

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – Japanese American Internment Primary Sources and Historical Fiction Writing Lesson from Sean Gilligan

Grade – Grade 11

Length of class period – Period Length: 60 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

-What was life like for Japanese Americans in the internment camps?

-Imagine you are a teenager living in the internment camps...what was your experience like?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

Content Objectives

-Students will analyze a written primary source and photo/illustration primary sources to develop insights about the Japanese American experience during World War II.

-Students will apply their knowledge by creating a new product: a letter written by a Japanese American teenager in the 1940s.

Language Objectives

-Students will gain more experience with historical fiction writing, group discussion, and whole class discussion.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)

“To Do What Was American, Celebrating the Fourth of July in an Internment Camp”, an account from Mary Tsukamoto (from *Ordinary Americans* Primary Sources Book).

Photos and Illustrations from the Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives (online).

<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/jarda.html>

Primary Source or Photo Illustration Analysis Sheet (created by Sean Gilligan)

Japanese American Internment: “Letter to a Friend” Writing Activity (created by Sean Gilligan)

The last two materials are included with this lesson.

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

Initiation: Students will be asked what they learned about the Japanese American experience from the previous background readings.

As a whole class, we will read and discuss the primary source account by Mary Tsukamoto. Students may be asked the following questions in our discussion:

-What insights about the Japanese American experience during World War II do you gain from Mary Tsukamoto's account?

-Pretend you are Mary Tsukamoto. Share what your thoughts and feelings might have been both during time in the internment camp and afterwards.

For the photo/illustration primary source analysis, you can divide the students into groups of four students. Each group receives a packet from the Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives. Each photo in a packet represents a different theme: people, places, daily life, and personal experiences (artwork from Henry Sugimoto). You have a variety of themed photos and illustrations to pick from on the website.

Students will look over the visuals and discuss them while the teacher moves about the room between the groups checking for their insights. Also, each student will fill out a primary source photo/illustration analysis sheet.

After students complete their analysis within groups, there will be a whole class discussion so that some students can verbally share their insights, reactions, and thoughts about the photos and illustrations.

Discussion Closure Question: How have these photos and illustrations changed your understanding of the Japanese American experience during World War II?

At this point, the Japanese American Internment: Letter to a Friend Writing Activity instructions will be explained to the class. Each student will portray a 1940s Japanese American Nisei teenager in writing this letter. Students will begin working on the letter in class. The letter can be completed as homework or saved for another class day. This historical fiction writing activity should count as a test grade.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

Primary Source or Illustration Photo Analysis Sheet

Japanese American Internment: Letter to a Friend Writing Activity

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

-use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives.

-demonstrate an understanding of the ways race, gender, ethnicity and class issues have affected individuals and societies in the past.

-display empathy for people who have lived in the past.

Both the Primary Source Photo or Illustration Analysis Sheet and the Japanese American Internment: “Letter to a Friend” Writing Activity are included starting on the next page.

Primary Source Photo or Illustration Analysis Sheet

Name: _____

Answer the following items in complete sentences in the provided spaces.

A) What is happening in the photo or illustration?

B) What does the photo or illustration teach you about the Japanese American experience during World War II?

C) What is your reaction or thoughts about this photo or illustration?

**Japanese American Internment: “Letter to a Friend”
Writing Activity**

We have studied the Japanese American experience during World War II through various sources. We have learned that most Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps known as “relocation centers” from 1942 until 1945/46. You will apply your newly learned knowledge and create a product. You will pretend to be a Japanese American teenager living in a relocation center in 1943 who is writing a letter to a friend back home.

The year is 1943, You are a 16-year-old Nisei teenager. You can either be a boy named Henry Iwano or a girl named Mary Takei. You can choose to be originally from California (Los Angeles, Oakland, Fresno, etc.), Oregon (Portland, Astoria, etc.), or Washington (Seattle, Puyallup, Bainbridge Island, etc.). Also, you can choose to be writing from one of the following relocation centers: Manzanar in California, Minidoka in Idaho, Heart Mountain in Wyoming, Gila in Arizona, Camp Jerome in Arizona, or Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas.

Here are the steps to the letter:

-At the top, write your friend’s full name and address (number and street, town, state, zip code). Also, write the date you wrote the letter.

-Start your letter with Dear _____

-You will write a three paragraph letter. In the letter, you must have these features:

-Ask questions about what's happening back home.

-Share what life has been like for you and your family in the internment camp.

-Share your thoughts, hopes, and fears about the future.

-End the letter by signing your name and your relocation center name and location.

VERY IMPORTANT: YOUR LETTER MUST BE HISTORICALLY ACCURATE. THE LETTER MUST REFLECT THAT YOU ARE LIVING IN THE 1940S!

The assessment list is on the next page. This assignment will count as a test grade!

Assessment List

Here is how your letter will be graded. Remember that it is a test grade.

Address, name, and salutation information that normally is in a letter are present in your letter. _____ of 10 points

Your letter asks relevant questions about what is happening back home. _____ of 20 points

Your letter shares what life has been like for you and your family in the internment camp. This information is realistic and detailed. _____ of 20 points

Your letter realistically shares your thoughts, hopes, and fears about the future. _____ of 20 points

This letter is highly historically accurate. This letter truly could have been written by a _____ of 30 points

Japanese American teen who lived during the 1940s.

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 100 points

Remember that you are a Nisei teenager. That means you were born in America...you are a 2nd generation Japanese American. But your parents are Isei. Your parents are Japanese immigrants who moved to America some time between the 1890s and 1924. Remember that 1924 was the year that the United States passed a law stopping Japanese immigration to America.