

# Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II *Poster Exhibition Educators' Guide*

HOW CAN  
WE LEARN FROM  
THE PAST? HOW  
WILL YOU SHAPE  
THE FUTURE?



The Mochida Family were forced to leave their home and greenhouse operation in Eden, California in May 1942. *Courtesy of National Archives*

These complex and powerful questions are at the heart of the *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II* poster exhibition and this accompanying educators' guide. Through the lens of these and additional exploratory questions, students will examine the history of Japanese American incarceration during World War II, analyzing the choices made by those within and outside of the incarceration camps and the lessons we can apply to our actions and policies today.

This educators' guide contains aligned standards and objectives, learning strategies, supplementary primary and secondary materials, and close-looking guides for each poster.

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**RIGHTING A WRONG**

Japanese Americans and World War II

*Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II* was developed by the National Museum of American History and adapted by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. The traveling exhibition and poster exhibition are supported by a grant from the Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, the Terasaki Family Foundation, and C. L. Ehn & Ginger Lew.

## Learning Objectives

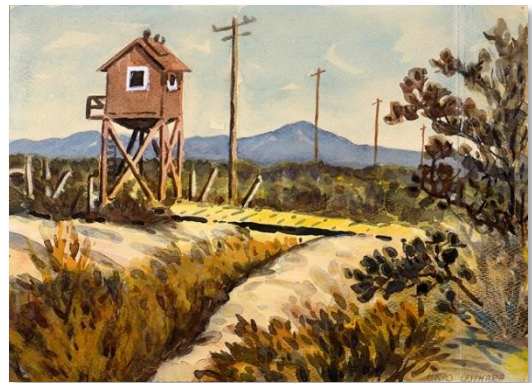
- Examine the events, fears, and rationales that led to the incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals living in the United States during World War II.
- Explore the choices Japanese American citizens and Japanese nationals made while inside the incarceration camps and after the war ended.
- Identify connections between the public mindsets and policies of this event and today.
- Build historical analysis, critical thinking, and communication skills by studying this period in American history using material culture and secondary sources as points of evidence.

## How to Use This Poster Exhibition

Use the framing questions listed above to launch an inquiry learning experience into the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The learning starts with the first poster, which presents the introductory question: How can we learn from the past? The final poster poses a culminating question designed to spark reflection and goal-setting by asking: How will you shape the future?

Each poster contains supporting questions and images of material culture and other primary sources that students can use to better understand how this moment in history came to be, the impact it has had on national policy since then, and the lessons learned that can be applied to issues today.

Students should continue their learning through dialogue with peers, teachers, and stakeholders outside the classroom, as they formulate and share their own arguments in response to each question.



Aikio Ujihara painted this watercolor of the guard tower at Topaz War Relocation Center.  
*National Museum of American History*

## College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies

This exhibition is designed around the C3 Framework and models its inquiry arc:

- **Dimension 1:** Developing questions and planning inquiries
- **Dimension 2:** Applying disciplinary tools and concepts
- **Dimension 3:** Evaluating sources and using evidence
- **Dimension 4:** Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

### Suggested Learning Strategies

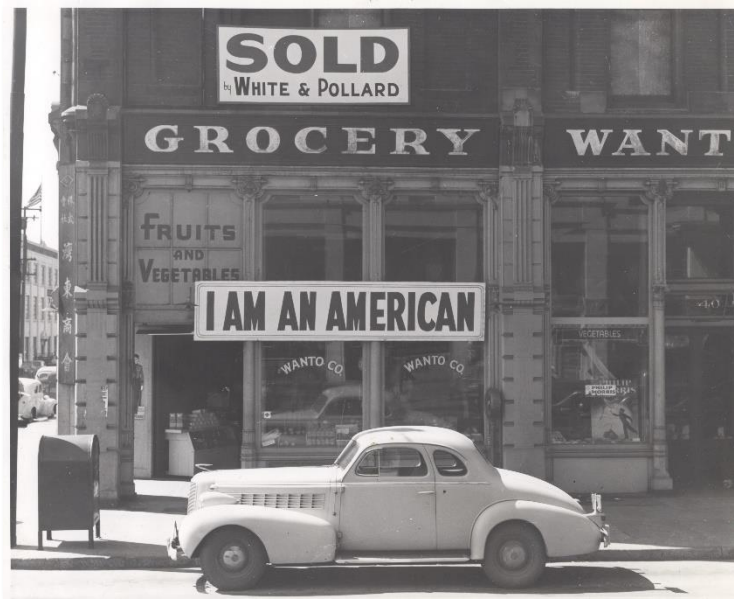
This poster exhibition can help students build their critical thinking and communication skills, using any of the following suggested learning strategies.

**Stations:** Armed with the framing questions, students engage in a series of explorations and discussions with one poster at a time.

**Jigsaw Groups:** Students become experts on the topics, concepts, and questions of one poster, and bring their findings to a new group with students who focused on different posters. Conclusions related to the framing questions can be shared and further discussed with the class.

**Panel or Fishbowl Discussions:** Students work in teams to dive into the framing questions using the full set of posters. In collaboration with their teammates, representatives from each group participate in a panel discussion or fishbowl conversation to communicate their conclusions and learn from their peers.

**Creative Writing and Performance:** After analyzing the posters and compelling questions, students document their conclusions through a creative writing exercise. Students can be asked to share their thoughts through a variety of performance media including museum exhibits, slam poetry, or songwriting.



The Masuda family, owners of the Wanto Grocery in Oakland, California, proclaimed that they were American, even as they were forced to sell their business before they were incarcerated in August 1942. *Courtesy of National Archives*

## Standards Alignment

### National Center for History in Schools

#### ***Era 8 (The Great Depression and World War II (1929–1945)***

STANDARD 3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.

- Standard 3A: The student understands the international background of World War II
  - Analyze the reasons for the growing tensions with Japan in East Asia culminating with the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
- Standard 3C: The student understands the effects of World War II at home
  - Evaluate the internment of Japanese Americans during the war and assess the implication for civil liberties.

### ***Historical Thinking Standards***

#### STANDARD 3: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas.
- B. Consider multiple perspectives.
- C. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas.
- D. Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues.



President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, providing an apology and \$20,000 to the living Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II. *Courtesy of the Ronald Reagan Library, National Archives*

#### STANDARD 5: HISTORICAL ISSUES-ANALYSIS AND DECISION-MAKING

- A. Identify issues and problems in the past.
- B. Evaluate alternative courses of action.
- C. Evaluate the implementation of a decision.

## Standards Alignment Continued

### **Common Core – Anchor standards for reading, writing, and speaking and listening**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

### **National Council for the Social Studies – College, Career and Civic Life Standards (C3)**

D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influence the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

## Additional Resources to Augment Student Learning

### Vocabulary

#### *Executive Order 9066:*

Signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ten weeks after Pearl Harbor, this order authorized the removal and incarceration of “any and all persons” from areas of the country deemed vulnerable to attack or sabotage.

#### *Nisei:*

A person born in the United States or Canada whose parents were immigrants from Japan.

#### *Issei:*

A Japanese immigrant to North America.

### *The Language of Incarceration*

“We gave the fancy name of ‘relocation centers’ to these dust bowls, but they were concentration camps nonetheless.”

—Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, 1946

In the 1940s the War Relocation Authority, charged with implementing Executive Order 9066, used bureaucratic terminology to describe its operation. Scholars and members of the Japanese American community have since raised questions about how this language shaped or even distorted perceptions of the federal government’s actions. They have developed alternate terminology to more accurately describe what happened, terms that are gradually becoming more widely accepted.

These new terms are used throughout the poster exhibit and this educators’ guide. The summary table below is adapted from the 2013 *Power of Words Handbook* written by the National Japanese American Citizens League. The full handbook is located here: <https://jacl.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Power-of-Words-Rev.-Term.-Handbook.pdf>

<b>ORIGINAL TERM</b>	<b>CURRENT TERM</b>
Exclusion	Eviction
Evacuation	Forced removal
Internment	Incarceration
Internee	Inmate
Assembly Center	Temporary detention center
Relocation Center	Incarceration camp

## Map of Assembly Centers



### Arizona

Mayer

### Oregon

Portland

### California

Fresno  
Marysville  
Merced  
Pinedale  
Pomona  
Sacramento  
Salinas  
Santa Anita  
Stockton  
Tanforan  
Tulare  
Turlock

### Washington

Puyallup

## Map of Incarceration Camps



### Arizona

Gila River  
Poston (Colorado River)

### Idaho

Minidoka

### Arkansas

Jerome  
Rohwer

### Utah

Topaz

### California

Manzanar  
Tule Lake

### Wyoming

Heart Mountain

### Colorado

Granada (Amache)



## Online Exhibits, Artifact Collections, and Lesson Plans

- [Japanese Americans in World War II Learning Lab collection](#)

Smithsonian Learning Lab is an interactive online educational tool for teachers, students, and independent learners alike. Search through Smithsonian collections to create unique collections of your own for the classroom or informal learning environments. This collection includes objects and resources related to Japanese incarceration during World War II.



- [National Youth Summit on Japanese American Incarceration \(2016\)](#)

The National Youth Summit brings middle and high school students together with scholars, teachers, policy experts, and activists in a national conversation about important events in America's past that have relevance to the nation's present and future.



- [National Museum of American History's Righting a Wrong online exhibit](#)  
Based on the major exhibition *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II* on display at the National Museum of American History.
- [National Museum of American History's A More Perfect Union online exhibit](#)  
Search through more than 800 related artifacts on this online exhibition *A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution*.
- [National Museum of American History's The Price of Freedom online exhibit](#)  
Based on the exhibition *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War*, this exhibit examines how wars shaped the nation's history and transformed American society.

## HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PAST?

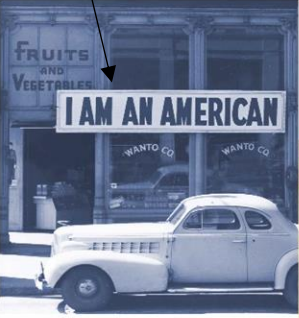
### Take a Closer Look

“I am an American.” Why would someone put a sign up with this message? What sort of building is it posted on? Who might have posted it?


**RIGHTING A WRONG: Japanese Americans and World War II**

In 1942, the U.S. government rounded up more than 120,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals living in the United States and sent them to incarceration camps. Forty years later, community members pushed the nation to confront the wrong it had done—and to make it right.

By exploring this history and asking questions about the past, we discover interweaving stories of oppression, perseverance, and triumph that help us better understand the choices we face today.



*“It shouldn't have happened to us. And it certainly shouldn't happen to anyone else.”*  
—Bob Fuchigami, incarcerated in the Anselmo camp, Colorado



**HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PAST?**

Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II was developed by the National Museum of American History and supported by the Ford Foundation Initiative. The exhibit is a collaboration of the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution. The exhibit is a collaboration of the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution. The exhibit is a collaboration of the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution.

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“It shouldn’t have happened to us. And it certainly shouldn’t happen to anyone else.” Who said this quote and what was his experience? What is he warning us about?

Compare and contrast what is depicted inside and outside the room in this painting. What do you consider to be ordinary and extraordinary? What could this tell us about what it was like to live in an incarceration camp?

## HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

What's more important, personal liberty or national security?

### Take a Closer Look

Look closely at the tags you can see in this photograph and notice that they are on both the people and the bags. What can this tell you about how Japanese Americans were treated when they were evicted?

This poster shows a dramatic image of Japan, symbolized by the yellow octopus, taking over the globe. In your opinion, why might an exaggerated image like this have reinforced people's fear of Japan and Japanese Americans?



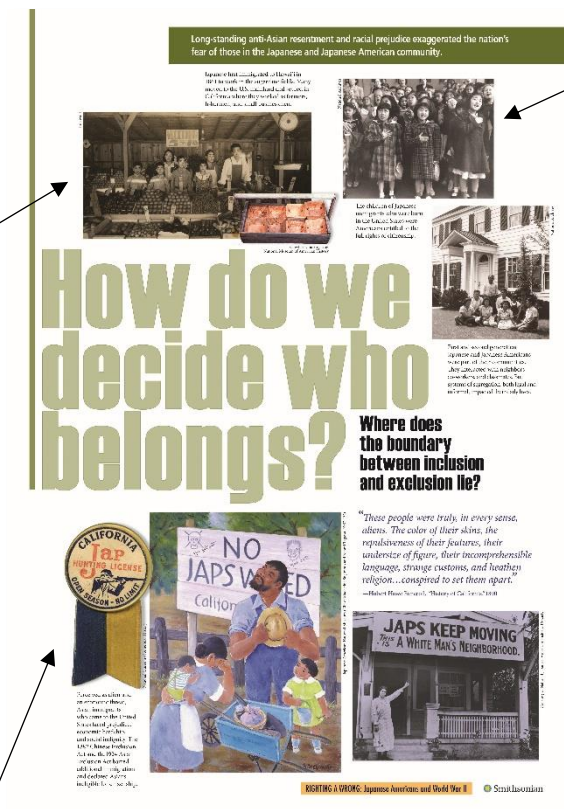
This cartoon was drawn by Theodor Geisel, also known as Dr. Seuss, depicting Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals lining up to get TNT (bomb-making supplies) and awaiting a "signal from home." According to this cartoon, what did many Americans fear? Where does the word "home" refer to?

# HOW DO WE DECIDE WHO BELONGS?

## Where does the boundary between inclusion and exclusion lie?

### Take a Closer Look

Look closely at this photograph and the note at the top. What can this image tell us about how Japanese Americans and nationals built and felt part of a community in the United States?



This image depicts natural-born American children saying the Pledge of Allegiance, a common practice used by many American schools to start each school day. Compare this to the quote by Hubert Howe Bancroft.

“Hunting License” pin. This political statement pin used extreme hyperbole to express an anti-Japanese sentiment. What reaction might this pin have evoked among the Japanese American community?

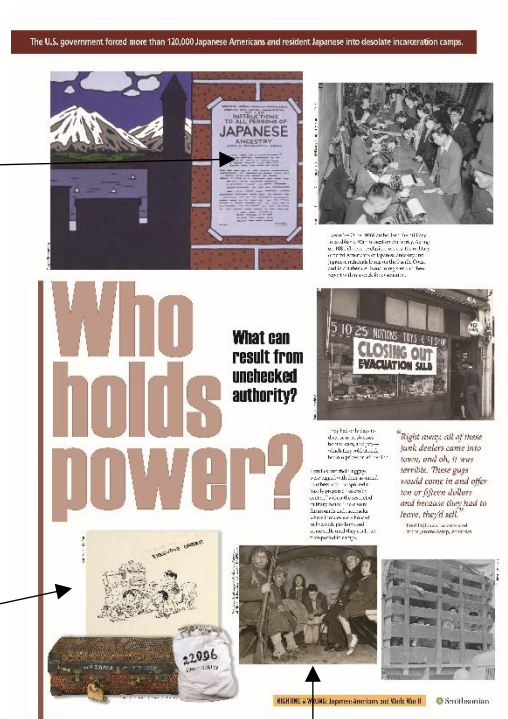
## WHO HOLDS POWER?

### What can result from unchecked authority?

#### Take a Closer Look

Notices, like the one shown in this painting, were posted in 1942 to announce the removal of all Japanese residents from identified areas to incarceration camps. They read in part: “. . . All persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from [this] area by 12 o’clock noon . . .” How would this make you feel if you saw this in your neighborhood?

Once notices like the one shown above were posted, families had only days before they were forced to leave. What emotions do you see depicted on the faces of the Japanese American family in this drawing?



This photograph depicts a Japanese American family in the back of a military truck being escorted by a soldier. The forced removal of persons of Japanese ancestry was facilitated by the U.S. military, per the instructions of Executive Order 9066. Why might the military have been put in charge? How do you think this would have affected people’s feelings of fear or security?

## WHAT COUNTS AS COURAGE?

How can persisting every day be as brave as fighting in a war?

### Take a Closer Look

Look closely at this painting of the boundary of an incarceration camp and notice the barbed wire and guard tower. What might it have felt like to live within these barriers?

This drawing, along with the jersey, mitt, and baseball, depict a popular pastime in the incarceration camps as well as across the country. How do the items demonstrate the resilience of people who were incarcerated? Why might something as simple as playing baseball in the camps be a courageous act?

Many in the camps declared their American-ness and their resilience by maintaining the routines and institutions of everyday life. Others joined or were drafted into the U.S. military.

The history of this war and the experience of Japanese American incarceration is a story of resilience and courage. The Japanese American community has shown the ability to persevere through the darkest of times, and their spirit of hope and determination has inspired generations to come.

Under the counter gaze of a world that turned its back, the Japanese American community found the strength to endure. They did so with a quiet courage, a resilience that is a testament to the human spirit.

**What counts as courage?**

*"Courage is something strong within you that brings out the best in the person."*

—Neil Patrick Harris, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Knowing It*

**How can persisting everyday be as brave as fighting in a war?**

It is a symbol of the courage and resilience of the Japanese American community during World War II. The Liberty Torch patch was worn by members of the 442nd Central Postal Directory and the 442nd Central Postal Directory.

RESILIENCE A VOICE © Japanese Americans and World War II © Smithsonian

The 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team designed and wore this Liberty Torch patch on their uniforms while fighting in Europe. What might this symbol represent and why might a Nisei soldier want to wear it with pride?

# WHAT CHOICES CAN WE MAKE?

## Is it better to conform or resist?

### Take a Closer Look

Look at the painting and newspaper together. What type of event do these resources describe? What are the implications of a newspaper headline that says the U.S. Army acted to suppress actions taken by American citizens?

Many resisted the injustice of their incarceration through protests and legal action.

**Tulelake Reporter**  
**JAPS RIOT: ARMY MOVES IN**  
 JAPANESE RIOT AT TULE LAKE CAMP, CALIF., RESULTS IN DEATHS AND WOUNDS. ARMY TROOPS CALLED IN TO SUPPRESS THE RIOT. (AP Wirephoto)

"We could either tuck our tails between our legs like dogs or stand up like free men and fight for justice. Sense of us chose the latter. We were going to resist."  
 Frank Ichi, brother of the late "Doc" Ichi, San Francisco

**What choices can we make? Is it better to conform or resist?**

Most historians credit the protest as the first act of resistance by Japanese Americans to the internment camps. It was a bold statement of defiance against the government's policies of confinement and discrimination.

Many protesters chose to renounce their American citizenship and return to Japan. This was a difficult decision, as it meant giving up everything they had built in America.

There were several motivations for this choice. Some felt that they had been treated unfairly and wanted to return to their homeland. Others felt that they were not American and wanted to return to their birthplace. Still others felt that they were not wanted in America and wanted to return to their birthplace.

Not everyone chose to renounce their citizenship. Many Japanese Americans fought for their rights and worked to improve their conditions in the camps. Some even organized protests and strikes.

RESISTING A WRONG: Japanese Americans and World War II © Smithsonian

Closely examine the people in this photograph. What emotions do you see?

These badges belonged to two incarcerated Japanese Americans who tried to renounce their American citizenship and return to Japan. Why might they have chosen to resist in this way?

# HOW DOES DEMOCRACY WORK?



## How can we have liberty and justice for all?

### Take a Closer Look

Read the testimony of the man who was incarcerated as a child (in the drawing in the upper left). Compare his sentiments to the quote from President Ford. How do they differ? Why might each have a unique perspective?

Examine the expressions of the people in the photo. How do they feel about their accomplishment? In your opinion, is this act of legislation enough?

Some forty years later, the Japanese American community pushed the nation to confront the wrong it had done—and to make it right.





The man who was incarcerated as a child (in the drawing in the upper left) compares his sentiments to the quote from President Ford. How do they differ? Why might each have a unique perspective?

**How does democracy work? How can we have liberty and justice for all?**

**Personal Justice Denied**

... we have learned from the tragedy of that long ago experience forever to treasure liberty and justice for each individual. . . .

President Gerald R. Ford, 1976, in the Foreword to the Civil Liberties Commission Report



The signing of the Civil Liberties Commission Report in 1983, signed by President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George H. W. Bush. The effort to redress the wrongs of World War II was a long and difficult process.

**RIGHTING A WRONG: Japanese Americans and World War II** | Smithsonian

Look closely at the signs held by individuals at this rally. What are they asking for? How do these demands react to and go beyond what was provided for in the 1988 legislation?



## HOW WILL YOU SHAPE THE FUTURE?

### Take a Closer Look

This photograph, taken between 1942 and 1944, shows a young boy at the Heart Mountain incarceration camp in Wyoming. Think about what it might have been like to be a child in the incarceration camps. How might this experience shape one's perspective and understanding of current events?

Carefully read the quote from John Tateishi. Why is it important to think about what the legacy of this history will be? What is the legacy he wants to leave behind?

The graphic features a central title "HOW WILL YOU SHAPE THE FUTURE?" in large blue letters. To the right is a protest sign that says "NO MORE MANZANARS" with a drawing of a woman. Below the title is a photograph of a young boy in a field. To the left is a photograph of a group of people walking past a train car. Text boxes include: "The country made a big and tragic error in 1942. Could it happen again?", "How will 'we the people' determine the balance between the rights of individual citizens and minority groups and the need for defense of the nation?", and a quote from John Tateishi: "There is a saying in Japanese culture, 'kodomo no tame ni,' which means, 'for the sake of the children.' And for us running this [redress] campaign, that had much to do with it. It's the legacy we're handing down to them and to the nation to say that, 'You can make this mistake, but you also have to correct it—and by correcting it, hopefully not repeat it again.'"

The protest sign references the name of one of the most well-known incarceration camps, called Manzanar. Compare the actions represented by the protest sign to those shown in the photograph of younger generations visiting the sites of Japanese incarceration camps. In your opinion, how can we learn from the past to shape our actions today and strive to create a more humane future?



## Critical Analysis Questions

Take a closer look at each poster and consider the prompts below.

1. What questions are explored in this poster?
  2. Carefully examine each historic image, artifact, and quote and the supporting text. Note anything that you find to be surprising or moving.
  3. Reread the guiding questions and write down your response based on what you have learned from this poster.
  4. Identify and note two pieces of evidence to support your answer.
- 