

Teaching history from **DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:** Fourth Grade Lesson on Japanese American Incarceration

GA Social Studies Standards

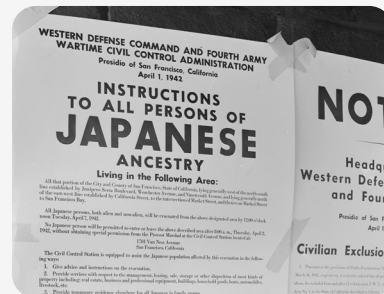
SS4CG3 Describe the structure of government and the Bill of Rights.

The United States brands itself as the land of the free and the home of the brave. But during World War II, it imprisoned 77,000 of its own citizens due to what the government decades later admitted to be “racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” Teaching young learners about the difficult but important history of Japanese American incarceration helps them examine the complexity of citizenship and civil rights.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order (EO) 9066 in February 1942, giving the military authority to create areas where people considered threats to national security could be forcibly moved and detained. While EO 9066 did not specify any group of people, it was overwhelmingly applied to Japanese Americans on the West Coast, but not to German or Italian Americans. Adding to the confusing application of EO 9066 was the fact that babies, the elderly, and the disabled were all subjected to military removal from their homes and imprisonment.

As families prepared to leave their homes on the West Coast, some people put up signs declaring, “I am an American, too.” Some men joined the military to prove their loyalty, serving in segregated units like the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Yet despite their valiant acts of heroism, Japanese American veterans’ names were removed from community honor rolls and some cemeteries refused to bury soldiers’ remains. Even U.S. Army Captain Daniel K. Inouye, later elected to the U.S. Senate, was refused service in a barbershop after walking in dressed in full uniform.

After EO 9066 was released, 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast had days to sell their property and belongings before reporting to one of 16 assembly centers, bringing only what they could carry with them. Between May and October 1942, they were transferred to ten hastily-built prison camps located in isolated and inhospitable areas. Each camp housed 7,000-18,000 Japanese Americans. Camp barracks were crowded with little

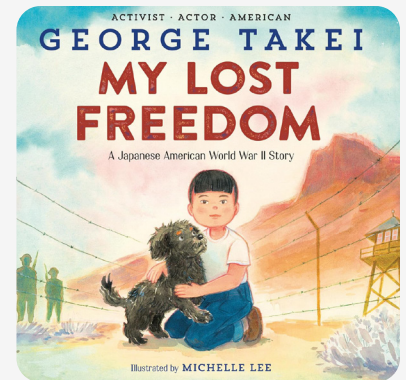
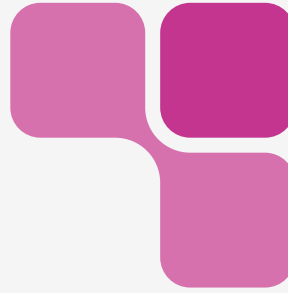


privacy, but families were innovative and salvaged what they could to make their miserable conditions feel more like home until they were able to return home beginning in January 1945.

Perhaps you've heard these camps described in a different way - as internment camps. But that's incorrect! Since the War of 1812, internment has been reserved for foreign nationals of a country with which the United States is at war. Two-thirds of the Japanese Americans imprisoned during WWII were U.S. citizens whose Constitutional rights were violated. Using terms like internment, relocation, or evacuation does an injustice to their experiences.

Students can read about firsthand experiences from camp survivors and their relatives in books like:

- My Lost Freedom by George Takei
- Love in the Library by Maggie Tokuda Hall
- It Began with a Page by Kyo Maclear
- The Bracelet by Yoshiko Uchida
- Baseball Saved Us and Heroes by Ken Mochizuki
- Write to Me by Cynthia Grady
- Dear Miss Breed by Joanne Oppenheim



Complete Article and Lesson Plan



Photo credit:

(Top to Bottom, Left to Right)

1. Map of WWII incarceration sites - Public Domain
2. Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry - Public Domain
3. Dorothea Lange Collection, Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration (Public domain via Densho)
4. Dorothea Lange Collection, Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration (Public Domain via Densho)
5. George Takei, My Lost Freedom: A Japanese American World War II Story (Penguin Random House, 2024)
6. Maggie Tokuda-Hall, Love in the Library (Candlewick, 2022)

Ready to implement multi-perspectives in your classroom?

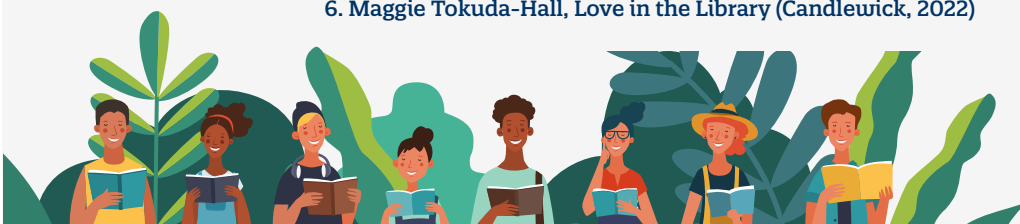
Contact us - info@aaved.org
Web: www.aaved.org



instagram
[@aaved_org](https://www.instagram.com/aaved_org)



facebook
[@aaved.org](https://www.facebook.com/aaved.org)



Asian American Voices for Education