

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1) **Innocent Until Proven Guilty**

Ask your students to think about a time when they were blamed for and possibly punished for something that they did not do. How did it make them feel? What did they do to try to clear their names? How well did it work? Now ask the students to consider their how situation and their feelings compare to those of the interned Japanese Americans.

2) **What's the Story Here?**

Select several of the photos and ask your students to pretend they are news reporters and that they have just received the photographs from their field photographer. Have them write a news story that describes what a typical day in the life of those living in the camps might be like based on what they can learn by looking at the photographs.

3) **Present Your Case**

Divide your class into three teams: one team will be pro-internment, one team will be anti-internment and one team will be a panel of judges. Ask teams one and two to prepare an argument for their position that includes: an opening statement, presentation of three facts or evidence (photographs from the Internment Exhibit can be used as evidence) that supports their position, a closing statement, and some cross examination questions they would have for the opposing team. Ask the panel of judges to come up with a set of 3-6 questions they might ask concerning the topic of Japanese American internment. Allow the teams to make their presentations and ask their cross examination questions before the panel of judges. Then allow the panel to ask the teams for answers to the questions they have previously created or fresh ones that arose based on the presentations of the two teams. At the end of the session ask the judges to vote and render a decision in favor of one or the other teams. This decision should include a list of the reasoning and justifications that lead to their conclusion. Those judges who do not agree with the majority decision should prepare a list of the reasoning and justifications that lead to their conclusions. Finally, ask the students to research the Supreme Court's war time ruling in *Korematsu vs the United States*. How did the ruling of the student judges compare to that of the Justices on the Supreme Court?

4) **The Bill of Rights: Here to Protect You?**

Ask your students to review and familiarize themselves with the rights and protections guaranteed by each of the 10 Amendments in the Bill of Rights. Then ask them to identify and describe how the internment of the Japanese Americans impacted/violated each of those rights. Next, have them evaluate whether the Japanese Attack on Pearl

Harbor justified the violation of these rights. What alternative actions might the government have taken that would have preserved the rights of the internees but still protected the public at large?

5) Two Wrongs Don't Make A Right

Ask your students to create a list of groups they think have experienced unfair treatment in this country throughout its history (Blacks, Native Americans, Women, Immigrants and so forth). Then ask them to compare and contrast the internment of Japanese Americans to the treatment of these other groups. In what ways were the experiences the same? In what ways were/are they different? Has anything changed over time? If so what? If not, why not?

6) Fair to Compare?

Ask your students to locate and analyze information and photographs of the concentration camps set up in territory controlled by Nazi Germany during World War II. Then ask them to compare and contrast those with information and images of the Japanese American internment camps. Is it fair to compare the two? In what ways were they different? In what ways were they the same?

7) These Three Things I Cherish...

Ask your students to create a list of 4 everyday activities that would not have been possible for the people held in the internment camps. Then ask your students to consider how they might feel if they were not able to participate in those everyday activities. Now ask them to imagine that they were being sent to one of the camps and could only bring three things with them, what would those three things be? Have them create a video collage called "These Three Things I Cherish" where each student lists the three things they would bring. Post it on line and invite others to share their list as well.

8) What Do Our Things Say About Us?

Ask your students to survey their families to create a list of 10 things their family would take with them if they were suddenly asked to leave their homes as the Japanese Americans were during the internment. Then have the students share these in class to determine if there are any trends across the lists. Ask them to create a chart that shows the frequency of things that make the lists across families. What does this chart say about us as Americans?

9) Prejudice Over Time

The internment of the Japanese Americans can be seen as the culmination of a long series of prejudicial acts against Asians on the West Coast. Ask your students to research and report on measures taken against Japanese Americans in the decades leading up to the

internment. You may want them to create a timeline of the actions taken. What were the actions based on? What justification was given for these actions?

10) Words or Pictures

Share with your students images of life in the internment camps and ask them to brainstorm a list of their impressions and emotions. Then play for your students the oral history excerpts and ask them to again brainstorm a list of their impressions and emotions. Have them if hearing the oral histories sharpened or softened their impressions and emotions. Ask them to explain how or why?

11) “Hell No, We Won’t Go”

Organize a class discussion around the simple question, “Why didn’t the Japanese Americans do more to resist being sent to the camps?” Ask your students to consider what they might have done to resist if they were faced with a similar dilemma.

12) Is Silver Lining From a Dark Chapter?

The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II is seen as a dark chapter in American history. Ask your students to research what happened to the Japanese Americans after they got out the camps. To what extent were they able to reconstruct and go on with their lives? How did people respond to them after the war? Ask your students to consider what lessons we learned and what lessons we have failed to learn from the internment. Was there any “silver lining” to be found in the act?

13) What’s Your Read On This?

Share with your students a copy of Executive Order 9066. Have them go over the document line by line or section by section and ask them to describe what it means in their own words. Ask them to share their reinterpretations. Do all the students interpret the order the same way? What might account for the differences? Why do they suppose that the military interpreted it the way they did? Where in the document does it say to round up people and relocate them to camps?

14) A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words

Ask your students to select one of the photographs from the exhibit and analyze it in terms of its purpose, subject, intended audience, style, and composition. Have them describe the impact of the image. What emotions does it invoke? What call to action does it inspire? Ask them to write a brief description of what is happening in the photo and what they think might have taken place in the moments just before and just after the photo was taken.