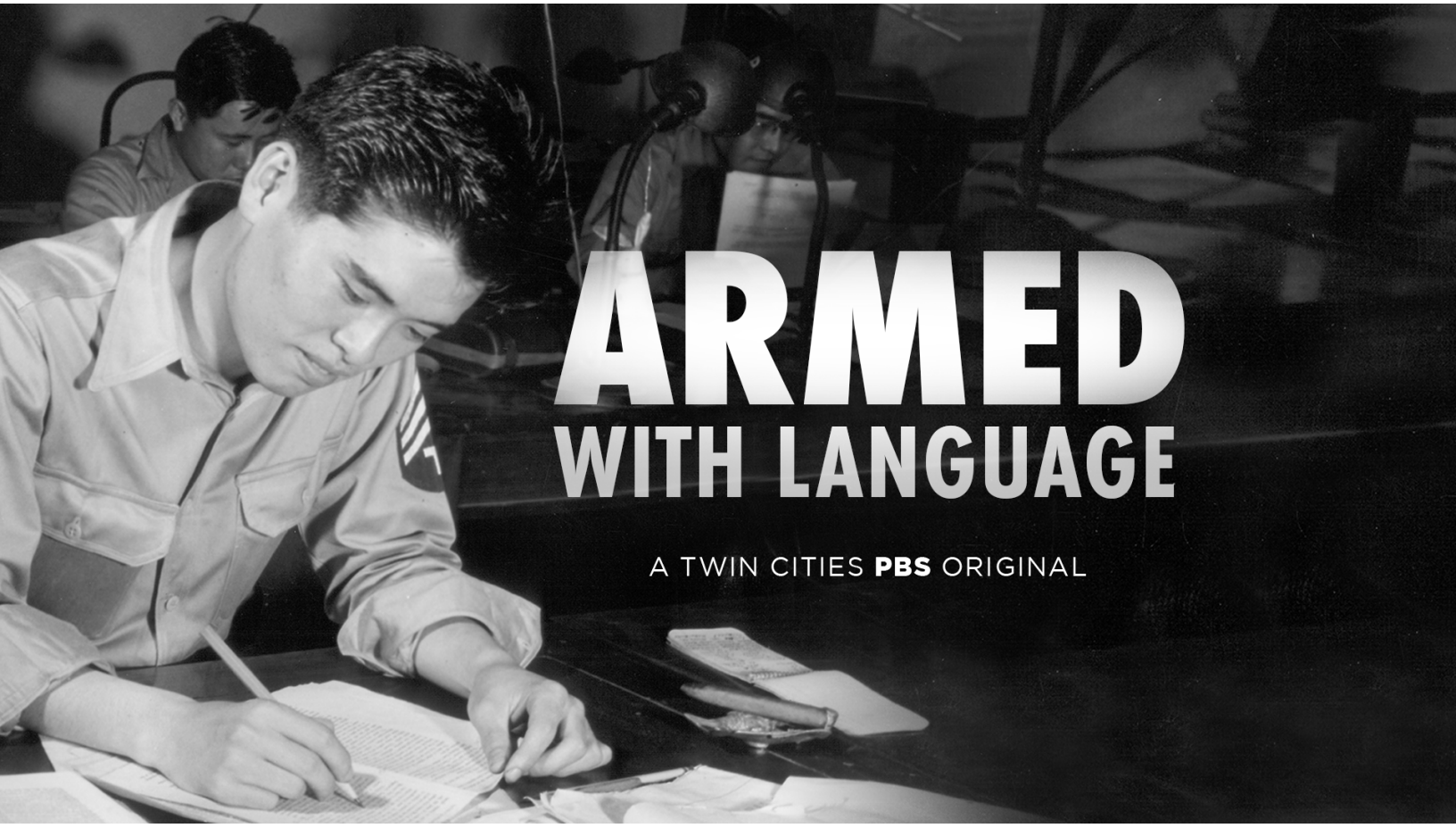
ARMED WITH LANGUAGE

SCREENING TOOLKIT



Minnesota was home to a Japanese Language school during WWII that trained thousands.

Community screening and discussion guide

TWIN CITIES PBS

ARMED WITH LANGUAGE EXPLORES LITTLE-KNOWN MINNESOTA WWII HISTORY

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Minnesota was home to a little-known military intelligence school during WWII that trained Japanese Americans be to translators. Primarily recruited from concentration camps on the West Coast, these men and women, served while many of their families remained imprisoned. For their efforts it is said that they "shortened the Pacific War by two years and saved possibly a million American lives."

"In the interviews, I'll see something flicker across the face of a Nisei soldier, a feeling, an unspoken thought, and it's there and not there. Their emotions, their inner life, are not, as they sometimes say in acting, highly indicated. So when you watch this documentary, look closely at the faces of these men and consider what they contributed to the war and our country." *-David Mura, Writer*

This little-known history changed not only the course of the war, but the makeup of Minnesota as we know it. The Twin Cities became a center for Japanese relocation and the number of people of Japanese ancestry went from under 40, before the war, to 1400 by the end of 1944.

This film is part of *Minnesota Experience,* which is funded by grants from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

This content is produced by TPT - Twin Cities PBS.

HOW TO WATCH

ARMED WITH LANGUAGE

Below are ways that you can watch *Armed With Language.*

Watch on your big screen without cable

Search for the PBS Video App in your device's app library and download to stream today!

Download on Apple TV · fire tv · Google Chromecast · Roku · SAMSUNG

Watch on your mobile devices

Download the PBS Video App on your phone or tablet and start streaming today!

Download on the App Store · GET IT ON Google Play

STREAM FOR FREE at:

http://tpt.org/languageschool

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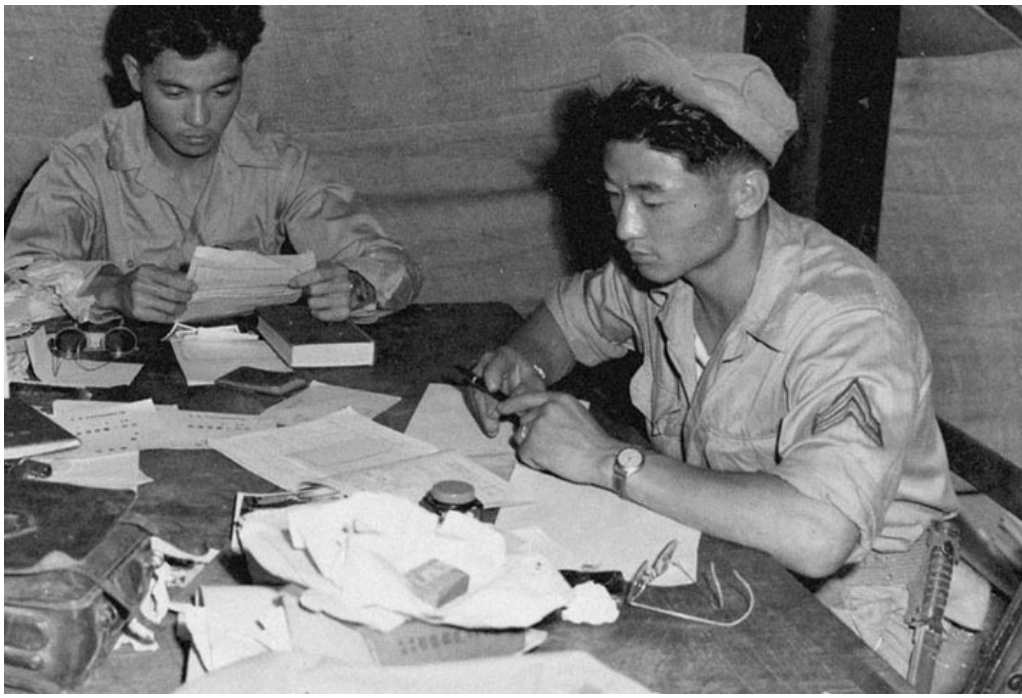
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



"This documentary about the MIS Nisei and the history of Japanese Americans is so necessary, particularly at this time."

-David Mura, Writer

AFTER WATCHING, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING:

1. Why were Japanese Americans treated differently than German and Italian Americans during WWII?
2. 90% of the Nisei did not qualify to serve as MIS Nisei. Why was this the case?
3. In addition to knowing the language, what other skills were important for Nisei in their service?
4. What motivated the Nisei to serve, especially when their families were held in concentration camps and they were not able to serve as officers?
5. The Nisei who served overseas were often targets of enemy and American bullets. Discuss their brave service and the contributions they made in the face of danger.
6. Have we made advances in how Asian Americans are treated today?
7. How is this story relevant today?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ARMED WITH LANGUAGE

By David Mura, Writer, *Armed with Language*

During World War II, nearly 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent were incarcerated in desolate areas of the West in ten camps, each ringed by barbed wire fences and rifle towers with machine guns. My parents' families were among those imprisoned.

One irony of the camps is that a significant number of Nisei men — second generation Japanese Americans — served in the armed forces. More than six thousand Nisei soldiers served as Military Intelligence Service linguists throughout the Pacific theater. They translated captured documents, interrogated prisoners, helped US troops maneuver on battlefields, and provided absolutely crucial information to commanders forming battlefield strategies. General Charles Willoughby, MacArthur's chief of intelligence, maintained that the MIS Nisei linguists shortened the war in the Pacific by two years and saved a million American lives.

During the war, the MIS Nisei linguists were trained at a language school at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling. Because of this Minnesota connection, Twin Cities PBS has produced a documentary about them and this school, ***Armed With Language.***

Many Nisei soldiers served even while their families were imprisoned, without a trial or writ of habeas corpus. And the key reason why they were imprisoned was the racist refusal to distinguish between Japan the nation and Americans of Japanese descent.

As the recent rise in anti-Asian hate crimes makes clear, this racist refusal to distinguish between the countries of Asia and Americans of Asian descent continues to the present. This documentary about the MIS Nisei and the history of Japanese Americans is so necessary, particularly at this time.

Pictured Above: Nisei Women's Army Corps detachment at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. During World War II and the postwar period more than 300 nisei women served in the WAC. (Photo courtesy of Densho Digital Repository)

Writer David Mura's Website
David Mura is an American author, poet, playwright, critic and performance artist whose work explores race, identity and history.
http://www.davidmura.com/

Take Action Against Anti-Asian Racism
What you can do right now to combat anti-Asian racism, from Asian Minnesotan Alliance For Justice.
https://caalmn.org/asians-mns-alliance-4-justice/take-action-against-anti-asian-racism/

Japanese American Citizens League Education Guides
Military Intelligence Service curriculum guides.
https://www.tcjacl.org/education/mis/

The Densho Encyclopedia
Concise, accurate, and balanced information on many aspects of the Japanese American story during World War II.
https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Military_Intelligence_Service_Language_School/

Military Intelligence Service Language School at Fort Snelling
Books, articles and images from Minnesota Historical Society.
https://libguides.mnhs.org/misls

TPT's Commitment to Sharing Stories of Those Who Serve
For decades, Twin Cities PBS has been committed to sharing the stories of Americans who heeded the "call to serve." We are proud that *Armed With Language* is joining TPT's collection of historical documentaries on wartime experiences.
https://www.tptoriginals.org/projects/call-to-serve/

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FACILITATOR GUIDE

People who feel safe, encouraged, respected and challenged are likely to share openly and thoughtfully. Here's how you can encourage that kind of participation as a facilitator.

Prepare yourself

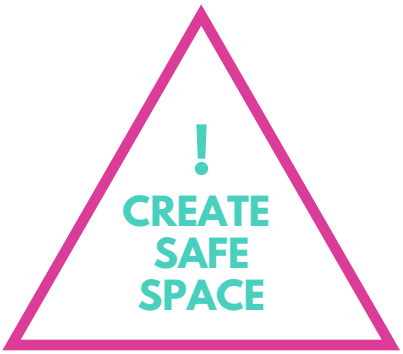
Identify your own hot-button issues. View the media before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

Preview it. Watch the media ahead of time to assess age-appropriateness and conversation starters. Think about the key points you would like your audience to take away.

Activate prior knowledge. Help your audience determine what they already know about the video's content.

Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an expert on a certain culture or history to lead an event, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. Prior to your event, take time to check the out background information and local resources or partners.

Make it meaningful. Across multiple platforms and virtually every setting, most of your audiences are constantly consuming media. So why is this particular video important, unique or special? Share why you are showing *this* video. Ask them to think about questions or ideas that relate to their own lives or communities for a post-viewing discussion.



Be clear about your role. Being a facilitator is not the same as being a content expert. For instance, an expert's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move the discussion along without imposing his or her views on the dialogue.

Know who might be present. It isn't always possible to know exactly who will attend a screening, but you may be able to predict who might be represented. You can also keep in mind that issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors like geography, age, race, religion and socioeconomic class can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and prior knowledge. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.

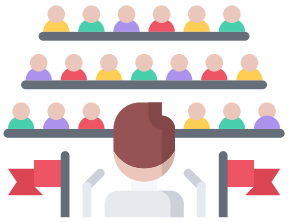
FACILITATOR GUIDE

Preparing the group

Agree to norms around language. Prior to starting a discussion or panel Q&A, remind the audience of basic ground rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include no yelling or use of slurs and asking people to speak in the first person ("I think…") rather than generalizing for others ("Everyone knows that…"). If a speaker breaks a ground rule, gently interrupt, remind them of the norms and ask them to rephrase.

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard. Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing people from dominating the discussion.

Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue.



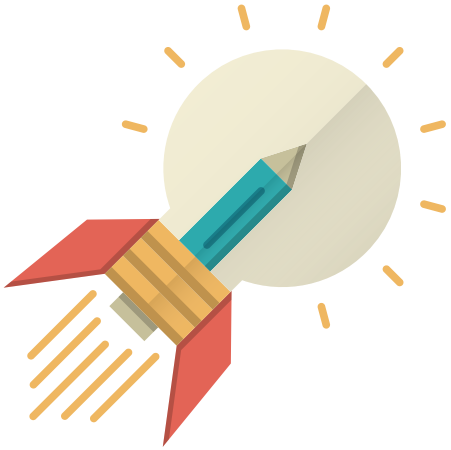
Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Everyone in the audience may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence on which they base their opinion can help people to understand one another's perspectives.

Watch-Think-Share: After viewing, use this method to spark lively discussion. Begin by fostering first reactions with general, open-ended questions. What did you like? What didn't you like? What was the best part? Why do you feel that way? Then break into small groups to explore the questions provided for each clip, with members jotting notes on the discussion. These notes help each group talk about their impressions and ideas with the full cohort.

Write On!: Another way to encourage active viewing and prompt discussion is to have audiences write down a question they have during and after watching the video. Then they can share their questions individually or in groups, generating answers and insight from their peers.

Take care of yourself and group members. If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly so that you are not asking people to reveal things that could place them in legal or physical danger. Let the audience and invited speakers know whether or not the press will be present.

Resources adapted from Indie Lens Facilitator Guides, KQED's Tips for Using Videos, and Common Sense Media's Watching Videos article.



ACTIVITY PROMPTS

There are lots of ways to learn. Whether you're talking, writing, thinking, activating, or getting creative, make sure you consider what might work best for your classroom or your community group. Do they like working alone or working together? Do they like making something or talking in small groups? How could they make a plan for next steps - big or small?

TALK. Host discussions using the media as a starting point.

THINK. Reflect on what you learned. What surprised you?

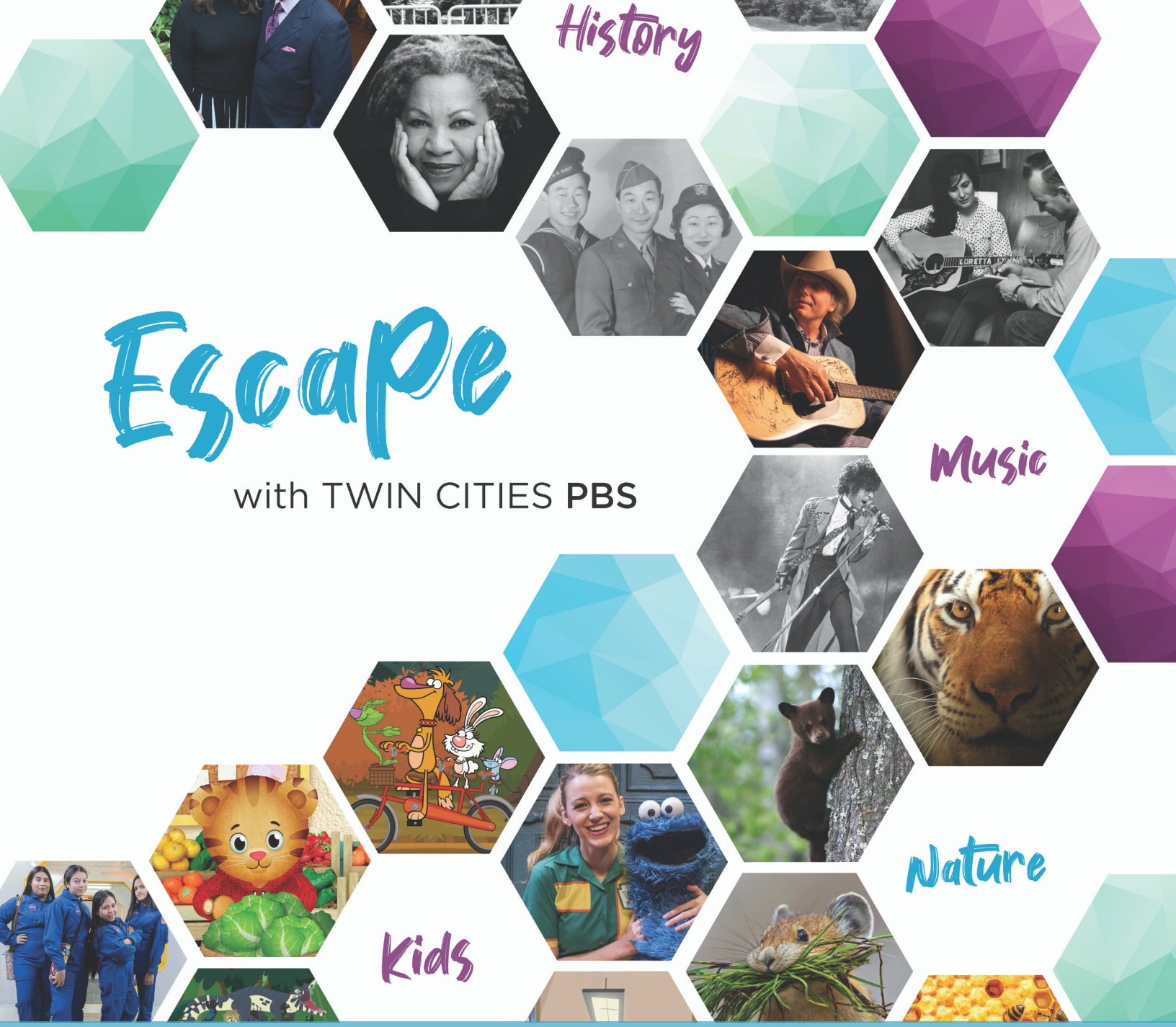
WRITE. Journal out your thoughts, feelings, and questions.

ACTIVATE. Make a personal action plan. What are your next steps?

SHARE. Start a conversation in your own networks by sharing on social media.

Optional:

- Find a relevant organization in your community and attend a meeting.
- Ask to interview community members working in this field.
- Create a piece of art that reflects on the topic and key themes.
- Design a game.
- Write your legislators about this topic.



CREATING CONTENT FOR EVERY AGE & STAGE OF LEARNING

www.tpt.org/homelearning

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