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Lesson Plan on Japan

- I. Rationale-** In a unit on World War II, I conduct a fictitious trial called “The Trial of Harry Truman.” The former president of the United States is placed on trial on charges of “crimes against humanity” for his decision to use the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in August of 1945. One of the questions that is always brought out in this trial is the issue of what constitutes a crime against humanity. Isn’t war itself a crime against humanity? In this lesson which would precede the Truman trial, I would like to look at man’s inhumanity towards his fellow man in World War II. Certainly, examples from the Holocaust, the dropping of the atomic bomb, the relocation of Japanese Americans in the United States, and the Bataan Death March would be some of the most obvious examples that I would use to examine this topic. Specifically, in this lesson I would like to explore with students the idea of how the indifference of people leads to atrocities in war. I will be using the Japanese writer Hirabayashi Taiko and her 1946 short story titled “Blind Chinese Soldiers” to examine this idea in more detail. This lesson will be presented in a ninth grade United States history class.
- II. Goals and Objectives-**
- A. Students will learn to use literature as a method of examining the question of atrocities in war.
 - B. Students will examine how the writer of “Blind Chinese Soldiers” explores the concept of indifference and then compare this with another piece on indifference called “The Hangman” which they have already discussed in a previous lesson.
 - C. Students will discuss how atrocities of war are brought out in this short story by Taiko.
 - D. Students will identify and examine the different symbols used by Taiko to illustrate her points of indifference and atrocities in war.
- III. Academic Content Standards for Social Studies- Grades 9-10**
- A. **People in Societies**
 - 1. **Benchmark B- Analyze the consequences of oppression, discrimination, and conflict between cultures (p. 260)**
- IV. Essential Questions-** Some questions are of a universal nature and apply throughout the teaching of history. In this lesson several universal questions are applicable:
- A. Are atrocities to be expected in war, or should man-made laws such as the Geneva Conventions govern the conduct of war?

- B. Does indifference serve as a catalyst to the commission of atrocities during a period of war?
 - C. Should countries and individuals who commit atrocious acts during war be held accountable or should the attitude “anything goes in war” be adopted and followed.
- V. **Strategy-** In the lessons immediately preceding this lesson, students will have read “The Hangman” and examined the idea of how indifference by one person can lead to atrocities such as those committed by the Nazis in World War II. Students will also have studied about the Bataan Death March and Japanese relocation after FDR’s executive order which created the relocation camps in the western United States. To further explore these ideas in this lesson, students will be given the short story by Hirabayashi Taiko, “Blind Chinese Soldiers” to read for discussion the following day in class. A series of thoughtful questions will be given to students to think about and reflect upon as they read the short story. These questions will serve as the catalyst for starting this lesson. Specific questions such as “Why do you believe Taiko used the contrasting image of the young prince against the blind Chinese soldiers to make a point? Why do you suppose the Chinese soldiers were blind? How does the indifference in this story shown by the train passengers compare to the indifference shown by the narrator of “The Hangman?” The essential questions above would also serve as good questions for the reading as well. I will divide the class into small groups to discuss these questions and each group will be given 20-30 minutes to discuss and reflect upon their groups response to the questions provided. Each group will then share their insights with the other groups.
- VI. **Materials-** Copies of Hirabayashi Taiko’s “Blind Chinese Soldiers”
- VII. **Evaluation-** Students will be evaluated on the answers provided in their homework done on “Blind Chinese Soldiers,” their group discussions, and a small essay they will write following this unit.
- VIII. **Follow-Up Lesson-** The series of lessons, including the one I have just outlined, will serve as an excellent introduction into the fictitious “Trial of Harry Truman” that is always a highlight for my U.S. history students.