting the Stage

Focus Question: How was propaganda used during World War II to influence public perception of Japanese and Japanese Americans? What were the words and images specifically used to depict the Japanese and Japanese Americans and what was the effect of such representation?

- Teacher begins the lesson by presenting a propaganda poster. Teacher explains that this is an example of PROPAGANDA.

- Teacher shows slide presentation on propaganda. As teacher reviews slide show with students, she also emphasizes that propaganda material use power of imagery, symbols, irony, exaggeration and distortion to create a specific effect
- To facilitate discussion and engagement, students will in groups work on hand out provided and record findings in journal
- Students will report finding to the class as teacher records finding in a chart to be posted and facilitates a whole class discussion about racial stereotypes, racism, caricature of the other
- Students summarize their conclusions/finding in journal: what did they learn about propaganda, its purposes, techniques/elements and characterization of the Japanese during World War II?

Day 2: Japanese Internment

Focus Question: How were Japanese Americans treated during World War II and what actions did the US government take to marginalize and entire group of people and how did they carry this out?

- Teacher begins the class by writing the word INTERNMENT on the board and with question: What might you feel if the police came to your house and arrested you and your family? Student quickwrite and discuss as a class. Teacher connects this to what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II and show images of Japanese internment and the camps.
- Teacher shows film that government used to justify Japanese internment. The film is an example of government propaganda: "Japanese Relocation" (9 minutes). Students answer questions as they view the film and discuss in small groups.
- Students study the executive order 9066, citing specific language used and discuss the reasons why the government decided to implement order, "Congress Hearing on Aliens Starts Here" (newspaper 1942) and "The text: ...to take such steps as the secretary of war deems advisable..."
- Counter perspectives: Students view film "The Untold Story of Japanese Americans During World War II (narrated by George Takei) and discuss how the Japanese experience differs from government propaganda
- Students read "The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family by Yoshiko Uchida and "From Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson (Prentice Hall textbook)

- Students also examine primary texts: "My Only Crime is My Face" Liberty Magazine 1943 and the Background text. Students get a complete picture of the implications of the Japanese internment in the United States from the perspective of Japanese Americans
- Students will conduct independent research or in groups to further study primary texts to better understand what the implications of the internment were from the Japanese American perspective
- Websites to be visited by students:
 - Smithsonian National Museum of American History
www.americanhistory.si.edu/perfect union
 - Smithsonian on Japanese Internment
www.smithsonianeducation.org/japanese internment
 - Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement: A digital Archives
www.bancroft.berkeley.edu
 - www.iamanamerican.weebly.com
- [Student gather information and compare and contrast both perspectives in a t-chart: Internment: Government justifications/perspective vs. Japanese American experience](#)

Day III: Japanese Internment: A challenge to American Democracy and constitution?

Focus Question: As students evaluate the decision to intern Japanese Americans during the war, they will determine whether this act violates the constitution and examine what the larger implications of this was for Japanese Americans and our democracy

- Based on previous knowledge and research, the class lists potential legal conflicts with executive order 9066 (federal government's role in defending the country, treason, equality before the law, search and seizure, presidential powers, balance of powers, citizen rights...). Teacher writes these on chart paper and posts
- In small groups assigned to one of these issues, students will read excerpts from American constitution to find text evidence on their issue and how this relates to the treatment of Japanese Americans during internment
- Students draft out arguments by citing specific textual evidence from the constitution either supporting or denying the constitutionality of the executive

order and engage in a debate. If the class agrees that the internment of Japanese Americans was unconstitutional, they as a class will agree on what reparations should be made.

- In conclusion, whole class engages in discussion answering the following questions: Could this kind of a marginalization of a group of people be repeated? Students would be encouraged to make connections to similar issues today

Assessment/Culminating Task:

- Students will choose to write a propaganda speech pro internment or against internment that will be played on American radio (read to the class)
- Write a diary entry as a Japanese American living in an internment camp and in character, present to the class
- Create pro internment or counter internment propaganda poster (with writing abstract)