

Images and Imaginings of Internment: Comics and Illustrations of Camp

Educator Resources



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Images and Imaginings of Internment: Comics and Illustrations of Camp

If you are interested in using *Images and Imaginings of Internment: Comics and Illustrations of Wartime Incarceration* as an educational resource, please consider the following options. There is a lot of material here, so please pick and choose to meet the needs of your class and your learning community.

I. Websites

Please access the free educational materials listed at the end of this section. They supplement the content on this virtual exhibition.

II. Let's Talk About It

In addition to external resources, think about how the "Let's Talk About It" feature in each section of the virtual exhibition might be useful for you and your students.

III. Into-Through-Beyond Lesson Plans

You might also want to consider the "Into-Through-Beyond" lesson plans available below. These lessons provide ways for your students to think about the exhibition before getting into the material, while working through the material, and how they might go beyond this content. These are simply suggestions, and we hope you will add your own ideas to help your learning community engage with the site.

INTO-THROUGH-BEYOND

**Lesson Plans for *Images and
Imaginings of Internment:
Comics and Illustrations of
Wartime Incarceration***



I. Home and Welcome to the Exhibition

Into:

1. List three specific things you notice in the image that opens the exhibition. Share with your class or small group.
2. How do the noticings of you and your classmates challenge the common conception of “comics”?
3. Both “internment” and “incarceration” are used in the title. As you work with the site, see if you can figure out why. When you do, share with your class or small group.

Through:

1. Open the Table of Contents and take a few minutes exploring the site. Where did you decide to begin your exploration? Why? Share one thing you discovered in this self-guided exploration.
2. Return to Home and click on “Welcome to the Exhibition.” What do you see in this image that reminds you of the image that opens the exhibition? List one or two specific things.
3. After reading “About this Exhibition,” how do you understand the structure of this site?
4. Read the “Content Advisory.” What do you think about the developers’ decision to leave the stereotypes and negative/racist language from this period? Does it worry you that some people are not mature enough NOT to use these slurs? Why or why not?
5. In “Why is this Project Important?” it reads, “The images that surround us every day shape who we are and how we interpret the world around us.” What is an image in your life that has shaped who you are and how you interpret the world? Discuss this with your class or small group.
6. After thinking about the facts and the questions in the “Let’s Talk About it” section, read “Tips for Navigating this Exhibition.” Make sure everyone in your group understood these tips, then respond in the “What Do you Think?” dialogue bubble.

Beyond:

1. You’ve begun to explore the site Images and Imaginings: Comics and Illustrations of Camp. So far, what in this site has connected you to your own time in history? Do the images or any of the text make you ask questions about contemporary life? If so, share those with your class or small group.
2. Think back to the responses to the question about the images in your life that have shaped how you interpret the world. Now think about that question if you were from another ethnic group or culture. What images can you think of that might shape how others think of themselves or interpret their lives. Share.
3. Start collecting images that help you engage with the importance of images shaping our lives. Possibly work with a small group to create a exhibition of these images and a discussion of the power of the visual.

II. Incarceration History

Into:

1. This section of the exhibition is divided into five sections:
 - Before World War II
 - Executive Order 9066
 - Contextualizing the Japanese American Incarceration
 - The Incarceration: An Interactive Experience
 - Incarceration Testimonies

Scroll through the five images that represent the sections. Again, list three specific things you notice in these images. Share with your class or small group.

2. The first three sections have many possibilities for study. Select one that you want to focus on and begin to work through the materials. Which one has caught your interest – “Before World War II,” Executive Order 9066,” or “Contextualizing the Japanese American Incarceration”? Can you explain why?
3. Divide your group into three groups, making sure that each of the three sections has students exploring this material. Now move to your section and begin your study.

Through:

1. Name the section you are working with.
2. List three points of specific information that you gleaned from this section. Share this with your classmates.
3. Respond to the “Let’s Talk about It” questions. Share one response with others who are working with this section of the exhibition.
4. What questions do you have after working through this section?
5. Add questions and comments to the “What do you Think” dialogue bubble.
6. Share what you learned with the whole group. Listen to what your peers learned in the section they explored.
7. Now move to “The Incarceration: An Interactive Experience” and work your way through this “choose your own experience.”
8. After this interactive experience, please add questions and comments to the “What do you Think” dialogue bubble.
9. Listen to one testimony in the fifth section of this exhibition. What is one point of interest for you in this testimony? Share with your class or small group.
10. Move to the “Life After Camp” section of the exhibition. After working with this material, list three of the challenges faced by those who were incarcerated.
11. Remember to share your thoughts in the “What Do You Think” dialogue bubble. The exhibition team is interested in what you have to say.

Beyond:

1. Continue to think about the images that shape our lives today. After engaging with the images in “Incarceration History,” what images might you want to add to your collection to help you illustrate an idea in contemporary life? Explain.
2. Are there any photos in your family that you thought about as you looked at the photos from the Takaragawa and Munemitsu family photos? Describe the photos you are thinking about.

III. Comics and Illustrations of Camp

A. Yellow Peril Representations

Into:

1. Describe the opening image for this section of the exhibition. If you look at both the left and right sides of the panel, how might you interpret this image?
2. What does “peril” mean? If you aren’t sure, look it up. What does “yellow” mean in this context? In your own words, what did those who use “Yellow Peril” want you to think?

Through:

1. The text suggests that “yellow peril” imagery was used during the Covid 19 pandemic. Did you witness or hear about this? Explain.
2. Scan through the timeline. Describe a theme, image, or language that is repeated over time.
3. Watch the Superman short in the “Let’s Talk About It” section. What do you think is the point of this short? What leads you to this conclusion? [Again, reflect upon the explanation of “Yellow Peril” and some of the images/language in the timeline to explain your idea.]

Beyond:

1. Consider the superhero films on the 21st century. Do they share any characteristics of this Superman short? If so, explain. If you don’t think they do, what has changed?

B. Comics Outside of Camp

Into:

1. If you are a comic reader, what are some of the comics you like? If you are not a comic reader, why not?
2. As you work with “Comics Outside of Camp,” you will see that themes are repeated by many different authors. Keep track of some of the these you see and share them with your group.

Through:

1. The comics in this section include Captain Courageous, Captain Midnight, Green Hornet, Little Joe, Mr. Mystic, and Superman. If you are working in groups, have each member of your group read a different comic to see how Japanese and/or Japanese Americans are portrayed in the comic. Share your observations with your group.
2. Did you find some shared themes as your group shared? What are they?
3. Read the letter written by Bob Maxwell, Director of Radio at Superman. [Not you can Zoom in to read the letter.]
4. Respond to questions 1 and 2 in the “Let’s Talk About It” section.

Beyond:

1. Now, think about the third question in “Let’s Talk About It!” DO you think a person can be separate from the community or nation they represent? Explain your thinking.
2. Do others in your group feel the same way? Did someone in your group make a point that challenged your own thinking? Explain.

C. Japanese American Agency and the Superman Controversy

Into:

1. What is a controversy? [Of course, if you are not sure, look it up.]
2. What is an example of a contemporary controversy?

Through:

1. Read through the Superman panel included at the top of this section. Do you get an idea of what the controversy is? If not, keep reading and come back to this section when you have an idea.
2. Read some of the comments from the Japanese Americans in the incarceration camps. Read until one of the comments makes a point that you think is an especially good one. Put that point into your own words.
3. As you get near the bottom of this section, do you now see what the controversy is? Why the government may be concerned about the plot in the Superman comics? Explain.
4. In your small group, discuss the power of comics in the incarceration of Japanese Americans in WWII.

Beyond:

1. After your discussion of WWII comics, can you think of popular media – comics, films, video games, television shows that depict a group of people with stereotypical and negative images? Give some specific examples of what you are thinking about.
2. What about social media? Do you racist comments or images on social media? Discuss.

D. Comics in Camp

Into:

1. Look at the image for this section of the website. What. Two details jump out at you?
1. Why do you think the “camps” were called “camps” when you have seen that we are using the words “incarceration” and “internment”? What images come to your mind when you think of “camp.”

Through:

1. As you see from the introduction to this section, the incarceration camps have their own newspapers which included comics. What was the challenge for these comics?
2. Choose one of the artists featured in this section [possibly have each member of your group select a different artist]:
 - Benny Nobori
 - Eddie Sato
 - Jack Matsuoka
 - George Akimoto
 - Miné Okubo
 - John Watanabe
 - Chris Ishii
 - Hank Shin

When you click on the “go there” button for each artist, you can see more of their work and learn about their lives.

3. Describe one element of your artist’s style; in other words, what do you notice about how they draw or how they use humor or what subjects they depict?
4. What aspects of life in incarceration do you see in their work?

Beyond:

1. When thinking about “Comics Outside of Camp” and “Comics in Camp,” what are the major differences in the way Japanese Americans are depicted. Give a specific example.

E. Comics After Camp

Into:

1. What do you think the children are doing/ thinking in the opening image.
2. What do you think “Comics After Camp” will be exploring?

Through:

1. The introduction to this section introduces the idea of “reparations.” What is this? What did it mean for those Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during WWII?
2. Read the excerpt from *Bombshells*. Do you notice anything different from the “Comics Before Camp” or “Comics Outside of Camp”? What is that difference?
3. Scan the eight graphic novels included in this section:
 - *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes
 - *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* by Laura Atkins and Stan Yogi
 - *Gaijin* by Matt Faulkner
 - *Stealing Home* by J. Torres and David Namisato
 - *Take What you Can Carry* by Kevin C. Pyle
 - *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, and Steve R. Scott
 - *Those Who Helped Us* by Ken Mochizuki and Kiku Hughes
 - *We Hereby Refuse* by Frank Abe and Tamiko Nimura
- A. Check your school library website and see if your library carries any of the novels. If so, which ones?
- B. Have you read any of graphic novels? If so, which ones. How did you hear about this novel?
- C. What graphic novel would you like to read? Why does it interest you?

Beyond:

1. Talk with your teacher and/or school librarian to see if your library could get copies of these novels. See if you can find the graphic novel that you would like to read.
2. Think about other historical events that you have heard about. Do some research and see if there are any graphic novels about these events.

Educators, we encourage you to explore the Free Educational Materials listed below. They are rich resources for this history. You might also consider having your students use the sites to put together a lesson for your class.

- National Archives Educator Resources - Japanese-American Incarceration During WWII (<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation>)
- The New York Times: Teaching Japanese-American Internment Using Primary Resources (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/learning/lesson-plans/teaching-japanese-american-internment-using-primary-resources.html>)
- EDSITEMENT! Japanese American Internment Camps during WWII Lesson Plan (Grade 6-12) (<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/japanese-american-internment-camps-during-wwii>)
- Smithsonian Education: Letters from the Japanese American Internment (https://smithsonianeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/japanese_internment/index.html)
- Japanese American National Museum – Education Resources (<https://www.janm.org/education/resources#general-resources>)