

# Nihonjin Face

## Gaman: Never Give Up



*Grades* K - 5

*Objective* To make personal connections to the Japanese concept of Gaman, or perseverance

*Materials* Paper, colored pencils or crayons  
Historic photos from [Densho](#) website (optional)

### Background

Tomiko learns the concept of perseverance through the Japanese word, ***gaman***, which her mother teaches her. This idea helps Tomiko to endure separation from loved ones, the challenges of camp and the difficulty of starting a new life with little money and no home. As she ages, it inspires her to use her experiences to keep pushing for greater equality for all Americans. In this activity students reflect on the concept of ***gaman*** and reflect on experiences in their life where they have kept on trying.

This activity is a perfect opportunity to reinforce the concept of a **Growth Mindset!** It works best as a wrap up activity after viewing the play, **Nihonjin Face**.



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### Lesson Procedure

#### 1.) Recall

Take a moment to recall Tomiko's challenges from the play. Some examples include:

- Being separated from her friend Alice
- Having her dad taken away
- Leaving her home and school with very few belongings
- All the challenges of living in the camps
- Starting a new life with little money and no home

## 2.) Empathize

Encourage your students to make an empathetic connection with Tomiko's experience from the play by discussing with them how they think they might feel going through such challenges.

- How would you feel if you were in Tomiko's situation?
- When was a time that you went through something really difficult and felt like giving up, just like Tomiko?

## 3.) Introduce *Gaman*

Sometimes Tomiko felt like giving up too, but her mom taught her something to help her keep going. ***Gaman*** - It's a Japanese word that reminds us to try our hardest.

- What does it mean to not give up?
- What does it mean to keep trying and keep learning?

## 4.) Connect and Create

Think of a time when you were frustrated and almost gave up, but instead kept trying your best. This is what it means to *persevere*. For Tomiko and Alice, persevering also means standing up for others. Think of times in your life where you overcame a great obstacle or succeeded by standing up for someone else. Now draw and/or write about this memory.

## 5.) Share

Share/display this student work that shows them trying their hardest. Consider displaying the students' work interspersed with some of the historical pictures of children enduring the challenges of forced removal and incarceration in the camps.