



Episode 4: CAMERAS

Pictures allow us to peer into the past, but those images are often far more complicated than what initially meets the eye. Photographs (and the people who took them) portrayed Japanese Americans as menacing threats, as hapless victims, as model Americans. But there were also covert acts of resistance playing out on both sides of the camera. In this episode, we talk about the visual record of WWII incarceration and the stories that unfolded behind the lens. About what you see — and what you don't. See the full transcript [here](#).

Discussion Questions:

1. Photography was one way to document an experience in 1944. What are some other ways of documenting experiences today? If you had to document an experience, what form would you use?
2. Why do you think the War Relocation Authority (the government agency that ran the camps) wanted to portray the incarcerated as “good Americans”? What is the contradiction/irony in this message?
3. How did the portrayal of Japanese American incarcerated as “good Americans” help lead to the myth of Asians being the “model minority”? How has this myth influenced perceptions/stereotypes of Asian Americans?
4. The podcast gives several examples of anti-Japanese propaganda used during the war. What are some examples of propaganda related to other subjects that you can think of (e.g. immigration, terrorism, crime, COVID-19)?

Lesson Idea:

See--Think--Wonder Activity: This thinking routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps students stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry.



Show students this [painting by Kango Takamura](#).

(Tip: Cover over caption in lower left corner that says, "First Impression of Manzanar.")

Takamura was an [Issei](#) who was incarcerated at the Santa Fe internment camp and the Manzanar concentration camp. For more information on Kango Takamura, see the [Densho Encyclopedia](#).

Ask each of the following questions in sequence, allowing time for students to look closely at the painting, to reflect, and to respond (either verbally or in writing) after each question.

Question 1: What do you **SEE**? (For this question, it's important that students focus only on observation, not interpretation.)

Question 2: What does it make you **THINK** about? How does it connect with something else that you have seen or know?

Question 3: What does it make you **WONDER**? What questions does it bring up for you?

