

Lesson 5: What Did We See When We Got There?

OVERVIEW

The geographic theme of place seeks to answer the question: What do we see when we get there? The Rohwer Camp opened on September 18, 1942, and the opening of the Jerome camp followed on October 6, 1942. The Japanese Americans had taken an exhausting three-day cross-country journey by rail before they stepped off the trains and first glimpsed the camps. This lesson is designed to allow the students to examine the places of Jerome and Rohwer through the eyes of the Japanese Americans using primary resource documents including oral histories, art, and autobiographies.

OBJECTIVES

Using geographic characteristics of the West Coast and the Arkansas Delta, students will be able to analyze their similarities and differences by completing a graphic organizer.

GUIDING QUESTION

How did the geography of the Arkansas Delta differ from that of the West Coast?

FRAMEWORKS

TCC 1.2, 1.3, 1.4

PPE 1.4, 2.5

PAG 1.5

MATERIALS

Map of the United States

Map of Arkansas

Eddy Kurushima Drawings, “Deep in the Heart of Arkansas Mud” and “A View of the Jerome Camp”

Venn diagram organizer (drawn on the chalkboard or overhead transparency)

Excerpts from the “Diary of an Evacuee”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

After Executive Order 9066 was signed on February 19, 1942, Japanese Americans in the Military Exclusion Zone (California, western Oregon, western Washington, southwestern Arizona) were told to gather their belongings into suitcases and bundles that they could easily carry. They had to report to assembly centers on the West Coast. Some of these assembly centers were located in racetracks where Japanese Americans had to live in converted horse stalls. By fall, Japanese Americans from the assembly centers at Santa Anita, Stockton and Fresno, California began to be moved to Rohwer and Jerome.

This lesson and those following ask students to use their “geo-eyes.” This is a concise way of asking them to consider history in terms of the 5 themes of geography: location, place, region, movement and human-environment interaction.

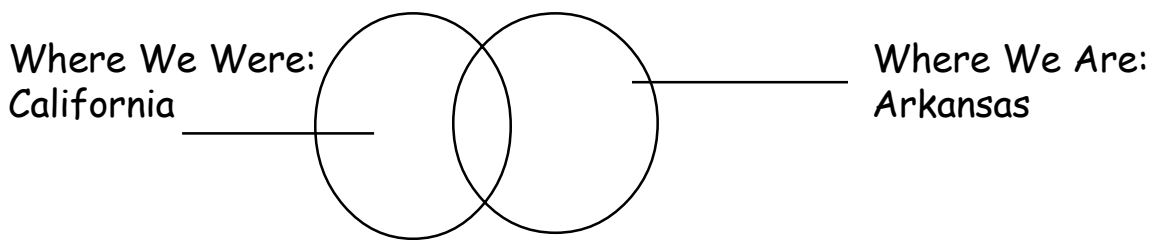
OPENING

Have students write down the physical characteristics, activities, and material goods associated with the place in which they are sitting (their classroom) right now. Discuss how place influences daily activities.

ACTIVITIES

1. Where We Were Vs. Where We Are

Have students create a Where We Were Vs. Where We Are Venn diagram. Remind students of the photographs they examined in the previous day’s lesson and have the class brainstorm physical characteristics, activities, and material goods of each place, California and Arkansas. Then, have students read excerpts from the oral histories and student autobiographies (teachers may want to cut out individual quotes and fasten them to index cards, then hand out to selected students and have them stand up and read the quotation). First, have the students determine whether the quotation is referring to California or Arkansas. Then, discuss what each quotation tells us about the place. On the chalkboard or overhead projector, make a list of characteristics of California and Arkansas. After the list is complete and all quotations have been read, have students place the characteristics in their Venn diagram



2. Drawings of Place

Have the students examine drawings of the camps by Eddy Kurushima that are reproduced following the lesson plan. You may wish to copy the drawings on to an overhead transparency or project the images from the CD-ROM using a computer and data projector. [file names 1) drawing – Kurushima – a view of the Jerome camp, 2) drawing – Kurushima – Deep in the Heart] Initiate a class discussion about the land, problems, and activities presented in the drawings. For example, the land was flat, was swampy in places, and was poorly drained. When it rained, mud was a constant problem.

3. Excerpts from the “Diary of an Evacuee”

Pass out copies of excerpts of Diary of Evacuee (Activity Sheet #3). Ask the students to read the excerpts and respond to the questions either alone, with a partner, in a group, or as a large class.

CLOSING

Have the students draw (or write a description) of what we would see when if we came to some place that was familiar to them (their home, place of worship, a store, a favorite park, etc...). They may use Eddy Kurushima's drawings as a guide.

EXTENSIONS

Have the students describe a trip they took somewhere and how that place differed from their own home.

Students can research the location and place of the other 8 concentration camps and complete a Venn diagram comparing these places to the Arkansas Delta camps at Rohwer and Jerome.

REFERENCES

Kurushima, Eddy. Drawings. Jerome Relocation Center, 1942-1944.

REgenerations Oral History Project. California State University, Fullerton.

Student autobiographies from Mabel Rose Jamison Vogel Collection, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

LESSON 5: WHAT DID WE SEE WHEN WE GOT THERE? WHERE WE WERE VS. WHERE WE ARE

Excerpts from Oral Histories and Student Autobiographies

Directions: Read each quotation and determine whether it is referring to California or Arkansas. Then, make a list of physical characteristics, activities, and material goods associated with California, and those associated with Arkansas. Finally, draw a Venn diagram comparing the two places.

Our home was located on the top of a small hill, and one could see miles and miles of rich soil, and homes of all shapes...Nearby there were oil wells and sloping hills where we went sledding, hunting, and hiking. It's rich green grass, and its miles of citrus trees, brought fragrant smells of blooming buds to our nostrils...In the summer, I worked...plowing and disking the field, picking and growing vegetables, and hauling them to the market. On Saturdays my schoolmates and I visited a movie, or went to the beach. Our little group...played football, and softball in sandlots. – George Kobayashi, “My Autobiography”

You saw these tar paper covered barracks in a clearing out of a forest – you really thought you were in another world, that this was not a part of the United States that you would recognize. – Roy Uno, REgenerations Oral History Project interview

It was right on the flat areas...where there was constant flooding of the Mississippi. It was a flat area where we had a lot of very arable soil. – Ben Chikaraishi, REgenerations Oral History Project interview

From the nearby station Japanese radio programs were heard every week for two hours. During the summer time there was the great Nisei Festival. A queen and four attendants are elected. The festival lasts for a whole week. The streets are decorated with Japanese lanterns and the stores have red and white flags out...During the week they have baby shows, flower arrangements, tea ceremonies, Talent Revue, and etc. But the greatest of all is the Ondo-Parade. There are about two hundred boys and girls young and old dressed in Japanese kimonos. – Chiyeko Narasaki, “Autobiography of My Life”

...We had never experienced a winter like that, but it did get cold. It didn't snow, but we had a couple of hail storms that left about six inches of hail on the ground. The wood situation was something that nobody could anticipate. In the fall they stockpiled what everybody thought would be sufficient, but with a cold spell the wood would disappear, which meant that the crews would have to go out into the forest on these lumber or woodcutting expeditions. It may be wet, the ground may be muddy, and the trucks had difficulty getting in and out; but without the wood, there just wasn't any heat...The big problem was that...the forest was just loaded with what they called “pin oak”...It's very hard and very difficult to split. It burns well once you get it started, but we had no kindling wood. This was one of the big

problems, to get a fire started in the morning. We spent many, many smoke-filled mornings trying to get the fire started. – Roy Uno, REgenerations Oral History Project interview

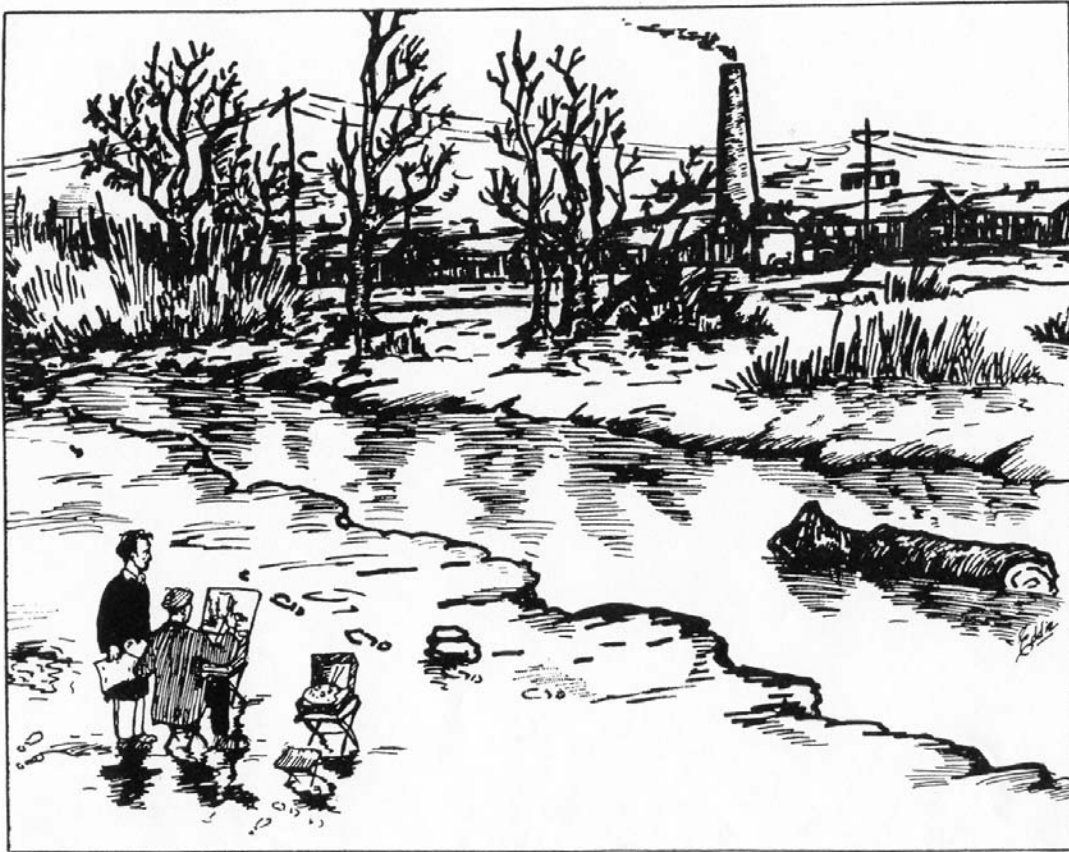
There were many playmates with whom I went to the 37th Grammar School. We also had a couple of dogs for pets. I remember one particular dog, who used to follow me to school every day. He was a little black and white dog who we used to call “Blackie”. – Takeo Shibata, “Autobiography”

It was a time when I was able to play with friends my age, all Japanese, every one of them. And so from that standpoint, it was fun... There were fireflies that we never see here that we would try to catch at night...and catching crawdads in the creek, and that kind of thing. – Paul Sakamoto, REgenerations Oral History Project interview

The first day here was a sunny day; ...after a few weeks it was always raining which made mud here and there and the house was so hard to keep clean. – Lillian Hanansushi, “My Life”

Our home had six rooms which was very cozy. Around our house we had gardens, fruit trees and many other kinds of shady trees. The other buildings we had around our home were barn, tool and repair shed, tractor and truck shed and a bunk house for the hired men. My father was a farmer of several hundred acres raising sugar beets, potatoes and field corn. We had many farming implements and two diesel tractors which my brother and I ran....My father had a 1941 Oldsmobile eight sedan, my brother had a 1938 Ford coupe and I drove and rode around in a 1935 Ford coupe. – Minoru Tsutairi, “My Autobiography”

LESSON 5: WHAT DID WE SEE WHEN WE GOT THERE?
EDDY KURUSHIMA: A VIEW OF THE JEROME CAMP



Eddy Kurushima, A View of the Jerome Camp. Courtesy of Mr. Eddy Kurushima.