

**Please note:**

This lesson plan is meant to act as a starting point for teachers. Teachers are advised to modify this lesson to meet their specific classroom needs.

**Lesson Plan: Arkansas in WWII: A Diversity of Experiences**

**Lesson Overview:** What was life like for those on the fringes of Arkansas during WWII? The activities in this lesson aims to help students think about those who were on the margins in Arkansas during WWII: German POWs housed in the state, and Japanese Americans who were held in internment camps. Both of these groups of people endured forms of imprisonment and detainment, but for different reasons and under different conditions. This lesson plan aims to help students think critically about this aspect of the war, and to compare and contrast these two types of “prisoners” held in the state during this time period.

**Attribution:** This lesson plan was written by Kara Flynn in December, 2019.

**Recommended grade level:** 8-12 (discussion questions can be adapted to various grades)

**Time required:** Two 50-60 minutes class periods

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to put primary sources into the larger historical context of the period.
2. Students will be able to read and collect information from primary sources.
3. Students will be able to think critically about the information presented by primary sources, and will be able to put different sources in context with each other.

**Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks:**

Era5.5.AH.9-12.1, Era5.5.AH.9-12.2, Era8.4.US.6, Era8.4.US.1, Era8.4.US.3, Era8.4.US.4, Era8.4.US.6

**Primary Sources Used:**

German Prisoner of War Letters: <https://libraries.uark.edu/specialcollections/POW/>  
Rowher Reconstructed Digital Project: <https://risingabove.cast.uark.edu/home>

**Procedure:**

Give students some brief background information on the internment of Japanese Americans in Arkansas, and the German POWs who were housed in Arkansas.

**Activity One: German POWs (30 mins)**

Read or ask the students to read the Introduction on the German Prisoner of War Letters webpage: <https://libraries.uark.edu/specialcollections/POW/>  
In groups, have students read and analyze a German POW letter, and have them fill out the Primary source analysis handout.

**Activity Two: Class Discussion (30 minutes)**

Ask each group to share their observations. Possible discussion questions to spark discussion include:

- What did you notice first when looking at these documents?
- What do you notice that you didn't expect?
- Why do you think this item is important?
- What can we learn from examining this?
- Did the letters meet your expectations for what you thought life as a German POW in Arkansas would be like? Why/Why not?

**Activity Two: Japanese American Internment (30 minutes)**

Using a pre-selected group of primary sources, have students break into small groups and complete the Primary Source analysis handout.

Suggested sources for this activity include:

- [Community Activities publication, 1944](#)
- [A job recommendation letter for Mr. Inouye and Mr. Nakamura, 1944](#)
- [Letter regarding possible donations for the center, 1944](#)

**Activity Two: Class Discussion (30 minutes)**

Ask each group to share their observations. Possible discussion questions to spark discussion include:

- What did you notice first when looking at these documents?
- What do you notice that you didn't expect?
- Why do you think this item is important?
- What can we learn from examining this?
- Did the sources meet your expectations for what you thought life as a Japanese-American Internee in Arkansas would be like? Why/Why not?
- What is one new thing you learned about Japanese American Internment from looking at these materials?
- How was life as a Japanese American internee different from life as a German POW? How was it similar?

## Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

### Type of primary source (check all that apply):

Letter  Speech  Photograph  Telegram  Court document  Report  Newspaper   
Advertisement  Press Release  Memorandum  Report  Email  Identification document   
Presidential document  Congressional document  Other

Describe it as if you were explaining to someone else. Is it handwritten or typed? Is it all by the same person? Are there stamps or other marks?

### Answer the following questions about this item:

1. Who wrote it and when? How did you determine this?
2. Who would have read/received it? How did you determine this?
3. Where is it from? How did you determine this?
4. In one sentence, summarize this document.
5. What events were happening during the period in which this item was created?

6. How would those events have influenced the creation of this item, or the perspective of the creator?

7. What other documents or historical evidence are would you use to help you better understand this event or topic?