



Lesson One

Aleut Americans and World War II

Goals & Objectives

Provide students with fuller understanding of the affects of World War II at home, and of America's civil rights history. Promote critical thinking, writing skills.

Time Requirements

One to five class periods, depending on activities selected. Additional study time outside class is recommended for some activities.

Activities

Students will create a timeline of events, create a chart of official arguments related to the Aleut relocation, write an opinion piece, and research and prepare a written emergency management plan.

Recommended Viewing

This lesson plan relates to *Aleut Story*, segments one and two (see Viewing Guide).

WAR AND RELOCATION

We shall be worse than fools if we do not anticipate an attack in force against Alaska within the next two months... The record of inaction, delays, inter-agency squabbles and bickering... will be terribly ugly. An outraged public... will rightly insist upon a hard-boiled investigation, which might easily shake this administration to its very foundation.

James C. Rettie, Alaska Office, National Planning Board,
to Harold D. Smith, Bureau of the Budget, May 7, 1942
(National Archives Records Group 407)

The Aleut American experience during World War II is unlike that of any other group of United States citizens, raising fundamental questions about government's obligations to its citizens, and the influence of societal attitudes on official policies.

Many of the same questions raised during this tumultuous chapter of history have been repeated in the years since as our nation has faced new challenges.

In this lesson you will examine the wartime evacuation of Aleut Americans from the Aleutian and Pribilof islands to federal relocation or "duration" camps in Southeast Alaska.

You'll be asked to explore how attitudes may have influenced official decision-making and the action or inaction that followed.

Finally, you'll work with classmates to create an emergency management plan as a way of testing your assumptions, attitudes and organizational skills.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson is intended to give students a fuller understanding of the effects of World War II at home, American civil rights history, specifically the Aleut American experience during World War II, and to encourage students to apply knowledge gained through analysis of historical events to contemporary issues. Students will learn about:

- The World War II, Aleutian Campaign, and its effects on Aleut Americans
- Aleut American history
- Opposing viewpoints and how civil rights laws can be interpreted and applied differently, depending upon people's viewpoint
- Analyzing primary documents
- Working in teams

Students will work alone and in small groups. By the end of this lesson, they will have:

- Created a timeline of key events leading up to the Aleut evacuation
- Created a chart comparing and contrasting official arguments and policies related to the Aleut evacuation and relocation
- Evaluated the constitutional basis for the officials arguments and policies
- Analyzed whether societal attitudes influenced official policy, to what degree, and whether those attitudes were consistent with the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights
- Participated in the development of an emergency management plan
- Engaged in research, writing, critical thinking, and team building

CONSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS

This lesson relates to the [Bill of Rights](#), specifically the **Fifth Amendment** guarantee that no citizen will be deprived of life, liberty and property without due process of law or just compensation, the **Ninth Amendment** protection of individual rights, and the [Fourteenth Amendment](#) clause requiring all people receive "equal protection of the laws."

STANDARDS

This lesson plan relates to the following national educational standards:

National History Standards

Era 8—The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

- Standard 3C—Demonstrate understanding of the effects of World War II at home.

National Standards for Civics and Government

Standard II. A. 2. How American constitutional government has shaped the character of American society. Explain the extent to which Americans have internalized the values and principles of the Constitution and attempted to make its ideals realities. Describe, giving historical and contemporary examples, how Americans have attempted to make the values and principles of the Constitution a reality.

Standard IV.B.2. Evaluate, take and defend positions on issues regarding personal rights.

Standard V.B.5. Explain considerations and criteria commonly used in determining what limits should be placed on specific rights, e.g., clear and present danger; compelling government interest; national security; chilling effect on the exercise of rights; libel or slander; public safety; equal opportunity.

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED

Note: Viewing *Aleut Story* is highly recommended but not required. This lesson relates to Segment One: The Untold Story (14 minutes) and Segment Two: Invasion, Evacuation, Relocation (11 minutes). See Viewing Guide & Film Worksheets.

One to five class periods, depending upon selected activities. Additional study outside class will be needed to complete Activity Five, a group activity.

- **ACTIVITY ONE — Create a timeline of significant events.** One class period or assigned as homework. Students may work individually or in groups.
- **ACTIVITY TWO — Analyze primary documents and write an essay.** One class period or assigned as homework.
- **ACTIVITY THREE — Create a chart comparing and contrasting arguments related to Aleut evacuation and relocation.** One class period or assigned as homework. Students may work individually or in groups.
- **ACTIVITY FOUR — Write an opinion piece.** One class or assigned as homework.
- **ACTIVITY FIVE — Prepare an Emergency Management Plan.** Two or more class periods, plus additional time outside class. Designed for students to work individually and as part of a small group, and as part of a classroom discussion. Additional class time may be needed if students are asked to present their final product.

ASSESSMENT

An assessment rubric developed for use with this unit may be downloaded from [Supplemental Materials](#). This evaluation tool is primarily intended for teachers but may be adapted for use by students to assess classmates' participation in small group activities, or judge individual or group presentations.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES — MATERIALS & RESOURCES

EQUIPMENT

Students will need word processing equipment and paper, or paper and pencils/pens. Depending upon availability, students may also use art supplies (such as poster board, craft paper), computers and audio/video recording equipment for Activity Three.

DOCUMENTS

Students will need a copy of the documents listed below, or Internet access to the [Aleut Story](#) website where they may find the information online:

- This lesson plan
- [National Archives written document analysis worksheet \(PDF\)](#)
(<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/document.html>)
- [The Bill of Rights \(PDF\)](#)
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_of_freedom_7.html
- *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Part II, The Aleuts*
(http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/personal_justice_denied/index.htm)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Log, Agent Dan Benson describing the evacuation from St. George Island ([Supplemental Materials](#))
- [Transcript of Aleut Story](#)
- “Are You Ready: An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness,” from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Basic Preparedness Section
(http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/basic_preparedness.shtm)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES—INDIVIDUAL & GROUP ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE: Create a **timeline** of at least 10 key events in the Aleutian Islands during World War II related to the evacuation of Aleut Americans. You will find information related to this assignment in the *Aleut Story* [film transcript](#) and [Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Part II, The Aleuts, The Aleutian Campaign](#). Additional reading material is listed on the *Aleut Story* website.

Your timeline should include the date (be as specific as possible), the event and why it is important and people who had a significant role in the event.

See example on following page.

Sample Timeline

WORLD WAR II

DATE	September 1939—September 1945
WHAT	Global conflict between totalitarian (fascist) and democratic forces. WII involved 61 countries, 1.7 billion people (three-quarters of world population), cost more than \$1 trillion, an estimated 30 million civilian and 25 million military deaths.
WHERE	Europe, Africa, Middle East, Southeast Asia, China, South Pacific, and North America; also Atlantic and Pacific oceans and other major seas.
RESULTS	Allied victory. Creation of United Nations, emergence of United States

JAPAN ATTACKS UNITED STATES

DATE	December 7, 1941
WHAT	Japan bombs United States, destroying American military ships and aircraft, some 3,500 Americans are killed or wounded
WHERE	Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Territory
RESULTS	United States officially enters World War II. Anti-Japanese sentiments and hostilities worsen across the country, especially on the West Coast.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 SIGNED INTO LAW

DATE **February 19, 1942**

ACTIVITY TWO: Write an essay on the Aleut evacuation from St. George Island using primary documents and transcripts from *Aleut Story*.

Step 1. Read and analyze the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Log entry by federal agent Dan Benson describing the evacuation of St. George Island. Analyze the document using the [National Archives document analysis worksheet](#).

Step 2. Read [Aleut Story transcript](#) of interviews with evacuees from St. George describing the day they were taken off the island.

Step 3. Write an essay about the event. Summarize what happened including the differing points of view expressed by the Aleut evacuees and the federal agents responsible for carrying out orders. List or suggest reasons for the extreme actions and short notice. Describe how you might feel—first as an evacuee, and then as a federal agent.

ACTIVITY THREE: Create a chart comparing and contrasting official arguments related to the evacuation and relocation of Aleut Americans. Begin by reviewing the official arguments cited in [Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Part II, The Aleuts, The Aleutian Campaign](#). Create your chart using information from the report.

Your chart should include:

- At least three arguments against evacuating the Aleuts
- At least three arguments in favor of removing the Aleuts
- An evaluation of each argument for and against the evacuation of the Aleuts

Summarize each argument in your own words, quoting key or phrases as needed. Be sure to provide attribution (who said it), the date (when it was said). In your evaluation, consider the social and legal foundations for each argument:

- What attitudes (beliefs, prejudices, judgments) appear to be influencing the statement for or against evacuation?
- What is the context (e.g. enemy attack is eminent) for the argument in favor or against evacuation?
- Is the position consistent with the Bill of Rights, in particular the Fifth, Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments? Why or why not? Be specific.
- Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
- Imagine the argument is whether to evacuate you and your family. Does that change how you feel about the statement?
- Might someone be heard making this same argument today? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY FOUR. Write an opinion piece. Below are two topics described in *Aleut Story* and discussed in *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Part II, The Aleuts, The Aleutian Campaign*. Select one of the topics below as the basis for your piece. Your opinion piece should:

- **Be concise.** Limit your piece to no more than 750 words.
- **Be specific.** Present a strong argument that is clearly relevant to the issue or event.
- **Provide a recommendation.** Your opinion should include suggestions for what might have been done, or what should be done now to support your position
- **Use facts.** Support your opinion with well-documented and well-researched facts, statistics, and examples related to the issue.
- **Make it relevant.** What does this have to do with your community?

TOPIC I

Jake Lestenkof was a child when he was evacuated from St. George and interned at Funter Bay. Years later, after serving as the head of one of the agencies responsible for the Aleut relocation, Lestenkof reflected on the experience in *Aleut Story*, saying: “I used to reflect on the charge of my predecessors during the war years, and while I was not faced with the magnitude of problems that they were faced with, the inattention that was paid to living conditions of those evacuees, I think, was criminal.”

What do you think of his statement? Do you agree or disagree? What do you think could have been done differently? Are there lessons from his experience that apply today?

TOPIC II

In *Aleut Story*, the narrator explains that during World War II, federal and Alaska territorial officials argued over whether to evacuate the Aleut. In July 1942, after the bombing of Dutch Harbor. Federal officials eventually instituted an emergency evacuation policy in based on a “blood quantum” rule that required: “All natives, or persons with as much as one eighth (1/8) native blood were compelled to go...Only such portable baggage as the people could carry was permitted...”

Blood quantum rules have been used since the early 1700s when Virginia adopted laws limiting the colonial civil rights of Native Americans or people of Native American ancestry. But the concept of blood quantum was not widely applied until the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

What do you think of that policy? Is it useful? Is it fair or unfair? Does the policy seem to be in keeping with the intent of the Constitution or with the Bill of Rights? Is blood quantum rule still used today, for what purpose?

ACTIVITY FIVE: Prepare Emergency Evacuation Plan (group activity). Organize into groups. Each group will be responsible for preparing a credible emergency management plan, including a recommendation regarding evacuation procedures.

During this activity, keep in mind the Aleut evacuation during World War II. Your event

should require consideration of numerous factors, similar to those faced by Alaska Territorial and federal officials.

Consider what obligation, if any, government has to care for its citizens—in what circumstances, and why or why not? Write a short paragraph *before* proceeding.

You may find it helpful to review the Federal Emergency Management Agency “Plan for Disaster.” This information may be included with this lesson, or you can find it online at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtm>.

You may also find it helpful to research news and scholarly articles on national or local disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, California wildfires, or the bombing of Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Step 1. Identify an emergency event. Write a short description of the emergency event. The team should choose an event that could threat the safety and security of your school, community or region. This can be a natural disaster or a manmade threat.

Step 2. List possible hazards. Once your team has decided upon an event, start a list of the possible hazards such as:

- Damage to structures, power and water, roads, transportation systems, hospitals and health care facilities, communication including cellular phone service, television, and radio
- Health risks including physical injuries, death, contamination of water and food supply, disease transmission
- Emotional challenges such as widespread fear or panic, shock, grief, etc.

Step 3. List at-risk populations. Who might suffer loss of property, be at risk of injury, or require special assistance to deal with the impending threat? Among others, consider:

- Families with small children or infants
- Seniors
- People who speak English as a second language, or non-English speakers
- People with physical or mental disabilities
- People in hospitals or nursing homes
- People with infectious diseases
- People with criminal records or prison inmates
- People with pets or livestock
- Animals in shelters and zoos, wildlife

As you make your list, consider who is responsible for assisting and protecting the different populations. What, if anything, will you do to protect against looting, assault and robbery, or other criminal activity?

Step 4. Assign responsibility for the various populations and public and private sectors that may be affected. For example, one person in your team may be responsible for all public utilities including water, sewer, power, and communications. Another person may be responsible for all students and staff at public and private schools.

Step 5. Formulate policy related to your area of responsibility. During World War II, federal and Alaska territorial officials argued over whether to evacuate civilians from the Aleutians. With that debate in mind, develop your own recommendations to deal with problems related to your group's emergency scenario.

For example, if you are responsible for limiting damage to private homes in the event of a flood, you may have a policy of issuing early warnings and providing sand bags to homeowners. Your policy may be to encourage or require homeowners to evacuate. Or, you may recommend your agency leave it up to individual homeowners to prepare for a disaster by purchasing national flood insurance and a lifeboat.

You must justify your recommendations. Be sure to answer the following questions:

- Which at-risk populations are included under your policy?
- What if people refuse to comply with the policy? (For example, they refuse to leave their home although it is in the path of a meteor.)
- Does the policy deny emergency assistance to any group or individual? For example, if you're in charge of emergency shelters, are people with pets allowed? What about people who are sick with a cold or flu? Or have a criminal record?
- What is the rationale behind your policy?
- Is the policy consistent with the Bill of Rights, or does it suspend individual rights in the interest of society or national security?
- What assumptions, attitudes or beliefs are reflected in the policy?

Step 6. Create an emergency management plan. As a team, you must now consider all of the different hazards, at-risk populations, and policies as you formulate a plan of action related to your chosen emergency event. Your team should produce a written plan but may also decide to include key elements in another format such as a poster, public service announcement or website.

Your final product should include:

1. A summary statement on the challenges of planning for an emergency, in particular the challenge of meeting individual rights while providing protections for the community.

2. Emergency Management Plan

- a. Executive Summary or introduction (short overview of the plan and its purpose)
- b. Emergency Planning Team, including who is on the team, who is responsible for what (consider a chart showing the chain of command)
- c. Response plan objectives and policies (what is the plan intended to do or not do, why or why not)
- d. Description of your team's prior experience responding to this type of catastrophe
- e. Description of specific hazards or threats anticipated by this plan
- f. Possible hazards or threats not dealt with in this plan, and why not
- g. Description of at-risk populations, including those with special needs
- h. Recommended actions
- i. Resources, including what is currently available and what more is needed to satisfy the recommendations (for example, the plan may call for placing 1,000 people into shelters but there are currently only 300 shelter beds available in the region)
- j. Operations, logistics, coordination (how the plan will be carried out)
- k. Public awareness program (how you will make people aware of your plan)
- l. Community preparedness (the role of individuals and groups)
- m. Unresolved concerns and consequences for failing to prepare for disaster