



Texas Archive of the Moving Image

Lesson Plan: **Civilian Internment in Crystal City, Texas** (Elementary Social Studies)

During World War II thousands of American citizens of Japanese, German, and Italian descent were forcibly relocated into internment camps. Using the government film *Alien Enemy Detention Facility, Crystal City, Texas*, this lesson plan explores the internment of American citizens and the use of propaganda during World War II. It correlates with TEKS curriculum objectives in Social Studies for grades four and five.

Objective:

Through the use of primary sources, students will analyze the use of bias to shape the way the American public viewed the interment of German and Japanese citizens in the Crystal City Detention Facility. Students will also evaluate the removed rights of these citizens and determine if the government was justified in its actions.

Film:

- *Alien Enemy Detention Facility, Crystal City, Texas:*
http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Alien_Enemy_Detention_Facility%2C_Crystal_City%2C_Texas

Accompanying Worksheets:

- A - Questions for Viewing, B - Compare and Contrast, C – Compare and Contrast:
http://www.texasarchive.org/education/lesson_plans/ccelemworksheets.pdf

Resources:

- http://traces.org/buseum_2_tour/buseum_2.html: a Web site devoted to German-American Internees.
- http://www.teacheroz.com/Japanese_Internment.htm: a list of links pertaining to Japanese-American and German-American internment during World War II. Provides over 30 resources.



Texas Archive of the Moving Image

- <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/99/fear/intro.html>: a lesson plan with activities introducing students to Japanese-American internment

Process:

Prior Knowledge

1. The following activity assumes that students are aware of the causes of WWII and the alignment of countries between the Allied and Axis powers.
2. Students should also be aware of the existence of concentration camps in Europe, internment camps in the United States, and how those institutions differ.
3. Students should have a working knowledge of human rights and the privileges of citizenship.

Hook

1. Ask students to describe what makes someone an American and to write down their responses.
2. Have them share their answers with the class and write a list of their responses on the board.
3. Remind students that there are many different ways a person can be considered “American,” but there have been times in our country when those definitions have been restrained by the government under the guise of helping the “greater good.”
4. Today they will examine the internment of American citizens in a time of war, and identify how the government tried to make the internment seem positive, when in fact it was a negative situation.

Lesson

1. Students will watch the film *Alien Enemy Detention Facility, Crystal City, Texas* in 5 parts according to the time divisions provided below.
Part 1: start-2:26
Part 2: 2:26-6:50
Part 3: 6:51-10:10
Part 4: 10:10-15:33
Part 5: 17:46-20:40



2. At the end of each section denoted below, stop the film and have students make a list of adjectives, emotions, scenery and infringement of rights they see in each section. See Worksheet A.

Example of viewing questions:

- Make a list of adjectives that **describe** daily life at the camp:
 - Make a list of scenes and places you **see** the people working and living:
 - Make a list of emotions you would **feel** if you were held in the camp:
 - Make a list of **rights** you would not have if you lived in Crystal City:
 - Make a list of what you **heard** about the Japanese and Germans:
3. Once students have been given time to think about the questions, discuss possible answers as a class. If students could not think of an answer on their own, have them write down one of the responses shared in class, or add new responses to their own.
 4. There is a two minute break between Parts 4 and 5 due to semi-violent content. Please resume the film at 17:46 to complete Section 5.
 5. When Section 5 has been completed, ask students to make a T-chart. Label one side “positive” and one side “negative.” Have students list which aspects of the film made

life in Crystal City seem positive, but how in reality that was actually negative. See Worksheet B.

Example of T-Chart:	
Positive	Negative
Swimming pool	Swimming pool built on garbage dump

6. Encourage students to come up with at least 3 examples on their own and share as a class.
7. Provide students with Worksheet C. Based on the students’ list of adjectives, scenes, emotions and rights from the viewing section and the results of the T-Chart, have students draw-in and write qualities on the Alien side that shows life in the camp. On the American side, have students draw scenes and write qualities that show how non-interned Americans were living during WWII.



Texas Archive of the Moving Image

8. Closing: The handout should show the differences between Alien and American ways of life even though the film tried to make life at Crystal City seem pleasant. Discuss with students why the government would have wanted to make Crystal City look enjoyable for the internees, but how their rights were violated by internment.

Extended Learning:

Pretend you live or work at Crystal City. Decide if you are a female detainee, male detainee, child detainee, and if you are Japanese or German. Or, decide if you will be a doctor, perimeter security guard, cook, server, or mail censor. (Teacher could assign roles also).

You may write a diary entry, compose a letter to your family living outside the camp, or write a skit that explains your life and experience in the camp. Be sure to consider the specific problems or advantages your group encounters at the camp; try to imagine exactly what your life would be like on a daily basis.

TEKS:

Social Studies Grade Four

5A: Identify the impact of various issues and events on life in Texas such as World War II.

20A: Identify the similarities and differences within and among selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Texas.

24D: Identify different points of view about an issue or topic.

Social Studies Grade Five

21B: Describe important individual rights including freedom of religion, speech, and press and the right to assemble and petition the government.

21C: Describe important due process rights including trial by jury and the right to an attorney.

23A: Identify the similarities and differences within and among selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States.

25D: Identify different points of view about an issue or topic.

25E: Identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced the participants in an event.



Texas Archive of the Moving Image

14B: Explain the relationships among rights and responsibilities in democratic societies.

21D: Identify different points of view about an issue or topic.