



LESSON PLAN

CIVILIAN INTERNMENT IN CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS

Social Studies, Grades 7–8

OBJECTIVE

Through the use of primary sources, students will analyze the use of propaganda and bias to shape the way the American public viewed the interment 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.

This lesson is intended to introduce/reinforce the student’s understanding of bias, specifically in historical contexts and the media.

Hook

Read the students the following statement, or post the statement on the board for students to read themselves:

Dogs are dirty. They eat sticks and sometimes trash. Dogs can also carry diseases. One time, I was bitten by a dog. I had to get a shot because the dog might have given me a disease.

Ask the class to respond to the following questions (either in writing or through discussion):

- What is this person’s opinion about dogs?
- Do you think this is the whole story about dogs?
- Did this writer say anything positive about dogs?

Explain that this person’s opinion about dogs comes out as a “bias” in writing because only one side of the issue is being examined, and the paragraph is based more on opinion and emotion than fact.



LESSON PLAN

Remind students that you can have a positive or a negative bias. Have students practice working with bias by writing and sharing 3 sentences that have a positive bias towards dogs. Make sure they understand that bias depends on the speaker and the events around them.

Explain to the students that today they will examine how the United States government used bias to justify its actions during World War II. They will examine the internment of American citizens in a time of war, and identify how the government used bias to make the internment seem positive, when in fact it was a negative situation.

Lesson

Have students look up and define the following words (or do so as a class):

- Repatriation
- Internment
- Detainee
- Rationed
- Morale
- Monotony

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
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

Have students use a T-chart with one side labeled “positive” and one side labeled “negative.” After each segment, stop the video and have students list the aspects of the segment that made life in Crystal City seem positive, but how in reality the government was biased in its



LESSON PLAN

explanation and the camp had negative effects on the prisoners. Write their responses on the T-chart.

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.

Divide the students into groups of four. Have each group answer one of the following questions. When groups have answered the question, designate a presenter from each group to share their group's response.

- Was the United State government successful in making Crystal City look positive? Why or why not?
- Why was the United States government portraying life in the internment camp in this way?
- Who do you think was the intended audience of this film, and why do you think so?
- Do you think these citizens were enemies who were trying to harm the United States?
- Were the government's actions justified? Why or why not?
- Do you think the United States government would do the same thing today if we went to war with Japan and Germany again? Why or why not?

Closing

Ask students if they think the United States government was justified in interning citizens in order to protect the nation against its enemies. Did their actions against a small group of citizens benefit the "greater good" of the nation?

Independent Practice

Have each student complete the following writing assignment individually:

Pretend you are imprisoned at Crystal City. Decide if you are a female detainee, male detainee, child detainee, and if you are Japanese or German. (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, with your own bias. 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.



LESSON PLAN

Video



Alien Enemy Detention Facility, Crystal City, Texas

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00010

Worksheets

[Worksheet A - Compare and Contrast](#)

RESOURCES

Suggestions for teaching propoganda in the classroom

<http://www.classroomtools.com/prop.htm>

Internment Camps, a Web site devoted to 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 7

7E - Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major events, including World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, on the history of Texas

21D - Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants

21F - Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material

21G - Evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author

Social Studies, Grade 8

21A - Identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important historical and contemporary issues

21B - Describe the importance of free speech and press in a constitutional republic



LESSON PLAN

23D - Analyze the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity

29F - Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material

29G - Evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author

STAAR

Social Studies, Grade 8

23A - Identify selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups that settled in the United States and explain their reasons for immigration

23C - Identify ways conflicts between people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups were resolved

29A - Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about the United States

29B - Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions

29D - Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference which influenced the participants