

On All Fronts
World War II and the NFB
Lesson plan for *Unwanted Soldiers*

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Overall Objective

This film looks at how Canada's enlistment policies discriminated against Chinese Canadians during the Second World War and how this discrimination represented a broader pattern of racism prevalent at the time. The learning activities involve making drawings inspired by the film and writing in a fictional journal.

Grade level

Advanced 9–12 and beyond. This unit can be adapted to younger grades and different courses of study in various Canadian provinces and territories.

Content Areas

History
Citizenship
Political Science
Human Rights
Social Studies

Content Items Used

Unwanted Soldiers, 1999 (47 m 21 s)

Content items can be viewed online free of charge at <www.nfb.ca/ww2>.

Materials Required

Blackboard, white board or flip chart and markers
Laptop and projector
Computer lab

Summary

Unwanted Soldiers by Jeri Osborne is a sensitive, sobering look at the discriminatory relationship between the Canadian Government and Chinese Canadians during WWII. This documentary chronicles stories of a group of men who fought to be recognized as Canadian citizens and reveals federal policies that limited Chinese Canadians' human rights. Though originally banned from enlisting in the military, Chinese Canadians were finally deployed as Special Forces agents for dangerous espionage work in Southeast Asia.

Preparatory Activity - To be done before showing the film (45 minutes)

1. Present some background information about Canada's involvement in WWII: how and when the country entered the war and the race-based policies regarding enlistment. Similar examples of discrimination against First Nations people and the use of enfranchisement to achieve military service may be discussed.

The following clip from the online CBC TV Archives presents important facts on this issue. Using a computer and a media projector, show these two segments to the class:

http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-69-1433-9243/life_society/chinese_immigration/

2. Present an overview of early Chinese immigration to Canada.
3. Establish a historical context for the film. For example, present a timeline of suffrage in Canada that includes women, Asian and First Nations people and when they received the right to vote in national elections.
4. To explore the issues in the film, first discuss the definitions of *racism*, *discrimination*, *xenophobia* and *bigotry*.

Introduction Activity (The film is 48 minutes, and this activity can be done during the viewing)

While watching the film, students should take notes of examples of discrimination experienced by Chinese Canadians. Give them these categories (in boldface) to list in point form: **political** (e.g., politicians banning Chinese from voting, Knights of Labor), **social** (e.g., stepping to the side of the sidewalk to let a Caucasian person walk by), **family** (families separated due to immigration restrictions) and **economic** (restricted employment and professional membership).

http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/cin/026019-119.01-e.php?nl_id_nbr=4093 provides an example of a racist cartoon.

ACTIVITY 1: Making drawings inspired by the film (1 hour)

Objectives:

- Through visual art, students will illustrate examples of discrimination and its personal effects on people.
- The illustrations will act as talking points for a deeper discussion of the issues.
- Students will develop empathy with the personal experiences of Chinese Canadians.

Step 1: Hand out poster paper and ask the students to divide the poster into 4 equal parts.

Step 2: In each quadrant, students are to make a drawing about the types of racism depicted in the film. Words are to be kept to a minimum. Students are to illustrate their perceptions, feelings and understandings about racism and discrimination. Art will be used as tool to encourage empathy with those victimized by discrimination.

Step 3: Have students who feel comfortable sharing their work show their illustrations to classmates. Ensure that most examples of racism depicted in the film are illustrated.

Step 4: Have students identify which scene from the film is being illustrated by the drawings being shown by others. Encourage constructive and respectful comments.

ACTIVITY 2: Journal writing (1 hour)

Objectives

- Through fictional journal writing, students will identify with the deep wounds caused by racism by modelling a Chinese Canadian citizen during World War II.
- Students will individually reflect on what they learned about Canadian government policies regarding Chinese Canadian enlistment, as well as the discriminatory attitudes of some of Canadian society during this period.
- Develop and personalize student empathy toward Canadians of colour and non-European backgrounds.

Step 1: Students write a fictional journal entry in the first person about a Chinese Canadian experience of discrimination as depicted in the film.

The character or person chosen could be an enlisted soldier, someone who was refused enlistment, the parent of a Chinese Canadian soldier or any other first-hand account. Students should write a minimum of one page demonstrating their knowledge of policies, events or personal experiences.

Encourage students to emphasize emotions. Facts should be used to provide context for personal experience.

Step 2: Students share their writing with their peers.

Closure Activity (10 minutes)

“A Chinese-Canadian Governor General” 01:36 min

http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-69-1433-9251/life_society/chinese_immigration/clip10

Have the students watch this short clip of the swearing-in ceremony of Adrienne Clarkson as Governor General in 1999. She speaks of her family arriving in Canada as refugees in 1942 after the fall of Hong Kong. As an optional homework assignment, have students write a brief personal opinion about discrimination, racism or xenophobia as they exist in Canadian society today and current government policies.

Check for Understanding

The completeness of the listing of forms of discrimination in the introductory activity will determine what students have initially learned from the movie.

The depth of the expressions of “feelings” in the illustrations and journals will determine the extent to which students can empathize with the experiences of Chinese Canadians.

Being able to establish a safe, respectful environment for discussing these issues will illustrate that students can modify their behaviour in ways that encourage respect for a diversity of opinions and cultures.

References and Resources

Chinese Canadian National Council: <http://www.ccnc.ca/about.php?section=content/search.php>

“The Role Played by Chinese-Canadians in WWII”:

http://www.sen.parl.gc.ca/vpoy/english/Special_Interests/speeches/Speech%20-%20AAAS%20Toronto.htm

“Relocation to Redress: The Internment of the Japanese Canadians”: http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-71-568/conflict_war/internment/

“Humoring Ethnic America: Abercrombie & Fitch Still Doesn’t Get It”:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/gate/archive/2002/04/23/eguillermo.DTL>

“Prejudice and Discrimination”:

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006458>

Pacific Rim Magazine online, an article about the head tax levelled on Chinese Canadians and the movement for redress: <http://www.langara.bc.ca/prm/2005/past.htm>

Evaluation rubric for teachers

Criteria	Needs Improvement/ Incomplete	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
	1	2	3	4
Knowledge & Understanding	The student demonstrates little understanding of policies and events of Chinese Canadian involvement in WWII. Little engagement in activities.	The student demonstrates some understanding of policies and events of Chinese Canadian involvement in WWII. Reasonably active engagement.	The student demonstrates considerable understanding of policies and events of Chinese Canadian involvement in WWII. Active engagement with good results.	The student demonstrates excellent understanding of policies and events of Chinese Canadian involvement in WWII. Fully engaged in the assignments.
Critical Thinking	Little ability to identify and express key concepts and events in the film.	Able to identify and express some key concepts and events in the film.	Demonstrates considerable ability to identify key or critical concepts of events in the film and critical analysis of issues.	Excellent ability to identify key or critical concepts of events in the film, and critical analysis of issues.
Synthesis & Analysis Drawing of Racism & Discrimination	Difficulty illustrating acts/events depicting discrimination in the film.	Somewhat engaging or limited illustrations of acts/events depicting discrimination in the film.	Creative illustrations of acts/events depicting discrimination in the film.	Excellent illustrations of acts/events depicting discrimination in the film.
Synthesis & Analysis Journal Writing	Entries demonstrate little understanding of discriminatory events depicted in the film. Numerous spelling or grammatical errors.	The writing demonstrates understanding of events depicted in the film. Some grammatical and spelling errors. Supporting details are relevant but general.	The writing engages and holds the readers interest and demonstrates a solid understanding of issues in the film. Grammatical and spelling errors are few. Supporting details are relevant and specific.	The writing is creative and original and demonstrates an outstanding understanding of issues in the film. Supporting details are precise and original. Few or no grammatical or spelling errors.



Self-evaluation rubric for students

Criteria	Needs Improvement/ Incomplete	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
	1	2	3	4
Drawings depicting racial discrimination	I felt like my drawings didn't show discrimination very well.	My drawings illustrated discrimination reasonably well.	I like my drawings. They illustrate discrimination quite well.	I feel really good about my drawings. They illustrate discrimination really well.
Journal entries reflecting racial discrimination	My journal entries were all right, but I felt like something was missing, or I didn't really understand what I was supposed to do.	My journal entries were fairly good and I understood what I was supposed to do.	My journal entries made me understand what discrimination is like and I was interested in the project.	Writing the journal made me feel like I was sharing the experience of discrimination and made me think about what it must have been like for Chinese Canadians.

