



THE WAR



A KEN BURNS FILM

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY KEN BURNS AND LYNN NOVICK

Gaining Insight into the WWII Era through Electronic Records and The National Archives

Through the National Archives website, you and your students have access to millions of electronic records that provide insight into the World War II era. On the surface, the Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource seems a bit intimidating, as it provides online access to electronic records that are highly structured, such as in databases. But two of the archival series available through AAD in particular provide a wealth of information about WWII that students and teachers will find fascinating. They include WWII Army Enlistment Records and Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II. A complete list of the additional series is available at (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-list.jsp?cat=all>).

Both of these series contain information that was originally recorded by hand, subsequently recorded on computer punch cards, and later migrated to digital magnetic tape, their current preservation medium. The original handwritten forms were destroyed, and the punch cards are now useless because the machines that could read them are obsolete. But, the records have been preserved and are more accessible today than ever before and can lead to valuable learning experiences—ones that utilize technology to achieve content objectives.

World War II Army Enlistment Records

This series contains records of approximately nine million men and women who enlisted in the United States Army between 1938 and 1946, including the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Although incomplete, the records contain data for a majority of the enlistees in the United States Army during World War II. In general, the records contain the recruit's serial number, name, state and county of residence, place of enlistment, date of enlistment, grade, Army branch, term of enlistment, nativity (place of birth), year of birth, race, education, civilian occupation, and marital status.

Teaching Suggestions

1. As an introduction to the information available in this database, ask each student to select a person they know of

(a famous individual, a relative, or other) who enlisted in the army between the years 1938-1946. Direct them to the main page for the series at (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-description.jsp?s=3360&cat=all&bc=sl>), and then ask them to type their person's name in the search box and click on the blue search button. At the next screen, ask students to select the "view records" option. When the results page appears, instruct students to select the "view record" option for the person whose data best fits their knowledge of the individual. Encourage students to print out a copy of their record detail page and share their findings with the class.

Example: To retrieve information on the aviator Chuck Yeager's enlistment, on the initial screen, type "Charles Yeager." When the results screen appears, select "view record" for the individual whose place of residence was West Virginia. All of the available information on his enlistment will be displayed, including the fact that he was born in 1923, and enlisted in 1941 as a private in the Army Air Corps.

2. As a class, select a particular state and county to focus on (for example, your own community) and divide the students into four groups. Assign each group one of the following categories to study: race, civilian occupation, education, and marital status. Direct student groups to generate a list of five questions about their assigned category that they think the database might be able to help them to answer. Assign students to conduct a variety of searches that allow them to gather information on their assigned category, find answers to their questions, and share their findings with the class. They will need to conduct an "Advanced Search."

Example: If Calvert County, MD, was the area of focus, students could type "Maryland" on the first line and "Calvert" on the second line. Doing so, they will retrieve 459 records. If they select "view records," on the next page that appears, in the box that reads "Search this file unit," students can select "search within a field" to customize their search results. When the "fielded search page" comes up, ask students to select the red "show more fields" button and then select (1) race and citizenship,

(2) education, (3) civilian occupation, and (4) marital status. Insure that students de-select another field (such as Source of Army Personnel or Army Serial Number) to fit the requested information on the screen. Once they have made their selections, ask them to select the “submit” button on the bottom of the page, and the “search” button on the bottom of the next page. Scanning the 46 pages of results listing information on the 459 enlistments and find that the majority of them were “single with no dependents.”

Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II

This series contains personal descriptive data about Japanese Americans evacuated from Washington, Oregon, and California to ten relocation centers operated by the War Relocation Authority during World War II in California (Tule Lake and Manzanar Centers), Idaho (Minidoka Center), Utah (Central Utah Center), Colorado (Granada Center), Arizona (Colorado River and Gila River Centers), Wyoming (Heart Mountain Center), and Arkansas (Rohwer and Jerome Centers). Each record represents an individual and includes the name; relocation project and assembly center to which assigned; previous address; birthplace of parents; occupation of father; education level; foreign residence; indication of military service; sex and marital status; race of evacuee and spouse; year of birth; age; birthplace; indication of the holding of an alien registration number and/or Social Security number, and whether the evacuee attended Japanese language school; highest grade completed; language proficiency; and occupations.

Teaching Suggestions

1. Divide students into 10 groups and assign a different relocation center to each group. Provide each group with a list of the categories of information included in the database (listed above). Direct each group to select and focus on three of the categories of information in the database and to gather information about the Japanese Americans who lived in their center by conducting a variety of searches using the series entitled “Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II” available at (<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-description.jsp?s=623&cat=all&bc=sl>). For more information about Japanese American internment, you can also watch a clip. Direct them to conduct an initial search on the name of their relocation center. When the results screen comes up, encourage them to select “view records” and on the next screen, “search within a field” to tailor their search. For example, students might choose previous address, birthplace of parents, and year of birth. Instruct students to analyze the data gathered on their selected categories and draw conclusions in order to write a one-page description about the Japanese Americans

who lived at their assigned center. Encourage students to share their descriptions with the class. Ask them to consider how analyzing additional data might alter their descriptions.

2. Inform students that the War Relocation Authority (WRA) collected all of this information on individual evacuees on WRA Form 26 and then transferred the information to computer punch cards. The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley converted the punch cards to an electronic form in the 1960s, and in the late 1980s, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, used a copy of the data file to support distribution of reparations to former evacuees. Invite students to assume the role of an official at the Department of Justice in the late 1980s and ask them to determine which information from the database would have been most useful to them during the distribution of reparations. Encourage students to share their answers in a class discussion. In the discussion, ask students to consider how the data may have originally been used by the WRA during the war.

Additional information about the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II is available online from the Smithsonian Institution at: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/overview.html>

Visit the “SEARCH AND EXPLORE”

(http://www.pbs.org/thewar/search_home.htm) section of THE WAR web site for more information about Japanese Americans and internment.

Resources

Manzanar (New York: Times Books, 1988), with photographs by Ansel Adams and commentary by John Hersey, provides a stunning portrait of a camp.

Farewell to Manzanar (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), is an easy-to-read memoir by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston of Japanese American experience during and after the World War II internment.

Nisei Daughter (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), a memoir by Monica Sone, and *Obasan* (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1982), a novel by Joy Kogawa, capture the prewar, wartime, and postwar life of Japanese Americans.

Bill Hosokawa's Nisei: The Quiet Americans (New York: W. Morrow, 1969), Roger Daniels' *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), Page Smith's *Democracy on Trial: Japanese American Evacuation and Relocation in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), and a portion of Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1993) provide a historical look at internment.

A few stories of Nisei and their reactions to internment can be found in Studs Terkel's *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) and Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

A novel, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, by David Guterson (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1994), set in the Puget Sound area of the Pacific Northwest, gives an account of life and tensions before, during, and after World War II as cultural values clash in a love story about a Caucasian man and a woman of Japanese ancestry.

A recent novel, *The Climate of the Country* by Marnie Mueller (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1999), is based on the author's experience of living with her father, a Caucasian, who was interned as a conscientious objector.

Standards

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

- Era 8 -The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)
 - Standard 3C -Demonstrate the understanding of the effects of World War II at home.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

- Standard I.C.2. -Explain the various purposes served by constitutions.
- Standard IV.B.2. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on foreign policy issues in light of American national interests, values, and principles.
- Standard IV.B.1. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding personal rights.
- Standard IV.B.1. -Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding political rights.

Lee Ann Potter is the head of Education and Volunteer Programs at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.