INTRODUCTION:

The novel *All I Asking for is My Body* by Milton Murayama is one of the only novels written in the local literary tradition that goes into detail about the social, cultural, and political issues related to plantation life in Hawaii. In the story, for example, Kiyoshi Oyama tells about the hierarchy set up in camp to conquer and divide the workers within it. He describes how camp was set up like a pyramid, with haole managers at the top, Portuguese and Spanish lunas and workers hovering just below, and a gradual dissension of Japanese and Filipino workers (in that order). At one point, Murayama puts the significance of this hierarchy into perspective when the narrator remarks, "Shit too was organized according to the plantation pyramid. Mr. Nelson was top shit on the highest slope, then there were the Portuguese, Spanish, and nisei lunas with their indoor toilets which flushed into the same ditch, then Japanese Camp, and Filipino Camp" (96). In other words, the closer you were to the bottom, the more everybody else's shit was dumped onto your camp.

Living conditions were not the only way in which plantation owners attempted to separate the different racial and ethnic groups. One reason workers had to be segregated stemmed from the inequitable distribution of payment among them. Where you stood on the plantation hierarchy determined how much (or how little) you would be paid; those on the top received higher pay than those at the bottom.

A number of other social and cultural elements are related in the novel that further shed light on what true plantation life was like. Such issues include filial duty between children and their parents in Japanese American families, cultural gaps between issei parents and their nisei children, and the way in which WWII affected all members of camp life. None of these themes can be discussed until the history of life on a sugar cane plantation is addressed and understood. Once again, literature cannot be discussed in isolation of the time and events during which it was written.

This lesson plan takes students into plantation life through a simulation activity. The purpose of this activity is to allow students to experience different elements present in camp life; frustration, discrimination, having to use the resources around them to work together for survival. This activity tries to transfer these elements of plantation life to something more contemporary and relevant to students.

MATERIALS:

OBJECTIVES:

By working together on a project with features that simulate the conditions present on Hawaii's sugar cane plantations, students will come to understand through first-hand experience some of the same social, cultural, and political elements workers on the plantations experienced. From this experience students will be able to better understand the context in which the novel being read in class, *All I Asking for is My Body* was written.

*From this group activity, students will encounter a range of experiences that resemble those present in camp life - frustration, discrimination, anger, helplessness
*Students will collaborate as one team to produce a design that expresses their ideal entertainment system, based on the group type they are assigned to (this will resemble how the workers worked together in the fields and lived together in camp)
*By arranging students into homogenous groups (ie., blind, deaf, voiceless, not able to use hands) students will gain a sense of segregation, and eventually the reason they were being separated