

Remembering Rohwer — Memory, Erasure, and Preservation

Teacher Lesson Plan

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SUBJECT	GRADE LEVEL	DURATION	FORMAT
AR History / US History	Grades 7–12	65–70 minutes	Discussion + analysis

Rationale and Explanation

This lesson examines how historical memory is shaped after physical sites and communities disappear. Although the Rohwer and Jerome incarceration camps once held thousands of Japanese Americans, few physical traces of the camps remain today.

Through maps, timelines, images, and memorial efforts found on the [Rising Above in Arkansas website](#) students explore how remembrance occurs decades later and consider who is responsible for preserving difficult histories. The lesson encourages students to think critically about absence, memorialization, and the choices that shape public memory.



Arkansas State Standards

Course / Grade Band	Standard	Relevant Focus
Arkansas History (Grades 7–8)	H.1.AR.H.11	Investigate social, economic, and political effects of World War II on various segments of the population in Arkansas, including ... Japanese-American internment camps.
Arkansas History (Grades 9–12)	H.5.AR.H.7	Analyze social, economic, and political effects of World War II on various segments of the population in Arkansas, including ... Japanese-American internment camps (i.e., Jerome and Rohwer).
United States History Since 1929 (Grades 9–12)	H.5.US.H.8	Analyze the social, economic, and political effects of World War II on the American people, including Japanese-American internment camps.

Lesson Objectives

Knowledge Identify ways Rohwer and Jerome have been remembered after the camps closed.	Analysis Examine visual and spatial sources (maps, monuments, images) to understand how memory is constructed.
Critical Thinking Evaluate how erasure and preservation affect public understanding of incarceration history.	Reflection Consider what aspects of incarceration history are most important to preserve for future generations.

Note

Previous lessons provide an introduction to the Japanese American incarceration. This lesson assumes background knowledge from those lessons or another source.

Lesson Outline

STEP 1

20 minutes

Remembering Rohwer and Jerome After Incarceration: Timeline Analysis

Explain to students that the incarceration camps closed in 1945, but public recognition, preservation, and apology only occurred decades later. In this activity, students will examine how Japanese American incarceration has been remembered over time and through different forms, such as monuments, government actions, and historic preservation.

Small Group Activity: Timeline Investigation (10 minutes)

Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one event from the [Rising Above timeline](#):

- *The Rohwer Relocation Center Site is Listed on the National Register of Historic Places*
- *Termination of Executive Order 9066*
- *New Monument Dedicated at the Cemetery*
- *Apology to Japanese Americans*
- *Jerome Monument Dedicated*
- *Rohwer Cemetery Declared a National Historic Museum*
- *Jerome War Relocation Center Site Listed on the Arkansas Register*

Students should carefully read the timeline entry and examine any associated images or materials. As a group, they will answer the following guiding questions:

- What is remembered in this timeline entry (an event, place, person, or action)?
- When did this act of remembrance take place, and how long after the camps closed did it occur?
- Who is responsible for this act of remembrance (former incarcerated, government agencies, local community members, organizations)?
- What form does this memory take (monument, government action, historic designation)?

Whole-Class Share-Out (10 minutes)

Each group will briefly share their findings with the class. As groups share, the teacher will guide students to identify patterns across the timeline, such as:

- Many acts of remembrance occurred decades after the camps closed in 1945, highlighting the long delay between incarceration and public acknowledgment.
- Acts of remembrance come from different groups, including former incarcerated, local communities, advocacy organizations, and the federal government. This shows that memory is shaped by both grassroots efforts and official action.
- Remembrance takes different forms, such as monuments, historic site designations, and government apologies. Each form reflects a different way of publicly recognizing the past.
- Some acts focus on national recognition, while others emphasize local sites like Rohwer and Jerome, where the camps once physically existed.

STEP 2

20 minutes

Erasure and Remembrance in the Landscape: Map Analysis

In this activity, students will use the [Rising Above interactive maps](#) to explore what remains of the Rohwer and Jerome incarceration sites today — and what has been erased.

Guided Map Exploration (10 minutes)

Direct students to the Maps section of the Rising Above website and have them select the “Erasure and Remembrance” chapter on the left. Students should begin by reading the short overview text. Next, show students that they can use the Change Camp feature to switch between maps for Rohwer and Jerome. Finally, have students click on different features in the maps including:

- Areas showing former camp land now used for agriculture
- Remaining physical features (such as smokestacks, water tanks, or foundations)
- Interpretive signage and the cemetery at Rohwer
- The Jerome Commemorative Memorial

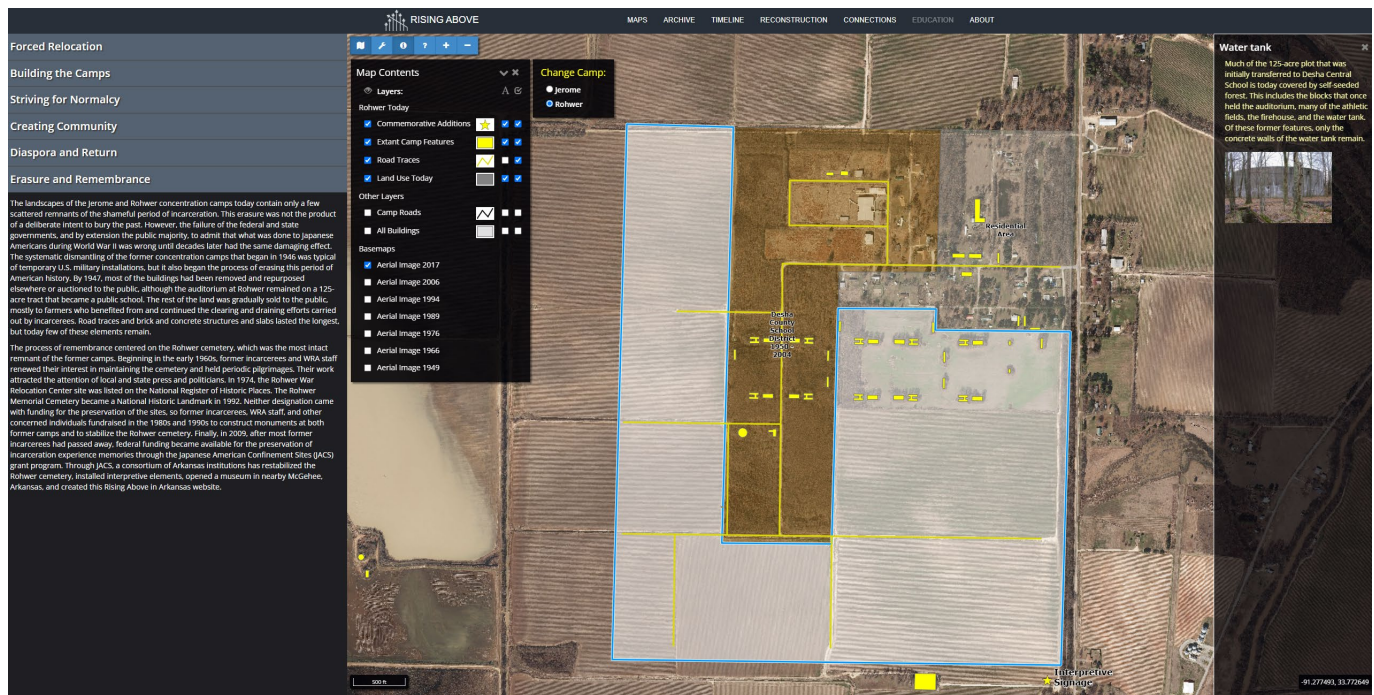


Image 1 Students will read the text in the Erasure and Remembrance tab and select different map features to reveal additional information about them. In this example, the water tank has been selected on the Rohwer camp map.

Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Discuss what students observed in the exercise. Let students make their own observations or conclusions, or use guided questions, such as:

- What physical traces of the camps still exist, and what has disappeared?
- How does the land’s current use shape how people might understand or overlook this history?
- How do monuments, cemeteries, and signage change how these spaces are remembered?
- What differences or similarities do you notice between how Rohwer and Jerome are remembered today?

STEP 3

15 minutes

Preserving Memory Beyond the Camps: Multiple Forms of Remembrance

Explain to students that the memory of Japanese American incarceration exists beyond textbooks and classrooms. It is preserved through programming and projects, each serving a different purpose and audience.

Teacher Overview: Forms of Memory (5 minutes)

Briefly introduce the following projects. Students do not need to explore each resource independently.

- ***Rising Above in Arkansas***
– A digital project preserving the history of Rohwer and Jerome through archives, maps, timelines, and a 3D reconstruction. <https://risingabove.cast.uark.edu/home>
 - ***World War II Japanese American Internment Museum***
(McGehee, AR) – A physical museum that preserves artifacts and tells the local history of Rohwer and Jerome. <https://www.facebook.com/WWIIJapaneseAmericanInternmentMuseum/>
 - ***Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II***
(National Archives) – A federal database containing official government records related to incarceration across the United States. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/10642541>
- Densho Digital Repository***
- A Japanese American–led digital archive that centers oral histories and personal narratives from those who experienced incarceration nationally. <https://densho.org/>

Explain that each project preserves different kinds of evidence and reflects different goals, such as documentation, education, commemoration, or community memory.

Class Discussion: Why Multiple Forms of Memory Matter (10 minutes)

Lead a class discussion focused on synthesis rather than research. Discussion prompts may include:

- Why is it important that memory exists in multiple forms — digital, physical, local, and national?
- What might be preserved in a government record that would not appear in an oral history?
- What kinds of stories might be lost if only one type of memory project existed?

The teacher may emphasize that:

- Some collections connected to Rising Above come from teachers, administrators, or local officials, which can shape how camp life is represented.
- Other collections prioritize the voices of Japanese Americans themselves, often focusing on lived experience and long-term impact.
- Together, these projects help create a fuller, more nuanced understanding of incarceration.

STEP 4

10–15 minutes

Exit Ticket: Choosing What Is Remembered

Students respond to the following prompt in a paragraph:

Exit Ticket Prompt

If only one aspect of Rohwer or Jerome could be publicly remembered, what should it be, and why?

Students should support their response with at least one example from the lesson, such as:

- a timeline event
- a map feature
- or a monument or site discussed in class.