

TITLE An Issue of Loyalty: Exploring the Treatment of Japanese Americans During World War II (1941–1945)

GRADES 5 through 8

SUBJECT AREAS

- History
- Multicultural Studies
- Language Arts

OVERVIEW

One overriding issue in the incarceration of Japanese Americans was the controversy over loyalty and disloyalty. When the government considered releasing inmates from the camps and allowing men to join the army, it was concluded that only "loyal" persons would be eligible for release and service. The rationale for holding Japanese Americans shifted from "military necessity," or the fear of espionage and subversion, to disloyalty. Thus it became necessary to determine who could be called loyal and who were labeled disloyal. A principle method for determining this was a questionnaire, but this method proved disastrous and led to great abuse and hardship for the inmates. The abstract concept of loyalty was also put to the test through investigation of internees' backgrounds. This lesson plan is designed to acquaint students with the situation as it happened in the camps and to examine these abstract ideas as they relate to our real and everyday lives.

MATERIALS

The Film **Rabbit in the Moon**

MEDIA COMPONENTS

www.geocities.com/athens/8420/main.html

Has URLs of many useful Web sites related to the Japanese-American internment

<http://www.asianlawcaucus.org/>

The Asian Law Caucus Web site. Click on "Anti-Asian violence" for articles and statistics

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/01/03/MN7534.DTL>

Article about hate crimes against Asian Americans

<http://www.mrs.umn.edu/~ummasa/harvard/>

Article about Asian Americans as the "model minority"

<http://www.asianweek.com/>

Web site for Asian Week, a weekly newspaper for and about the Bay Area's Asian community.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider the meaning of loyalty.
- Students will explore the history of Japanese in the United States.
- Students will consider the meaning of citizenship.

TIME Two class periods (50 minutes each) and research time for students

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY

Before showing the film to students, explore the concept of loyalty. What is loyalty? What is disloyalty?

1. Brainstorm with the class, throwing out age-appropriate questions about loyalty to friends, family and school. On the board or the overhead, list types of behavior that are considered loyal and disloyal.
2. Point out situations of competing loyalties (friend vs. family, one friend vs. another, etc.) and emphasize that issues of loyalty are not necessarily clear-cut.
3. Summarize the kinds of behavior normally considered disloyal: acting like you prefer one person over another, hurting someone's feelings, harming someone physically, financially or in some other way, making someone look bad, embarrassing someone, and so on.
4. Then move the question of loyalty to wartime and add more items to the lists.
what kinds of behavior are considered loyal or disloyal during war? (Draw similarities to the students' lives, such as an argument within a group of friends or being pressed to "prove loyalty" to one angry friend by taking a stand against another friend.)

POSTVIEWING ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 - Have students write an essay on the following:

What if Canada and Mexico allied themselves to attack the United States and you had friends and relatives in these countries? Would you be tempted to do things that others might think disloyal (such as write letters, defend your relatives, etc.)? What if your grandparents or parents were born in Canada or Mexico and moved to the United States? What would you do to "prove" you are a loyal American? Would you change your name to sound more "American"? Would you give up eating traditional foods? Would you stop speaking your native language? (Point out that these are things some German Americans did during World War I to prove their loyalty to the United States.)

Activity 2 - History of Japanese Americans in the United States

Have students break into three research groups, and have each group take a topic from A, B, or C below, researching the experience of Japanese Americans from their arrival through incarceration to the present. Have each group create a presentation for the class. It can be a poster, Power Point or other computer-generated presentation.

A. History up to Pearl Harbor

1. Some points to cover: When did the first wave of Japanese arrive in the United States? What brought them here? How were their dreams similar to that of other immigrants? Where did they settle? What occupations did most hold? How were Japanese immigrants treated differently from White (European) immigrants? Were Japanese allowed to become citizens? What other forms of discrimination did they face?

[A good source is **Personal Justice Denied, the Report of the Commission on Wartime and Internment of Civilians**, United States, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1983]

B. Pearl Harbor and World War II , including internment of Japanese Americans

1. Use a map of the Pacific (perhaps a transparency on the overhead) to illustrate the military situation in early 1942. Show the Japanese Empire and its recent attacks. Point out the location of Hawaii and calculate the distance from Hawaii to the West Coast of the United States.
2. Questions to consider: How many internees were citizens? Had any of the internees done anything illegal? What happened in Hawaii? Were German Americans or Italian Americans interned? Did the internees try to prove their loyalty to the United States?
3. Some men chose to fight in the American army. Students can do research on the 442nd and write about their exploits.
4. Discuss how, a year after incarceration began, a mandatory questionnaire was used to segregate those deemed disloyal.

C. World War II to 2001

1. Did the U.S. government ever admit that the internment was wrong? Have students research the campaign for redress from 1980 to 1988.
2. Do Japanese Americans experience discrimination in the United States today? What forms does the discrimination take? What does it mean to be considered a "model minority"? How might this label be hurtful? (Reference the Asian Law Caucus and Asian Week Web sites.)

D. Conclusion

Have students present their findings to the class. Discuss with the class:

1. Why were Japanese Americans treated differently from German Americans and Italian Americans during World War II?
2. Was it fair to intern Japanese Americans this way? Why or why not?
3. Was it constitutional? (Refer to the Fifth Amendment: "No person shall be...deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. ...")
4. Can anybody really prove something like loyalty? Should anyone have to prove it?

Activity 3: What it means to be an American

A. Definition of citizenship

1. Have students research how citizenship is defined. Can a person be a "loyal" American without being a citizen? What rights does citizenship confer on a person? What responsibilities are expected? How can a person deal with divided loyalties?

B. During World War II, the rights of citizenship were ignored and violated. They were put into the status of non-Americans. How was this made possible? For Japanese Americans loyalty began to mean different things. Some chose to show loyalty by volunteering for the army and being drafted when called. Others chose to show loyalty by protesting against the incarceration and asking that their rights as American citizens be restored.

1. Have students do a divided diagram showing how differing ideas of loyalty resulted in different acts and behaviors. Have them write an essay on how these actions relate to the meaning of being an American.

STANDARDS

Language Arts: Grade 6

WRITING

- Write research reports, persuasive pieces and responses to literature.

Language Arts: Grade 7

WRITING

- Use structure, support and pre-writing for compositions, revise them for word choice, identify and narrow topics, and cite information correctly.

Language Arts: Grade 8

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

- Deliver specific, insightful and organized oral presentations that use a variety of primary and secondary sources.