

Lesson: Forced Removal

Lesson Author: Leslie Heffernan

Grade Level(s): 6-8

Overview

In this lesson, students will view a short video clip that shows the small but important steps taken by the U.S. government in the removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Students will participate in a protocol to create a found poem and then craft a claim that answers the essential question using evidence from the film. Finally, students will ask a question that is lingering in their minds for future study.

Essential Question(s)

What are the injustices of forced removal?

Student Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Build historical empathy as they listen to survivor memories about incarceration and identify powerful words or phrases.
- Create a "found poem" that captures the essence of the memory of forced removal.
- Craft a claim and support it with evidence from the text.

Materials

Teachers will provide the following materials:

- Found poem protocol:
"Found Poems." Facing History and Ourselves.
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/finding-poems>
- Sentence strips or register tape
- Bold markers
- Copies of transcript from film (see below)
- Clip from the film, *And Then They Came for Us* (2017):
 - "Forced Removal" (6:44-8:19)
 - After registering for a free account, educators can screen the film on Facing History's website:
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/and-the-then-they-came-us>

Assessment

- Found poems
- Written student reflections

C3 Alignment

This lesson supports the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework:

- D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

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- D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

Prior to Class

Students should be grounded in the basic knowledge of the history of oppression and hysteria towards Japanese and Japanese Americans prior to World War II. Students should know that thousands of families (120,000 individuals) were living along the West Coast in five states and had lives, families, farms, and jobs. Students also should know background information about Executive Order 9066, which prompted the forced removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans living in Military Zone 1 along the Pacific Coast of the United States. This forced removal occurred after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Do Now

Note: this exercise may evoke strong emotional reactions from your students. Please monitor and adjust the lesson directions as you see fit for the learners you serve.

Read aloud and/or post the following prompt for students:

Imagine you were told you had to move and you have only 24 hours to pack. You do not know where you are going and you do not know when (or if) you'll be back. You can carry only what can fit in a regular-sized suitcase. Write for two minutes, listing the things that you would bring with you.

Direct students to write for three minutes about how they are feeling about this hypothetical move. Are they frustrated? Excited? Scared? What questions do they have? What are they worried about?

Before

Let the students know that they are going to learn about the forced removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans as a result of Executive Order 9066, when people were forced from their homes, businesses, and farms, often with less than two or three days notice. This removal happened to people living in the United States of America, many of whom were U.S. citizens.

Next, share out student responses in the "Do Now" opening of the lesson. Teachers may wish to record student reactions on chart paper.

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During

Students will then watch a short video clip that describes the steps taken by the government to enforce the forced removal and how it was remembered by the Japanese Americans who experienced it.

While they watch the video, prompt students: *What words or phrases do you hear that help you know and understand the steps the government took to remove Japanese and Japanese Americans?*

Some possible answers might include:

- Registration (identification as a marked person; given a number)
- Curfew
- Bank accounts frozen...financially paralyzed
- Soldiers came to get us

Then, prepare students for a second viewing of the same video clip. This time, however, distribute copies of the video transcript to each student (see below for transcript handout). While they watch the video this time around, inform the students: *What words or phrases do you hear that help you know and understand the power of the injustice of the forced removal? As you watch, highlight these words or phrases on the transcript.*

After the video has ended, have students go back through the transcript one more time to highlight words or phrases that they find powerful that speak to the survivors' experiences.

Distribute sentence strips or register tape (two to three pieces per student). Ask the students to go back through the quotes they've highlighted and, using a bold marker, write these words or phrases down on their strips of paper. Divide students into groups so that each group has no more than 3-5 students.

In these small groups, students will follow a protocol and create a "found poem" based on the quotes that they identified that helped them understand the effects of the removal experience.

To start the found poem, have the groups gather in a circle. A volunteer can start by placing one of their words or phrases on the ground. Go around the circle having each person place a word or phrase on the ground. Their placements do not have to be in order.

Then, students can place another one of their words or phrases, or students can move someone else's word/phrase.

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Finally, ask for a volunteer to read the poem aloud to the entire group. As the reading comes to a close, ask students to share their reflections on the protocol and how they understand the quotes and incarceration as a result of the activity.

Teachers might find it useful to view this video of a culminating reading of a found poem, also about the World War II Japanese American Incarceration: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1sEja8xPvPLtGSDj6XhvvzvdI8w3Dp64hG>

After

Individually or in pairs, ask the students to write a claim in response to the essential question:

What are the injustices of forced removal?

Students should answer the question and provide at least one piece of evidence from the text (video transcript) to support their claim. Teachers might wish to provide a few examples for writing a claim and giving evidence to support it. The following are a few short examples of claims and supports:

Claim: The removal process was hurried and unjust.

Support: Japanese Americans were not given access to their bank accounts. Their own money was inaccessible to them.

Claim: The removal was designed to be efficient and impersonal.

Support: Japanese and Japanese Americans were forced to register and were given tags and numbers.

Extensions (optional)

In our present moment, people are being forced to flee violent and unsafe areas of the world. Provide students with images, video clips, and interviews with the people who have been forced to move and make a connection to the forced removal of Japanese Americans in 1942. Share this connection with your friends, families, and others to bring awareness.

And Then They Came For Us

Film Clip Transcript – 6:44 to 8:19

Milton Eisenhower (Director, War Relocation Authority):

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, our west coast became a potential combat zone. Living in that zone were more than 100,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them American citizens. Military authorities therefore determined that all of them, citizens and aliens alike, would have to move.

George Takei (Actor and Activist):

And so right after Pearl Harbor, they had us all register. And then shortly after the registry, they came down with a curfew.

Gary Okihiro (Professor, Comparative Ethnic Studies, Yale University):

Registration was not benign. It provided the infrastructure for the mass removal and confinement. First was the identification of "you" as a marked person. Second was the given number, anonymity.

George Takei:

And then, we discovered that our bank accounts were frozen. We were financially paralyzed. And then, the soldiers came to get us.

And so my brother and I were gazing out the front window, and we saw two soldiers marching up our driveway. They carried rifles with shiny bayonets on them. And literally at gunpoint, we were ordered out of our home. We followed them out onto the driveway, and waited for our mother to come out. And when she came out, tears were streaming down her cheeks.