About This Guide

Oregon Children’s Theatre creates teacher resource guides for our mainstage shows with the intention to help teachers enhance the field trip experience for their students by engaging further with the content of the show. We seek to provide lesson plans and activities that can be facilitated easily and with minimal preparation, that tie in with the standard curriculum, and that engage different abilities and imaginations. In these activities we also offer opportunities to explore social and emotional skills, as are described by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). We highlight these themes in the play in our discussion questions and offer activities that help students build these skills. These standards can be found throughout this guide in blue.

About the Show

In 1942, 12-year-old Ben Uchida and his family are forcibly removed from their home in San Francisco and relocated to Mirror Lake, a fictional camp which represents ten American concentration camps where families of Japanese descent were imprisoned. In this unfamiliar place, removed from everything he once knew, Ben’s emotional journey is even more upsetting than his physical one. Originally commissioned by the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, this play details—with anger, despair, sadness, and hope—a dark chapter in this country’s history, and tells a story that is relevant, moving, and one that cannot be forgotten.

Content warning: This show uses historically accurate language (from the 1940s during WWII), including racial slurs, hate speech, and threats of bias-motivated violence. Additionally, the play contains visual imagery and indirect references to suicide in the concentration camp. The word “suicide” is not used in the play, nor is the act of suicide dramatized or seen on stage.

For more information about preparing your students in advance, or debriefing with them after, please contact Patron Services for details and resources. We also recommend informing parents that a character in the play dies by suicide, so that they can be prepared to support their student as needed.
Big Ideas

- Hearing personal stories are a powerful way to learn about painful historical events.
- Remembering family and relationships can help in difficult times.
- Learning about your family’s history and culture is important.

About the Author

Barry Denenberg is the critically acclaimed author of non-fiction and historical fiction. His historical fiction includes titles in the *Dear America*, *My Name is America*, and *Royal Diaries* series, many of which have been named NCSS/CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People. His nonfiction books have covered a wide array of topics, from Anne Frank to Elvis Presley. After the publication of *An American Hero: The True Story of Charles Lindbergh*, Denenberg was interviewed for various documentaries including ABC’s “The Century.” Denenberg was born in Brooklyn, New York and lived in Long Island, Binghamton, New York, and Palisades Park, New Jersey. “I was a serious reader from an early age and when I attended Boston University in 1968, majoring in history, I worked in a bookstore at night,” he says. “After college I was a book buyer for some fine, independent bookstores, some of the nation’s largest retail book chains and a marketing executive in publishing. At the age of forty I came to the startling realization that the glamorous world of power lunches, power politics, and power trips was not for me. I immediately went to work on the Great American Novel (since destroyed) and was rescued when my future wife, Jean Feiwel (then publisher of Scholastic Inc.) made me an offer I couldn’t refuse. Scholastic had received a biography of John F. Kennedy that they deemed unacceptable: would I like to try and write one? The rest is history in more ways than one. I went on to write biographies of Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, J. Edgar Hoover, Nelson Mandela, Elvis Presley and Voices From Vietnam, an oral history of the war. Writing some of the first books in the *Dear America* series was a turning point in my career. Its popularity and the resulting readers’ letters made a great impression on me. This in turn inspired my writing and fueled my research. With my bookstore background and the help of numerous knowledgeable booksellers I am able to assemble an extensive bibliography on each topic I write. I think there’s an art to both writing and research. I’m a good writer but a better researcher.” Something that has added greatly to Denenberg’s perspective on writing for young readers is his volunteer work as Director of Creative Writing and Library Services at the Waterside School in Stamford, Connecticut. Waterside, established in 2001, is an independent school dedicated to educating gifted children of the communities’ low-income families. Aside from writing and teaching, Denenberg’s interests include listening to music, reading (books not related to his research), swimming, practicing yoga and spending time with his family. Barry Denenberg lives in Bedford, New York with his wife and daughter.

About the Playwright

Naomi Iizuka’s plays include *36 Views, Polaroid Stories, Anon(ymous), Language of Angels, Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls, Tattoo Girl, Skin, At the Vanishing Point, Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West, 17 Reasons Why, Ghostwritten, Hamlet: Blood in the Brain* (a collaboration with CalShakes and Campo Santo + Intersection for the Arts), *3 Truths* (a collaboration with Cornerstone Theater Company), and *War of the Worlds* (a collaboration with Anne Bogart and SITI Company.) Her plays have been produced by Berkeley Rep, the Goodman, the Guthrie, Cornerstone, Intiman, Children’s Theater Company, the Kennedy Center, the Huntington Theater, Actors’ Theatre of Louisville, GeVa, Portland Center Stage, the Public Theatre, Campo Santo + Intersection for the Arts, Dallas Theatre Center, the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s “Next Wave Festival,” and Soho Rep. Her plays were included in Arena Stage’s Our War project.
and Baltimore Center Stage’s My America project. Iizuka’s plays have been published by Overlook Press, Playscripts, Smith and Kraus, Dramatic Publishing, Sun and Moon Press, and TCG. Iizuka is an alumna of New Dramatists and the recipient of a PEN/Laura Pels Award, an Alpert Award, a Joyce Foundation Award, a Whiting Writers’ Award, a Stavis Award from the National Theatre Conference, a Rockefeller Foundation MAP grant, an NEA/TCG Artist in Residence grant, a McKnight Fellowship, a PEN Center USA West Award for Drama, Princeton University’s Hodder Fellowship, and a Jerome Fellowship. Her play Good Kids was the first play commissioned by the Big Ten Consortium’s New Play Initiative designed to provide more roles for women. Her latest work, The Last Firefly was workshopped at the Kennedy Center’s New Visions/New Voices and was commissioned and recently produced at the Children’s Theatre Company. Iizuka currently heads the MFA Playwriting program at the University of California, San Diego.

Activities: Before the Show

Our Rights: What Does It Mean to Be An American?

Outcome: Students will contemplate their most important rights and the consequences of having those rights taken away.

Oregon Social Sciences Content Standards: Grades 4-8

Adopted May 17, 2018

- Explain how diverse individuals, groups and other traditionally marginalized groups, circumstances and events influenced early growth and changes in Oregon. (4.12 Multicultural Studies & Historical Knowledge)

- Identify issues related to historical events to recognize power, authority and governance as it relates to systems of oppression and its impact on ethnic and religious groups and other traditionally marginalized groups in the modern era (bias and injustice, discrimination, stereotypes) (5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.28 Multicultural Studies, Historical Knowledge)

- Evaluate the influence of the intersections of identity (including but not limited to gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion and class) on experiences of peoples, groups and events. (8.25 Multicultural Studies, Historical Knowledge)

- Examine and analyze important U.S. and Oregon documents, including the Constitution, Bill of Rights... (8.5 Multicultural Studies)

Materials: Post-its

Write “rights” on board. What “rights” do we have? Give an example & nonexample at school, e.g., We all have a right to be productive workers in our classroom. Does that mean I can wear my rollerblades in class if that helps me study? Why not? What rights should/do we have in our class? In school? What rights should/do all Americans have?

Ask each student to list 3 important rights important as an American. Share in small groups. Each group chooses 2-3 and writes each on a post-it. Post on board and cluster similar terms.

Key Questions

Discuss as class: What do you notice?

During World War II the American government took away the rights of many Japanese Americans, including their rights to freedom of speech and press
and against unreasonable searches. What if that happened to you? What would you think? What would you do? Are there other examples where the American government has not given people living here the same rights as others?

**Closure**

Write and reflect: Choose one right that is important to you. What if that right were taken from you? What would you do/say? What would be the consequence for you?

What does it mean to be an American? Students write key words on a class list. (for reflection after the show)

**Vocabulary: The Words We Use**

**Outcome:** Students will use appropriate terms to describe past and present events and generations. *(Oregon Social Science Content Standards 4.12, 5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.28)*

**Materials:** Envelopes with separate vocabulary word cards and their definitions:

- **Prejudice:** Unfavorable opinion formed beforehand or without reason, knowledge or thought*
- **Discrimination:** Treatment of a person or group based on pre-judgment and not merit*
- **Resilience:** Capacity to “bounce back” from difficult life events
- **Stereotype:** What we might wrongly expect from people simply based on their group or class
- **Immigrant:** A person who comes to a country to live permanently
- **Exclusion:** When someone is deliberately not allowed to join an activity or enter a space
- **Citizen:** A person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country
- **Forced removal:** When people are forced to leave their homes and are forbidden from returning
- **Incarceration:** Being confined or imprisoned

- **Concentration camp:** Guarded compound for imprisoning or detaining aliens or groups for political reasons*
- **American concentration camp:** A place where people are imprisoned not because of crimes they committed but simply because of who they are*
- *(Also see Japanese American Citizens League’s Power of Words, adopted July 7, 2012)*

The terms we use are important for the messages we send. In small groups of 4 to 5, students match words with their correct definitions. When finished, think of an example for each. Randomly call on groups to share individual definitions and examples, checking with the class for general agreement. Reveal the correct definition.

**Closure**

Choose one new word, create a sentence and share it with a neighbor.

**Extension Activity**

Today you’ll deepen your understanding of key vocabulary—using more of your senses.

How could a “frozen picture” help us to understand a word’s meaning? For a neutral word, like “school dance,” ask a few brave volunteers to demonstrate by creating a frozen image with their bodies of what a “snapshot” of a school dance might look like.

Depending on the age of students, it might be helpful to follow a concrete group example, like “school dance,” with one that is more conceptual, like “winning,” or “judgement,” so that they can, as a group, get a sense of how to represent a concept, rather than an concrete circumstance.

Students, in groups of 4 to 5, will be given a vocabulary word card and definition. Each group will decide how to use their bodies to create a frozen image of what that word means. In 5 minutes, you’ll create a frozen picture to share with the class. (Do not include your word in your frozen picture.)
One by one, groups will share their frozen image. Invite the other students in the class to name out what they see, but don’t guess the word yet. After a good number of observations have been made, ask the class to guess what vocab word they think is being portrayed. After you’ve collected a few different answers, allow the group to share their word.

**Closure**

For each frozen picture: What do you notice? What makes you say that? Choose a new term and use it in a sentence.

Tips for creating images:

- Images can be of ideas or feelings—they don’t have to be real people.
- Everyone should be working together to make a single image. If the word is “sad,” we don’t want to just see three sad people. We want to see an image that altogether means “sad.”
- Remember to use your facial expressions, levels, physical proximity—everything your audience will see should be information.
- Remind students to ask permission for any ideas they’d like to try involving physical contact.
- Remind students they will need to hold this pose for a while, so don’t make it too challenging on themselves! If students are holding an awkward pose for a long time while the class is reading their image, give them a chance to relax/shake out before resuming the image again.

**Generations of Japanese immigrants**

Japanese Americans gave names to each generation who immigrated from Japan.

- The 1st generation who came from Japan to the U.S. were Issei (ee’-say). (Ben’s parents)
- The 2nd generation, their American-born children are Nisei (nee’-say). (Ben and Naomi)
- The 3rd generation, children of the Nisei, are Sansei (sahn’-say). (Naomi’s children)
- 4th generation: Yonsei (yohn’-say)
- 5th generation: Gosei (goh’-say)
- 6th generation: Rokusei (roh’-ku-say)
- All those of Japanese descent: Nikkei (nee’-kay)

**Labels: What is it Like to be Labeled and Excluded?**

**Outcome:** Students will identify nonverbal behaviors that contribute to the exclusion and inclusion of others.

(Oregon Social Sciences Content Standards 4.12, 5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.28; 8.25)

**Materials:**

One label per student, each marked with one of the following: “Smile at me,” “Say, ‘hi,’” “Pat me on the back,” “Shake my hand,” Give me five” and “Give me an ‘OK’ sign” plus any other responses typical for your group. On 10% of the labels, write: “Turn away from me.” (Very important: Distribute the latter labels to those whose classmates do not visibly demonstrate those attitudes to them. Teacher may wish to give those students a “heads up.”)

**Intro**

Do we ever label people if they belong to a certain group? Labeling people can limit how they join our groups. Each of you will receive a sticker. Keep it in your hand and do not look at it or at the labels of your classmates. Now, when everyone has a label and—without looking—students attach to themselves below their necks. At “Go,” students will mill around as if they were in the school lunch room or at a party. Do what other’s signs tell you to do—but do not talk or reveal anyone else’s label. Mingle for 3 to 5 minutes. Then return to seats, still without looking at your own labels.

**Key Questions**

Students might write individual thoughts/reflections first.
How do you feel? (Perhaps on a scale of 1–10, to begin)

Without looking at your label, can you guess what it says? Why do you think that?

Those who think you wore a “Turn away from me” label, come to the front of the classroom. How are you feeling?

Students look at their labels now. Explain that each of us have had times when we felt we were wearing a “Turn away from me” label, when we felt left out or targeted. But some groups experience this more than others, even regularly.

What groups at school get targeted or left out?

What groups in society seem to have a “Turn away from me” label on them? e.g., those with disabilities, different religions, races, who speak with an accent, who are underprivileged or homeless.

Tell students that messages came via body language and facial expressions. 94% of all communication is nonverbal. We need to pay close attention to our body language and nonverbal expressions, as well as our words.

What can we do to change our nonverbal behavior to help everyone feel included?

Any new insights on how it feels to be in an oppressed group?

Closure

Write one thing you will begin doing now to be more careful about including others.


Activities: After the Show

Discussion Questions

1. Which character do you remember the most? What did that person do or say that was most memorable? Give examples.

2. Mr. Uchida tells Ben, “You can be anything you want in this country. Anything you can dream of you can be. As long as you’re willing to work for it.” Do you agree with Mr. Uchida? In what ways is this true? In what ways do you disagree?

3. Before the show, we talked about what it meant to be an American. Did seeing the show change your thoughts? How would you change your definition? Show students the key words they listed before the show. Compare. Explain your thinking.

4. Choose one of the following quotations from the play. Explain what you think led to that person’s view. What more do you want to know? What would you tell that person?

• Just call me by my number. That’s all I am anyway, a number. (Ben)

• Don’t rock the boat, don’t ask any questions, don’t make any trouble, just do what you’re told like sheep (Naomi)

5. The Journal of Ben Uchida shows an example in history of how humans harm each other. Fear of Japanese Americans motivated the U.S. government to unfairly incarcerate tens of thousands of innocent American citizens. Share examples from the play where people said or did hurtful things because of their fears or prejudices.

Examples:

• Go back to where you came from.

• You’re not a real American.

• What are other ways that people do harm because of fear and prejudice?

6. What can each of us—even young people—do to prevent others being harmed because of fear and prejudice?
• In small groups, create a list: What can I do to prevent others from being harmed by prejudice? (Specific lists could include what we can do ourselves and what our classroom, school, families, communities could do.)

Match the Quote
Outcome: Students will connect a quotation from the play to the character who said it.
Extension A: Students will explain how the character might have felt when making the statement, giving examples from the play.
Extension B: Students will tell what they could do or say to that person.

(Oregon Social Sciences Content Standards 5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.28 Multicultural Studies, Historical Knowledge, Historical Thinking)

Materials:
List of names: Ben, Naomi, Mr. Uchida, Mrs. Uchida, Miss Kroll, Soldier, Neighbor
Quotations: (Note: Some characters are quoted more than once.)

1. Let me tell you, I never liked you people. I never trusted you, not for one minute. I’m glad they’re sending you away. I’ll sleep better at night. We’ll all sleep better at night. (Neighbor)

2. Why do I have to wear this stupid tag with this stupid 13559? Like I’m some kind of prisoner or something? Why are we being treated like we’re different? We didn’t do anything wrong. (Naomi)

3. This place is filthy. I refuse to live in filth. (Mrs. Uchida)

4. A person who thinks “why bother” is a person who has given up. Have you given up, Benjamin? Do you give up so easily? (Miss Kroll)

5. This country is a great country. The people, they’re good people. They’re fair and decent and they’ll do the right thing. Eventually, they’ll do the right thing. (Mr. Uchida)

6. I was born here. I’m from here. I don’t know. I just am. I’m an American. (Ben)

7. I did what I was told. If I had to do it over, I’d do things different. (Soldier)

8. It belonged to my grandmother and her grandmother and her grandmother before her. When your father and I got married, my mother gave it to me. It’s one of the few things I took with me from Japan. (Mrs. Uchida)

9. It’s for our own safety. Emotions are running high right now. You’ll see, before we know it we’ll be able to come back. You have to have faith in our government. They’re doing this for a reason. (Mr. Uchida)

Role on the Wall
Outcome: Students will identify how verbal, physical, and situational cues can affect how others feel. Students will visually map how actions of others can affect our emotions.

(Oregon Social Sciences Content Standards 4.12, 5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.25, 8.28 Multicultural Studies, Historical Knowledge, Historical Thinking; Common Core ELA-LITERACY. SL.7.1.A, SL.7.4, RL.7.6)

Materials: Whiteboard/Blackboard, large post-it/paper, or overhead projector
• Draw an outline of a head and torso (Make sure there is room to write inside and outside the drawing.) How do other people’s words and actions affect how we feel?
• Choose a character from the play. Invite students to name words, phrases or messages that this person received, e.g., Ben’s father tells him, “You’re history in the making” or Mrs. Uchida’s neighbor tells her, “I never liked you people.” (Students might first create lists in pairs or small groups before working as a class.)

Write student responses on separate post-its and post on the outside of the figure on the board. When a “message” is offered, ask students to think about where it came from. (You might prompt students by
giving examples from specific scenes, e.g., when Ben received a threatening phone call.)

- To give visual cues, responses could be grouped, e.g., positive on one side and negative on the other.
- Connect the messenger to the message with colored lines, noting there could be multiple messengers.

**Key Questions**
- What messages do you think this character is receiving?
- What might that person be thinking or feeling, based on those outside messages?
- Write those feelings inside the figure in another color ink.
- Connect the outside messages to the inside feelings, using colored lines.
- Which events or actions impacted this person the most? How?
- What might you do or say to send your own message to this person?

**Pyramid of Hate**

Outcomes: Students will analyze how actions in The Journal of Ben Uchida demonstrate increasing levels on the pyramid of hate. Students will identify actions they can take now to prevent or counteract examples of hate.

(Oregon Social Studies Content Standards 4.12, 5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.28, 5.24, 8.25)

**Materials:** Pyramid of Hate visual plus one for each small group, post-its

Small things can lead to big things. (Give example, e.g., What if today someone used a derogatory name for a girl because she liked hockey—and no one said anything. Then the next day 2 to 3 people said the same thing; by the next week, the whole class....)

Calling someone a name because of that person’s race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other differences might be a small step that could lead to bigger infractions. It’s part of a continuum: Violent words could lead to more violent actions. Those actions can start small. If there are no consequences and this seems acceptable, it can lead to bolder behaviors, some with life-threatening consequences.

The Pyramid of Hate shows how biased attitudes can eventually lead to genocide – the annihilation of an entire group of people, such as what Hitler attempted to do to Jewish people in Europe during World War II. That’s why we want to “nip it in the bud.” Review the pyramid levels.

In small groups: From the bottom of the pyramid, list examples from the play for each level. List 4 to 5 on separate post-its and post on the class chart. Cluster those that are similar.

**Key Questions**
- What do students notice visually about the class pyramid? Redefine and review with students their examples for each level, noting areas of strong consensus.
- How many levels of the pyramid did we see in Ben Uchida’s story?
- What could we do to prevent or counteract what appeared at each level? (This could be another group activity.)
  - Prevent: to stop something before it happens
  - Counteract: an act against something to reduce its force
Genocide
The act or intent to deliberately and systematically annihilate an entire people

Bias Motivated Violence
Murder, Rape, Assault, Arson, Terrorism, Vandalism, Desecration, Threats

Discrimination
Economic discrimination, Political discrimination, Educational discrimination, Employment discrimination, Housing discrimination & segregation, Criminal justice disparities

Acts of Bias
Bullying, Ridicule, Name-calling, Slurs/Epithets, Social Avoidance, De-humanization, Biased/Belittling jokes

Biased Attitudes
Stereotyping, Insensitive Remarks, Fear of Differences, Non-inclusive Language, Microaggressions, Justifying biases by seeking out like-minded people, Accepting negative or misinformation/screening out positive information

Pyramid of Hate © 2018 Anti-Defamation League
Our Bill of Rights

Outcome: Students will identify rights from our Bill of Rights that were denied Japanese Americans during World War II.

(Oregon Social Sciences Content Standards 5.21, 6.21, 7.25, 8.28, 8.5 Multicultural Studies)

Materials: Copies of the Bill of Rights in original language as well as simpler, contemporary language (Printable version on pages 19-20).

The context
During WWII, the American government took away rights from thousands of US citizens due to their Japanese ancestry, even though many of them were born in the United States and had been citizens their entire life. Some of these US citizens were born in Japan, but worked hard to become citizens and were proud to call the US their home. [Note: Issei were not able to gain citizenship until 1952—after the war.] The United States Constitution was written to protect all US citizens from unfair treatment and limit the government’s power. However, citizens with Japanese heritage were denied this protection. The US Bill of Rights is a part of the Constitution that described what rights all US citizens should have.

For teachers: Summary of Constitutional Rights Violated:

I. Religious freedom: Shinto was prohibited and Buddhism was restricted by the ban on written materials.

Freedom of speech and press: Japanese language was prohibited in public meetings; camp newspapers were censored.

Right to assemble: Mass meetings were prohibited.

IV. Freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures: The FBI searched homes without search warrants and took items considered contraband, such as short-wave radios.

V. Right to life, liberty and property: Japanese Americans were removed from their homes and detained.

Right to legal counsel and to call favorable witnesses: Counsel and witnesses were denied.

Right to be informed of charges: Japanese Americans were not told of crimes or charges against them.

VI. Right to a speedy and public trial: Japanese Americans were forcibly removed and detained without a statement of charges and trial by jury.

VIII. Freedom from cruel and unusual punishment: Japanese Americans were detained in concentration camps where conditions were “grossly inadequate.”


We’ve talked about being Americans and our rights as citizens – as well as the rights taken from Japanese Americans during World War II. What documents guarantee our rights as Americans? Imagine you are a lawyer and need to determine what constitutional right were violated when people of Japanese descent were incarcerated during WWII. Read the following summary aloud and display images:

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, allowing for the removal of any persons from along the West Coast. This order paved the way for the forcible removal of those of Japanese descent from their homes and into concentration camps on American soil. In all, more than 120,000 men, women and children were incarcerated. And two-thirds (87,000) were American citizens, born in this country. In the end, not a single Nikkei (person of Japanese descent) was charged or convicted of espionage or acts of sabotage against the United States.

Lives of the Nikkei were suspended for years. Expelled from their homes, they were forced to live with only what they could carry. Many lost their property, businesses and farms. All were forced to live in desolate, arid concentration camps, surrounded by barbed wire with search lights and armed guards overhead.
In 1945 when our government finally allowed Nikkei to leave, they were each given $25 and a train ticket. But many had nowhere to go and were forced to begin life anew. Because this was such a shameful and humiliating violation of their civil rights, many never spoke about it, even with their own families. Not until 1988 (Civil Liberties Act of 1988) did the U.S. government apologize for this “grave injustice” caused by “wartime hysteria, racism, and a failure of political leadership.”

**Image A:** Letter sent to Mitsume Takayama, an architecture student ordered with his family into imprisonment at Gila River, Arizona. The family spent 2 1/2 years there in deplorable conditions. Gift in Memory of Mitsume Takayama, 2015.310.001

**Image B:** Example of Evacuation Posting after the signing of Executive Order 9066. Citation: “Dorothea Lange/National Archives/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images; accessed on History.com”

### Key Questions

Divide class into small groups of 3–4.

- What constitutional rights were taken from Japanese American citizens when they were incarcerated during World War II?
- List each right (amendment from the Bill of Rights) denied Japanese Americans and give a specific example.
- Choose one right. How would it affect you if you lost that right today?

**Japanese Americans in Portland**

This short documentary produced by the University of Oregon Multimedia Journalism graduate program explores memories of Portland’s Japantown—Nihonmachi—and the thriving Japanese American community in Oregon prior to World War II. The film features Chisao Hata, an artist, teacher and activist, and Jean Matsumoto, who was incarcerated as a child at the Portland Temporary Detention Center and in the Minidoka concentration camp.
Nihonmachi—Portland’s Japantown
In the early days, Portland’s Japantown was the heart of the Japanese community in Oregon. During the 1890s and early 1900s, Portland was the hub from which Japanese immigrants were sent to work for the railroads, lumber companies, canneries, and farms throughout Oregon and as far away as Wyoming and Colorado.

Japantown began as a place of hotel rooms, restaurants, barbers, food markets, bathhouses, laundries, and gambling halls. As the community grew and spread, the downtown business district remained Nihonmachi and evolved into a self-sufficient, Japanese-speaking community providing services to early immigrants and later to businesses that served the greater Japanese American community throughout Oregon.

Compare the map of Japantown to a current map of the same area in Portland. Optional: Have students place landmarks of the Japantown map onto a contemporary map of Portland.

An interactive map teachers and students can explore together can be found [here](https://www.expocenter.org/about-expo/the-expo-story).


Explore Japantown Now
Use this [interactive app](https://www.expocenter.org/about-expo/the-expo-story) to time travel to Nihonmachi. Let this guided tour take you through downtown and stand in places rich with history and meaning for the people who used to inhabit historic Japantown, before they were forced to sell or abandon their businesses, and leave their homes.

1942: Portland [Temporary Detention] Center

During World War II, the Portland Expo Center temporarily ceased operation as a livestock exposition facility. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, allowing the exclusion of any person from a designated military area, and local leaders transformed the complex into the Portland [Temporary Detention] Center. [It housed] 3,500 detained [Japanese Americans] before their transfer to [concentration] camps in Idaho and California.

Throughout five months, families and individuals endured living conditions similar to the livestock before them. Many hailed from surrounding agricultural areas and some descendants continue to operate farms throughout the Willamette Valley and Eastern Oregon today. Portland artist Valerie Otani created the Torii Gate to honor those housed at the Portland [Temporary Detention] Center and to serve as a reminder of this sad chapter in our nation’s history.

Learn more at [https://www.expocenter.org/about-expo/the-expo-story](https://www.expocenter.org/about-expo/the-expo-story).

Brackets indicate language that has been adjusted to reflect the terminology recommended by the Japanese American Citizen’s League.

At the [MAX] Yellow Line’s last station, Expo Center, the train comes to a rest against a large backstop. The doors open.

At the edge of the platform stand two gates, each made of a pair of cedar pillars capped by a double crosspiece. Artist Valerie Otani created the installation, titled “Voices of Remembrance,” as part of a public art project involving each stop of the Yellow Line.

The imagery of the gates, Otani says, evokes the torii, or traditional Japanese gates, found in Japan and throughout Asia, where they mark sacred spaces such as mountains, islands, and the entrances to temples. “Although this is not a sacred space,” she says, “it’s a significant one.” Passing under a torii gate is an act of purification, she says. “So it seemed just a wonderful
way to mark this history and be able to recognize it in a way that is also healing in a certain way."

Several ropes lined with metal tags hang from each gate, one for each person held at the detention center. The tags represent the manila baggage tags the internees had to wear, each bearing a number assigned to their family. “You meet people today and they all still know their family number,” Otani says.

The way the metal tags hang from the ropes also recalls the Japanese tradition of tying paper prayers or wishes on similar ropes at temples. “It turns out they make a sound,” Otani says of her metal versions, “which was kind of a fortuitous accident. Sometimes it’s totally silent and still, and other times very jangling and insistent.”

“This is a Yellow Line train to Portland City Center,” the familiar recorded voice recites. The message is exactly the same one that plays hundreds, maybe thousands of times throughout the day and night.

As the train sits at the Expo Center station, passengers looking through the car’s open doors might notice large, bronze trunks in place of the usual station benches. The sculptures, part of Otani’s installation, represent the hastily packed belongings of Japanese American families from Oregon and southwest Washington. Belongings carried to this point, this terminus—the beginning of an uncertain future.

Otani’s installation also includes a replica of the exclusion order for Portland, declaring that those who lived in the marked area had to report to a certain place. “I think seeing a map, you immediately want to locate yourself, where you live,” she says. As you do so, you might realize that “if you had lived there you would have been affected by that exclusion order.”

In September 1942, at more or less this very place, Japanese Americans boarded trains to carry them east, out of Military Zone 1, out of Oregon. The trains, their window shades drawn to keep these passengers in the dark about their destination, rolled out along the Columbia River, past Pendleton, to the concentration camp at Minidoka in Idaho. There, these families would spend the remainder of the war as prisoners of the United States. At the end of the war, farmers had lost their crops, urban entrepreneurs their businesses. Many had no homes to go back to. Portland’s Japantown, once a thriving center of Japanese-owned businesses, had already become a piece of history.

**Name Tag Activity**

Recreate this work of art in your classroom. Have students from each class choose a name/number and write a name tag, and hang the tags on display in your room.

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#StopRepeatingHistory: Developing Allyship

Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. —George Santayana
**Tsuru (CraneS) for Solidarity**

125,000 paper cranes to DC in June 2020 for Tsuru for Solidarity’s “National Pilgrimage to Close the Camps”

https://tsuruforsolidarity.org

Tsuru for Solidarity is a nonviolent, direct action project of Japanese American social justice advocates working to end detention sites and support frontline immigrant and refugee communities that are being targeted by racist, inhumane immigration policies. We stand on the moral authority of Japanese Americans who suffered the atrocities and legacy of U.S. concentration camps during WWII and we say, “Stop Repeating History!”

Never Again is NOW. Our mission is to:

- educate, advocate, and protest to close all U.S. concentration camps;
- build solidarity with other communities that have experienced forced removal, detention, deportation and separation of families;
- coordinate intergenerational, cross-community healing circles addressing the trauma of our shared histories.

**What is “tsuru”?**

TSURU means crane in Japanese, and it symbolizes peace, compassion, hope and healing. In the traditional Japanese folk art of paper folding (origami), it is a popular, easy-to-learn figure that children and adults of all abilities can create.

Japanese Americans from across the country will gather in Washington, D.C. on June 5–7, 2020 for a “National Pilgrimage to Close the Camps.” We plan to bring 125,000 paper cranes, or tsuru, as expressions of solidarity with immigrant and refugee communities that are under attack today. The 125,000 cranes represent the members of our community who were rounded up and incarcerated in U.S. concentration camps during World War II, including both Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans.

You can help show your support by making your own tsuru (paper cranes) and bringing them with you to the theater when you come to the show. Each crane collected at the theater will be brought to the Japanese American Museum of Oregon and will be sent to Washington DC as part of the “National Pilgrimage to Close the Camps.”

Here’s how you can make your own paper crane and show your support:

https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/easy-origami-crane-instructions-4082282
**Constellations**

“Look at those stars. So many. If you look, if you really look, you begin to see a pattern. Like a map or a plan. Like a grand design. If you know what to look for, you can always find the connection.” —Mr. Uchida

**Outcomes:** Students will embody ways individuals and groups are interconnected. Students will develop a sense of community, identity, and belonging by making interpersonal connections visible.

Explain that we’re going to play a game where we learn different ways we are connected to each other. I’ll read a series of prompts or statements and you’ll place your hand on the shoulder of someone who meets the criteria of the statement. For example: Place your hand on the shoulder of a person in the room whom you’ve known the longest.

Encourage participants to respond to each statement as quickly as possible; there is no right or wrong answer, and everyone will have multiple ways to respond to each statement.

Ask students to move slowly and silently through the room, hands at their sides. Encourage them to explore a variety of pathways and to try and keep some space between themselves and their classmates.

Offer a prompt and ask participants to quickly form a constellation by connecting to each other’s shoulders. Once grouped, invite participants to notice the room. It can be helpful to offer additional meaning-making. (Take a minute to notice the room—repeat; Part of our work together is about building on a strong foundation with each other and the friendships we’ve made over time.)

You may also choose to ask each constellation to engage in a brief moment of reflection (Turn to someone in your constellation and discuss your favorite moment from our work together today) and share out their dialogue. (Let’s hear from one or two groups about their reflection.)

After each prompt is finished, ask participants to drop their arms and return to walking through space without touching or talking to prepare for the next prompt.

**Example Prompts for Groups:**
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person you’ve known a short amount of time.
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person you’ve known for a long time.
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person who has a skill you’d like to learn.
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person whom you haven’t talked to yet today.
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person who is wearing the same color shirt as you.
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person who has different color hair than you.
- Place your hand on the shoulder of a person who lives in the same neighborhood as you.

**Reflection**
- What did you notice about yourself doing this activity? What did you notice about the group?
- What, if anything, took you by surprise?
- Why might it be important for us to consider the types of connections we share?

**Possible Side-Coaching:**
- Don’t over-think it. Just find the first person who could be an answer to the prompt for you.
- Take a quick look at how we are connected. What do we notice about the room?
- Possible Variation
- Invite or assign students to play as characters from the show—place your hand on another character that you help in the story.
A Tradition of Japanese Poetry: Haiku and Tanka

Japanese culture has greatly influenced and contributed to American culture through art, games, food, cinema, and literature. One of the most well-known literary contributions is haiku.

Haiku is a very popular form of Japanese poetry. Traditional Japanese haiku are short poems with only three lines and 17 syllables: 5 in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the last.

Sunlight is dancing
On the rippling water
It glides to the shore

Busy bees buzzing
So attentive to their work
Sipping sweet nectar

Haiku poems are usually observations of nature and also express a mood or an emotion. To help express this mood or emotion, many haiku include a simile or metaphor.

Helpful hints:
- We experience nature with all of our senses: sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound. Try to use at least two senses in your haiku.
- Try to write about an experience everyone has had, like flying a kite. But describe it in a new way, like playing tug-of-war.
- Also, try using personification. (This means to talk about something that isn’t a person, like a tree, as if it was a person.)
- Many haiku are serious. But they can also be funny.
Another lesser known form of Japanese poetry is tanka. A tanka is similar to a haiku, except it has two more lines of 7 syllables each. Here’s an example of Tanka:

*Invisible hands*
*caress my face; have I walked*
*through a spider’s web*
*woven this morning to catch*
*flies writhing with my surprise*

Many poets find that the tanka falls naturally into the form of a haiku followed by a couplet. The haiku tends to focus more on observation, the couplet on reflection. But you don’t have to observe this movement in your own writing. The tanka is a syllabic form, so just follow these simple rules:

Here’s some helpful hints on writing Tanka:
- Avoid end-rhyming the lines.
- Vary the rhythms from line to line.
- Use enjambment (continuing a statement from one line to the next without pause) to keep sentences and clauses twisting around the ends of the lines.
- Avoid ending too many lines in a row with a one-syllable word.

**Extreme Rock, Paper, Scissors (Jan Ken Pon)**

**Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to take steps to resolve conflicts in constructive ways, demonstrate a sense of school and community responsibility, and work with and support others.**

In this team building game, students battle it out to find who is the Jan Ken Pon champions as the losers of each mini-round cheer the remaining winners on (usually chanting their name)! As the game goes on each team gets bigger and bigger until there is one champion.

This game works best for grades 4 and up. It’s recommended for large or extra-large groups of 15+ people.

Did you know one of the earliest forms of Rock Paper Scissors was created in Japan and is called Jan Ken Pon. Jan Ken Pon uses the same Rock, Paper, and Scissors signs as the modern version we play in this country today.

Jan Ken Pon literally means “Beginning with stone.” At the same time both players show their fists to start the game while saying: “Jan Ken Pon!” Followed by “now we show,” players show either the rock, paper or scissors sign on the word “show.”

**Activity:** Have each student pair up for the first round. If there is an odd number, add the odd person out to another pair and have them do a quick knock-out match to form a pair. Alternatively, you can ask for a volunteer to participate as a referee with you.

Once everyone is in pairs, ask them to play 3 games, and the best 2 out of 3 will be the winner. You should act as a referee during this time in case there are any disputes or confusions.

1. Instruct the students who lost the first match to start cheering the name of the person who beat them and following that person around to their next game.
2. Have all the winners pair up and face off against each other while the ones they beat are cheering for them. When one winner beats the other, all the people behind the losing player should start cheering for the winning player.
3. Repeat this process in elimination, tournament style, until there are only two players left with large cheering sections behind them from their previous wins. Let them play the final match. The game is over after one player wins the final match and everyone cheers for that person.
4. (Optional): If you have an odd number of people and you want to reset the game and play again,
have the winner of the last game stand aside as a referee with you to give another player the chance to win instead.

**Discussion questions**
- Why do you think we played this game?
- How did it feel when you won a match in this game?
- How did it feel when you lost?
- How did it feel to cheer on and support your teammate in the next game?
- At the end we all cheered for the winner of the game? How did that feel?

**Inclusion and Involvement**
- What does it mean to be inclusive or exclusive?
- What did we do as a group that was inclusive? That was exclusive/not inclusive?
- Why is inclusion and involvement important?
Bill of Rights

Note: The “translation” or interpretation following each amendment is the interpretation of a single source. Constitutional scholars, lawyers, and supreme court judges spend years reading and interpreting the meaning of the constitution in regard to context and intention—the provided interpretation is merely meant to present the general idea of the amendment in simplified language. It should be regarded as a fairly simplified, un-nuanced interpretation, and therefore only part of the possible meaning/whole picture.

Amendment I
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The First Amendment protects several basic freedoms. It allows people to express their opinions through speech and the press (news and media). It also protects the right to gather or assemble in a group to protest or for other reasons. It prevents the government from creating or favoring a religion. People can practice any religion they choose.

Amendment II
A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

The Second Amendment grants the right to keep and bear arms. This means that citizens can own weapons to protect themselves.

Amendment III
No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

The Third Amendment says that in peacetime, American citizens will never have to house soldiers in their homes without giving their permission. Before the Revolution, British soldiers would force Americans to provide food and housing for their soldiers.

Amendment IV
The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

There must be a good reason for a search [of any citizen’s body or property], and a warrant signed by a judge is required.

Amendment V
No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

The Fifth Amendment says that anyone accused of a crime is innocent until proven guilty. A grand jury must decide if a case should go to trial, and a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime. Neither can the government take anyone’s property without paying for its use. Finally, it protects people from being forced to testify against themselves. This is what it means when people say: “I plead the Fifth.”
Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

The Sixth Amendment outlines requirements for a fair trial. Citizens have the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury. Defendants have the right to a lawyer and to bring their own witnesses to trial.

Amendment VII

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

The Eighth Amendment protects people from having to pay unreasonably high bail in order to be released from jail while awaiting trial. It also outlaws “cruel and unusual punishment” for crimes.

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

The Ninth Amendment explains that people’s rights are not limited only to the rights that appear in the Constitution.

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

The Tenth Amendment says that the federal government only has the powers mentioned in the Constitution. If it is not listed, it belongs to the states or to the people.

https://billofrightsinstitute.org/founding-documents/bill-of-rights/
https://www.coolkidfacts.com/bill-of-rights/

Notes:
**Additional Resources**

**Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL)**
https://jacl.org/

The oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in the U.S. The JACL monitors and responds to issues that enhance or threaten the civil and human rights of all Americans and implements strategies to effect positive social change.

Find additional reading, opportunities for activism and engagement, scholarship/youth opportunities, and complete lesson plans for teachers, such as “Race and the Media in Times of Crisis.”

**Japanese American Museum of Oregon (JAMO, previously the Nikkei Legacy Center)**
http://www.oregonnikkei.org/

Find permanent and rotating exhibits, the Japanese American Historical Plaza (aka Bill of Rights Plaza), various speakers and tours, apps, exhibits, and more. JAMO is located in the previous Japantown and its permanent exhibit includes a replica of the inside of a barrack during World War II.

**The Orange Story**
https://theorangestory.org/

A website with a brief educational film shown in 4 chapters. Between chapters, examine archival documents, as well as oral histories from Japanese Americans. Contains additional curriculum and resources for educators.

**Tsuru for Solidarity**
https://tsuruforsolidarity.org

**Densho**
http://densho.org/

Resources include photos, documents, oral histories, teacher resource materials and an encyclopedia.

**Oregon’s Japanese Americans Beyond the Wire**

An hour-long documentary on OPB, featuring many of the artists, scholars, and educators who contributed to this guide, and this production!

**Recommended Reading:**

**Young Readers**

*The Dreamer* by Il Sung Na*

**Grades 4–6**

Books by local author Allen Say:
*Home of the Brave*
*Grandfather’s Journey*
*The Inker’s Shadow*

*Music for Alice* (about former Portland resident Alice Sumida)

Books by Yoshiko Uchida:
*The Bracelet*
*Journey to Topaz: A Story of Japanese American Incarceration*
*The Best Bad Thing*
*Journey Home*

Books by Ken Mochizuki:
*Baseball Saved Us*
*Heroes*

*Blue Jay in the Desert* by Marlene Shigekawa
*So Far from the Sea* by Eve Bunting*
The Paper Crane by Molly Bang*
Emmanuel’s Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah by Laurie Ann Thompson*

Grades 6–8
Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston
Weedflower by Cynthia Kadohata
Fred Korematsu Speaks Up by Laura Atkins and Stan Yogi
The Journey by Sheila Hamanaka
Citizen 13660 by Mine Okubo
Nisei Daughter by Monica Sone
Thin Wood Walls by David Patneaude
A Place to Belong by Cynthia Kadohata*
The War I Finally Won by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley*
The Red Pencil by Andrea Davis Pinkney*
A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park*

Grades 10–12
Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps by Mary M. Gruenwald
No-No Boy by John Okada
Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet by Jamie Ford
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr
Desert Exile, The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family by Yoshiko Uchida

Poetry books by Lawson Inada, former Oregon Poet Laureate
Legends from Camp
Only What We Could Carry

*Indicates a book on Green Bean Books “additional reading” list. Teachers enjoy 20% off these titles and all book purchases at Green Bean Books!
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