Title of Lesson Plan: Loyalty, Dissent, and Non-Action at Topaz

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Grade Level: 6-8

Synopsis/Summary of Lesson:
Students compare and contrast multiple views of loyalty, dissent, and non-action from Japanese Americans who were imprisoned at Topaz incarceration camp. Students read and view interview segments/transcripts of three survivors, one of whom is Fred Korematsu. Students discuss and create a T-chart categorizing evidence of loyalty and dissent. Then, students find evidence of non-action before creating a secondary source incorporating views and motives of the Topaz prisoners toward their incarceration.

Background Introduction:
After President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, more than 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry were forcibly removed from their homes, sent to detention centers, and eventually to incarceration camps. From 1942 to 1945, the United States government operated ten incarceration camps, one of which was the Topaz incarceration camp in Delta, Utah. The camp’s population almost all came from the San Francisco Bay Area, imprisoning a total of 11,212 people during its operation. The prisoners lived in barracks within the camp’s residential blocks, inside a community enclosed by a barbed-wire fence. Japanese Americans differed in their responses toward their forced removal and incarceration. While many joined the military, others, like Fred Korematsu, spoke out against the immorality and unconstitutionality of their imprisonment.

Possible Units to Use With: World War II, Asian American History

Focus/Essential Question(s):
- How did Japanese Americans respond to their imprisonment under Executive Order 9066?
- What motivates people to respond to injustice?

Objectives:
1. Students identify and understand the various manifestations of resistance among Japanese American prisoners, with an emphasis on Fred Korematsu’s experiences.
2. Students find evidence of loyalty, dissent, and non-action and write a paragraph that synthesizes the responses of prisoners.
C3 Framework Standards:
D2.His.6.6-8. Analyze how people’s perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.
D3.3.6-8. Identify evidence that draws information from multiple sources to support claims, noting evidentiary limitations.
D3.4.6-8. Develop claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

Required Materials and Preparation:
Before you implement the lesson, students should have a background on the World War II Japanese American incarceration and Executive Order 9066. It also may be helpful to teach about the living conditions at incarceration camps.

- Digital projector
- Mini-lecture on Topaz and the Fred Korematsu case, adapted from two sources: an excerpt of Fred Korematsu’s story from the Korematsu Institute (www.korematsuinstitute.org/fred-t-korematsu-lifetime) and an excerpt from Densho Encyclopedia’s article on Topaz incarceration camp (http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Topaz). Teachers may choose to distribute copies of an information handout instead of a mini-lecture (see attached handout).

- Interview videos and transcripts:
  - Fred Korematsu
    Segment 10: http://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1012-1-10/
  - Roy Ebihara
    Segment 19: http://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-222-19/
    Segment 20: http://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-222-20
  - Helen Harano Christ
    Segment 14: http://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1013-6-14

Procedure:

Day 1
1. Introduce the lesson to students by asking them, “What are ways that a person can react to an injustice or unfair law?” Students should write down at least three ways and discuss as a class. Explain to students that they are going to learn about Fred Korematsu and other dissenters who reacted to their incarceration in different ways.
2. Explain the importance of historical context in understanding prisoners’ responses to the law and recall prior lessons on Executive Order 9066. Present a mini-lecture on Fred Korematsu’s case against the incarceration and the Topaz incarceration camp and have students write down notes.
3. Distribute interview transcripts of Korematsu, Ebihara, and Harano Christ. Project and show the interviews while students follow along with their transcripts.

4. After showing the interviews, put students into groups of 2-4. Ask students to draw a T-chart in their groups and complete it with examples from the transcripts. One column should be for loyalty and the other, dissent. Students should note the interviewee’s name and include a quote from the interviews as evidence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loyalty</th>
<th>Dissent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Facilitate a class discussion for students to present their findings. Make sure that when sharing the information from their T-charts they refer back to the interview sources.

**Day 2**

1. Review the T-chart from the previous day and continue the lesson by asking the class about the instances from the sources where prisoners’ responses to their incarceration cannot be easily categorized as “loyal” or “disloyal.” Explain that the T-chart does not fully present a full picture of Topaz prisoners’ reactions to their incarceration.

2. Ask students to review the transcripts and individually write down evidence of “non-action” toward the incarceration below the T-chart. In a class discussion, have students share their findings and discuss the motives behind the interviewees’ actions/non-action. For example, a motive of non-action is the security of keeping the family together.

3. Below the T-chart and evidence of non-action, ask students to write at least two paragraphs describing the actions and motives of the interviewees. Students should take evidence and incorporate quotes from Fred Korematsu’s experiences, Roy Ebihara’s brother and sister, and Helen Harano Christ’s description of prisoners’ views on loyalty/allegiance. Explain to students that they are creating a secondary source that incorporates multiple perspectives/narratives of the Topaz prisoners.

4. End the lesson with a few students presenting their secondary source to the class and a class discussion on the different views of prisoners at Topaz.

**Differentiated Engagement Strategies for Accessibility of All Students:**

For students who have difficulty reading the transcripts: Ask students to highlight and annotate the interviews after viewing the videos with the class. Students highlight evidence of loyalty with
one color and evidence of dissent with another. On the second day of the lesson, ask students to underline the evidence of non-action. Students can also write their secondary source in small groups or as a class.

**Additional Resources:**

**Extension Activity:**
Students may continue their research into the loyalty and dissent at the camp by looking through the *Topaz Times* and other newspapers. For example, students may further study the motives of volunteers for the military from Topaz (article: [http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-142-432](http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-142-432)).

Another research path is the killing of Hatsuaki Wakasa, a Topaz prisoner, and the response of the camp (article from *The Seattle Daily Times*: [http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-56-1023](http://ddr.densho.org/ddr-densho-56-1023)).

Another closure activity for this lesson is to discuss other examples of non-action, support, and dissent toward laws considered unjust in history. The topic of this lesson can be extended into a lesson/unit on social movements.
Overview of Fred Korematsu and Topaz Incarceration Camp

Fred Korematsu’s Arrest and U.S. Supreme Court Case

Fred Korematsu chose to defy Executive Order 9066 and carry on his life as an American citizen. He underwent minor plastic surgery to alter his eyes in an attempt to look less Japanese. He also changed his name to Clyde Sarah and claimed to be of Spanish and Hawaiian descent. On May 30, 1942, he was arrested on a street corner in San Leandro, California, and taken to San Francisco county jail. While in jail, he was visited by Ernest Besig, the director of the San Francisco office of the American Civil Liberties Union, who asked Korematsu if he was willing to become the test case to challenge the constitutionality of the government’s imprisonment of Japanese Americans. On September 8, 1942, Korematsu was convicted in federal court for violating the military orders issued under Executive Order 9066. He was placed on a five-year probation. For several months, he lived at the Tanforan “Assembly Center” in San Bruno, CA, one of the former horseracing tracks where Japanese Americans were first held before being sent to the more permanent American concentration camps. Korematsu and his family were transferred from Tanforan to Topaz, Utah, where the government had set up one of ten incarceration camps for Japanese Americans.


Topaz Incarceration Camp (September 11, 1942 – October 31, 1945)

The euphemistically named "Central Utah Relocation Center," or Topaz, in Utah was one of ten concentration camps administered by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to house Japanese Americans who were forcibly removed from the West Coast during World War II. One of the smaller camps, Topaz also had a relatively homogeneous and urbanized population that came almost entirely from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Q: Fred, could you talk about what kind of support or what other Japanese Americans said? Did you have any help in making a decision?

FK: Well, while I was in camp, the first time I was in camp, my brother, he was involved in various Japanese activities. And he thought it might be a good idea for me to get some suggestions and opinions regarding to, if I should fight the case or not. So I obeyed because I wanted to know their opinion, if I should fight it or not. So that night, he had a gathering of about thirty young people there, in a room, and they were discussing it to themselves or in little groups. And I stood around and waited for someone to speak, but no one actually came up to speak to me. Finally one did, and he said, "Fred, we're all in camp," and they're undecided on if I should fight the case or not, because... or if it, there's no way that they can help me. So therefore it was up to me to decide on what to do. And I assume that one of the main reason is their families are in camp already, and they don't want to make any more disturbance. Well, they didn't do any disturbance, but anything to upset the parents right at this time because they were too upset already being, just being in camp. So I think that was one of the reasons why decided to not say anything.

Q: I heard that other Japanese Americans view your stand, do people see you as a troublemaker? Was there any support from Japanese American groups in the camp like JACL?

FK: No. They were very quiet about my actions. Maybe majority of 'em just avoided me, so I assume that I got myself in this problem, and therefore it was my problem and not theirs.

Q: That's the, that's the way you felt?

FK: Yeah. So they tried to avoid the question, or they tried to act like nothing ever happened. Therefore I had to take the load myself.

Q: Did you feel like other Japanese Americans could have taken a stronger stand, that they were perhaps too docile in reporting to the camps?
FK: Well... if they weren't in favor of it, I would think that I would be much happier that I had them backing me up on this. But to do, to do this by myself, I just wonder if I was doing wrong or not doing the right thing, or maybe putting them in shame by bringing the issue up again. And because the Japanese people, they liked to... they're peaceful people, and they like to leave things alone if they can, because they were in enough trouble as it is because of this Pearl Harbor attack. They sort of feel, and the country blamed them, so they feel they had this sort of a guilty complex, even though they had nothing to do with it.

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Densho Digital Archive
Densho Visual History Collection
Title: Roy Ebihara Interview
Narrator: Roy Ebihara
Interviewer: Tom Ikeda
Location: Denver, Colorado
Date: July 5, 2008
Densho ID: denshovh-eroy-01-0019

<TI: So what was the reunion like with your brother?
RE: Pretty good. My brother was so happy to see our family safe, that was most of his concern, was the safety of the family. But found out that it wasn't too long, that my, he was, he was in a controversial situation as you know. Back in (...) early '43, 1943, they were embroiled in the controversy of joining the army or whatever, you know. My brother's stance was a patriotic stance that said, "We've got to prove our loyalty to America, there are no other options." And the other, there were only a handful of dissidents, but these young men said, "Why should we do -- " I remember being in the barrack, in the mess hall at nights, night after night when these things went on, at least six nights a week. They were, they were just, it was just the same old rehash, why we shouldn't go. And, of course, there were legitimate arguments on both sides, as I recall, recollect. Because, you know, when you're incarcerated like that with no charges, and then being asked to join the army, why would you want to do that?

TI: So describe these discussions. How many...
RE: They were heated.
TI: ...other people were there, and was it a debate, more, or how --

RE: There were at least a dozen if not more people. There were a few who took sides with my brother, but by and large, there were, the more dissidents at these meetings attacking my brother's stance. They said, "How could you be like that? You were born in Japan of all things," you know. My brother said, "That's not the issue. The issue is that you people born here should now find ways to get your, your family out of here. And how do you think you're gonna get your family out of here?" And that was his stance. But then, you know, he found that, what is he gonna do? So he finally wrote Secretary of War Henry Stimson.

TI: And so describe that again. So the letter and the whole process, why don't you talk about that?

RE: Well, prior to that, however, some fights ensued, and I think my brother got stuck in the back with a fork, I remember. It wasn't a serious wound, but nonetheless, my brother was beaten up on several occasions. Us kids were also considered bad eggs, so we would run around with these little plastic, like, helmet, what do you call those? Liner, helmet liners with guns, and we would play war. [Laughs] So we would get beaten up because we played American soldiers. So you know, all was, not all the great issue of to join the armed forces or not. But my brother finally said, "Well, I need to, I need to talk to somebody because I should do my patriotic duty. And so the letter he produced went to Secretary of War Stimson, and a copy went to the President of the United States. My understanding -- and I hope I'm correct on this -- was Eleanor Roosevelt apparently sauntered by the President's desk, saw the letter, was so moved, so moved by the letter that she asked the President the right to talk to my brother, and apparently she called him by phone to Topaz. And just said, "What can I do for you?" And my brother said just that, "I need to have, be able to be in the armed forces." Apparently the President directed the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, to act on his behalf. And he went, not many months went by when he was now allowed to join the army.

TI: Wow, what a story.

RE: So that hit the newspapers across the country.

TI: And how was that received inside Topaz?

RE: Well, you know, I'm not sure much was said because it wasn't too many months after that he and my sister Amy and my dad left because of the, the Quaker people were very kind to us. And especially our family was in imminent danger from the attack by people in the camp.
TI: So let's talk about that. So, so it didn't change over time. I mean, it was still pretty, pretty tense for your family.

RE: Yes. So it was that we pretty much, as a family kept to ourselves.

TI: And, and so I get the, sort of, over the decision to join the army or not. So there was a faction that opposed that, so they would --

RE: Yeah, I mean, they weren't, they were militant enough that they would be segregated out and sent to Tule Lake or anything, no. They argued their, their point pretty well, addressing that point that, hey, we've been mistreated, we've been... we're held here without due process and all this stuff.

TI: So I'm curious, did the Japanese American Citizens League ever come into play? 'Cause they were very, in the same way, feeling that men should volunteer. Did they ever try to support your brother?

RE: I don't recall that, no.

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RE: And, of course, my sister didn't help matters either. She, she raised a commotion and threatened to leave the camp, she was gonna walk out. So it was very timely in the fact that the Quaker and the friends of Quakers came to the rescue so to speak. They were negotiating with the War Relocation Authority, and of course War Relocation Authorities were saying, "Well, why not, if we can move them to the east of the Mississippi where they will be accepted, whether it's Chicago, Kalamazoo or Cleveland, or whatever." We became the first family to, big family -- I said, "big family" -- to leave Topaz.

TI: So let's go back to your sister, your activist sister, so Amy. What was she concerned about? What did she kind of object to?

RE: Well, she objected to the fact that, you know, like everybody else, about habeas corpus, and you know, all the, "This is wrong. We're wrongfully incarcerated." And she wanted to continue to raise that issue, that, "Hey, get us all out of here," you know. "You people are wrong." She knew the Constitution probably as good as anybody would who had graduated from college.

TI: And so mentioned earlier, so she threatened just to walk out of camp?
RE: Oh, yeah, she threatened to walk out.

TI: And she told the officials this?

RE: Oh, yes. They said, "Hold on, we're gonna get you out real soon." And so they had to promise her how soon and all that before she just cooled, you know.

TI: Boy, this is another good story. I've never heard anyone just saying, "This is wrong, let us out or I'll walk out." And then the officials saying, trying to make that happen. That's another interesting thing.

RE: Well, you know, my brother had a patriotic fervor, my sister was more concerned about the loss of civil liberties, you know, as a young girl who has never even finished high school. That's amazing. She went on to do other things later on, too, that's interesting, too.

TI: And as all this was happening, you mentioned how the newspapers covered your brother's story with Eleanor Roosevelt. Was there any newspaper articles or anything written about your, your sister and what she was doing?

RE: No, I don't think so.

TI: Or any, any letters or any documentation about this?

RE: No. I don't recall her writing anything, she was a lot more vocal. Her protests were more vocal than written.
MA: Was there ever any point where the students – I think you had mentioned earlier that they expressed some sort of, not anger, but just kind of resentment about the whole internment situation?

HC: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, there were people who, some of the students who said, "I'm Japanese so why should I pledge the American flag? Why should I sing the American national anthem? 'Cause they're not, they don't respect me, so why should I respect them?" And so we, I think the teacher worked it out so that we pledged the flag only on certain days and not every single day of the week. And I may be mistaken on this, but I think she told some of the students that if they thought that they couldn't pledge the flag, that they could just stand and not pledge the flag, but they were to be respectful anyway. Yeah, there were those who did not want to be respectful of being Americans and were resentful of being in the camp because of, of their ancestry.

MA: What about your parents? I mean, as American citizens themselves, did they have certain views that they expressed about, about the internment in general?

HC: Actually, not in front of me. I don't know if they did in front of any of my other brothers and sisters, and if they did it in front of me and I wasn't getting it, that may be true, too. But later on in life, when I was, oh, in my fifties and my parents were (visiting), maybe I was in my forties and my parents were in their fifties and sixties... sixties, must have been in (their) sixties, after my dad retired, I asked my dad, "Why was there no... why weren't the, why didn't the Nisei do something about not being in, not having to go to camp?" And he said, "Well, what could we do? 'Cause if it were only the aliens who would be interned, that would be like just Grandma in our family group, and what would, what would happen to her all by herself?" And then with my grandma, with his parents (going), it would be just the two boys (left), the two teenage boys, and what's gonna happen to them? What'll they do? They'll go wild without their parents. So he said there was nothing we could do, and it was either all of us or none of us. And I said, "Oh, okay." And so it wasn't resignation necessarily, but understanding that it could be a whole lot worse if, if there was a revolt by the Japanese people about being interned.

MA: Yeah, that's an interesting perspective.

HC: And they had no... they had no choice, as long as the government was bound and determined to do it, then they had no choice.

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