

Japanese Americans and the Rohwer Relocation Camp

Lesson Plan by Velma B. Branscum Woody, Author,
Bandits, Bears, and Backaches: A Collection of Short Stories Based on Arkansas History
2005-06 School Year Lesson Plan
Revised 2007-08 School Year Utilizing 2006 Social Studies Frameworks Including
2007 Arkansas History Amendments and 2007 Library Media Frameworks

2004 Butler Center Publication, 2006 ADE Textbook Adoption

<http://www.butlercenter.org/publication/books.html>

The March Section from 2008 *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture Calendar* features a photograph of "Easter at Rohwer" Calendars can be ordered annually by emailing info@encyclopeidaofarkansas.net

Students will examine and understand that in extreme cases such as a World War II, fear can override justice. They will review how the Japanese were moved from California and other areas into relocation camps in Arkansas during World War II. They will use resources for a teacher determined task.

Grades: 5th – 8th

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate critical thinking skills through research, reading, writing, speaking, listening and problem solving using the tools of social sciences
2. Demonstrate use of resources while completing a predetermined task.

Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks: Note that some of the Student Learning Expectations are for fourth grade students.

Arkansas History Student Learning Expectations:

- WWP.9.AH.7-8.2** Describe the social and economic effects of World War II on Arkansans
- WWP.9.AH.7-8.3** Research Japanese relocation camps and prisoner of war camps in Arkansas using available technology
- WWP.9.AH.9-12.2** Investigate the social and economic effects of World War II on Arkansans
- WWP.9.AH.9-12.3** Research Japanese relocation camps and prisoner of war camps in Arkansas using available technology
- H.6.4.9** Evaluate data presented on a timeline of Arkansas history

G.2.5.1 Describe customs, celebrations, and traditions of selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Arkansas and the United States

H 6.6.19 Research the major events and political decisions made by the United States during the course of World War II

Arkansas Library Media Student Learning Expectations:

A.4.5.1, A.4.6.1, A.4.7.1, A.4.8.1 – Use resources and/or technology tools for a predetermined task.

Related Encyclopedia of Arkansas Entries:

[Japanese-American Relocation Camps](#); [Rohwer Relocation Camp](#); [World War II through the Faubus Era](#)

Introduction:

The teacher will review the student learning expectation and key terms; obtain a copy of *Bandits, Bears, and Backaches*; and develop writing prompts/rubrics as desired.

Collaboration with the school library media specialist for assistance in utilization of this technology resource tool for Arkansas History is suggested. See above links or visit the encyclopedia at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net>.

Key Terms:

Kibei	evacuee	heritage	pilgrimage
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Key Terms Defined:

Kibei-a group of American-born Japanese who were educated in Japan and who were believed to be sympathetic to Japan during the war

evacuee-a person evacuated from an area, usually a dangerous area

heritage-something passed down from preceding generations, a tradition

pilgrimage-a long journey or search

Key Facts:

More than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry were required by the United States Army to move from the Pacific Coast region after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. Approximately 16,000 of these individuals were moved to Rowher and Jerome, both relocation camps in Arkansas. They were given two weeks to settle their affairs, including selling their homes and businesses. Often they were forced to take much less than their property was worth. Many Japanese arrived at Rowher in the fall of 1942. Almost all of them were American citizens. They were very docile and understood why the move was required. They made the very best of a bad situation and most held no bitter feelings at the United States Government.

Background:

The teacher should be familiar with the Japanese relocation camps. Information may be obtained from archived copies of the *Arkansas Gazette* articles from the time period. If online electronic searching is possible, students may wish to use the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net).

Procedure:

If there is not a classroom set of *Bandits, Bears, and Backaches* available, read Chapter X, “Japanese Americans and the Rowher Relocation Camp” to the students. This is a fictionalized account of a sixteen year old girl who travels with her Japanese American extended family to Arkansas in 1967 to tour the Rowher Relocation Camp where older family members had been held during World War II. The teacher should read the chapter prior to reading it aloud to the students.

One of the key terms is heritage. Ask the students to explain why the trip turned out to be important for the main character in knowing more about her heritage.

Lead a class discussion on the phrase, “Fear can override justice.” Based on the reading of the story and the class discussion, divide students into a “debate” teams. Have them argue for or against the judgment of the United States government in setting up these relocation camps. The students will complete research as the teacher directs in order to support their “pro” or “con” arguments.

The teacher may ask the students to do a creative writing assignment utilizing the journal entry format. Students will be asked to write a journal entry of one day as a Japanese American living in Rowher during World War II.

Co-Curriculum Activities:

Working with the art teacher, have students create a poster about a day in the life in Rowher. The teacher may wish to use the primary resource found at the following link: <http://www.cals.lib.ar.us/butlercenter/manuscripts/rohwer.html>

Working with the journalism teacher, have the students write a newspaper article announcing the arrival of the Japanese evacuees at Rowher.

With the help of the family and consumer science teacher, have students prepare a typical Japanese meal that might have been served at Rowher. Base this meal on research. Use guidelines for snacks in Arkansas schools.

Sources:

Life Interrupted: The Japanese American Experience in WWII Arkansas, Curriculum Project with UALR and Japanese American National Museum, Distributed to Arkansas Schools in 2004.

Steed, Stephen. “Return to Rowher”, *Weekly Spectrum*. July 8-14. 1992. P. 11. www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net

See “Suggested Reading List for Chapter X in *Bandits, Bears, and Backaches*.

The Taylor Foundation (Little Rock, Arkansas) makes Butler Center lesson plans possible.

Contact the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System, 100 Rock St., Little Rock, AR, 72201. 501-918-3056 www.butlercenter.org and www.cals.lib.ar.us

