

Kim Leng
East Asia Since 1800
Fall 2018 Curriculum Project

The Stories of “Comfort Women”

Rationale:

From 1932-1945, Japan forced girls as young as 14 years old from Korea, China, and the Philippines to become sexual slaves or “comfort women” to Japanese soldiers. This unit seeks to acknowledge a painful history in Asia’s past that is often overlooked during discussions about World War II. Students will read personal accounts of “comfort women” from various news articles and watch *The Apology*, a documentary about three comfort women: Cao Hei Mao from China, Adela Barroquilla from the Philippines, and Gil Won-Ok from South Korea. Although their stories are full of painful memories, the women display strength, resilience, and courage.

Common Core English Language Art Standards:

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

Speaking and Listening:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

Range of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grades: 10-12

Subject Areas: English/Language Arts, World History

Materials:

The Apology, directed by Tiffany Hsiung

<https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/asia/2018/08/filmmaker-year-journey-filming-asia-comfort-women-180813125008321.html> (view *The Apology* (47:30 minutes) using this link and the article is just as informative)

Blakemore, Erin. "The Brutal History of Japan's 'Comfort Women'." - www.history.com/news/comfort-women-japan-military-brothels-korea

Chung, Maya. "Bringing Poetry to the Cruel History of Comfort Women." www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/10/17/bringing-poetry-to-the-cruel-history-of-comfort-women/

Engle, Margarita. "The Life of a Digger ." *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 2019, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/141839/the-life-of-a-digger

"*Oral Histories of Comfort Women*." Asia for Educators, Columbia University http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/korea/comfort_women.pdf

Romo, Vanessa. "Japan Times' Newspaper Redefines 'Comfort Women' And 'Forced Labor'." www.npr.org/2018/11/30/672423391/japan-times-newspaper-redefines-comfort-women-and-forced-labor

Smith, Josh. "South Korea's Surviving 'Comfort Women' Spend Final Years Seeking..." www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-japan-comfortwomen/south-koreas-surviving-comfort-women-spend-final-years-seeking-atonement-from-japan-idUSKCN1NS024

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the experience of comfort women survivors
- Reflect on the atrocity of war

- Reflect on the impact of country relations (Japan and Korea) due to war
- Write a poem or a letter to one of the comfort women in *The Apology*

Day I: Background Information: Japan and “Comfort Women”

Essential Question: Why did Japanese officials destroy documents related to comfort women stations and attempt to reshape Japan’s military history? Find evidence from two different sources in the text to support your claim.

Lesson Activities:

- Teacher introduces the history of comfort women and as a class read “The Brutal History of Japan's 'Comfort Women'” by Erin Blakemore www.history.com/news/comfort-women-japan-military-brothels-korea.
- Class discussions:
 - What are “comfort women?”
 - How were the women recruited?
 - Why did the history of comfort women go undocumented for decades?
- Student will independently read the following articles:
 - “*Oral Histories of Comfort Women.*” Asia for Educators, Columbia University
 - “Japan Times' Newspaper Redefines 'Comfort Women' And 'Forced Labor'” by Vanessa Romo.
 - “South Korea's Surviving 'Comfort Women' Spend Final Years Seeking...” by Josh Smith

Assessment:

Check-out question: Have students share their responses to the essential question. If time permits, ask students to also share one quote from the text that resonates with them and why.

Day 2: View *The Apology* Documentary

Lesson Activities:

- As a class, read director Tiffany Hsiung’s journey to filming *The Apology* at this link: <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/asia/2018/08/filmmaker-year-journey-filming-asia-comfort-women-180813125008321.html> . Explain to students that they will watch the documentary about three former comfort women: Cao Hei Mao from China, Adela Barroquilla from the Philippines, and Gil Won-Ok from South Korea. The director calls them “Grandma” in this film. Have the class take out their notebook and for each page, write down each grandma’s name. They will watch, listen, and take notes. Have students focus on the grandmas’ emotions. After completing the film, they will use their notes to write a poem or letter to one of the grandmas.
 - Show *The Apology* documentary. It is about 47 minutes.

Assessment:

Exit ticket: Circulate the class and stamp completed notes.

Day 3: Poetry/ Letter Workshop

Lesson Activities:

- Instruct students to take out yesterday's notes. They will now select one grandma to focus on and write a poem or letter.

Hand out a sample poem to students from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/141839/the-life-of-a-digger>.

The Life of a Digger
By Margarita Engle

Henry from the island of Jamaica

Jamaican digging crews have to sleep
eighty men to a room, in huge warehouses
like the ones where big wooden crates
of dynamite are stored.

My hands feel like scorpion claws,
clamped on to a hard hard shovel all day,
then curled into fists at night.

At dawn, the steaming labor trains
deliver us by the thousands, down into
that snake pit where we dig
until my muscles feel
as weak as water
and my backbone
is like shattered glass.

But only half the day
is over.

At lunchtime, we see sunburned
American engineers and foremen
eating at tables, in shady tents
with the flaps left open,
so that we have to watch
how they sit on nice chairs,
looking restful.

We also watch the medium-dark
Spanish men, relaxing as they sit
on their train tracks, grinning
as if they know secrets.

We have no place to sit. Not even
a stool. So we stand, plates in hand,
uncomfortable
and undignified.

Back home, I used to dream of saving
enough Panama money
to buy a bit of good farmland
for Momma and my little brothers
and sisters, so that we would all
have plenty to eat.

Now all I want is a chair.
And food with some spice.
And fair treatment.
Justice.

Explain to students that the poem can be written as free verse. It does not need to rhyme. The poem needs to be a minimum of 5 lines that will capture the experience or emotion of one of the grandmas.

Assessment: Have students share their poems to the class. Collect all poems at end of class.

Works Cited

- Blakemore, Erin. "The Brutal History of Japan's 'Comfort Women'." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 20 Feb. 2018, www.history.com/news/comfort-women-japan-military-brothels-korea. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
- Chung, Maya. "Bringing Poetry to the Cruel History of Comfort Women." *The New York Review of Books*, The New York Review of Books, 17 Oct. 2018, www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/10/17/bringing-poetry-to-the-cruel-history-of-comfort-women/. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
- Engle, Margarita. "The Life of a Digger ." *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 2019, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/141839/the-life-of-a-digger. Assessed 11 Jan. 2019.
- Hsiung, Tiffany. "A Filmmaker's Six-Year Journey Filming with Asia's 'Comfort Women'." *GCC News | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 14 Aug. 2018, www.aljazeera.com/blogs/asia/2018/08/filmmaker-year-journey-filming-asia-comfort-women-180813125008321.html. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
- "*Oral Histories of Comfort Women*." Asia for Educators, Columbia University , 2009, afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/korea/comfort_women.pdf. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
- Pov. "Lesson Plan: Listening and Responding to Women's Stories from War: The Apology. PBS. *American Documentary Inc.*, POV, 19 Oct. 2018, archive.pov.org/theapology/lesson-plan/. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.
- Romo, Vanessa. "Japan Times' Newspaper Redefines 'Comfort Women' And 'Forced Labor'." *NPR*, 1 Dec. 2018, www.npr.org/2018/11/30/672423391/japan-times-newspaper-

redefines-comfort-women-and-forced-labor. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.

Smith, Josh. "South Korea's Surviving 'Comfort Women' Spend Final Years Seeking..." *Reuters*, Dec. 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-japan-comfortwomen/south-koreas-surviving-comfort-women-spend-final-years-seeking-atonement-from-japan-idUSKCN1NS024. Accessed 4 Jan. 2019.