

Fear, Panic, and Injustice: Executive Order 9066

A Lesson for Grades 4-6

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Rationale:

Decision making is one of the essential skills advocated by the National Council for the Social Studies for effective citizenship in a democratic society. Leaders in any society make decisions that influence many lives. In a democratic society, we expect that deductive and inductive reasoning guide decisions made for the common good. However, what happens when fear-based thinking enters the decision-making process? How might fear influence decisions that leaders make? In this lesson, students use primary sources to develop an understanding of how events of a war and feelings of fear and panic influenced President Franklin Roosevelt to sign the executive order that resulted in the incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese descent. Following an introduction to the events leading up to Executive Order 9066, the students examine and interpret primary sources to gain a better understanding of the multiple perspectives of individuals impacted by the executive order.

Teacher Background Knowledge

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States was gripped by war hysteria and xenophobia. Many American citizens began to question the allegiances of others around them. Many considered individuals of Japanese heritage (including U.S. citizens) suspect and associated them with the actions of the government of Japan. People, particularly along the Pacific coast of the United States, feared Japanese attacks on their cities, homes, and businesses. They demanded that residents of Japanese ancestry be relocated to

isolated inland areas. Under pressure, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This order resulted in the forcible internment of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were citizens of the United States.

Building Empathy

This lesson helps students increase awareness about the Japanese American internment camp experience as well as enhance their sense of empathy. A meaningful way for students to develop a sense of empathy is to examine an event from the

perspective of a child during that time. During the evacuation and internment experience, Japanese American children and their families faced threats to their personal security. Through children's literature and primary sources, students examine the consequences of Executive Order 9066 on Japanese American children. Reflection on the experiences of the Japanese American children will help elementary students grasp the importance of treating others with fairness and equality rather than judging them through stereotypes and prejudice.



“Reading War News aboard Streetcar,” San Francisco, California, 1941,

John Collier, photographer

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Essential Question: *What happens when fear-based thinking enters the decision-making process?*

Knowledge Objectives:

1. Discover how wartime hysteria prompted or promoted prejudice against a particular ethnic group;
2. Analyze media and personal accounts of the tensions following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Attitudinal Objectives:

1. Respect the diversity of perspectives surrounding an event;
2. Evaluate circumstances based on facts and not fear-based predictions;
3. Support the dissemination of equal rights to all people.

Skill Objectives:

1. Critically analyze multiple primary and secondary sources;

2. Identify words and phrases that indicate prejudice or bias based in fear;
3. Identify the expressed and hidden fears of speakers and writers.

Exploratory Introduction Procedures:

1. Ask students, “Do you believe fear or panic can influence decisions people make?” and “Can you think of any examples?”
2. Introduce the events that led to Executive Order 9066 by viewing an online streaming video entitled “A More Perfect Union” at www.americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html.
3. Ask students, “How did you feel after viewing this video? Do you think the media contributed to the order for removal of Japanese Americans? If so, how? With whom did the video say you should be angry? Do people ever look at a person and think we know them because of their looks? Can you think of any examples?” The teacher should guide the focus of the discussion to include examples of bias and prejudice.

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4. Show the online newsreel of a report of the bombing of Pearl Harbor at www.open-video.org/details.php?videoid=4102. (Note: Complete download prior to viewing). Introduce the newsreel by saying, “You will watch a historical newsreel of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Listen carefully for any words or phrases that illustrate feelings towards the Japanese people.” After viewing the newsreel, list students’ observations of specific words, phrases, predictions, and justifications for why people might have made such comments.

Focus the discussion on the importance of putting an event in the context of its historical time. To do so, have students examine the following primary and secondary sources:

- Timeline of events leading up to, during, and after Executive Order 9066, www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/timeline.html
 - Audio of Roosevelt’s speech to Congress, December 8, 1941, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pearl3.htm
 - Copy of Executive Order 9066, www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/od9066t.html%20
 - The two images titled “Reading War News aboard Streetcar,” San Francisco, California, by Collier, John, 1913 (see page 269); search using the title name in the American Memory Collection at memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html
 - Written transcripts and audio files from interviews conducted with people on the streets immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, memory.loc.gov/ammem/afcphtml/afcpseries.html.
5. Ask the students to think about the following questions, “How do you think the Japanese American community responded to the mass removal? Can you imagine what it would have been like for the children? How or why would such a thing happen to Japanese Americans? Could it happen to a group of people in the United States today?”

Lesson Development Procedures

1. Without any explanation, the teacher can ask students to do the following, allowing a few minutes for each statement or question.
 - a Write a list of all your possessions including things like toothbrushes, clothes, special toys, etc.
 - b Imagine that you are going away—you don’t know to where, how long you’ll be gone, or what conditions you might face. Out of the list you have already made, you may take anything you want and need, as long as you can carry them in one suitcase. Cross out the items on your list that you would leave behind.
 - c Think about the following questions: What would you take? What would you leave behind? Is it difficult/easy

to decide what to take? How do you feel about the things you must leave behind? What fears or concerns might you have about leaving? What questions would you have?

2. Read aloud the children’s literature book, *The Bracelet*, by Yodhiko Uchida and illustrated by Joanna Yardley (New York, NY: Philomel, 1996). After reading the book, revisit the questions posed above (in procedure 1c.) and discuss how Emi, a Japanese American girl, forced to leave her home, might have answered the questions.
3. Distribute primary source packets to each group. Student groups examine the various texts in the packet. Contents of packet include:
 - a Map of internment camp locations found at www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce1.htm
 - b Post cards written by children from the camps to Clara Estelle Breed, the librarian for the children’s section at the San Diego Public Library at www.janm.org/collections/online/clara_breed_collection
 - c “Image of Girl in Train Window for Evacuation” by Dorothea Lange (1942), click on image from Letters from Japanese American Internment at smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/japanese_internment/leaving_home.html
 - d Quote from Louise Ogawa (which is posted above Lange’s photo), also at smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/japanese_internment/leaving_home.html
 - e Images of Japanese American internment camps from www.americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/loyalty_segregation.html
 - f An Interview with Marielle Tsukamoto found at lcweb2.loc.gov/learn//lessons/99/fear/interview.html
4. Students use the following questions as they examine the primary sources:
 - a Does hearing about personal experiences provide helpful understanding of an event? Why or why not?
 - b Are first-person accounts likely to provide better information of an event? Why or why not?
 - c There are other resources that are not firsthand accounts that can accurately provide more information about the Japanese Internment. Where and how could you go to find them?
 - d How do you think children in 1941 might have viewed these documents? How might the attitudes during World War II have been different from our current ideas?
5. With the class, the teacher revisits the essential question and facilitates a class discussion and closure to this part of the lesson by asking:

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- What happens when fear-based thinking enters the decision-making process?
- How did public opinion and media influence decisions after Pearl Harbor was attacked? How did Executive Order 9066 affect the lives of Japanese Americans?
- How might it be possible to correct such a mistaken decision?
- What are some alternative decisions the U.S. government might have taken in 1941?

Expansion of the Lesson

1. Students may use the following websites to do further research on the wrongdoing associated with Executive Order 9066 and the efforts of American citizens to remedy the past:
 - a The Desho Sites of Shame, www.densho.org/learning/default.asp
 - b The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 from www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/civilact.html
 - c Presidential letter sent with reparations checks of \$20,000 to victims of World War II internment from www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/clinton.html
2. In groups, students construct an illustrated timeline of events that impacted Japanese Americans before, during, and after

Executive Order 9066 (December 7, 1941 and October 9, 1990, when the first nine redress payments were made) using the cited websites and primary source packets.

3. Individually, students write an essay that addresses one of the following questions: "Could an entire group of people ever be interned in the United States again? How can individual rights be protected to ensure that one segment of society is not treated differently from others? What lessons can we learn from the Japanese American internment experience?"

References

A story on the internment of a group of people, the Aleuts of Alaska, during World War II (unfamiliar to most Americans), www.nps.gov/archive/aleu/AleutInternmentAndRestitution.htm
www.aleutstory.tv/

The Center for Columbia River History website has some audio files of recorded oral histories of Japanese Americans who were interned in camps during World War II, www.ccrh.org/comm/moses/orarch.html

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Student Essay Assessment Rubric

Category	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Role (Indication of understanding of how fear and panic influence decision-making process)	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were clear and consistent.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were often clear and consistent	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were sometimes clear and consistent	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were rarely clear and consistent
Historical Accuracy (Indication of understanding and analysis of primary sources to support statements)	Includes many references to accurate historical information gleaned from primary sources	Includes some references to accurate historical information gleaned from primary sources	Includes one reference to accurate historical information gleaned from primary sources	Includes no references to accurate historical information gleaned from primary sources
Knowledge Gained (Indication of understanding of how individual rights can be protected from discrimination)	Can clearly explain many ways individual rights can be protected from discrimination	Can clearly explain several ways in which individual rights could be protected from discrimination	Can clearly explain one way in which individual rights could be protected from discrimination	Did not explain any way in which individual rights could be protected from discrimination
Writing Elements: Organization; Grammar; Punctuation	Student had no more than 2 errors	Student had no more than 5 errors	Student had no more than 8 errors	Student had more than 8 errors