



Japanese Internment featuring Kishi Bashi

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did Japanese American veterans experience Japanese internment during World War 2, and how did music grant them resilience during this historic injustice?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students compare the benefits and drawbacks of primary and secondary sources by analyzing the history of Japanese Internment. They listen to excerpts from the podcast Asian American History 101 to learn the history of Japanese Americans. They then analyze a variety of primary sources on Japanese Internment, including oral histories from the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project, photographs of the Manzanar internment camps by Ansel Adams, and written accounts of life in the internment camps collected and published by Dr. Minako Waseda. As a concluding activity, students examine the work of contemporary musician Kishi Bashi, and discuss how primary and secondary sources from multiple perspectives help illuminate difficult moments in the history of the United States.



Civilian exclusion order #5, posted at First and Front streets, directing removal by April 7 of persons of Japanese ancestry, from the first San Francisco section to be affected by evacuation. California San Francisco, 1942. April. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001705937/>.

On August 10th, 1988, Congress passed Public Law 100-383, otherwise known as the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. Signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, the Act acknowledged that the “evacuation, relocation, and internment” of Japanese American civilians during World War II was in fact not motivated by security concerns, but rather “by racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” As means of restitution, the bill also granted payments of \$20,000 for all citizens formerly incarcerated in the camps.

Like all acts of racial prejudice, the forced removal of Japanese American citizens into internment camps during World War II was not an isolated incident, but rather the culmination of a long history of racial discrimination directed towards Japanese immigrants, especially on the West Coast.

Immigrants from Japan first began arriving in large numbers to the United States following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. With Chinese immigration effectively banned in the country, businesses began searching for other means of cheap labor. This need, combined with more lenient emigration policies in Japan by the second half of the 19th century, led to a substantial number of Japanese families immigrating to the United States - particularly in Hawaii and later, to the West Coast.

In the United States, the majority of immigrants pursued farming and other agricultural work. In California, newly arrived Japanese Americans were often given tracts of land that were widely considered infertile. Yet, after decades of farming experience in Hawaii and centuries of accumulated knowledge of farming in Japan, Japanese American farms started thriving - quickly becoming the most profitable in the state. Soon, local resentment of Japanese farming success spurred by opportunistic politicians and media members - transformed into outright prejudice. In San Francisco, the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League began official operations in 1905, demanding the Chinese Exclusion Act be extended to include Japanese and Korean immigrants. A year later, the San Francisco School Board voted to segregate all Japanese students—an act made legal thanks to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* “separate but equal” ruling in 1896. By 1907, the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League’s discriminatory efforts achieved their intended results: the United States entered into a “gentleman’s agreement” with Japan (never ratified by Congress) which greatly slowed Japanese immigration to the United States. California also passed the Alien Land Act of 1913, which forbade “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning land in the state. The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Coolidge. The Johnson–Reed Act further curtailed immigration from Asian countries.

Decades of anti-Japanese sentiment no doubt contributed to the “wartime hysteria” that led to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Just hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, over one thousand Japanese-American citizens were rounded up by the FBI. Their “crimes” ranged from being community leaders to simply owning fishing boats (that, supposedly, could be used to transport goods to the Japanese Navy, were they ever to enter the West Coast).

Around three months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 1066 on February 19, 1942. The order authorized the U.S. military to forcibly remove all persons “deemed a threat to national security” to “relocation centers” further inland. Approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans across California, Oregon, and Washington were forced to leave their homes, businesses, and farms, only bringing what they could fit in their suitcases. While the relocation centers were being built, Japanese families were moved to “assembly centers”—quickly erected camps built on race tracks and livestock stables. After spending months in fields filled with manure and other animal products, Japanese Americans were sent via train to one of 10 relocation camps in Arizona, California, Arkansas, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. Many families spent as much as three years at these sites.

While termed “camps,” first hand accounts reveal the relocation centers looked much more like prisons. Families were forced to live in very small quarters with little to no privacy, and the sites were surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers. People at the camps were warned of being shot if they approached the barbed wire fences. However, while structured as prisons, those interred were given a fair amount of freedom within the camps. Soon, each camp was administered by the Japanese community who resided within them. Farms and schools were developed, and athletics and the arts flourished, from American-style football games and swing dance nights to Japanese kabuki performances and calligraphy classes.

Additionally, younger people had some ability to leave the camps, either by volunteering to be laborers or working at religious organizations. As no Japanese were eligible for the draft, many enlisted - most joining the all-Japanese 442nd Regimental Combat Team, one of the most decorated regiments in the history of the U.S. military.

By 1946, most of the camps were evacuated, but the effects of this moment in history remain. Many Japanese Americans, having lost everything in the process of internment, restarted their lives close to the camp, resulting in a great disbursement of Japanese Americans across the country. Additionally, exposure to Japanese performing arts and culture within the camps led many *nisei*--or second generation Japanese--a greater appreciation of Japanese culture.

Today, artists such as Kishi Bashi use music as a way to remember this period, and, seeing parallels between the treatment of immigrants today with their treatment in the 1940s, serve to warn us on how quickly a citizen's constitutional rights are revoked in moments of hysteria.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- How a history of prejudice against Japanese Americans culminated in the internment during World War II
- The experiences people had being part of the internment program
- How music and arts were used as a mode of resilience towards Japanese internment
- The effects of Japanese internment
- How musicians continue to draw meaning from the period of Japanese Internment
- The differences between primary and secondary historical sources, and how they benefit historical inquiry

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to identify how primary and secondary sources provide insight into the period of Japanese internment by listening to podcasts, examining oral histories, and viewing photographs.

ACTIVITIES

DISCLAIMER

This lesson contains primary source documents and other materials that may include terms and images reflecting the attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs of different times that today are considered offensive and demeaning. TeachRock does not endorse the views expressed in these documents, but recognizes the value such materials provide for historical inquiry. For guidance on introducing controversial historical materials into the classroom, we suggest reviewing this document from the Library of Congress. <https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2011/11/dealing-with-difficult-subjects-in-primary-sources/>

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Display **Image 1, “Summer of ‘42” Lyrics**. Then play Kishi Bashi, “Summer of ‘42,” through this NPR link (<https://www.npr.org/2019/05/23/724983774/first-listen-kishi-bashi-omoiyari>) or this Bandcamp link (<https://kishibashi.bandcamp.com/album/omoiyari>). After playing the song, ask students:
 - How would you describe this song to someone who has never heard Kishi Bashi? Does it remind you of anything?
 - Based on the lyrics, what do you think the song is about?
 - Look more closely at stanza #3. What might that be referring to? What might have been going on in the summer of 1942?
2. Display **Image 2, Kishi Bashi on “The Summer of ‘42.”** Then ask students:
 - According to Kishi Bashi, what is the message of the song?
 - What “incarceration camp” is Kishi Bashi referring to?
3. Inform students that Kishi Bashi is referring to Japanese internment during World War 2, which will be the focus of the lesson. Ask students:
 - Is there anything you already know or have read about regarding the Japanese internment camps during World War II?

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute to students **Handout - Japanese Internment Vocabulary Sheet**. Individually or as a class, read each definition aloud, and encourage students to use the vocabulary sheet as a reference throughout the lesson. (*Encourage students who speak Japanese or are learning Japanese to help the class with pronunciation of some of the terms.*)
2. Inform students that they will be learning more about Japanese American history leading up to Japanese Internment by listening to excerpts of the Podcast “Asian American History 101.” Distribute to students **Handout - Japanese American History Timeline**. Play the below clips from “Asian American History 101.” As they listen to the following excerpts from the

podcast, ask students to fill in the missing information on their timeline. Pause between clips as needed.

- **Clip 1, Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The Late 1800s**
- **Clip 2, Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The Early 1900s**
- **Clip 3, Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The 1920s**
- **Clip 4, Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The 1940s**

3. After students completed their handout, ask the class:
 - Why might knowing Asian American history in the 1800s and early 1900s be important for better understanding Japanese Internment during the 1940s?
 - Were governmental decisions affecting Japanese Americans done unanimously, or were there disagreements among U.S. officials?
 - What does this say about how the United States has functioned historically?
4. Inform students that they will now be hearing first hand accounts of people's experiences in the internment camps by listening to oral histories of Japanese American veterans. Distribute **Handout - Oral History Notes** to each student. On their personal devices, ask students to select one of the oral histories based on the instructions in the handout, watch it, and take notes. *(Note to teacher: all clips for this activity are around 8 to 10 minutes long.)* Optionally, teachers can distribute **Handout - Oral History Interview Transcriptions** for students to read along with or instead of the oral histories. Oral Histories clips are as follows:
 - **Clip 5, Veteran's History Project: Warren Michio Tsuneishi Oral History**
 - **Clip 6, Veteran's History Project: Norman Saburo Ikari Oral History**
 - **Clip 7, Veteran's History Project: Grant Hayao Ichikawa Oral History**
 - **Clip 8, Veteran's History Project: John Junji Katsu Oral History**
 - **Clip 9, Veteran's History Project: Robert Hiroshi Kono Oral History**
 - **Clip 10, Veteran's History Project: Kennie Namba Oral History**
5. Group students according to which oral history interview they watched. *(For example, all students born January-February should be in a group, since they watched the same clip.)* Display **Image 3, Oral History Discussion Questions**. Inform students that as a group, they will be discussing the questions in the image. After a period of discussion, ask each group to share what they learned.
6. Display **Image 4, Gallery Walk Directions**. Inform students that they will be examining what life was like in the relocation camps by examining photographs by Ansel Adams and reading personal accounts. Ask students to keep the two questions from the image in mind as they proceed through the Gallery Walk. After the Gallery Walk, ask students to share their thoughts.
7. Inform students that the oral interviews they watched came from the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. Each interview is with a Japanese American who chose to enlist in the army - or a relative of a veteran. Play **Clip 5, Asian American History 101 "Life in Internment Camps and No-No Boy History" Podcast Excerpt: The "No-No Boys"**, then ask students:
 - If given an interview, do you think the "No-no boys" described in the podcast would have the same reflections as the veterans? Why or why not?

- What might your response to the previous question say about some of the benefits and limitations to using primary sources to research history?
(Possible answer: Primary Sources can be subjective based on the person's experience.)

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Display **Image 5, “F Delano” Lyrics**. Then play Kishi Bashi, “F Delano” through this NPR link (<https://www.npr.org/2019/05/23/724983774/first-listen-kishi-bashi-omoiyari>) or this Bandcamp link (<https://kishibashi.bandcamp.com/album/omoiyari>) and ask students to follow along with the lyrics as the song plays. After playing the song, ask students:
 - What might this Kishi Bashi song be about?
 - Are there any terms or names you recognize from the lesson?
2. Display **Image 6, Kishi Bashi on Omoiyari**. Inform students that both songs they heard came from the album *Omoiyari*. As a class, read how Kishi Bashi describes the album. Then ask students: What might this Kishi Bashi song be about?
 - How does Kishi Bashi draw parallels between the period of Japanese Internment and America today? What kind of “hysteria” might people in the United States today risk falling into?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Learn more about the history of Japanese Internment by listening to the entire Asian American History 101 podcasts: “Causes of Japanese Internment” (<https://asianamericanhistory101.libsyn.com/causes-of-the-japanese-internment>) and “Life in Internment Camps and No-No Boy History” (<https://asianamericanhistory101.libsyn.com/life-in-internment-camps-and-no-no-boy-history>).
2. Ansel Adams’ photographs and reflections on his visit to the Manzanar War Relocation Center were published in the book, *Born Free and Equal*. The book is available digitally through the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/ansel-adams-manzanar/articles-and-essays/ansel-adams-book-born-free-and-equal/>. Read Adams’ introduction to the book, and write a piece of reflective writing considering how photographers might contribute to social justice and human rights.
3. Examine and discuss the significance of the court case, *Korematsu v. U.S.* by using the “Facts and Case Summary” page at USCourts.gov: <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/facts-and-case-summary-korematsu-v-us>
4. Read this article about the heroic 442nd Regiment, an all-Japanese American unit and one of the most decorated units in U.S. military history: <https://goforbroke.org/history/unit-history/442nd-regimental-combat-team/>



5. Listen to Kishi Bashi's album Omoiyari here: <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/23/724983774/first-listen-kishi-bashi-omoiyari>
6. Examine the Japanese-American Internment Camp Newspapers archive written in the internment camps here: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/japanese-american-internment-camp-newspapers/about-this-collection>. Using the newspaper clippings as inspiration, write a short story or diary entry that narrates a day in the life of someone at the internment camp.
7. Read these articles about the connection between Swing Music and Japanese Americans:
1. <https://theamericanscholar.org/last-dance/>; 2. <https://www.kqed.org/news/11802718/swingposium-celebrates-music-in-japanese-american-incarceration-camps-with-taiko> Then write a short reflection on the role American Swing music played and continues to play for Japanese Americans.
8. Learn more about the Japanese instrument the koto and the role it played in internment camps by reading this article: <https://actaonline.org/performing-defiance/>. Find koto music on the internet to listen to, and write a short reflection on what you think of the music.
9. Watch this PBS news story about the "In America" choir performance: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/inspired-internment-camp-history-students-write-musical-work-hear-echoes-today>. Then, write about how music might help you grasp difficult historical moments.

STANDARDS

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE (C3) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

History

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.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

D2.His.9.9-12. Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY—SOCIAL SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS

10.8 Students analyze the causes and consequences of World War II.

5. Discuss the constitutional issues and impact of events on the U.S. home front, including the internment of Japanese Americans (e.g., Fred Korematsu v. United States of America) and the restrictions on German and Italian resident aliens; the response of the administration to Hitler's atrocities against Jews and other groups; the roles of



women in military production; and the roles and growing political demands of African Americans.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

US2.47 Critique the reasons for the incarceration of Japanese Americans while drafting Japanese men to serve in the army during World War II, and evaluate the consequence of the decision, including ways in which Japanese Americans resisted internment.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK STANDARDS

Topic 3: Defending Democracy: Responses to fascism and communism HSS.USII.T3.07

Explain the long-term consequences of important domestic events during the war.

CONNECTICUT ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

US-5. World War II

US.His.16.c. Develop arguments about the juxtaposition between the United States' founding ideals and actions of the Federal government during World War II using evidence from multiple relevant sources (e.g., Japanese-American Internment, Holocaust intervention, Braceros Program, Fair Employment Practices Act, segregated regiments, women in the military).

NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS - SOCIAL STUDIES

US-5. World War II

6.1.12.CivicsDP.11.a: Use a variety of sources to determine if American policies towards the Japanese during WWII were a denial of civil rights.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Information Text Standards for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow

or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

LEARNING FOR JUSTICE SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS

JU.9-12.12 I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.

JU.9-12.13 I can explain the short and long-term impact of biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions that limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.

JU.9-12.14 I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.

JU.9-12.15 I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The Late 1800s
- Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The Early 1900s
- Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The 1920s
- Asian American History 101 “Causes of the Japanese Internment” Podcast Excerpt: The 1940s
- Veteran’s History Project: Warren Michio Tsuneishi Oral History
- Veteran’s History Project: Norman Saburo Ikari Oral History
- Veteran’s History Project: Grant Hayao Ichikawa Oral History
- Veteran’s History Project: John Junji Katsu Oral History
- Veteran’s History Project: Robert Hiroshi Oral History
- Veteran’s History Project: Kennie Namba Oral History
- Asian American History 101 “Life in Internment Camps and No-No Boy History” Podcast Excerpt: The “No-No Boys”

HANDOUTS

- Handout - Japanese Internment Vocabulary Sheet
- Handout - Japanese American History Timeline
- Handout - Japanese American History Timeline (Teacher’s Guide)
- Handout - Case File: Pearl Harbor Investigation
- Gallery Walk - Life and Recreation at Manzanar War Relocation Center