

Death in Camp

Story Thematic - Lesson 4

Title: Did people die there?

Summary: This lesson discusses losses which occur during internee's time in camp. *Consider using this lesson in conjunction with "Life in Camp," to illustrate life events that occurred during internment.

Age/grade level: 5th – 8th

Related EALR: Check the Omoide website for Washington State 2008 EALRS and CBA's applicable to your grade level.

Suggested materials: Copy of newspaper obituaries, Copies of Omoide stories. Omoide IV – "The Drowning," "My Sister Passed Away in Camp"



Time needed: One or two class sessions

Lesson Objective: Students will reflect and discuss death in internment camps as it relates to life events that occurred there.

Presenting the Lesson

Preparation:

Get a few samples or a collection of obituaries from a newspaper, newsletter, or other sources. Decide which stories you'll share and make copies if desired.

Set/Introduction:

Show students the copy of the obituaries that you obtained. Tell them the people in the obituaries died recently. All had life experiences that someone living shared with them. This is often how obituaries or memorials are written.

Main activity:

Tell students they will read about some people who died during WWII. The stories were written by people who knew the deceased and are memories of that time and place.

Review or introduce students to the Omoide book. Explain to them that the stories contained in the book were about children's lives in Japanese American internment camps during WWII. During that time, people lived and died just as they did outside of camp. Most people didn't die in camp, but they may have known someone who did or heard about deaths.

1. Read aloud or give students time to read copies of the stories you've selected to share.

2. Lead a large group discussion by asking the guided questions provided or ones that you come up with after reading.
3. Summarize the activity by having students think about their own lives today and how people live and die in what is normal setting for them.

Secondary activity:

Ask students if they know anyone who's died. Tell them to think about the life of that person and come up with a few words that may describe their lives. Have students write quick and simple obituaries for the person that point out the highlights of that person's life. Set aside a time for them to share their tributes. *If they don't know anyone who's died, they can write a remembrance for anyone they choose.

Guided questions/Potential answers:

- ❑ How do you think people felt when the character in the story died? (*Answers will vary, but may include sad, scared, angry, or confused.*)
- ❑ Do you think they felt different because they were in camp? Or would it be the same if they were out of camp? (*Answers will vary.*)
- ❑ Do you think the people who died in camp would have lived if they weren't in camp? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary, but should reflect something about camps were not typical places that people died in.*)
- ❑ Why do you think these authors chose to write about deaths during their internment experience? (*Answers will vary, but might include: "because this was a unique time period in their history" or "it makes them remember their camp experience."*)

Summary:

Review with students that death is a normal life event and can occur in all kinds of situations. It can invoke deep feelings and memories which is part of life.

Assessment options:

Have students respond in writing to any or all of the guided questions. You can use the [response rubric](#) or the [empathy rubric](#) found in the Omoide curriculum website to assess understanding.

Extensions/Follow up:

If you haven't done so yet, use the Life in Camps lesson to illustrate attempts of normalcy in life in camps. Or choose one of the other lessons to continue discussion about experiences in camp. Relate to students' lives as applicable.

Additional Bibliography:

Other resources can be found in the [reference/bibliography](#) located on the Omoide curriculum website.

Notes: