

LESSON 3: PRELUDE TO INCARCERATION

Organizing Questions

- In what ways do you think media images contributed to the mass removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast?
- In what ways did the Japanese American community respond to the possibility of being ordered to leave their homes and be incarcerated?

Introduction

In this lesson, students analyze popular media depictions of people of Japanese descent after the U.S. entry into World War II. They also analyze Japanese American responses to the mass removal from the West Coast. It is recommended that students engage in both activities in this lesson.

Objectives

knowledge

- to learn about the nature of wartime hysteria
- to analyze differing Japanese American responses to the mass removal

attitude

- to appreciate the diversity of the Japanese American responses to the mass removal

skill

- to work effectively in small groups
- to critically analyze popular media coverage and congressional testimonies

Reading: *Prelude to Incarceration*

Before beginning the activities in this lesson, discuss *Prelude to Incarceration* with the following questions:

- In what ways do you think the media contributed to the order to remove Japanese Americans from the West Coast?
- What were the differing visions of the Department of Justice and the military with respect to the Japanese Americans on the West Coast? How might the nature of these offices account for the differences?
- In what ways did the Japanese American community respond to the mass removal? Why do you think Japanese American opponents of the mass removal were ineffective in their efforts?
- What do you think were the merits and/or demerits of cooperating with federal authorities?
- What do you think were the merits and/or demerits of resisting federal authorities?

Activities

Activity 3-1: Perspectives Through Popular Media

Students examine articles and cartoons that present diverse reactions to the incarceration debate.

Activity 3-2: Japanese American Perspectives Through Congressional Testimonies

Students examine testimonies of two Japanese Americans given before a congressional committee.

ACTIVITY 3-1: PERSPECTIVES THROUGH POPULAR MEDIA

Introduction

In this activity, students examine some of the attitudes expressed in the U.S. media towards Japanese Americans prior to their removal from the West Coast. Students are first presented with a range of reactions, then are asked to engage in small-group activities based on an article and political cartoons. In addition, students analyze non-Japanese American perspectives that voiced disagreement with the mass removal and incarceration.

Time

One to two class periods

Materials

- Handout 3-1a: "Today and Tomorrow" (one copy per group of three students)
- Handout 3-1b: The Nippu Jiji (one copy per group of three students)
- Handout 3-1c: Dr. Seuss (one copy per group of three students)
- Handout 3-1d: In the News (one copy per student)

Procedure

1. Download and print the PDF file of Activity 3-1 handouts. Make copies as indicated above.
2. Inform students that they will examine primary-source documents that illustrate some of the attitudes toward Japanese Americans and/or the mass removal and incarceration as expressed by the U.S. media following the U.S. entry into World War II.
3. Divide the class into groups of three students. Give each group one of the Handouts 3-1a through 3-1c. Give groups 30 minutes for their tasks.
4. Ask a representative from each group to present the group's work in front of the class.
5. After all groups have presented, discuss the activity with the following questions:
 - How are these three perspectives similar or different?
 - If the same incident occurred in our society today, how do you think the public would react?
 - Is it fair to judge events in the past from our current perspective, or should we judge past actions by the standards of that time? If the latter, is that possible?
6. During or after the discussion above, mention to students that several non-Japanese American groups did speak out against the incarceration of Japanese Americans; the Quakers and the West Coast branches of the American Civil Liberties Union were among those who argued that the incarceration was a mistake. Handout 3-1d: *In the News* contains a list of some excerpts of articles written by people who argued against the forced removal and incarceration. Suggested activities are also included in the handout.