

Lesson 7: Gardens

OVERVIEW

This lesson examines the geographic theme of human-environment interaction through a study of gardens at Jerome and Rohwer.

OBJECTIVES

Through a study of pictures and paintings of gardens at Rohwer and Jerome, students will identify ways in which Japanese Americans in the Arkansas camps altered their environment to better fit their needs.

GUIDING QUESTION

How did Japanese Americans impact the landscape at Rohwer and Jerome?

FRAMEWORKS

TCC 1.2, 1.4

PPE 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.5

PAG 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8, 1.9

SSPS 1.1, 2.1

MATERIALS

Painting: *Rohwer Camp* by Henry Sugimoto (reproduced following the lesson plan)

Student Activity Sheet

BACKGROUND

Many of the Japanese Americans who were sent to the Arkansas camps from California were *Issei* (first generation Japanese Americans) who had farmed in California. Bob Mitori, a former inmate, estimates that as many as seventy percent of those sent to Jerome and Rohwer were farmers. Not only had they been labeled aliens ineligible for U. S. citizenship, but they had also been denied the right to own land in California by the anti-alien land law of 1913.

Once settled into the life of the assembly centers and the relocation camps, these farm families put their skills to use. At Jerome and Rohwer, the Japanese American inmates dug ditches that drained the swampland and felled trees for firewood and to clear the land. This made it possible for them to grow crops of cucumbers, corn, tomatoes, mustard greens, cabbage, and Jubilee watermelons, which expanded their diet beyond starchy vegetables. Like other American families, they planted victory gardens to show their support of the country that labeled them aliens and their children, U. S. citizens by birth, non-alien.

They also created rock gardens and ornamental gardens of boxwood, calla lilies, and daisies. Sunflowers and castor bean plants provided much-needed shade as did morning glory and gourd vines trained to climb string or handmade stick trellises built over barrack walls and entrances.

OPENING

Show students the reproduction of Henry Sugimoto's painting "Rohwer Camp." You may wish to reproduce this as an overhead transparency or show the image in color from the CD-ROM (file name Painting – Sugimoto – Rohwer Camp). Ask the class to identify how the painting shows that Japanese Americans have altered the environment. Write responses on the board.

ACTIVITIES

1. As a class, examine the Henry Sugimoto painting *Planting Vegetables* (print in color on to an overhead transparency from the CD-ROM, or use a computer and data projector with the CD-ROM – file name painting- Sugimoto- Planting Vegetables). Divide the painting into four quadrants and have students look for objects and activities in each quadrant. What does the painting tell you about life at Jerome?

2. Read, or have students read aloud, the paragraph on the student activity sheet. Ask students to sketch pictures of the kinds of crops grown by inmates at Rohwer and Jerome. Ask students if they have grown these types of crops before. What are our motivations today for growing these things? How do they differ from those of the Japanese Americans during WWII?

3. Examine the photographs of the victory gardens at Rohwer (reproduce on to an overhead transparency, make a class set of photocopies, or use the computer, a data projector, and the CD-ROM) and have students answer the questions that follow either alone or with a partner.

CLOSING

Remind the students that one of the guiding questions for the unit is, "How did Japanese Americans impact the landscape at Rohwer and Jerome." Remind them that they will be addressing this question as part of their culminating project. Suggest that this lesson might provide some ideas that can be used in the culmination project.

Conclude by looking again at Sugimoto's painting, "Rohwer Camp." Pose the following question to students: "If you had been incarcerated at Rohwer, what changes would you have made to the environment?"

EXTENSIONS

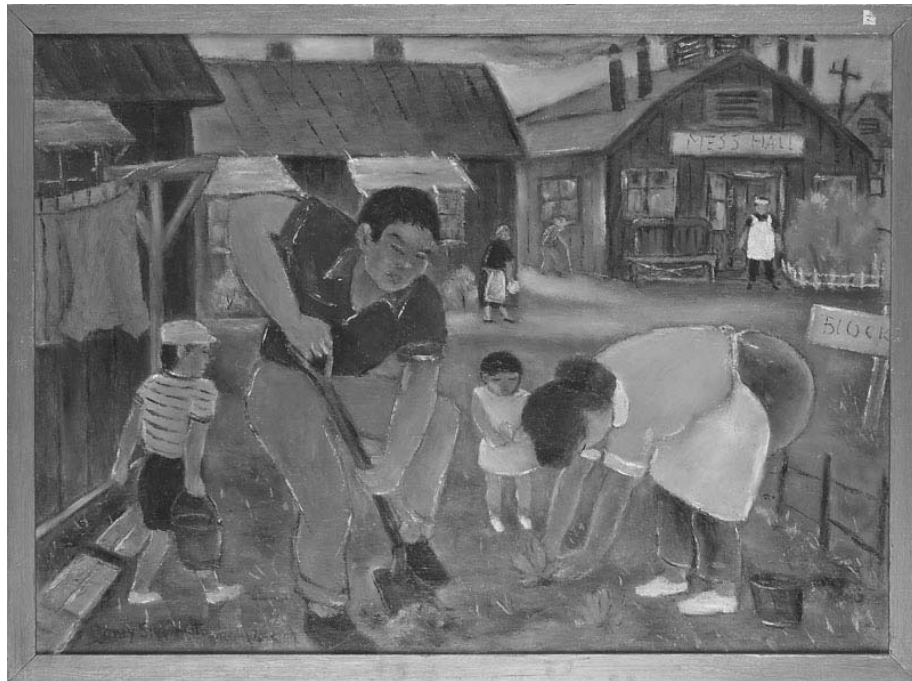
Plant sunflower seeds in paper cups. Record their stages of growth with drawings in journals. Take them home with instructions on where to plant and how to care for them.

Conduct research on other victory gardens planted by U.S. citizens during the war. Design a plot for your own victory garden at your home, community center, or school.

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STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

One former inmate estimates that as many as seventy percent of those sent to Jerome and Rohwer were farmers. Once settled into the life of the assembly centers and the relocation camps, these farm families put their skills to use. At Jerome and Rohwer, the Japanese American inmates dug ditches that drained the swampland and felled trees for firewood and to clear the land. This made it possible for them to grow crops of cucumbers, corn, tomatoes, mustard greens, cabbage, and Jubilee watermelons, which expanded their diet beyond starchy vegetables. Like other American families, they planted victory gardens to show their support of the country that labeled them aliens and their children, U. S. citizens by birth, non-aliens.



Henry Sugimoto, Planting Vegetables. 1944. Gift of Madeleine Sugimoto and Naomi Tagawa, Japanese American National Museum (92.97.71)



Photograph NO. NWDNS-210-G-H495. Rohwer Relocation Center, McGehee, Arkansas. One of many small victory gardens...6/16/1944. National Archives and Records Administration. Photographer Charles E. Mace.



Photograph NO. NWDNS-210-G-H434. Closing of the Jerome Relocation Center, Denson, Arkansas. 6/13/1944. National Archives and Records Administration. Photographer Charles E. Mace.