

INTRODUCTION

Student-Work at the Jerome Relocation Center

Before presenting the essays, speech, article, and poems written by students at the Jerome Relocation Center, Arkansas, a brief historical background of the events leading to the Japanese internment at Jerome are provided below.

Pearl Harbor

In 1939 wars were going on in different parts of the world: Germany invaded Poland; Polish allies, England and France declared war against Germany; and in 1940 Germany attacked Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Norway.

Germany and Japan were allies in this war. For years Japan had nurtured the goal of becoming a powerful nation in the world. Therefore, it had begun conquering countries in Asia. By the spring of 1940, after conquering France and the Netherlands, Germany let Japan take over the former French and Dutch colonies in the Pacific, Indochina and Netherlands Indies. However to get the Netherlands Indies, Japan had to move its soldiers by ship to the place.

The United States expressed its disapproval of Japan's conquests by moving the US Navy's Pacific fleet from California to Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was a US Navy base near Honolulu, at Oahu in the Hawaiian island and on the Pacific Ocean. Hawaii, which was about 2000 miles from California, was a US territory (it became a state in 1959). When Japan moved deeper into Indochina, the US showed further disapproval by stopping oil exports to Japan.

An angered Japan, under Army General and Prime Minister, Hideki Tojo was prepared for war against the US. However, its navy admiral, Isoroku Yamamoto, a former resident of the US, was against war. But he was interested in weakening the power of the US by attacking the US Navy at Pearl Harbor. He presumed that the US would not fight back, rather, negotiate a deal with Japan, thereby letting Japan continue with its conquest of nations.

In a two-hour surprise attack, beginning on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes bombed US ships anchored in Pearl Harbor. The attack resulted in 21 sunk or damaged US ships, 188 destroyed and 159 damaged airplanes, a total of 2,403 killed

servicemen and civilians, and 1178 wounded. This attack caused the US to join World War II and declare war on Japan and its allies.

Relocating Japanese Americans to the Assembly Centers

Most of the Japanese Americans, called Nikkei (pronounced Nee-kay) lived on the West Coast of the United States and in the American territory of Hawaii. From times well before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Americans were subjected to discrimination and racial prejudice. Issei (pronounced Ees-say), were Japanese citizens who had migrated from Japan to the US to better their lives. By law, these first-generation migrants who were foreign-born were denied US citizenship. However, their children born in the United States, called Nisei (pronounced Knee-say), automatically became US citizens. The Nisei knew only America, spoke English, practiced American customs, and considered themselves American.

Patriotic Japanese Americans were as shocked about the Pearl Harbor bombings as the rest of the US. Immediately after the bombings, the FBI raided the houses of respectable Japanese Americans without search warrants. Some of the Japanese Americans were arrested and taken away from their families without any reason.

The Pearl Harbor bombings caused an outpouring of hatred toward all Japanese. Newspapers and radio began spreading propaganda toward all things Japanese—including fellow Americans with Japanese faces. The Japanese Americans were not allowed in restaurants, cafés, movie theaters, roller-skating rinks, public parks, and stores. Shop windows and billboards displayed offending and threatening words aimed at the Japanese Americans. Their cemeteries and homes were vandalized, farms terrorized, and a few shot and killed. The Japanese Americans were addressed derogatorily as “Japs” and were seen as spies. The Army thought that the best way to protect America from these spies was to remove the Japanese Americans from the West Coast and relocate them in isolated camps in the interior of the country.

Yielding to the Congress and the public, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, which authorized the removal of all Japanese from the West Coast and subsequent relocation to camps. According to the Order, the Secretary of War, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, had to establish military areas in various parts of the US to relocate the Japanese Americans from the eight states of Washington, Oregon, California,

Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and Montana. The General's views about the Japanese Americans can be seen in the following words, "A Jap's a Jap. They are a dangerous element It makes no difference whether he is an American; theoretically he is still a Japanese, and you can't change him ... by giving him a piece of paper" (April 13, 1943).

General DeWitt announced the Civilian Exclusion Order on March 2, according to which all Japanese Americans had to evacuate their homes and depart to undisclosed destinations between one to three weeks. The Order also stated that the government was not responsible for any possessions that the Japanese Americans left behind on the West Coast during their relocation. So, the Japanese Americans had to sell their houses, cars, furniture, and farms at extremely low prices. They also had to leave behind their friends. Not all whites were prejudiced against Japanese Americans—the Japanese Americans had friends in some whites and blacks. The latter offered to take care of some possessions of the Japanese Americans. Japanese Americans were allowed to take just clothing and toiletry with them. The Japanese Americans not only lost their jobs, but also their constitutional and legal rights.

General DeWitt established the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) to carry out the internment plan. The WCCA established sixteen assembly centers to provide temporary facilities for the evacuated Japanese Americans, until permanent relocation centers were constructed. The following table provides a list of the location of the assembly centers by towns and states:

Assembly Centers

# of Assembly Centers	Assembly Centers By Towns	Assembly Centers By State	# of States	# of Assembly Centers By State
1	Mayer	Arizona	1	1
2	Fresno (fairgrounds)	California	2	1
3	Manzanar			2
4	Marysville (fairgrounds)			3
5	Merced (fairgrounds)			4
6	Pinedale			5
7	Pomona (fairgrounds)			6
8	Sacramento			7
9	Salinas (rodeo)			8
10	Santa Anita (converted race track)			9
11	Stockton (fairgrounds)			10
12	Tanforan (converted race track)			11
13	Tulare (fairgrounds)			12
14	Turlock (fairgrounds)			13
15	Portland (fairgrounds)	Oregon	3	1
16	Puyallup (fairgrounds)	Washington	4	1

Between March 22 and late April, Japanese Americans were evacuated from their homes to the assembly centers. The conditions at Santa Anita, a race track converted into an assembly center, briefly described here, tells how life at the assembly centers was for the Japanese Americans: A barbed wire fence surrounded the camp with guard towers. Armed guards with binoculars stood guard all day and at night. Their army searchlights went back and forth flashing the lights at 10-second intervals all night long. The race tracks were muddy and had puddles.

Dark and dirty stables served as apartments. Wood shavings, nails, dust, straw, manure, and dead bugs lay on the floors of the stables. The Japanese Americans were provided with metal army cots with canvas bags. They were shown piles of straw to make-do as mattresses. They had to stand in long lines to receive sub-standard food.

Relocating Japanese Americans to Internment Camps

On March 18, 1942 President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102. As per the Order, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was created to assist in the evacuation of the Japanese Americans to ten permanent relocation centers. These centers were situated many miles inland and often in remote and uninhabited places. The following table gives the list of the Relocation Centers by towns and states:

Relocation Centers

# of Relocation Centers	Relocation Centers By Towns	Relocation Centers By State
1	Poston	Arizona
2	Gila River	Arizona
3	Jerome	Arkansas
4	Rohwer	Arkansas
5	Manzanar	California
6	Tule Lake	California
7	Granada	Colorado
8	Minidoka	Idaho
9	Topaz	Utah
10	Heart Mountain	Wyoming

Below is a map showing the sites in the western U.S. associated with the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II:

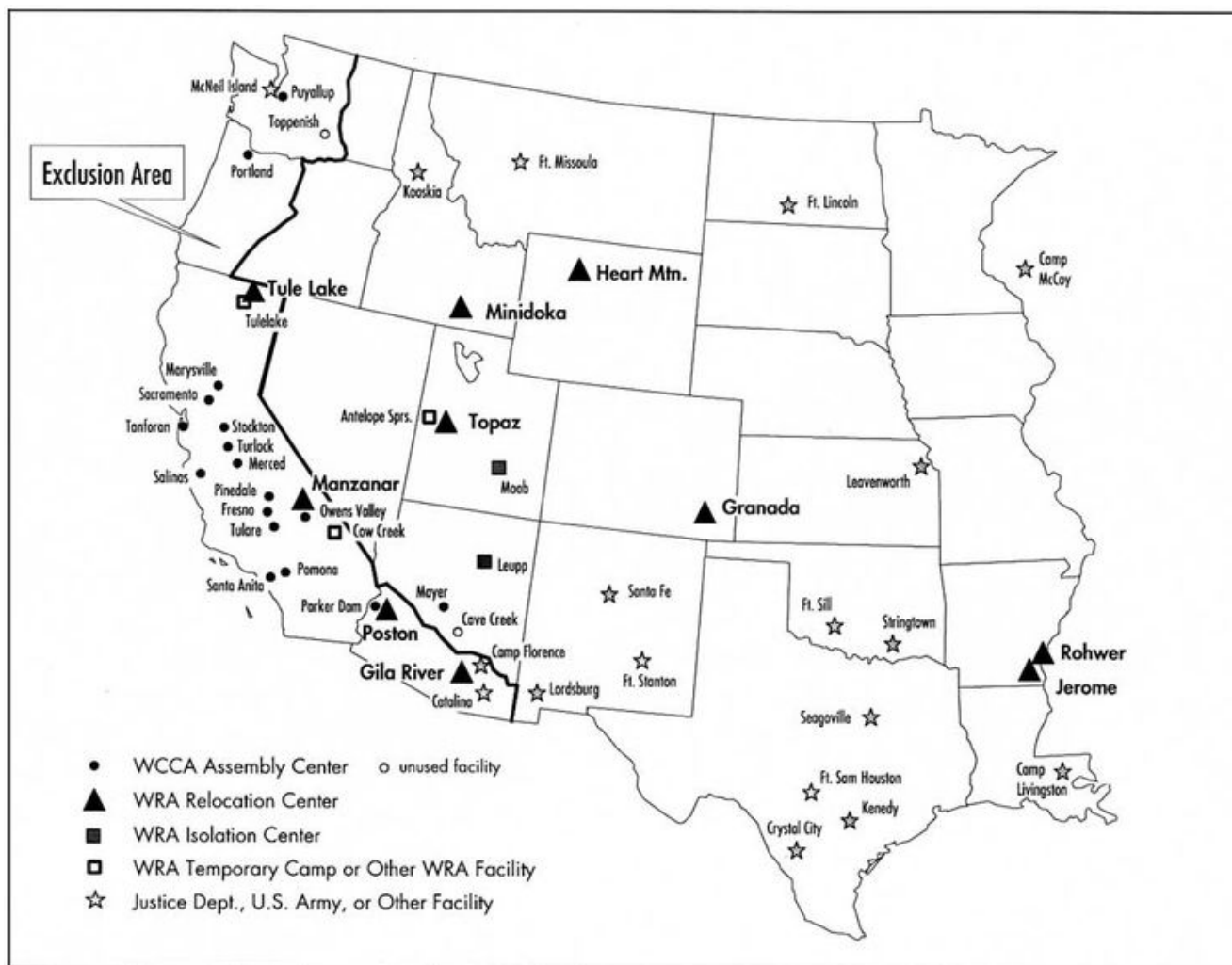


Figure 1.1. Sites in the western U.S. associated with the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Public domain image from the US Park Service from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Relocation Centers began operating on different dates, as can be seen from the table below:

Start Date of Operations at the Relocation Centers

#	Relocation Center	Operation Start Date in 1942
1	Manzanar, CA	March 21 (same as Assembly Center)
2	Poston, AZ	May 8
3	Tule Lake, CA	May 25
4	Gila River, AZ	July 10
5	Minidoka, ID	August 10
6	Heart Mountain, WY	August 11
7	Granada, CO	August 27
8	Topaz, UT	September 11
9	Rohwer, AR	Sep 18
10	Jerome, AR	October 6

The Jerome Relocation Center in Arkansas

On September 18, 1942, the internees started arriving at the camp at Rohwer and on October 6, 1942 to Jerome in Arkansas in special trains with blackened or shaded windows and armed guards. The journey itself was four-days long passing through four southwestern states. The Jerome Relocation Center was located in Drew County and partly in Chicot County, in the Mississippi river delta region, 0.5 miles south of the town of Jerome, 18 miles south of McGehee, 120 miles southeast of Little Rock, and between the Big and Crooked Bayous. The Center operated between October 6, 1942 and June 30, 1944 for a period of 634 days. It held a maximum of 8, 497 Japanese Americans at a point in time.

The center was divided into 50 blocks and had over 610 buildings. The buildings were A-framed structures. There were 36 residential blocks—but they were without plumbing or running water. Each block had fourteen residential barracks, making 504 of them for the 36

residential blocks. Each barrack with an area of 20'x120' was divided into four to six apartments. Thus, there were approximately 2500 apartments on the camp. In addition, each block had a recreational building, a mess hall, and a combined building for laundry and bathroom. Other buildings in the camp were meant for a hospital, a dental clinic, gymnasiums, auditoriums, administration, fire stations, military police, canteens, motion pictures, a warehouse (for storing coal) and factory, a barber shop, a shoe repair shop, motor pools, and a segregated residential section for white WRA personnel. On October 23, 1942, a post office was set up. In 1943, the internees cultivated 630 acres of land at the center and raised more than 1200 hogs for food. Barbed wire partially surrounded the camp and in heavily wooded areas, military soldiers guarded the seven watch towers located at vantage points.

The Jerome Relocation Center was one of the smallest and least developed internment camps and it was closed on June 30, 1944—the first of the camps to close in the country. The internees were transferred to the other Relocation Center in Arkansas, Rohwer, which was twenty-six miles north by rail from Jerome. On December 17, 1944, the U.S. War Department announced revocation of the West Coast exclusion order against Japanese Americans, effective from January 2, 1945. This announcement was made anticipating a possible negative ruling of Supreme Court the following day which declared that the WRA could not detain loyal citizens against will, thus opening the way for Japanese Americans to return to West Coast. On January 2, 1945, restrictions preventing resettlement of the Japanese Americans on the West Coast were removed, though many exceptions continued to exist. A few carefully screened Japanese Americans had returned to the coast in late 1944. On July 2, 1948 President Truman signed the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act, which allowed financial compensation to Japanese Americans because of their forced evacuation.

In the ongoing World War II, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on August 6 and 9 respectively. On September 2, 1945 Japan surrendered formally, thereby ending the six-year long conflict. By the end of 1945 many Japanese American relocation centers had closed. Only the Tule Lake Segregation Center operated until March 20, 1946, because many evacuees there had renounced their American citizenship.

On July 31, 1980 President Jimmy Carter signed a bill to create the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) to determine whether any wrongs had

been committed in the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans. This led to President Ronald Reagan signing the Civil Liberties Act on August 10, 1988, which provided for the payment of \$20,000 to each internee, an apology to the estimated 60,000 survivors of internment, and a \$1.25 billion education fund.

The School at the Jerome Relocation Center

Sixty-six percent of the internees had US citizenship and thirty-nine percent were below nineteen years of age at the Jerome Relocation Center. The camp had 2,483 school-age children, a full thirty-one percent of the population. Three blocks were allocated for elementary and high schools, but were not built. It is hypothesized that one of the residential buildings was used for the purpose of school.

At Jerome, the Denson School System opened on January 4, 1943, very late for the academic year. The school consisted of nursery, kindergarten, and adult education sections as well as junior and senior high schools. The mess hall barracks were used as auditoriums, the recreation buildings were converted into gymnasiums and the mess kitchens into libraries. It took several weeks before the students had folding chairs and months before they had typewriters, science equipment and library materials. When the supplies arrived, they were not in sufficient quantity. There were approximately 2061 students and ninety-five teachers. Arkansas and Japanese teachers taught the students.

The students showed great interest in their studies and teachers had to look for sufficient materials to keep their students busy. They worked on assignments until they were completed. They obeyed their teachers whether it was during class or recess; lunch break or after school let-out. Class attendance was excellent. They enjoyed the friendliness of their southern teachers. And typical of students, the west coast evacuees mimicked the southern accent of their teachers.

The students organized school clubs and honor societies, elected school officers, and published a school newspaper and a yearbook. Friendships, dating, and romances were part of the scene too. The Jerome Relocation Center witnessed 103 weddings and no divorces.

Students at Jerome were sometimes asked by teachers to write about their lives and coming to the relocation centers. Their views expressed in the form of essays have been

preserved in the Virginia Tidball Papers at the Special Collections Department of the University of Arkansas Libraries. Tidball was a teacher at the Jerome Relocation Center. We have provided below samples of student essays and work. Read the student-work while imagining yourself in the position of the Japanese Americans students, and try to feel the experiences that they underwent.

LESSON

Student-Work at the Jerome Relocation Center

Student-Work 1: Autobiographical Essay



Betty Kagawa
Jan, 15, 1943

Autobiography

My name is Betty Kagawa and I was born sixteen years ago in Honolulu, Hawaii. I am the eldest of a family of five children, of which four are girls. This is the first time in my life that I have been away from the Islands. I lived on the island of Oahu and visited the island of Maui several times when I was a little child. I lived in the district of Kaimuki, which is one of the residential sections of the city of Honolulu. I lived among many people of different ancestry of which were Caucasians, Spanish, Koreans, etc. I attended Aliiolani School, which is an elementary school, Robert Louise Stevenson Intermediate [Intermediate] School and before I came here I was attending Roosevelt High School. I had a pet dog whose name was Duke. He was a mixture of a Spitz and a Fox Terrier. Before we came here I had to give him up to the Humane Society because we weren't allowed to bring any pets here.

Due to the war, we were evacuated here and I hope that we will be able to return to the Islands when the war is over.

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Betty Kagawa
Jan 15, 1949

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Autobiography

My name is Betty Kagawa and I was born a few years ago in Honolulu, Hawaii. I am the eldest of a family of five children, of which four are girls. There is all good time in my life that I had spent away from the I can see. I lived on the island of Oahu and had visited the island of Maui several times when I was a little child. I lived in the district of Kaimuki, which is one of the residential sections of the city of Honolulu. I lived among many people of different ^{rac}es of which were Caucasians, Spanish, Korean, etcetera. I attended Ohiolani School, which is an elementary school, Robert Louis Stevenson Intermediate School and before I came here I was attending Roosevelt High School. I had a pit dog whose name was Duke. He was a mixture of a Spitz and a Fox Terrier. Before we came here I had to give him up to the Humane Society because we weren't allowed to bring any pits here.

Because
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Student-Work 2: Essay: On Relocation



Edward Niimi
12 B Period

Japanese Vs. 14th Amendment and Relocation

After the outbreak of the present war when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor the native sons and daughters of the Golden West were ordered to evacuate from the western coast due to military purpose and safety in time of invasion by the enemy.

The 14th amendment says: 'No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges of citizens of the United States, nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law [']'. The Japanese including the aliens and the citizens were deprived of their liberty and property without due process of law with the Germans and Italians being left alone on the west coast.

Was this legal? Equality to all?

In the recent case of Hirabayashi and Yasui [,] with relocation and the California curfew held in the Supreme Court of the United States, Hirabayashi and Yasui were both defeated and was [were] fined and imprisoned due to the evacuation becoming a military necessity [necessity].

This was a good hypothetical case but the verdict and jurisdiction was weak and poor [These were good real cases, but the verdict and jurisdiction were weak and poor]. Chief Justice Stone and Associate Justice Murphy came out with a weak statement which could be hit from all legal point[s] of view [,] but their opinion was the strongest and fairest stating: 'now since the confusion [confusion] is settled [,] the Japanese should be returned and given their full legal rights again.'

The test for this case was whether the 14th Amendment was true and effective or just a clause with no backing or effectiveness.

To day after one year and eight months of war and remaining in these various centers for all the past months we are still waiting anxiously to be returned to our homes, relatives, business [businesses] and friends.

The Japanese as well as the Negroes and the Jews are discriminated in the United States by the Whites and other races.

The Japanese are being used as a political foot ball by the politicians of the present term to assure themselves of another term. Some politicians and high public and military officials come out with untrue statements like the Dies Committee and others, statements like: 'Japs a Jap'; Only good Jap is a dead Jap: also other shrewd words.

Edward Kimmi
120 period 1

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Student-Work 3: Essay: On Relocation



Akiko Shiotani
August 12, 1943

Americans are known as great relocators.

Many of us may think that the problem of relocation has dawned upon a certain minority group for the first time in our American history. In order to obtain a broad perspective on this issue, it seems that it is incumbent that we refer to American history where there are many incidents when a certain group of people or individuals have resettled involuntarily or voluntarily for political, economic, or religious reasons. Our world history will evidence the same fact where people have resettled in a new environment.

Today, we, Japanese Americans, find ourselves in the same predicament, wherein we must pave our way for our future security and welfare. The policy pursued by the W. R. A. [War Relocation Authority] evidences the foresightedness of its officials to resettle the Japanese Americans so that we will be able to live a normal life and enjoy the full citizenship rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. With great demands for workers at the present time, the W. R. A. feels that it is an opportune time to accelerate the program of resettlement so that the “Japanese problem” will be minimized as much as possible during the post-war era.

This program of relocation is more than ever emphasized today, in spite of the pressure groups such as the American Legion of California and the Native Sons and Daughters of Golden West who are utilizing all kinds of influences to confine us in the camps. After the policy was announced to give indefinite furloughs to evacuees as soon as they obtained leave clearance and assured employment outside and in communities where they will be received without hostility, many thousand evacuees have left many Relocation Centers. They are leaving for different cities in the Middle Western States. They are pioneers—pioneers in that these people are paving the ground for those who are contemplating leaving the Center in the immediate future. Since many of the Caucasians have never seen the Japanese people, they must establish a good reputation so that it will enable others to relocate. It will be doubly incumbent on them to follow the mores and morals of the communities.

Relocation will scatter the Japanese Americans throughout the breath [breadth] of the Middle Western States. Consequently, the Japanese Americans will not be congregated in “Little Tokyos.” Hence, the dissemination of the Japanese Americans will enhance the process of assimilation. Perhaps this will enable us to become an integral part of the American Commonwealth. We must admit that America is a great melting pot, but it has made it hard for certain metals to melt. Just recently, Associate Justice Murphy in his opinion in the Hirabayashi case made a statement to this effect, “To say that any group cannot be assimilated is to admit that the great American experiment has failed, that our way of life has failed when confronted with the normal attachment of certain groups to the lands of their forefathers.” Such a statement uttered by one of the judges sitting in the highest court has given us an added confidence in that we Japanese Americans have a part to play in the destiny of our country.

Of course, the circumstances that we find ourselves are unusual. We must have foresight. It will either make us or break us. We must have courage, determination, hope, and vision. Perhaps at the end we may say that it was an experience that we had never had before.

