

# Document-Based Question

## Time

1 to 2 periods (50 minutes per period)

## Overview

Because our students live in a highly visual world, we must also study the rhetoric of visual media such as photographs, paintings, films, advertisements, graphics, charts, and editorial cartoons. This lesson uses classic American art by Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Norman Rockwell to show the extent to which the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans contradicted the most central values of American democracy.

## Objectives

- Students will use the OPTIC system (see below) to understand and evaluate visual representations of the ideas that underpin the American ideal as well as images that illustrate how those rights and privileges were suspended for Japanese Americans during the incarceration.

## Essential Questions

- How do societies striving for equality come to terms with the tension between the good of the one and the good of the many?
- How is the balance between the one and the many influenced by visual language?

## Guiding Question(s)

- What role does visual language play in creating/supporting the power of the majority over the minority?

## Colorado Model Content Standards (2008)

- History 2.2: Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information.
- Advanced Placement English Language: Students will comprehend the arguments made by visual representations of ideas.

## Materials

- *Handout 4-1: Excerpt from Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" Speech*
- Norman Rockwell's *Four Freedoms* quartet of paintings must be downloaded from the National Archives and Records Administration Web site at [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/four\\_freedoms/four\\_freedoms.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html) (accessed August 6, 2009)
- *Handout 4-2: Four Freedoms and the Japanese American Experience*
- *Handout 4-3: OPTIC Handout*
- *Handout 4-4: Excerpt from Eleanor Roosevelt's "The Great Question" (remarks delivered at the United Nations, New York, March 27, 1958)*

## Background

This lesson employs visual analysis techniques to deepen student thinking and examine contrasting visual materials created by photographers Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange and painter Norman Rockwell. (More information for teachers about these visual analysis techniques is provided at the end of this lesson.)

Dorothea Lange was one of the great documentary photographers of the twentieth century. While her photographs of migrants and workers taken during the Great Depression are recognized worldwide, few people are aware of her photographs of the World War II Japanese American experience. Commissioned by the federal government, her photographs were never published as a collection, and in fact, few of them were published at all: They too openly condemned the internment as unjustified and racist. After the war the government sent the collection to the National Archives, and there they rested, nearly undisturbed for sixty years. For a full account of Lange's internment photographs and their suppression—this book is the first collection of her work from this period—see *Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of*



*Japanese American Internment*, edited by Linda Gordon and Gary Y. Okihiro (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

Norman Rockwell's ability to convey the values and events of an evolving American society made him one of the most widely recognized artists of his time. He explained his appeal: "Without thinking too much about it in specific terms, I was showing the America I knew and observed to others who might not have noticed." Over the course of his career, Rockwell's renditions of Americana appeared all over the world. During World War II he painted the series entitled the *Four Freedoms* as his personal contribution to the war effort; these patriotic paintings symbolized the war aims set forth by President Roosevelt in his "Four Freedoms" speech. The *Four Freedoms*, all dated 1943, were reproduced in four consecutive issues of *The Saturday Evening Post* alongside essays by contemporary American writers. These paintings—*Freedom of Speech*, *Freedom to Worship*, *Freedom from Want*, and *Freedom from Fear*—were so successful that the works toured in an exhibition that raised more than \$139 million for the war effort through the sales of war bonds, according to the Rockwell family's account on its official Web site.

### Opening

- Before beginning this lesson, students should be introduced to the artists' work. In addition, students should read and discuss *Handout 4-1: Excerpt from Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" Speech*, which originated the idea of the "Four Freedoms."
- A discussion of the role visual texts have played in all conflicts within and among societies could begin this lesson. All wars have been supported by propaganda that relies heavily on the evocative power of imagery. In all likelihood, students have studied propaganda cartoons and posters in connection with both world wars.

### Activities

- Distribute copies of the Rockwell paintings downloaded from the Web as well as *Handout 4-2: Four Freedoms and the Japanese American Experience*, which depicts related photographs taken by Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange. Have the students respond to the prompt that follows. Depending on the level/aims of the class, the work may be done as a timed writing in imitation of an AP question, or as homework with revision, etc. If it is a "training exercise" intended to develop skill at reading visual text, use the method described in *Handout 4-3: OPTIC Handout*. The analysis may be done on each picture separately (perhaps in a jigsaw fashion in the interest of time) for beginners; for classes more experienced in the analysis of visual texts, use the OPTIC system with each set of four works or pair the appropriate painting with its counterpoint photograph.
- *Freedom of Speech* corresponds to the photo of Roy Takeno reading a newspaper in front of the news office
- *Freedom of Worship* corresponds to the photo of a reverend's hands locking the door to a Buddhist temple
- *Freedom from Want* corresponds to the photo taken in a mess hall
- *Freedom from Fear* corresponds to the photo of a family waiting for buses

### Prompt

Using the accompanying photographs and paintings, formulate a reaction to the discrepancy between President Roosevelt's professed beliefs about the rights of all people and the effects of his Executive Order 9066 on a specific group of people. Be sure to consider these pieces from the standpoint of our Essential Question: *How does visual language influence and reveal our thoughts and attitudes?*



## Closing

- *Handout 4-4: Excerpt from Eleanor Roosevelt's "The Great Question"* speech, taken from her remarks on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, will make an excellent closure prompt for this lesson, as well as for the entire unit. It might be used as the opening question for a final seminar or as a final writing. The goal is to see that students can demonstrate competence in dealing with the original Overarching Understanding—that building and preserving American democracy demands attention to threats to individuals and minority groups created by the tyranny of the majority.

## Teacher Materials

### Three Techniques for Deepening Student Thinking

#### I. Overview—Parts—Title—Interrelationships—Conclusion (OPTIC)

The OPTIC strategy, which is highlighted in Walter Pauk's book *How to Study in College*, provides students with key concepts to think about when approaching any kind of visual text. A sample OPTIC lesson would include the following steps:

Provide students with a single visual text that presents a position or point of view on an issue; political cartoons, advertisements, paintings, even graphs and charts are useful.

Divide students into groups and lead them through the OPTIC strategy:

- **O** is for **overview**—jot a few notes on what the visual appears to be about.
- **P** is for **parts**—zero in on the parts of the visual. Note as many elements or details as possible. Push the students to see more than the obvious.
- **T** is for **title**—highlight the words of the visual's title (if one is available).
- **I** is for **interrelationships**—use the title as the theory

and the parts of the visual as clues to detect and specify the interrelationships in the graphic.

- **C** is for **conclusion**—draw a conclusion about the visual as a whole. What does the visual mean? Summarize the message of the visual in one or two sentences.

Debrief the effectiveness of the strategy in analyzing visuals.

#### II. Critical Thinking Development through "Five Habits of Mind"

Adopted from the program used by Central Park East Secondary School in New York City, this system of lenses through which to view issues, writings, and visuals has proven to be highly efficacious in giving students a framework for increasing the depth of their thinking. All readings and visual texts are viewed, either in discussion or in writing, through one or more of these five lenses.

1. From whose viewpoint are we seeing or reading or hearing? From what angle or PERSPECTIVE?
2. How do we know what we know? What's the EVIDENCE, and how reliable is it?
3. How are these things, events, or people connected to each other? What is the cause and what is the effect? How do the cause and effect fit together? What other CONNECTIONS are there? Have we heard, read, or seen this elsewhere?
4. What if . . . ? Could things be otherwise? What are or were the ALTERNATIVES? Supposing . . .
5. So what? Who cares? What is the IMPORTANCE? What does it all mean?

#### III. Socratic Seminars

On a biweekly basis, students participate in a Socratic seminar on readings and visuals within the unit at hand. These seminars promote close reading, flexible thinking, careful expression, and the ability to support one's stance while responding to others.

### Teacher Preparation for the “Document-Based” or “Synthesis” Question

In most college courses that require substantial writing, students are called upon to write researched arguments in which they take a stand on a topic or an issue and then enter into conversation with what has already been written on it. By definition, a “conversation” is “talking together” about a topic that involves give and take and listening to the various parties taking part in it. Effective writers don’t simply draw material from published sources and drop them onto a page. On the contrary, writers create their arguments by listening to their sources and incorporating them, either positively or negatively, into their own thinking and writing.

In all other occasions for creating arguments—that is, in real life—the same process must be undertaken if a person wants to convince others of the rightness of his or her cause.

The “document-based question” (DBQ) and the “synthesis question” as found in the Advanced Placement History test and Advanced Placement English Language and Composition test respectively, seek to reveal a student’s ability to build an argument in response to the ideas of others. These questions provide students with a number of relatively brief sources on a topic or an issue—texts are no longer than one page—plus at least one source that is a graphic, a visual, a picture, or a cartoon. The prompt calls upon students to write a composition that develops a position on the issue and that synthesizes and incorporates perspectives from a specified number of the provided sources. Students may, of course, draw upon whatever they know about the issue as well.

There are certain “moves” that experienced writers have learned to make to create effective arguments. In preparing to answer the DBQ and synthesis question, students have the opportunity to learn these so-called moves of academic writing, thus preparing them to progress from high school to college and giving them tools to use in their everyday endeavors.

What are these “moves”? According to Dr. David A. Jolliffe, professor of English at the University of Arkansas and former Chief Reader of the AP English Language and Composition program, there are six: **read, analyze, generalize, converse, refine, and argue.** Professor Jolliffe’s system is explained in his essay “Preparing for the Synthesis Question: Six Moves Toward Success” on the College Board Web site at [http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers\\_corner/51307.html](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers_corner/51307.html) (accessed August 6, 2009).

#### A Skill for College and Life

In short, on the DBQ and synthesis question the successful writer is going to be able to show readers how he or she has thought through the topic at hand by considering the sources critically and creating a composition that draws conversations with the sources into his or her own thinking. This is a skill that we all need to cultivate so that we can express our ideas forcefully and sway others to a desired course of action.

# Four Freedoms Speech

Handout 4-1

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*In the future days which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants— everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.*

—Franklin D. Roosevelt  
State of the Union Address  
January 6, 1941





# Four Freedoms

## and the Japanese American Experience

Handout 4-2

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Roy Takeno reading paper in front of office.

Photographer: Ansel Adams  
Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division  
Reproduction Number LC-DIG-ppprs-00004



Florin, California. Hands of Reverend Naito (Buddhist priest) are here as he locks the door of his church. The beads are carried by Buddhist priests at all times.

Photographer: Dorothea Lange  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration  
ARC Identifier 537853 / Local Identifier 210-G-C542



Manzanar Relocation Center, Manzanar, California. Mealtime in one of the mess halls at this War Relocation Authority center for evacuees of Japanese ancestry.

Photographer: Dorothea Lange  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration  
ARC Identifier 538170 / Local Identifier 210-G-C888



Byron, California. As families of Japanese ancestry evacuated from farms in Contra Costa County, they gathered at Wartime Civil Control Administration station and awaited buses for assembly center at Turlock Fairgrounds, 65 miles away. Evacuees will be transferred later from assembly centers to War Relocation Authority centers where they will spend the duration. Boy in background is a spectator.

Photographer: Dorothea Lange  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration  
ARC Identifier 537455 / Local Identifier 210-G-C100



# OPTIC

## An Approach to Visual Arguments Handout 4-3

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Because many aspects of cultures can be and are presented visually, visual materials are one means for us to understand the ideas of a culture. Paying attention to details is a habit that is a necessary part of effective analysis of all ideas and their representations. As you look at this visual, please use the OPTIC strategy outlined below to help you become conscious of details, and thereby construct deeper meaning from the art.

**O** = Write a brief **overview** of the visual. Basically, what do you see?

**P** = Key in on all of the **parts** by noting as many details as you can. Notice color, figures, textures, scenery, comparative sizes, etc.

**T** = Use the **title** of the work (or caption) to clarify the subject/tone of the visual.

**I** = Specify the **interrelationships** in the visual. How are the various parts related both to one another and the work as a whole?

**C** = Draw a **conclusion** about the visual as a whole. What is the argument that the creator of the visual presents?

**O** = \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**P** = (the back of the paper can also be used) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T** = \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I** = \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C** = \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# The Great Question

Handout 4-4

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*Where, after all do human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.*

—Excerpt from Eleanor Roosevelt's "The Great Question"  
(remarks delivered at the United Nations, New York, March 27, 1958)

