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Wandering the Web — Exploring Information of Japanese Americans’ Experiences in Internment Camps during World War II

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Author’s Note: When you explore the stories of Japanese Americans, you may notice that many stories narrate their experiences in internment camps during World War II (WWII). Although America is a country that consists of immigrants primarily from Europe, many Americans are in general not familiar with how Asians, for instance Japanese, immigrated to the U.S. and how they were historically treated by others in this country. When I pointed out this issue in my graduate course one day, many students reluctantly agreed with my comments. Although many teachers and teacher trainees tend to show a discomfort with using multicultural stories in their instruction due to their unfamiliarity with the cultural contexts in the stories, their use helps stretch their comfort zones and enrich their cultural perspectives as educators. Therefore, teachers and librarians should also be familiar with multicultural stories with a variety of ethnic groups. Although no quick solution exists for this agenda, exploring specialized Websites during and after reading a story, and gaining more specific information about a particular topic help readers build more accurate knowledge and understanding of the topic. I recently had opportunities to explore some of the Websites related to Japanese Americans during WWII. Below is the list of Websites that I recently explored. — TS

These Websites are especially useful when teachers plan extension and/or application activities after reading related stories with their students. The following Websites were selected based on the quality and accuracy of information.

Experiences of Japanese Americans in Internment Camps during World War II

The Children of the Camps: The Documentary — http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/ — is owned by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). The documentary portrays the personal stories of six Japanese American children during WWII. The documentary was directed by Dr. Satsuki Ina, who was born in the Tule Lake Internment Camp. She guided former child internees from Japanese ancestry for about ten years. This documentary was broadcasted from April 1999 to April 2000. DVD and VHS versions are now available for purchase. You will be able to find specific information about the overview of the documentary, the background information about the participants and filmmakers, and the viewers’ guide and reviews from the audience on the Website.

Welcome to the Denshō Website — http://www.densho.org — Denshō is the term originally derived from a Japanese word, which means “pass on the truths to the next generation.” This Legacy Project...
was organized in 1996 and its purpose was to disseminate the voice of Japanese Americans who were unfairly incarcerated during WWII due to their ancestry. The Website consists of six sections: (1) Home, (2) Causes of the Incarceration, (3) Learning Center, (4) Densho Archives, (5) Other Resources, and (6) About Densho. Learning Center is the Densho’s curriculum modules. These multidisciplinary lessons help students from upper elementary levels to undergraduate levels learn about the historical overview of Japanese Americans’ experiences in the internment camps.

**Oral History and Digital Resources for Instruction**

A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution — http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html — is owned by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center. This Website consists of five sections: (1) Story Experience, (2) Reflections, (3) Collection Search, (4) Resources, and (5) Credits. A former NBC journalist, John William Chancellor, provides the historical overview in the introduction. You can choose to either listen to or read it. The photographs are grouped into six categories such as Immigration, Removal, Internment, Loyalty, Service, and Justice. In Reflections, you can read reactions from others and also post your own responses, which is one of the unique characteristics of this Website.

Calisphere: Japanese American Relocation Digital Achieves — http://calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/jaarda/ — is owned by the University of California. All of the digital collections are listed under the Society and Culture Collection. Although the images cover extensive political, social, and cultural topics related to Native Americans, Chinese Americans, the Washington State Government, Labor, Original Artworks, Outdoor Activities, and Performing Arts, pertaining to Japanese Americans, the lives of Camp Harmony (Puyallup) and Minidoka (Idaho) are especially focused on this site. One of the unique characteristics of this Website is that the lives of Japanese American students in the University of Washington, children in the camps, and Japanese Canadian’s internment issues are also described with the digital images. Digital images are powerful literacy instructional tools especially for primary and intermediate grade level students. They can also compare and contrast them with other text features from picture books and informational texts.

**Our Story: American History Stories and Activities You Can Do Together** — http://amhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/internment/ — is also owned by the Smithsonian National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center. Approximately twenty-three topics are listed under Activities. Under Life in a Japanese American Internment Camp, you will find a brief historical overview and the list of the bibliography. Bibliographic information includes not only the topics, appropriate age groups, and publishers of the books but also the types of the books and the authors that these books were granted in the past. This Website helps you locate some of the well-known picture books related to Japanese Americans’ experiences in the internment camps.

**Telling Our Stories: Oral History Achieves Project** — http://www.tellingstories.org — provides you with five different oral histories such as (1) stories of the Civil Rights Era, (2) Holocaust Survivors and Refugees, (3) Liberators and Witnesses to Genocide, (4) Japanese American Internnees, and (5) Fillmore Redevelopment and Dislocation. The Website is owned by the Urban School of San Francisco. Under the Japanese American Internnees, you will find twelve Japanese-Americans’ oral histories based on their experiences in the internment camps. Each of the interviews were conducted and transcribed by local high school students in the Urban School District of San Francisco. The project is operated by local students, teachers, and community volunteers. Exploring and analyzing oral histories by these twelve Japanese Americans will work as efficacious extension and/or application activities after reading related stories.

**Memorials for Japanese Americans**

Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) — http://www.jacl.org — is known as the oldest national civil rights organization for Japanese Americans in the U.S. The primary purpose of this organization is to protect the human rights of the Japanese ancestry and maintain the history and legacy of Japanese Americans. This Website also emphasizes fairness, equity, and social justice for Japanese Americans. Information regarding Japanese Americans’ experiences in the internment camps exists under the Education section, and you will also find the historical information, the map of the internment camps, the Exclusion Order, and the summary of the Constitutional Rights violations. The JACL periodically offers teacher workshops about the Declaration of war against Japan and the Civilian Exclusion Order 5, teacher’s guide and analysis tools and supplementary instructional guides as well as ones for other major historical events in the U.S. The resources for education are especially targeted for both pre-service teacher students and in-service teachers when they plan history lessons. The primary sources can be employed as authentic instructional materials for teaching students any academic subjects at any grade levels.

**National Achieves: Teaching With Documents: Documents and Photographs Related to Japanese Relocation During World War II** — http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/internment/ — this Website exists under the Primary Source Sets in the Library of Congress. In this Website, you will find many primary sources, such as photographs of the President Roosevelt signing the declaration of war against Japan and the Civilian Exclusion Order 5, teacher’s guide and analysis tools and supplementary instructional guides as well as one for other major historical events in the U.S. Teachers and communities and developed instructional tools and materials for teaching children the true meanings of democracy based on the Japanese Americans’ experiences in the internment camps during WWII. The JANM also offers teachers pre-visit educator workshops before they bring students to the museum. This professional development workshop facilitates not only teachers’ learning about the history and experiences of Japanese Americans but also their students’ interactive learning experiences when they visit the museum.

**Teaching Resources**

Japanese-American Internment During World War II — http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation/ — The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration offers the information regarding Japanese Americans’ incarcerations during WWII under Teachers’ Resources. The lesson resources consist of five sections: (1) The Documents, (2) Standards Correlations, (3) Teaching Activities, (4) Document Analysis Worksheet, and (5) OurDocuments.com. As one of the unique characteristics, you will find the photocopy of the final report of Japanese Americans’ evacuation from the West Coast and the transcript of Executive Order 9066 by President Franklin Roosevelt, February 19, 1942.

Letters from Japanese American Internment — http://www.smithsoniandeducation.org/educators/lesson_plans/japanese_internment/ — is owned by the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access (SCLDA). In this Website, letters written to Miss Clara Breed by Japanese American children and her responses to them are used for teaching history during World War II. Miss Breed was a librarian at the San Diego Public Library from 1929 to 1945. It is believed that she distributed stamped and addressed postcards to Japanese American children, asking them to write to her and describe their lives in camp. The resources on this Website can be used when teachers plan to teach reading and writing as well as U.S. history. Teachers and librarians may continue on page 77
fell modestly to 60%, but added members from 44 other countries.  At present, 175 consortia are fully represented on the ICOLC Website with descriptions of their functions.  Numbers fluctuate somewhat as some groups do fade in purpose, while others consolidate and combine.  Consortia are also very different creatures from one another, depending on focus and extent.  The largest has almost 1,000 members; most have a few to a few dozen.

As ICOLC nears its 20th, it faces a significant transition.  Tom Sanville, after his move to Lyra is a few years back, retired at the end of 2014, and ICOLC representatives are depending more than ever on the volunteer efforts of colleagues in the group.  After a series of participatory structural discussions online and at the Albany (April 2015) and Oslo (October 2015) meetings, a coordinating committee of nine members (currently Rick Burke, Teresa Costa, Celeste Feather, Kirsten Leonard, Craig Olsvik, Ann Okerson, Anne Osterman, Kjell Tjensvoll, and Glenn Truran) is providing and divvying up the sorts of roles that were previously handled by Tom.  Emphasis and discussion are shifting into areas such as eBooks, discovery, currency fluctuation, promoting ICOLC outreach and partnerships.  We are learning not only how challenging it is to replace Tom (seems to take a village!) but also about the effort required to minimize organizational weight and bureaucracy, to remain the light-weight and productive organization of the past 19 years.

We invite you to learn more about this remarkable, sometimes under-the-radar group and if you are in a library, to support actively your consortial leaders.  If you’re an information or service provider, keep us in mind for conversations and possible partnerships.  And if you staff a consortium focused on providing the best possible service to your libraries, please join us — be prepared to work for the benefit of libraries everywhere.

Recommendations for further reading:
ICOLC Website: http://icolc.net

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use all of the letters and lesson plans for any grade levels, but most of the instructional tools and suggestions are more appropriate for primary graders than ones in intermediate and/or middle grade levels.

Utah Education Network — http://www.uen.org/themepark/liberty/japanese.shtml — offers some useful Web links for the information about Japanese Americans during WWII.  The links are grouped into five categories (1) Places To Go, (2) People To See, (3) Things To Do, (4) Teacher Resources, and (5) Bibliography.  The information on this Website is especially useful for people who cannot visit some of the sites and museums physically due to a long distance.  Another unique characteristic is that this Website also describes German Americans and Italian Americans who were also placed in the U.S. internment camps during WWII.

Ten Internment Camps for Japanese Americans during WWII

Ten internment camps existed in the U.S. during WWII.  You will be able to access more specific information about each of these internment camps through clicking on the following Web links:

Amache, Colorado — http://www.amache.org
Gila River, Arizona — http://www.bookmice.net/darkchilde/japan/gila.html
Heart Mountain, Wyoming — http://www.heartmountain.org

Jerome, Arkansas — http://www.intheirwords.org/the_home_front_experience/internment_camps/jerome_internment_camp
Manzanar, California — http://www.nps.gov/manz/index.htm
Minidoka, Idaho — http://www.nps.gov/min/index.htm
Poston, Arizona — http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anthropology74/ce10.htm
Rohwer, Arkansas — http://www.intheirwords.org/the_home_front_experience/internment_camps/rohwer_internment_camp
Topaz, Utah — http://www.heartmountain.org
Tule Lake, California — http://www.tulelake.org/history.html

Conclusion
Theses Websites are not a comprehensive collection of historical overviews and experiences of Japanese Americans’ internment camps during WWII.  Although the main focus of each Website somewhat varies, as one of the most important findings, I discovered that most of these sites offered the teaching tools, instructional materials and/or lesson plans regarding Japanese Americans during WWII.

A number of historical fictional stories describing their ancestry and experiences during WWII are widely available nowadays.  However, we should not ignore the gap that exists between the information from these stories and the truths from each of the personal stories and experiences.  Although eliminating the gap is almost impossible, through exploring these specialized Websites as an initial step, we may possibly narrow the gap and minimize the misunderstanding toward Japanese Americans and their history, rethink and reevaluate our own responsibility as the U.S. citizens and/or residents, and further educate ourselves as teachers and/or librarians.  It goes without saying, expanding background knowledge about a particular topic such as Japanese Americans invariably helps us understand related stories better, and ultimately, it also helps us and our students understand the cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity that exists in this country further better in the future.