

## **Title of Lesson Plan: Architectures of Power**

**Grade level:** 10-12

**Possible Units to use with:** World War II, Japanese American incarceration, prisons, mass incarceration, the school-to-prison pipeline, juvenile justice

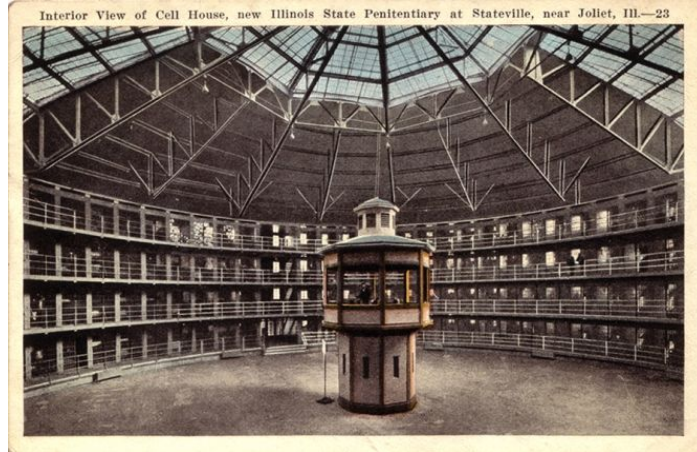
### **Synopsis/Summary of Lesson:**

This lesson can be used to forefront a study of the Japanese American incarceration or a larger unit of study on mass incarceration and prisons. During this lesson, students explore definitions of power through an activity called the “Great Game of Power.” In this activity, students move series of objects to represent different arrangements of power. In the second half of the session, students investigate how power works in the context of the modern prison, drawing upon Jeremy Bentham’s classic model of the “panopticon.” These early conversations about power can serve as a foundation for studying the history of Tule Lake and its special status as a high-security prison.

### **Introduction:**

This 50-minute lesson is an introduction to studying the Japanese American incarceration through issues of power and prison architecture. Specifically, the lesson prepares students for a study of Tule Lake, the largest camp and the site where over 18,000 Japanese Americans who responded “no”--for a range of complex reasons--to a “loyalty questionnaire” issued in 1943 by the War Relocation Authority. Tule Lake served as a “segregation center” for these dissenters and special security measures were put into place, such additional barbed wire fencing and military police surveillance. Moreover, among the ten major concentration camps that imprisoned Japanese Americans during World War II, Tule Lake is the only site in which a small jail was built within the confines of the camp. The jail and the surrounding area served as holding areas for those deemed “troublemakers” by the camp overseers. Today, the jail is one of the few remaining structures that the public can visit at the national monument.

The “jail-within-a-jail” is one strategy the camp administration used to control prisoners at Tule Lake. The presence of the jail at Tule Lake opens up larger questions about how prison systems “work” as a mechanism of control: What messages does the presence of a jail send to an already incarcerated population? How do buildings contain prisoners? How can such structures be used to maintain power?



*Interior view of Illinois State Penitentiary*

In this lesson, students will get an introduction to the “panopticon,” a theory about prison design posed by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham during the nineteenth century. The panopticon is a prison shaped in a circle or semicircle, with all cells facing the center. In the center of the circle is a watchtower, from which one overseer can observe and surveil an entire prison population. Such a design permitted guards to control prisoners, not only because it gave them an expansive view of cells but because prisoners--who could not be sure when they were being watched--would self-discipline. The panopticon is a tool to make sense of Tule Lake’s difficult history and also gives a broader explanation for the ways that institutions--like schools or the workplace--are similarly designed to control their various and sundry populations.

**Focus/Essential Question(s): What question(s) will guide student learning throughout the lesson?**

- What is power?
- How does power work in systems and structures of incarceration?

**Objectives:**

1. To explore questions about power and the various ways power seeps into our day-to-day lives.
2. To make connections between power and the structures (e.g., buildings, administrative rules) through which power is generated and sustained.

**C3 Framework Standards:**

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

## Preparation

- Arrange the desks into a circle
- Make copies of the “Panopticon”

## Readings for Teachers

Bentham, Jeremy. *Panopticon or the inspection house*. Vol. 2. 1791. Retrieved from [http://www.fcsh.unl.pt/docentes/rmonteiro/pdf/panopticon\\_%20jeremy%20bentham.pdf](http://www.fcsh.unl.pt/docentes/rmonteiro/pdf/panopticon_%20jeremy%20bentham.pdf)

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage, 1977. Retrieved from <http://foucault.info/doc/documents/disciplineandpunish/foucault-disciplineandpunish-panopticism-htm>

Takei, Barbara, and Judy M. Tachibana. *Tule Lake Revisited: A Brief History and Guide to the Tule Lake Concentration Camp Site*. Tule Lake Committee, 2012.

## Materials and Preparation

- Copies of the “Panopticon” Diagram
- Arrange the classroom so that there is a large space in the center of the
- Chart paper or whiteboard

## Procedure:

### Great Game of Power<sup>1</sup> (20 minutes)

1. When students come into the room, desks should be arranged as a circle. In the center of the circle, place a set of four chairs (chairs should be the same in size and design) and a water bottle.
2. Ask for one volunteer to arrange the 4 chairs and the bottle so that, from their perspective, one chair has more power than the others. These set of objects can be placed in any order, direction, or height. However, the chairs or the bottle may not be removed from the center circle.
3. As the volunteer arranges the chairs, ask the rest of the students to watch closely. Once the volunteer is satisfied with their arrangement, ask them to return to their seat.
4. Next, ask the group to “read” the configuration of the chairs and water bottle:
  - a. **Observe:** What do you see in front of you? What do you notice about the placement of these objects?
  - b. **Interpret:** Which object has the most power? Why?
  - c. **Connect:** What does this arrangement remind you of? Is there a real life example that you might link to this scene?

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<sup>1</sup> Great Game of Power is an activity originally conceived in Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed: Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.

Have another volunteer repeat the activity. Prompt the volunteer with various other configurations, such as:

*Arrange the objects so that one object has all of the power.*

*Arrange the objects so that there is shared power.*

5. After trying out a few different arrangements, ask the students to write silently for a few minutes to this prompt: *What is power? How would you define it?*
6. Ask for student responses. Make a list of their definitions on a board or chart paper.

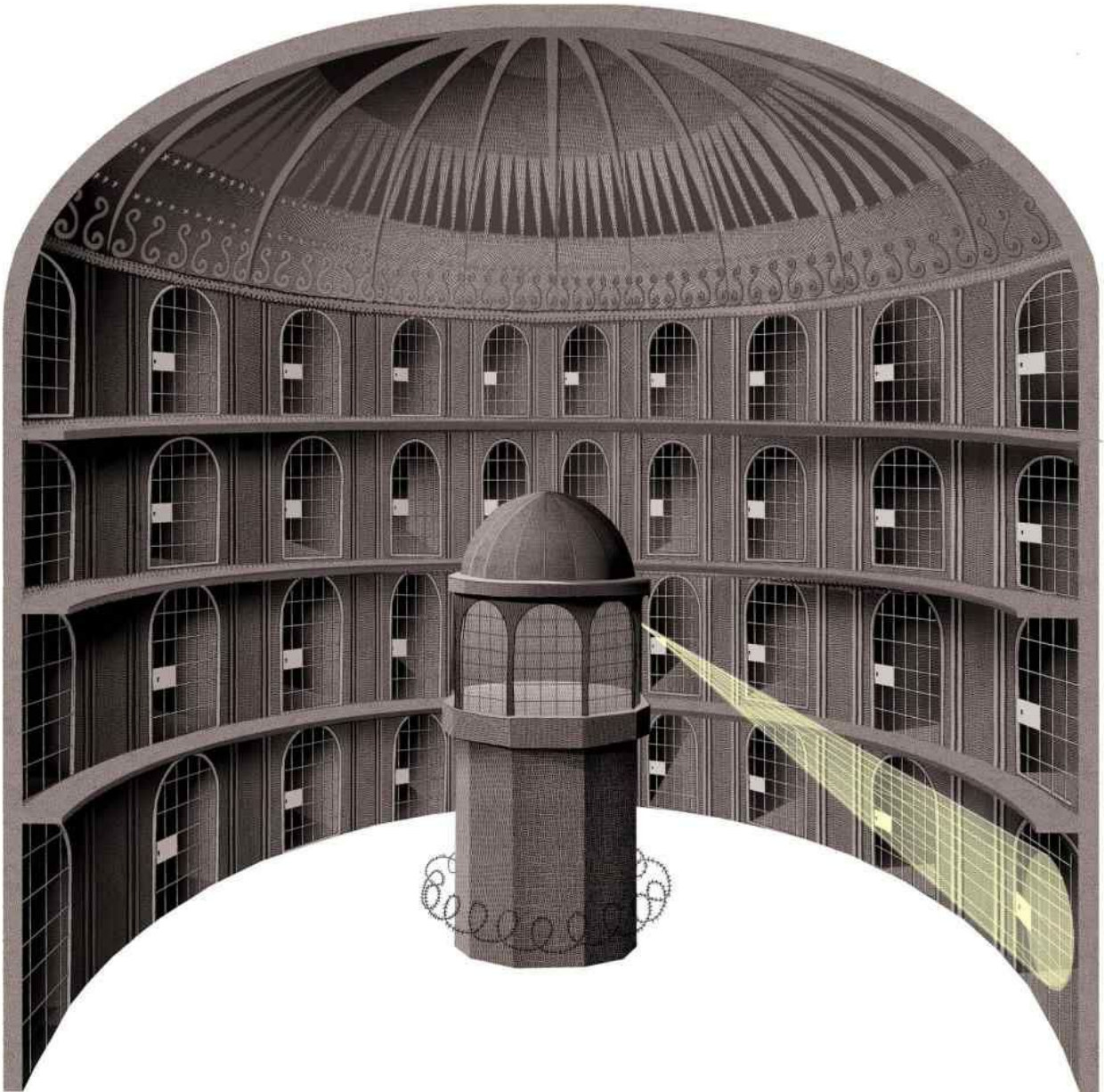
### **Prisons and Power (20 minutes)**

1. Go into the center of the circle. Ask students to look around the room and notice how the chairs in the classroom are arranged today. Then ask: *Who in the room has the most power? Why?* Ask students to dig deeply here and to observe their seating arrangements, who is sitting and standing, who has freedom of movement, etc.
2. Tell students they are going to be studying about systems and histories of incarceration (e.g., the case of Tule Lake or the Japanese American incarceration). Pass out a diagram of the “panopticon.”
3. Ask students what they notice about the panopticon. Then, prompt students to circle on their copy of the diagram and jot down a few sentences: *Who has the most power in this prison? Why?*
4. Have students turn to a partner and share their responses for a few minutes.
5. Ask each student in the circle to give their response.
6. Finally, give a brief definition of the panopticon, describing how the panopticon is a theory about how prisons (and other institutions like factories and schools) are arranged and designed to wield control over inmates.

### **Wrap-Up (5 minutes)**

1. Pass out index cards or small sheets of paper. Ask students to take a few moments to do the following:
  - a. Draw a building which allows few people have power over many.
  - b. Write a few sentences describing your drawing and your rationale for your design.
2. Collect these index cards as students leave the session.

## The Panopticon<sup>2</sup>



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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [https://security.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/styles/large\\_retina/public/panopticon%20%20pointsdactu-dot-org.jpg?itok=gTL\\_soMw](https://security.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/styles/large_retina/public/panopticon%20%20pointsdactu-dot-org.jpg?itok=gTL_soMw)