

# ECHOES ON EASELS

# JAPANESE INTERMENT CAMPS



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# ECHOES ON EASELS

Introducing hard histories, or topics that come with complex stories and big feelings and require thoughtfulness and intentionality when implementing in the classroom, can be daunting.

The Illinois State Museum offers the use of carefully curated pieces from our art collection as a tool to introduce hard histories in the classroom.

Providing examples of creative expression representing troubling periods of our nation's past as well as context and guiding questions, Echoes on Easels aims to serve as a catalyst for important classroom conversations about histories that need to be preserved, and stories that must be shared.

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2. VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES: SACRAMENTO BY  
MIYOKO ITO

3 - 4. OVERVIEW OF JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMPS

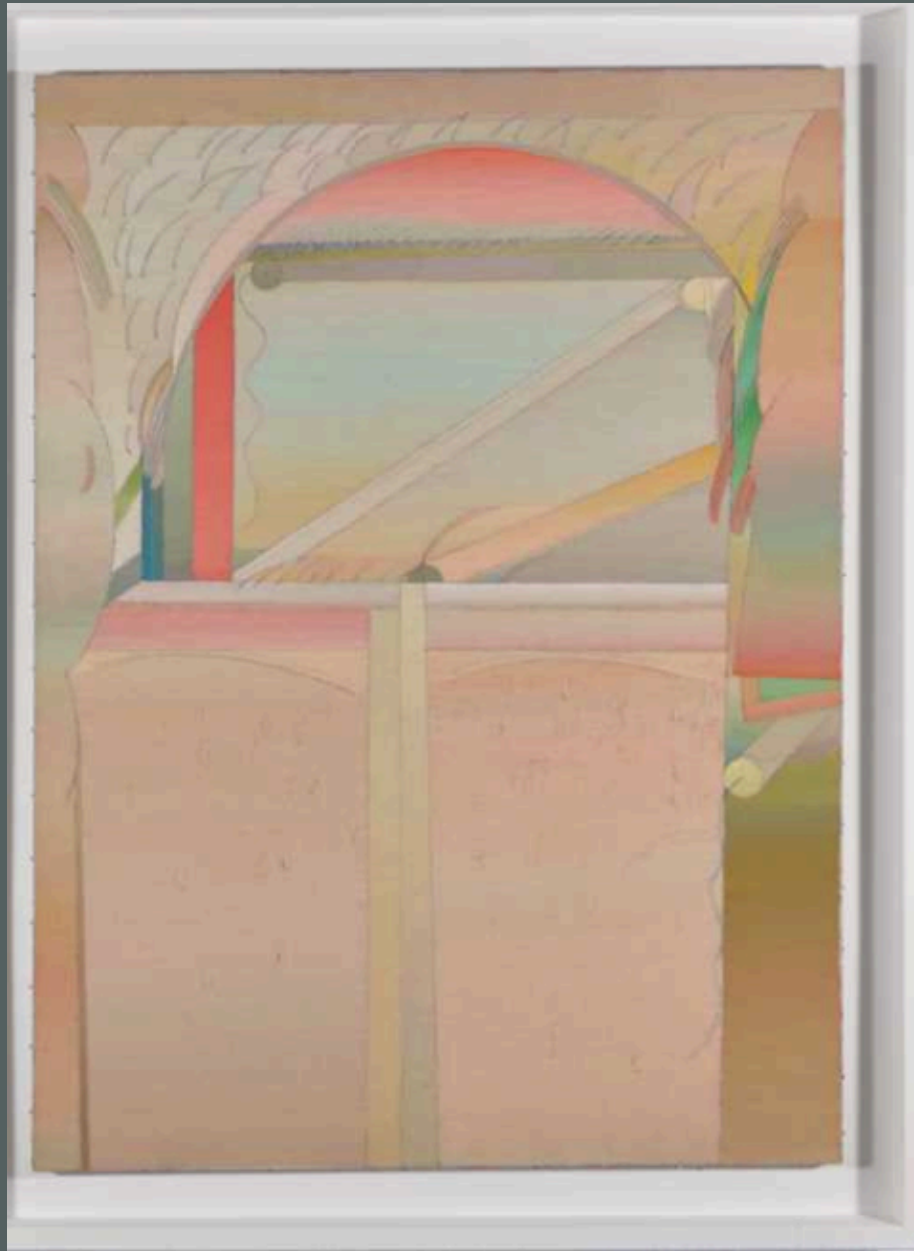
5. GUIDING QUESTIONS

6. RESOURCES

7. STANDARDS

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*Sacramento*, Miyoko Ito, 1975

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On December 7, 1941, the Empire of Japan conducted a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, a US naval base located in Oahu, Hawaii. This attack prompted the US government to enter World War II, fighting against the Japanese. During this attack, approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry lived in the United States, most of whom were located on the Pacific Coast. The majority of these individuals were full US citizens, born in the United States.

Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt adopted a drastic domestic policy toward people in the US with Japanese ancestry. The president, motivated by anti-Japanese suspicion and fear, issued Executive Order 9066, which approved the relocation of Japanese Americans into “relocation camps” or internment camps. These individuals were given little time to get their lives in order before being forced to report to the camps, with only a few personal items. Most individuals and families did not have time to make accommodations for their homes, farms, businesses, or their belongings, which became lost forever when they were forced into the camps.

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These camps were located in remote and desolate locations, including some areas of California, Idaho, Arkansas, and Colorado. During their time incarcerated, Japanese-Americans created small communities as they carried on with life in these oppressive locations and under constant watch. These individuals were imprisoned for their ancestry or nation of origin, not for their behavior.

As the war drew to a close, the internment camps were slowly evacuated, returning those who were incarcerated there to their new surroundings. These individuals were not in their hometowns or where they had left their belongings, and had to make decisions on whether to return home or find a new home. In 1980, 35 years after the war ended, the Commission on Wartime Relations and Internment of Civilians was created to investigate Executive Order 9066 and to examine the constitutional and ethical issues with the internment camps. Commissions were held across the United States, including in Chicago, where around 100 people testified about their experience. Those recordings and transcripts are currently being held at Northeastern Illinois University.

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### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is the purpose of incarceration?
- What crimes or behaviors were those held in Japanese Internment Camps charged with? Was this just for Japanese Americans?
- How were the lives of Japanese Americans impacted before, during, and after being held in Internment Camps?

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### RESOURCES

#### WATCH:



[Click here to watch Miyoko Ito & Her Painting:  
Exploring How Objects Tell a Story](#)

#### LISTEN:

[Northeastern Illinois University Digital Commons:  
Hearing Before the Commission on Wartime  
Relocation and Internment of Civilians \(Chicago\),  
September 22 – 23, 1981](#)

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### RESOURCES

- Library of Congress – Primary Source Set: Japanese American Internment
- Library of Congress – Ansel Adams’s Photographs of Japanese-American Internment at Manzanar

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### STANDARDS

SS.3–5.IS.6. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.

SS.3–5.IS.5. Develop claims using evidence from multiple sources to answer essential questions.

SS.3–5.IS.6. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.

SS.H.1.6–8.LC: Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

SS.H.1.6–8.MdC: Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.