

"Life in This New Land": The Story of Immigrants and Refugees from Asia



Multi-Generational Family of Lim Lip Hong aka Lim Tye by Robert F. Lim, San Francisco, CA, May 1914. (National Archives)

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

TL TEACHING LITERACY
TH THROUGH HISTORY



“Life in This New Land”: The Story of Immigrants and Refugees from Asia

BY MISHA MATSUMOTO YEE

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original sources of historical significance. Through a step-by-step process, students will acquire the skills to analyze, assess, synthesize, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned viewpoints on primary and secondary source materials.

Students will examine and analyze maps, graphs, photographs, interviews, and legal documents to understand how obstacles Asian Americans encountered led to notable achievements in American history. Students will demonstrate their knowledge by answering critical thinking questions, summarizing main ideas, and analyzing primary sources.

GRADE LEVEL(S): 3–5

NUMBER OF LESSONS: 3

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Read, explain, and evaluate visual and textual primary sources
- Analyze and assess historical context and situations and relate them to the primary sources
- Answer and complete critical thinking questions about the resources

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What were some of the circumstances that made life difficult for Asian American communities?
- How did laws about immigration affect Asians who wanted to come to America?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are many origins of Asian migrations to the Americas, some of which occurred before the United States even existed, like the arrival of the Filipino sailors who settled in the Mississippi delta thirteen years before American independence from Britain. Asian migration is a global phenomenon. Many people moved to other places, including England, France, Hawaii, Uganda, Cuba, Canada, and Mexico, before coming to the United States. These other migrations also become part of how Asian America is defined.

It is important to recognize the pan-ethnicity of Asian Americans. There are lots of different countries of origin for the groups today identified as Asian American, and the different ethnic groups cannot be easily

lumped together. Asian American pan-ethnicity must also be distinguished from Pacific Islanders, who are a distinctly different Indigenous pan-ethnicity. Despite differences between Asian Americans, they share two things in common: the experience of racism in the United States and, despite that, the creation of vibrant communities. The surge in anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a deep and hidden history of Asian American persecution, scapegoating, and exclusion as well as a renaissance of Asian American political consciousness. The notion that Asian Americans are invisible until they are scapegoated captures the way that a history of Asian Americans is reflected in their absence in our collective historical imagination.

Reconstructing an Asian American past means embracing complexities that affirm Asian American lived experiences of hardship as well as joys, of transformation as well as tradition, and of unity and solidarity as well as division. These complexities are at the heart of the Asian American experience. Asian American histories reflect the power of large forces such as war and economic change as well as the determination of individuals and the strength of community. The Spanish-American War of 1898 advanced the US imperial march into the Pacific and Caribbean, leading to direct American colonization of the Philippines for over three decades. Without the history of US colonization, it is impossible to understand why Filipinos joined Mexicans to fight for fair wages in California grape fields in 1965, thus fueling the growth of a multi-ethnic community of Mexipinos.

US wars haunt Asian American history and regularly illustrate the fact that foreign conflict leads to domestic persecution. This lesson was taught twenty years ago when Sikh and Muslim Americans faced persecution after the 9/11 attacks. The roundup of American citizens of South and Western Asian descent echoed that of Japanese Americans during World War II in 1943. Those who remembered stood up against the wartime hysteria in the twenty-first century and forged new bonds to resist this American tradition of racism. From an Asian American perspective, the US invented immigration laws in order to prohibit Asian immigration and naturalization. This process began with the 1876 Page Act and culminated in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that treated Asian immigrants as pernicious, degenerate, and dangerous until 1943. When US laws began to shift away from Asian exclusion after WWII, influential White Americans used the opening of Asian immigration as a political message that American racism was no longer a potent force in society. Despite this message, the ravages of anti-Black racial oppression continued in the post-WWII era. Without knowledge of this period, we would not be able to understand how influential White Americans named the cultural, political, and economic behavior of Asian Americans as the “model minority” in order to demean and discredit the growing African American struggle to end segregation and promote civil rights for all. In addition to performing this divisive role, the concept does other kinds of damage as well. When Asian American excellence is labeled “model minority” to deny claims of discrimination against other people of color, it hides the high rate of suicide, the greatest wealth disparity within a racial group, and the ongoing harassment and discrimination that many Asian Americans still face. These examples embrace complexity and reflect the everyday contradictions of our students’ lives.

The push and pull forces of migration connect individual lives to big social structures and processes, illustrating the ways that Filipino nurses, South Asian computer scientists, Hmong farmers, Korean

priests, and Afghani painters made choices to build lives in the United States. One factor that too often goes unmentioned in Asian American histories of migration is how US wars and imperial conflict have shaped patterns of violence and displacement in Asia. The largest determinant of the treatment of Asian Americans is the degree to which the US is at war in Asia and whether those conflicts are cold wars, hot wars, trade wars, or culture wars. With the conclusion of the longest military conflict in US history in Afghanistan, we hear the next war drum calling the People's Republic of China the greatest threat to our country. Teaching Asian American studies is a project of peace, of community building, and of healing.

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COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1 and RI.5.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2 and RI.5.2: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1D: Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1D: Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

US Policy and Asian American Immigration in the Early Twentieth Century

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will examine excerpts from the Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act) and the Immigration Act of 1952 (also known as the Walter-McCarran Act). They will summarize these two acts in their own words, learn new legal vocabulary, and compare the results of the two acts.

MATERIALS

- Source #1: Immigration Acts & Asian Immigration
 - o Excerpts from the Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act) from An Act to Limit the Immigration of Aliens into the United States, and for Other Purposes, Public Law No. 68-139, 43 Stat. 153 (1924). Available from the National Archives, catalog.archives.gov/id/5752154.
 - o Excerpts from the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act) from An Act to Revise the Laws Relating to Immigration, Naturalization, and Nationality; and for Other Purposes, Public Law No. 82-414, 66 Stat. 163 (1952), govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-66/pdf/STATUTE-66-Pg163.pdf.
- Activity Sheet #1: Understanding the Immigration Acts
- Activity Sheet #2: Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)
- Activity Sheet #3: Immigration Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act)

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute copies of Source #1 which includes excerpts from the Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act) and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act). Provide historical context using the background information provided.
2. “Share read” the excerpts with the students. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin reading aloud, modeling appropriate rhythm and inflection. Ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to serve as the model for the class. This method will help struggling readers and English language learners (ELL).
3. As this is a legal document, many legal terminologies are used. After reading through the entire excerpt, define the bolded words.
4. Display Activity Sheet #1 large enough for all students to see, and as a class, restate the underlined portions

of the excerpt into phrases the students can understand easier.

5. After defining the words and rephrasing the underlined phrases as a class, distribute Activity Sheet #1, which asks students to fill in the blanks using words from the word bank that make the most sense. Once the underlined portions are filled in, go over the correct answers with the class by reading the excerpts together. This exercise will help students better understand what the excerpts are saying.
6. Next, distribute Activity Sheet #2. Students will use the two excerpts to answer questions about the acts. Begin with the Immigration Act of 1924, providing students time to answer the Yes/No questions. Once all students have answered the questions, review their answers as a class. After the correct answers are provided, have students answer the free-response question. Ask for volunteers to share their responses.
7. Distribute Activity Sheet #3 on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Students will now use the 1952 act to answer the Yes/No questions. Review correct answers once students complete the first half of the activity sheet.
8. Allow time to answer the free-response question. Ask for volunteers to share their responses.
9. Once students complete their activity sheets, review their answers. Ask students to share their free-response answers.

Timelines and Graphs on Asian American Immigration

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will analyze graphs displaying statistics for Asian immigration to the United States and relate the data to the Immigration Act of 1924 and the Immigration Act of 1952. Students will use their summaries of the Immigration Acts in their own words and compare their understanding of the Immigration Act of 1952 to demonstrate why the graph shows an increase in Asian immigration.

MATERIALS

- Source Document #1: Asian Population in the US, 2000 to 2060
 - o This graph is based on sources found on the website of the Pew Research Center, Washington, DC (September 1, 2021). The data that forms the basis for this chart is from US Census Bureau 2017 population projections for 2020–2060. For more information, see [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/ft_2021-09-02_asianamericankeyfacts_01/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/ft_2021-09-02_asianamericankeyfacts_01/).
- Activity Sheet #4: Nearly Half of All Asians Live in the West
 - o This map is based on sources found on the website of the Pew Research Center Analysis of 2017–2019 American Community Survey (IPUMS) Pew Research Center, Washington, DC (April 28, 2021), [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/ft_2021-04-29_asiankeyfacts_04/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/ft_2021-04-29_asiankeyfacts_04/).

Note from the Pew Research Center: In 2000 and after, Asians include mixed-race and mixed-group populations, regardless of Hispanic origin. Prior to 2000, decennial census forms only allowed one race category to be selected. Asians include Pacific Islanders in 1980 and earlier years. Population figures for 1870–1980 are rounded to the nearest 1,000, and for 2000–2060, they are rounded to the nearest 100,000.

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute copies or project Source Document #1 for students to see.
2. Provide time for students to look at the graph. Ask students to share observations about the graph. If students are stuck, here are some guiding questions to help with observations:
 - c. Is the graph moving up or down?
 - d. Are the numbers growing larger or smaller?
 - e. What do you think the dotted part of the line means?

3. After initial observations, explain the graph to students. Identify that the bottom numbers represent the different years and the line represents the population of Asians in the United States during that year. The dotted parts of the line predict the future numbers of the Asian population in America. The graph is based on information available in 2019, so the numbers may not turn out to be accurate; the dotted line represents data scientists' best guesses.
4. Next, have students find their summaries of the Immigration Acts from Lesson 1.
5. Review the Immigration Act of 1924. After reviewing the Immigration Act of 1924, have students find where 1920 would be on the graph. Estimate the Asian population in the 1920s.
6. Next, review the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 as a class. After reviewing the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, have students find the date closest to 1952 and identify the number of Asians in America then.
7. Divide the class into small groups of three or four to discuss the following two questions:
 - a. Between 1910 and 1960, did the population of Asians in America grow larger or smaller?
 - b. Why did the number of Asians increase between 1910 and 1960?
8. Have students come together as a class to share their answers.
9. Next, ask the class whether they think the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 helped more Asians to come to America.
10. Explain why the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 allowed more Asians to come to America, leading to the increasing numbers between 1910 and 1960 on the graph. Be sure to connect how the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 overturned the Immigration Act of 1924 that prevented Asians from entering America.
11. Connect this to the present day by asking students how many Asians live in America as of 2019. Then, ask students what the expected population size of Asians in the United States is in 2040.
12. Distribute Activity Sheet #4 and explain that this map shows where Asian populations live in the United States as of 2019.
13. Have students analyze this map by answering the questions on Activity Sheet #4. They may complete this activity independently or in small groups.
14. After students have been allowed time to answer the questions, review the answers as a class.

DANIEL K. INOUE AND IMMIGRATION

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the life of Daniel K. Inouye and read an excerpt from his “Oahu Conference on Immigrants and Refugees” speech from September 5, 1986. Through reading and analyzing Inouye’s original speech, students will learn how to identify main arguments, draw logical inferences, examine how the evidence supports arguments, and synthesize arguments from prior lessons.

MATERIALS

- Background information on Daniel K. Inouye
- Source #2: Senator Daniel K. Inouye, 2021, Daniel K. Inouye Institute and Hawaii Community Foundation, [dkii.org/gallery/#iLightbox\[gallery_image_1\]/35](https://dkii.org/gallery/#iLightbox[gallery_image_1]/35).
- Source #3: Statement to the Oahu Conference on Immigrants and Refugees, Daniel K. Inouye, Oahu, Hawaii, September 5, 1986, dkii.org/speeches/september-05-1986/.
- Large sheets of paper for three groups
- Source #4: “Yong Vang Yang family on their first day in St. Paul,” June 20, 1979, Minnesota Historical Society, collections.mnhs.org/cms/
- Activity Sheet #5: Analyzing Photographs
- Source #5: Hmong Experience: In Your Own Words

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DANIEL K. INOUE

Daniel K. Inouye was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on September 7, 1924. He was the second longest-serving member of the US Senate and the first Japanese American to be elected to the US Congress.

Before being elected to the Senate, Inouye served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team of the United States Army during World War II. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed of Japanese American soldiers, was the most decorated military regiment in US history. Inouye was injured during the war, losing his right arm to a grenade attack. After the war, Inouye was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart with Cluster.

In 1959, the territory of Hawaii became the fiftieth state in the United States, and Inouye was elected one of Hawaii’s first state representatives in the US Congress. In 1962, Inouye won Hawaii’s Senate seat in the US Congress. He served as Hawaii’s US senator for forty-nine years; before retiring in 2012, he was the Senate’s

president pro tempore for two years. As president pro tempore, Inouye was the third in line of presidential succession, making him the first high-ranking public official of Asian descent in United States history.

Inouye was known for advocating for the rights of Native Hawaiians, American Indians, and Alaska Natives and for federal, legal recognition and justice for Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II and Filipino World War II veterans. He was passionate about strengthening relations between the Asia-Pacific region and the United States. Inouye died on December 17, 2012.

Sources

“The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, United States Senator, September 7, 1924–December 17, 2012.” The Man. The Daniel K. Inouye Institute and the Hawaii Community Foundation, n.d. dkii.org/the-man/.

“Daniel K. Inouye: A Featured Biography.” U.S. Senate: Daniel K. Inouye. United States Senate, n.d., senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured_Bio_Inouye.htm.

PROCEDURE

1. Before starting this lesson, set up the desks/tables into three groups and place a large sheet of paper on each setup. On each piece of paper, write one of the questions from Source #3. Each sheet should have a different question.
2. Read the background information on Daniel K. Inouye out loud to the class while projecting Source #2, the photograph of Senator Inouye.
3. After reading the background information, ask the class, “What did you find interesting about Senator Inouye’s life?”
4. Ask for volunteers to share their answers with the class.
5. Distribute Source #3, the excerpt from Daniel K. Inouye’s “Statement to the Oahu Conference on Immigrants and Refugees.” You may need to explain that this text is an excerpt from a long speech and that the ellipsis points represent text that has not been included in the excerpt.
6. Read the excerpt one paragraph at a time using the share-read method described in Lesson 1. At the end of each paragraph, ask students to share what they think the paragraph is about. Continue until the excerpt is read in full.
7. Next, divide students into three groups. Each group will work together to answer the question on one of the sheets of paper.
8. Once groups are finished answering their question, allow them to present their answers to the class.
9. Next, project the image on Source #4 and distribute Activity Sheet #5.
10. Briefly explain the image to the class: state the title of the photograph and the year the photograph was

taken.

11. Complete the activity sheet as a class, going over each question one at a time. Ask guiding questions if students are unable to answer some of the questions.
12. After completing Activity Sheet #5 as a class, distribute Activity Sheet #6.
13. Explain the instructions to the class and read through the quotation together. Optional: This would be a good time to project a world map and locate Laos with the students. You may also want to explain that Mao Heu Thao immigrated to Minnesota from Laos.
14. Allow students time to complete the activity sheet by themselves. As students work, walk around the classroom to see if they have any questions and are on the right track.
15. After students have completed the activity sheet, review answers together.
16. Ask for volunteers to share their answer to question 5, “Using the information from the quotation and the photograph of Hmong immigrants, how would you feel if you were an immigrant experiencing your first day in America?”

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Inouye’s excerpt references Emma Lazarus’s poem “The New Colossus,” which is engraved on the Statue of Liberty. This lesson can provide a nice transition into looking at the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and European immigration.

Source #1

Immigration Acts & Asian Immigration

Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)

Steamship Fines Under 1917 Act

Sec. 26. Section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1917 is amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 9. That it shall be unlawful for any person, including any transportation company other than railway lines entering the United States . . . to bring to the United States either from a foreign country or any insular possession of the United States any alien . . . with any of the said diseases or disabilities at the time of foreign embarkation. . . . It shall also be unlawful for any such person to bring to . . . the United States any alien who . . . [is] unable to read, or who is . . . a native of that portion of the Continent of Asia and the islands adjacent. . . .”

Source: An Act to Limit the Immigration of Aliens into the United States, and for Other Purposes, Public Law No. 68-139, 43 Stat. 153 (1924).

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act)

Chapter 1—Quota System

Sec. 201. (a) The annual quota of any quota area shall be one-sixth of [one percent] of the number of inhabitants in the continental United States in 1920, which number, except for the purpose of computing quotas for quota areas within the Asia-Pacific triangle, shall be the same number . . . determined under . . . the Immigration Act of 1924. . . . *Provided*, That the quota existing for Chinese persons prior to the date of enactment of this Act shall be continued. . . .

Section 202 (b) . . . An immigrant who is attributable by as much as one-half of his ancestry to a people or peoples indigenous to the Asia-Pacific triangle comprising all quota areas . . . there is hereby established . . . an Asia-Pacific quota of one hundred [people] annually. . . .

Source: US Congress, An Act to Revise the Laws Relating to Immigration, Naturalization, and Nationality; and for Other Purposes, Public Law No. 82-414. HR 5678. 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess, 1952.

Definitions

Adjacent: (adjective) next to something

Alien: (noun) belonging to another nation

Ancestry: (noun) past generations of a family, ethnicity

Annual: (adjective) once a year

Attributable: (adjective) a quality, character, or characteristic of

Comprising: (verb) to be made up of

Continental: (adjective) belong to a continent

Embarkation: (noun) to get on a ship or plane

Existing: (adjective) continues to be

Indigenous to: (adjective) originally from

Inhabitants: (noun) people living somewhere

Insular: (adjective) US territory that is not state or Washington DC; usually refers to an island

Quota: (noun) limited number of people allowed to do something

Unlawful: (adjective) illegal; not following the law

ACTIVITY SHEET #1 Understanding the Immigration Acts

Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)

Use the word bank below to fill in the blanks in the Immigration Act of 1924.

immigrant	separate part
next to Asia	immigrant
against the law	leaving their country
from	

Steamship Fines Under 1917 Act

Sec. 26. Section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1917 is amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 9. That it shall be _____ for any person, including any transportation company other than
 unlawful
 railway lines entering the United States . . . to bring to the United States either from a foreign country or any
 _____ of the United States any _____ . . . with any of the said diseases or disabilities
 insular possession alien
 at the time of _____ It shall also be unlawful for any such person to bring to . . . the United
 foreign embarkation
 States any _____ who . . . [is] unable to read, or who is . . . _____
 alien a native of
 that portion of the Continent of Asia and the island _____”
 adjacent

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (The McCarran-Walter Act)

Use the word bank below to fill in the blanks in the Immigration Act of 1924.

can trace at least
originally from
limit
a year
regulated

family's ethnicity
limited
including
yearly limit from
people living

Chapter 1—Quota System

Sec. 201. (a) The _____ any _____ area shall be one-sixth of [one percent] of
annual quota of quota
 the number of _____ in the continental United States in 1920, which number, except for . . .
inhabitants
 areas within the Asia-Pacific triangle shall be the same number . . . determined under . . . the Immigration Act
 of 1924. . . . Provided, That the _____ for Chinese persons prior to the date of enactment of this
quota existing
 Act shall be continued. . . .

Section 202 (b) . . . An immigrant who _____ one-half of his _____
is attributable by as much as ancestry
 to a people or peoples _____ the Asia-Pacific triangle _____ all
indigenous to comprising
 _____ areas. . . . There is hereby established . . . an Asia-Pacific _____ of one
quota quota
 hundred [people] _____
annually

ACTIVITY SHEET #2 Immigration Act of 1924

Based on the Immigration Act of 1924, circle “yes” or “no” to answer the following questions.

Was it against the law for people to bring other people to the United States?	Yes	No
Could Americans bring in people who were from another country?	Yes	No
Did immigrants have to be healthy to come into America?	Yes	No
Could people from Asia enter the United States?	Yes	No

Using your answers from the four questions above, explain the Immigration Act of 1924 in your own words.

[illegible]

ACTIVITY SHEET #3 Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952

Based on the Immigration Act of 1952, circle “yes” or “no” to answer the first four questions. For the last question, find the correct answer in the excerpt from the Immigration Act of 1952.

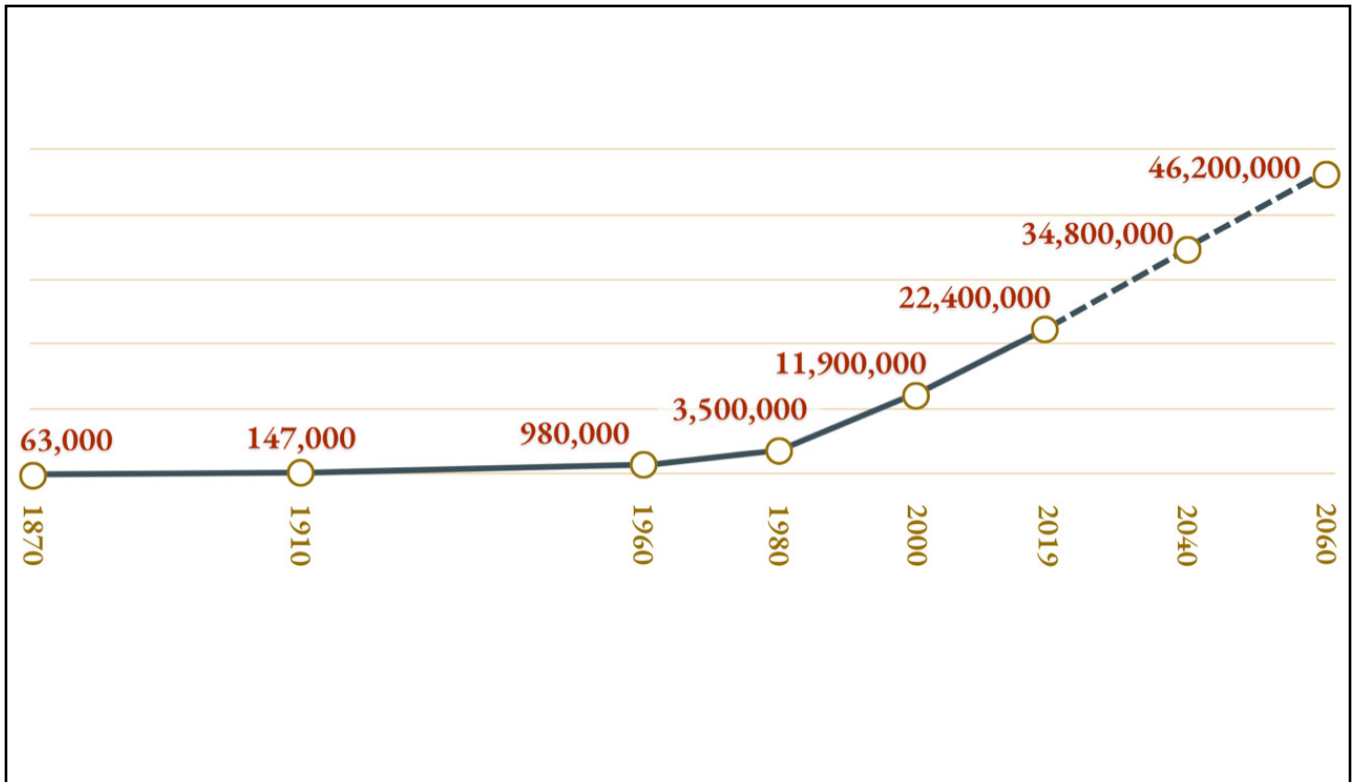
Was there a limit to how many people could come to America?	Yes	No
Did this Act allow some people from Asia to enter America?	Yes	No
Did it change how many Chinese could enter America?	Yes	No
Were immigrants whose ancestors came from the Asia-Pacific area allowed to come to America?	Yes	No
How many people from Asia-Pacific were allowed to come to America?	Yes	No

Using your answers from the Immigration Act of 1924 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, explain the difference between these two immigration acts in your own words.

Source Document #1

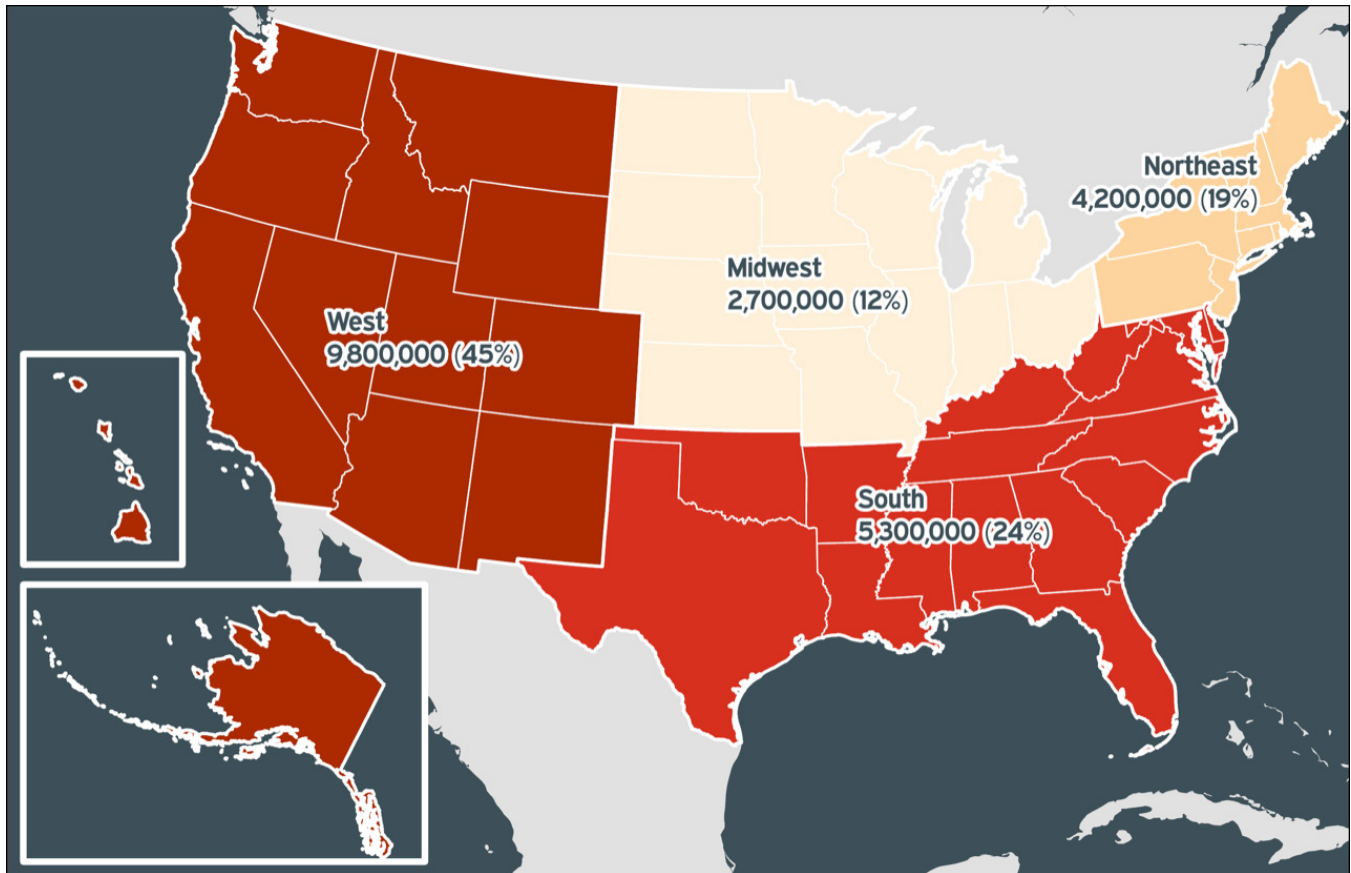
Asian Population in the US, 2000–2060

The Asian population in the US nearly doubled between 2000 and 2019 and is projected to surpass 46 million by 2060.



Based on information from the Pew Research Center and data from the US Census Bureau

ACTIVITY SHEET #4 Percentage of Asian Population in the US, 2019



Based on information from the Pew Research Center and data from the US Census Bureau

1. What percentage of Asians live in the South?
2. Is the Asian population larger or smaller in the Midwest than in the Northeast?
3. List the areas of the Asian population in the US from highest to lowest.
4. Why do you think almost half of America's Asian population lives in the West?

Source #2
Senator Daniel K. Inouye, 2021



(Daniel K. Inouye Institute and Hawaii Community Foundation) information from the Pew Research Center and data from the US Census Bureau

Source #3
Statement to the Oahu Conference on Immigrants and Refugees
by Daniel K. Inouye, 1986

“My father and paternal and maternal grandparents were immigrants. They began life in this new land as laborers in the sugar fields. Thousands of my fellow citizens in Hawaii trace their beginnings to similar circumstances. For that matter, over 80% of the population of Hawaii trace their beginnings to immigration.

For the most part, most of us of immigrant beginnings have fared reasonably well. . . .

[America] just observed the centennial of miss liberty with glittering fanfare, speeches, and music—the most costly extravaganza in American history. It will be well to remind ourselves of the inscription that appears at the base of miss liberty. Because if these words are meaningless, and if these words do not represent America, they should be erased. These are the words:

‘give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!’”

Source: Inouye, Daniel K. “Statement to the Oahu Conference on Immigrants and Refugees.” Speeches. Daniel K. Inouye and Hawaii Community Foundation, April 12, 2019. <https://dkii.org/speeches/september-05-1986/>.

Questions

1. Senator Inouye starts this speech by talking about his grandparents. Were his grandparents immigrants? Where did they work when they first came to America?
2. At the end of the first paragraph, Inouye talks about Hawaii. What percentage of the population in Hawaii has ties to immigration?
3. In the third paragraph, who is the “Miss Liberty” that Inouye is talking about? Why do you think he talks about Miss Liberty?

Source #4

“Yong Vang Yang family on their first day in St. Paul, Minnesota,” 1979



“Yong Vang Yang Family on Their First Day in St. Paul” (Collections Gallery Hmong Americans in Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society, June 20, 1979.)

ACTIVITY SHEET #5 Analyzing Photographs

Title of Photograph: _____

Year Taken: _____

Location: _____

Based on the title of the photograph, what event is this photograph showing?

Why do you think the family took this picture?

Look at the faces and body language of each family member. What emotions do you see?

Why do you think different family members are showing different emotions?

Source #5

Hmong Experience: In Their Own Words

Directions: Use the quote below to answer the questions.

“I saved the suitcase [I brought with me from Laos to America] because it reminds me of where I came from, who I am, and where I may go. We did not have much when we entered [America], just \$5.00 and the clothes that my mother had made.”

- Mao Heu Thao, Hmong health coordinator for Ramsey County Public Health, 2015

Source: “40 Years after Arrival, Minnesota Hmong Tell Their Story,” *Twin Cities, Pioneer Press*, October 28, 2015.

Questions

1. Who is the person being quoted?
2. What country did the person leave to come to America?
3. What items did they have when they arrived in America?
4. Why did the person keep their suitcase?
5. Think: Using the information from the quotation and the photograph of Hmong immigrants, how would you feel if you were an immigrant experiencing your first day in America?