**Baseball Saved Us**

by Ken Mochizuki

*Paperback ©1995  ISBN – 978-1-880000-19-9*

**Overview**

During World War II, a young Japanese-American boy and his family are sent to an internment camp after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Despondent in their desolate surroundings, father and son pull the camp together to build a baseball diamond and form a league.

**Grade 5**

**LEARNING TARGETS**

**5th Grade**

* I can simulate a historic event to show how civic engagement could have improved the protection of the rights of individuals involved in the Japanese internment camps.
* I can discuss how the baseball games described in the book were “civic action” that supported the general welfare of those involved.
* I can explain the specific protections of the Bill of Rights which should have protected the rights of those in the Japanese internment camps.
* I can explain how the laws limiting the powers of government should have protected the rights of those involved in the Japanese internment camps.

**STANDARDS**

**5.1.1.1.1** Simulate a historic event to show how civic engagement (voting, civil discourse about controversial issues and civic action) improves and sustains a democratic society, supports the general welfare, and protects the rights of individuals.

**Grade 5**

**Civics**

**5.1.1.1.2** Identify a public problem in the school or community, analyze the issue from multiple perspectives, and create an action plan to address it.

**5.1.3.5.1** Explain specific protections that the Bill of Rights provides to individuals and the importance of these ten amendments to the ratification of the United States Constitution.

**5.1.4.8.1** Explain how law limits the powers of government and the governed, protects individual rights and promotes the general welfare.

**5.1.1.1** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

**Grade 5**

**Language**

**Arts**

**5.1.6.6** Describe how a narrator’ s or speaker’ s point of view influences how events are described.

**5.2.4.4** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

**GUIDE**

1. What is “civic action?” (Actions citizens take to improve the life of their community.) The book Baseball Saved Us takes place in a Japanese internment camp during World War II. What are the problems that the citizens of this community are facing? As a class, make a list of the problems described in the book. (They are imprisoned and guarded by armed soldiers. They had been removed from their house against their will. Lack of privacy. Poor living conditions. Boredom leading to arguments. ) What do the people in the camp decide to do to improve their circumstances? (Build a baseball field) How does this improve their community? (Gives them a common project to work on and a common interest.) We generally think of civic action as things like voting, being a juror, volunteering during an election. Do you think building a baseball field can be “civic action?” Why or why not? How did baseball save them, as referenced in the title to the book?

Civics Standard: 5.1.1.1.1

Language Arts Standard: 5.1.1.1

1. The Fourth Amendment in the Bill of Rights protects citizens against unreasonable search and seizure. Consider the events described in the book. Pretend you are an attorney for the family. Could you argue that their Fourth Amendment rights had been violated by the government? What events in the book would you use to make that argument? (They were removed from their house and had to throw stuff away. This is arguably a “seizure” of their property.) The Fourth Amendment limits the power of government to protect the rights of individuals. Why did the government ignore this important protection in the case of the Japanese American citizens during World War II. (Fear during a time when the United States was at war with Japan.)

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standards: 5.1.1.1 5.2.4.4

1. The Fifth Amendment offers a variety of protections for citizens. Which might apply to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II? (They were not accused of a crime, so it is arguable if a Grand Jury had to be involved. Double jeopardy was not involved. They did not have to witness against themselves. They were deprived of liberty and property without due process of law. Although many of the internees lost property due to internment, the government did not directly take the property.) What was the “liberty” that they lost? (They were imprisoned in the camps) In the book, what property was lost? (They had to throw things away when they left. They were removed from their home.) Read more about the loss of property by Japanese Americans during this time.

Go to <http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html> to read about “Moving Out” to learn more. Imagine if your family was told that you suddenly had to leave your home and could only take what you could carry with you. What would you take? What would you have to leave behind? Write a paragraph describing what you would take with you.

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standards: 5.1.1.1 5.2.4.4

1. The government explained the removal and internment of the Japanese American citizens by saying it was necessary for security during a time of war. This is often a difficult dilemma for government, balancing individuals’ freedom with the need for security for the country as a whole. One of the problems for the government in the case of Japanese Americans was that there was very little actual evidence that these people were a security risk for the United States. Can you imagine a situation where an individual’s freedom should be limited to protect the country’s security? What proof do you think the government should have to produce before individual freedom is limited?

Civics Standards: 5.1.3.5.1 5.1.4.8.1

Language Arts Standards: 5.1.1.1 5.2.4.4

1. In 1988 Congress apologized to Japanese Americans for the internments. President Ronald Regan signed a law that provided for money to be paid to those who had been injured through being interred, for example for the loss of property. The government had decided that the decision to hold the Japanese Americans during World War II was not based on security, but on racism and war-time fear. They also blamed lack of leadership from those in the government at the time of the removals and internment. In Baseball Saved Us the soldier who watches the baseball games represents the government. How does the narrator feel about the soldier? What do you think the soldier is thinking as he watches the baseball games? Why? Write a paragraph from the soldier’s point of view describing what he sees and how he feels about it.

Civics Standards: 5.1.1.1.1

Language Arts Standards: 5.1.6.6

1. Summative Assessments:
2. Write a play based on the events described in Baseball Saved Us. You can write it from the point of view of the boy who narrates the book, or from another character’s point of view. Think about the father who came up with the idea of starting the baseball games, or the solider who watches the games. How would it change the story to describe these events from their point of view? Perform the play for your class.
3. As an “exit ticket” answer the following question: Japanese Americans lost many things during the World War II internments. They lost things that were property and individual rights. What do you think the most important thing they lost was, and why?
4. Baseball was an unusual “civic action” to fix the problems the people were facing in the internment camp, but it worked. Consider a problem that you see in your school or neighborhood. What could be an unusual solution to that problem? Think creatively about actions that people could take to help solve the problem. Write a description of the problem, and then a description of the solution you have thought of.

**Notes**

This guide is made possible in part by grants from the Education Minnesota Foundation and the Minnesota Legacy Amendment Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.