

WITHIN THE SILENCE Study Guide

NOTE: Please also see the linked JACL materials for further supplementary resources

Objective: Through the viewing of and participation in the live presentation of *Within the Silence*, students will gain a greater understanding of the impact World War II had on Japanese-Americans and the history of anti-Asian sentiment in the United States. Students then will be able to draw parallels between the internment of the Japanese-Americans and other current and historical events and issues.

Story Synopsis

Emiko Yamada is a second-generation Japanese-American living in Seattle, Washington in the late 1930s. Her parents were born in Japan (Issei), but Emi and her two older brothers were born in America (Nisei). This means that Emi, Grant and Tommie are American citizens, but their parents are still considered immigrants because, by law, they are not allowed to become American citizens.

The Yamadas run a grocery store in their Japanese neighborhood, and Mr. Yamada is also the principal of their Japanese Language School. Emi is a normal American teenage girl with 2 best friends, Ruth and Monica, and a dog named Suki. She dreams of growing up to become a teacher but, as a Japanese-American, no school would ever hire her—just as her brother Grant can't get a job anywhere except the family store, despite his engineering degree.

Emi and her family are at church when they hear about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and after that life is never the same. Her best friend Ruth turns against her, accusing Emi and her family of being Japanese spies. It is an opinion many other Americans share. One night, the Yamadas decide they must destroy everything they own from Japan, to show their allegiance to America—but the FBI still comes to search their house and arrest Mr. Yamada. The family learns that he has been taken to a prison camp in Montana with other Japanese community leaders.

There are rumors that all Japanese-Americans will be taken away, rumors that prove true when the signs appear in Emi's neighborhood. They have one week to get ready, and they can take with them only what they can carry. All around them, families and businesses are forced to sell everything they own, at a fraction of its value. Emi's family leaves what is left of their belongings in their boarded-up store. She must also leave Suki behind with her friend Monica.

The family is assigned a number and loaded onto a bus, taken with hundreds of others to a fairground surrounded by barbed wire, known as Camp Harmony. Conditions are cramped and crowded—not much different from the permanent camp where they are ultimately sent, Minidoka. In the desert of southern Idaho, thousands of Japanese-Americans endure the dust storms, the wind and the scorching sun. They live in flimsy wooden barracks and line up for unfamiliar food in a government mess hall. It is at Minidoka that Mr. Yamada is finally returned to his family—but his time at the prison camp has left him silent and broken, no longer the Papa that Emi knew.

Minidoka tries to be like a small American town, with a school, a newspaper, jobs, clubs, even sports teams. Yet no one can overlook the armed guards that hold them there. Then the army

brings in a loyalty questionnaire that divides many of Minidoka's residents, including Emi's own brothers. Question 27 asks "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States?" Question 28 asks "Will you forswear any allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor?" Many who answer yes, like Grant, join the army. Those who do not, like Tommie, are called the "No-No Boys." Not long after Grant returns to camp on leave before being shipped out as part of the 442nd, an all Japanese-American army unit, Tommie and the other No-No Boys are sent to another camp in California, Tule Lake.

Life in the camp begins to change: passes are issued to go into town or to work on nearby farms for a day, and Army officers become a common sight—informing parents of their sons' death in the war. Then the worst happens: one of those officers stops at Emi's door. Her brother Grant has been killed in action while defending his country—the United States of America—against the Nazis. After Grant's memorial, his girlfriend Cherry leaves Minidoka to attend a college in Pennsylvania that accepts Japanese-Americans. She encourages Emi to consider pursuing her teaching degree, but Emi knows that when she leaves Minidoka, she will be too busy helping her parents to go to college. When Minidoka is finally closed down, after three years, their departure is not a celebration. Each resident receives \$25 and is sent back out through the gates, as their camp home is torn down behind them.

In Seattle, Emi and her parents discover that their store has been vandalized and most of what they'd left behind is gone. Emi is reunited with her dog, but Tommie calls to say he has moved to Chicago. It is easier for Japanese-Americans to start over in the East and Midwest. Emi is the only one left to help her parents rebuild their business. After several years, she has nearly given up her dreams of teaching, when her parents announce that they have finally saved up enough money to send her to college.

Emi becomes a teacher. With her students, she recites the Pledge of Allegiance each morning. She pledges to her family that she will not let them down. She pledges to the past that she will remember to tell its story—when the world is ready to hear it. And she pledges to her country that she will do all she can to help make the words of that Pledge come true.

DEFINITIONS

Issei: Japanese-born immigrants, living in the US but forbidden by law to become US citizens

Nisei: first-generation Japanese-Americans, children of the Issei born in the US as US citizens

Integration Activities

Within the Silence is a fictional account of the Japanese-American internment camps during World War II: one girl's perspective, based on the real-life experiences of many different young people at the time. The following activities are designed and adaptable for students of all levels, in accordance with the Washington State standards for history and social studies. They aim to explore the issues and events of this production through a dynamic, hands-on approach. Students may address the following topics and questions through any of the suggested mediums or a combination of them:

Writing: write a story, a poem, a report, an article, a scene, a play, a song, a caption

Art: draw or paint a picture; create a collage, a sculpture, a comic strip; take a photograph; make a video

Drama: create a still image, a dance or movement activity, a series of images, an improvisation, a scene, a play

Discussion: partner or small group talk, oral report or presentation

1. Supplement a specific scene in the script with work in another medium.
2. Supplement a specific image from the video with work in another medium.
3. Interview a character from the piece.
4. Research historical documents to find a real person's description of an event from Emi's story (i.e. how they heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor; their departure to or from the camp). Share what you learn.
5. Read and explore selections from other fictional or first person perspectives (see bibliography for suggestions).
6. What are the issues of Questions 27 & 28: what do the different answers mean or imply? What are the consequences? How would an individual decide what to answer?
7. Re-create a scene from the piece from another character's point of view (i.e. Ruth's perspective after the bombing of Pearl Harbor; Grant or Tommie's perspective on Questions 27 & 28).
8. How were the experiences of Japanese-Americans in California or other states or parts of the country similar or different to Emi's experiences in Washington?
9. Research and compare the treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II with that of German-Americans and Italian-Americans. How was it the same? How was it different? Why was it different?
10. How did Monica and her mom react to Emi differently than Ruth and her family? What did Monica and Mrs. Andrews do for Emi during the war?
11. Who else in the video helped or inspired Emi, her family, or other Japanese-Americans? Research and share how other Americans helped the Japanese-Americans during this time.

12. How is the treatment that Japanese-Americans received during World War II related to the treatment other ethnic groups have received during other periods or history, including today? Research and compare the similarities and differences between the internment camps and the Native American experience, the Holocaust or current events (the aftermath of September 11).
13. What were the differences between the internment camps and prisoner of war camps during World War II?
14. Choose a part of Emi's story that you'd like to know more about and research it. Share what you learn.
15. Research another event in history and how it is related to this one.
16. Imagine you could get in touch with Emi. What would you want to tell her or show her about the future?
17. How did watching *Within the Silence* make you feel?
18. What would you do/how would you feel if these events were happening now?

Supplemental drama activities:

Role-on-the-wall: a character is represented in the form of an outline of a person, on which the group writes or draws information about that character: on the inside of the figure is written what the character thinks or feels about herself; on the outside, how she appears or how others perceive her. This activity can be repeated for multiple characters, including other fictional or real-life people. This activity can be used as a jumping point for further discussion and exploration of character choices, motivation, perceptions and prejudices.

Still images/tableaux: Image work can be used to explore any theme, idea or topic. It can be literal or symbolic, can depict actual events from the piece or imaginary ones, and can also focus on different points of view. Students may then select characters from the images to interview or scenes to bring to life or explore further in other ways.

Voices in the Head: students form two lines facing each other to make a path for Emi as she leaves for internment or returns to Seattle. As Emi passes through (played by the teacher, a student or series of students), students creating the path offer her a piece of advice. Alternately, or in addition, they may speak as her family, friends, acquaintances or personal thoughts and feelings.

Forum Theatre:

- a. In partners or small groups, students share personal experiences of prejudice or discrimination.
- b. For each personal story, students work separately to create their image of the situation (images may be visual or dramatic). The images are then shown to the whole group to compare and discuss.
- c. Situations are selected and played as improvisations, in which other members of the group can freeze the scene at a crucial moment, take on the role of the main character and experiment with different ways the scene could have happened.

Sample Drama Lesson Plan

Learning objective: to humanize and personalize Japanese-Americans during World War II
Central question: how did it feel to be sent to an internment camp?

Warm-Up:

1. establish ground rules for workshop
2. games and activities for getting to know each other and for working together through drama (practice skills such as listening, communication, cooperation, creative problem-solving)

Introduction:

3. role in a bag: leader provides a selection of items which have been found left behind by someone who has been sent to a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II
 - whole group discusses and creates character, using role-on-the-wall to record information (the character is represented in the form of an outline of a person: on the inside of the figure is written what the character thinks or feels about herself; on the outside, how she appears or how others perceive her)

Development:

4. physical brainstorming: whole group creates images from this character's photo album (literal or symbolic) in a round robin format
 - first students make solo images only, then they can add sound and/or movement, bring in or sculpt others
 - add further information discovered/decided about character to role-on-the-wall
5. skits: in pairs, A plays the character and B plays his/her best friend
 - situation: A tells B that s/he is about to leave to go to the camp—A does not want to go; B tries to convince A it is for the best
 - switch so each partner gets a chance to play both roles
 - spotlight pairs during improvisations
6. image work: in small groups, students create a flow series of still images of the character's journey to the camp
7. the suitcase: in a circle, each student contributes one item (real or written on a piece of paper) this character would have taken to the camp
 - all items must fit into one suitcase
 - leader provides suitcase into which students can literally pack the objects

Closure:

8. the journey: students form two lines facing each other to make a path, through which the leader walks as the character on his/her way to the camp—the end of the two lines is the camp. As the leader passes by, students provide voices in the head: the character's thoughts and feelings or what others might be saying as s/he is leaving

Discussion:

9. debrief activities and answer questions

Follow-up:

10. students reflect on the drama experience through writing or art.

Additional culminating project options

Each of the following projects may be presented in any of the following methods: academic paper or research report, oral presentation, poem, short story, play or skit, visual art, music, dance, film/video, or any combination of the above. Teachers and students may decide together on the best method of presentation.

For additional research resources for each of these projects, please consult the *Within the Silence* bibliography.

Checks and Balances

Project Directions:

Students will develop a reasoned position on the effectiveness of our nation's system of checks and balances in relation to the internment camps for Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II.

1. Explain how the branches of the state or federal government did or did not exercise constitutional powers around Executive Order 9066 and the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry.
2. Explain possible checks available to the branches of government during this period.
3. Analyze whether the system of checks and balances was effective through researching the internment experience of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Assessment

The EALRs addressed in the Checks and Balances project include:

Civics 2.1.2b: Describe the structure of state and federal government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; federal, state, and local levels; and political parties.

Civics 2.3.2a: Describe the purposes of government and how its powers are acquired, used and justified

Social Studies Critical Thinking Skills 3.1.3d: Analyze and evaluate the ideas, events and/or people of a historical event.

Social Studies Skills 1.1.1f: Create a product that demonstrates understanding of information and responds to central question; presents product to a meaningful audience.

Historical Perspectives on Current Events

Project Directions:

Students will develop a position on how the historical events portrayed in *Within the Silence* helps them to understand a related current issue.

1. Explain how the internment experience for Americans of Japanese ancestry relates to the understanding of a significant, current issue using well-supported reasons.
2. Outline the time period of the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry
3. Reflect on how this period in history helps us understand current events.

Assessment

The EALRs addressed in the Historical Research on Current Events project include:

History 1.2.2: Identify and analyze major issues, people, and events in Washington State, U.S., and World History.

History 1.2.2b: Using evidence for support, identify, analyze, and explain possible causal factors contributing to a given historical event.

Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 1.1.2d: Recognize relevant facts and ideas in Social Studies documents.

Social Studies Skills 1.1.1f: Create a product that demonstrates understanding of information and responds to central question; presents product to a meaningful audience.

Constitutional Issues

Project Directions:

Students will make an informed decision on the constitutionality of the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II after researching and discussing different perspectives on the issue.

1. Explain how the issues from *Within the Silence* connect with democratic ideals and/or constitutional issues.
2. Make references to the Constitution and explain their relationship to the Japanese Americans and other groups involved.
3. Develop a position on the issue that attempts to balance individual rights and the common good.
4. Make explicit references from the sources (*Within the Silence* and/or further research material) that provide relevant information and/or support for the position on the issue.

Assessment

The EALRs addressed in the Constitutional Issues project include:

Civics 1.1.2b: Explain specific rights guaranteed by the Constitution and how these rights are related to responsibilities.

Civics 4.1.2a: Explain how responsibility to the common good might conflict with the exercise of individual rights.

Civics 1.2.2a: Explain key democratic ideals of the U.S. government and discuss their application in specific situations.

Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 3.1.3a: Identify multiple perspectives; compare and contrast; use multiple sources; determine relevant information.

Social Studies Skills 1.1.1f: Create a product that demonstrates understanding of information and responds to central question; presents product to a meaningful audience.

Understanding Differences

Project Directions:

Students will explore the history of the Japanese in America and their development in Washington State, including the internment experience during World War II and its aftermath.

1. Explain and reflect upon the challenges that Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans faced before, during and after World War II, with specific examples from *Within the Silence*.
2. Explain and reflect upon how Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans responded to these challenges, with specific examples from *Within the Silence*.

Assessment

The EALRs addressed in the Understanding Differences project include:

Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 1.1.2f: Create a product that uses social studies content to support findings; present product in an appropriate manner to a meaningful audience.
History 1.3.2: Examine the development of different cultures in Washington State and U.S. History.

Causes of Conflict

Project Directions:

Students will explain the causes of the conflict portrayed in *Within the Silence*.

1. Describe the background of the internment experience, including what the internment was, who was involved (on all sides), when and where the internment took place.
2. Explain the various factors that played a role in the government's decision to issue and implement Executive Order 9066, providing concrete details and commentary based on both *Within the Silence* and other cited resource materials.

Assessment

The EALRs addressed in the Causes of Conflict project include:

History 1.1.2b: Using evidence for support, identify, analyze, and explain possible causal factors contributing to given historical events
History 2.1.2a: Explain the origin and historical context of major ideas and their impact on societies.
Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 1.1.2f: Create a product that uses social studies content to support findings; present product in an appropriate manner to a meaningful audience.

Analyze Events

Project Directions:

Students will develop an account of the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry and an interpretation of why this event occurred, using the production of *Within the Silence* and other primary sources as evidence.

1. Describe the time period of *Within the Silence* based on the production and/or other specific primary sources.
2. Provide an interpretation of why the US internment of the Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry happened, using the production and/or other specific primary sources.

3. Explain the relationship between the geography of the events and why events occurred (focus on the zones of evacuation, different treatment of Japanese Americans in Hawaii, and other parts of the mainland).

Assessment

The EALRs addressed in the Analyze Events project include:

History 1.2.2: Identify and analyze major issues, people, and events in Washington State, U.S., and World History

History 1.1.2b: Using evidence for support, identify, analyze, and explain possible causal factors contributing to given historical events.

Social Studies Skills 1.1.1f: Create a product that demonstrates understanding of information and responds to central question; presents product to a meaningful audience.