

Defining moments

from the past with lessons for a post-9/11 world...

Lesson Six The “Yellow” Peril

Overview/Objectives

Students will discuss what happened on the west coast of the United States in 1942 from the perspective of either Japanese and Japanese Americans or their non-Asian neighbors. After watching part one of the video, students will be made aware of both sides of the issue the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Benchmarks Targeted

- 1.2 (comprehending the past)
- 1.3 (analyzing and interpreting the past)
- 2.1 (diversity of people, places, and cultures)
- 6.1 (identifying and analyzing issues)
- 6.2 (group discussion)
- 6.3 (persuasive writing)

Procedure

1. Break the class into several small groups. Designate some groups as being of Japanese descent and other groups as their neighbors or the “majority American public” on the west coast of the United States. Explain to them that they are to pretend that they are living in 1942, just a few months after the attack on Pearl Harbor.
2. Have the class watch part one of the MGTV video on Korematsu.
3. Have the students who are in the “Of Japanese Descent” groups record the sentiments and feelings of those being interned in 1942. The groups who would be their non-Japanese neighbors should record the feelings and words of those witnessing what was occurring. Have them think about why their neighbors are being forced to move.
4. After they have had enough time to form their viewpoint on the internment of the Japanese living in America, have each side give examples of why the program was or was not a good policy.
5. As a whole class, decide on the efficacy of the policy set forth by the United States government in 1942.

Wrap-up

Imagine it is 1942. Think about recent events that you might have read in the paper or heard on the radio. Compose a diary entry that describes what you think about the events that you had witnessed and/or read and heard about.