

Guiding Question: How did Japanese Americans respond to the government’s demand that they take a “loyalty oath” to the United States?

Document-based Writing Activity

Allegiance

Context Discussion

First, read and discuss Source 1, which includes the text of Questions 27 and 28 on the Loyalty Questionnaire given to Nisei imprisoned by the United States government during World War II:

Q27. *Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?*

Q28. *Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack....?*

Document Analysis

Analyze the rest of the sources. In each, a Japanese American explains how they responded to Questions 27 and 28. Follow the prompts and summarize each explanation in your own words.

Analyze the range of responses that Japanese Americans had to these questions by completing the **Loyalty Questionnaire Response Analysis** graphic organizer.

Writing

Once you have completed the document analysis, write *three short paragraphs*:

- **Paragraph 1:** Why did some imprisoned Japanese Americans answer “**yes**” to Questions 27 and 28, and pledge loyalty to the United States?
- **Paragraph 2:** Why did some imprisoned Japanese Americans answer “**no**” to Questions 27 and 28, and refuse to pledge loyalty to the United States?
- **Paragraph 3:** Why did some imprisoned Japanese Americans **refuse to answer** Questions 27 and 28?

Be sure to cite details from the documents to support your statement.

Source 1: Swearing Allegiance

Japanese Americans incarcerated by the US government in prison camps received different questionnaires depending on their gender and citizen status. Nisei men who were old enough to be drafted into the army received the Army Questionnaire. Nisei women who were old enough to serve in the Army Nurse Corps received the War Relocation Authority (WRA) Questionnaire. On both questionnaires, Questions 27 and 28 asked about willingness to serve in the US military and swear allegiance to the United States.

Time: 60 minutes

Goal/Intent: Building on their game knowledge, students read five statements by incarcerated Nisei explaining how they responded to the Loyalty Questionnaire. Students then analyze and describe in writing the range of reasons why Japanese Americans answered yes, no, or refused to respond to questions about their loyalty and willingness to serve in the US military.

Instructions

Context Discussion (optional) (10 min)

While playing the game, students have learned about Questions 27 and 28 on the government questionnaire given to Japanese American prisoners. You are encouraged to read Source 1 together and discuss the questions that follow to ensure students understand the context for this activity.

Document Analysis (20 min)

Have students work individually or in pairs to read Sources 2-6, summarize the explanations in each, and complete the graphic organizer.

Note:

*Questions 27 and 28 probe the issue of loyalty in slightly different ways, but here students analyze the questions together, as if they constitute a single oath of loyalty. In reality, respondents could answer **yes** to one question and **no** to the other, and many did. For the purposes of this activity, students will not analyze such examples.*

Writing (30 min)

Have students use their summaries and the graphic organizer to write three short paragraphs.

Teaching Suggestions

- Make sure to explain to students that there are a variety of ways that

Army Questionnaire (given to nisei men)

27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

WRA Questionnaire (given to nisei women)

27. If the opportunity presents itself and you are found qualified, would you be willing to volunteer for the Army Nurse Corps or the WAAC [Women's Army Auxiliary Corps]?

28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?

word bank

unqualified (adj.) – wholehearted and without any doubts
forswear (v.) – agree to give up; to renounce

Analysis Questions

1. According to these questions, what are the ways to show one's loyalty to the U.S.?
2. What do you think is meant by "unqualified allegiance" and why would this type of allegiance be particularly important to the U.S.?
3. Why do you think Americans of Japanese descent were specifically asked to give up any loyalty or obedience to the Japanese emperor or any other foreign power?

Source 2: An Anonymous Man

This is an excerpt of the reasoning behind why a Nisei man answered "no" to Question 28, as recorded by the Community Analyst of Manzanar on January 15, 1944.

In order to go out prepared and willing to die, expecting to die, you have to believe in what you are fighting for. If I am going to end the family line, if my father is going to lose his only son, it should be for some cause we respect. I believe in democracy as I was taught it in school. I would have been willing to go out forever before evacuation. It's [not] that I'm a coward or afraid to die. My father would have been willing to see me go out at one time. But my father can't feel the same after this evacuation and I can't either.

Japanese American individuals and families interpreted and responded to Questions 27 and 28. The documents in this activity are only a small number of examples.

- Instead of asking every student to read all of the sources, consider using a jigsaw approach in which students work in a small group to read and respond to *one* source. Then you can put students into mixed groups to share the source they analyzed and complete the graphic organizer with information from their other groups members.

Scaffolding

If your students need support in completing this activity, consider the following suggestions for scaffolding the task:

- Reduce the number of sources students use in the activity.
- Provide sentence starters like the following to students who need additional writing support:

Some Japanese Americans answered yes to Questions 27 and 28. For example, _____ explained that he answered yes because _____. _____ answered yes for a different reason. He said it was because _____.

Other Japanese Americans answered no to Questions 27 and 28. For instance, _____ said that he/she answered no because _____.

Still other Japanese Americans refused to answer Questions 27 and 28. _____ is someone who refused to answer the questions, and he explains that he refused because _____.

Explain in your own words why this man answered “no”:

Source 3: Paul Nagano

Paul Nagano was incarcerated with his family in Poston, Arizona, where he served as the one of the first English-speaking Japanese American pastors in any of the prison camps. He responded ‘yes-yes’ to Questions 27 and 28 of the “Loyalty Questionnaire” and says his Christian faith and prayers partly explain how he came to this decision.¹

Well, it's very difficult to answer those questions. But I wrestled with it myself, and so I volunteered. But I volunteered as a chaplain. My friends were going and I was at that age, still able to volunteer. And I volunteered as a chaplain. And a couple of weeks later they called me in from the other camp saying, "You cannot serve as a chaplain because you don't have your seminary training." And so I was rejected. But in thinking about this, we felt that, well we could get mad and say, "Here, we are in camp, and we're considered prisoners. And ... why should we go out and fight for the United States?" But we didn't know where our future was to be or where do we belong? And we realized we're -- actually, our future will be here in America. We are American citizens, this is our proper responsibility. And we thought about the future. So that was the counseling that I gave out. I tried to be an example, myself, by volunteering.

Source: Interview with Paul Nagano by Densho on May 25, 1999

Explain in your own words why Paul Nagano answered “yes”:

Source 4: Frank Emi

Frank Emi was one of the leaders of a resistance movement that questioned the legality of forcing Japanese American men to be drafted into the U.S. Army during World War II, since they were imprisoned by the government without constitutional rights. He refused to answer Questions 27 and 28.

When question 27 asked, "Will you go into combat duty wherever ordered?" I thought it was very stupid, and a very... arrogant question to ask of us, after we were thrown out of our homes and put into these concentration camps, without even a word about our citizenship rights or civil rights, or constitutional rights being restored. And then Question 28 was another very ambiguous and a very senseless question, because... one of the phrases was, "Will you forswear

¹ https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Paul%20M.%20Nagano/#cite_note-ftnt_ref2-2

allegiance to the Emperor of Japan?" ...We had never sworn allegiance to the Emperor of Japan, and how can we forswear something we had never sworn to before? So that didn't make sense. And then for our parents to forswear allegiance to Japan, that would have left them without a country, they'd have become stateless persons. So it really made me very angry just reading that thing, and that's when I got sort of involved in it.

That night, after studying it carefully, I formed my answers to both questions. I put down, "Under the present conditions and circumstances, I am unable to answer these questions." And I put that on both 27 and 28.

Source: *Interview with Frank Emi by Densho on March 20, 1994*

Explain in your own words why Frank Emi refused to answer the questions:

Source 5: Amy Uno Ishii

Amy Uno Ishii's father was imprisoned in five different "enemy alien centers" between 1941 and 1947. She and her siblings were separated into two different prison camps in Wyoming and California. She explains why her brothers answered "yes" to Question 27.

...My mother, who had done nothing against the country except raise ten children, was behind barbed wire. In spite of all that, my mother felt, "If you boys go and serve this country and prove your loyalty, maybe they will turn Daddy loose, and at least give a chance for Dad to join Mother and the children and bring back the family unit." So with this in mind, my brothers said, "Yes, there's a good chance that they might allow Dad to be either completely released or at least released where he can come and join Mother and the children." So the boys decided that they would go.

Source: [Transcript of Interview with Amy Uno Ishii](#) by Betty E. Mitson and Kristin Mitchell on July 9 and July 20, 1973 for the California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program Japanese American Project

Explain in your own words why Amy Uno Ishii's brothers answered "yes":

Source 6: George Fujii

George Fujii was a kibe (American-born, educated in Japan) who was imprisoned at the Poston prison camp in Arizona. He explains why we answered "yes" to Questions 27 and 28.

I told the truth and answered yes, yes. I signed the whole thing away. In the first place, anything the government asked me to do, I did it. In the second place, in order for me to protest the government, or demand a right to the government, I would have to be a citizen. If you declare yourself a non-citizen, then you have no right to protest. That was my interpretation of the whole matter. So, I kept my position as a citizen intact so that I could protest to the government.

Source: [Interview with George Fujii](#) by Ronald C. Larson on August 31, 1976 for the California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program Japanese American Project

Explain in your own words why George Fujii brothers answered “yes”:

Loyalty Questionnaire Response Analysis

Directions: Use the documents you read to help you complete the following chart.

<p>Some Japanese Americans responded “YES” to Questions 27 and 28 because... <i>(list all the reasons you found)</i></p>	<p>Which of the writers mentioned these reasons?</p>
<p>Some Japanese Americans responded “NO” to Questions 27 and 28 because... <i>(list all the reasons you found)</i></p>	<p>Which of the writers mentioned these reasons?</p>
<p>Some Japanese Americans refused to answer Questions 27 and 28 because... <i>(list all the reasons you found)</i></p>	<p>Which of the writers mentioned these reasons?</p>