

**Handout: HBS Example Historical Agency**

## Preparation:

1. The book used for this example is Cynthia Kadohata's (2006) [Weedflower](#). It follows Sumiko from the flower farms of California to a war-time Japanese relocation camp on an Indian reservation in Poston, Arizona. The story contrasts Sumiko's experience of separation and segregation with those of Frank, a Mohave Indian whose people experienced an earlier relocation to Poston.
2. Two pieces of related non-fiction provide context. The first is Joanne Oppenheim's (2007). ["Dear Miss Breed": True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration During WWII and a Librarian Who Made a Difference](#). This book includes letters exchanged between Clara Breed, a California librarian, and her former students who were incarcerated at Poston. It includes information about the treatment of Japanese-Americans, and focuses on how those who were interned in the camps – as well as many who were not – lobbied for the restoration of civil rights, worked to improve camp conditions, and argued that interns were loyal Americans. In contrast, Herman Viola's (1990) [After Columbus](#) chronicles the impact of European contact on Indians in North America. Chapters on the "Era of Internal Exile," and "Fighting for Rights" explain the situation of the Indians living on reservations such as Poston and the interplay of individual, collective, and institutional agency in North American Indians' on-going struggle for civil rights.
3. For this relocation/reservation investigation, use these two packets of photographs. [Packet A](#) includes images showing life for Japanese Americans like Sumiko prior to internment, during relocation, and in the camps. [Packet B](#) includes photographs of life on the reservation and Indians working at the camp

## Execution

1. *Recognizing Changing Perspectives*. The characters Sumiko and Frank view the relocation camp quite differently. Sumiko experiences it as a series of losses – of home, family, farm, and freedom. In contrast, Frank watches with envy as the government provides running water, irrigation, and electricity to residents of the camp, but not to the surrounding reservation. The authorities, for their part, promise they will allow Frank and others on the reservation to live in the relocation camps once the war is over. The packets of photographs help children interpret Sumiko's and Frank's changing perspectives on the relocation camp and life on the reservation.

Source: <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/22365>

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**Handout: HBS Example (page 2)**

2. *Recognizing Agency: What Can be Done?*
  - a. Distribute “Recognizing Agency” chart (Template B). Work through the chart using one of Sumiko’s uncles as an example.
  - b. Assign pairs of students to a fictional or historical participant:
    - Fictional participants:
      - Sumiko, her family and friends
      - Frank, his family and friends.
    - Historical participants:
      - Governmental agencies (Bureau of Indian Affairs, War Relocation Authority, local and state government)
      - Ms. Breed
      - Organizations that worked against internment
      - People living near Japanese-owned property.
      - Indians living on the Poston reservation
      - Japanese-Americans living in the relocation center
  - c. Display charts. Discuss:
    - Why do some people, groups and institutions seem to have more power than others?
    - How can people work most effectively for change?
    - Can you identify strategies used to alter other historical experiences of separation or segregation?
3. *Agency in Modern Poston.* A group of people in Poston are working to [restore](#) the relocation camp. After considering the kinds of agency expressed by people during the internment years, students might write an argument for or against the restoration of this historic site, or design an exhibit on “Historical Agency: Internment and Reservation at Poston.”