

The Fillmore

Neighborhoods: The Hidden Cities of San Francisco

TITLE: Japanese American Internment

GRADES: 11-12

SUBJECT AREA(S): US History (Twentieth Century), American Democracy
Language Arts

OVERVIEW: What would it feel like to have neighbors and friends from school suddenly disappear because of their race? In this lesson, students will experience the internment of Japanese Americans from San Francisco's Fillmore neighborhood. By connecting local experiences with national events, students will understand both the constitutional issues at stake and the human impact of this government policy.

NATIONAL STANDARDS:

This lesson addresses the following national content standards found in the McRel Standards Database: www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks.

Grades K-12:

United States History:

Era 8 – The Great Depression and World War II

25. Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.

31. Understands economic, social and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

Civics:

1. Understands ideas about civic life, politics and government.

4. Understands the concept of a constitution, the various purposes that constitution serve, and the conditions that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of constitutional government.

Language Arts:

Writing:

1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

4. Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Reading:

5. Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

7. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.

Viewing:

9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

PROGRAM SEGMENTS:

- (1) 0:08-0:14 — The Japanese American community in the Fillmore before internment; internment and loss of property, assets, pride; survivors' desires to forget
- (2) 0:20-0:22 — Japanese Americans return to the Fillmore after World War II to find their property occupied and businesses gone
- (3) 1:20-1:23 — Japantown today; a neighborhood for Japanese American living in other places; the Day of Remembrance

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will write to reflect on the experience of internment for Japanese Americans, making connections to prior knowledge and experience.
- Students will evaluate and explain the decision to intern Japanese Americans during the war; discuss the constitutional issues involved; and investigate the human impact of internment.
- Students will write to analyze and interpret the US government internment policy, supporting their judgements through references to texts and non-print media.

MATERIALS: The Fillmore, part 4 of The Neighborhoods of San Francisco
The United States Constitution

TIME: 2-3 class periods (60 min. each)

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Have students:

1. Visit www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/main.html and click on the link to the war poster. What does the poster announce? Who printed it? When? Who was intended to read it? Why?
2. Imagine you are a Japanese American high school student in May, 1942. Today you saw this poster and learned you and your family will have to leave your school, your home and all your belongings. Write a diary entry describing your feelings, questions, and fears.
3. Define: relocation, internment

FOCUS FOR VIEWING:

Ask students to generate their own questions about the internment of Japanese Americans. Write them on the board. Ask students to listen for answers as they watch.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Pause the tape after segment 1.

1. What questions were answered? What questions remain?
2. Discuss: What was it like to live in this neighborhood before the war? How did non-Japanese neighbors feel when the Japanese “disappeared”? Why do you think the Japanese Americans did not resist? What did Japanese Americans lose?

Pause the tape after segment 2.

1. What questions were answered? What questions remain?
2. Discuss: How had the neighborhood changed during the war? What choices did Japanese Americans have once they were released?

Pause the tape after segment 3:

1. What questions were answered? What questions remain?
2. Discuss: How do Japanese Americans today feel about the internment? How do their feelings differ among different generations? Why? What does the neighborhood mean to Japanese Americans today?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Have students:

1. Find newspaper articles from 1942 at www.sfmuseum.org/war/evactxt.html and interpret the rationale for interning Japanese Americans and the community reaction.
2. Find photographs of Japanese Americans online (www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/main.html and www.loc.gov) being evacuated and in internment camps. Choose one photo that moves you. Try to find out who the person(s) was. Write a letter to him/her in the camp.
3. Find a map of internment camps in the US and identify the number of Japanese Americans imprisoned. (See www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/main.html)

EXTENSIONS:

- Have students role play a Supreme Court review of the constitutionality of the presidential order to intern Japanese Americans.
 1. Based on their previous knowledge, have the class list potential legal conflicts with the order (e.g. federal government's role in defending the country, habeas corpus, treason, equality before the law, search and seizure, presidential powers, balance of powers, citizens rights). Put these on the board.
 2. Divide the class into groups of nine. Each student is a justice who will argue one of the above constitutional points; a chief justice should be appointed on each team who is responsible for assigning issues of interest to each justice.
 3. Have students read the Constitution to find text bearing on their issue in relation to the treatment of Japanese Americans. (Have students find the US Constitution online www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.overview.html or www.usconstitution.net/). Quoting text from the Constitution, have students draft a 1-page argument supporting or denying the constitutionality of the order.
 4. Have each chief justice call his/her court to order. Each justice should present his/her case and is responsible for listening to the arguments of his/her colleagues. After all 9 have presented, have the chief justice call a vote.
 5. Have all chief justices report the decision and main arguments back to the whole class. If the courts agree that internment of Japanese Americans was unfair, have them make recommendations for reparation. Then have students research and evaluate what reparations were actually offered and when.

6. In groups of 3, role play 3 generations of a Japanese American family: (1) a grandparent who lived in an internment camp as a young adult, (2) a parent who lived there as a child, and (3) a grandchild who was born after 1970. Based on the film, who wants to forget and who wants to remember? Why? How does Japanese culture, history and personal experience impact your opinion?
- Have students read *Snow Falling on Cedars*, by David Guterson or watch the film adaptation to explore another community torn by discrimination.
 - Research the 442nd, a battalion of Japanese American soldiers who fought in World War II for the US while relatives were interned. Watch *Honor Bound*, a documentary film by Wendy Hanamura.
 - Watch *Rabbit in the Moon*, a documentary film by Emiko Omori about the shame and pain of her family's internment experience. (Transit Media, 22-D Hollywood Avenue, Hohokus, NJ 07423 Phone: (800) 343-5540) Visit KQED's web site to read how diverse audiences relate this event in US history to their own experiences:
www.kqed.org/tv/productions/baywindow/rabbitinthemoon/index.html
 - Compare and contrast the experiences of German Americans and Italian Americans. Use the web to search for information on internment of these groups. Evaluate the impact of race on governmental policy.

ASSESSMENT:

1. Have students create a portfolio of their writings, including print-outs of related photos they find while doing research.
2. Review students' diary writings, letters, and constitutional arguments. Assess students' understanding of historical events, the human consequences of internment, the logic of arguments, and the appropriateness of citations from the Constitution to substantiate their points.