

Where Could This Happen?

Overview

This lesson uses reading analysis (prediction and detail) to introduce the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. A pre-test and word wall are used to familiarize students with background information and vocabulary that prepare them for the topic.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze historical facts about the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans.
- Recognize key terms about the Japanese American incarceration and Japanese culture.
- Use context clues to determine the relevant meaning of a word.
- Discuss context clues and comprehend that loss of Constitutional rights to citizens occurred in the U.S. based solely on ethnicity.

Essential Question

- What are the responsibilities that every American must follow in order to protect the rights of other Americans?

Guiding Questions

- What was the true reason for the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans by the U.S. government?
- How did most people in the U.S. react to the Japanese American incarceration?
- How did Japanese Americans react to the incarceration?

National History Standards

Part Two—United States and World History
Grades 5–12

Chapter 2: Historical Thinking

- Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 3: U.S. History Standards

- Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929–1945)
- Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970's)
- Standard 3: The causes and course of WWII, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.
- Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties.

Arizona State Standards

Social Studies—Grade 8

Strand 2: American History

Concept 8: Great Depression & WWII.

- PO 2. Describe how Pearl Harbor led to U.S. involvement in WWII.
- PO 4. Explain how the following factors affected the U.S. home front during WWII.
 - a. internment of Japanese, German, and Italian Americans.
- PO 5. Describe Arizona's contributions to the war effort:
 - e. POW and internment camps

Strand 2: World History

Concept 1: Research Skills for History

- PO 4. Formulate questions that can be answered by historical study and research.

Strand 3: Civics/Government

Concept 3: Functions of Government

- PO 8: Describe the impact of the following executive orders and decisions:
 - a. Executive Order 9066—creation of internment camps on U.S. soil.



Strand 4: Geography*Concept 1: The World in Spatial Terms*

- PO 4. Locate physical and cultural features (e.g., continents, cities, countries, significant waterways, mountain ranges, climate zones, major water bodies, landforms) throughout the world.
- PO 5. Interpret thematic maps....depicting various aspects of the U.S. and world regions. (Apply to regions studied).

Concept 2: Places and Regions

- PO 4. Identify how the role of the media, images, and advertising influences the perception of a place.
- PO 5. Describe how a place changes over time. (Connect with content studied).

Concept 4: Human Systems

- PO 6. Describe the aspects of culture (e.g., literacy, occupations, clothing, property rights) related to beliefs and understandings that influence the economic, social, and political activities of men and women.

Concept 6: Geographic Applications

- PO 2. Describe ways different groups of people (i.e., Native Americans, Hispanics, retirees) create and shape the same environment.
- PO 3. Use geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., recognizing patterns, mapping, graphing) when discussing current events.

Reading—Grade 8**Strand 1: Reading Process***Concept 4: Vocabulary*

- PO 2. Use context to identify the intended meaning of unfamiliar words (e.g., definition, example, restatement, synonym, contrast)..

Concept 6: Comprehension Strategies

- PO 1. Predict text content using prior knowledge and text features (e.g., illustrations, titles, topic sentences, key words).
- PO 2. Confirm predictions about text for accuracy.
- PO 3. Generate clarifying questions in order to comprehend text.

- PO 7. Use reading strategies (e.g., drawing conclusions, determining cause and effect, making inferences, sequencing) to interpret text.

Strand 2: Comprehending Informational Text*Concept 1: Expository Text*

- PO 1. Restate the main idea (explicit or implicit) & supporting details in expository text.
- PO 2. Summarize the main idea (stated or implied) and critical details of expository text, maintaining chronological, sequential, or logical order.
- PO 10. Make relevant inferences about expository text, supported by text evidence.

Writing—Grade 8**Strand 2: Writing Elements***Concept 1: Ideas and Content*

- PO 1. Use clear, focused ideas and details to support the topic.
- PO 2. Provide content and selected details that are well-suited to audience and purpose.
- PO 3. Develop a sufficient explanation or exploration of the topic.
- PO 4. Include ideas and details that show original perspective.

Concept 5: Sentence Fluency

- PO 1. Write simple, compound, and complex sentences.
- PO 2. Create sentences that flow together and sound natural when read aloud.
- PO 3. Vary sentence beginnings, lengths, and patterns to enhance the flow of the writing.

Strand 3: Writing Applications*Concept 2: Expository*

- PO 2. Write a summary based on the information gathered that include(s): a topic sentence, supporting details, and relevant information.



Materials

- (1-A) Vocabulary—Word Wall with KEY
- (1-B) Where Could This Happen? Article/worksheet and KEY
- (1-C) Japanese American Experience Pre-Test with KEY
- Classroom Dictionaries

Background

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 is known in history as a “day of infamy.” Within just a few days, the U.S. government moved to isolate any possibility of Japanese assistance within the United States by isolating community leaders of Japanese birth or heritage. If a citizen had “the face of the enemy,” they were deemed a risk, and all persons of Japanese descent, whether citizens or not, who lived along the west coast of the United States were targeted for restricted movement and removal. On the west coast the Japanese immigrant community had historically been denied the right to purchase property, or to become naturalized citizens. In spite of such hostility, the Japanese community had prospered through sheer hard work, provoking envy.

There was little interest from the general population in the welfare of people of Japanese descent as the fear of internal espionage grew. In fact more than two-thirds of the incarcerated Japanese Americans were American by birth. They had exactly the same Constitutional rights as any other citizen. Because their rights were violated they endured severe economic loss, as well as social and civil standing.

The lesson opens with a reading designed to stimulate interest in the idea that such an incident violating basic Constitutional rights could occur in the United States. The scene in the reading “Where Could This Happen?” actually took place in the home of Mr. Masaji Inoshita, a Japanese American who was incarcerated at Gila Rivers, AZ, just as it is told.

Teacher Instant Expert Notes are designed to help the teacher with further background information in discussing student worksheets.

Opening

- Teacher Preparation: Place selected vocabulary words on classroom Word Wall from the provided vocabulary word list (1A).

Activities—Day 1

Where Could This Happen? Student Reading Analysis (Prediction and Details)

- Distribute “Where Could This Happen?” (1-B) article/worksheet.
- The article may be read individually, in partnerships, or as a class. Ask students to complete questions and be prepared to discuss. Emphasize that the answers need to be in complete sentences. (Reading and questions 20 minutes. Class discussion of answers 20–30 minutes.)

Discussion: Where Could This Happen?

Teacher Instant Expert Notes:

1. Usually students have heard of “camps,” but associate them with Siberia, Afghanistan, or somewhere else in the world.
2. Some community leaders were picked up within a few hours of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Community leaders were generally men. Many were not allowed to pack anything at all. Initially community leaders ended up in camps run by the Department of Justice in remote locations like North Dakota and Montana. They were not allowed communication with their families and suffered from the extreme temperatures.
3. The breakfast details are interesting to students. Once Japanese Americans were placed in camps, some camp personnel and administration took pleasure in providing foods with which the



Japanese American community were unfamiliar. One result was that many suffered from intestinal troubles. Assembly center mess halls, for instance, at first offered no rice to a community who had previously eaten rice three times a day.

4. An excellent opportunity to discuss “just following orders” mentality is presented here, and a discussion/comparison of Germans after the end of the war who claimed to be “just following orders” is a possibility.
5. Generally people are handcuffed when they are perceived to be dangerous to themselves or others. In fact, seeing the father of the family, a law-abiding, peaceful man handcuffed by government officials was shocking to the family. Although they immediately tried to learn where the father had been taken, it was many months before they had contact.
3. If a person of Japanese descent lived within the exclusion zone (effectively western California, Oregon, Washington and parts of Arizona) they were removed from their homes. If they lived outside the zone, they were allowed to stay, although they were often treated poorly and subjected to all kinds of questioning and accusation by local and federal law enforcement. Those in business had a difficult time holding on to their non-Japanese customers.
4. Japanese Americans were given very short notice and allowed to store furniture and other possessions, although the U.S. government refused to guarantee the storage it offered. Many Japanese Americans simply sold their goods for reduced prices.
5. There were ten major War Relocation Authority camps euphemistically called “Relocation Centers.” For more information, see “A Note on Terminology” at the beginning of this unit.
6. Most Japanese Americans had no ties at all with the Emperor of Japan. They were American and proud of it.
7. A few were given meaningful work, such as those who were dentists and doctors. But most working adults found themselves suddenly without employment. Jobs were available in the camps, but they were low paid, and menial. Jobs included work in the mess halls, in local businesses such as picking cotton or other crops, making camouflage nets, and other general labor. To their credit, in every one of the camps, Japanese Americans set up and organized schools, clubs, bands and orchestras, and other activities which helped people become involved within the community.
8. Most persons did report for removal. There were some legal protests which resulted in verdicts of guilty and incarceration (they were later overturned).
9. Most Americans seemed to be fearful. Some encouraged their Japanese American friends and neighbors to take heart, but most of the non-

Activities—Day 2

Japanese American Experience Pre-Test

Student Assessment of Historical Knowledge

- Distribute and administer the Japanese American Experience Pre-Test (1-C). (10 minutes)
- Teacher leads a review of answers as a class. **Important: Teacher must use Word Wall vocabulary in discussion.** Numbers align with pre-test questions. (15 minutes)

Discussion: Japanese American Experience Pre-Test - Teacher Instant Expert Notes

1. Absolutely not. Anyone of Japanese descent who lived on the west coast within a designated zone, were confined in American concentration camps. Japanese Americans who lived outside the zone were treated with suspicion and prejudice, because they looked like the enemy.
2. No Japanese American in the U.S. was found guilty of treason during or after World War II. Ten individuals were prosecuted for treason and all ten were Euro American.

Japanese American community ignored or took advantage of the plight of the Japanese Americans.

10. There was a list of forbidden items to take into the camps; radios and cameras were on the list. However, the prohibition was later relaxed.
 11. Pets were on the prohibited list. And yet, each camp had some pets, although they were kept in a very low-key way.
 12. Japanese customs and manners did help weather the incarceration. Patience was very helpful. Many in the Japanese American community hoped that their peaceful removal and confinement was proof of their loyalty to the U.S.
 13. The fact that so many people of Japanese descent lived in Hawaii is exactly why Hawaiian Japanese Americans were not mass incarcerated. The logistical and economic impact would have been too great.
 14. Mass incarceration made no real sense at all. It was an out and out over-reaction to fear and wartime hysteria, and a continuing emphasis on anti-Asian sentiment.
 15. It should never happen again, if we citizens protect the rights of one another, regardless of racial background or religious beliefs. It is an embarrassment that a democratic society based on the rights of freedom, allowed it to happen.
- Teacher will lead a class discussion on student knowledge of group discrimination in the world. (examples: slavery, Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, Shia and Sunni divisions of Islam, African tribal wars, Chinese and Koreans, etc.) Teacher will lead students towards analysis of complex reasons why such discrimination might exist (competition for land or power/ethnic/religious beliefs/tribal affiliations/racism, etc.) (15–20 minutes)

Activities—Day 3

Word Wall Vocabulary Exercise

Teacher Preparation: Prior to class prepare Word Wall words (1-A) in groups of 5 for distribution.

- Provide students individually with five Word Wall words each. Instruct students to (1) In their own words write definitions of vocabulary words, although they may use Dictionaries if they do not know a word. (2) Students will then use each word in a sentence, insuring that the words are used correctly and with meaning. (15–20 minutes)
- Place students into partnerships. Each is to share sentences with a partner, and critique one another's work. (10 minutes)
- Ask for volunteer sharing of words and meanings with class. (15 minutes)
- Class discussion that investigates the question of: What if the rest of America refused to allow the incarceration of people of Japanese descent in WWII? (5–10 minutes)

Closing

- Think-Pair-Share. Each partner shares with the other what they have learned about the way World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans was initiated, and specifically should express to one another their opinions about how protected U.S. citizens are by their Constitutional rights. (5 minutes)

Extensions

- Set up a debate between people who supported the confinement of all people of Japanese descent.
- Internet research on the question: Whose responsibility is it to protect Constitutional rights?
- Read excerpts aloud from one of the many personal histories of Japanese Americans. See examples under References.
- Compare the Japanese American experience with the treatment of American Muslims after 9/11.



References

- Egami, Hatsuye. *The Evacuation Diary of Hatsuye Egami*. Edited by Claire Gorfinkel. Pasadena, Calif: Intentional Productions, 1942 reprint 1995.
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- Hoobler, Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler. *The Japanese American Family Album*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 96-103.
- Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki and James D. Houston. *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience During and After the World War II Internment*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin Books, 2002.
- Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco. <http://www.sfmuseum.org>. (accessed September 3, 2009).