

LESSON PLAN

Lesson Title: Letters from Prisoners of War
Grade Level: Adaptable 3 -12th
Length of Lesson: Five 45-minute class periods

Lesson Description:

Students will learn about German Prisoners of War held at the Florence Army Air Field During World War II and their role in filling labor shortages in the area. Many of these prisoners became friends with the families they worked for. Even after the war, German prisoners would often stay in contact with their American friends through letters. Students demonstrate understanding of these events by writing a response letter to a fictional POW.

South Carolina State Standards:

ELA Writing: Standards 3, 4, 5, and 6
Social Studies: 3-5, 5-4, 7-4, 8-6, USHC-7

Instructional Objectives:

- Students will imagine they are a South Carolina farmer that used POW labor during World War II. The student will write a letter to a fictional German POW describing life in South Carolina and enquiring about their repatriation.

Vocabulary:

World War II
Prisoner of War
Labor Shortage
Repatriation

Materials:

Paper, Plain white or lined
Pencils
Erasers

Florence County Museum Connections:

POW Artifacts, Florence Army Air Field, Pee Dee History Gallery
Letter to Cleo Young, Pee Dee History Gallery

Questioning:

- Why do you think there was a need to use German POW's to work on farms and in factories in South Carolina? Do you think it would be easy to work alongside "Enemies" of the United States during the war? Do you think getting to know the person would lead to friendship?
- Do you think German POW's were able to quickly return to their homes and families after the war? What was the process of repatriation?
- How do you think people stayed in touch before e-mail and the Internet? If it was too expensive to call overseas to talk to a friend, how could you remain in contact?

Instructional Procedures:

1. Students will learn about German POW's held at the Florence Army Air Field, and other military bases throughout the United States during World War II.
2. Students will read examples of letters written from POW's to American friends after WWII. Examples are available on our website at flocomuseum.org/pee-dee-connections-lesson-supplements.
3. Students will write a letter in response to a fictional POW. Have students display understanding by describing life in the US after World War II and asking questions about the repatriation process. Letter should include the 5 parts of a friendly letter: Heading, Greeting, Body, Closing, and Signature, and may include a Post Script.
4. You may wish for students to present their letters in class or display them for others to see.

Closure:

- How do you think friendships formed between German POW's and American citizens changed the preconceived ideas of both parties?
- How did the difficult process of repatriation affect the families of POW's?
- Do you think letter writing is a practical form of communication today?



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PEE DEE CONNECTIONS

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ABOUT THIS POSTER

Within a month of the United States' entrance into World War II, the city purchased 200 acres of land just east of the city limits to be used as an airfield and training base for the United States Army Air Corps. For the next three years the Florence Army Air Field supplied fighter pilots and bomber crews to the war effort. The land that the military base occupied had previously been used as the municipal airport since 1928.

In May of 1945, German Prisoners of War captured by Allied forces in North Africa began arriving in Florence. The prisoners were held in barracks on the south end of the Florence Army Air Field. Due to domestic labor shortages caused by the war, these POW's were frequently borrowed from the base and used by local farmers. When off base, the prisoners had to distinguish themselves by marking their clothing "PW" for Prisoner of War.

Although strict guidelines were designed to direct the relationships between German POW's and their employers, prisoners occasionally established unexpected friendships with the families on whose farms they worked. One such friendship was struck in Timmonsville on the tobacco farm of Mr. Cleo Young. After the close of the war, the Young family received letters from at least a dozen former German POW's held at FAAF. Many of these letters offer a personal glimpse into the difficult process of repatriation and the state of life in divided, postwar Germany.

The Florence Army Airfield went on inactive status in October 1945. Today, that property is the home of the Florence Regional Airport.

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Tuesday - Saturday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, Sunday: 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

