

Korematsu v. United States / Congressional Gold Medal Celebration Invitation—Answer Key

Directions:

Read the following excerpt from a press release from Senator Mazie Hirono's office¹ regarding the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to Fred Korematsu. Then complete the questions and tasks that follow.

January 30, 2019

Hirono, Murkowski, Coons, Gardner, Takano Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Award Fred Korematsu the Congressional Gold Medal

Civil Rights Hero Led the Opposition to the Illegal Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II

WASHINGTON, D.C.— On what would have been his 100th Birthday, Senators Mazie K. Hirono (D-Hawaii), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Chris Coons (D-Del.), and Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) and Representative Mark Takano (D-Calif.) introduced bicameral legislation to award Fred Korematsu the Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of his fight against the illegal incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and his work to advance civil rights.

“Fred Korematsu stood up for the rights of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II, and continued his fight for decades to expand civil rights and overturn his own false criminal conviction,” Senator Hirono said. “Awarding the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress’ highest civilian honor, to Fred Korematsu is a fitting tribute to his lifelong pursuit of justice and equality.”

“The placement of Japanese Americans in internment camps during WWII is a reprehensible part of our nation’s history, and the bravery demonstrated by Fred Korematsu in the defense of freedom is something that all Americans should aspire to,” Senator Murkowski said. “In remembrance of Korematsu’s unwavering commitment to justice, equality, and the promotion of civil liberties, I am proud to cosponsor legislation that will posthumously award him with the Congressional Gold Medal.

“Every American should know Fred Korematsu’s story, and Congress should honor his bravery and sacrifice by posthumously awarding him a Congressional Gold Medal,” Senator Coons said. “Fred Korematsu courageously challenged discrimination and

¹ Office of U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono, “Hirono, Murkowski, Coons, Gardner, Takano Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Award Fred Korematsu the Congressional Gold Medal,” News release, January 30, 2019, <https://www.hirono.senate.gov/news/press-releases/hirono-murkowski-coons-gardner-takano-introduce-bipartisan-legislation-to-award-fred-korematsu-the-congressional-gold-medal>.

fought to defend the rights of all Japanese Americans as United States citizens when the federal government deprived him of his liberty.

“Japanese internment is a stain on our nation’s history, and the *Korematsu v. United States* decision was a setback for racial equality and a rejection of our Constitutional values. Fred Korematsu fought against this discrimination despite the consequences and his legacy of courage serves as an example for all Americans,” Senator Gardner said. His fight to promote equal protection under the law for every American underscores fundamental values of our nation: freedom, equality, security, and justice.”

“Nearly 75 years after the Supreme Court delivered a devastating blow to the civil liberties of Japanese Americans in the landmark *Korematsu v. United States* decision, we are witnessing and experiencing the progress we have made as a country. “Mr. Korematsu was an outspoken activist, a fighter for justice, and a hero to many – including myself. His life’s work placed civil rights at the forefront and it has been one of the cornerstones in the movement to build an America where everyone can be treated equally under the law.

“NAPABA is proud to honor the legacy of Fred Korematsu on his 100th birthday and encourages Congress to recognize him with a Congressional Gold Medal,” National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) President Daniel Sakaguchi said. “This bill is a reminder of his important place in history and that we continue to learn from his legacy, a commitment to civil rights and justice for all. Korematsu remained a civil rights advocate throughout his life and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, from President Bill Clinton in 1998. He passed away on March 30, 2005 at the age of 86.

1. List 5–10 positive words used to describe Fred Korematsu in the press release above.
Student answers will vary but may include courageous, brave, outspoken, dedicated, patriotic, hero, defender, champion, and leader.
2. Using the positive words above, make a draft of an invitation to the award ceremony. It can be a social media post, email, or flyer. Your invitation should be short, clear, and include the following information:
 - a. The reason Fred Korematsu received the medal.
Fred Korematsu received the Congressional Gold Medal for his fight against the illegal incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and his work to advance civil rights.
 - b. The personal traits of Fred Korematsu according to the congresspeople awarding him.
Student answers will vary but may include that the congresspeople awarding the medal described Fred Korematsu as having a “lifelong pursuit of justice and equality,” “the bravery demonstrated by Fred Korematsu in the defense of freedom is something that all Americans should aspire to,” “unwavering commitment to justice, equality, and the promotion of civil liberties,” “Congress should honor his bravery and sacrifice,” and “an outspoken activist, a fighter for justice, and a hero.”
 - c. The positive effects of his life and legacy on people today.

Student answers will vary but may include that, “His life’s work placed civil rights at the forefront and it has been one of the cornerstones in the movement to build an America where everyone can be treated equally under the law,” or “Fred Korematsu courageously challenged discrimination and fought to defend the rights of all Japanese Americans as United States citizens when the federal government deprived him of his liberty.”

3. Create or paste your invitation below:

Student invitations will vary, but should include information from the press release and the case *Korematsu v. United States*.