THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARKANSAS

View on EOA

Japanese Internment in Arkansas during World War II

After Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and America's subsequent declaration of war and entry into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the War Relocation Authority (WRA), which selected ten sites to incarcerate more than 110,000 Japanese Americans (sixty-four percent of whom were American citizens). Two internment camps were selected and built in the Arkansas Delta, one at Rohwer in Desha County and the other at Jerome in sections of Chicot and Drew counties. Operating from October 1942 to November 1945, both camps eventually incarcerated nearly 16,000 Japanese Americans.

GRADES:	DURATION:	CONTENT AREAS:
6-12	45-85 minutes	Arkansas History, U.S. History

Objective(s)

Students will understand the causes and effects of Japanese internment during World War II; Students will apply knowledge of World War II and Japanese internment to create an original written historical analysis of a primary source document.

Key Vocabulary

1. Primary Sources: first-hand information from those who experienced a time or event. Includes memoirs, interviews, letters, and public documents
2. Secondary Sources: second-hand information; works that have been collected, interpreted, or published by someone other than the original source
3. Prejudice: unfriendly feelings or foregone conclusions directed against an individual, a group, or a race
4. Internment: the state of being confined, especially during a war
5. Relocation: to move or be moved to a new location
6. Generation: those being a step in a line from one ancestor
7. Issei: 1st generation Japanese immigrant
8. Nisei: 2nd generation Japanese immigrant – American citizen by birth
9. Sansei: 3rd generation Japanese immigrant – American citizen by birth
0. Kibei: American citizen who had primary education in Japan
1. Evacuee: a person evacuated from an area, usually a dangerous area
2. Heritage: something passed down from preceding generations, a tradition

3. Pilgrimage: a long journey or search

Necessary Materials

Students' writing utensils, lined paper for students' notes, printed copy or preferably online version of the CALS Encyclopedia of Arkansas entry **Japanese American Relocation Camps** for each student

Historical Background

More than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry were forced by the United States Army to move from the Pacific Coast region after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Approximately 16,000 of these individuals were moved to **Rohwer** and **Jerome**, both relocation camps in Arkansas, during **World War II**.

They were given two weeks to settle their affairs, including selling their homes and businesses. Often, they were forced to take much less than their property was worth.

The camp at Rohwer operated from September 18, 1942, to November 30, 1945, its peak population reaching 8,475 people. The camp at Jerome operated from October 6, 1942, to June 30, 1944. Jerome operated the shortest time out of any internment camp in the country.

Those who lived in states where the internment camps were located responded in different ways. Arkansans were often unhappy with the camps and even were fearful of the Japanese Americans they held, with the governor at the time passing restricting laws on those relocated Japanese Americans.

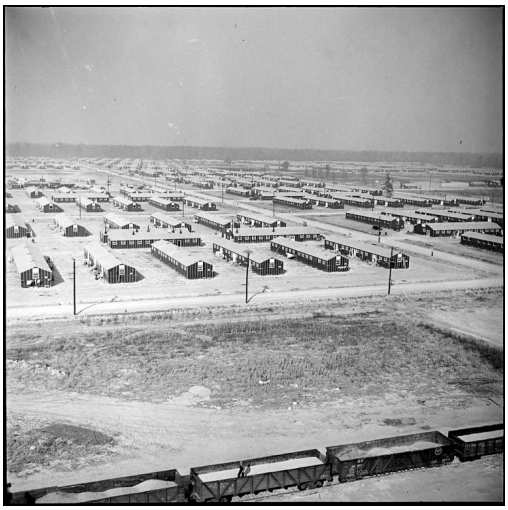
Nearly all of those interned were American citizens. Many understood the actions of the U.S. government and tried to earn the reputation of being congenial, hardworking American citizens; however, others, especially school children and teens, were confused or distraught at their situation.

While at the camps, the interned attended school classes; worked jobs in food, cleaning, or construction; and took care of their families. Only under extremely limited circumstances were individuals permitted to leave the camps; those that were permitted were often men seeking employment to support their interned families.

Activities

BELLRINGER

Display the photo of the Jerome Relocation Center to students. Ask that they take a moment and quietly observe this photo.



Overview of barracks and other buildings at the Jerome Relocation Center; circa 1940s.

What details do they notice? What sticks out? Allow students to discuss with a partner or at a table. Things you might overhear students discussing are the dirt roads, the snow, the symmetry of the buildings, how small they appear, the train next to the camp, trees in the distance, the lack of people, or the fact that the photo is in black and white.

After students discuss, ask each group or table to describe some of their observations. When everyone has spoken, with the teacher guiding students toward these observations where necessary, ask students what they think this is a picture of. Depending on familiarity students might use words like town, camp, barrack, or park. Ask who they think lives there and why we can't see anyone in the photograph.

This gets students thinking about the conditions Japanese Americans were subjected to throughout World War II, scaffolds their engagement with photograph primary sources to prepare them for later in the lesson, and gets them questioning the choices that were made regarding these camps before knowing the context, which will help them think critically later.

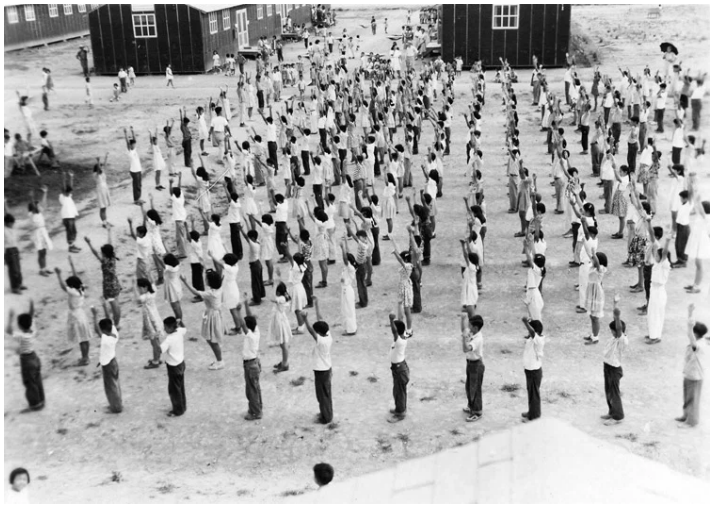
Direct Instruction

After the bellringer, students should be introduced to the idea of being forced to live in this camp. Nothing past the road we see is available to them in this scenario, only the buildings that they see. Lead this hypothetical example into direct instruction regarding Japanese internment in the United States during World War II. Ensure by the end of instruction that students are familiar with:

1. The fear of those with Japanese ancestry following the bombing of Pearl Harbor
2. The founding of the War Relocation Authority and Executive Order 9066
3. The various camps and the states they were located in
4. The reactions of citizens of those states
5. The reactions of Japanese Americans being relocated
6. The conditions experienced within the internment camps

Analyzing Primary Sources

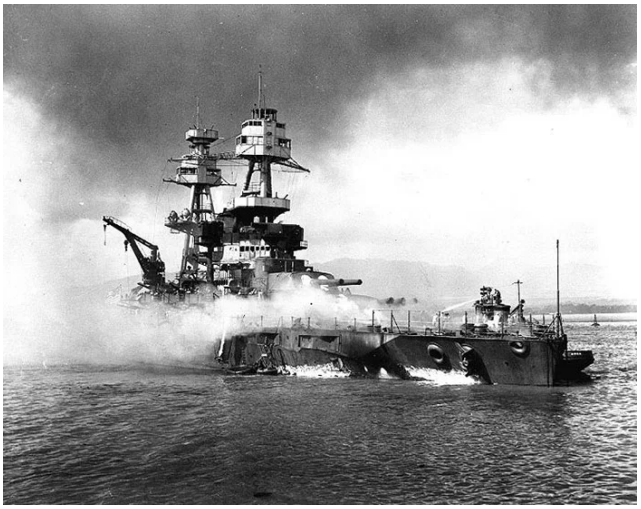
Select between two and four photographs for students to analyze from those online at the CALS Encyclopedia of Arkansas entries on the camps at **Rohwer** and **Jerome**. Make available to students via printed copies or a digital link or file.



Japanese-American fifth- and sixth-graders exercising on the elementary school grounds at the Jerome Relocation Center.

Group of unidentified young Japanese-American girls at the Jerome Relocation Center.

Students and teacher in a fourth-grade class in Barracks 3-4-B at the Rohwer Relocation Center near McGehee (Desha County): circa early 1940s.



USS Hoga (YT-146), alongside the port bow of the battleship USS Nevada (BB-36), helping to fight fires on the ship after it was bombed and torpedoed during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor; December 7, 1941.

Grounds and monuments to the internees at the Rohwer Relocation Center; 2015.

Ask students to analyze these through the eyes of historians: they are to look at each photo and describe in a detailed paragraph what is happening in that photo. They should include: the historical context of World War II, the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, the Japanese American relocation, and the internment camps. Students should also include descriptions of the people, their clothes, and what they are visibly doing. Remind students not to guess what's happening but describe what they see.

The purpose of this activity is to get students comfortable with personally analyzing primary documents outside of printed text. By acting through the lens of the historian, students might come to appreciate the work they do. Students will apply background knowledge given during direct instruction and critical thinking skills to create a written historical analysis of a primary source document.

Evaluation

Student evaluations come in the form of written and verbal responses to images being analyzed. These analyses should be at least a paragraph, include details learned in direct instruction, be thorough in their analysis of the image, and utilize appropriate tone and language to the task. This evaluation demonstrates students' ability to engage with primary sources, understand the time period, understand language conventions and their use, utilize appropriate tone for an audience, and produce a thorough analysis of a multimedia text via images.

Extensions

Direct students to search the school library or the internet for details about the experiences of Japanese Americans in camps outside of Arkansas. **Densho.org** is a great resource. Have students pick one camp and produce an essay, slideshow presentation, or poster describing and depicting:

1. Where that camp was located
2. How long it was operational

3. Who was in charge of it
4. Any unique features, events, or noteworthy individuals
5. How the local region outside of the camp reacted to its presence

This challenges students to take the skills in this lesson a step further and apply research methods to their analysis. By conducting this research themselves, students experience higher levels of rigor and self-led learning opportunities unique to a research project, while still maintaining a manageable scope for class pacing.

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