

## Lesson Plan

# Chinese Immigration, Nativism, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

**Rational:** U.S. History textbooks are by and large East Coast centric. They do an inadequate job of covering U.S. History from a West Coast perspective. For example, *The Americans*, a textbook adopted by LAUSD, devotes no more than 5 paragraphs in one chapter to Chinese immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Act. Chinese immigrants played a key role in 19<sup>th</sup> Century California History and their experience is relevant to all students, but especially those living in the Western States. Likewise the book neglects to mention that the worst mass lynching in U.S. History took place in Los Angeles, not the American South, and its victims were not African-Americans but Chinese immigrants. This lesson seeks to remedy the inadequacies of the textbook. Supplementing the usual focus on European immigration and the nativist response, this lesson looks at the same concepts, push and pull factors and nativism, from the Chinese perspective. The lesson includes a lecture, visual discovery, document analysis, and culminating essay. The lesson is designed to be completed in 3 days but can be lengthened with suggested videos or shortened by omitting activities.

### Standards Addressed:

- CA H.S.S. 10.4.3 Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.
- CA H.S.S. 11.2 Students analyze the relationship among the rise of industrialization, large-scale rural-to-urban migration, and massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.
- CA H.S.S. 11.2.2 Describe the changing landscape, including the growth of cities linked by industry and trade, and the development of cities divided according to race, ethnicity, and class.
- NCHS U.S, History Era 6, Standard 2: Massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity
- NCHS World History Era 6, Standard 5: Transformations in Asian societies in the era of European expansion

### Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the political, social, and economic factors behind Chinese emigration from China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Students will be able to describe the political and economic factors behind Chinese immigration to America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century including the California Gold Rush and the Trans-Continental Railroad
- Students will identify Chinese contributions to the economic development of California and the Western U.S.
- Through the analysis of primary and secondary source documents students will discover the roots of anti-Chinese nativism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and describe how nativism led to the Chinese Exclusion Act
- In an essay, students will describe the challenges and rewards of Chinese immigrants in 19<sup>th</sup> century America

**Time:** This lesson is designed to be completed in the three 50 minute periods. Extra time may be required depended on the skill level of the students and the completion of optional activities

**Materials:** Printer, access to copier, computer, and LCD projector

**Assessment:** A culminating essay serves as an assessment for the lesson. The essay can be completed as an in-class assignment, a homework assignment, or incorporated into a larger unit exam on immigration.

# Day 1

## Chinese immigration push and pull factors – lecture and optional reading

1. Warm-up Activity (10 minutes)
  - Have students respond to the following prompt:  
  
***What do you know about Chinese history and the experience of Chinese-Americans?***
    - Have students pair share their responses before opening the question up to discussion
    - During discussion you may want to write down student responses on the board
2. Lecture – PowerPoint Slides (20 minutes, or longer depending on optional reading)
  - *Slide 4* – use the graphic image to explain push factors behind emigration if your students are not already familiar with this term
  - *Slide 5* – Explain the flooding on the Pearl River has been an age old problem in Guangdong Province
  - *Slides 7 - 9* – if you do not teach World History, it is recommended that you do some background reading on the Opium Wars to offer further explanation to your students
  - *Slide 10 option* – Have the students read the handout about the Taiping Rebellion or use the accompanying 15 minute video (time permitting)
  - *Slide 14* – use the graphic image to explain push factors behind emigration if your students are not already familiar with this term
  - Stop at Slide 27
3. Document Analysis – Excerpt from *Roughing It* (1872) by Mark Twain
  - Hand out the document and questions
  - Read the document together as a class
  - Explain that the term Chinaman was commonly used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries but is now considered a pejorative and should not be used by the students
  - Have paired students complete steps 1 & 2 (Close reading and discussion questions)
  - Conduct a class discussion centered around the students' responses to the discussion questions
  - Collect the questions and check for understanding
4. Optional Video
  - *Becoming American, The Chinese Experience Program 1, "Memories of Gold Mountain"*
  - This video does an excellent job covering the Chinese experience of the Gold Rush and building the Transcontinental Railroad. The first part of Program 1 can be streamed via Vimeo and/or the entire episode can be streamed on the Facing History and Ourselves website ([www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org))
  - If you view this video in part or in its entirety you will need to add an extra day to the lesson.

## Day 2

### The Los Angeles Chinese Massacre of 1871 and Chinese Immigrant profile lecture

To prepare for this lesson you may want to read the entire 1894 account of the massacre or read background information from one of the following websites:

<http://www.laweekly.com/news/how-los-angeles-covered-up-the-massacre-of-17-chinese-2169478>

[https://archive.org/stream/jstor-41167579/41167579\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/jstor-41167579/41167579_djvu.txt)

<http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2014/06/chinese-massacre-1871/>

1. Warm-up Activity (10 minutes)
  - Have students respond to the following prompt:  
  
***What do you think Los Angeles was like in the late 1800s? Think about the people who lived there, the size of the city, the work people did?***  
  
    - Have students pair share their responses before opening the question up to discussion
2. Lecture – PowerPoint Slides 28 – 36 (10 minutes)
  - *Slide 29*– Explain to the students that without women the Chinese American community could not grow naturally and that with prevailing attitudes regarding miscegenation white women were not an option for Chinese men
  - Slide 36 provides a transition to the Chinese Massacre
3. Document reading and analysis - The Chinese Massacre
  - You may want to introduce the topic by streaming this video, <http://www.kcet.org/social/departures/chinatown/from-canton-to-la/chinese-massacre.html>
  - Pass out the reading and discussion questions.
  - As a class read the excerpt pausing to clarify points or answer students' questions
4. PowerPoint Slide
  - The PowerPoint contains videos and maps showing the location of the massacre
  - Use the PowerPoint as a basis for discussing the reading
5. Discussion Questions
  - Have the students work in pairs to complete the discussion questions
  - Have students share their answers as a basis of discussion and to check for understanding
  - Collect discussion questions

## Day 3

### Document Analysis: Nativism and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

#### 6. Warm-up Activity

- Have students respond to the following prompt:

***For much of its history the U.S. has opened its door to immigrants. In 1882, the U.S. closed its door for the first time. Why do you think that the Chinese were the first people to be legally prohibited from immigrating to America?***

- Have students pair share their responses before opening the question up to discussion

#### 7. Introduce the Chinese Exclusion Act

- Explain that the U.S. had free open immigration prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act and that this policy remained in effect until 1920 for immigrants other than Chinese
- There were few if any restrictions on immigration
- Though everyone could immigrate there were still restrictions on who was eligible for citizenship and Chinese were excluded
- The Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester B. Arthur in 1882 and was not repealed until 1943

#### 8. Document Analysis

- Pass out the Document Analysis graphic organizer
- Pass out documents a – d, provide one set for each group of paired students
- Read document A together as a class and stop as appropriate to explain any unfamiliar vocabulary
- Have the students underline or highlight key words and phrases
- Model the analysis of document A using the graphic organizer
- Repeat the process with the remaining documents as necessary
- Call on paired students to share their answers in order to check for understanding

#### 9. Culminating Essay (Assessment)

- Introduce the prompt by writing it on the board or distributing a printed copy
- Time permitting, have your students begin writing in class or assign the essay for homework

**Based on the lectures, readings, documents, and discussion write an essay in response to the following prompt:**

***What were the risks and rewards for Chinese immigrants to the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century?***

- **Include a thesis statement**
- **Use at least 5 pieces of evidence from the Mark Twain excerpt, the Chinese Massacre excerpt, and documents A - D**