

Teaching American History Project 2009-2012

Lesson Title- Introduction to Japanese Internment from Robert Gamache

Grade- 7-10

Length of Class Period- 45 Minutes

Inquiry- Students will consider the following questions:

In what ways did the United States react to the Bombing of Pearl Harbor?

What was the Japanese Internment?

All we have to fear is fear itself???

Objectives- Students will learn about the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent relocation of thousands of Japanese American citizens on the west coast.

Students will analyze photos, predict what they think the photos are of, they will read text and compare and contrast this with the current United States policy regarding citizens from countries which have attempted to attack the United States.

Students will answer the question “Could this happen today?”

Materials-

Photo Analysis Worksheet :

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>

Photos:

http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/japanese_internment/japan_internmentphotos.htm

Activities-

1. When the students come into the class the seats will be rearranged so that there are 3-4 desks in islands (groups facing each other).

2. When the students come into the class put them in the groups which you find to be most appropriate.

3. Hand out photo packets, blank paper/pencil

4. Allow students about 5 minutes to look at the photos and discuss what they see as a group. Once you feel they have had sufficient time to observe the photos ask them to complete the photo analysis worksheet. Share a few responses as a class.

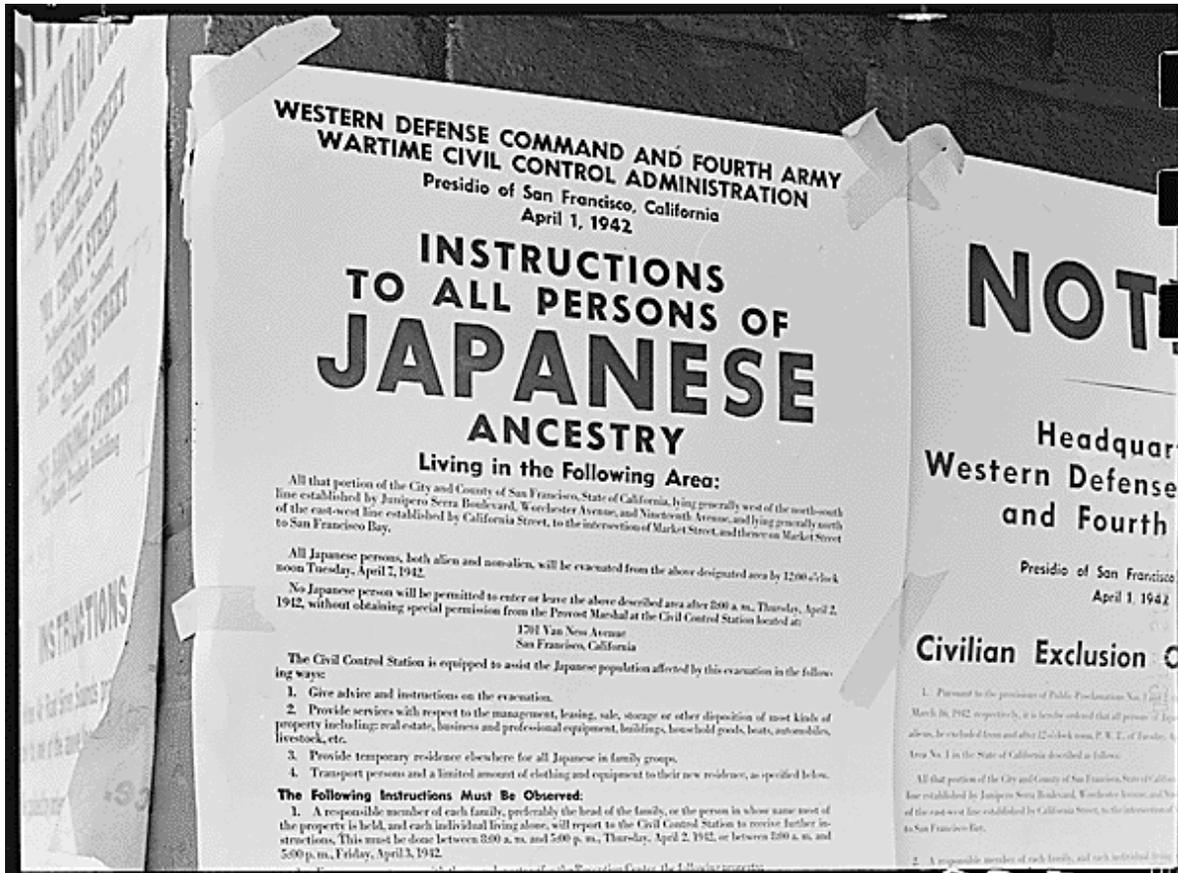
6. Now we will begin to explain to students what is going on in the photos. You may choose to give a brief introduction yourself while you hand out the overview of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Internment.

7. Once you have finished reading about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Internment open the floor for discussion. Do students think what happened to the Japanese Americans on the west coast was alright? Did the United States violate their civil rights? Do you think this policy contributed to our Victory in the War? Is this period a black eye for the United

States?

8. Finally, students will write a quick journal entry to conclude the class period. The topic of this journal is “Considering the amount of successful and attempted attacks on the United States by people from such countries as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, etc, do you think it would be prudent for the United States to adopt a policy similar to that of the Japanese Internment during World War II?”

Assessment: Both the review of the photos and the journal entry will be checked for completion/comprehension. Participation in the class discussion can also be considered when grading and while give insight into the student’s level of understanding.



Background

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared that the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, would live in infamy. The attack launched the United States fully into the two

theaters of the world war. Prior to Pearl Harbor, the United States had been involved in the European war only by supplying England and other antifascist countries of Europe with the munitions of war.

The attack on Pearl Harbor also launched a rash of fear about national security, especially on the West Coast. In February 1942, just two months after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt as commander-in-chief, issued Executive Order 9066, which had the effect of relocating all persons of Japanese ancestry, both citizens and aliens, inland, outside of the Pacific military zone. The objectives of the order were to prevent espionage and to protect persons of Japanese descent from harm at the hands of Americans who had strong anti-Japanese attitudes.

In Washington and Oregon, the eastern boundary of the military zone was an imaginary line along the rim of the Cascade Mountains; this line continued down the spine of California from north to south. From that line to the Pacific coast, the military restricted zones in those three states were defined.

Roosevelt's order affected 117,000 people of Japanese descent, two-thirds of whom were native-born citizens of the United States. The Issei were the first generation of Japanese in this country; the Nisei were the second generation, numbering 70,000 American citizens at the time of internment. Within weeks, all persons of Japanese ancestry--whether citizens or enemy aliens, young or old, rich or poor--were ordered to assembly centers near their homes. Soon they were sent to permanent relocation centers outside the restricted military zones.

For example, persons of Japanese ancestry in western Washington State were removed to the assembly center at the Puyallup Fairgrounds near Tacoma. From Puyallup to Pomona, internees found that a cowshed at a fairgrounds or a horse stall at a racetrack was home for several months before they were transported to a permanent wartime residence. Relocation centers were situated many miles inland, often in remote and desolate locales. Sites included Tule Lake, California; Minidoka, Idaho; Manzanar, California; Topaz, Utah; Jerome, Arkansas; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Poston, Arizona; Granada, Colorado; and Rohwer, Arkansas.

As four or five families with their sparse collections of clothing and possessions squeezed into and shared tar-papered barracks, life took on some familiar routines of socializing and school. However, eating in common facilities and having limited opportunities for work interrupted other social and cultural patterns. Persons who became troublesome were sent to a special camp at Tule Lake, California, where dissidents were housed.

In 1943 and 1944 the government assembled a combat unit of Japanese Americans for the European theater. It became the 442d Regimental Combat Team and gained fame as the most highly decorated of World War II. Their military record bespoke their patriotism.

As the war drew to a close, the relocation centers were slowly evacuated. While some persons of Japanese ancestry returned to their home towns, others sought new surroundings. For example, the Japanese American community of Tacoma, Washington, had been sent to three different centers; only 30 percent returned to Tacoma after the war. Japanese Americans from Fresno had gone to Manzanar; 80 percent returned to their hometown.

The internment of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II sparked constitutional and political debate. In the 1940s, two men and one woman--Hirabayashi, Korematsu, and Endo--challenged the constitutionality of the relocation and curfew orders. While the men received negative judgments from the court, in the 1944 case *ExParte Mitsuye Endo*, the Supreme Court ruled that, "Mitsuye Endo is entitled to an unconditional release by the War Relocation Authority." Some people refer to the relocation centers as concentration camps; others view internment as an unfortunate episode, but a military necessity. During the Reagan-Bush years Congress moved toward the passage of Public Law 100-383 in 1988 which acknowledged the injustice of the internment, apologized for it, and provided a \$20,000 cash payment to each person who was interned.

One of the most stunning ironies in this episode of American civil liberties was articulated by an internee who, when told that the Japanese were put in those camps for their own protection, countered "If we were put there for our protection, why were the guns at the guard towers pointed inward, instead of outward?"