



MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL LESSON PLAN

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

Produced by Gwen Perkins Whiting for the Washington State Historical Society

INTRODUCTION

In May 1882, Congress, responding to pressure from unions, passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. This treaty with the Chinese Government banned Chinese emigrants from entering America and called for the deportation of any who arrived after 1880. Was the Exclusion Act the best solution? What were its positive and negative outcomes?

Chinese immigrants began arriving in America in significant numbers in the 1850s, most from the southern provinces of China, where war, persecution and famine caused the deaths of millions. American businessmen actively sought Chinese laborers in mines and other industries, using them to provide much of the labor for building the transcontinental railroads. At first praised as diligent workers, praise turned to hostility as the railroad was completed and competition for other jobs increased. Anti-Chinese political activity and violence erupted between 1880-1900 throughout the West, resulting in scores of deaths.



Chinese people are shown being forced to leave their homes and businesses in Seattle. This detail is from an issue of *West Shore* magazine, published in 1889 after anti-Chinese riots. Washington State Historical Society Collections.

This curriculum asks students to examine legislation and determine the stakeholders and parties involved, using the 1885 expulsion of Chinese people in Tacoma as a case study. Students are asked to define values and issues related to the events of the late 1880's in their examination of this time period and its influence on Northwest communities. They will then examine the relevance of this subject to modern constitutional issues through classroom discourse and a position paper on a contemporary topic or a local manifestation of this Act.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Who was involved in the expulsion of Chinese people from Tacoma? What motivations did they have? Were they economic, political, social?

- What kind of effect did the Chinese Exclusion Act have on the people it targeted? How has it influenced their descendants' lives today?
- How does this topic relate to us today? What is the role of the United States government in regard to immigration? What issues are the same as they were in the 1880's and what issues have changed? Why is this topic important?

ACADEMIC STANDARDS MET

This lesson plan satisfies Washington state standards in Civics, History, and English. It satisfies Common Core standards in History/Social Studies as well as English Language Arts and Literacy. It can also be used to fulfill a Constitutional Issues Classroom-Based Assessment.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

OPTIONAL READINGS

(located online at WashingtonHistory.org/education/curriculum/chineseexclusion)

- The Chinese Exclusion Act
- Chronology of Asian American History
- Reflections on Exclusion

PREPARATION

Prepare yourself by getting familiar with the content of this lesson plan. Review all primary and secondary sources listed above. The optional readings listed on the left have also been provided for teacher use. They show a modern perspective on the effects of exclusion. They also provide a timeline of some of the events before and after the Chinese Exclusion Act.

As the culminating activity, students will be asked to consider a constitutional issue of their choice relating to this topic. You may wish to lead up to this unit by suggesting that students collect clippings from current publications on subjects such as civil rights or immigration in order to make comparisons between the late 1880's and today.

SESSION ONE

RESOURCES NEEDED

- Device to display information for student viewing (chalkboard, etc)
- World map

(located at the end of this document)

- Chinese Immigrants
- European Immigrants
- Vocabulary Organizer
- Run Out on the Rails They Built
- Issue Analysis worksheet

lesson.

STEP I

Provide students with an overview of this lesson by explaining to them that they will be studying the Chinese Exclusion Act. You may wish to share some of the details from the teacher reading about the Exclusion Act or read it out loud.

Pass out copies of essays about Chinese and European immigrants in your classroom. You may either wish to split the group in half and have each half read a different section and compare verbally or you can have students read both essays in their entirety.

You may wish to have a world map on hand so that students can reference different parts of the world as they are working through the assignment. Ask them to use the vocabulary organizer as they complete the readings so that they can organize their thoughts for classroom discussion throughout the

STEP II

After students have been given the opportunity to read these essays, project a world map. Ask them to point out the area from which the groups in their readings came.

Engage the class in discussion about the following points:

- *What factors influenced the move of these peoples?*
- *Take a look at this map. What resources existed in the homeland of those immigrating to the United States? What resources existed in the lands they were entering?*
- *What role did the railroad play in immigration? Why would Chinese labor on the railroad have influenced settlement patterns in the Pacific Northwest?*

On the Chinese Exclusion Act
"1882 is a watershed. For Chinese Americans, all our reference points begin from here. The 1882 legislation is unique in U.S. immigration law because the Chinese were singled out by name thereafter, as 'aliens ineligible for citizenship' - hereafter no Chinese will be admitted to naturalization. Preemptively barred from the possibility of citizenship. That's even bigger than excluding a people just from entry."
- Connie Young Yu, historian

Draw students into a discussion about how the railroad played a part in the movement of resources and people from one place to another. Ask how the resources available in home countries would have created similarities and differences between cultures. Do they think that this would have played a part in the roles that immigrants played in other countries? What other factors played a part?

Here to Stay?

Most immigrants of this period, whether from Asia or Europe, came as sojourners with plans to return home after acquiring wealth. This idea was not unique to the Chinese population, although it was often represented as such. European immigrants had return rates equal to those of Asian immigrants.

STEP III

In class or as homework, have students read *Run out on the Rails They Built*. Ask them to continue using their Vocabulary Organizer to add to their concept of what immigration meant. As they complete this, ask that they do the Issue Analysis Worksheet and explain that they will be exploring what happened more in depth in the next class session.

SESSION TWO

RESOURCES NEEDED

(located at the end of this document)

- James Wickersham letter
- Lum May statement
- Who Questions? Worksheet
- Socratic Seminar Handout

STEP I

As you bring students back together for this session, debrief some of the things that they learned in their readings. Divide them into smaller groups and pass out copies of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Use this legislation as part of a jigsaw exercise. Give each group a different section of the Act to read and explain to them that they will be presenting to the class what they believe their section means. Using the first section, model the expectations by providing them with a brief description of the Act and its implications for the Chinese community.

After students have been given the opportunity to discuss their sections in small groups, bring them together to explain various sections to the class. You may want to offer them the possibility of presenting this material verbally, dramatically, or artistically, depending on time constraints and the learning styles of your students.

STEP II

Pass out copies of the James Wickersham letter and Lum May Statement. You may have students read both letters or keep the class in their smaller groups to discuss amongst themselves.

After they have had the opportunity to study both documents, discuss the following points:

- *What is a stereotype, and do you see any in these documents? If so, what are they?*
- *Think about stereotypes that you have experienced. How did they make you feel?*
- *What stereotypes did other Americans have about Chinese people? What stereotypes do you see in James' Wickersham letter?*
- *How did some of the Chinese people that you read about try to counter stereotypes?*
- *Was there anything in what you read that surprised you? Why do you think it did?*
- *How do you challenge a stereotype? What effects can the perceptions of other people have on an individual's life?*

STEP III

Ask students to review their "Run Out on the Rails They Built" essay again. As a class, identify the issues at stake and some of the stakeholders involved. You may wish to write this on the board, creating a simple chart with space to write about each individual stakeholder. Using the Issue Analysis Worksheet as a guide, encourage students to evaluate the motives of each individual stakeholder in preparation for Session Three.

STEP IV

Explain to students that in the next class session, you will be conducting a Socratic seminar. Ask them to prepare by writing questions to ask during the course of the session using the Who Questions? Worksheet. Explain to them that this seminar will require them to participate by asking and answering questions of their classmates.

You will need to read the Socratic Seminar Handout to prepare for this session beforehand.

SESSION THREE

STEP I

In this session, students should be prepared to discuss the topic of Chinese expulsion - its origins and its effect on people today, the relationship between this event, and modern immigration and/or civil rights issues.

Review the following guidelines for your class. Students should know that it's good to:

- *Use your readings as you need to during the discussion. This is not a test. Use evidence to back up arguments.*
- *It is okay to pass when asked to contribute.*
- *Do not participate if you are not prepared.*
- *Ask that the point be clarified for you if you become confused.*
- *Keep the discussion focused on the point at hand.*
- *Take turns speaking and be respectful of fellow participants. All viewpoints have equal validity- there is no "right" or "wrong" answer.*
- *Talk to each other, not just to your teacher.*

Remember that the Socratic seminar is an exercise to allow students a chance to explore this topic through discourse with their peers. Your role as teacher/leader is to guide the discussion, and ensure that students remain on-topic and treat one another with respect.

Wrap up this session by asking students to reflect on the topics discussed in the seminar. You may ask them to do a freewrite about their experience to help them process the discussion; however, it is not recommended that this freewrite be graded. It needs to be a low-stakes writing assignment.

SESSION FOUR

STEP I

RESOURCES NEEDED

(located at the end of this document)

- Graphic Organizer

Tell students that they are now ready to begin exploring constitutional issues that affect them today. Ask them to look at what they have learned about the Chinese Exclusion Act and think about how they could incorporate that information in a

topic closely related to a current issue. Among topics you might suggest for student use are civil rights and immigration.

Remind them that they must select a debate and identify the different stakeholders involved. Using their recent work on the Chinese expulsion, review positions and values discussed earlier.

Explain to students that they will need to do the same when writing their position paper. Tell them that they will need to choose a position, and outline that in the paper, presenting a solution to the problem based on historical and Constitutional analysis. Provide them with the graphic organizer for them to use as they draft their position paper.

WashingtonHistory.org offers a tremendous number of primary and secondary sources that can be used for this paper. Depending upon the amount of time you have, you may have your students devote only a few days to this assignment, or, alternatively, they may extend their research into many other sources, ultimately devoting more time to the writing and presentation of their papers.

After students have drafted their persuasive essays, pair them up and have them switch papers. Ask them: Are you persuaded by your partner's recommendation? Why or why not? What evidence have they used?

POSSIBLE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Suggest that students visit the Chinese Reconciliation Project Foundation website at www.cprftacoma.org to find out how Tacoma is addressing the issue of expulsion in their community. This website has a PowerPoint presentation available that could be used as part of classroom discussion.

- You may also wish to have students do further exploration of the topic by examining related events outside of Washington. You could suggest that they research the effects of exclusion in other parts of the country or even other parts of the world. Ask if they can find examples of this type of legislation or social rule in other cultures.

An Early Fight against Exclusion

In 1885, residents of Olympia, Washington passed a resolution opposing efforts to remove the Chinese by force. When white rioters threatened to do so anyway, Sheriff William Billings deputized local businessmen to help him keep order.

In 1997, Gary Locke, the first Chinese American governor of Washington state, reflected on the efforts to discuss anti-Chinese violence in the Pacific Northwest. He said in part:

In the history of every minority in America, there are stark contrasts of light and dark. There are tales of terrible oppression and persecution -- and, on the same page -- tales of incredible courage, and passionate advocacy for equal rights.

As we work to restore the historical memory of the anti-Chinese, anti-immigrant violence of the 1880s, we must also -- and equally-- work to restore our historical memory of the people who opposed it.

We should build... monuments to the citizens and the sheriff in Olympia, who put their lives on the line when they stood between an angry, armed mob and their intended Chinese victims.

It is not enough to vilify the bigots. We must never forget to celebrate the heroism of those who stood up to them.

- Adapted from the Becoming American: The Chinese Experience website at <http://www.pbs.org/becomingamerican>

- Have students search the Washington State Historical Society's online collections for artifacts pertaining to this period of history. Print out some of the photographs and ephemeral pieces and have students examine them. Ask them to form a hypothesis about the significance of the object and then conduct research to see if they can find other evidence to prove or disprove their original assumptions.
- Schedule a visit to the Washington State History Museum so that students can use the ideas in this lesson plan to examine other periods in Washington state history.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

This list outlines all of the sources and components provided as part of this lesson plan. You may reproduce any or all for personal or classroom use.

Primary Sources for Student Examination

1. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
2. Letter from James Wickersham
3. Statement from Lum May
4. Images from the Washington State Historical Society collections

Secondary Sources for Student Examination

1. Chinese Immigrants: An Overview reading
2. European Immigrants reading
3. Exclusion in Washington reading
4. Run Out on the Rails They Built reading

Worksheets and Supplemental Materials

1. Vocabulary Organizer
2. Issue Analysis Worksheet
3. Who Questions? Worksheet
4. Socratic Seminar Handout
5. Graphic Organizer

Additionally, you will need to provide the following to complete this unit:

1. Device to display information for student viewing (chalkboard, projector, etc)
2. World map
3. Printouts of the above materials for student use