



LESSON PLAN

CIVILIAN INTERNMENT IN CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS

Social Studies, Grades 4–5

OBJECTIVE

Through the use of primary sources, students will analyze the use of bias to shape the way the American public viewed the internment of German and Japanese citizens in the Crystal City Detention Facility. Students will also evaluate the removed rights of these citizens and determine if the government was justified in its actions.

PROCESS

Prior Knowledge

The following activity assumes that students are aware of the causes of WWII and the alignment of countries between the Allied and Axis powers.

Students should also be aware of the existence of concentration camps in Europe, internment camps in the United States, and how those institutions differ.

Students should have a working knowledge of human rights and the privileges of citizenship.

Hook

Ask students to describe what makes someone an American and to write down their responses.

Have them share their answers with the class and write a list of their responses on the board.

Remind students that there are many different ways a person can be considered “American,” but there have been times in our country when those definitions have been restrained by the government under the guise of helping the “greater good.”

Today they will examine the internment of American citizens in a time of war, and identify how the government tried to make the internment seem positive, when in fact it was a negative situation.

Lesson

Students will watch the video Alien Enemy Detention Facility, Crystal City, Texas https://texasarchive.org/2006_00010 in five sections, which can be accessed using the Educator Links listed under the video player.

Sections in Educator Links (under video player)

1. Introduction to the film, start-2:26
2. Americans arriving at the camp and overview of camp facilities, 2:26-6:50
3. Resources and jobs on the camp, 6:51-10:10



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4. Food preparation and other jobs, 10:10-15:33

There is a two-minute break between Parts 4 and 5 due to semi-violent content. Please resume the film at 17:46 to complete Section 5.

5. Children on the camp and recreation, 17:46-20:40

Worksheet A

After each section, stop the film and have students make a list of adjectives, emotions, scenery and infringement of rights they see in each section. Example of viewing questions:

- Make a list of adjectives that describe daily life at the camp:
- Make a list of scenes and places you see the people working and living:
- Make a list of emotions you would feel if you were held in the camp:
- Make a list of rights you would not have if you lived in Crystal City:
- Make a list of what you heard about the Japanese and Germans:

Once students have been given time to think about the questions, discuss possible answers as a class. If students could not think of an answer on their own, have them write down one of the responses shared in class, or add new responses to their own.

Worksheet B

When Worksheet A has been completed, ask students to make a T-chart. Label one side “positive” and one side “negative.” Have students list which aspects of the film made life in Crystal City seem positive, but how in reality that was actually negative.

Example of a T-Chart:

Positive	Negative
Swimming Pool	Swimming pool built on garbage dump

Encourage students to come up with at least 3 examples on their own and share as a class.

Worksheet C

Based on the students’ list of adjectives, scenes, emotions and rights from the viewing section and the results of the T-Chart, have students draw-in and write qualities on the Alien side that shows life in the camp. On the American side, have students draw scenes and write qualities that show how non-interned Americans were living during WWII.

Closing

The worksheets should show the differences between Alien and American ways of life even though the film tried to make life at Crystal City seem pleasant. Discuss with students why the



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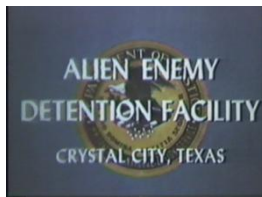
government would have wanted to make Crystal City look enjoyable for the internees, but how their rights were violated by internment.

Extended Learning

Pretend you live or work at Crystal City. Decide if you are a female detainee, male detainee, child detainee, and if you are Japanese or German. Or, decide if you will be a doctor, perimeter security guard, cook, server, or mail censor. (Teacher could assign roles also).

You may write a diary entry, compose a letter to your family living outside the camp, or write a skit that explains your life and experience in the camp. Be sure to consider the specific problems or advantages your group encounters at the camp; try to imagine exactly what your life would be like on a daily basis.

Video



Alien Enemy Detention Facility, Crystal City, Texas

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00010

Worksheets

[Worksheet A - Questions for Viewing](#)

[Worksheet B - Compare and Contrast](#)

[Worksheet C – Compare and Contrast](#)

RESOURCES

TSHA site on German-American Internees

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qug01>

A list of links pertaining to Japanese-American and German-American internment during World War II. Provides over 30 resources

http://www.teacheroz.com/Japanese_Internment.htm

A lesson plan with activities introducing students to Japanese-American internment

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/fear/>

TEKS

Social Studies, Grade 4

5A - Identify the impact of various issues and events on life in Texas such as urbanization, increased use of oil and gas, the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and World War II



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19A - Identify the similarities and differences among various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Texas

21D - Identify different points of view about an issue, topic, historical event, or current event

Social Studies, Grade 5

20A - Describe the fundamental rights guaranteed by each amendment in the Bill of Rights, including freedom of religion, speech, and press; the right to assemble and petition the government; the right to keep and bear arms; the right to trial by jury; and the right to an attorney

22A - Identify the similarities and differences within and among various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States

24D - Identify different points of view about an issue, topic, or current event