

Questions of Loyalty and Liberty

Time

2 class periods (30 minutes per period)

Overview

Lesson 5 covers Chapters 29 through 33 (35 pages) of *Weedflower* and addresses questions of loyalty and liberty.

Objectives

- Students will know that loyalty means different things to different people.

Essential Question

- Why is it important to treat everybody—including those who may seem different from me—fairly?

Guiding Question(s)

- What things did Japanese Americans do during World War II to prove their loyalty to the United States?

Colorado Model Content Standards (2008)

- History 3: Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.
- History 5.3: Students know how political power has been acquired, maintained, used, and/or lost throughout history.

Materials

- A copy of the young adult novel *Weedflower* by Cynthia Kadohata

Background

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans (even Nisei) were classified by the War Department as 4C, or “enemy aliens,” and were therefore not eligible for military service. Those already serving were placed in noncombat situations or discharged. The Japanese American Citizens League lobbied vigorously to give

Japanese Americans the right to volunteer for service. In January 1943 the War Department reversed its earlier decision and declared them eligible for military service again. In January 1944, Japanese Americans, even those in the concentration camps, became eligible for the draft.

Prior to being declared eligible for military service, Japanese Americans were administered a questionnaire by the U.S. government to try to determine the loyalty of all men and women over 17 years of age who were living in the concentration camps. The questionnaire posed two difficult questions:

1. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?
2. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces and forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese emperor or to any other foreign government, power, or organization?

Many people who were eager to prove their loyalty answered “yes” to both questions and then [immediately volunteered hurried to volunteer] for the U.S. armed forces. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was formed, and they then joined the 100th Battalion from Hawai`i. This heavily decorated unit was made up primarily of Japanese American soldiers and sustained many casualties during World War II.

Some people, however, chose to answer “no” to both questions. They became known as “No-No Boys” and were moved to the camp at Tule Lake, California.

Opening

- Review with the class the events that led up to the Japanese American incarceration. Focus the discussion on how powerless the community was in the face of public sentiment after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Activities

- No new vocabulary words are introduced in these chapters.
- While reading through Chapters 29–30, discuss the following questions in the appropriate chapters:

Chapter 29

- Why were people nervous about these two questions,
 - *Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?*
 - *Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces and forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese emperor or to any other foreign government, power, or organization?*
- Ichiro said he was signing up for Sumiko and Tak-Tak. What do you think he meant by that?

Chapter 30

- When the time finally came to leave Poston, many people didn't want to leave. Why do you think they felt that way?
- Why do you think Auntie took a job in Chicago and not back in California?

Closing

- Discuss the fact that many people in the Japanese American community were eager to prove their loyalty and serve their country even though many of their rights had been taken away. Discuss why some people felt that by answering “no, no” they were not being disloyal to the United States.

Extensions

- After reading Chapter 29, allow students time to research the 100th Battalion: <http://www.katonk.com/442nd/442nd.htm> (accessed July 24, 2009).
- A Japanese American grandmother's trunk full of personal belongings is available for one-week check-out from the Colorado History Museum. It contains artifacts that a Japanese American woman might have owned at the turn of the twentieth century. It is available from Wednesday to Wednesday for \$5.00 plus return postage. Call (303) 866-4689 or go to <http://www.coloradohistory.org/> (accessed July 24, 2009).

References

- Kadohata, Cynthia. *Weedflower*. New York: Atheneum Books, 2006.
- Katonk.com. <http://www.katonk.com/442nd/442nd.htm> (accessed July 24, 2009).

