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Lesson Plan: **Understanding Bias: Civilian Internment in Crystal City, Texas** (Middle School 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 seven and eight.

### **Objective:**

Through the use of primary sources, students will analyze the use of propaganda and 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\\_Energy\\_Detention\\_Facility%2C\\_Crystal\\_City%2C\\_Texas](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php/Alien_Energy_Detention_Facility%2C_Crystal_City%2C_Texas)

### **Accompanying Worksheets:**

- A - Compare and Contrast:  
[http://www.texasarchive.org/education/lesson\\_plans/ccmsworksheets.pdf](http://www.texasarchive.org/education/lesson_plans/ccmsworksheets.pdf)

### **Resources:**

- <http://www.classroomtools.com/prop.htm>: suggestions for teaching propaganda in the classroom

### **Internment Camps**



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- [http://traces.org/buseum\\_2\\_tour/buseum\\_2.html](http://traces.org/buseum_2_tour/buseum_2.html): a Web site devoted to German-American Internees.
- [http://www.teacheroz.com/Japanese\\_Internment.htm](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.
- <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/99/fear/intro.html>: a lesson plan with activities introducing students to Japanese-American internment
- [http://go.hrw.com/resources/go\\_sc/hst/HSTSW041.PDF](http://go.hrw.com/resources/go_sc/hst/HSTSW041.PDF): a pdf activity on understanding bias

### 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.
4. This lesson is intended to introduce/reinforce the student's understanding of bias, specifically in historical contexts and the media.

#### Hook

1. Read the students the following statement, or post the statement on the board for students to read themselves:

Dogs are dirty. They eat sticks and sometimes trash. Dogs can also carry diseases. One time, I was bitten by a dog. I had to get a shot because the dog might have given me a disease.

1. Ask the class to respond to the following questions (either in writing or through discussion):
  - a. What is this person's opinion about dogs?
  - b. Do you think this is the whole story about dogs?
  - c. Did this writer say anything positive about dogs?
2. Explain that this person's opinion about dogs comes out as a "bias" in writing because only one side of the issue is being examined, and the paragraph is based more on opinion and emotion than fact.



3. Remind students that you can have a positive or a negative bias. Have students practice working with bias by writing and sharing 3 sentences that have a positive bias towards dogs. Make sure they understand that bias depends on the speaker and the events around them.
4. Explain to the students that today they will examine how the United States government used bias to justify its actions during World War II. They will examine the internment of American citizens in a time of war, and identify how the government used bias to make the internment seem positive, when in fact it was a negative situation.

### Lesson

1. Have students look up and define the following words (or do so as a class):
  - a. Repatriation
  - b. Internment
  - c. Detainee
  - d. Rationed
  - e. Morale
  - f. Monotony
2. 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
3. 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.
4. Have students use a T-chart with one side labeled “positive” and one side labeled “negative.” See Worksheet A. After each segment, stop the video and have students list the aspects of the segment that made life in Crystal City seem positive, but how in reality the government was biased in its explanation and the camp had negative effects on the prisoners. Write their responses on the T-chart.
5. 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.
6. Divide the students into groups of four. Have each group answer one of the following questions. When groups have answered the question, designate a presenter from each group to share their group’s response.



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- a. Was the United State government successful in making Crystal City look positive? Why or why not?
  - b. Why was the United States government portraying life in the internment camp in this way?
  - c. Who do you think was the intended audience of this film, and why do you think so?
  - d. Do you think these citizens were enemies who were trying to harm the United States?
  - e. Were the government's actions justified? Why or why not?
  - f. Do you think the United States government would do the same thing today if we went to war with Japan and Germany again? Why or why not?
7. Closing the Discussion: Ask students if they think the United States government was justified in interning citizens in order to protect the nation against its enemies. Did their actions against a small group of citizens benefit the "greater good" of the nation?

### **Independent Practice:**

Have each student complete the following writing assignment individually:

Pretend you are imprisoned at Crystal City. Decide if you are a female detainee, male detainee, child detainee, and if you are Japanese or German. (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, with your own bias. 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 7**

7D: Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major wars, including WWII.

17A: Identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues.

21D: Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced participants.



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21F: Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.

21G: Evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources and information about the author.

### **Social Studies Grade 8**

21C: Identify the different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important historical issues.

22B: Describe the importance of free speech and press in a democratic society.

24D: Analyze the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity.

30F: Identify bias in written, oral, and visual material.

30G: Evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author.