

## 6.1 - Redefine American

### The Asian American Education Project

<b>Grade Level(s)</b>	K-5
<b>Lesson Overview</b>	Breaking Ground (1850s to 1920s). Who were the first Asian Americans? This episode focuses on early Asian immigrants to the United States, their reasons for immigration, successes they experienced, challenges they faced, and the changing reception they received in their host country. As such, in this lesson, students will learn what an immigrant is, what it means to be an “American, what the American Dream is, and how primary sources and secondary sources provide varied perspectives that inform a deeper understanding of an event.
<b>Lesson Objectives</b>	Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify reasons for the first large-scale arrival of immigrants from Asia into the U.S.</li><li>• Describe the challenges and achievements of early Asian immigrants especially Antero Cabrera, Lee Wong Sang, Moksad Ali, and Mamie Tape</li><li>• Identify the causes and effects of court cases such as Tape vs. Hurley which helped to shape the Asian American experience</li></ul>
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### **Redefine American Essay:**

Asians arrived in the U.S. as early as the 1700’s. Later in the 1800’s, more Asian immigrants came to seek new opportunities in the U.S or to flee from conflict in their native countries. These early immigrants came from all parts of Asia including but not limited to: Philippines, Japan, Korea, China, India, etc. Some of these early immigrants intended to return home after making their fortune; many eventually settled to make new homes for themselves in the U.S., achieving successes and facing challenges. They struggled with what it means to be an American when they looked Asian.

Antero Cabrera, a Filipino interpreter and houseboy to a prominent American anthropologist, came with his employer to be part of the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904. Despite being displayed as a “savage” in a human exhibit of Filipino ethnic groups at the World’s Fair, Antero fought to achieve greater social status-

The Gold Rush that attracted Lee Wong Sang to the U.S. in 1866 was largely over when he arrived, so he became part of a growing Chinese labor force that helped build the Transcontinental Railroad.

Afterwards, he settled in California like so many of his fellow railroad workers. As Chinese workers gained employment across various sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, they became a threat to white labor. This became known as “Yellow Peril.” Asian immigrants, especially the Chinese who made up the majority of the Asian workforce at that time, were eventually banned from entering the U.S. through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Mamie Tape could be considered one of the earliest Asian Americans, as the American-born daughter of self-made, entrepreneurial Chinese immigrant parents, Joseph and Mary. Her father found a way to continue a thriving business as a broker despite anti-Chinese fervor. In claiming the rights and privileges of an American citizen for their daughter, they tried to enroll Mamie in an all-white school in San Francisco in 1884. When she was barred entry, her parents brought her legal case to the California Supreme Court - generations before the more prominent *Brown vs. Board of Education* case, which contested the racial segregation of schools.

Lastly, Moksad Ali’s story is that of a dark-skinned merchant who played up his exotic background in order to sell goods and make a living but who experienced xenophobia because of that very same foreignness or prejudice toward dark-skin people. Yet he found a home in the black community of New Orleans, leaving a long line of ancestors who call themselves Americans today.

By examining the struggles and contributions of these early Asian Americans, students will learn how complicated and nuanced it is to define what it means to be “American.”

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### Works Cited:

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- “Mary Tape, An Outspoken Woman,” 1 Jan 2001. *Organization of American Historians, Magazine of History*, 15(2), 17–19. <https://doi.org/10.1093/maghis/15.2.17>

### Vocabulary: <sup>1</sup>

- **American Dream** - a happy way of living that is thought of by many Americans as something that can be achieved by anyone in the U.S. especially by working hard and becoming successful
- **Board of Education** – a board of citizens controlling especially the elementary and secondary public-school education in a state, county, city, or town
- **Equality** – the quality or state of being equal of getting equal treatment
- **Immigrant**- a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence
- **Primary Sources** – firsthand accounts of a topic from people who have a direct connection with it; examples are letter, diaries, photographs, interviews, etc.
- **Promised Land** – something and especially a place or condition believed to promise final satisfaction or realization of hopes
- **Queue** – traditional Chinese men’s hairstyle which consists of a braid of hair usually worn hanging at the back of the head
- **Racism** - a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race
- **Secondary Sources** – secondhand accounts that describe, interpret, or analyzes information from primary sources; examples include newspaper articles, textbooks, etc.

- **Segregation** – the separation for special treatment or observation of individuals or items from a larger group
- **Sue** – to seek justice or right from (a person) by legal process
- **Supreme Court** – the highest judicial tribunal in a political unit

Definitions adapted from Merriam-Webster dictionary

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean to be an immigrant? Over time, how has the United States' perspectives on immigration changed? What are the reasons for such different perspectives?
2. What causes a person to leave his/her native country and go to a new country? What are the struggles and obstacles of starting a new life in a foreign place?
3. What does it mean to be “American”? Why aren't all “Americans” treated equally?
4. Why is it important to recognize the contributions of people of color? For example, Chinese railroad workers were not included in the celebration photo of the completed railroad at Promontory Point. Why not? What are the implications of this?
5. Even though Mamie Tape never went to Spring Valley School, her family still fought the legal system over her right to do so. Why is it important to fight for civil rights even if you don't personally or directly benefit?
6. Are segregated schools ever good for society?

### **Activity 1: Defining “Immigrant” (Grades K-1)**

- A. Warm up – What is it like for you to be new in a school or class?  
Ask students to share their answers on the following questions about being a newcomer:

- How did you feel about coming to the new school? New class?
- How do you like your new school? Your new classmates?
- Did a new classmate make friend with you? How did that make you feel?

- B. Asian immigrants to America

1. Show the first four photographs from *Redefine-American-photos* one at a time.
  - Ask students what they think about the people in the photos.
2. Give a short background about Asian immigrants to America:

“Over 170 years ago immigrants came from all corners of Asia to America. They came from tiny villages and big cities. The first immigrants crossed the ocean by boats from China and Japan, from Korea, India and the Philippines. Some came to look for jobs. Some left because there were wars and fighting in their countries. Some came for better jobs or to see new places. They dream of doing new things in America.”

- C. See, Think, Wonder

1. Show the next four images in *Redefine-American-photos* one at a time.
  - Ask students what they think about the people in the photos.
2. Then show the images again one at a time and read the stories one at a time to the students. Ask the students what they see, what they think and what they wonder after each image.
  - Where did these immigrants come from?
  - What are some reasons why these early Asian immigrants came to America?
  - How are their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren doing now in America?

- a) First show the photo of Antero Cabrera.

Tell the story of Antero Cabrera. Antero was a 12-year-old boy. He was a Filipino interpreter. He wanted to travel and see America. So he agreed to be brought to America in 1904 to be displayed in the 1904 World's Fair. Afterwards he got an education for himself and his children in America.

b) Show the photo of Lee Wong Sang.

Tell the story of Lee Wong Sang. He was a Chinese immigrant who came to America in 1866 to work and to earn money to send home to his family in China. He helped build the Transcontinental Railroad. His great-granddaughter, Connie Young Yu, is now an American writer, historian, and lecturer.

c) Show the photo of the Tape family

Tell the story of Joseph and Mary Tape. Joseph was a Chinese immigrant. He came to America to earn a living. He later became a businessman driving a milk wagon. Mary grew up in an orphanage. Joseph met Mary in a milk run, and later married her. She gave birth to Mamie in America. Mary wanted to send Mamie, to an all-white school in San Francisco in 1884. The school principal told her her school is only for White students. Mary did not think it was fair because they were Americans too; so she sued the school. She won the case. But the school board still did not let Mamie go to the White school. They built a separate school for Chinese students.

d) Show the photo of Moksad Ali and Ella Blackman

Tell the story of Moksad Ali and Ella Blackman. Moksad was a dark-skinned merchant from India. He came to America to make a living. He found a home in the black community of New Orleans. He married Ella Blackman, an African American. Moksad and Ella had a son, Bardu Ali. Bardu became the leader of the Napoleon Zyas band.

#### D. Review

- Ask students what they have learned about people who are new to this country, immigrants.
- How are these immigrants' families doing now?
- How can they help people who are new to the school, to their class or their city?

### ***Activity 2: Defining "Immigrant" (Grades 2-5)***

A. Have students do a quickwrite. Tell them to think about a time they moved to a new town, or a new school, or started a new grade. Provide these prompts: What was it like to be new? How did you feel? What were you excited about? What were you worried about?

Have students pair up. Tell students to share their thoughts with their partners. Convene as a whole group and select a few students to share.

#### B. See, Think, Wonder

1. Print out the images of Antero Cabrera, Lee Wong Sang, Tape family picture, and Moksad Ali from the *Redefine-American-photos*.
2. Tape the images on the wall.
3. Draw a big chart of the following table and post it on the wall.

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
SEE				
THINK				
WONDER				

Tell students these are images of some early Asian immigrant leaders to the United States. Explain how they were new to the United States. Organize students into groups of four. Have each group walk

around to each image and look at the details. Have each group record responses and comments on sticky notes to post on chart. Tell them to answer the following guiding questions:

- What do you SEE in this picture?
- What do you THINK about what you see?
- What do you WONDER about based on what you see and think?

Allow enough time at each image and then rotate so all groups have a chance to study each image.

Convene students as a whole group and facilitate a discussion by asking these questions:

- What do these four images have in common?
- What is different about the four images?
- What wonderings do you have?

C. Display the first 4 photos from *Redefine-American-photos*. Read aloud paragraph 1 from the *Redefine American Essay*.

Facilitate a whole group discussion by asking students:

- Where did these immigrants come from?
- What are some reasons why these early Asian immigrants came to the United States?

D. Review each image and the sticky notes on the chart paper.

Then, read aloud paragraphs 2, 3, 4, and 5 from the *Redefine American Essay*, display the photograph of the person in the story from the *Redefine-American-photos*.

Stop after each paragraph to facilitate a whole group discussion by asking the following questions:

- Who is this person?
- Why is this person important?
- How did the information confirm or differ from your original thoughts based on the image analysis?

E. Have students do a quickwrite. Tell them to answer the following questions:

- What do you think it was like for these people to be “new”?
- How is it similar or different to the experience you shared with your partner at the beginning?

Convene as a whole group and select a few students to share their quickwrite responses. End this activity by facilitating a whole group discussion around this question:

- How can we be more mindful of people who are new to our country?
- How can we help?

### **Activity 3: Redefine “American” and the “American Dream” (Grades 3-5)**

1. Distribute the *Bubble-Maps* worksheet, or ask the students to draw a bubble map.

- Ask students to write this question in the middle box: Who is an American?
- Ask students to fill in the bubbles with adjectives, words, or phrases that come to mind.

2. Tell students the following statement: “Many Asian Americans, even those born in the United States, were not viewed as Americans. For example, let’s learn more about the Tape family.” Show students video clip. To aide student comprehension of this clip, ask these questions:

- Why was Joseph “unusual”?
- What was the significance of Joseph cutting off his queue?
- Who helps raise Mary Tape? How are Joseph and Mary similar?

3. Have students retell the video clip content by sharing aloud a list of events.

- Then, as a class, select the six most important events.
- Distribute the *Sequencing-Event-Maps* worksheet

- Have students organize these six events into chronological order of what happened by creating a “Sequencing Events” timeline.
  - On the timeline, direct students to write a simple sentence for each event and then draw the event.
- Recap the video clip and tell students, “Joseph and Mary Tape came to the United States as children and grew up in San Francisco. They dressed like Americans, talked like Americans, and were raised in American culture. They married and had three kids who were all born in the U.S.” Ask students:
    - Do you think they were Americans? In what ways were they Americans?
    - Were they treated like Americans? In what ways were they and in what ways were they not?
    - What happened to Mamie when she tried to start school?
    - Was what happened to Mamie fair or not? (Provide this sentence frame, “I think what happened to Mamie was \_\_\_ because \_\_\_.”)
  - Revisit the bubble map from the beginning of the activity. Allow students to revise or add new responses.
  - Facilitate a whole group discussion by asking these questions:
    - What is the American Dream?
    - Is the American Dream possible for everyone? Why or why not?
    - Who gets to have the American Dream and who doesn’t?

Give students a blank sheet of unlined paper. Have them draw what the “American Dream” means to them. Have students pair up and share their drawing with a partner. Convene as a whole group and select a few students to share.

- Introduce the handout, *Graphic-Organizer-Early-Asian-Immigrants-ws*. Tell students, You’ve already learned about the Tape family. You will learn about three more Asian immigrants who came to the U.S. in the 1700-1800’s. These four immigrants came from different countries in Asia. I will read a passage about each of these early Asian American immigrants. As you listen to their stories, record the following information onto the graphic organizer:
  - Where was this person born?
  - Why did this person come to the US?
  - What were some positive things this person experienced in the US?
  - What were some struggles this person experienced in the US?
  - As you listen to each passage, pay attention to their successes and challenges. Also, think about how their experiences are similar and how they are different.”
- Facilitate a whole group discussion, by asking, “
  - What do these four people of Asian heritage have in common?
  - What are some differences among them?
  - What do their stories tell you about what it was like to be an Asian immigrant in the United States?
  - How are they American? How are they not American? How did each person view the American Dream? Did this dream come true for them? Why or why not?”

#### **Activity 4: Analyzing Primary and Secondary Sources (Grades 4 & 5)**

- Explain that primary sources are eyewitness or first-hand accounts of an event from someone who was connected to it directly. Examples are letters, photographs, diaries, artifacts etc.
  - Distribute the *Document–Analysis-ws* worksheet.



- Before the lesson, prepare a printed copy of *Letter-from-Mrs-Tape*. Read the letter aloud.
- During the reading, have students answer the following questions as stated on the *Document-Analysis-ws*.

Give the following instructions:

- What is the context of document? Explain context means: What are you looking at? Who wrote it? When was it created? Where was it printed? Who was the one that printed it? Next,
  - What is the purpose of this document? Put yourself in the author's shoes: Why did the author create it? Who is the audience that the author is talking to? What is the format and why did the author choose it?
  - What is the content of this document? What is the main point or argument the author is making in this document?
  - What is the value of this document? What can you tell about the author from this document? What can you tell about this period of time in history?
2. Convene as a whole group and review the students' responses. Facilitate a whole group discussion by asking the following questions:
    - What did you learn about Mrs. Tape?
    - What did she want?
    - How did she feel?
  3. Explain that secondary sources are sources that describe, interpret, or analyze information from primary sources; examples include newspaper articles, textbooks, documentaries, etc.

Show the video clip on Mamie Tape and court case and explain that this documentary clip is a secondary source. After viewing the clip, ask students these questions:

- What did you learn from Mae Ngai, a historian, and Alisa Kim, a descendent of the Tapes?
  - What were their viewpoints on the Tape family's experiences and court case?
  - What more did you learn about the context in which Mrs. Tape wrote her letter?
4. Convene as a whole group and facilitate a whole group discussion by asking students:
    - What more did you learn from the secondary source?
    - What is the difference between the primary and secondary source? What kind of information did you get from the primary source that you didn't get from the secondary source and vice versa?
  5. Tell students that they are going to use primary sources (i.e. Letter from Mrs. Tape) and secondary sources (video clips) to identify the causes and effects of the *Mamie Tape v. Hurley* court case. Instruct students to create a graphic organizer to illustrate cause and effect. Have students identify six causes the led to the court base by asking them the following questions:
    - Why wasn't Mamie Tape allowed to enroll in Spring Valley School?
    - What caused the Tape family to use the court? [Optional: Explain to students that effects can in turn become causes for more effects. Discuss how Mamie Tape's case caused other Asian Americans to bring their cases to court, which helped gain civil rights for all (i.e., Yick Wo, Wong Kim Ark). Encourage students to do more research on other court cases that impacted Asian Americans.

## **Further Information**

*Resources for Students:*

- Learn about the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Golden Spike celebration in Utah, celebrating the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad: <https://spike150.org/>

- Watch this 4-minute audio clip of Igorot descendants reflecting on the St. Louis World Fair: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1909651>
- Examine American photographer Taryn Simon's portraits of Antero Cabrera's descendants: <http://smithsonianapa.org/recollections/taryn-simon-chapter-x>