

Artwork of Topaz

Time

2 class periods (45 minutes per period)

Overview

Lesson 4 introduces students to a unique and instructive primary source: artwork created at the Topaz concentration camp. Students will analyze the artwork to gain additional insight into the emotions of the Topaz artists.

Objectives

- Students will reflect on what emotions the people at Topaz felt.
- Students will learn to analyze works of art for emotional impact.
- Students will discuss how artwork constitutes a primary source.

Enduring Understanding

- Diversity in the United States helps democracy to function.

Essential Questions

- What is the Topaz “Relocation Camp”?
- How does racism affect the American experience?
- How do communities endure?

Materials

- Class access to computer lab and the Japanese American National Museum’s Hisako Hibi collection: <http://www.janm.org/collections/people/hibi-hisako/> (accessed August 3, 2009)
- *Handout 4-1: Hisako Hibi Collection*
- Two to three copies of each of the following books (see “References” for bibliographic information):
 - *Topaz Moon: Chiura Obata’s Art of the Internment*, edited by Kimi Kodani Hill
 - *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp* by Michael O. Tunnell and

George W. Chilcoat

- *Citizen 13660* by Miné Okubo.
- *Handout 4-2: Artists in Topaz*
- *Overhead 4-1: Quote from Yoshiko Uchida*
- Various art supplies

Assessments

- *Handout 4-1: Hisako Hibi Collection*
- *Handout 4-2: Artists in Topaz*
- Student Artwork

Background

Many accomplished Japanese American artists who lived in San Francisco prior to World War II were incarcerated at Topaz between 1942 and 1945. While in Topaz the artists continued to produce their own artwork and also taught art classes; many of their youth and adult students created excellent works of art. This artwork, which provides insight into the emotions felt by those who were forcibly removed from their homes, constitutes a unique collection of primary sources.

Four paintings by Ms. Hisako Hibi (1907–1991), a Topaz artist, will specifically be analyzed in Lesson 4. In total, 63 Hibi paintings and related bibliographic information are available on the Japanese American National Museum’s Web site at <http://www.janm.org/collections/people/hibi-hisako/> (accessed August 3, 2009).

Instructional Strategies/Skills

Day 1:

- In the computer lab, have students access and become familiar with the Japanese American National Museum’s Hisako Hibi collection: <http://www.janm.org/collections/people/hibi-hisako/> (accessed August 3, 2009).
- Distribute *Handout 4-1: Hisako Hibi Collection*. Have students look through the collection online and then respond to the questions.

Day 2:

- Divide students into groups of four to five.
- Give each group a copy of either *Topaz Moon*, *The Children of Topaz*, or *Citizen 13660*.
- Have the groups work together and independently to complete *Handout 4-2: Artists in Topaz*.
- Then arrange students into new groups so that every group has at least one student who used each print source. These new groups should share what they have learned from the print sources and discuss how the emotions in the books compare to Hibi's emotions, as seen in the paintings from the previous day.

Day 3:

- Display *Overhead 4-1: Quote from Yoshiko Uchida*.
- Reflecting on the quote, ask students to create their own artwork reflecting daily life in Topaz.
- Distribute art materials.
- At the end of the class, students may share their work with the entire class.

Extensions

- Reflection essay: *What do you think were some of the emotions felt by Japanese Americans while they were at Topaz? Give at least five specific examples from the artwork you have seen.*
- Conduct further research on Hisako Hibi, Chiura Obata, Miné Okubo, and/or Yoshiko Uchida.
- To learn more about daily life in camp, view the media clips available on the Japanese American National Museum's Web site: <http://www.janm.org/projects/ec/resources/curricula-media>

References

- Hill, Kimi Kodani, ed. *Topaz Moon: Chiura Obata's Art of the Internment*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books, 2000. Japanese American National Museum. <http://www.janm.org/> (accessed August 3, 2009).
- Okubo, Miné. *Citizen 13660*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983.
- Tunnell, Michael O., and George W. Chilcoat. *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp*. New York: Holiday House, 1996.
- Uchida, Yoshiko. *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982.

Hisako Hibi

Collection Handout 4-1

Name _____ Period _____

Access and become familiar with the Japanese American National Museum's Hisako Hibi collection and biography: <http://www.janm.org/collections/people/hibi-hisako/>. (accessed August 3, 2009)
Then answer the following questions.

1.



Study for a Self-Portrait, ca. 1944
Gift of Ibuki Hibi Lee
Japanese American National Museum (99.63.1)

A. How do you think conditions at Topaz may have affected Ms. Hibi's physical appearance? Give three specific examples.

B. Check the "Biography" section to learn when Ms. Hibi was born. How old was she when this painting was done?

Do you think Ms. Hibi looks her real age? Why or why not?

2.



Barrack 9, Apt. 6, San Bruno, CA, 1942
Gift of Ibuki Hibi Lee
Japanese American National Museum (96.601.3)

A. Where was the Hibi family living at this time?

B. Why do you think Ms. Hibi chose to use these colors? Give two specific examples.

C. How is the background of this painting different than the foreground? Why do you think that is the case?

All requests to publish or reproduce images in this collection must be submitted to the Hirasaki National Resource Center at the Japanese American National Museum. More information is available at <http://www.janm.org/nrc/>.

3.



Shopping to Delta, 1943
 Gift of Ibuki Hibi Lee
 Japanese American National Museum (96.601.19)

- A. What do you think the colors of the landscape symbolize?
- B. Why do you think the people inside the truck do not have distinct facial features?
- C. What is the emotion you feel when viewing this painting?

4.



Prayer, 1944
 Gift of Ibuki Hibi Lee
 Japanese American National Museum (96.601.26)

- A. How do the emotions depicted by the artist in this painting differ from those in the first three?
- B. What is visible in the background?
- C. What might the rabbit in the lower left corner mean?

Now choose one painting not listed above. Draw a quick sketch. Then write down its title, year, and ID number. Write about the emotions symbolized in the painting, using at least three specific examples.

5.

<p>Title and year _____ Gift of Ibuki Hibi Lee Japanese American National Museum (_____)</p>	
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Artists in Topaz

Handout 4-2

Name _____ Period _____

Your group has received one of the following books of artwork from Topaz: *Citizen 13660*, *Topaz Moon*, or *The Children of Topaz*. Work with your group to select four specific works of art and discuss the questions below, then write down the answers on your own worksheet. You will be responsible for telling others in different groups about your book.

Name of book _____

Title of artwork (if there is one) or description	Date created	Page number	What colors are used? Why do you think these colors were used?	What similarities exist between the PowerPoint presentation and/or the Hibi collection?	What is the emotion this artwork evokes? Why do you think this?

What is your favorite picture of the group? Why?

Daytime, with its debilitating heat and the stresses of camp life, was harsh and unkind, but early evening after supper was a peaceful time of day at Topaz. The sand retained the warmth of the sun, and the moon rose from behind dark mountains with the kind of clear brilliance seen only in a vast desert sky. We often took walks along the edge of camp, watching sunsets made spectacular by the dusty haze and waiting for the moon to rise in the darkening sky. It was one of the few things to look forward to in our life at Topaz.

—Yoshiko Uchida, *Desert Exile*

