

LESSON 9 REPRODUCIBLE

Name: _____ Date: _____

A GRAVE INJUSTICE

In the early 1940s during World War II, people of Japanese heritage were singled out due to wartime hysteria. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor (in Hawaii) in December 1941, the United States declared war on Japan. Americans were afraid that people of Japanese ancestry in the United States would betray America to the enemy. These fears were especially widespread on the West Coast, where many Japanese Americans lived and where people feared further attacks by Japan. (The hysteria had no basis in fact. It was later revealed that the authorities knew soon after Pearl Harbor that there was no threat inside the United States from people of Japanese ancestry.)

In 1942, in response to the fears of white citizens, the United States government evacuated 110,000 Japanese Americans who lived in California, Arizona, and the coastal areas of Washington and Oregon. A third of those evacuated were Japanese immigrants; two thirds of the evacuees had been born in the United States and were American citizens. Half of them were children. The evacuees had to leave their homes, pets, and businesses and take only what they could carry. At isolated inland internment camps they were surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers. Not one of them was accused of a crime. They were imprisoned solely because of their ancestry.

This act of governmental discrimination had long-range effects. The evacuees suffered great mental, physical, and economic harm. In 1988 Congress passed what is known as the Japanese American Redress Bill, admitting "a grave injustice" and requiring payment of \$20,000 to each victim of internment.

Read the following quotes made by people at the time of the evacuation of Japanese Americans. Identify which are examples of stereotyping, which are examples of personal prejudice, and which are examples of discrimination. Then answer the questions below.

Quotes from World War II Era	Stereotyping	Prejudice	Discrimination
1. "All persons of Japanese ancestry...will be evacuated...by 12 o'clock noon...Saturday, May 9, 1942. — <i>Western Defense Command [U.S. Army] Wartime Civil Control Administration...May 3, 1942</i>			
2. "In my opinion...the German and Italian problems should be considered separately from those of the Japanese.... I am...strongly of the conviction that Japanese who are American citizens should be subjected to a more detailed...investigation. — <i>Mayor of San Francisco</i>			
3. "You can't draw a distinction between [Japanese citizens and non-citizens]. They all look alike, act alike and think alike. — <i>Deputy District Attorney of Los Angeles County</i>			

QUESTIONS:

1. How did you identify each quote? Explain why you chose the category for each quote.

2. In what ways do stereotypes contribute to discrimination against groups of people?
