# ***Immigration Thematic Unit***

**The Asian American Education Project**

# For educators who wish to teach with a thematic approach when using The Asian American Education Project curricular resources**,** the following are suggestions on how to utilize the different lesson plans with the time teachers can allot to the theme.

***Theme – Immigration:***

In this thematic unit, students explore issues pertaining to immigration through the lens of the Asian American experience in the United States.

***Organizing Questions*:**

* Why do people wish to immigrate to the United States?
* What challenges have immigrants faced in the past? What challenges do they continue to face today?
* What are some past and present immigration policies? What was the motivation behind the creation of these policies? What was their impact?

***Teacher Procedures*:**

1. Inform students that they will be learning about immigration through the lens of the Asian American experience.
2. Outline expectations for discussions on this topic. Emphasize that they must be respectful when acknowledging classmates’ comments, as well as exhibit sensitivity toward cultures and ideas different from their own.
3. Follow the guidelines outlined below, depending on how much time you have available to teach this unit.
4. Please note that instructions for group work are based on a class size of 30. Adjust accordingly for different class sizes.

**PREPARATION PRIOR TO DAY ONE:**

***Summary:***

The class is divided into five groups to learn about five different topics pertaining to education.

The day before you wish to teach the lesson, divide class into five small groups. Assign each group the following homework:

***Group 1:***

Students in this group focus on Chinese immigrants who come to the United States to work on the Transcontinental Railroad.

1. Watch the video from Lesson 1.2 – *Contributions of Chinese Transcontinental Railroad Workers*.
2. Read the *Essay* from Lesson 1.2.
3. Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and prepare to share during the following class:

* What purpose did the Transcontinental Railroad serve for the U.S. economy at that time?
* Why were Chinese workers needed to build the Transcontinental Railroad?
* Why did the Chinese workers want to come to the United States to build the railroad?

***Group 2:***

Students in this group focus on Chinese immigration to the United States in the 1800s, and the significance of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

1. Watch the video for Lesson 1.3 – *Chinese Exclusion Act and the Exclusion of Asians*.
2. Read the *Essay* from Lesson 1.3.
3. Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and prepare to share during the following class:

* Describe some of the factors that led to an increase of the usage of Chinese laborers in the latter half of the 1800s.
* Xenophobia (dislike of or prejudice of people from other countries) becomes a driving force of anti-Chinese sentiment in the West Coast, and soon grows to the rest of the nation. Describe some of the depictions or assumptions of Chinese people during this time.
* The text of the Chinese Exclusion Act signed in 1882 features this key clause: “The coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby, suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborers to come.” The documentary makes note that the law allows the entry of: “students, teachers, travelers, merchants, and diplomats.” It establishes both the laws and the mechanisms to arrest and deport those who are found in the country unlawfully.

a) On what basis were a group of people banned from entering the United States?

b) How did the Chinese Exclusion Act make Chinese immigrants the first undocumented immigrants?

***Group 3:***

Students in this group focus on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and immigration to the United States during this time.

1. Watch the video for Lesson 3.5 – *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* *– Civil Rights Movement Era*.
2. Read the *Background Essay* from Lesson 3.5.
3. Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and prepare to share during the following class:

* What events in the United States led to the creation of the Immigration and Nationality of Act 1965, and what was its intent?
* How did the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 affect Asian immigration and naturalization?
* How did the 1965 Immigration Act change the makeup of the U.S. population?

***Group 4:***

Students in this group focus on the Vietnam War and the refugees from Southeast Asian who came to the United States during that time.

1. Watch the video for Lesson 4.6 – *Southeast Asian Refugees*.
2. Read the *Background Essay* from Lesson 4.6
3. Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and prepare to share during the following class:

* What are the effects of watching films about the Vietnam War like *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*, told from the perspective of white Americans, especially for Southeast Asian refugees?
* Why did many Southeast Asian refugees face discrimination from Americans when they immigrated to the United States?
* What responsibilities do U.S. citizens have towards the people that have been affected by U.S. militarism abroad?

***Group 5:***

Students in this group focus on issues facing undocumented immigrants and the complications that ensued after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2011.

1. Watch the video for Lesson 5.5 – *Tereza Lee and Undocumented Asian America*.
2. Read the *Essay* from Lesson 5.5*.*
3. Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and prepare to share during the following class:

* What is Senator Dick Durbin’s point of view on undocumented immigrants like Tereza Lee?
* What impact did the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States have on the DREAM Act? In what ways do we see that impact continue until today?
* Why do you think the DREAM Act focused on young undocumented students who had been brought to the country as minors? In what ways do they change the prevailing perceptions about undocumented immigration?

***Note:*** *If students do not have computer and Internet access to watch their assigned videos as homework, you will need to provide students time to watch their assigned videos during class.*

**DAY ONE:**

***Summary*:**

After an initial quickwrite, students engage in a jigsaw activity in which they become “experts” on the topic they were assigned for homework, and learn from their classmates about the topics those group members studied. Class concludes with an examination of lyrics from a song by the band Los Tigres Del Norte, and a class discussion.

***Activity 1*:**

1. Inform students that they will spend the class learning about immigration.
2. Begin class with a quickwrite (excerpted from Lesson 6.1 – *Define American*). Tell students 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?
3. Divide the class into partner pairs. Instruct students to share their thoughts with their partners. Convene as a whole group and select a few students to share.

***Activity 2*:**

1. Inform students that they will participate in a jigsaw activity in which they will become “experts” on a certain topic in order to share the information they learned with other members of the class (who will, in turn, share the information that they are experts on). In preparation for this activity, direct the class to assemble in the groups (1–5) they were assigned for homework. Allow students time to discuss the topic they were assigned for homework within their group.
2. Inform students that they will now form different groups to learn about other aspects of the Asian American immigration experience. Divide the class into six groups (A–F), so that one student from each group (1–5) is represented.
3. Instruct students to share information from their assigned lesson videos and essays, based on the videos they viewed, their accompanying *Essays*, and the questions that they answered for their homework.

* What type of jobs do immigrant and migrant workers take on today?
* Why does the United States want to bring in immigrant and migrant workers?
* Why do immigrant and migrant workers continue to come to the United States today?
* Is there any current change in immigration policies or current proposal on immigration policies?
* What were some past laws that affected Asian American immigration and naturalization in the United States? Why were these laws created?
* What were some of the different viewpoints on immigration by activists, politicians and intergovernmental agencies during the 1800s, 1960s, and today?
* Who are some of current day refugees fleeing their countries and seeking assistance from the United States?
* How are their situations similar or different from Southeast Asian refugees?
* What do these people of Asian heritage depicted in the videos have in common?
* Who is American? What does it mean to be American? Does being documented or undocumented affect this view?
* How can we be more mindful of people who are new to our country? How can we help?

***Activity 3*:**

1. Conclude the class with an examination of the lyrics to the song, “We Are More American” by the band Los Tigres Del Norte (excerpted from Lesson 5.5.1 – *Fight for Just Immigration in a Nation of Native Americans and Immigrants*).Distribute one copy of the handout to each student.
2. Inform students that U.S. immigration issues are not limited to Asian Americans, and the lyrics to this song illustrate aspects of Mexican immigration to the United States. Allow students time to read the lyrics quietly to themselves. Then, ask student volunteers to read stanzas aloud to the class.
3. Engage in a class discussion regarding the handout and what they have learned about immigration as whole. Use the following questions as a guide:

* Does anything stand out to you about this song? If so, what?
* According to the lyrics, who is the invader? Why?
* After hearing the song, what does “We did not cross the border, the border crossed us” mean to you? What is the “hard-working man” made up of? Cite evidence from the lyrics.
* How does this song connect with what you have learned about immigration in this lesson?

|  |
| --- |
| **One Day to Teach Lesson:** |
| If you only have one day to teach about immigration through the Asian American experience, stop here. However, if you have additional time, proceed to the following day’s instructions. |

***Homework Prior to Day Two*:**

Students read assigned sections of the handout, *Defending the Unpopular Immigrant*, in preparation for the following class lesson.

1. Inform students that for homework, they will read a handout by Bill Ong Hing, who is an attorney and law professor who has helped defend immigrants from Mexico, China, Cambodia, and many other countries.
2. Distribute one copy of the handout, *Defending the Unpopular Immigrant* (student version), (excerpted from Lesson 5.5.1 – *Fight for Just Immigration in a Nation of Native Americans and Immigrants*) and instruct students to complete the worksheet as homework.
3. Since the handout is 10 pages, you might wish to divide the class into four groups and assign the following sections:

**Group 1:** Sections I and II

**Group 2:** Sections I and II

**Group 3:** Sections I and IV

**Group 4:** Sections I and V

Instruct students to read and complete the graphic organizers and tasks for their sections before the next class.

**DAY TWO:**

***Summary:***

Students complete and analyze the handout *Defending the Unpopular Immigrant,* in more depth, and conclude the class with a discussion.

***Activity 1:***

1. Direct students to have their *Defending the Unpopular Immigrant* (student version) handout ready to work with.
2. Divide the class into small groups so that every group has a student that has completed the reading and homework for each section. Depending on class size, some groups will have one more than one student from each section.
3. Direct students to share a summary of the sections that they read for homework, and the answers to the graphic organizers and tasks that they completed. Other group members should fill in the remainder of their handouts as each student in their group presents.
4. When all groups have completed their tasks, reconvene the students for a class discussion, using the following questions as a guide:

* What does the 2002 repatriation agreement do?
* Should the United States deport ex-criminals like Many?
* Has Many paid for his errors through prison time?
* Do deportations break apart families? How?
* Why is breaking families apart a problem?
* Does Many deserve a second chance?

**DAY THREE:**

***Summary:***

Students choose from an extension activity to deepen their learning and understanding about issues pertaining to immigration.

1. Direct students to choose an extension activity from below.

* (From Lesson 3.5 – *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—Civil Rights Movement Era*)

Research each of the following laws that affected Asian immigration to the United States and eligibility to become naturalized citizens, and the intent of each law during the period they were enacted:

* 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (later expanded to exclude all Asians)
* Immigration Act of 1921, and Immigration Act of 1924 (quota system)
* Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act of 1943 (allowed 105 visas from China per year)
* Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (preference system: family reunification and skilled workers)
* (From Lesson 3.5 – *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—Civil Rights Movement Era*)  
  Read the material listed below. Then, write an essay comparing/contrasting Douglass’ and President Johnson’s views on immigration, or which rhetorical strategies they use to persuade their audiences, and how their views/strategies compare to the objectives in the U.N. Global Compact for Migration.
* Frederick Douglass’ lecture where he advocates for Chinese immigration

<https://longislandwins.com/columns/immigrants-civil-war/ban-chinese-proposed-frederick-douglass-spoke-3/>

* President Lyndon B. Johnson’s speech during the signing of the 1965 immigration bill <http://www.lbjlibrary.org/lyndon-baines-johnson/timeline/lbj-on-immigration>
* United Nations Global Compact for Migration  
  <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>
* (From Lesson 3.5 – *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—Civil Rights Movement Era*)  
  Conduct independent research on the Naturalization Act of 1790, the first law established to define who was eligible for naturalized citizenship in the United States, limited at that point in time to just free white persons that have lived in the country for two years. Write an essay addressing the following points:
* Who was not eligible for naturalized citizenship under the Naturalization Act of 1790? Why were they not eligible? How did this change later in 1870?
* How did the Naturalization Act of 1970 and 1870 affect the decision of *Ozawa v. United States* in 1922 in determining whether Japanese immigrants were eligible for naturalized citizenship, and later lead to the Immigration Act of 1924 that stopped all immigration from Japan?
* Discuss how the Naturalization Act of 1790 set the tone for today’s current discussion on immigration and naturalization in the United States. How did only allowing free white persons to become a naturalized citizen in 1790 later shape and legally justify future exclusion laws against Asian Americans, including the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, and other non-white immigrants in the United States?

Students can visit *Densho Encyclopedia* for their research: <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Naturalization_Act_of_1790/>

* (From Lesson 4.6 – *Southeast Asian Refugees*)  
  Research the different types of refugee-related laws and programs in the United States. Write a report discussing the purpose of each and who they affected.  
  <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/our-history/history-office-and-library/featured-stories-from-the-uscis-history-office-and-library/refugee-timeline>
* Displaced Persons Act of 1948
* Refugee Relief Act of 1953
* Migration and Refugee Assistance Act 1962
* Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act (1975)
* United States Refugee Act of 1980
* American Homecoming Act 1988
* (From Lesson 4.6 – *Southeast Asian Refugees*)  
  Write an essay about the following topic:  
  Since 2011, a civil war in Syria has displaced over 6.8 million refugees across the world. What caused the Syrian refugee crisis, why did people flee, and what have the United States and other countries been doing about it? Compare and contrast the Vietnamese and Syrian refugee experience.

Resources:

* The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ report, <https://www.unhcr/org/5d08d7ee7.pdf>
* *Frontline* article, “By the Numbers Syrian Refugees Around the World,” <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/numbers-syrian-refugees-around-world/>
* Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugees-united-states>
* (From Lesson 5.5 – *Tereza Lee and Undocumented Asian America*)

Research three undocumented Americans. Some can be found in [Dreamers’ Stories](https://www.durbin.senate.gov/issues/immigration-and-the-dream-act/dreamers-stories). Write a short report that answers the following questions:

* Who are the undocumented Americans you selected, what is their family background, where did they grow up?
* What is their educational and/or professional backgrounds?
* Do you think they will be able to contribute to our country? To advance our country?
* How have immigration policies such as DACA, as a substitute for the DREAM Act, assisted them, and will affect them if cancelled?
* Do you think that the DACA program should be extended? Why or why not?

1. Allow students time to research their chosen topic during class, and complete the assignment as homework, if necessary.
2. If you have only two days to teach about this topic, collect students’ assignments the following day for assessment. If you have three days, follow instructions for Day Four.

**DAY FOUR:**

***Summary*:**

Students share their chosen extension activity with the class and conclude with a class discussion.

***Activity 1*:**

1. Group students together according to which extension activity they chose. If there are students without a group, direct them to a group with fewer members, or allow them to choose a group whose topic they wish to learn more about.
2. Allow students time to share and discuss their research.
3. Direct students to choose a paper (or papers) that they would like to share with the class.
4. Select student volunteers to share their research.

***Activity 2*:**

1. Conclude the unit with a class discussion, example questions provided below:

* Why do people wish to immigrate to the United States?
* What challenges have immigrants faced in the past? What challenges do they continue to face today?
* What are some past and present immigration policies? What was the motivation behind the creation of these policies? What was their impact?
* Did you have an opinion about immigration to the United States before this unit? Has your opinion changed? If so, how?
* What new information have you learned from this unit?
* Did anything in this unit surprise you? If so, what was it?
* In what way does the Asian American immigration experience mirror other immigrant groups’ experiences? In what significant ways has it differed?
* What are some differences within the Asian American community in terms of immigration experiences?

**ADDITIONAL DAYS:**

If you have more than four days to teach about immigration through the lens of the Asian American experience, consider spending one class per time period, and incorporating activities from the following lessons in particular:

***Breaking Ground, 1850s – 1920s***

* 6.1, *Define American (Elementary)*
* 1.2, *Contributions of Chinese Transcontinental Railroad Workers*
* 1.3, *Chinese Exclusion Act and the Exclusion of Asians*

***Good Americans, 1950s – 1960s***

* 3.5, *Immigration Act of 1965—Civil Rights Movement Era*

***Generation Rising, 1960s – 1970s***

* 4.6, *Southeast Asian Refugees*

***Breaking Through, 1980s - Present***

* 5.5, *Tereza Lee and Undocumented Asian America*
* 5.5.1, *Fight for Just Immigration in a Nation of Native Americans and Immigrants*

If class time allows, consider including additional activities such as the following:

* Arrange a panel of guest speakers of people who have immigrated to the United States.
* Write a letter to their senator to share their thoughts on the DREAM Act.
* Under class supervision, organize a social media campaign to raise awareness for issues pertaining to immigrants and refugees.
* Organize a field trip (or virtual field trip) to [Ellis Island](https://www.statueofliberty.org/ellis-island/overview-history/) and/or [Angel Island](https://www.aiisf.org/).

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The thematic unit was created by Waka Takahashi Brown, Curriculum Specialist, Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), and the lesson plans were developed by Asian Americans Advancing Justice.