



**Asian Educational Media Service**  
*Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies*  
*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

## **TEACHER'S GUIDE TO**

### ***Doubles: Japan and America's Intercultural Children***

*(Available online at <http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/Doubles/Table.html>)*

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#### Table of Contents

#### **Introduction**

*Goals, Grade levels, Subjects, Connections to National Standards, Synopsis, Key Themes, Connecting Concepts*

#### **Activities**

- Before Viewing
- While Viewing
- After Viewing

**Essay: The Allied Occupation of Japan** (See website)

**List of Characters** (See website)

**Optional Activities** (See website)

**Key Quotes** (See website)

**Letter from Reggie Life, Producer of Doubles**

Interested in purchasing this film?  
Visit <http://www.globalfilmnetwork.net/films.html>.

# Introduction

## Goals

To understand the experiences and issues of intercultural children born as a result of the Occupation of Japan by American soldiers and reflect on how these experiences and issues might be relevant to our own lives.

## Grade Level

High School, College, Adult

## Subjects

History, Ethnic Studies, Civil Rights, Sociology

## National Standards

*Doubles: Japan and America's Intercultural Children* helps students understand the experiences and issues of intercultural children born as a result of the Occupation of Japan by American soldiers and to reflect on how these experiences and issues might be relevant to our own lives. The film is useful for not only teaching students about concepts like national identity and issues of culture, but also as a supplement to teaching about specific national standards for U.S. and world history. In particular, the film could be used to support Era 9 of the U.S. history standards (Postwar United States, 1945 to early 1970s) and Era 9 of the world history standards (The 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes), with a focus on the years of the Occupation of Japan (1945-1952).

## Synopsis of *Doubles*

At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, Allied troops, primarily American soldiers, were stationed in Japan. One of the little discussed results of the Occupation was the union of American soldiers and Japanese women. This film explores the difficulties and triumphs of the children born of these intercultural unions. The experiences of these children were diverse. Some couples married and their children were accepted by their extended families on both sides of the Pacific. Others were left by their American fathers and raised by their Japanese mothers in Japan, and yet others were abandoned by both their parents and left to face the world alone. Through first-person interviews, the stories of these intercultural children and how they strive to understand their identities and come to terms with their complex racial and cultural backgrounds are brought to life. Whether they were teased and made outcasts, or assimilated and accepted, all of these children had to face the challenge of overcoming stereotyping and finding their own unique place in the world. In a world in which contact between cultures and races is becoming increasingly more common, will intercultural children be the next wave of the future? How do the experiences of intercultural children today differ or resemble those born over fifty years ago? This film raises issues about individual identity and choice that all people must address.

## Key Themes

- Intercultural experience
- Identity
- Prejudice
- Stereotypes
- Heritage/Tradition
- Assimilation

War

## **Connecting Concepts**

Responsibility

Being abandoned

Being teased

Not belonging to a group

Diversity/The blending of cultures

## Activities Before Viewing

**A. Divide the class into five groups. Each group will get a task card including a set of discussion questions and a task to complete.**

### **Task Card #1: Responsibility**

Discussion:

What areas of responsibility do you have in your life? Do you feel responsible for certain people or projects or principles? Have you ever not fulfilled a responsibility? Why did you do so and how did that make you feel? Identify people who have responsibilities toward you. Have they ever let you down? Why do you think they did so and how did you react?

Task:

Imagine the following scenario. An American soldier is sent to a foreign country far away from home. He does not know anything about the culture and he is not allowed to fraternize with the local people. Despite this rule, he befriends a woman from that country who unexpectedly becomes pregnant. The soldier is sent home before the baby is born. The mother is too poor to take care of the child and faces social alienation if she keeps it. The child is left at an orphanage. Whose responsibility is the child? In finding a solution take into consideration the responsibilities of the United States, the country where the child is born, the father, the mother, and their respective families.

### **Task Card #2: Being Abandoned**

Discussion:

Abandonment can occur in many different situations. Have you ever felt abandoned by someone close to you, such as a parent, friend, girlfriend or boyfriend? How did you feel initially when it first happened and how did you decide to respond to the situation? Have you ever abandoned anyone? Have you ever abandoned a pet? What made you do it? What emotions did you feel then and how do you feel about it now? Have you ever known someone who was abandoned? Were you able to support this person in some way?

Task:

Write a group poem capturing your group's thoughts on being abandoned. You can either write it together or each person in the group can contribute a verse. You may write either about your own experiences or about someone else whom you know.

### **Task Card #3: Being Teased**

Discussion:

What are some of your earliest memories of being teased? What did you do about it? What types of conflict did you feel? Were you able to resolve or manage the conflict? Have you ever teased someone else? What were your motives? How did the person respond?

Task:

As a group, brainstorm a list of reasons why people tease each other. Prepare a short skit presenting at least three different scenarios.

#### **Task Card #4: Belonging to a Group**

Discussion:

What kinds of groups do you come in contact with? Some examples might be athletic teams, school clubs, social circles, religious communities, and volunteer organizations. Which ones do you belong to? Which ones do you avoid? Are there any groups you would like to be a part of but are not? What are the benefits of belonging to a group? What are the difficulties of belonging to a group?

Task:

Pretend you are a group of advertising executives. Identify at least three different organizations. Create ads promoting or dissuading membership from each.

#### **Task Card #5: The Blending of Cultures**

Discussion:

What are the different cultural influences that you see in your own community? In what ways do these cultures blend and interact? You might think of fusion cuisine, the casual mixing of English and non-English words, festivals and traditions, people of mixed heritage, etc.

Task:

Design a billboard showing the different cultural influences in your community that highlights the ways in which these interact and blend. Create visual symbols for particular ways in which different cultures are blended in your community.

**B. In the same groups, have students read the handout "The Allied Occupation of Japan," and answer the questions below. This will help to set the historical context of the film.**

- What was the Occupation?
- What were the objectives of the Occupation?
- What were some major governmental changes made in Japan during this time?
- Briefly, compare the American governmental structure to the Japanese government's structure.
- What were some other changes that occurred during the Occupation?

## Activities While Viewing

### A. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group a photo card of a character or characters (below) to follow throughout the film.

Debbie Brune  
Velina Houston  
Margo (no last name mentioned)  
Curtiss Rooks  
Susan Hacker  
Christopher Helm  
Don Watanabe  
Tino Ramirez  
Hitomi Ishiyama/Takashi Norris  
Anthony Brown/Maya Moore

### B. Each group should make notes during the film to answer the following questions.

- What is your character's name?
- Where does he/she live?
- Where did he/she grow up?
- What language(s) does he/she speak?
- What are some stories about his or her parents?
- How are his or her relationships with other relatives?
- What was family life like as a child? How much of each culture was incorporated?
- Were there any difficulties he/she experienced because of being intercultural?
- What are the good things he/she feels about being intercultural?
- Does he/she have any children? How are the experiences of your character's children different from the character's own experiences?

## Activities After Viewing

### A. Group Discussion: Compare and Contrast the Characters

After the film, have different groups of students pair up to discuss the similarities and differences of their characters. Some possible groupings are suggested below:

Margo and Hitomi Ishiyama/Takashi Norris  
Debbie Brune and Don Watanabe  
Tino Ramirez and Curtiss Rooks  
Christopher Helm and Anthony Brown/Maya Moore  
Susan Hacker and Velina Houston

## **B. Art Project: Inside and Outside**

What was the first moment that you realized that people treated you based on how you looked? Draw a picture of how people see you on the outside versus what you feel on the inside. Feel free to use both images and words as part of your diagram. [See quotes #12 and #15, page 12

## **C. Research project**

Many books and Web sites now exist exploring the intercultural experience. Write a short research paper on one of the following topics:

- Inter-racial relationships
- The experience of being inter-racial
- Inter-racial identity and the census
- Cross-cultural adoptions
- Anti-miscegenation laws

## **D. Mapping the Cultural and Racial Diversity of the Class**

Even if you are not obviously biracial like the characters portrayed in the film, everyone has cultural and racial diversity as part of his or her heritage. For example, if you are of Caucasian descent, think about specifically where each of your parents came from. Is one from Italy and another English? Or are you part German, part English and part French? If you are Asian, also think specifically about your ancestral origins. Perhaps your parents grew up in Malaysia but one is of Chinese descent. Or maybe one parent is from southern China and another from the North. How is this cultural diversity manifest in your family and how is it hidden?

Another way in which we experience cultural diversity is from the environment in which we grow up. Perhaps you are Asian but have grown up in a Jewish neighborhood. Or perhaps you have grown up in an

African American and Korean neighborhood. Maybe your babysitter or teacher spoke another language. Perhaps you have a close relative or friend from another culture who has had a significant influence on you.

Have each student draw a diagram representing his or her cultural and racial identity. When everyone is done, have students explain their diagrams. Then select a few students to tabulate statistics for the class and create a chart mapping the overall cultural and racial diversity of the class. Display this chart on the wall.

## Letter to Students from Regge Life

*Doubles: Japan and America's Intercultural Children* was inspired by the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of World War II. As the producer of the film, I observed that most broadcasters were creating programs that limited discussion of the war to battle strategies and the dropping of the atomic bomb. Not that these issues were not important, but I felt that there was another issue, an issue of lasting importance to both Americans and Japanese. During the Occupation of Japan by predominately U.S. troops, despite orders forbidding fraternization, American soldiers and Japanese women interacted and those relationships created a large population of intercultural children. There are estimates that as many as 30,000 children were born of U.S. servicemen and Japanese women in and out of wedlock. Most of these mixed blood children were not regarded well in Japan and were murdered, abandoned, sold or bartered by adoption agencies. Some children returned to the U.S with their fathers and mothers to lead a life where the racial hierarchy of America had little or no place for these mixed kids.

It is important in watching *Doubles* that you pay attention to the issues of culture and national identity that these intercultural men and women face. In the American experience, we often regard everything through only a racial prism, but to do that in this case would be limiting. The issues of appearance and phenotype are only a portion of the challenges faced by "doubles"-so take time to understand this point and then examine your personal life to see how their issues could in fact be your issues.

Enjoy the video and please feel free to share your comments via our website at [www.globalfilmnetwork.net](http://www.globalfilmnetwork.net).

Sincerely,

Regge Life  
*Producer*