



Curriculum Guide

Franklin D. Roosevelt and WWII

Japanese American Internment

In the uncertain weeks after Pearl Harbor, as Japanese forces expanded across the Pacific and Southeast Asia, many Americans—particularly those on the Pacific coast—feared enemy attack and saw danger in every corner.

Wartime fears combined with racial prejudice to lead to a great injustice. Early in 1942, civilian and military leaders on the West Coast—including California Attorney General Earl Warren (later U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice)—complained that members of the region's large Japanese American community might be working with the Japanese military to plan acts of sabotage. Though no serious evidence of this existed, they pushed the Roosevelt administration for action.

On February 19, 1942, FDR issued executive order 9066, which led to the forced relocation of more than 110,000 Japanese Americans to inland internment camps operated by the military. More than two-thirds were native born American citizens. Abruptly forced to abandon or sell their homes and businesses, many lost everything. Yet they remained loyal, and some Japanese Americans from the camps served in the nation's military, where they distinguished themselves with extraordinary valor.

The Supreme Court upheld the President's order in two wartime cases. But in the 1980s, Congress acknowledged this violation of the civil liberties and voted to provide some financial compensation to individuals confined in the camps. The Supreme Court also vacated its earlier wartime rulings.

Similar wartime fears led Canada and nations throughout Latin America to adopt comparable expulsion measures against residents of Japanese ancestry.



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Text of Executive Order 9066: Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas:

This press release containing the text of Executive Order 9066 was issued on the day after Roosevelt signed the order. The original Executive Order is located at the National Archives in Washington D.C. as part of Record Group 11: The General Records of the United States

Government.

FOR THE PRESS IMMEDIATE RELEASE FEBRUARY 20, 1942

The President has signed the following Executive Order:

AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF WAR TO PRESCRIBE
MILITARY AREAS
9066

WHEREAS the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities as defined in Section 4, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 533, as amended by the Act of November 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1220, and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 655 (U.S.C., Title 50, Sec. 104):

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area hereinabove authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,

February 19, 1942.