

Racism in Canada: Secondary lesson plans

These three lessons are meant to be taught as a unit in a sequential manner so that students can learn about racism through a combination of experiential activities, history, and via their own lived experiences.

Subject: Social Studies 11 (may also be adapted for other courses)

Learning outcomes

- Assess Canada's role in World War I and II and the impact on Canada.
 - Students are to explain the impact of the war on the home from "enemy aliens."
- Understand and assess the development and impact of Canadian social policies and programs related to immigration, and minority rights, specifically:
 - the head tax and immigration policies
 - treatment of minorities, such as the internment of Japanese Canadians
 - restrictions on voting

Resources

Internment and Redress: The Japanese Canadian Experience, a Resource Guide for Social Studies 11 teachers, www.japanesecanadianhistory.net. Although this resource is intended for Social Studies 11, other classes could use the documents and ideas to incorporate into their lessons.

Context

During the both World War I and II, the Canadian government deemed people from countries that they were fighting against as "enemy aliens". These people faced discrimination and were severely restricted. For example, during the wars Canada considered Germans, Italians, and Austrians as enemy aliens. However, the government took swift action against the Japanese during World War II, as a "precaution" for national security after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour in 1941. The Japanese were sent to internment camps and had all of their personal items confiscated, including houses, boats, cars, cameras, and radios. In 1988, 43 years after the end of World War II, the Canadian government offered an apology and compensation to the Japanese Canadians who were affected and those who were repatriated to Japan were given back their Canadian citizenship.

Lesson 1—Auctioning of personal possessions

The teacher will explain to the class that they will be participating in a simulation auction exercise. This would begin by randomly collecting between five and ten cell phones or other electronic devices from students and securely holding them at the front of the room.

Set a ground rule for this simulation and ensure that the random students whose devices have been confiscated know that they can only communicate through written words, symbols or pictures to express their thoughts and feelings: no verbal communication is allowed on their part for the duration of the simulation game.

The remaining students may talk throughout the simulation game. They will receive play money that will be used in the auction. The collected devices will be auctioned off to the highest bidder,

but no exchange of the goods will happen. After the auction is complete, the students that had items taken will post up their responses on the wall around the classroom. The students who bid on the goods will do a walk around the classroom and look at all the responses (known as a gallery walk).

1. Debrief the exercise as a large group:

For those whose devices were taken away ask:

- What was your initial reaction?
- What did you draw or write down?
- In a real life situation where your cell phone would not be returned, how would you respond?

For those who bid for the cell phones ask:

- Whose words or pictures evoked powerful imagery or emotion in the gallery walk?
- How did you feel bidding on items that you knew were taken from someone else?
- What motivated you to bid?

For those who decided not to bid, but observe ask:

- Whose words or pictures evoked powerful imagery or emotion in the gallery walk?
- What were your feelings toward the bidders and the people who had their items confiscated?

2. Have students look at the artifacts (1-5) from the *Japanese Canadian History* website and answer the corresponding questions from the website.

3. Students should carefully read the *Order In Council Notice: Notice To All Persons OF Japanese Racial Origin* (February 2, 1942). See Gallery Walk of Japanese Canadian Artifacts 1-12

www.japanesecanadianhistory.net/lessons/gallery_walk05.htm

4. Ask students: To what extent was this notice racially motivated? How do you know?

Lesson 2—Racism in the sporting world

Introduction: Ask students, “How can sports unite or divide a country?”

For example, Hockey in Canada, Vancouver Olympics, World Cup, etc...

1. Ask students to do a silent written reflection about this question.
2. Have students use a think/pair/share strategy to share their responses with a partner.
3. Show the NFB documentary: *Sleeping Tigers: The Asahi Baseball Story* (2003) 50 minutes
www.nfb.ca/film/sleeping_tigers_the_asahi_baseball_story/

This NFB documentary profiles the surviving members of the Asahi Japanese baseball team from Vancouver. It highlights their hardships and isolation in internment camps along with their passion for baseball. Through the sport of baseball, Japanese Canadians were able to help break down cultural and racial barriers.

4. Discussion questions:

- a. What were some of the hardships that Japanese Canadians faced in these camps?
- b. How did the Asahi baseball team help break down racial and cultural barriers while being interned?

Lesson 3—Parliamentary debate

Introductory discussion questions

- a. Does the government have the right to restrict its citizens during war? If so, under what circumstances?
- b. Was the government justified in interning the Japanese? Why or why not?
 - i. Parliamentary debate: Should the government apologize and compensate the Japanese Canadians for their internment during World War II?
- c. Teacher will randomly divide the class into three groups and have students come up with arguments in support of their position. Three positions:
 - Apologize and compensate
 - Apologize only
 - Give nothing at all
- d. Structure of Debate: each group should have time for giving an opening statement, arguments to debate, counter arguments, rebuttals, and an opportunity for closing statements.
- e. Before the debate begins, have students set up a page with each of the three positions. See below:

Apologize and compensate	Apologize	Nothing

- f. During the debate, while students are listening to one another have them record the arguments presented from different perspectives.
- g. Teacher summarizes the main points for each perspective with the whole class during a large group debrief.
 - ii. Ask students: Does racial profiling still exist? If so, how does it manifest itself?

Depending upon the student responses, the teacher may prompt students to relate it to the detainment of Tamil refugees in BC in 2009 and the treatment of people of Arab background after September 11, 2001.

Assessment

Collect and assess students' arguments from the parliamentary debate as well the individual charts that each student made during the debates.

Using the *Racism in Canada* poster point out the section regarding: Tamil Refugees and Japanese internment where it asks:

- queue jumper or asylum seeker?
- war victims or criminals?

Assess students' written response to this question:

- Were the actions of interning the Japanese justified? Why or why not?

Students should consider whether or not the Japanese were war victims or criminals within their written responses. Ask them to support their position from an evidence based perspective.

Assess students' discussions and work for understanding the context and impact of the Japanese internment. Also assess students' ability to explain and support personal responses to the information and documentaries by making connections with prior knowledge and experience, describing reactions and emotions, and developing opinions using evidence.

Extension

Have students read excerpts from the novel *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa. This novel centers on a school teacher who remembers the struggle growing up as a third generation Japanese Canadian during World War II in an internment camp. The novel focuses on identity, persecution, and racism.

Students can then write:

- a reflection from the viewpoint of the protagonist
- a letter to a family member
- a letter to the government describing the hardships and living conditions and/or the inequities experienced by the Japanese Canadians in the internment camps

Have students view the NFB documentary, *Enemy Alien*: www.nfb.ca/film/enemy_alien/. This documentary tells the story of the injustice experienced by Japanese Canadians sent to the internment camps in BC (26 minutes). Have students write a story from the perspective of one of the characters from the documentary recalling the injustices and racial discrimination that they faced.