



## Lesson Plan

### Debating U.S. Policy

*Is it acceptable for the U.S. government to limit participation in the military because of a person's ethnicity?*

By John Moody, Seward High School, Nebraska

**Grade Level:** High School

**Length:** 4 days

#### McRel National Social Studies Standards:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/SubjectTopics.asp?SubjectID=5>

##### U.S. History 25.4.4

Understands how World War II influenced the home front (e.g., the impact on science, medicine, and technology; how Americans viewed their achievements and global responsibilities at the war's end; how minorities contributed to the war effort and the contradiction between their treatment at home and the goals that they were fighting for in Europe; the effects of the relocation centers on Japanese American families)

##### U.S. History 31.4.2

Understands how recent immigration and migration patterns, and demographic shifts, impacted social and political issues (e.g., major issues that affect immigrants and conflicts these issues engendered; changes in the size and composition of the traditional American family; demographic and residential mobility since 1970)



B-29 pilot Jim Jenkins and gun turret operator Ben Kuroki, 1945

*Courtesy Jim and Ellenette Jenkins*

#### Nebraska State Social Studies Standards:

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ss/DOCUMENTS/TheHistory-SocialStudiesStandardsPDF.pdf>

##### American History 12.1.14

By the end of twelfth grade, students will demonstrate verbal and written skills that focus on enduring issues, divergent viewpoints, and excerpts from famous speeches and documents in United States history.

#### Objectives:

Students will research and debate the actions of our government to prevent or limit Japanese Americans from actively serving in WWII.



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**Terms:**

Nisei            prejudice            racism            discrimination

**Materials and Resources:**

- *The Most Honorable Son: Ben Kuroki* video
- Guidelines for creating the debate (at the end of this lesson plan)
- Access to the Internet to research the topics
  - PBS Most Honorable Son  
<http://pbs.org/mosthonorableson>
  - Nebraska State Dept. of Education: Profile of Ben Kuroki  
<http://www.nsea.org/news/KurokiProfile.htm>
  - PBS Conscience and the Constitution: Profile of Ben Kuroki  
[http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/the\\_story/characters/kuroki\\_ben.html](http://www.pbs.org/itvs/conscience/the_story/characters/kuroki_ben.html)
  - Freedom: A History of US (Webisode 12. Segment 6: Forgetting the Constitution)  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/web12/segment6.html>
  - Organization of American Historians: Incarcerating Japanese Americans  
<http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/ww2homefront/daniels.html>
  - Japanese Internment Camps  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_American\\_internment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_American_internment)
  - San Francisco State University: Japanese Internment Camps Lesson Plans  
<http://bss.sfsu.edu/internment/lessonplans.html>
  - A Nisei on Corregidor  
<http://www.thedropzone.org/pacific/akune.html>
  - Japanese American (Nisei) Students at University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
<http://www.unl.edu/libr/libspec/exhibits/NiseiSite/index.html>
  - Wertheimer, Andrew B., *Admitting Nebraska's Nisei: Japanese American Students at the University of Nebraska, 1942-1945*, Nebraska History Magazine, Volume 83, No. 2. Summer 2002  
<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/back02.htm>
  - Rules of Debate  
[http://www.triviumpursuit.com/speech\\_debate/what\\_is\\_debate.php](http://www.triviumpursuit.com/speech_debate/what_is_debate.php)  
<http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/courses98/DEBATERULES.htm>
  - Discrimination against Arab Americans  
<http://faculty.ncwc.edu/TOConnor/soc/355lect14.htm>
  - Immigrants from the Middle East  
<http://www.cis.org/articles/2002/back902.html>
  - San Francisco Weekly, *Suffer the Little Muslims*  
<http://www.sfweekly.com/2005-08-17/news/suffer-the-little-muslims/>
  - The Treatment of Arab Americans Today (May 2001)  
<http://academic.udayton.edu/race/06hrights/WaronTerrorism/Arabs01.htm>
  - Arab American Institute: About Arab Americans  
<http://www.aaiusa.org/arab-americans>

**The Process:****DAY ONE**

- I. Introduce the topic: Was it appropriate to prevent or limit Nisei from serving in WWII? Students should research this question while keeping in mind a broader question: Should the U.S. prevent or limit Americans with ethnic ties to a warring nation from serving in the U.S. military? This second question will lead into the lesson extension at the conclusion of this lesson plan.

*Optional:* View the video, *Most Honorable Son*

- II. Introduce the format for the debate (see *Guidelines* at the end of this lesson plan). The class will be divided into small groups, each consisting of 3 people. Each of those three people will be assigned a role of judge, affirmative spokesperson, or dissenting spokesperson.

#### DAY TWO

All students research the question looking for supporting and opposing views.

#### DAY THREE

- I. Students engage in a structured debate in groups of three.
- II. After the debate, judges should be given time to process all of the information that was given during the debate and make a decision. Following the judges' decisions, the judges collectively should write a policy for our government to follow when deciding whether to allow Americans with ethnic ties to a warring nation to serve in the U.S. military.
- III. While judges are making a decision and writing a new policy for our government, each spokesperson should write a summary of their position with reasons supporting it.

#### DAY FOUR

- I. Judges will share the results of the debate and the new policy with their spokespeople.
- II. The teacher will lead the class in a discussion of the new policies. What are the difficulties in implementing the new policies? Has anyone's mind been changed by either the debate or the new policies? Why or why not?

#### **Assessment:**

The teacher should circulate from group to group during the debate to keep students on task. At the conclusion of the debate, the teacher will collect from each spokesperson all of their research that includes arguments and sources used during the debate. The judges will hand in their decisions along with the rationale for that decision.

While assessing the spokespersons' arguments, the teacher should determine if their position is supported by the research they found, if they have omitted any information, can they refute their opponent, and whether they have documented their sources.

Assessing the judges should focus on logical explanations and reasoning for why they chose the side they did.

**Extension:**

The teacher can lead a class discussion on Middle Eastern American treatment today or provide questions for students to answer as homework. Suggested questions:

1. In the U.S. today, are Middle Eastern Americans treated the same as other Americans?
2. Should Middle Eastern Americans serve in the U.S. military? Will the policy the judges wrote following the debate be effective today?
3. What is your personal view on Middle Eastern Americans serving in the military?
4. Has the U.S. progressed since WWII in the treatment of minorities?
5. What Constitutional issues arise from this debate?

## Guidelines and Set-up for Debate

This style of debate allows for total class involvement. All students are accountable for participation, unlike most full class debates. This style of debate will work with any topic of a controversial nature.

1. Divide the class into several groups of 3 people each. Assign a role to each person in the group: judge, affirmative spokesperson, or dissenting spokesperson.
2. Each member in each group is responsible for researching the topic and being prepared to participate in a small group debate.
3. After researching the topic, each small group of three meets to share information to bolster their argument. The judges will meet and develop a rubric on points they feel need to be covered during the debate. If points are not addressed by the spokespersons during the debate, the judges will ask each spokesperson to elaborate (see #6 below).
4. On debate day, one spokesperson from each group will meet with a single judge. Each spokesperson will share their point of view without interruption from the other spokesperson.
5. After each spokesperson has expressed their view, each side may refute any or all of the arguments presented by their opponent.
6. Judges will then ask any questions they have of either spokesperson.
7. Judges will make a decision based upon the effectiveness of the spokespersons.
8. Judges will write up a policy for our government to follow when deciding whether to allow Americans with ethnic ties to a warring nation to serve in the U.S. military.

*Possible suggestions to research:*

- Was preventing Nisei from serving a matter of national security?
- Was preventing Nisei from serving blatant discrimination?
- Is racism justified when it is a matter of national security?