

Prisoners of War



Authors: Joy Lyman and Daniel Messer

Grade Levels: 11-12

Purpose: This lesson focuses on the experiences of POWs in our nation's wars. The interviews give unique insights into how these men were affected by their often brutal and inhuman experiences while in captivity. Students will be able to compare the condition of POWs in different wars, and how treatment differed based on such factors as the war in which they served, the nation holding the prisoner, a POW's rank, and the political context of the war. Through these first-hand accounts, students will gain a better understanding of the POW's war, as well as the sacrifices often made by our POWs during the wars of the Twentieth Century.

Objectives: Upon completing the activities presented in this Resource Guide, students will:

- Compare the treatment of POWs by different combatants and in different wars.
- Incorporate the POWs' understanding of their experiences into the student's own knowledge of the wars more generally.

Materials:

Internet access, headphones, audio equipment for listening to and watching interview clips, printer, projector

Illinois State Learning Standards:

Late High School

SS.16.A.5a: Analyze historical and contemporary developments using methods of historical inquiry (pose questions, collect and analyze data, make and support inferences with evidence, report findings).

SS.16.B.5a: Analyze worldwide consequences of isolated political events, including the events triggering the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars I and II.

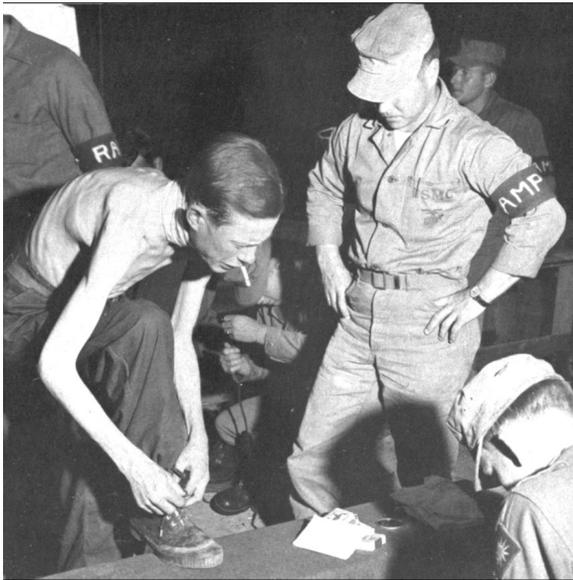
SS.16.B.5b: Describe how tensions in the modern world are affected by different political ideologies including democracy and totalitarianism.



Late High School:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9:

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.



Background Information:

Many of America's veterans were captured on the battlefield and spent the rest of their war as POWs. Once captured, these veterans were at the mercy of their captors, and often were subjected to inhumane treatment. The several Geneva Conventions, spanning from 1929-1949, resulted in treaties and protocols that were meant to govern the treatment of captured soldiers, but not all of America's enemies recognized them. During World War II, for example, Germany did recognize the Geneva Convention, but Japan did not, and generally treated their POWs more brutally. Some countries only followed certain parts of the conventions, while others, such as the United States, followed them in their entirety.

During the Korean War, POWs on both sides became pawns in an ideological struggle between the world's democracies and communist countries. During the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese considered downed pilots as war criminals who were therefore outside the protections of the Geneva Convention. This lesson plan gives students a chance to hear the POWs' own stories of their treatment, and to compare the treatment of POWs during WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.



Activity:

As an individual or group project:

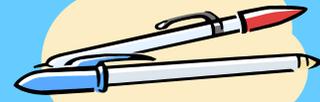
1. Students, either individually or in groups, will select or be given an interview on which to focus. The student will then listen to the interview and/or read along with the transcript.
2. The student will give a presentation on the interview
3. Examples of questions students should address in their presentation include: What was the interviewee's role in the military prior to capture? How was he captured? Describe his treatment? Did his treatment violate the Geneva Convention? What were some of his most vivid experiences? What were his feelings upon release? Did he have difficulties adjusting to civilian life after being released?
4. After hearing all of the presentations, the class will then compare the treatment of POWs in the different wars and different countries.

As a class:

1. These interviews can be used in a full classroom setting as well, by comparing the clips included in this lesson.
2. Listen to several of the clips and have students record their thoughts on the Evidence/Interpretation Notetaker.
3. Then ask students to reflect as a class on the what the interviews have added to their knowledge of a specific war, and of the life of a POW. Use the discussion questions below to help facilitate conversation. Encourage students to think critically.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did the treatment of POWs vary between the Second World War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War?
2. In cases where the Geneva Convention wasn't observed; why wasn't it?
3. How did political ideology impact the treatment of POWs?
4. How did POWs interact with each other?
5. Contemporary discussion: How should the United States deal with modern-day terrorists, who wear no uniform, swear allegiance to no country, and who will never sign a peace treaty?



Tips and Suggestions:

- * Customize this lesson plan to fit your classroom by focusing solely on veterans of one war.
- * Compare the treatment of American POWs with the treatment of other countries' POWs.
- * Look at our Additional Resources section to add more background information to your lesson, such as the Geneva Convention.

Additional Resources:

- Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 27 July 1929. <http://www.icrc.org/>
- Geneva Convention: <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/y3gctpw.htm>
- U.S. Prisoners of War and Civilian American Citizens Captured and Interned by Japan in World War II: The Issue of Compensation by Japan: http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/usprisoners_japancomp.htm
- Day of mourning will honor German POWs held in U.S.: 'Volkstrauertag' holiday illuminates mostly forgotten chapter of WWII history: http://www.nbcnews.com/id/6491844/ns/us_news/
- Walter G. Hermes, Truce Tent and Fighting Front: United States Army in the Korean War

Books written by Interviewees

- John Borling, Taps on the Wall
- Kazimir Ladny, It was Worth it
- Ernest N. Thorp, My Stretch in the Service 1943-1945 (unpublished journal)
- William W. Smith, A Moment in Time

Interviews:



Bill Ingram: Bill served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was captured in 1942 when his ship, the USS Houston, was sunk in the Battle of Sunda Strait. He spent the rest of the war as a Japanese prisoner of war working

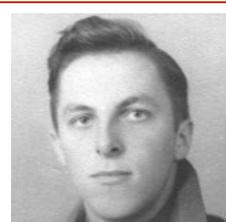
on the Burma Railway.

Interview: [Work Detail](#) (2:46) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Beatings](#) (0:36) [Transcript: Coming Soon](#)
[Getting Medicine](#) (2:19) [Transcript: Coming Soon](#)

Kazmir Ladny: A Polish WW II veteran. He was captured by the Russians in late 1939, spending the winter in a Siberian Gulag. He was then exchanged with the Germans, and spent the remainder of the war as a slave laborer. He was liberated in 1945.



Interview: [German Farm Laborer](#) (6:31) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Medical Exams](#) (4:55) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Marched Into Woods](#) (6:41) [Transcript: Click Here](#)



Richard Lockhart: Dick Lockhart was a WWII veteran who served in the 106th Infantry Division. During the Battle of the Bulge, he was captured by the Germans and spent the rest of the war in Stalag IX-B, where his captors were unable to

adequately care for their POWs.

Interview:
[Attack on the Train](#) (3:44) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Treatment in Camp](#) (6:25) [Transcript: Click Here](#)

Sam Million: Sam Million enlisted in the Army in 1946, and by early 1948 was assigned to Sugamo Prison in Tokyo, where those Japanese accused of war crimes were imprisoned. He spent six months on suicide watch over General Hideki Tojo, the former Japanese Prime Minister.



Interview:
[Japanese and Cigarettes](#) (4:33) [Transcript: Click Here](#)



Fred Stockmeier: Stockmeier served in WWII with the 100th Infantry Division in southern France, and was captured by the Germans in December 1944. He spent the remainder of the war in prison camps until liberated by the Russians. He returned to civilian life until he was

recalled in 1950 to serve in Korea.

Interview:
[Act of Kindness](#) (1:21) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Conditions in Camp](#) (13:10) [Transcript: Click Here](#)

Ernest Thorp: Thorp served in the 729th Squadron, 452nd Bomb Group during WW II. He was shot down while on his eighteenth mission, and bailed out over the North Sea. Thorp spent the rest of the war as a prisoner of war, moving from camp to camp as Germany was nearing defeat.



Interview:
[German Fisherman](#) (1:42) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Interrogation](#) (5:42) [Transcript: Click Here](#)



Robert Berry: Berry served with the 187th Airborne Regiment in Korea. He was deployed to Kojedo Island during the Communist prisoner uprising, and helped put down the prisoner revolt. He spent the rest of his tour in the Iron Triangle sector on the front line, where he later worked in the battalion Intelligence Section.

Interview:
[Kojedo](#) (1:18) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[New Compounds](#) (4:12) [Transcript: Click Here](#)

Gene Bleuer: Gene Bleuer was an infantry platoon sergeant with the 5th Regimental Combat Team during the Korean War. He was captured by the Chinese in December, 1952 and spent the next several months in a Chinese POW camp until he was exchanged for sick and injured Chinese troops as part of Operation Little Switch.



Interview:
[Claustrophobia](#) (1:05) [Transcript: Click Here](#)
[Wounded Prisoners](#) (1:51) [Transcript: Click Here](#)

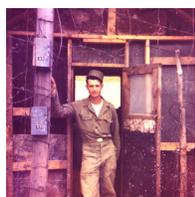
Interviews:

Ken Hanson: Kenneth Hanson is a Korean War veteran who served with the 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. Captured by the North Koreans in late 1951, he spent the rest of the war as a POW. He discusses being beaten when initially captured, his interrogation, his time at Prison Camp # 2 near the Yalu River, and repatriation in July, 1953.

Interview:

[Treatment of POWs](#) (1:29) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Torture](#) (1:52) Transcript: [Click Here](#)

Robert Kirby: Robert Kirby was a Military Policeman who served in South Korea from 1952 to



1953 with the 8137th Military Police Group. He was stationed on Koje-do Island guarding North Koreans Communist POWs. Kirby was on Koje-do when the prisoner exchange occurred following the July 1953 armistice.

Interview:

[North Korean Defector](#) (2:01) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Wrong Headcount](#) (2:00) Transcript: [Click Here](#)

Bill Smith: In 1947, Smith was sent for duty in Pusan, Korea. In 1950, Bill was nearing the end of his tour, but the North Koreans invaded the south, and Bill's time was extended. Six months later he was captured by the Chinese near Unsan, North Korea. He spent the next two and a half years in a Chinese POW camp before he was released in April, 1953.



Interview:

[Lieutenant Gets Shot](#) (1:08) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Starvation](#) (0:33) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Beatings](#) (1:08) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Russian Roulette](#) (1:15) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Lectures](#) (0:46) Transcript: [Click Here](#)
[Waking up Fighting](#) (1:59) Transcript of interview with Bill's wife, Charlotte: [Click Here](#)

General John Borling: John Borling was a career Air Force officer whose F-4 Phantom was shot down over North Vietnam in June, 1966. He spent six and a half years as a POW in North Vietnam's infamous Hanoi Hilton before being released in 1973. Borling resumed his military career, retiring in 1996 as a Major General.



Interview:

[Slipping the Cuffs](#) (2:58)
Transcript: Coming Soon
[Broken Back](#) (0:45)
Transcript: Coming Soon
[French Bread](#) (4:45)
Transcript: [Coming Soon](#)



Name:

Date:

Class Period:

POW Experiences Listening Guide

Complete the following chart as you listen to the audio excerpts. Write down *evidence*, in other words, things that the interviewee says during the excerpt, and then write down *interpretation*, things that you thought about or connected to while listening to the interview.

Evidence: I heard....	Interpretation: I thought... I wondered... I predicted... I made a connection to...

Primary Sources on Torture Policy:

Excerpts from the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War:

Article 3

In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

1. Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.

To this end the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

(a) Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
(b) Taking of hostages;

(c) Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment;

(d) The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

Article 17

No physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion, may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.

Article 87

Collective punishment for individual acts, corporal punishments, imprisonment in premises without daylight and, in general, any form of torture or cruelty, are forbidden. Source: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/prisonerwar.htm>

Excerpts from the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment:

Article 1

1. For the purposes of this Convention, the term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

Article 2

2. No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.

3. An order from a superior officer or a public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture.

Source: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cat.htm>