Journey to Topaz: A 6th Grade Literacy Focus Unit
Created by Julie Hamm

Featured Selection:
Title: Journey to Topaz  
Author: Yoshiko Uchida  
Publisher: Publisher’s Book Services  
Copyright Year: 1971

Summary:
Yuki and her Japanese American family are shocked to hear about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They are even more shocked when her father is arrested by the FBI because the US Government suspects he is an enemy alien and his family has to move to an incarceration camp. Just as they become as comfortable as a family could be in such a camp, they are moved to a camp in Utah titled Topaz. At Topaz, her family is reunited with her father and her brother joins the American army to show his loyalty to his country. The whole family is finally allowed to leave the camp when Father helps the camp officials.

Related Materials:
Title: Journey Home  
Author: Yoshiko Uchida  
Publisher: Aladdin Paperbacks  
Copyright Year: 1978  
Reading Level: 6th Grade
This book is actually the sequel to the main feature, Journey to Topaz. It can be used to identify the struggles families go through to rebuild their lives when they are set free with virtually nothing but their hope and courage.

Title: Baseball Saved Us  
Author: Ken Mochizuki  
Publisher: South China Printing Co  
Copyright Year: 1993  
Reading Level: 3-4th Grade
Relation to Unit: This book describes the life of a Japanese American boy living in an incarceration camp and how he and his family, friends, and fellow inmates passed the time. This can be used to help understand life in an incarceration camp.

Title: Under the Red-Blood Sun  
Author: Graham Salisbury  
Publisher: Random Children’s House  
Copyright Year: 1994  
Reading Level: 5-6th Grade
Relation to Unit: This book describes Tomi’s life before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and how the war did not really directly affect him or his buddies. This book can be used to show how war impacts the lives of families and children.
Title: My Friend the Enemy
Author: J.B. Cheaney
Publisher: Random House, Inc.
Copyright Year: 1995
Reading Level: 5th and 6th Grade
Relation to Unit: This book describes the story of a 12-year-old girl who finds a Japanese American boy hiding in her neighbor’s house. This book can be used to show different attitudes of the Japanese Americans during WWII.

Title: The Journal of Ben Uchida, Citizen 13599, Mirror Lake Internment
Author: Barry Deneberg
Publisher: Scholastic
Copyright Year: N/A
Reading Level: 5-6th grade
Relation to Unit: This book is a real journal that will give students a look into what it was like growing up in an incarceration camp. This book is more emotional and students will be able to connect and realize this was a real event that affected real people’s lives, not just something in history they need to learn about.

Goals:
- Students will gain a better understanding of the events of WWII, especially the elements of Japanese incarceration camps in America.
- Students will gain a better understanding of the events that caused the United States to join the war.
- Students will show empathy not only for characters they read about, but for real people who went through this time in history
- Students will realize history is real and happened to real people; it is not just something they need to learn and will be tested over.

Specific Skills and Strategies:
- Empathy
- Using a variety of words when writing
- Strategies of effective storytelling
- Converting yards to feet
- Researching Skills → locating information in old magazines, newspapers, online, or in books

State Standards Covered:
- Social Studies 6.3.1: Identify and locate on maps the countries and capitals of Europe and the Americas such as Great Britain, Russia, Mexico, Canada, Brazil
- Science 6.2.7: Locate information in reference books, back issues of newspapers and magazines, CD-Roms, and computer databases
- Mathematics 6.5.2: Understand and use larger units for measuring length by comparing miles to yards and kilometers to meters
- Language Arts 6.5.6: Use varied word choices to make writing interesting

Unit Plan:
Prereading:
- Teacher brings in pictures of WWII and shows brief excerpts from the movie Pearl Harbor starring Ben Affleck and Josh Hartnett
  o Grouping: Whole Group
- Teacher introduces WWII and the countries involved
  o Grouping: Whole Group
- Using their social studies books, students will identify and locate countries involved in WWII on a blank map, coloring the countries that were allies the same color (Social Studies 6.3.1)
  o Grouping: Individually
  o Assessment: Collect finished worksheets
- Teacher will read aloud Baseball Saved Us as an introduction to Japanese incarceration camps in America. Then students will play a short game of baseball.
  o Grouping: Whole Group

**Reading**
- Teacher will ask students to remember the incarceration camp discussed in Baseball Saved Us and explain they will be reading a book related to the topic
  o Grouping: Whole Group
- Teacher will read chapter aloud, then students will read independently, with a partner, and will read aloud in class with a varying schedule. Students will respond every four chapters in a reading log and it will be collected. They will make connections as well as answer a question asked by the teacher. Students should ask questions and make predictions as well.
  o Grouping: Varied Schedule
- Word wall words to add: incarceration camp, holocaust, rationing, Pearl Harbor...etc

**Responding**
- After every four chapters, students will respond in a reading log where they write a brief summary and make connections
  o Grouping: Independent
  o Assessment: Teacher will collect reading logs
- After chapter eight, students will write a journal entry as a child their age in an internment camp. They will use a variety of words and make their writing come to life, using information they have learned from the book (Language Arts 6.5.6). Also, they will empathize with Yuki and her family.
  o Grouping: Independently
  o Assessment: Collect papers and read
- When the students are reading with a partner, the teacher will go around and listen to students read as well as ask comprehension questions or engage in discussions about the book. If a student is struggling, the teacher will offer more assistance and maybe volunteer to be their buddy.

**Exploring**
- Study the art and music from the time period. Assign each person a partner and assign the pair two songs and two pieces of art to examine. Ask them to determine if the art or music reflects the mood of war. After the pair has discussed have them share their findings with the class and have a group discussion about how the war affected the arts.
  o Grouping: Partners + Whole Group
  o Assessment: Observe who and who is not engaged in discussion/examination
- Assign each student a partner and have them choose a specific country involved in WWII and do a short report on the weather in that country and how it might have affected the soldiers or battles. Have them look at computer databases, and old newspapers or magazines to find information. Have them turn the information they find into a short research paper. It should be
about half of a page long, double spaced, focusing more on the way the students are researching and selecting content than the way the information is organized in the paper (Science 6.2.7).

- Grouping: Partners
- Assessment: Collect research papers and observe students while researching. Grade based on a teacher-constructed rubric

- Look at maps of battle routes soldiers took. Use the map scale to determine how many yards the troops would travel. Convert this to feet and determine roughly how many steps a soldier would travel to battle sites. (Mathematics 6.5.)
  - Grouping: Individual
  - Assessment: collect worksheet/have them show all work on the worksheet

**Applying:**

- Since folktales were a big part of incarceration camps, assign each student a folktale to read. Then have them retell the folktale in their own words to the class.
  - Grouping: Individual/Whole Group
  - Assessment: Observe while students tell their folk tale and grade based on a teacher-constructed rubric

- Have students pretend their family is being evacuated from home. At home, have them pack a backpack of what they would take with them. They should include their personal belongings, treasures, and things they would take, but they should keep in mind that it all has to fit in their backpack so they can carry it. Split students into groups of 4 to signify families. Mark a 10 X 20 ft space with masking tape to simulate the space in which the Sakanes lived.
  - Grouping: Individual/Small Group/Whole Group
  - Assessment: Participation and discussion will be observed and recorded on a teacher-constructed rubric

**Assignment Checklist:**

________ Country Maps
________ Reading Logs
________ Journal Entry
________ Art/Music and the Mood of War
________ Research Paper
________ Math Worksheet
________ Tell Folktales
________ Simulation
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td>Pictures Pearl Harbor Clips Intro to WWII Countries/Maps</td>
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<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
<td>Baseball Saved Us Play baseball Chapt 1 (read aloud)</td>
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<td><strong>Day 3</strong></td>
<td>Teach Empathy Chapt 2-4 (independent) Reading Log Due</td>
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<td><strong>Day 4</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 4-6 (buddy) Teacher Varied Word Use and Empathy</td>
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<td><strong>Day 5</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 6-8 (read aloud) Start Journal Entry Reading Log Due</td>
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<td><strong>Day 6</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 8-10 (independent) Art + Music Examination Work on Journal Entry for HW</td>
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<td><strong>Day 7</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 10-12 (buddy) Reading Log Due Researching Skills Start Research Paper</td>
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<td><strong>Day 8</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 13 (read aloud) Journal Entry Due Finish Research Paper</td>
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<td><strong>Day 9</strong></td>
<td>Teach Math Conversions Math worksheet</td>
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<td><strong>Day 10</strong></td>
<td>Chapter 14 (independent) Good Story Telling Assign Folk Tales</td>
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<td><strong>Day 11</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 15 (buddy) Tell Folktales</td>
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<td><strong>Day 12</strong></td>
<td>Chapt 16 (read aloud) Final Reading Log Due Hw: bring in items</td>
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<td><strong>Day 13</strong></td>
<td>Simulation of camp/discussion of why they brought items they did</td>
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<td><strong>Day 14</strong></td>
<td>Free day: Students can look at related materials if they have not already or can do more research on topics related to WWII if approved by you</td>
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<td><strong>Day 15</strong></td>
<td>Discussion/reactions to simulation, book, related materials</td>
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