

# Lesson 4: Remembering Manzanar



How Does My Identity Shape My Experience in America?

## Activity 7: Life After Camp

How did Japanese Americans' identities shape their internment experiences?

### Objective:

Students understand some of the challenges faced by internees after the war ended and the camps closed.

### Procedure:

#### OPTION ONE

- ✓ Students make a list of the most valuable things they own.
- ✓ Tell students many Japanese Americans returning home from internment camps found most of their houses and possessions lost or in some cases sold without their knowledge. Some people put valuable possessions in storage but when they returned home from camp, many found much of it stolen or vandalized.\*
- ✓ Ask students to try to imagine that the same thing happened to their most valuable possessions and the government was responsible.
- ✓ Have students write a persuasive letter to the government asking for money to pay for the things they lost.

#### OPTION TWO

- ✓ Divide your class in half. Provide the first half with stickers to wear while students in the other half are given nothing.
- ✓ The students then participate in a spelling bee for a prize to the group that wins.
- ✓ The students with the stickers are given very easy words to spell such as “cat” while the students without stickers are given increasingly difficult words to spell such as “thesaurus.” Make the word differences obvious.
- ✓ Students should quickly reach the conclusion that the students with stickers are being given an unfair advantage.

\* Some Japanese Americans returned home to find that their neighbors protected and maintained their property and valuables during internment.

**Grade Level:** 4th

**Time:** 1-2 hours

**Materials:**

Stickers

Paper

Pencils

**Concepts Covered:**

**Understand & identify** with other viewpoints.

**Write** coherent ideas in paragraph form.

**CDE Standards:**

**4th Grade**

**English/Language Arts:**

**Writing**

2.1.a 2.1.d

**History/Social Science**

4.4.5

Activity 7: **Life After Camp**

How did Japanese Americans' identities shape their internment experiences?



*Man and woman at Manzanar, 1943  
Katsumi Taniguchi Collection, Manzanar NHS*

**Procedure (continued):**

- ✓ After the students understand the unfairness, stop the spelling bee and ask them to think about how Japanese Americans were treated by others when they tried to go back to their homes. Remind students how some Japanese Americans were treated when they were taken to the camps; that many people lost everything and were treated badly because they were Japanese. This did not stop when the camps closed. Many people still felt hatred toward Japanese Americans; even returning Japanese American war veterans experienced hate and discrimination. Still, others welcomed Japanese Americans back into their communities.
- ✓ Have the students write a paragraph (perhaps in journals) about what they think the Japanese Americans felt after experiencing years of internment camps only to return home to discrimination.

**Assessment:**

1. Student participation in the spelling bee.
2. Students understand prejudice and unfairness.
3. Students write clear and concise paragraphs.

**Extension:**

1. Ask students if anyone has ever moved before. Ask students to describe to the class what it was like. Did they know anyone? Was it hard to make new friends? Compare student experiences to Japanese Americans' camp experiences. Visit [www.densho.org](http://www.densho.org) to listen to oral history interviews that discuss moving.
2. Ask your students to imagine that they were interned during World War II. Ask them what would be the first thing that they would do when they left the camp (go to the beach, eat a burger, ride in a car, etc.)?