

Author

Judy Hansen

Name of Unit

“I Am an American”

Suggested Grade Level(s)

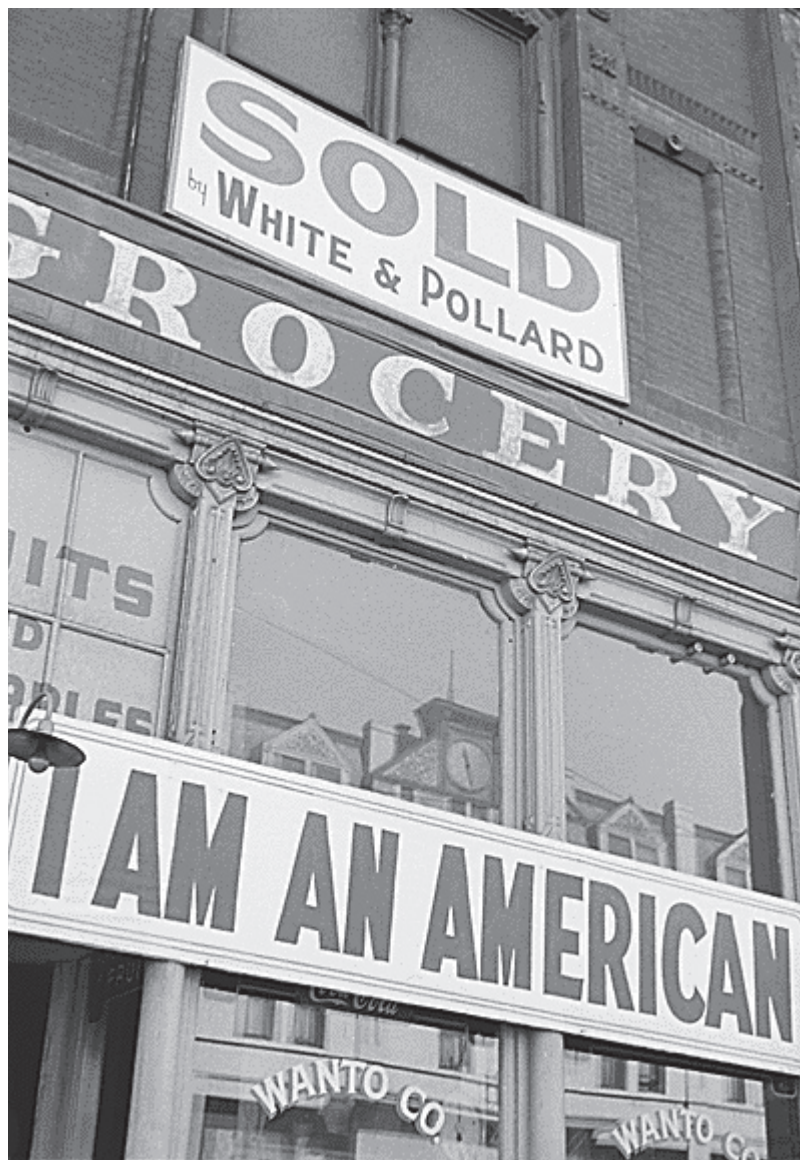
4, 5, 6

Suggested Subject Area(s)

English Language Arts and Social Studies

Oakland, California. Following evacuation orders, this store, at 13th and Franklin Streets, was closed. The owner, a University of California graduate of Japanese descent, placed the “I AM AN AMERICAN” sign on the store front on December 8, the day after Pearl Harbor. Evacuees of Japanese ancestry will be housed in War Relocation Authority centers for the duration.

Photographer: Dorothea Lange
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration
ARC Identifier 537833 / Local Identifier 210-G-C519



Unit Map

Author

Judy Hansen

Name of Unit

“I Am an American”

Suggested Grade Level(s)

4, 5, 6

Suggested Subject Area(s)

English Language Arts and Social Studies

Number of Class Periods Required

14 class periods (30 minutes per period)

Essential Question(s)

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

Guiding Question(s)

Lesson 1: Sumiko’s Life

- Prior to World War II, how did Japanese Americans assimilate into society while maintaining cultural elements from their previous homeland?

Lesson 2: Distrust and Uncertainty

- How did Colorado’s Governor Ralph Carr try to help the Japanese Americans during World War II?

Lesson 3: Leaving Home

- How did distrust and uncertainty affect Japanese Americans during World War II?

Lesson 4: Life in “Camp”

- What was life like for Japanese Americans in World War II concentration camps?

Lesson 5: Questions of Loyalty and Liberty

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

Lesson 6: “I Am an American”

- (See Essential Question)

Teacher Overview

This unit uses the novel *Weedflower*, by Newbery Award–winning author Cynthia Kadohata, as a read-aloud to provide historical background about the Japanese American incarceration during World War II. Class discussions about *Weedflower*, information about Colorado’s Governor Ralph Carr, and online research focusing on the Amache concentration camp in Granada, Colorado, allow students to investigate and respond to the unit’s essential question: “Why is it important to treat everybody—including those who may seem different from me—fairly?”

The unit is divided into six lessons, with several 30-minute class periods included within each lesson.

Prior to starting this unit, it is highly recommended that the teacher does the following:

- Read the overviews and timelines about the Japanese American experience found in the introductory materials accompanying this unit.
- Read the article “Terminology and the Japanese American Experience” found in the introductory materials accompanying this unit.
- Locate, preview, and bookmark Web sites needed for student research. The addresses are listed in the “Materials” section of Lesson 4.

Also, please note that on its Web site the Japanese American National Museum has video footage from July 2006 of Cynthia Kadohata discussing the novel *Weedflower* and answering questions from educators that provide insight into her writing process. This footage can be accessed at <http://www.janm.org/projects/ec/resources/curricula-media> (accessed July 24, 2009).

Note about the Colorado Model Content Standards

This unit cites the 2008 Colorado Model Content Standards. Updated standards will be available in Fall 2009 and were not available at the time of printing.