

Incarcerated Life: Looking at the Cultural experience of Japanese Americans during the Japanese American Incarceration of World War II Era

These lessons focus on the incarceration of Japanese Americans from a cultural perspective. The lesson will show students the daily life of internees. The lesson uses readings, videos, and primary source documents with individual and group activities. **Note:** The term “internment” is being replaced, in this part of history’s vocabulary, by “incarceration.” Therefore the language in the lesson plan reflects that change, but the secondary source documents do not. Note this change to your students.

Teacher:	Location:
Class/Topic:	Time: 1-2 class periods
Grade Level: Middle School	Date:

Overview: Today’s lesson will focus on the incarceration of Japanese Americans from a cultural perspective. This lesson would fit in after learning about WWII.

Goals: To understand the experience of Japanese Americans being incarcerated during the WWII.

Objective(s): Students will be able to identify the key aspects of life for Japanese Americans in incarceration camps during WWII.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Resources: suitcase, pencil/pen, paper, projector, internet access, printed documents included in lesson plan

Procedure:

- Ask students if they know the following terms: interned/incarcerated, Japanese-American, Nisei and Issei. If not, go over as a class making the definition together using previous knowledge.
- Read them Scenario A. Have them write a short paragraph on how they would feel, what would they do. Then share with a partner. Have a few students share with the class aloud. [Attached to lesson plan. Called “SCENARIO A”]
- Have students read brief background on why the Japanese Americans were incarcerated. Either read aloud, popcorn style or at teacher discretion. [Attached to lesson plan. Called “HISTORICAL CONTEXT”]. Answer follow up questions.
- Have students watch a short interview with George Takei about leaving behind his life to go to an incarceration camp. Answer follow up questions [Attached to lesson plan. Called “Video Questions.”]
- Have students read about life in the incarceration camps. Split up students into different groups based on the sections. Then have them create a poster depicting their section. Share with class. Have class answer as a whole the follow up questions. [Attached to lesson plan. Called Behind the Fence: Life in the Internment Camp]
- Show pictures of incarceration camps. Have students draw connections between what they read and what they see in the pictures. Have class discussion. [Pictures in suitcase. Choose from the following images: G3, G2, I6, I5, D2, I3, I4, H2, F2, G1]
- For the remainder of class and homework, have students write a letter home to a friend pretending to be an incarcerated Japanese American. Have them use material that they learned about from the day. Have them express their feelings of being incarcerated, and have them tell their friend if they still feel like an American after this experience.

Formative Assessment: Students will answer follow up questions to readings, and the class will go over them as a whole.

Summative Assessment: Students will write a letter pretending to be an incarcerated Japanese American.

SCEANRIO A

Imagine...

You live in a nice neighborhood where everyone gets along for the most part. Neighbors know each other and consider themselves friends. One day though you notice your next-door neighbors' have a lot of boxes and are selling all of their stuff in the front yard. You go over to see if they are moving and ask if you can help. Your neighbor tells you him and his family are moving not by choice, but by force. He tells you the government is picking up their family in the next twenty-four hours to be taken to a special area where they will live for the foreseeable future. You ask "why? What did you do?" Your neighbor replies, "The government thinks it is right."

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: Japanese-American Internment Camps

A historical fact that is not really "common knowledge" is the fact that, during World War II, over 100,000 Japanese-American individuals, the vast majority of which were actually American citizens, were rounded up and shipped eventually to internment camps. These consisted of poorly-constructed barracks surrounded by barbed wire, sentry posts and armed guards.

They were put in these camps, not because they had been tried and found guilty of something, but because either they or their parents or ancestors were from Japan and, as such, they were deemed a "threat" to national security. They were also easily identifiable due to their race. There was no similar large-scale roundups of German or Italian- Americans, even though we were also fighting them during World War II.

These people were forced to abandon their businesses, their homes and, in many cases, their families as some individuals were taken elsewhere and held, again without trial, for years. The Japanese-Americans suffered severe economic losses, personal humiliation and, in some cases, death, due to this relocation.

The relocation itself was ordered by the then President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and by an act of Congress.

The Japanese-American (Nisei) and the Japanese aliens (Issei) on the West Coast were rounded up and moved to assembly centers and then to internment camps. Few Japanese living in the East or Midwestern portions of the U.S., though, were treated the same way.

What is extremely interesting is that the Nisei and Issei living in Hawaii were not subject to a mass evacuation even though they formed a third of the population in Hawaii and were a lot closer to Japan than the Japanese-Americans on the West Coast of the U.S.

The reasons they weren't rounded up were both cultural and economic. *"There was no mass relocation and internment in Hawaii, where the population was one-third Japanese American. It would have been impossible to transport that many people to the mainland, and the Hawaiian economy would have collapsed without Japanese American workers."* -from the book *Japanese American Internment Camps* by Gail Sakurai, 2002

"Ironically, the territory with the largest Japanese population saw the least discrimination. More than one third of all residents of Hawaii had some Japanese ancestry. Japanese labor was considered vital to the civilian and military economics of the Hawaiian Islands. Besides, the views of Delos Emmons, military commander of Hawaii, were the opposite of those of General DeWitt." -from the book *Japanese-American internment in American History*, 1996.

As noted in some of the other reviews, there were a very small number of people arrested and detained in Hawaii and a small number that voluntarily went to the mainland camps, but primarily so they could find relatives. There was not a single act of sabotage in Hawaii by the Japanese Americans during the entire war. In addition, since there were so many people of Japanese ancestry already living in Hawaii, about a third of the population, racism was not at all the kind of problem it was on the west coast

Although prejudice and discrimination played major roles in the internment, economics and jealousy did also, as many Californians were jealous of the economic success that the Japanese-American farmers and store owners enjoyed. Thus arose a lot of the anti- Japanese-American feeling in the same way that some people despise Jewish people, largely due to their economic successes. The hard work, self-sacrifice, and strong efforts by the Japanese-Americans and Jewish people are overlooked and ignored when people of prejudice proclaim their

judgments against Japanese-Americans and Jewish people.

Questions:

1. How many Japanese-Americans were incarcerated during WWII?
2. Why were they incarcerated?
3. Who did not go to incarceration camps, even though they were part of WWII?
4. Why weren't Japanese-Americans in Hawaii put in incarceration camps?
5. Why were people in California jealous of Japanese-Americans?

Source: Delphine Kendrick, Jewett Academy Middle School,

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDIQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.polk-fl.net%2Fstaff%2Fteachers%2Ftah%2Fdocuments%2FJapanese-AmericanInternmentCamps.pdf&ei=DuFtUrOhLcmziQKU3IHICw&usg=AFQjCNGMMk8KyyEy3RYbsYhoRkK_fMvqkQ&bvm=bv.55123115,d.cGE

Behind the Fence: Life in the Internment Camp

Shikata Ga Nai ... It Cannot Be Helped

During the summer of 1942, most evacuees from the Portland Assembly Center were transferred to newly constructed relocation centers at Minidoka, Idaho, Tule Lake, California, or Heart Mountain, Wyoming. Upon arrival their evacuation from the exclusion area was complete. They were now internees. About two-thirds of them were Nisei American citizens, most under 21 years of age. The rest were Issei Japanese aliens prohibited by law from becoming citizens. These internees tended to be much older, averaging well over 50 years of age.

Improving the surroundings

Soon after arriving, the new residents set about improving their surroundings. The government furnished only standard Army cots, blankets, and a small heating stove for each apartment. Inside the apartment, internees improvised by making shelves and furniture from whatever scraps could be found. Curtains, pictures, and posters also were hung to add to the livability. One internee remembered how her brother salvaged wood from the camp's scrap lumber pile to build a dresser attached to the wall studs: "Now each member of the family had one drawer for clothes." Then her brother built two standing wood frames for their mother to cover with cloth to serve as room dividers. These improved life because "we had a semblance of privacy now for dressing and sleeping."

Outside the barracks they planted, to the extent that the climate permitted, trees, hedges, and flower beds to soften the stark environment. One resident described his experience at Manzanar, California: "Oh, it's really so hot, you see, and the wind blows. There is no shade at all. It's miserable, really. But one year after, it's quite a change. A year after they built the camp and put water there, the green grows up. And mentally everyone is better." As part of the beautification, Manzanar boasted a "lovely landscaped Japanese garden" near one of its mess halls.

Camp organization

"Aside from the absurdity of living that way, life went on pretty much as usual," according to one internee. The Japanese Americans worked to set up a generally stable small-town existence with fire and police departments, newspapers, and baseball teams. Of course, all of this was within the limits of the WRA framework. Internees were encouraged to assume responsibility for many phases of community management, but it was always clear who was in charge. Caucasian WRA employees headed by a project director set the basic policies of each camp. From there, camps differed in their organization. Internees in some centers drew up charters and formed governments not dissimilar from ordinary cities of the same size. Other camps used more informal methods such as conferences held by a small group of key residents with the project director when important decisions needed to be made.

Apathy in community affairs could be a problem, particularly with the younger Nisei internees. One leader at the Tule Lake Relocation Center took his fellow internees to task at a "citizens' rally." Shaking his finger at the disappointingly small crowd attending the rally, Walter Tsukamoto railed: "Look at this! We are not here to talk about our daily bread, but to discuss the vital questions affecting the very life of the nisei world. And only this many of you are

interested!" He continued: "I sometimes wonder if the nisei themselves really do care to have their rights protected."

Camp population

As an overview, three internees at Tule Lake wrote a letter to Governor Sprague in October 1942 outlining the general demographic and occupational numbers associated with the camp's residents:

Dear Governor Sprague:

...Therefore on this day, October 18, 1942, there are remaining in this camp exactly 14,472 persons. Of this number, women and children under 18 years of age comprise 9,412. The remaining 5,060 are males over the age of 18, but of this number 1,060 are over the age of 60. ...Under any circumstances, when nearly 15,000 people are brought together to live in a new community established in a period of less than three months, there will be among them many whose labor is essential to the daily operations of the new community. These include 800 project farm work; 500 construction; 400 maintenance men which includes janitor and garbage disposers; 800 warehousing and other transportation; 350 cooks and cooks' helpers; and 410 wardens, firemen, and other Civic workers; and at least 100 hospital employees, a total of 3,360."

Sincerely yours,

Ichiro Hasegawa, Richard Hikawa, Ken Sekiguchi

Employment in the centers

As described above, thousands of internees were employed in and around a camp to keep it largely self-sufficient. Typical employees worked 44 hours a week and were paid from \$12 to \$19 per month. Each internee also received a small monthly allowance to purchase clothing. In October 1942 the Tule Lake Relocation Center employed about 800 workers on the 2,500 acre WRA farm project. At the time, it supplied produce for the Tule Lake camp as well as five other relocation centers totaling about 70,000 people. The 500 construction workers at Tule Lake were completing the barracks and trying to "make them more tenable for the coming winter which is more severe than the climate to which the greater majority of us have been accustomed." They were also working on an addition to the hospital as well as construction of a 20,000 hen poultry farm and a 5,000 head hog farm. Future plans included building schools since "at present the 3,971 students are crowded into makeshift buildings without adequate desk and chair facilities." Other workers toiled in various services. The 400 maintenance men worked at a range of duties such as: garbage disposal for the city of 15,000; janitors for the approximately 400 public buildings including mess halls, laundries, and washrooms; and a fuel detail that supplied the 7,500 boilers and stoves with coal. Meanwhile, 800 warehouse and transportation workers staffed the more than 50 warehouses that accommodated the center and the project farm, which shipped an average of seven train cars of produce daily. The 350 cooks and helpers provided three meals a day to the camp, meaning that each cook, on average, prepared meals for 45 people. The Community Welfare and Internal Security Division employed 410 firemen, fire

wardens, police wardens, and other civic leaders, while more than 100 workers served as doctors, interns, orderlies, dentists, pharmacists, and ambulance drivers to the Tule Lake camp.

Food and dining

In addition to the produce and other food raised by the camp, the government provided meals, usually at a cost of about 45 cents per person per day. Contrary to persistent rumors, the internees were subject to the same food rationing restrictions as other Americans. The sheer size of the task of feeding 15,000 residents was daunting. By one accounting, a typical amount of food stuffs provided to residents each day included 8,160 pounds of beef, 9,600 pounds of rice, 120 cases of eggs, 3,000 loaves of bread, 2,400 gallons of milk, and 500 pounds of sugar.⁽⁸⁾ The meals were usually served cafeteria style in mess halls designed to seat about 250 to 300 people. A random menu might contain the following:

Tule Lake Relocation Center Mess Hall Menu

MONDAY:

- ▶ Breakfast: stewed dried fruit, farina with hot milk, french toast with syrup, cocoa, milk.
- ▶ Lunch: baked macaroni and cheese, steamed rice, tsukemono (pickled vegetables), boiled fresh vegetables, lettuce salad, orange, bread, tea.
- ▶ Dinner: fresh fried fish, stewed corn, steamed rice, pickled fresh beets, butterscotch dessert.

TUESDAY:

- ▶ Breakfast: half grapefruit, rolled oats with milk, hot cakes with syrup, cocoa, coffee, and milk.
- ▶ Lunch: boiled beef-spanish style, steamed rice, tsukemono, lettuce salad, apple tea.
- ▶ Dinner: beef sukiyaki (a sort of Japanese chop suey), steamed rice, tsukemono, potato salad, spice cake, tea.

WEDNESDAY:

- ▶ Breakfast: stewed dried fruit, dry cereal with milk, french toast with syrup, coffee, tea, and milk.
- ▶ Lunch: Boston baked beans, boiled fresh vegetables, steamed rice, tsukemono, lettuce salad, orange, bread, tea.
- ▶ Dinner: fried fresh fish, steamed rice, tsukemono, cole slaw, fruit jello, tea.

The choice of food on the menu was a source of near constant complaint by the internees. The American born Nisei were accustomed to a more standard American diet while most Issei preferred native Japanese dishes. The menus were an attempt to compromise between the two positions. And, internees were permitted to buy additional food at the cooperative stores in the camps, although they could not purchase anything that required ration points.

Medical care

Free medical and dental care were provided to the internees in the camps by hospitals staffed largely by Japanese Americans. Infants and nursing mothers received special medical services. Residents requesting special medical treatments or procedures that were not available at the

centers were required to pay for the services. Camp officials were concerned with preventing the outbreak of epidemics and therefore, considering the crowded living conditions, instituted special sanitary precautions.

Education

The WRA provided education through the high school level for all school-age residents. Most relocation centers built high schools and used converted barracks for grade school classrooms. Often entire blocks of barracks were used for classrooms. At first school supplies and equipment were in short supply. Later, internees and people from churches and relief agencies built or donated desks, bookshelves, books, maps, and related items.(10) Courses of study were planned and teachers were selected in collaboration with state departments of education following prevailing state standards.

Teachers came from both Caucasian and Japanese American ranks. One internee remembered that "of my teachers, roughly half were Caucasian and the other half were 'Buddhaheads' as the young fellows referred to Japanese Americans. I vividly remember two of my Caucasian teachers, dedicated and effective, although many students were hostile and uncooperative in the classroom, probably taking out their resentment on them. Who were these individuals who gave up the freedom and comforts of the 'outside' and chose to pursue their profession in the dreary camps? They must have been compassionate and selfless persons."(11)

College students could apply for indefinite leaves to attend higher education institutions located outside of the exclusion zone. According to the camp newspaper, the Daily Tulean Dispatch, students were one of several classes of individuals that could leave the camp. Still, the wait for approval could be long "because this type of leave includes both citizens and aliens, [and] the applicants must be cleared by the FBI and through the Record Office of the WRA."

Indefinite leave opportunities also applied to internees who needed 30 days to attend to matters that required their presence elsewhere, and for employment.(12) Student departures became a regular camp occurrence that commonly was noted in the newspaper. This was the case in October 1942 at the Minidoka, Idaho camp where "a student release certificate was received...Monday for Kiyō Fujii, who left this week for the St. Louis College of Pharmacy at St. Louis, Mo. The total member [number] of students relocated is now 45."(13)

Camp security

Police services were divided at the relocation centers. Outside of the center, military police guarded the boundaries and stood by to quell serious disturbances. Inside the center, a small civilian police force, headed by a Caucasian with prior police experience and several captains, maintained order. This force was also staffed by internee sergeants and patrol police who served as the bulk of the cops on the beat. Misdemeanor offenses were usually handled by the project director or by a judicial commission made up of residents. Major criminal cases were referred to outside courts.

Questions:

1. How was the medical care for internees?
2. Did internees still have to go to school?
3. Who were allowed to leave the incarceration camps?
4. What kind of activities could people do to keep busy in the camps?
5. What kind of jobs did people hold in the camps?
6. Why were internees upset about the food?
7. Describe the living conditions of the internees.
8. Identify several ways that the camps were similar to life outside the camps.

Source: Life on the Home Front. "Oregon Responds to World War II." 2008.

<http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/exhibits/ww2/threat/internment.htm>

Video Questions

1. What didn't George's father want to lose?
2. How much did the car sell for?
3. What happened to the rest of their house belongings?
4. What did some families do to their furniture? Why?
5. What did George's father do with his books?
6. What happened to the books?
7. What could George's father do?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4N7oaJ9pvVs&list=PLW6VIukf_zQhKFnysHa9YEB5J30QpU4NG