

# Debating Chinese Immigration and Naturalization, 1869–1898

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by Patience LeBlanc, John McNamara, and Ron Nash (Created in 2017, revised in 2024)

*Patience LeBlanc is an educator with twenty-three years of experience teaching social studies at both middle and high school levels. She is currently serving as secondary social studies coordinator for Frisco ISD in Texas, and was named the 2017 Texas History Teacher of the Year. John McNamara worked for more than thirty years as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and district supervisor of social studies, K–12, in New York City and New Jersey. Ron Nash taught high school history and special education in New Jersey for more than thirty-five years. John and Ron are project consultants for the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

**GRADE LEVELS:** 7–12

**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** Three 45-minute class periods

## UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

Over the course of three lessons, students will focus on the late-nineteenth-century history of Chinese immigration and the naturalization policies of the United States. They will read and analyze an essay by a scholar, legislation, a Supreme Court ruling, and several late nineteenth-century illustrations. The students will demonstrate what they have learned through their analysis and assessment of the primary sources, orally in small-group and whole-class discussions and by writing responses to the essential questions posed in the lessons.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary source documents using close-reading strategies
- Draw logical inferences and summarize the essential message of visual and textual primary sources
- Compose summaries of the major points in a document
- Present an argument, orally and/or in writing, supported by evidence
- Analyze historical change over time (e.g., immigration and naturalization policies)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did some Americans welcome Chinese immigrants?

- Why did some Americans oppose immigration from China?
- What government policies regulated immigration from China?
- How did Chinese people in America respond to discrimination?
- How did Chinese Americans obtain citizenship in the nineteenth century?

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

## MATERIALS

- Source 1: Historical Background: “An Introduction to Immigration Policy in US History from 1790 to the Late Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Chinese Immigration” by Natalia Molina, Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California. This Historical Background is part of a longer essay for a broader study of American immigration policy commissioned by the Gilder Lehrman Institute.
- Source 2: Joseph Becker, “Across the Continent: The Snow Sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, February 6, 1870, p. 346, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, [oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf3q2nb5qk/?order=1](http://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf3q2nb5qk/?order=1)
- Activity Sheet 1: Details, Description, and Decision
- Activity Sheet 2: Summarizing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 with excerpts from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, *An Act to Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese, US Statutes at Large* 22 (1881): 58–61, Law Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/lsl-v22/](http://loc.gov/item/lsl-v22/)
- Source 3: Thomas Nast, “Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner,” *Harper’s Weekly*, November 20, 1869, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/pictures/item/2002714704/](http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2002714704/).
- Source 4: Joseph Ferdinand Keppler, “The Chinese Invasion,” *Puck*, March 17, 1880, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/resource/cph.3c03143/](http://loc.gov/resource/cph.3c03143/)

- Source 5: “The Chinese Must Go,” advertisement for “The Magic Washer,” George Dee, Dixon, Illinois, 1886, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/resource/pga.02758/](https://www.loc.gov/resource/pga.02758/)
- Activity Sheet 3: Details, Description, and Decisions - Multiple Images
- Source 6: Excerpts from the Page Act of 1875, *An Act Supplementary to the Acts in Relation to Immigration, US Statutes-at-Large 18 (1875): 477–478*, Law Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/](https://www.loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/)
- Activity Sheet 4: Critical Thinking Questions: The Page Act of 1875
- Source 7: Excerpts from Justice Horace Gray’s Majority Opinion in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, 1898, 169 US 649 (1898), Oyez, [oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649](https://www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649)
- Activity Sheet 5: Critical Thinking Questions: Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898)
- Activity Sheet 6: How to Organize an Essay

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### **An Introduction to Immigration Policy in US History from 1790 to the Late Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Chinese Immigration**

by Natalia Molina, University of Southern California

From the founding of the nation through most of the nineteenth century, the US had no restrictive immigration laws. But it did limit which immigrants could become citizens. The 1790 Naturalization Act restricted citizenship to “free white persons” in an attempt to exclude African Americans and American Indians. As immigration changed the population of the United States, Supreme Court rulings included many of the newcomers in the category of “non-Whites.” These racialized newcomers, most notably Asians, were considered ineligible for citizenship or naturalization.

When the Fourteenth Amendment established national citizenship for African Americans and anyone born in the United States, the question of citizenship for racial minorities seemed settled. But as immigration continued to accelerate, so did concerns about what that would mean for the racial status quo.

Nearly twelve million immigrants arrived in the US between 1870 and 1900. This rise, coupled with tough economic times for the nation, helped to fuel racial antagonisms toward immigrants, and in response the federal government began to develop immigration legislation that would prevent “undesirable” newcomers from establishing themselves in the US and potentially becoming citizens.

These laws often used racial logic as a justification. The first federal immigration law, the 1875 Page Act, prohibited the entry of Chinese contract workers and prostitutes. This law sprang out of fear that Chinese immigrants would bring a potential population explosion that would overwhelm America’s White population. Those enforcing the law asserted that all Chinese women wishing to immigrate to the United States were prostitutes, with the unstated aim of deterring Chinese immigrants from starting families, settling in the US, and potentially becoming citizens.

This measure was followed by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which curtailed almost all Chinese immigration. That same year, the US passed the Immigration Act of 1882, the country’s first comprehensive immigration act, which further established categories on which exclusion could be based. It also introduced the idea of excluding immigrants who would become a burden on the US: the 1882 Immigration Act prohibited entry to any “convict, lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge” and also created the possibility of deporting an immigrant on these grounds even after they had lived in the US for some time. This created a category of people who were desired for their labor but who could also be deported once their usefulness had expired. It also further entrenched the idea of immigrants being of superior or inferior “stock.” These categories often worked in tandem with racial categories: “undesirable immigrants” were often considered as coming from inferior groups, physically and mentally, while “good” immigrants were portrayed as at least potentially part of the White elite and worthy of becoming citizens.

The links between Whiteness and citizenship continued to resonate for generations. From 1881 to 1920, the US received nearly 23.5 million immigrants, primarily from southern and eastern Europe, including groups such as Italians and Russians. While immigrants from Europe were legally classified as White and therefore eligible for citizenship, others had to fight to be included. Legal scholar Ian Haney-Lopez has

concluded that from 1878 until 1952 there were fifty-two racial prerequisite cases in which the petitioner had to establish his or her eligibility for citizenship. Of these, only one involved an individual who argued that he was Black and hence eligible for citizenship. The other fifty-one plaintiffs sued to be declared legally White.

In spite of the Fourteenth Amendment's promise of birthright citizenship, nativism and racism have long invalidated citizenship rights in practical terms. In 1895, Wong Kim Ark, an American born to Chinese immigrant parents, was barred from reentering the United States under the Exclusion Act. He sued for his citizenship and won. His case reverberates even today in debates about birthright citizenship, showing us how the links between race and citizenship continue to shape American identity.

*This Historical Background is part of a longer essay for a broader study of American immigration policy commissioned by the Gilder Lehrman Institute.*

*Natalia Molina, Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California, is the author of How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts (2014) and Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879–1940 (2006).*

## LESSON 1: US GOVERNMENT IMMIGRATION POLICY AND CHINESE LABOR, 1869–1882

by Patience LeBlanc, John McNamara, and Ron Nash (Created in 2017, revised in 2024)

### OVERVIEW

Students will analyze the historical background essay by Professor Natalia Molina and two primary sources in order to understand US policies concerning Chinese immigration in the late nineteenth century. In addition, students will gain an understanding of the role of Chinese labor, particularly in the American West, during that period. They will use close-reading strategies and image analysis in this lesson.

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**GRADE LEVELS:** 7–12

**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** One 45-minute class period

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### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- Why did some Americans welcome Chinese immigrants?
- Why did some Americans oppose immigration from China?
- What government policies regulated immigration from China?

### MATERIALS

- Source 1: Historical Background: “An Introduction to Immigration Policy in US History from 1790 to the Late Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Chinese Immigration” by Natalia Molina, Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California
- Source 2: Joseph Becker, “Across the Continent: The Snow Sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, February 6, 1870, p. 346, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, [oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf3q2nb5qk/?order=1](http://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf3q2nb5qk/?order=1)
- Activity Sheet 1: Details, Description, and Decision
- Activity Sheet 2: Summarizing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 with excerpts from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, *An Act to Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese, US Statutes at Large 22 (1881): 58–61*, Law Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/llsl-v22/](http://loc.gov/item/llsl-v22/)

### PROCEDURE

1. You may choose to have the students work individually, with a partner, or in small groups of three or four.

2. Distribute Source 1, the Historical Background on “An Introduction to Immigration Policy in US History from 1790 to the Late Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Chinese Immigration” by Professor Natalia Molina, and the accompanying Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing an Essay.
3. You may choose to “share read” the essay in class by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
  - a. Reading Strategy - Metacognitive Markers. As students read through Professor Molina’s essay, ask them to use the following Metacognitive Markers:

? - question mark, questions about the text

! - exclamation point, “aha” moment, things that surprise you about the text

\_\_\_ - underline key ideas and words to help you understand the text

\* - asterisk, to add a comment you have about the text

= - equal sign, to make a connection about the text to something else you know

NOTE: Depending on the time available and the experience of your students, you may choose to differentiate the activity by modeling the metacognitive markers and the activity with the whole class, completing the full activity with the class, or discussing the historical background with the class rather than assigning the reading.

- b. Once the students have read the essay, hold a class discussion using the following prompts:
    - What did you find surprising or what connections did you make? Explain your answer.
    - What additional information would you need to more completely understand the topic?
4. Distribute Source 2: Joseph Becker, “Across the Continent: The Snow Sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains” with Activity Sheet 1: Details, Description, and Decision.
5. Distribute Activity Sheet 3: Summarizing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and either share read the document, as described above, with your students or have them read it independently. This activity can be completed as homework depending on the time available and the students’ proficiency.
6. The first objective is to select keywords from the text and use those words to create a summary sentence that demonstrates an understanding of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Guidelines for Selecting Keywords: Keywords are very important to understanding the text. Without them the selection would not make sense. These words are usually nouns or verbs. Tell the students not to pick “connector” words (*are, is, the, and, so, etc.*). Students must know the meaning of the words they select. This will give them practice reasoning out word meanings using context clues and dictionary skills. In addition, a combination of a verb and adverb or adjective and noun may be counted as one word.

7. The students will now select six to eight words from the text that they believe are keywords and write them in the Keywords section of their organizers.

8. The students will use these keywords to write a sentence that summarizes the meaning of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. For example if the keywords chosen were *ten years*, *Chinese*, *not lawful*, *United States*, *removed*, *court*, and *citizenship*, the summary sentence could be “It is not lawful for Chinese to enter the United States for the next ten years and if found they will be removed and the courts can’t grant them citizenship.”
9. The students will now restate their keyword summary in their own words. For example, “Chinese people can’t come to the US for ten years and can be kicked out.”



## LESSON 2: DEBATING CHINESE AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING, 1869–1898

by Patience LeBlanc, John McNamara, and Ron Nash (Created in 2017, revised in 2024)

### OVERVIEW

Students will use the provided documents, including political cartoons and an advertisement, to understand the debate over Chinese American citizenship during the late nineteenth century. They will use text-analysis strategies and image analysis during this lesson.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did some Americans welcome Chinese immigrants?
- Why did some Americans oppose immigration from China?
- What government policies regulated immigration from China?
- How did Chinese people in America respond to discrimination?
- How did Chinese Americans obtain citizenship in the nineteenth century?

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**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** One 45-minute class period

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### MATERIALS

- Source 3: Thomas Nast, “Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner,” *Harper’s Weekly*, November 20, 1869, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/pictures/item/2002714704/](https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002714704/).
- Source 4: Joseph Ferdinand Keppler, “The Chinese Invasion,” *Puck*, March 17, 1880, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/resource/cph.3c03143/](https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c03143/)
- Source 5: “The Chinese Must Go,” advertisement for “The Magic Washer,” George Dee, Dixon, Illinois, 1886, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/resource/pgs.02758/](https://www.loc.gov/resource/pgs.02758/)
- Activity Sheet 3: Details, Description, and Decisions - Multiple Images
- Source 6: Excerpts from the Page Act of 1875, *An Act Supplementary to the Acts in Relation to Immigration, US Statutes-at-Large* 18 (1875): 477–478, Law Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/](https://www.loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/)
- Activity Sheet 4: Critical Thinking Questions: The Page Act of 1875
- Source 7: Excerpts from Justice Horace Gray’s Majority Opinion in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, 1898, 169 US 649 (1898), Oyez, [oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649](https://www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649)
- Activity Sheet 5: Critical Thinking Questions: Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898)

## PROCEDURE

1. You may choose to have the students work individually, with a partner, or in small groups of three or four.
2. Distribute the illustrations, Sources 3, 5, and 5. The students should discuss with their partners, in their groups, or as a class what they see in the images provided.
3. Students should now complete the Activity Sheet 3: Details, Description, and Decisions - Multiple Images. These images represent different attitudes toward Chinese immigration from 1869 to 1886. You will likely need to explain to students that nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants often worked in the laundry industry or owned small businesses that cleaned clothes. Likewise, you might wish to share with students that the expression “Chinese Must Go” was a motto in late-nineteenth-century American labor organizing; West Coast unions argued that Chinese workers, whose families often remained in China, were unfair competition because they were willing to work for lower wages than were needed to support a family locally. This argument unreasonably blamed Chinese people for their own oppression.
4. Distribute Source 6, excerpts from the Page Act. You may choose to share read the document as described in Lesson 1 or have the students read it independently. After reading the document students should complete Activity Sheet 4.
5. Distribute Source 7, excerpts from the majority opinion in *US v. Wong Kim Ark*. You may share read the new document or have students read it independently. After reading the document students should complete Activity Sheet 5. You may choose to have the students complete the activity sheet as homework.
6. Once the students have completed the activities, you may facilitate student discussion on the documents. This discussion could be framed with the Essential Questions:
  - Why did some Americans welcome Chinese immigrants?
  - Why did some Americans oppose immigration from China?
  - What government policies regulated immigration from China?
  - How did Chinese people in America respond to discrimination?
  - How did Chinese Americans obtain citizenship in the nineteenth century?

## LESSON 3: IMMIGRATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND CITIZENSHIP

by Patience LeBlanc, John McNamara, and Ron Nash (Created in 2017, revised in 2024)

### OVERVIEW

Students will use their analysis of secondary and primary sources from Lessons 1 and 2 to answer the essay prompt. They will cite evidence from those sources to support their thesis.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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- Activity Sheet 3: Details, Description, and Decisions - Multiple Images
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- Activity Sheet 5: Critical Thinking Questions: Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898)
- Activity Sheet 6: How to Organize an Essay

## PROCEDURE

1. Students should have access to all of the documents and activity sheets from Lessons 1 and 2.
2. Remind students that they need to cite evidence from the documents in the lesson to support the claims in their essay.
3. Ask students to organize their essay using the “How to Organize an Essay” activity sheet. The prompt on this guide is: Between 1869 and 1898, what were the most significant obstacles that Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans confronted? How did Chinese people challenge these obstacles? Use evidence from the documents to support your position.

## Source 1: Historical Background

### **An Introduction to Immigration Policy in US History from 1790 to the Late Nineteenth Century with a Focus on Chinese Immigration**

by Natalia Molina, University of Southern California

From the founding of the nation through most of the nineteenth century, the US had no restrictive immigration laws. But it did limit which immigrants could become citizens. The 1790 Naturalization Act restricted citizenship to “free white persons” in an attempt to exclude African Americans and American Indians. As immigration changed the population of the United States, Supreme Court rulings included many of the newcomers in the category of “non-Whites.” These racialized newcomers, most notably Asians, were considered ineligible for citizenship or naturalization.

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## Source 2: Building the Transcontinental Railroad

*The transcontinental railroad joined the eastern and western sections of the United States. More than two thousand miles of track had to be laid across the Great Plains, desert wastelands, and rugged mountainous terrain. Tens of thousands of workers, including Irish, German, and Chinese immigrants, African Americans, and Civil War veterans, worked on the railroad between 1863 and 1869.*

*Chinese immigrants made up more than 90 percent of the workers on the western leg of the railroad construction and toiled for lower wages than their White counterparts. Of the approximately fifteen thousand Chinese workers, more than one thousand died due to avalanches, falls, landslides, blasting accidents, and illness.*



*Joseph Becker, "Across the Continent: The Snow Sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, February 6, 1870, p. 346 (Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)*





## Activity Sheet 2: Summarizing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

### Excerpts

Whereas, In the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof: Therefore, Be it enacted . . . [that] until the expiration of ten years next after the passage of this act, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be . . . suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or, having so come [after the passage of this law] . . . to remain within the United States. . . . And any Chinese person found unlawfully within the United States shall be caused to be removed therefrom to the country from whence he came, by direction of the President of the United States. . . . No state court or court of the United States shall admit Chinese to citizenship; and all laws in conflict with this act are hereby repealed. . . .

Source: *An Act to Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese, US Statutes at Large 22 (1881): 58–61*, Law Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/llsl-v22/](http://loc.gov/item/llsl-v22/).

### Keywords

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### Keyword Summary

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### In Your Own Words

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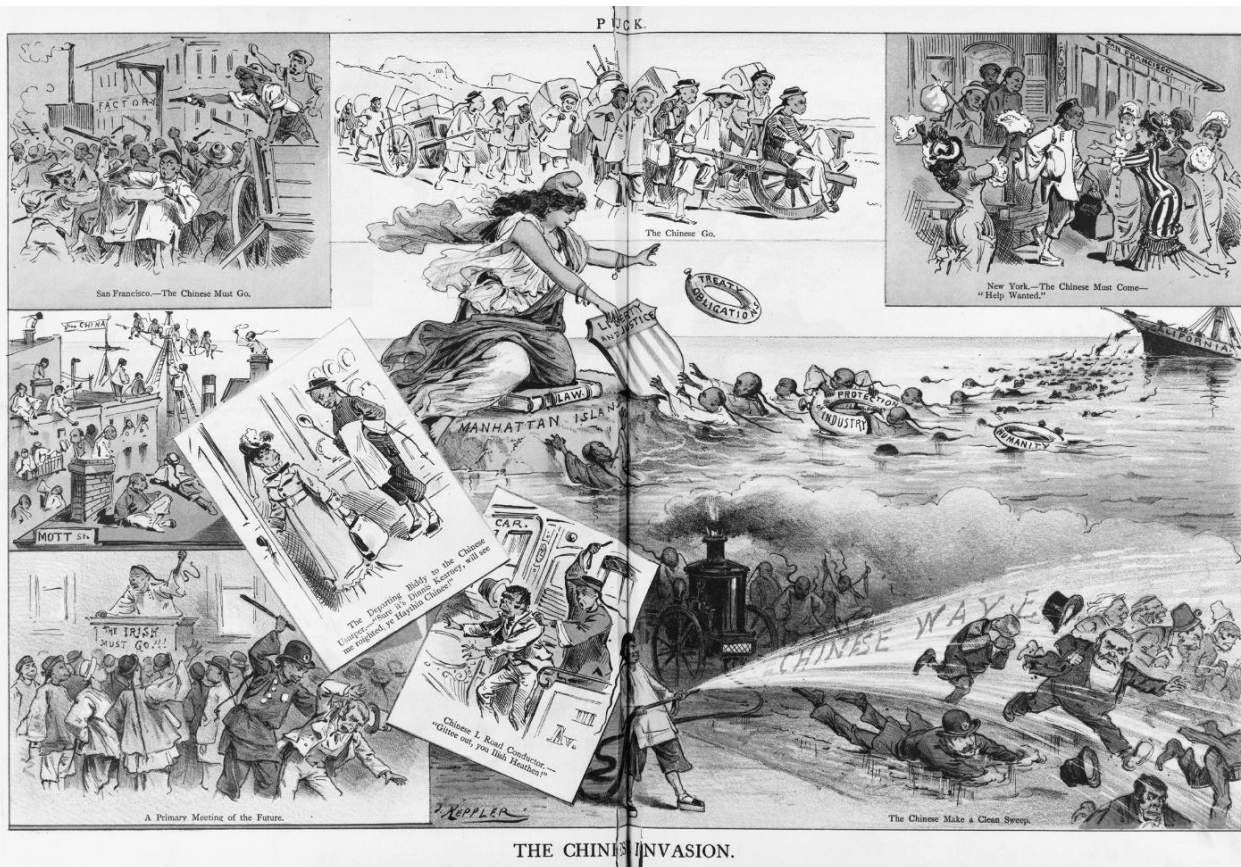
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Source 3: "Uncle Sam's Thanksgiving Dinner," 1869



Thomas Nast, "Uncle Sam's Thanksgiving Dinner," Harper's Weekly, November 20, 1869 (Library of Congress)

### Source 4: "The Chinese Invasion," 1880



Joseph Ferdinand Keppler, "The Chinese Invasion," Puck 7, no. 158 (1880), pp. 24–25 (Library of Congress)

Source 5: "The Chinese Must Go," 1886

To WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This is a Liquid Washing Compound, and is FULLY GUARANTEED BETTER THAN ANYTHING EVER OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC; its constant use will not injure the cloths nor turn them yellow. For sale by the Gallon, Half-gallon and Quart.  
TRY A SAMPLE AND BE SURPRISED.

# THE MAGIC WASHER

Manufactured by  
**GEO. DEE, Dixon, Illinois**

PROCLAMATION  
TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN  
HEREAFTER NO FAMILY  
WILL BE WITHOUT  
MAGIC WASHER  
UNDER PENALTY OF  
BEING DIRTY

DONT USE THIS  
IF YOU WANT TO BE DIRTY

MAGIC WASHER  
BEATS  
EVERYTHING

THE CHINESE MUST GO

We have no use for them since we got this WONDERFUL WASHER: What a blessing to tired mothers: It costs so little and don't injure the clothes.

Advertisement by George Dee, Dixon, Illinois, 1886 (Library of Congress)

### Activity Sheet 3: Details, Description, and Decision - Multiple Images

<p><b><i>“Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner”</i></b></p> <p>Details you see:</p>          <p>Describe what is happening:</p>	<p><b><i>“The Chinese Invasion”</i></b></p> <p>Details you see:</p>          <p>Describe what is happening:</p>
<p><b><i>“The Chinese Must Go”</i></b></p> <p>Details you see:</p>          <p>Describe what is happening:</p>	<p><b><i>Overall Assessment</i></b></p> <p>Decision: What have I learned from analyzing these three illustrations?</p>

### Source 6: Excerpts from the Page Act of 1875

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That in determining whether the immigration of any subject of China, Japan, or any Oriental country, to the United States, is free and voluntary . . . it shall be the duty of the consul-general or consul of the United States residing at the port from which it is proposed to convey such subjects . . . to ascertain whether such immigrant has entered into a contract or agreement for a term of service within the United States, for lewd and immoral purposes; and if there be such contract or agreement, the said consul-general or consul shall not deliver the required permit or certificate.

Sec. 2. That if any citizen of the United States, or other person amenable to the laws of the United States, shall take, or cause to be taken or transported, to or from the United States any subject of China, Japan, or any Oriental country, without their free and voluntary consent, for the purpose of holding them to a term of service, such citizen or other person shall be liable to be indicted therefor, and, on conviction of such offense, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars and be imprisoned not exceeding one year; and all contracts and agreements for a term of service of such persons in the United States, whether made in advance or in pursuance of such illegal importation, and whether such importation shall have been in American or other vessels, are hereby declared void.

Sec. 3. That the importation into the United States of women for the purposes of prostitution is hereby forbidden; and all contracts and agreements in relation thereto, made in advance or in pursuance of such illegal importation and purposes, are hereby declared void; and whoever shall knowingly and willfully import, or cause any importation of, women into the United States for the purposes of prostitution, or shall knowingly or willfully hold, or attempt to hold, any woman to such purposes, in pursuance of such illegal importation and contract or agreement, shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and, on conviction thereof, shall be imprisoned not exceeding five years and pay a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars.

Sec. 4. That if any person shall knowingly and willfully contract, or . . . in pursuance of such illegal importation, to supply to another the labor of any cooly or other person brought into the United States in violation . . . of the laws prohibiting the cooly-trade . . . such person shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and, upon conviction thereof, in any United States court, shall be fined in a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars and imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year. . . .

Source: *An Act Supplementary to the Acts in Relation to Immigration, US Statutes-at-Large 18 (1875): 477–478*, Law Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/](http://loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/).

**Activity Sheet 4: Critical Thinking Questions**  
**The Page Act of 1875**

You may need to use prior historical knowledge or research to answer the following questions.

1. What categories of immigrants were restricted by the Page Act of 1875?

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2. Why do you think the Page Act of 1875 identified these categories of immigrants to be restricted?

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3. How was the Page Act of 1875 used to target and discriminate against Asian immigrants who wished to come to the United States in the late nineteenth century?

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### **Source 7: Excerpts from Justice Horace Gray's Majority Opinion in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, 1898**

Justice Horace Gray's Majority Opinion (6-2) for the United States Supreme Court:

. . . It is conceded that, if he is a citizen of the United States, the acts of Congress, known as the Chinese Exclusion Acts, prohibiting persons of the Chinese race, and especially Chinese laborers, from coming into the United States, do not and cannot apply to him.

The question presented . . . is whether a child born in the United States, of parents of Chinese descent, who, at the time of his birth, are subjects of the Emperor of China, but have a permanent domicile and residence in the United States, and are there carrying on business, and are not employed in any diplomatic or official capacity under the Emperor of China, becomes at the time of his birth a citizen of the United States by virtue of the first clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

The Constitution of the United States, as originally adopted, uses the words "citizen of the United States," and "natural-born citizen of the United States." By the original Constitution, every representative in Congress is required to have been "seven years a citizen of the United States," and every Senator to have been "nine years a citizen of the United States." and "no person except a natural-born citizen, . . . shall be eligible to the office of President." The Fourteenth Article of Amendment, besides declaring that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside," also declares that "no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." . . . The Constitution nowhere defines the meaning of these words, either by way of inclusion or of exclusion, except insofar as this is done by the affirmative declaration that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States."

Source: *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, 169 US 649 (1898), Oyez, [oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649](https://www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649).



**Activity Sheet 5: Critical Thinking Questions**  
**Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898)**

Directions: Based on the excerpts from the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898), respond to the following critical thinking questions.

1. Why did the United States enact the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and how did this law affect Chinese immigration to the United States during the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century?

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2. How does the Fourteenth Amendment define the dimensions of American citizenship?

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3. What primary issue or question was presented in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*?

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4. What was the Supreme Court's ruling in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*? What reasons did the Court give to support that ruling?

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### Activity Sheet 6: How to Organize an Essay

***Essay Prompt***

Between 1869 and 1898, what were the most significant obstacles that Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans confronted? How did Chinese people challenge these obstacles? Use evidence from the documents to support your position.

Obstacle	Where I found evidence of this obstacle

Chinese people's response to obstacles	Where I found evidence of this response