

Role Playing E9

TEACHER BACKGROUND

The Japanese American experience impacted more than just the people relocated to the camps. Many Japanese Americans had supporters on the outside. Some inmates even had family members on the East Coast who were not relocated. There were many people who were prejudiced against Japanese Americans before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Afterwards, anger and hatred toward Japanese Americans became much more pronounced.

MATERIALS

Journey to Topaz by Yoshiko Uchida (with relevant page numbers bookmarked);
 Props such as hats, suitcases, Christmas presents, etc... (optional)

PROCEDURES

Divide the class into small groups of 4-6 members. Within the groups ask for volunteers to be actors in a role play. The other group members will serve as “researchers” to help the actors prepare their role play. Have each group read the setting for their group. The researchers should read the pages in which the scene is described in *Journey to Topaz*. Have actors choose characters who appear in *Journey to Topaz* or which they make up. Give students approximately 20 minutes to prepare their role plays. Groups then take turns presenting their role plays to the class. After each group completes their role play, debrief and talk about why characters acted as they did.

GROUP 1 - Setting - Japanese American family home in California on the evening of Monday, December 8, 1941 as they listen to the war news on the radio when suddenly they hear loud knocking at their front door. *Journey to Topaz* pp. 7-9

GROUP 2 - Setting - A Japanese American family in California delivers Christmas presents to their non-Japanese American friends on Christmas Eve, 1941. *Journey to Topaz* pp. 27-29

GROUP 3 - Setting - Japanese American family in California interviewing perspective families to take the family pet since they can not take it to the Assembly Center. *Journey to Topaz* pp. 36

GROUP 4 - Setting - Mess Hall of an Assembly Center in California where many Japanese Americans from different families discuss their new situation. *Journey to Topaz* pp. 54-55

GROUP 5 - Setting - War Relocation Center as a Japanese American family enters their family’s barrack apartment for the first time. *Journey to Topaz* pp. 98-99

GROUP 6 - Setting - Somewhere in a War Relocation Camp a Japanese American family and some of their friends discuss whether the oldest sons should volunteer to serve in WWII. *Journey to Topaz* pp. 134-137

George Takei Visits Rohwer E10

BACKGROUND

George Takei was born in Los Angeles, California. With the outbreak of World War II, he and his family were placed behind the barbed-wire enclosures of War Relocation Camps. George spent most of his childhood at the Rohwer War Relocation Camp in the swamps of Arkansas and at wind-swept Tule Lake War Relocation Camp in northern California. George Takei is best known for his portrayal of Mr. Sulu in the television and film series *Star Trek*. He has more than 30 feature films and hundreds of television guest-starring roles to his credit in an acting career that has spanned four decades.

PROCEDURE

Have students read the article “Japanese internment camp draws ‘Star Trek’ actor back to Arkansas.” Then have students complete the activity sheet that follows. Have students brainstorm questions they would ask George Takei or other former camp inmates if they were given a chance.

Japanese internment camp draws 'Star Trek' actor back to Arkansas

**By Melissa Nelson
The Associated Press
November 12, 2003**

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Name _____ Date _____

**George Takei Visits Rohwer E10
Student Activity Sheet**

1. Why do you believe the teenage George Takei called his father a "sheep" for going into the camps? _____

2. Why did the Takei family end up in a higher security camp? _____

3. Why do you believe the Japanese Americans went into the camps quietly rather than fighting the government on legal grounds? _____

4. If you were a Nisei living in California in 1942, would you have contested or cooperated with the evacuation order? Explain why or why not. _____

5. Why do you think George Takei is working to raise awareness about the history of the camps? _____

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