

Lesson Title: "Japanese Internment—How point of view influences attitude"

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### **Traditional American History Program**

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Lesson Overview: Students will read and analyze the poem "In Response to Executive Order 9066: ALL AMERICANS OF JAPANESE DESCENT MUST REPORT TO RELOCATION CENTERS" for speaker and point-of-view. Students will then use the original poem as a model to write an original poem from a different speaker's point of view. (This lesson is designed to go along with the lesson titled "Studying Japanese Internment with Primary Documents," also included on this website, which will give students the necessary historical background on Japanese Internment.)

Essential Questions: How was a person's opinion of Order 9066 influenced by his or her individual perspective? Is there such a thing as right and wrong, or does background and experience influence a person's point of view to such an extent that right or wrong simply becomes a matter of opinion?

Objectives: After completing this lesson the student will be able to:

- Apply prior knowledge to aid comprehension (GLE Reading 1F)
- Utilize strategies during reading to infer and visualize (Reading-1G)
- Analyze and evaluate the relationship between literature and its historical period and culture (Reading-1I)
- Compose text applying appropriate format, tone, and point of view (GLE Writing 3D)

Assessment:

- Check of comprehension questions handout.
- Scoring guide for original poem to check format, point of view, tone, and appropriateness of speaker's attitude considering the historical context.

Materials:

1. Copies for each student of poem: "In Response to Executive Order 9066: ALL AMERICANS OF JAPANESE DESCENT MUST REPORT TO RELOCATION CENTERS" written by Dwight Okita. You can find the poem at [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml/interactive/index.html](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml/interactive/index.html), as well as in several anthologies.

Class Time: One 45 minute class period.

Teacher Input: Teacher should read the poem aloud as students follow along and lead a discussion, asking pertinent questions, to clarify meaning.

Activities:

1. Ask students “Is it wrong to steal?” Chances are most of the students will agree that “yes” it is wrong to steal. Then ask “Are there any circumstances which would make it all right to steal?” “What if your little brother was starving and you had no money or possibility to earn money to buy him food?” Call on students for opinions to open a discussion of “right & wrong.” After some discussion, bring Order 9066 into discussion. Was it right or wrong? Review historical events which precipitated the order. Consider different points of view. Perhaps ask students to role play the parts of a Japanese American and a Caucasian American.
2. Next, read the poem aloud as students follow along. Teacher leads discussion of poem, asking pertinent questions to clarify meaning.
3. Have students fill out the comprehension worksheet.
4. Discuss the two girls in the poem and their opposing viewpoints, always keeping the historical context in mind.
5. Original poem assignment:  
Each student should write a poem modeled after the Okita poem in format and tone. However, students’ poems will be from the point of view of Denise, the non-Japanese girl. The poem should follow the format of the original, including dialogue.

Questions for review: When considering most issues, are there shades of gray or is it black and white—right or wrong? Have you changed your mind about that question since the beginning of this class? Why is it important to look at issues from all sides and perspectives before making up your mind? What other issues might you apply this lesson to?

Closure: Put Japanese internment photos up on a powerpoint or just pass them around (available at [www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/odex9066.html](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/odex9066.html)). Encourage students to discuss their feelings about this event in American history.

Extension: Students could create original poems using subject matter from contemporary issues or create a collage of a controversial contemporary issues showing a different point of view.

References:

Okita, Dwight. “In Response to Executive Order 9066.” *Teaching Multicultural Literature: A Workshop for the Middle Grades*. Annenberg Media. 2006. [[www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml/interactive/index.html](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml/interactive/index.html)]. 19 June 2006.

“Our Documents: Executive Order 9066.” Franklin D. Roosevelt. February 19, 1942. “Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.” [<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/odex9066.html>]. 19 June 2006.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS: "In Response to Executive Order 9066: ALL AMERICANS OF JAPANESE DESCENT MUST REPORT TO RELOCATION CENTERS"

1. Who is the speaker of the poem? (an Asian girl with the last name Ozawa)
2. How would you describe her? (She seems like a typical fourteen-year-old American girl. She is a bad speller and has a messy room. She's not super traditional because she feels funny using chopsticks and hotdogs are her favorite food.)
4. What clues let you know that she is not Caucasian? (the title; she mentions chopsticks; she says her best friend is "white," so you know she probably isn't; her last name is Ozawa)
5. Are you surprised by Denise's comments? Which one surprised you the most? Why?
6. What influences do you think Denise experienced in her life to shape her opinions?
7. Put yourself in Denise's place for a moment. What conversations might she have heard at home concerning political and war events of the time?