



Lesson Two

Aleut Americans and World War II

Goals & Objectives

Provide students with fuller understanding of America's civil rights history, and specifically the Aleut American experience. Promote civic literacy and competence, critical thinking, writing skills.

Time Requirements

One to four class periods depending on selected activities. Additional study may be required outside class.

Activities

Students will analyze primary documents, research civic policy, write and present a civil rights petition, use contemporary forms of writing, such as social media, to explore and report on the Aleut human and civil rights experience.

Recommended Viewing

Aleut Story, Segment Three: The Camps and Segment Four: Hardest Childhood Days

PROTEST IN THE CAMPS

The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1943)

The promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness resonate across our nation's history.

The Bill of Rights established our basic civil liberties. But our definition of civil and human rights is not static, rather it is continues to evolve.

We are constantly testing our definition of civil and human rights.

Direct civic action is one way to seek to refine and expand our rights. In some cases, individuals and groups have found it necessary to engage in direct action in order to ensure their existing rights were upheld as a matter of both law and community practice.

Aleut Americans, relocated and confined to government-run camps during World War II, suffered the loss of individual rights. In response, they challenged the government with direct action. At Funter Bay, Aleut women wrote a [protest petition](#) demanding federal officials respect their civil liberties. Later, Aleuts sought redress through the courts and in the form of a [historic appeal](#) to Congress.

In this lesson you will study the Aleut women's petition, consider fundamental questions regarding civil rights, and write and present a petition of your own. You will also explore ways to use social media to synthesize and report on the Aleut American experience, as well as express your vision of the American Dream and its relation to the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Objectives of this lesson include a fuller understanding of World War II history; the American civil rights experience including how societal attitudes may influence official policy and subsequent action or inaction; how past events may be applied to contemporary situations.

Students will learn about:

- The relocation of Aleut Americans to federal duration camps
- The effect the relocation had on Aleut Americans
- The Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and the Petition Clause
- The First War Powers Act and Executive Order 8985 Establishing the Office of Censorship
- Petitioning governing authorities

By the end of this lesson, students will have:

- Research and analyzed various historical materials, and their relationship to the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights
- Analyzed whether official policy was influenced by societal policy, and evaluated whether those attitudes were consistent with the Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.
- Demonstrated their ability to synthesize material presented in this lesson by developing an emergency response plan
- Applied reading skills, critical thinking including historical perspective, creative writing, listening and speaking skills, team building

CONSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS

This lesson relates to the [Declaration of Independence](#), the [U.S. Constitution](#) and the [Bill of Rights](#), specifically: the First Amendment as it relates to protection of free speech and the right to petition; the Third Amendment which requires consent for the billeting of soldiers in homes; 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 regarding retention of rights.

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.

McRel Standards for Civics

Standard 1. Level IV. Understands ideas about civic life, politics, and government

Standard 13. Level II: 2, 3 & 5. Level IV: 1. Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED

Note: Viewing *Aleut Story* is highly recommended but not required. This lesson relates to Segment Three: The Camps (19 minutes) and Segment Four: Hardest Childhood Days (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.

- 1 **ACTIVITY ONE**—Using expository writing skills, write a series of tweets about the Aleut American experience. One class period or assigned as homework
- 2 **ACTIVITY TWO**—Using narrative and first-person writing skills, write a diary, blog or vlog, drawn from the Aleut American. One class period or assigned as homework
- 3 **ACTIVITY THREE**—Analyze the Aleut women’s protest petition, write an essay and create a visual exhibit. Two to three class periods plus after-school study or assigned as homework.
- 4 **ACTIVITY FOUR**— Research, write and present a protest petition. Apply persuasive writing skills. Two to four class periods with homework and after-school group study. Students work in small groups to create a final product, and make a classroom presentation.

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 team or small group activities and 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 2.

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
- The Declaration of Independence
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html>
- The Constitution of the United States
<http://archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html>
- The Bill of Rights http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_downloads.html
- *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, Part II, The Aleuts
- [Aleut Story film transcript](#)
- National Archives document analysis worksheet
http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf
- The First War Powers Act and Executive Order 8985 Establishing the Office of Censorship
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16068&st=war&st1=power>

Note: All of the Charters of Freedom documents may be viewed or downloaded from the National Archives online at

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_downloads.html:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES—INDIVIDUAL & GROUP ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE: Tweet the Relocation (individual or small group activity). In this activity, you will need to apply your expository writing skills to writing two series of tweets. As you know, expository writing is intended, first and foremost, to provide facts. The information should develop a main idea, supported with facts and quotations. You will write two strings of “tweets,” one from the perspective of an evacuee and the other from the perspective of a federal agent. Both series should focus on the same event. Each series should include 10 individual tweets.

Step 1. Choose an event, a particular day or place in the Aleut American World War II experience to tweet about. Remember to focus on a subject that can be described by both an evacuee and an agent. Draw information for your tweets from 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](#). If you have online access to the *Aleut Story* website, check the archival letters and logs in [Historical Documents](#) and [Bonus Scenes](#) for information.

Step 2. For your first series of 10 tweets, imagine you are an Aleut evacuee writing about your relocation to a duration camp in Southeast Alaska. Your tweets should be informative, and have a sense of immediacy. Describe the experience, alert others to significant events, or use the tweets to connect with family and friends. Be as specific as possible given the format; remember individual tweets are limited to 140 characters.

Step 3 For your second string of 10 tweets, adopt the point of view of a federal or territorial official assigned to work or review conditions at one of the camps. Although you are limited to 140 characters, try to express the agent’s unique point of view.

ACTIVITY TWO: Write a diary, blog or vlog (video blog). Using your narrative and first-person writing skills, write about life in the duration camps. You may choose to write as an evacuee, a federal agent, or even a visitor to the camp. Remember, narrative writing has a beginning (character development and introduction to the plot line), middle (additional plot, climax of the story) and end (conclusion or resolution of the story). Taken together, your diary/blog/vlog entries must tell a story in the first-person. Focus your writing on key days (see below).

Step 1. Draw information for your diary entries or posts from [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](#). If you have online access to the *Aleut Story* website, check the archival letters and logs in [Historical Documents](#) and [Bonus Scenes](#) for other ideas. Is there someone you are particularly interested in?

Step 2. Adopt a voice. Will you write as if you are there? Or, will you adopt the voice of a central character in *Aleut Story* and build on his or her words? Write a one or two paragraph description of your character (I will be writing as though I am a 17-year-old Aleut girl, from St. George Island...).

Step 3. Write diary entries or posts a blog or vlog for the following key dates:

- The first day the evacuees arrive at camp. You may pick any of the duration camps, you may even choose to write about arriving at Wrangell Institute.
- Your first birthday in the camp.
- Your first Thanksgiving in the camp.
- A day you'll never forget in the camp.
- The day you are released from the camp.

ACTIVITY THREE: Analyze the Aleut women's petition and make a presentation to the class. (individual or small group activity) The right to petition government is one of the fundamental rights of American citizens. In this activity you will research the history of the right to petition, analyze the Aleut women's petition protesting conditions in the duration camps.

Step 1. Research the right to petition from Magna Carter to United States Founding Documents to contemporary legal definition. Be prepared to write a short summary of your findings.

Useful information may be found online at The First Amendment Center website (<http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org>), at National Archives & Records Administration (<http://www.archives.gov/>), and the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/>). You may also download the [Declaration of Independence](#), the [U.S. Constitution](#) the [Bill of Rights](#).

Step 2. Research the history of petition writing in this country. Visit the [Library of Congress American Memory](#) online collection of 5,000 petitions written by private citizens and organizations over the course of American history.

Step 3. Write a summary of your findings. Be sure to answer the following questions:

- Are citizens of the United States guaranteed the right to petition government? If yes, how is the right guaranteed?
- Are there limits on citizen's legal authority to petition government? If yes, what are some of the limits? How did they come about and what is the purpose of placing limits on the right to protest and/or petition government?
- The Magna Carta is considered the first, major, legal document to grant people the right to protest government by means of petition. Specifically, what does that historic document say about this right.
- Give a contemporary example of a citizens' petition to government

Step 4. Read the Aleut women's petition available online at *Aleut Story* ([Supplemental Materials](#) and [Historical Documents](#)) or at [National Archives online exhibit Documenting Rights](#). Evaluate the document using the [National Archives written document analysis](#)

[worksheet](#) (also can be downloaded from [Supplemental Materials](#) section).

Step 5. Read the quote below from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and consider its relevance to the Aleut experience, and the Aleut women's petition in particular.

“The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy”. Pres. Roosevelt (1943)

Step 6. Write an essay that speaks to the following questions:

1. How does the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights define American citizens' right to petition?
2. What does that mean to you?
3. What is your initial impression of the Aleut women's petition?
4. Do any words or phrases evoke particularly powerful images or feelings? Can you trace the origin of any of the words or phrases to Constitution or Bill of Rights? Be specific, give examples.
5. What are the women's specific complaints? In what way do the problems identified by the women in their petition represent a violation of their rights under the Bill of Rights? Specify articles of the bill and why they are relevant.
6. Roosevelt talks about “Americanism.” In your own words, describe the concept of Americanism.
7. Consider the Aleut women's petition and Roosevelt's quote. Do the Aleut women fit the description of a “good American”? Explain why or why not?
8. The Aleut women's petition was written in 1942. Roosevelt's quote is from 1943, at a time when Aleut Americans were still confined in federal camps. Is there a conflict between the Aleuts' experience and the ideal described by Roosevelt? If yes, what factors may have contributed to that conflict between political reality and democratic ideal?
9. Does such a conflict exist today in America? Give a specific example.
10. Do you consider petitions to the government an effective means of securing or protecting individual rights?

Step 7. Create a visual exhibit (e.g. poster, collage, sculpture, mobile, etc.) that expresses the ideas and feelings of the Aleut women's petition. Drawn upon your essay for editorial content, look to public art at your school and other places in your community for creative inspiration.

Step 8. Class presentation or exhibition.

ACTIVITY FOUR: Write and present a civil rights petition (Small Group Activity). In this activity, imagine that you are a member of a civil rights organization. You must work together with others in your group to research, write and present a petition seeking action from the government on a specific civil rights issue.

The overall goal this assignment is to answer to the following questions:

- What are our inalienable rights as humans?
- Do human rights differ from our civil rights? If yes, how, why and should they?
- How has your specific group struggled to have their civil rights recognized?
- How has the federal government responded to these struggles?
- How can current civil rights activists learn from your example?

Be prepared to discuss those questions following your group presentation.

Step 1. Organize into small groups. Each group will need to research, write and present a petition to a governmental agency.

Step 2. Select an action, event, rule or law for your petition. Your group must decide on a central focus for its petition based on an actual historic or contemporary event. You must support your petition using historical documents, news reports and other credible information such as first-hand or eyewitness accounts. The focus of your petition should be related to civil rights.

Step 3. Write your action plan. Decide how you plan to present your petition and research what the rules or laws are governing your action. Before writing your petition, it is important to know how you would make your position known. Explain how you would bring your petition to the attention of government authorities. Be sure to include whether your chosen method for presenting the petition is allowed under the law. For example, if your group decides it wants to hand out copies of the petition on a street corner, will that action be legal? Is a permit required? Under what circumstances, if any, should you consider action that challenges existing laws?

Step 4. Write your petition. Apply your persuasive writing skills. Examples of persuasive writing include political speeches and courtroom arguments. The goal is to present a clear argument that will motivate action.

- Your petition must include reference to specific articles in the Bill of Rights.
- Your presentation must incorporate relevant primary source documents.
- The petition should specify what corrective action the group wishes the government authority to take.

Write and present a civil rights appeal to Congress. The appeal may be on behalf of Aleut American internees, or you may write an appeal for another group by applying the various laws, principles, and arguments used on behalf of the Aleut. You may choose to include signatures from other members of the class. (For some ideas go to www.thepetitionsite.com)

Your appeal should be in the form of a letter or petition addressed to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and the President of the U.S. Senate. The letter should be one page, but may include additional pages of signatures.

- General subject heading (e.g. Aleut Civil Rights Violations)
- Title and name
- Address
- Date
- Reference line (e.g. Redress for Aleut American internees)
- Salutation
- Petition
 - Request for specific action (e.g. convene a congressional hearing, conduct field hearings, appoint a special commission, launch an investigation, introduce a bill providing for financial restitution, etc.)
 - Reason for request (what happened)
 - Why Congress should take action (include reference to Constitution, Bill of Rights, federal policy, etc. as appropriate)
- Closing (e.g. Respectfully submitted)
- Signature and printed name

Step 5. Present your petition. You must present your petition to the class as a whole. You may distribute written copies of your petition, present it orally, present it as part of a short play or any other method your group feels will effectively communicate the main purpose of your petition.

After each group presents their case, the class should:

- Discuss the basis for the petition
- Consider the historical context
- Evaluate the role of the government
- Determine whether corrective action should be taken
- If corrective action is to be taken, what that action should be.