



FOUNDATIONS  
and FUTURES

# Asian American and Pacific Islander Multimedia Textbook

Lesson Plan



# Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II

## Module 3: Forced Uprooting and Incarceration

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### Chapter Compelling Question

How can an entire racial group be unjustly incarcerated in a democracy?

### Module Supporting Questions

- Why is language important when describing historical events such as World War II Japanese American incarceration?
- What did Japanese Americans experience in the weeks following the bombing of the military base at Pearl Harbor?
- What were the conditions of camp life and how did Japanese Americans adapt to make it more liveable?

### Lesson Plan Description

Students will learn what euphemisms are and how the truth about Japanese American incarceration during World War II was distorted. They will examine how Japanese Americans were incarcerated and the poor conditions of the detention centers to understand why accurate terms are more appropriate to use than euphemisms. Students will further reflect on the importance of language when describing events in history.

### Learning Goals/Objectives

- **Learn** about the euphemistic terminology used to distort Japanese American incarceration and the accurate terms that reveal the truths of this history.
- **Understand** the importance of using accurate terminology.
- **Explore** the implications of using inaccurate language to describe important events.



 **Skills Focus**

- ☒ Written Communication
- ☒ Oral Communication
- ☐ Primary Source Analysis & Research
- ☐ Community Engagement
- ☐ Creative Arts
- ☒ Critical Thinking
- ☒ Additional Skills: Literacy; Academic Reading

 **Ethnic Studies Framing & Pedagogy**

- ☒ **Build a foundational understanding about Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders**, including the histories, perspectives, and contemporary experiences spanning the precolonial to the present day.
- ☐ **Develop literacy and the skills to communicate, understand, engage, and articulate different perspectives** through understanding multiple ways of knowing, including indigenous, ancestral, familial, and diasporic knowledge.
- ☒ **Nurture critical thinking and inquiry on fundamental assumptions** related to empire, capitalism, race and racism, gender and patriarchy, and other structures of power and inequality and how they shape society and the environment.
- ☐ **Cultivate holistic well-being amongst all and connections across difference** by strengthening historical empathy, self-worth and mutual respect, cultural expression, and cross-cultural understanding.
- ☒ **Grow wisdom and agency** to imagine and create new possibilities and solidarities for a more just, equitable, democratic, non-racist, compassionate, and sustainable society and world.



 **Suggested Grade Level(s)**

- ☒ 9
- ☒ 10
- ☒ 11
- ☒ 12
- ☒ 13-14

 **Suggested Discipline(s)**

- ☐ Arts
- ☒ English Language Arts
- ☒ Ethnic Studies
- ☒ History / Social Studies
- ☐ Other:

 **Note About Content Standards**

The following standards are based on the Common Core established by the California State Board of Education, as well as standards developed by the National Council for the Social Studies. Please check your own state's English Language Arts and History/Social Studies State Standards for specific curriculum alignment.

 **ELA Standards Alignment**

- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text



- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.



## History/Social Studies Standards Alignment

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



## Other Standards Alignment

### The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework<sup>1</sup>

- D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.
- D2.His.9.9-12. Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.
- D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.



## Materials

- [Euphemisms of Japanese American Incarceration Worksheet](#)
- [Teacher Copy: Euphemisms of Japanese American Incarceration Worksheet](#)

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<sup>1</sup> National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History* (NCSS, 2013).



## Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students, SPED, & Newcomers

- Chunk text into smaller parts.
- Provide text digitally so that larger print text, audio-versions, and translations can be created.
- Arrange for peer support (such as pairs or small groups) for note-taking and discussion.
- Review glossary terms or any unknown words when reading.
- Give key indicators so that students know they have engaged in tasks effectively.
- Announce optional extension activities for students who finish the tasks before others.

## CRITICAL CONCEPTS:



### assembly centers

#### DEFINITION & RATIONALE for choosing this word, phrase, or concept

Japanese Americans were temporarily detained or imprisoned in these facilities until more permanent incarceration camps were created by the War Relocation Authority. It is important to use the term “temporary detention centers” instead of “assembly centers” because it describes the US government’s true purpose, as well as the inhumane living conditions in these facilities. Japanese Americans were not simply gathered or “assembled” into these spaces.



### euphemism

#### DEFINITION & RATIONALE for choosing this word, phrase, or concept

A polite word or phrase used in place of a harsh or oppressive term or phrase.



### internment

#### DEFINITION & RATIONALE for choosing this word, phrase, or concept



The legal detention of foreign enemies. “Japanese American internment” has often been the phrase used to describe the mass imprisonment of Americans of Japanese ancestry. “Internment” is not an accurate way to describe this event in history because more than two-thirds of those imprisoned were American citizens, not foreigners. Incarceration is the act of being imprisoned, and thus “Japanese American incarceration” is a more accurate term.



### War Relocation Authority (WRA)

#### DEFINITION & RATIONALE for choosing this word, phrase, or concept

The federal agency that managed the imprisonment of Japanese Americans. The word “relocation” inaccurately describes the action as simply moving or relocating to a new home. In reality, Japanese Americans did not have a choice and were forcibly removed from their homes.

## LESSON PLAN

### C1: CULTURAL RITUAL/ENERGIZER [5-7 min]

#### Title of Cultural Ritual/Energizer: Distorting Truths

#### DESCRIPTION:

Instruct students to write a response to the following prompt:

- *How would it feel if someone described you in a way that hides and distorts the truth about who you really are and the experiences you’ve had in your life? Explain why.*

Pair up students and have them share their responses with a partner. Then facilitate a discussion with the whole class. Examples of possible student responses include:



They might feel betrayed or hurt by the person telling lies about them, especially if it is someone they considered a friend. Students might feel that way because friends are supposed to be loyal and not hurt one another.

They might not like being misrepresented because it makes them feel inauthentic, or fear that people would see them in the wrong way.

Inform students that they will be learning how the US government distorted the truth about the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans. The government did this through the deceptive language of euphemisms, a critical concept they will get to know at the beginning of the lesson.

## C2: CRITICAL CONCEPTS [15 min]

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### Title of Direct Instruction: Euphemisms of Japanese American Incarceration

#### DESCRIPTION:

#### STEP 1: Set Students Up

Tell students that they will gain an understanding of how the US government used euphemisms to hide the truth about Japanese American incarceration during World War II. Distribute the **Euphemisms of Japanese American Incarceration Worksheet**. Inform students that they will learn about three euphemisms that were used by the US government when they imprisoned Americans of Japanese ancestry. Students will fill out the worksheet with teacher-led instruction of the **Critical Concepts** section.

#### STEP 2: Review Terms - Internment vs. Incarceration

Review the definition of **euphemism** from the **Critical Concepts** section by projecting or writing it on the board:

*A polite word or phrase used in place of a harsh or oppressive term or phrase.*

Tell students to copy this on the worksheet in the space above the chart.



Review the definition of **internment** by projecting or writing the following on the board:

*The legal detention of foreign enemies.*

Tell students to copy this on the worksheet under the definition space for internment, in the “Euphemism” column. Then tell students the more accurate term for “Japanese American internment”:

*Incarceration or imprisonment*

Tell students to write this in the “Accurate Term” column.

For the third column, explain to students that they will respond to the following prompt:

- *What is the difference between internment and incarceration? Why do you think it might be important to distinguish between these two terms?*

Inform students why the term **incarceration** is more accurate than **internment** by referring to the description from the **Critical Concepts** section. Project or write the following on the board:

*“Japanese American internment” has often been the phrase used to describe the mass imprisonment of Americans of Japanese ancestry. This phrase is not an accurate way to describe this event in history because more than two-thirds of those imprisoned were American citizens, not foreigners. “Japanese American incarceration” is a more accurate term.*

Tell students to write this response in the “Importance of This Distinction” column.



### STEP 3: Review Terms - Relocation vs. Forced Removal

Review the definition of **War Relocation Authority** from the **Critical Concepts** section by projecting or writing the following on the board:

*The War Relocation Authority was a federal agency that managed the imprisonment of Japanese Americans.*

Tell students to copy this on the worksheet under the term’s definition space, in the “Euphemism” column. Then share the more accurate term for “relocation”:



### *Forced removal*

Tell students to write this in the corresponding “Accurate Term” column.

For the third column, explain to students that they will respond to this prompt:

- *What is the difference between the relocation and forced removal? Why do you think it might be important to distinguish between these two terms?*

Inform students why using the term “forced removal” is more accurate than words like “relocation” or “evacuation.” Project or write the following on the board:

*The word “relocation” from the War Relocation Authority inaccurately describes the action as simply moving or relocating to a new home. In reality, Japanese Americans did not have a choice and were forcibly removed from their homes.*

Instruct students to copy this response in the “Importance of This Distinction” column.



### **STEP 4: Review Terms - Assembly Centers vs. Detention Centers**

Review the definition of **assembly centers** from the **Critical Concepts** section by projecting or writing the definition on the board:

*Japanese Americans were temporarily detained or imprisoned in these facilities until more permanent incarceration camps were created by the War Relocation Authority.*

Tell students to copy this under the definition space for assembly centers in the “Euphemism” column. Then share the more accurate term:

*Temporary detention centers*

Tell students to write this in the corresponding “Accurate Term” column.

For the third column, explain to students that they will respond to the following prompt:

- *What is the difference between assembly centers and temporary detention centers? Why do you think it might be important to distinguish between these two terms?*

Inform students why using the term “temporary detention center” is more accurate by sharing the following description from the **Critical Concepts** section.



*It is important to use the term “temporary detention centers” instead of “assembly centers” because it describes the US government’s true purpose, as well as the inhumane living conditions in these facilities. Japanese Americans were not simply gathered or “assembled” into these spaces.*

Instruct them to write this in the “Importance of This Distinction” column. Explain to students that they will complete the last column of the worksheet in the next activity.

## C3: COMMUNITY COLLABORATION/CRITICAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION

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### Title of Main Activity: Jigsaw - Evidence for Using Accurate Terminology

#### DESCRIPTION:

In the previous part of this lesson, students learned about the euphemistic language used by the US government and the accurate terminology that should be used instead.

During this activity, based on the jigsaw learning strategy, student groups will read “Module 3: Forced Uprooting and Incarceration” and find evidence to show why the accurate terminology is more appropriate. Students will form new groups to exchange the information they learned with one another.

#### STEP 1: Set Up the Activity

Tell students to take out the **Euphemisms of Japanese American Incarceration Worksheet**. Inform them that they will be divided into groups to complete the column titled “Evidence for Using Accurate Term.” They will read a section of the textbook to find examples of this evidence.



 **STEP 2: Document Evidence from the Text**

Divide students into three small jigsaw groups. Depending on the number of students in the class, there can be multiple small groups working on the same “Accurate Term.” Each group will be tasked to fill out the “Evidence” column for one of three Accurate Terms:

- Group 1: Incarceration or Imprisonment
- Group 2: Forced Removal
- Group 3: Temporary Detention Centers

Have students read “Module 3: Forced Uprooting and Incarceration” of the textbook chapter. Direct them to work together and find two examples for the “Evidence” column for their assigned Accurate Term. Students can use the text as well as historical photos and multimedia as their examples.

Share the following reminders with each group to guide their reading:

- Group 1: Remind them that Japanese immigrants or Issei like Masuo Yasui were not allowed to become citizens due to federal law. Students should find examples of how the Yasui children and other Japanese American citizens were imprisoned, not interned.
- Group 2: As they read the textbooks, students should pay attention to the process in which Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes.
- Group 3: Students should find examples from the textbook that show how Japanese Americans were not simply gathered together or “assembled.” Students can use the conditions of the camps and how people were detained in separate centers as their evidence.

See the **Teacher Copy** of the **Euphemisms of Japanese American Incarceration Worksheet** for examples on how students can complete the worksheet.

After students find and write down two examples on the worksheet, explain that they are now the “experts” of their Accurate Term. Each expert will represent their group by teaching their two examples to members of different groups.



 **STEP 3: Share Evidence with Different Groups**

Create new jigsaw groups that include at least one “expert” from each “Accurate Term” group. Then instruct students to take turns presenting their examples to their new groups, in the following order:

1. The expert(s) from Group 1: Incarceration or Imprisonment will present the examples they wrote in the “Evidence” column of the worksheet.
2. Other students in the new group will take notes about the Accurate Term on their worksheet in the “Evidence” column.
3. Next, the expert(s) from Group 2: Forced Removal will present their examples.
4. Other students in the group will take notes on their worksheet in the corresponding “Evidence” column.
5. The expert(s) from Group 3: Temporary Detention Centers will present their examples.
6. Other students in the group will take notes on their worksheet in the corresponding “Evidence” column.

After experts for each “Accurate Term” present their examples to the group, all students will have a completed worksheet with valuable evidence.

 **Optional Extension Activity**

Have students create a publicity flier or a recorded Public Service Announcement (PSA) that publicizes the importance of using accurate terminology when describing Japanese American Incarceration during World War II.

## C4: CLOSING [5–10 min]

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### DESCRIPTION:



Despite being imprisoned in terrible living conditions, Japanese Americans showed resilience in the ways they adapted. Instruct students to reflect on this by writing a response to the following questions:

- *Describe what camp life was like for incarcerated Japanese Americans and how the accurate terms from the worksheet reflect these living conditions.*
- *How did Japanese Americans adapt to make their conditions more liveable?*

Pair students up so they can take turns sharing their responses. Then conduct a class discussion or invite 2–3 students to share their reflections with the whole class.

## Links to Resources and Notes:

- [Terminology - Densho: Japanese American Incarceration and Japanese Internment](#)
- [Japanese American Citizens League \(JACL\) Power of Words Handbook](#)
- [Reading Rockets Classroom Strategies Library - Jigsaw](#)

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