

Fish Ponds, Sumo and Philosophy

Overview

The World War II incarceration of the Japanese Americans in some ways is a conundrum. It was possible because the Japanese American community followed the instructions of the U.S. government in what is today recognized as unconstitutional. Why did the Japanese Americans obey the orders so readily? Why did they stay in camps they could have escaped from?

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.
- Comprehend how shared Japanese culture shaped the Japanese American community.

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 Japanese Americans react to the incarceration?
- What cultural background helped Japanese Americans endure the experience?

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

- (4-A) Fish Ponds, Sumo and Philosophy article with worksheet and KEY
- (4-B) What Happened After the War? Article with work sheet and KEY

- (1-C) Japanese American Experience Pre-Test and KEY
- (4-D) Photograph of Mr. Mas Inoshita at Gila River in 2003
- (4-E) *Lessons in Loyalty* DVD provided with this lesson.

Background

Traditional Japanese customs and manners are at least partly the result of a desire to keep the peace within the family and the greater community. Obeying the U.S. government's orders, then was a natural reaction for those who had been raised in culturally Japanese homes.

But even more influential than cultural traditions, the Issei (who at the time of World War II were ineligible for U.S. citizenship) feared what the U.S. government could do to them and their families. Without the basic protections guaranteed to citizens, they worried that if they didn't follow the orders being issued by the U.S. government, they would be separated from their families.

Once the camps were set up then, many Japanese Americans found solace and hope in gardens or other natural environments.

Opening

Inform students that the activity will discuss what Japanese Americans did while they were in camp for the duration of World War II. Ask if students can name an activity or sport that their ancestors performed, and whether or not it is one their family still follows. (5 minutes)

Activities—Day 1

Fish Ponds, Sumo and Philosophy—A cultural analysis that encourages understanding of one Japanese American's perspective of the World War II incarceration. Student Reading Analysis.

- Distribute "Fish Ponds, Sumo and Philosophy" (4-A) article with worksheet and key. (20 minutes)

- 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.

- **Discussion: Fish Ponds, Sumo and Philosophy** (20 minutes)

Teacher Instant Expert Notes

1. The Japanese in America came from a long history of challenges in dealing with extreme weather, political struggles, and pragmatism. "Shikata ga nai" means "It can't be helped." These words and philosophy helped many to weather all kinds of situations and challenges, including the World War II incarceration.
- 2 & 3. The concept of shame and humiliation is a strong concept within the Japanese culture. The concept of shame is not limited to just the individual, but is felt by entire families, a group of relatives, or in the case of mass incarceration, anyone of Japanese descent. Overcoming this shame required a concerted and pointed effort to reclaim pride and to re-establish honor, hence the intense desire for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team to fight for the United States.
6. Fish ponds gave the inmates a focus point. Building one produced the necessity of planning, obtaining construction materials, constructing, improving, and enjoying a creation that was a product of a person's own unique style and effort. Today, crumbling fish ponds are one of the few things left at places like the Gila River site, south of Phoenix, AZ. There are dozens and dozens of them scattered throughout the two parts of Gila River: Butte Camp and Canal Camp. Some of them have so many details (bridges, underwater features, pebble trim in designs or letters) that it is striking to think of the time needed to create them. They are in all kinds of shapes and sizes, with a multitude of different details. It must have taken painstaking labor. It must have brought a lot of satisfaction in a very unsatisfying situation.

- **Close:** Pair-Share: Ask students to consider what would bring them comfort if they and their families were put into camp? (5 minutes)

Activities—Day 2

What Happened After the War?—A summary reading activity, aimed at synthesizing information.

- Distribute What Happened After the War article/worksheet (4-B) (20 minutes).

- **Discussion: What Happened After the War?** (15 minutes)

Teacher Instant Expert Notes

1. There were some Japanese Americans who elected to return to Japan, as they did not feel welcome in the U.S. It was a decision most regretted because returning to a land destroyed by war meant they were immediately confronted with chaos. Most found it exceedingly difficult to return to Japan. Some families like the Masudas, fought discrimination, used the knowledge of their adult children born and raised in America to demand their rights, and returned to their former homes where they were supported by the general community. Some chose to move to areas near where they had been confined, mostly because they did not believe they had anywhere to go. Discrimination against persons of Japanese descent has been slow to fade, and it was not until the Civil Rights Movement that more Japanese Americans began to take pride in their Japanese heritage.
2. Some of the elderly at Gila River did not want to leave because they had no family to return to, were too ill, or too old to travel. Eventually, arrangements were made for most, but it is difficult to think of their fear and dilemma. As the elderly were Issei, most of them did not have strong English skills, which also made it difficult for them to get along in mainstream society.
3. It is heartbreaking to think of people being

handed \$25 and told to go “home.” The eventual redress provided in the 1980’s was partly to offset the bad taste that the entire episode in American history left. It is a fact that no Japanese American was found guilty of espionage during or after WWII.

4. Individuals reacted and survived in different ways. All felt the sting of being rejected and the humiliation of being seen as disloyal. The automatic stripping of civil liberties due to race is the one thing that all agree must never be allowed to happen again.

Activities—Day 3

Teacher announces to students that they will have a chance to meet Mr. Mas Inoshita (digitally), whose story they have become familiar with. **Lessons in Loyalty**, a DVD produced by Ray Gonzales focuses on Mas and his story. It is well worth the time. (30 minutes).

Class Close: Teacher administers the Japanese American Experience Pre-Test (1-C) as a post-test, and allows student discussion of answers. (15 minutes)

Closing

Ask students to think and write down three actions they believe might have stopped the U.S. government from incarcerating the Japanese American community after Pearl Harbor. Explain why these actions could have halted so much misery for so many people.

Discuss: Can this ever happen again? Why?

(5 minutes)

Extensions

- Field Trip to the Phoenix Japanese Friendship Garden, Ro Ho En, in Margaret T. Hance Park, across from Central Library. 1125 N. 3rd Ave., Phoenix, AZ
<http://www.japanesefriendshipgarden.org/> (accessed September 3, 2009)
Discounts and guided tours can be arranged for school groups during the week. (602) 256-3204
- Pretend you are a Japanese American living during World War II. Make a journal with 10 entries that includes the announcement of the removal and incarceration and what you must do, where you must go (if they will tell you), what you may take, and what you may not take, where you end up, and what happens to you.

References

- Beyond the Japanese Garden*. DVD. Produced by Frank H. Watase Media Arts Center. Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 2007. Also contains a delightful short mystery “Mamo’s Weeds.” (25 minutes)
- Egami, Hatsuye. *The Evacuation Diary of Hatsuye Egami*. Edited by Claire Gorfinkel. Pasadena, Calif.: Intentional Productions, 1942 reprint 1995.
- Fugita, Stephen S. and Marilyn Fernandez. *Altered Lives, Enduring Community: Japanese Americans Remember Their World War II Incarceration*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.
- Fugita, Stephen S. and David J. O’Brien. *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1991.
- Helphand, Kenneth. *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2006.
- History on the Net.com. <http://www.historyonthenet.com>. (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Japanese Friendship Garden, Phoenix, Ariz. <http://www.japanesefriendshipgarden.org>. (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Lessons in Loyalty*. DVD. Provided with this lesson, containing an interview with Masaji Inoshita and scenes of the Gila River Camps. (30 minutes)
- Uchida, Yoshiko. *Journey Home*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1978.