

Lesson: Challenging the Government Narrative on Immigration

Lesson Author: Pedro Uriostegue
Grade Level(s): 9-10

Overview

This lesson will help students understand the concept of a “euphemism” and how governments deploy language to make often inhumane policies and practices palatable to its citizenry. Students will analyze euphemisms used by the U.S. government both during World War II and today.

Essential Question(s)

- How do we assess a government's narrative about a policy or practice?
- What impact does an unchallenged government narrative have on society?

Student Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Analyze the government narrative during the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans
- Identify a modern narrative created by our current government
- Analyze the impacts or potential impacts that the current narrative creates in society

Materials

Teachers will provide the following materials:

- Index Cards
- Photograph Analysis handout
- Modern Government Narrative handout
- Printouts of historical photographs (enough for groups of 3 to have a set). Teachers may wish to find their own photographs for this exercise, using an online archive like Densho (www.densho.com) or the Japanese American Relocation Digital Archive (<https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/t11/jarda/>). Some suggested photographs are listed in the chart below:

Image 1: Exclusion Orders

Lange, Dorothea, photographer. “[San Francisco, California. Exclusion Order posted at First and Front Streets directing removal of persons of Japanese ancestry from the first San Francisco section to be effected by the evacuation.]” Photograph. From National Archives, *Central Photographic File of the War Relocation Authority, 1942 - 1945*. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/536017>.

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	<p>Image 2: Assembly Center in San Bruno, California</p> <p>Lange, Dorothea, photographer. "[San Bruno, California. Shown here is one type of barracks for family use. These were formerly stalls for race horses. Each family is assigned to two small rooms, the inner one without outside nor or window. The center has been in operation about six weeks.]" Photograph. From National Archives, Central Photographic File of the War Relocation Authority, 1942 - 1945. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/537954</p>
	<p>Image 2: Family outside of a barrack at the Manzanar prison camp</p> <p>Ansel, Adams, photographer. "[Mrs. Yaeko Nakamura and her two children, Joyce Yuki (right) and Louise Tami (left), standing on the step at the entrance of a dwelling, Manzanar Relocation Center.]" Photograph. From Library of Congress, Adams, Ansel, 1902- Manzanar War Relocation Center photographs. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/item/2002695958/resource/ppprs.00220/</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clip from the film, <i>And Then They Came for Us</i> (2017):<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ "Government Narrative" (13:50-15:20)◦ 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-n-they-came-us
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyses of photographs• Student discussion in small groups• Exit cards
C3 Alignment	<p>This lesson supports the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.• D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.
Prior to Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print out images, along with any contextual information provided by the archive• Make copies of the handouts

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Do Now

- Arrange the classroom with group seating to accommodate 3-4 students per group
- Post "Do Now" and "Exit Card" questions on a slide deck or written on a board

To begin the class, the teacher should instruct students to do the following:

Describe a moment where you made something serious and difficult appear to be acceptable or pleasant.

Why did you do it? What were the impacts of your "sugar-coating"?

If students are struggling to come up with responses, teachers may wish to give a real-life story to illustrate the concept of a "euphemism." For instance, a friend might have borrowed your car but returned it damaged. This person might say, *"Hey, you know how you let me borrow your car? Well, it kinda has a tiny scratch on it now. But you can't even notice it. Sorry!"* The euphemism is, of course, describing the scratch as "tiny."

Allow students to think of an instance and write it down in their journals, composition books, or any other method to capture their writing.

Before

The teacher should give students about two minutes to pair and share their responses to the "Do Now" with a table-mate or neighbor. The teacher should then elicit some responses from the whole class.

Once a few responses are shared, the teacher should shift focus, introducing the concept of a "euphemism." A euphemism is a strategy in which something unpleasant or offensive is described in a way that makes it seem agreeable.

Then, the teacher should queue up a clip from the documentary, *And Then They Came for Us* (segment 13:53 - 15:20). Prepare students for their viewing of the clip, which will highlight some of the U.S. government's euphemisms about the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

The teacher should tell the students to take notes on the following as they view the clip:

1. What euphemisms are being used in the government created film?
2. What narrative is the government creating?

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During

Ask the students to share their initial thoughts with a partner. Then take some time to debrief their responses as a whole class. Student responses may reflect the video, especially words such as "migration," "evacuation," "assembly centers," and "sacrifice." The teacher should guide students, if needed, to understand that the government was attempting to portray forced removal and incarceration as beneficial and safeguarding.

PART 1: Historically, what has been our government's narrative about mass incarceration during a time of war and crisis?

Create groups of three students and distribute a set of three historic photographs and copies of the handout, Photograph Analysis (see below), to each trio.

Each student in the group should select one photograph from the World War II mass incarceration. Then, students should individually take notes on the corresponding handout for the images. They should focus just on the first four boxes on the handout, including:

- Where is this photograph set?
- When was this picture taken? What was occurring in history when this photo was taken?
- Who is in the picture?
- What is happening in the photo?

Once the students are done individually analyzing their photographs, the small groups should have a discussion about what they learned from the images. Additionally, they should compare and contrast how the camps are being presented in the historic photographs and in the video clip viewed earlier in the lesson.

If time permits, call the students together as a class: Take some time to debrief students' observations of the historic photographs. Then, push their thinking: What perspectives do we glean from the photos about the camps? How does it differ from the government narrative put forth in the film?

PART 2: Currently, what is our government's narrative about mass incarceration during a time of war and crisis?

For the second day of the lesson, students should reconvene in their trios. Let the students know that they will shift now to examining the use of euphemisms in governance today by looking at a series of tweets on the issue of immigration.

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Once seated within groups, teachers should pass out copies of the handout, "Modern Government Narrative" (see below) to each student. Each group should be assigned one of the tweets on which to conduct an analysis.

Working collaboratively, they should discuss and take notes on the following:

- What narrative is being put forth in this tweet?
- What possible consequences might this speech in the text have on people?
- Is it necessary to challenge this narrative? Why or why not?

After groups have finished their discussion on their tweet, teachers should gather the class together. Project each tweet for the class. Have a representative from each group share their collective observations about the tweet: *What perspective is being offered? How is the platform of social media being used by the leaders from our government?* Students should take notes on the various tweets on their handout.

Finally, the teacher should open up the class for a discussion about government narrative and its potential impacts.

After

After the whole class discussion, pass out index cards. As a final exit card for the lesson, the students will respond to reflective responses to the following questions:

- When is it necessary to challenge government narrative?
- What am I doing or what will I do to challenge government narrative?

Photograph Analysis

Image Title:

Where is this photograph set? What do you notice about the location?	When was this picture taken? What was occurring in history when this photo was taken?
Who is in the picture?	What is happening in the photo?
WITH YOUR GROUP...	
Looking across all three photos, what do you learn about conditions in the prison camps?	Do these images fit the government narrative presented in the video clip we watched together? Why or why not?

Modern Government Narrative

 <p>Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>Follow</p> <p>More troops being sent to the Southern Border to stop the attempted Invasion of Illegals, through large Caravans, into our Country. We have stopped the previous Caravans, and we will stop these also. With a Wall it would be soooo much easier and less expensive. Being Built!</p> <p>6:52 AM - 31 Jan 2019</p>	<p>What narrative is being put forth in this tweet?</p> <p>What possible consequences might this speech in the text have on people?</p> <p>Is it necessary to challenge this narrative? Why?</p>
 <p>Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>Follow</p> <p>We are not even into February and the cost of illegal immigration so far this year is \$18,959,495,168. Cost Friday was \$603,331,392. There are at least 25,772,342 illegal aliens, not the 11,000,000 that have been reported for years, in our Country. So ridiculous! DHS</p> <p>5:44 AM - 27 Jan 2019</p>	<p>What narrative is being put forth in this tweet?</p> <p>What possible consequences might this speech in the text have on people?</p> <p>Is it necessary to challenge this narrative? Why?</p>
 <p>Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump</p> <p>Follow</p> <p>That's right, we need a TRAVEL BAN for certain DANGEROUS countries, not some politically correct term that won't help us protect our people!</p> <p>6:20 PM - 5 Jun 2017</p>	<p>What narrative is being put forth in this tweet?</p> <p>What possible consequences might this speech in the text have on people?</p> <p>Is it necessary to challenge this narrative? Why?</p>