

## **In-Class Response Activity #3**

### **Revisiting Universal Themes**

<b>Overview</b>	<p>This activity gives students the opportunity to explore and discuss how the "AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?" exhibition impacted their thinking about powerful universal themes in history, civics, and human relationships. These themes—which include American identity, citizenship, belonging and exclusion, loyalty, resistance, resilience, and solidarity—are as relevant in our lives today as they were in the 1940s.</p> <p>Classroom Activity #4 introduces students to the thematic discussion questions used in this activity and provides an opportunity to gather their initial thoughts before visiting the exhibition. The steps below assume that students also engaged in this prior activity.</p>
<b>When to Use</b>	After touring "AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?"
<b>Grade Level</b>	9-12
<b>Adaptations</b>	<p>To adapt this activity for younger grades (or to simplify and abbreviate the activity) consider one or more of the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask students to respond to only one question from the list. (This reduces the volume of writing required.)</li><li>• Shorten the list of questions from which students will choose. (This gives students fewer ideas to consider and increases their opportunity to share ideas with classmates who choose the same questions.)</li><li>• <b>Recommended for grades 4-6:</b> Select only one question for the entire class to discuss. (This maximizes opportunities to build on each other's thinking.)</li></ul> <p><i>If you used Classroom Activity #4 with students before touring the exhibition, you should make the same adaptations to both activities.</i></p>
<b>Materials</b>	Handout: Thematic Discussion Questions Connect, Extend, Challenge I Used to Think/Now I Think
<b>Directions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Direct students to take out the <a href="#">Thematic Discussion Questions</a> handout they looked at in class before touring the exhibition and their initial responses. (If you did not use the previous activity in</li></ol>

## **"AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?" – Fred Korematsu**

your class, consider adapting this activity to provide them extra time to respond to one or more of the prompts.)

2. Give students several minutes to review their initial responses to any of the questions they chose from the list. As they review their initial thinking, they should keep the following question in mind: *What events, information, images, or other items from the exhibition stand out most when I think about this question now?*
3. Students now have the opportunity to add to or revise their thinking about one or more of the questions for which they wrote an initial response. To do so, have them use either the "Connect, Extend, Challenge" or "I used to think/Now I think" handouts. **NOTE:** *"I Used to Think/Now I Think" can be used in all grades; "Connect, Extend, Challenge" is more appropriate for grades 8-12.*
4. After students have revised and/or reviewed their initial response(s), lead a whole group discussion of the universal themes students explored in the exhibition.
5. Consider using the [Fishbowl](#) strategy (Facing History & Ourselves) to structure the discussion. In a Fishbowl discussion, students take turns sitting in an inner circle of seats where they participate in the discussion while the rest of the students observe and take notes from an outer circle. The following suggestions can help get you started:
  - To set up the room, place at least 6 chairs in a circle in the center of the space and arrange the rest of the chairs in an outer circle. (*Note: If you prefer, make a larger inner circle with up to half the number of chairs as students in the class.*)
  - Choose a question from the "Thematic Discussion Questions" list to begin the discussion. Invite students who wrote responses to that question to fill the seats in the inner circle.
  - Begin the discussion by asking students in the inner circle to share their thoughts in response to the question. They can also respond to each other and ask follow-up questions.
  - As the discussion continues, rotate students in and out of the inner circle to make sure each student contributes to the

## **"AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?" – Fred Korematsu**

discussion. For grades 8 and above, you might allow students from the outer circle to "tag-in" to the discussion by gently tapping the shoulder of someone occupying an inner circle seat so that they can trade places. The person whose shoulder has been tapped should be given the chance to share their thinking before leaving the inner circle.

- Facilitate the discussion by asking students to clarify their thinking and posing follow-up questions as necessary. Attempt to address as many of the Thematic Discussion Questions as time allows, giving each student the opportunity to contribute.
6. With about five minutes remaining in the class period, end the Fishbowl and debrief the activity as a whole group. Using one or more of the following questions to guide the discussion:
- How did you experience the discussion? Was it natural or challenging to find opportunities to contribute?
  - What patterns did you notice in what students in the class seem to be taking away from the "AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?" exhibition?
  - What are some ways that one or more of the questions you discussed are important or relevant to our country today?

## **Handout: Thematic Discussion Questions**

1. What does being American mean to you?
2. What does it mean to belong to a community? What does it mean to be excluded from a community? What do belonging and exclusion each look like? Feel like?
3. What does it mean to be loyal to a person, community, or country? What kinds of things might one do, or be required to do, to demonstrate their loyalty?
4. What is "normal"? What are some ways that people try to make things seem normal even when they are not?
5. What does it mean to resist an injustice? What might this kind of resistance look like? List as many forms of resistance as you can think of.
6. How should we respond when people we know (or know about) are treated unfairly because they are seen as different? What kinds of responses do you think have the most positive impact?
7. What does it mean to be resilient in the face of injustice? What factors might fuel one's ability to be resilient?
8. What is solidarity? What does it mean to stand with others? What are the benefits and challenges of doing so?
9. Does history repeat? How do you think the past relates to the present and the future?

## Handout: Connect, Extend, Challenge

**Directions:** Respond to the following questions to document how your thinking has evolved about one of the thematic questions you wrote a response to before touring the "AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?" exhibition.<sup>1</sup>

**Copy the thematic question you are focusing on here:**

---

**Connect:** *In what ways did the exhibition connect to and support my initial thinking about this question?*

**Extend:** *What new ideas about this question do I have now that I have experienced the exhibition?*

**Challenge:** *In what ways did the exhibition prompt me to rethink my initial answer to this question? What areas of confusion or new questions do I have?*

---

<sup>1</sup> This protocol is adapted from the ["Connect, Extend, Challenge"](#) by Facing History & Ourselves.

## Handout: I used to think... / Now I think...

**Directions:** Respond to the following questions to document how your thinking has changed about one of the thematic questions you wrote a response to before touring the "AM I AN AMERICAN OR AM I NOT?" exhibition.<sup>2</sup>

**Copy the thematic question you are focusing on here:**

---

**I used to think...** *(summarize your initial response)*

**Now I think...** *(describe how your thinking has changed)*

---

<sup>2</sup> This protocol is adapted from the ["I Used to Think... Now I Think..."](#) by Project Zero.