



Lesson 5: Perspectives & Consciousness

How Does My Identity Shape My Experience in America?

Activity 2: Perspectives

How can perspectives dictate the treatment of a race or community?

Objective:

Students utilize primary source documents to understand and identify with the internment experiences of Japanese Americans.

Procedure:

- ✓ Divide students into groups of four to six depending on class size.
- ✓ Give each group one piece of literature to read and discuss. Literature may consist of factual news articles, individual columnists' articles, poems, letters to the editor, autobiographical materials, etc. that focus on selected Japanese Americans' experiences during World War II. Literature includes: "This Needs to Be Said" by Oliver Carlson; "Letter to the Editor," *Herald-Express*; *Santa Monica Evening Outlook*, 1945; *I Am the Mountain of Manzanar* by Michiko Mizumoto; "Coast Japs are Interned in Mountain Camp," *Life* magazine, April 6, 1942; Earl Wilson's column *L.A. Daily News*, August 24, 1945, *Nisei Daughter: The Second Generation* by Rose Furuya Hawkins (articles located in the Lesson 5 Activity 2 Resources section).
- ✓ Pass out the worksheet, *Views Toward Japanese Americans* (located in the Lesson 5 Activity 2 Resources section) to each group. Students complete it and prepare a 5-minute oral presentation on their findings.
- ✓ Each group delivers their presentation to the entire class.
- ✓ Have a class discussion focusing on questions generated by group presentations. Discuss and critique the literary techniques employed by each author. Particularly, focus on how the use of a specific genre helps the writer communicate his/her message.



Family at Manzanar, 1943. Katsumi Taniguchi Collection/Manzanar NHS

Grade Level: 10 & 11
Time: 2 hours (class)
 1 week (home)

Materials:
 7 Primary Source articles
 Views Toward Japanese Americans worksheet

Concepts Covered:

- Read** for detail.
- Compare & contrast** authors' reactions to the internment of Japanese Americans.
- Identify** features of different writing genres.
- Analyze** impact of writing genre on theme.
- Understand** meaning in context (wartime situation).
- Support** observations with specific detail.

CDE Standards:

10th Grade

English/Language

Reading

1.1 2.4 2.5 2.8 3.8

Writing

1.5 2.3

Listening & Speaking

1.1 1.2 2.2

History/Social Science

10.8.6

11th Grade

English/Language Arts

Reading

1.3 2.1 2.6

Writing

1.2 1.6 2.4

Listening & Speaking

1.2 2.2

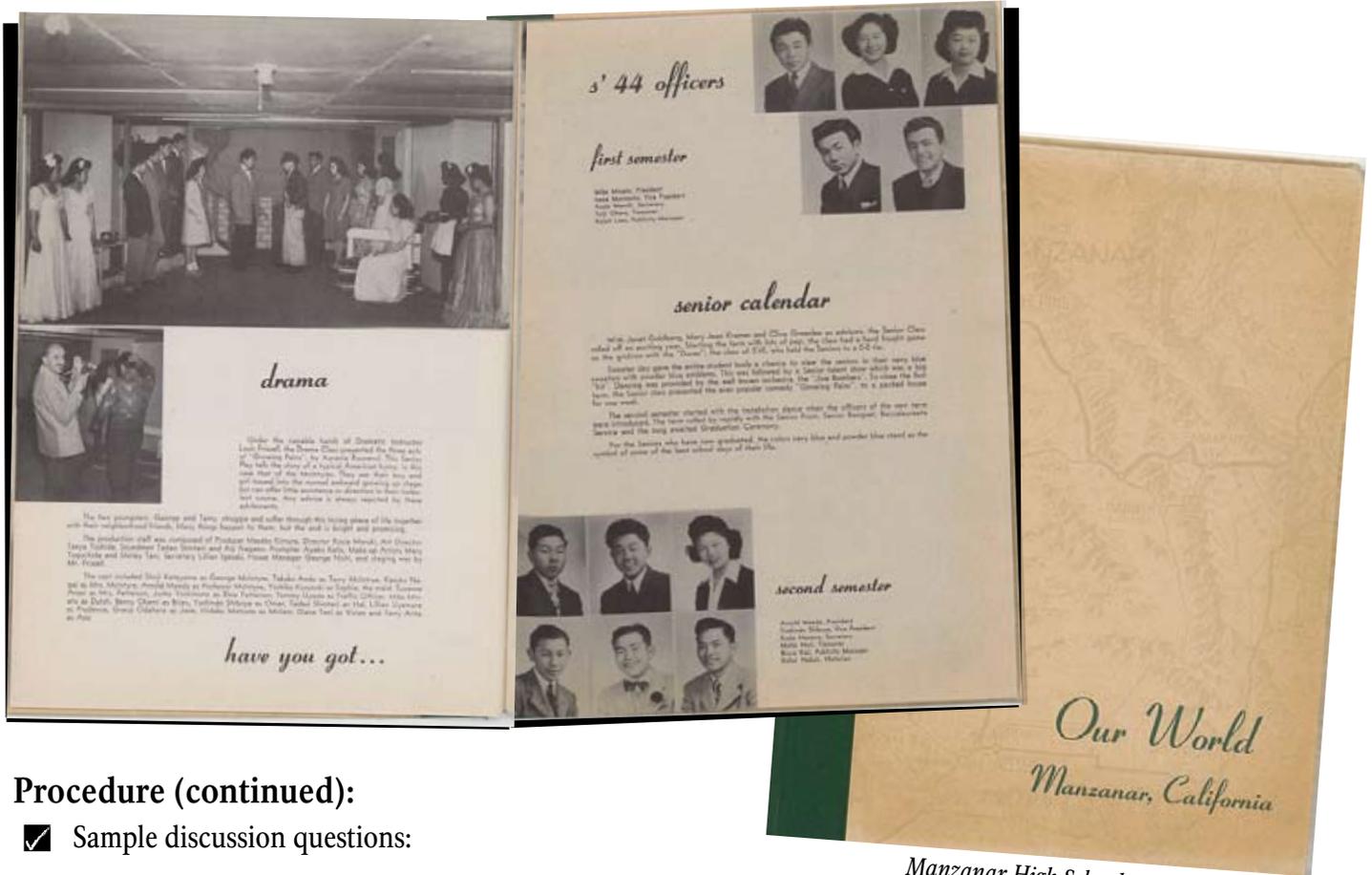
History/Social Science

11.7.3 11.7.5



Activity 2: Perspectives

How can perspectives dictate the treatment of a race or community?



Procedure (continued):

- Sample discussion questions:

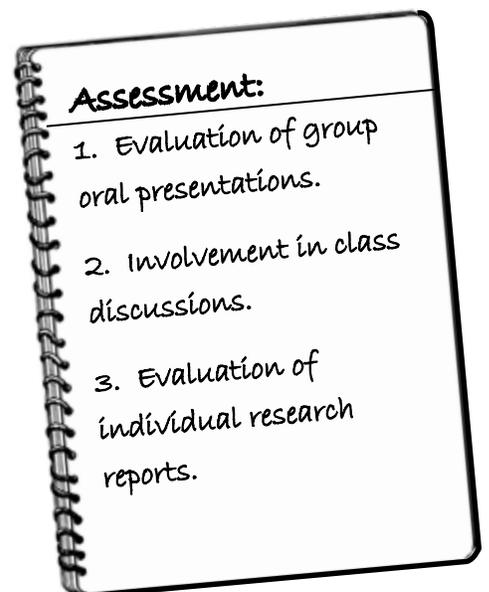
How does poetry, especially free verse like “I Am the Mountain of Manzanar” help the reader realize the emotional impact of internment? Focus on the word choice, format, tone, etc.

What is the impact of the personal letter format in the editorial section of the Herald-Express? Again, note word choice. Some of the same words used to label Japanese Americans are used in both these letters and the poem. How does their effect on the reader differ?

Look at the article from Life magazine. Is the material presented objectively or subjectively? Find specific examples to support your answers.

What is the effect of writing in poetry or prose? Do readers tend to believe one genre over another?

- At the conclusion of the class discussion, assign each student a 5-page research paper on a first person article, poem, etc., of their choice related to Japanese American internment.





Primary Source I

This Needs to Be Said

by

Oliver Carlson

Los Angeles Today, November 10, 1945

The Japs are coming back! Rumors and still more rumors abound and multiply with each telling, till the average citizen is both angry and befuddled. And some, at least, mutter that dire consequences will befall any “damned yellow-bellies” who show up in their vicinity.

Just a week or two ago, for example, the whole city of Burbank was astir with talk that 3000 Japs were to be moved into army barracks there. At once tempers began to mount and threats to be made. No damned government bureaucrats were going to dump 3000 traitorous Japs in the midst of Burbank and get away with it! No Siree! “Ship ‘em back to Japan!” “Get rid of the whole mess of them, kit and caboodle!”

Thoughtful citizens wondered what they could do to stop the emotional tide of hatred. Timid citizens shuddered at the prospect of riots and bloodshed.

Then, in the midst of all this excitement, it discovered that the Public Forum, conducted by the Burbank Board of Education, was having as its next speaker, Mr. G. Raymond Booth, who would discuss the problem of what to do with our Japanese. Mr. Booth, by the way, had been employed by the U.S. Government to handle its Relocation Authority in Los Angeles.

Audience Convinced

The Senior High School auditorium was well filled for the meeting. Many felt or feared that troublemakers would use that Forum meeting to fan the flame of hatred still higher.

I am happy to report that there was no trouble of any kind. Mr. Booth won his audience completely. In a detailed, frank and pleasing discussion of how Government authorities had checked and watched all Japanese, both foreign and native born, he convinced his audience that Federal authorities would not release any dangerous or subversive Japanese to roam about the cities and highways of California. He pointed out, to the amazement of his audience, that not a single act of sabotage, either in the United States or in Hawaii, could be traced to a Japanese, but that this was not true of Italians or Germans.

Mr. Booth cited the army records of the American-born Japanese (Nisei) as the most heroic and most decorated, and most wounded in the whole army. These young Nisei, he said, were fighting a double war: World War II against Fascism, Nazism and Japanese Militarism—and also the Revolutionary War to give them the rights and benefits of citizenship in this country.

When the lecture ended Booth was deluged with questions, asked mostly by high school students. But these were not asked in anger, but for further clarification of the issue. The meeting ended in a spirit of real Americanism. The audience went away feeling that their fears were unfounded. Some were a bit ashamed at the way they had talked and threatened previously.

Burbank, judging by the reports I have received in the past few days, is no longer jittery. Furthermore, it now knows that the 3000 Japs was a ten-fold exaggeration. And I feel sure that when some of those boys with yellow complexions and slanted eyes, wearing purple hearts walk down San Fernando Road or Olive Street, many a resident of Burbank will smile at him in gratitude and understanding for the double fight he had to put up. And some may well mumble to themselves, “There, but for the Grace of God, go I.”



Primary Source II

Letter to the Editor

Santa Monica Evening Outlook, October 20, 1945, pg 3

Editor *The Outlook*:

My blood is boiling! I have just read an article in the *Outlook*, which tells of 30 Jap families being quartered in converted Army barracks on Pico Boulevard, between 24th and 25th Streets. The same news item says also that thousands of other Jap families are to be returned to Southland communities.

The City of Santa Monica should rise in righteous indignation at any such procedure, when there are veterans, dozens of them, advertising in the papers for a place—any place—to live. Is there no way to keep these abominable, little yellow rats out of our city? If the barracks can be reconverted to house 30 Japanese families, why on earth can't they be used for our own boys and their wives and babies, many of whom are desperate for even one room?

I have seen the long line of young people waiting at the *Outlook* in the afternoons for the paper to come off the press, hoping to find something—anything—to rent. And in the face of this, living quarters are being built for those Japs.

Signed Mrs. David M. Flourney



Primary Source III

Letter to the Editor

Herald-Express, November 27, 1945

He Loves Some Japs

TOKIO, Japan—Our country is a great one—for one basic reason—it was settled by people who came to these shores because they were tired of tyranny and its more modern brothers, Fascism and Nazism.

I wish that you would send me the names of a few red blooded Americans, such as the one in Denver, a taxi driver, who refused to carry a Japanese soldier who had completed 58 missions over Germany. This incident is but one of many such actions which sometimes makes me wish that all of us had the opportunity to see unity such as we have in a combat unit.

Sometimes I actually feel ashamed of my country, so much so that it would not be too hard to change citizenship.

Why do we insist that the Japanese-Americans are not Americans?

Why do we draw no such lines against the German-Americans and the Italian-Americans?

I'm part German and the civilian or serviceman who wants a 175-pound argument needs only to say that I am not an American.

I have lost a brother, a great guy, in this war. To carry a loss further, I have also lost a nephew who was no less than a brother.

My school days and childhood were spent in and around Los Angeles. It was, and I speak with the utmost sincerity, my privilege to have numbered many Japanese among my friends. One of them is a major in the Army Air Corps Intelligence.

Do you think that our army and our F.B.I. would allow a post to be held by a disbeliever in democracy?

Why don't our people at home realize that we have a very good law, a law that a man is not guilty until proven so. Certainly a man with 58 missions over Germany cannot be considered or classified as an alien.

Before God I wish that the opinion expressed by me was my own, entirely, but it is also the opinion of the majority of servicemen.

S. Sgt. Bryson Rogers

5th Division, U.S.M.C.R.

Editor's Note—We doubt that a majority of servicemen share Sergeant Roger's enthusiasm for Japs. California found most Japs vicious before Pearl Harbor and most of the United States shared California's opinion after Pearl Harbor. Sergeant Rogers should read the testimony at the trial of Yamashita or peruse General Wainwright's story. There are undoubtedly some good Japs, but they are too rare to get enthusiastic over the race.



Primary Source IV

I Am the Mountain of Manzanar

Dust storms
Sweat days
Yellow people
Exiles

I am the mountain that kisses the sky
in the dawning
I watched the day when these, your people, came
into your heart

Tired
Bewildered
Embittered

I saw you accept them with compassion
impassive but visible
Life of a thousand teemed within your bosom
A thousand that hated and feared you
Silently you received and bore them
Daily you fed them from your breast
Nightly you soothed them to forgetful slumber
Guardian and keeper of the unwanted

They say your people are wanton
Saboteurs
Haters of white men
Spies

Yet I have seen them go forth to die
For their only country
Help with the defense of their homeland
America

I have seen them look with trusting eyes at nature
And know the pathos of their tearful laughter
Choked with enveloping mists of dust storms
Pant with the heat of sweat days, still laughing
Their only sin, their faces
Exiles

And I say to those who hate and those outside your bounds
Scoff if you must, but the dawn is approaching
When these, who have learned and suffered in silent courage
Better, wiser, for the unforgettable interlude of detention
Shall tread on free soil again
Side by side, peacefully with those who sneered at the
Dust storms
Sweat days
Yellow people
Exiles



Primary Source V

Coast Japs are Interned in Mountain Camp

From *Life* magazine, April 6, 1945

In a high mountain-walled California valley 240 miles from the sea, the vanguard of 112,000 Japanese residents of the proscribed Pacific Coast combat zone were settled comfortably last week, prepared to wait out the war in willing and not unprofitable internment. Of 1,000-odd Japs who arrived at the Government's Manzanar "reception center" in Owens Valley, March 22-23, more than four fifths were citizens of the U.S. All were volunteers who had offered their services to help prepare the encampment for those who will necessarily follow. For in the next month, the Army warns, evacuation of all Japanese and all German and Italian aliens from the West Coast's military zone must be complete.

The Army hopes this great and unprecedented migration will continue to be as spontaneous and cheerful as its first chapter. For continue it must, and continue it will, until every enemy alien and every individual of Japanese descent—whether friend or foe—is banished from the strategic areas of the coastal States. Last fortnight the Army extended a velvet glove to its first voluntary internees. The soldiers who escorted them across the Mojave Desert to Manzanar were friendly and affable, and the Japs commented afterward on the courteous treatment they had received. Nevertheless the trappings of war were there. And the commanding general of the West Coast area promised the Army would not shrink from using force to complete evacuation, if other methods failed.

The reception center in which the internees found themselves proved a scenic spot of lonely loveliness. The Japs gasped when they saw Mt. Whitney, highest peak in the U.S., shrugging its white shoulder above lesser ranges just 10 miles away. They were gratified to discover no mosquitoes. They tested the soil and found it hard and arid, but potentially fertile. . .

All this looked good last week—to the Japs, to coastal Californians who had howled long and loud for evacuation of aliens, to the Army, and even to some of Inyo County's hostile citizenry who had bitterly protested establishment of the center in their serene valley. Yet Manzanar, for all its hopes and assets was no idyllic country club. Manzanar was a concentration camp, designed eventually to detain at least 10,000 potential enemies of the U.S. Last week a Japanese-American internee emphasized that he and his comrades had come to Manzanar "without bitterness or rancor—wanting to show our loyalty in deeds, not words."



Primary Source VI

Feature Article

by

Earl Wilson

Los Angeles Daily News, August 24, 1945, pg. 36

NEW YORK.—I ventured into a nest of 30 Japs. Naturally, I was shaky about it.

“Step into our crub,” said T. Tai, a balloon-cheeked, leather-skinned little Japanese of about 55, who was wearing a white polo shirt, as he admitted me to the Japanese-American Young Men’s association, 9 W. 98th st. He said crub. He meant club.

I entered tremblingly. My Beautiful Wife had warned me they might slice me up for Sukiyaki. Of course, she said, they’d name it sukiyakidoodle-dandy.

“Why,” I asked, “do you call it young men’s association?”

“It was young men—years back,” laughed George T. Okuzaki, a tallish, spectacled white-haired Japanese domestic of about 60. “You see, we’ve been here long, long years. We used to have just strudents here. Just Japanese strudents.”

I leaned back, feeling much braver. Their four story, brick house, pinched in between Negro apartment buildings, is comfortable. And I liked that letter R for the letter L.

“We’ve a very democratic crub,” Tai, the manager, said. “Every man creans his own rooms, does his own cooking. Some go to basebawr games, some pray the horses.”

Did they (I asked) wish to keep Hirohito as emperor?

“We’re ariens, but good ariens,” Tai said. “When the war started the preesman come here but not a single man was taken from this house. We think the emperor should remain. He does no harm. The powerticians make him do things. He keeps the country together. That’s why it never sprits up.”

A fat little Japanese, in protest against the weather, sauntered through the next room in shorts and under-shirt, and Okuzaki yelled at him, “It it hrot enough for you?”

“What do you think of the atomic bomb?” I asked.

“A terriber, inhuman weapon,” Tai said. “One member had a famry in Hiroshima, another had a famry in Nagasaki. Suppose that bum was dropped in the midder of New York city. How you rike it?”

“Wouldn’t Japan have used it?” I asked.

“I think maybe they do,” he said.

He denied they worship the emperor. “A mistake in transration,” he said. “More respect than worship.” I noticed on the mantel two great brass heads of animals, with grinning, sneering mouths and cruel brass teeth. They were, of course, “rions.” (Not to be confused with Reonard Ryons): There was a Bible in one corner, amid the hundreds of books. Okuzaki goes to the Japanese Methodist church, 323 W. 110th street.

“Hows the sukiyaki nowadays?” I asked.

“Sirroin steak hard to get,” Okuzaki said. “Mostry use robster and Wrong Isrand duck. But some do get sirroin. They go to brack market.”

Suddenly I heard a scarey, whirring noise over by head, and decided they were now going to make me into sukiyaki as my B. W. had warned.

“What’s that?” I asked, fearfully. “An atomic bomb?”

“Oh, no,” laughed Tai. “Just a vacroom creaner. As I say before, each member creans his own room and never comprains. We have a paradise here. No women to boss us, sometimes a ritter beer to drink. We awr right.”



Primary Source VII

Nisei Daughter: The Second Generation

When people ask

About my mother
I look away and say,
“Oh, she’s been gone
A long time now.
I hardly knew her anyway.”

But I know she was
A renegade. Why else
Was she standing on some foreign shore,
Uncomfortable in high-heeled shoes
And black dress with bust darts,
Her cherry-blossom kimono
Left far behind?

How else did she consent
To trade her rice-paper walls
For corrugated tin
And to live, honor, and obey
This crude stranger, *Ito-San*
Who sipped Coca-Cola
Through a straw?

Yes, my mother was a renegade.
She braved the future
By swallowing her pride,
Her delicate fingers
Shaping paper swans
After a long day
Of picking cotton
In the Imperial Valley.

She sewed dresses

For my doll
Long after her feet
Were too tired to work the treadle
Of her prized Singer.

She taught me words:
Mi-mi, ha-na, ku-chi,
Pointing to my ear,
My nose, my mouth.

She fed me full
Of fat rice balls
And pickled radishes,
Afraid I might ask
For bologna sandwiches.

Mama, forgive me.
I guess I knew you well.
I was your miracle child,
Your second generation
Nisei daughter,
Born to you
When you were already too old,
Already too torn
By barbed-wire fences
And mixed loyalty.

Oh, where have you gone
Little moon-faced child
Who once chased fireflies
For paper lanterns
In old Japan?



Questions

Views Toward Japanese Americans

Name of selection you read: _____

1. From whose perspective (point of view) is the text (article, story, poem, etc.) written?
2. What is the author's attitude towards Japanese Americans and internment?
3. What is the agenda or objective of the article, letter, poem, etc.? How do you know? (Quote specific examples from the text as evidence.)
4. In the discussion with your group, what new information did you personally learn about the treatment and/or internment of Japanese Americans?
5. What, if any, evidence of prejudice or stereotyping did your group find in this piece?
6. What question(s) do you have about the internment or treatment of Japanese Americans as a result of reading this text?