

Innocence in an age of Infamy

Lesson 1: **Walk a Mile in My Shoes**

Grades 7-12

Objectives:

- Students will compare and contrast stories of individuals featured in the **Innocence in an Age of Infamy** video and education program.
- Students will develop a “Timeline of the War” and an “Empathy Timeline” of each individual’s life story and compare it with the events occurring in Germany and the United States during the same time period.
- Students will create a series of Empathy Snapshots to describe “A Day in the Life Of” the individuals from the video, including their possible thoughts, feelings, actions, and personal points of view.

Materials:

- Dictionaries
- “**Innocence in an Age of Infamy**” video
- Timeline and map are available at <http://www.opb.org/lmd/infamy>
- Background textbooks and other materials on World War II
- Butcher paper, colored markers, and other art materials for constructing the timeline

Procedure for Classroom Activity:

1. Begin the lesson by reminding students of this familiar phrase: “Don’t judge a person until you have walked a mile in their shoes.” Ask students to explain what this phrase means, and how they think it can be valuable advice for learning how to get along with people.
2. Distribute dictionaries, ask seven students to locate the words listed below in the dictionary, and write down their definitions on the chalkboard: empathy, sympathy, judgment, prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, and generalizations. Discuss the meanings of these words. Divide the students into seven groups and ask the students to role-play an example of each word to further extend their understanding of these important, and often misunderstood, terms.

3. Explain to students that the unit they are beginning today will look at the lives of six people now living in Oregon who grew up during World War II. The purpose of the unit is to try to “walk in each of their shoes” to better understand their experiences. Since each of these individuals was close in age to the students’ ages during World War II, the goal of the unit is to develop empathy for them as a way to see how the history of World War II affected each of them personally.

(NOTE TO TEACHERS: You may wish to caution students that this can be a very difficult process and that the lessons and video will sometimes deal with tragic events that happened to these people. You may wish to invite your students to personally let you know if they are disturbed by the content in any way, or you may structure journal writes for the students to help them process the information, as well as let you know if they are having difficulty with the topics involved.)

4. Organize the students into six groups to work on constructing separate sections of a World War II Timeline dating from 1919-1945. (Maps and timelines are also available online if you choose not to have students construct their own.) Using textbooks and background materials, ask the students to identify the significant events that occurred from 1919 through 1945 that related to World War II (in Europe, the United States, and in Asia) and to make a butcher paper timeline for the classroom wall to show this information. Each group is also to develop one map to visually show major steps in their section of the timeline.

Map Groups

Group 1: Europe, from 1919 - 1933

Group 2: Asia and U.S., from 1919 - 1931

Group 3: Europe, from 1933 - 1939

Group 4: Asia and U.S., from 1931 - 1941

Group 5: Europe, from 1939 - 1945

Group 6: Asia and U.S., from 1941 - 1945

5. Ask the groups to use large, bold lettering on the timelines and large maps to display their information. Review the main events with the students so that they have an overview of World War II. Emphasize that this timeline is the skeleton for the next learning that will take place in this unit: about real people who lived during these world events, and our goal to develop empathy with them.

6. As the students view the video and learn about the six people involved, divide them into six groups to develop Empathy Snapshots related to “A Day in the Life Of” each person. These Empathy Snapshots should include not only what happened to the person at a particular point in time, but also the students’ ideas of that person’s feelings and point of view about the events. Post these Empathy Snapshots on the timeline using different colors of paper to represent each of the individuals. As the unit progresses, students may wish to add additional significant events to the timeline and also more “snapshot descriptions” for the people about whose lives we are learning.

Assessment Suggestions:

1. Use a multi-step writing process (for example, identify audience and purpose, generate ideas, plan, draft, confer with others, revise, and publish) to help students develop and refine their written “snapshots.”

Enrichment:

1. Write a fictional play about a portion of one or more of the individuals’ lives. Students can create scenes where the individuals might meet each other or share their viewpoints about historical events — for example, Kristallnacht, D-Day, or Hitler’s suicide. Perform the play for another class.