

Prisoner in My Homeland Glossary

As students play MISSION US: "Prisoner in My Homeland," they will encounter many of the terms below. Some of the terms, listed in this document in purple, are included as "smartwords" in the game. Additional terms are included for teacher and student reference.

American concentration camp - A place where a large number of people are imprisoned, usually because of racial or national prejudice, wartime fears, or state security.

barbed wire - Metal wire fencing made with sharp points or edges along the top of the fence. It is often used to secure property.

barracks - Simple or primitive buildings often built to house military personnel.

bento - A single-portion, home-packed meal, commonly a boxed lunch.

block building - Manzanar was arranged like a military camp. Building 15 in each block was a 'block building' — an open barrack used for meetings and events.

block manager - A man appointed by camp administrators to carry out tasks relating to each block, such as distributing supplies and relaying messages.

citizen - A person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protection of that country.

Civilian Exclusion Orders - A series of orders issued by General John L. DeWitt as head of the Western Defense Command (WDC) in response to Executive Order 9066. It was used to remove all Japanese Americans from the West Coast and confine them to prison camps.

Congress - The two chambers of the United States federal government consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

draft - The selection of men who are required to serve in their country's military.

enlist - Volunteer to serve in the military.

euphemism - A mild word or phrase that is used in place of an unpleasant or offensive word.

Executive Order 9066 - An order signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in February 1942 authorizing the military to prescribe areas "from which any or all persons may be excluded," that was used to remove all Japanese Americans from the West Coast and confine them to prison camps.

FBI - The Federal Bureau of Investigation is the domestic intelligence agency and secret police service of the United States, and its principal federal law enforcement agency.

firebreak - A strip of land that has been cleared to prevent a fire from moving across it.

First-generation - A resident who was born in another country and relocated to a new country with the plan to become a citizen.

forced removal - To be required to leave a place without any choice or say in the matter.

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ganbari nasai - You must do your best (in Japanese).

General DeWitt - U.S. wartime general overseeing the defense of the Pacific Coast. DeWitt opposed allowing Japanese Americans to resettle on the West Coast on the grounds that it was "impossible to determine their loyalty."

guayule - A shrub that could be processed into rubber, which was in short supply during World War II.

harvest - The process of collecting crops that are ready to eat or sell.

heirloom - A valued personal possession passed down in a family from one generation to another.

hick - A derogatory term used to describe someone who is from a rural location ("the country").

incarceration - To confine or imprison as a form of punishment.

internment - Imprisoning people from another country, typically for political or military reasons.

inu - Derogatory Japanese word used for Japanese Americans accused of collaborating with the U.S. government.

Issei - First-generation Japanese immigrants to the United States.

JACL - Japanese American Citizens League; a political organization that advocated for the interests of Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans).

judogi, gi - Woven cotton uniform worn during judo (in Japanese).

kanji - Written characters that represent words or phrases in Japanese.

Kanō sensei - Teacher Kanō Jigorō, founder of judo.

kāsan - Mother (in Japanese).

kibei - Japanese term for Japanese Americans born in the United States but sent to go to school in Japan while their parents remained in the U.S. to work.

latrine - A communal toilet used at a camp or military barracks.

Major Bendetsen - U.S. army lawyer who, along with his boss, Major General Gullion, proposed that the army forcibly remove all Japanese Americans from the West Coast. After Executive Order 9066, Bendetsen was put in charge of this "evacuation" program.

majorette - A female who performs baton twirls and stunts while marching, typically in a parade.

mess hall - A building or room built for military personnel to eat and socialize.

mochi - Traditional small cakes made of sweet steamed rice paste.

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New Deal - A series of government programs and financial reforms enacted in the United States during the first administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, from 1933 to 1936, in response to the Great Depression.

nihongo gakkō - Japanese term for a school at which students learn to read, write, and speak Japanese and study Japanese culture, after school and on weekends.

nikyū - The second highest of the six student skill ranks in judo.

Nisei - American citizens by birth whose Japanese immigrant parents were prevented from becoming U.S. citizens.

obāchan – Grandmother (in Japanese, respectfully).

okāsan - Mother (in Japanese, respectfully).

onigiri - Steamed rice wrapped with nori (dried seaweed), sometimes with a pickled plum or salmon inside (in Japanese).

osuwari - Sit (in Japanese).

otōsan - Father (in Japanese, respectfully).

Pearl Harbor - Refers to a surprise military attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service against the United States. The attack occurred on December 7, 1941 at the naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii. The United States entered World War II the following day.

picture bride - An arrangement in which a matchmaker paired a bride (in Japan) with a groom (in America) using only photographs and family recommendations.

Pullman train - Refers to the dining or sleeper train cars built and run on many railroads by the Pullman Company from 1867 to 1968.

questionnaire - A form designed by the U.S. military to determine whether Nisei being considered for military service would be loyal to the United States or to Japan.

randori - Freestyle practice with an opponent in judo.

rat out - To betray someone by informing authorities about their bad behavior.

rations - The specific limited quantities of goods, such as sugar, that the federal government allowed civilians to use each week during the war.

redox reactions - Chemical reactions in which one chemical strips electrons away from another chemical, as in burning wood or rusting metal.

resident - A person who lives somewhere long-term.

sasae - Drawing ankle throw (in Japanese).

Second-generation - The children of immigrants who are citizens.

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Selective Service System - U.S. government agency responsible for maintaining information on persons who may be required to serve in the military.

sensei - Teacher.

shikata ga nai - "It is best to accept things that cannot be helped".

shodan - First (lowest) of the ten black belt skill ranks in judo.

shogunate - The government of a hereditary military commander who ruled Japan from the end of the 12th century until 1868.

shoguns - Japanese term for a series of hereditary military commanders who governed Japan from the end of the 12th century until 1868.

sugoi - Amazing or "wow."

supervisor - A person who oversees or manages other workers.

takuan – pickled daikon radish (in Japanese).

tar paper – A strong, durable paper most often used in housing construction.

temporary detention center - A place where prisoners are held for a short time, sometimes in buildings like fairgrounds or racetracks.

Terminal Island - An engineered island in the Port of Los Angeles where many first-generation Japanese American fishermen settled in the early 1900s.

tōsan - Father (in Japanese).

tradition – Customs or beliefs passed down from one generation to the next.

Tule Lake - Location of a prison camp that became a "segregation center" for Japanese Americans who gave "incorrect" responses to the government's loyalty questions.

unqualified allegiance – loyalty or dedication to a person, country, or belief without exceptions or reservations

WAAC – The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, an all-female volunteer unit of the U.S. Army formed in 1942.

waza – Techniques used in judo, such as holds or throws.

WRA – The War Relocation Authority -- a federal agency created by President Roosevelt in 1942 to run the detention facilities for Japanese Americans.