

Author

Ella-Kari Loftfield

Name of Unit

Making History: The Tools of Historical Investigation

Suggested Grade Level(s)

7 or 9

Suggested Subject Area(s)

Social Studies and Language Arts

6

Centerville, California. Members of farm family board evacuation bus. 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 537584 / Local Identifier 210-G-C237



Unit Map

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Number of Class Periods Required

Depending on whether this unit is used in a 7th- or 9th-grade classroom, it may take from 9 to 18 class periods (60 minutes per period). This unit also allows the teacher to tailor the unit to meet the needs of students depending upon how much background knowledge they already have about the importance of studying history.

Essential Question

- How will I make history?

Objectives, Guiding Questions, and Assessment

Please see following page.

Rationale from Ella-Kari Loftfield, the Author of this Unit

Building a unit of study about the Japanese American experience in New Mexico during World War II presented me with several dilemmas, because the story of Japanese Americans is not content that falls neatly within our curriculum. Sixth graders study ancient civilizations and eighth graders study U.S. history up to the Civil War. While it is true that seventh graders do study New Mexico history, many districts have moved twentieth-century New Mexico history to the

ninth grade; this follows a legislative mandate that ninth graders also study nine weeks of New Mexico history. The most appropriate grade level for this unit is up for negotiation.

Because of the increasing demands placed on teachers to adhere to strict timelines for teaching and following prescribed content, it was important to create a unit that was worth taking the time to teach. This unit is important because it integrates a fascinating local (but little known) historical story with important skills; these skills are essential for an understanding of and investigation into history that simply reading a textbook cannot provide. I wanted the unit to illustrate the steps students would have to take if they were, for example, going to write a historical research paper or compete in the National History Day Competition. The compelling story and the rich resources that are available regarding the World War II Japanese American experience make it an excellent topic through which to teach students the many and varied skills that it takes to study history. This unit was designed, therefore, to introduce students to those skills and to the bigger questions about how and why we should study history. Those skills are a part of any middle school teachers' social studies curriculum, and because so many of those skills are dependent upon good reading comprehension, many reading strategies are incorporated into the unit.

I personally felt one final constraint: as I searched the Internet for lessons regarding the Japanese American World War II experience, I found a number of excellent Web sites with which I could not compete (nor did I want to try). I felt that in order to honor the people imprisoned in the New Mexico camps and to drive home the fact that history happens where we stand, my unit needed to be as specific to New Mexico as I could make it. First, however, I had to build background knowledge for my students regarding removal and confinement in



order for them to understand the distinct role our camps played and the characteristics that distinguished the Department of Justice camps from the War Relocation Authority camps.

The result is a unit of discovery that teachers can approach in one of two ways depending on their emphasis. In neither case should it be introduced as a unit on the Japanese American World War II experience, as this theme reveals itself after several lessons. Teachers who want to do the complete unit will begin by assessing student understanding and attitudes about what history is and how and why we should study it; the unit should culminate with a project illustrating their new understanding of the importance of studying history. The title “Making History” and the Essential Question—*How will I make history?*—reinforce the idea that history is not over and done with. It is, in fact, a living, breathing subject that is influenced both by the quality of questions people are concerned enough to ask and by the answers they are brave enough to pursue. Teachers who feel that their students have that understanding and background will probably prefer to begin with Lesson 3 and end with Lesson 7, using the *tanka* poem assignment as the final assessment.

Essential Question: How Will I Make History?

Lesson Title	Objectives	Guiding Questions	Assessment
1. History: What It Is, What It Means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will answer three key questions and analyze a text for answers to the same questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is history? How do we know about the past? What do historians do? Students will learn the difference between a primary and a secondary source. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is history? How do we know about the past? What do historians do? How have our answers to these questions changed and grown through our reading and discussion? 	Students' understanding of the three questions posed and the difference between primary and secondary sources will be assessed informally through class discussion and note-taking.
2. Why Become a Historian?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will answer the question <i>Why become a historian?</i> Students will analyze one historian's answer to the question and compare his answer to theirs. Students will understand that history changes depending on who investigates it, what questions they ask, and what theories they propose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can who we are and what we're looking for in history change how the story is told and remembered? How do historians change history? 	Students' understanding of why it is important to study history will be assessed informally in class during the discussion and formally with the end-of-unit project.
3. What Can We Learn from a Pho- tograph?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will work in pairs to analyze photographs related to the Japanese American World War II incarceration. Students will make predictions regarding the sequence of the photographs. Students will determine what other resources they need in order to sequence the photographs with more certainty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can a photograph tell us? What can't it tell us? Where do you go to find the answers to the questions you have about the photographs? 	Students will be formally assessed on how well they have been able to interpret a photograph based upon the presentations that they make to the class and the completion of the analysis worksheet. Assessment of the third objective is made informally, during discussion.

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4. Questions Raised and Inferences Made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will categorize a list of adjectives to understand that subtle differences in words can create powerfully different impressions. Students will read a brief “secondary” account of the role of Japanese Americans in World War II; they will distinguish fact from opinion as well as identify inflammatory language. Students will identify the story of Japanese American incarceration as one of our nation’s often “omitted” histories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we proceed when a source raises more questions than it answers? How can sources show prejudice or favoritism? 	Assessment will be done informally through the class discussion and then formally through the end-of-unit project.
5. Reading (Between the) Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will generate leveled questions based on a timeline of the World War II Japanese American experience. Students will place photographs from Lesson 3 into a timeline. Students will articulate why Americans should know about the World War II Japanese American experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what ways can timelines be useful resources? What don’t timelines tell us? Why should Americans learn about the Japanese American experience during World War II? 	This lesson will be assessed by the leveled questions that groups pose based on the timeline information.
6. Making History Personal: Responding to a Memoir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will read a primary source memoir about the World War II Japanese American experience. Students will ask appropriate questions in response to the text. Students will evaluate strengths and weaknesses of a memoir when used as a primary source. Students will compare and contrast the Department of Justice camps and the War Relocation Authority camps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What impact did World War II incarceration have on Japanese American individuals and families? What can memoirs tell you about historical events? What can’t memoirs tell you about an historical event? How did the Department of Justice camps differ from the War Relocation Authority camps? 	The responses that students make as they are reading the memoir will be used as the assessment. Initial assessment will be done orally, so students have a chance to hear their peers’ responses. As the reading of the memoir progresses, assessments can be done independently and graded. Answers to the guiding questions will be assessed informally through class discussion and formally with the end-of-unit project.

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7. The Power of Primary Source Poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will read poetry and then identify the event being described and the emotion being expressed. Students will recite and present their poetry analysis to the class. Students will identify major themes that express the concerns and hardships faced by the men in the Santa Fe Department of Justice camp. Students will write and publish their own <i>tanka</i> as a character in one of the photographs from Lesson 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can literary selections reveal about historical events? What can't literary selections reveal about historical events? What themes dominate the poetry from the Santa Fe camp? 	Students are assessed formally through the presentation of their poetry analysis and the <i>tanka</i> that they write. Assessment of the identification of themes within the <i>tanka</i> is done informally through class discussion.
8. Resource Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will review all the resources studied to date and evaluate them for their advantages and disadvantages. Students will generate questions that the resources have raised but not answered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What advantages and disadvantages do various sources have? What questions remain? How do historians decide what details to include and exclude when writing historical accounts? 	This lesson includes concepts and requires analysis that not every student will be able to do (or perhaps not individually). It is therefore important to complete the chart in small groups; alternately, this can be done as a whole class. Students can then write paragraphs or brief essays about the resources, with possible topics being "best," "worst," "most reliable," "most useful," "least reliable." The class should set the criteria for scoring the paragraph.
9. Making History: A Recipe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will synthesize the work done in order to understand the process of writing a complete history. Students will evaluate what aspects of historical investigation are most important. Students will write a recipe for "Making History." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do historians "make history?" 	Students are formally assessed on the recipe they write.

