

# Generations of Chinese in America, 1890s–1940s

## Unit 2 of 2: 1940s–1990s



*The Chien Hua basketball team, Los Angeles, CA, ca. 1945. (Shades of LA. Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

# Generations of Chinese in America, 1880s–1990s

## Unit 2 of 2: 1940s–1990s

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

### CONTENTS

Lesson 1 . . . . .	6	Lesson 1 Handouts . . . . .	18
Lesson 2 . . . . .	8	Lesson 2 Handouts . . . . .	20
Lesson 3 . . . . .	9	Lesson 3 Handouts . . . . .	22
Lesson 4 . . . . .	11	Lesson 4 Handouts . . . . .	26
Lesson 5 . . . . .	13	Lesson 5 Handouts . . . . .	28
Lesson 6 . . . . .	15	Lesson 6 Handouts . . . . .	31
Lesson 7 . . . . .	17		

**GRADE LEVELS:** 7–12

**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

### 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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. Through a step-by-step process, students will acquire the skills to analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned viewpoints on primary and secondary sources.

This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in the United States. In particular, it explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities. The lessons in this unit provide a small window into a much broader and more complex area of study. While the lessons and material cover a variety of primary and secondary sources, they are not meant to capture the entire scope of this topic or time period. You may choose to use all or portions of the lesson materials.

Over the course of six lessons, students will identify, examine, and analyze the language and imagery of primary sources related to Chinese people in America. They will work with a variety of documents that include autobiography, photographs, and oral history.

Students will demonstrate what they have learned through their analysis and assessment of the primary sources orally in small-group and whole-class discussion. The unit concludes with an essay assignment that engages the essential questions.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary and secondary sources using close-reading strategies
- Interpret, analyze, and demonstrate understanding of visual materials

- Richly describe what they see in photographs and infer the significance of what they see
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of primary sources
- Identify ways in which Chinese immigrants and their descendants created businesses, formed communities, and petitioned for rights
- Understand the impact of the passage of the Hart-Celler Act and other legislation that eased obstacles to immigration
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in America includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the US for generations

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) and other legislation that eased obstacles to immigration change the Chinese American community?
- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

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.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source: provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on [grade-level] topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 and 11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### MATERIALS

- Optional: Historical Background: “Chinese Immigration to the United States, World War II to 1965” by Madeline Hsu, Professor of History, University of Maryland, College Park
- Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing an Essay
- Source 1: Excerpt from Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (University of Washington Press, 2019; orig. Harper, 1950), [muse.jhu.edu/book/81764](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/81764)
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking

- Source 2: The Chien Hua Basketball Team, Los Angeles, CA, ca. 1945, Shades of LA Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, [tessa2.lapl.org/digital/collection/photos/id/80796/rec/1](https://tessa2.lapl.org/digital/collection/photos/id/80796/rec/1)
- Source 3: Ed Ford, Americanized Chinese Gals on Mott St., New York, NY, April 27, 1965, New York World Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/resource/cph.3c13493/](https://loc.gov/resource/cph.3c13493/)
- Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Photograph
- Activity Sheet 4: Identifying Cultural Values
- Source 4: The Chin Family in Sam Wah Laundry on Creston Street in the Bronx, November 1952. Posted on June 10, 2019, Museum of Chinese in American (MOCA) Collection, Chin家经营Sam Wah洗衣店, 位于纽约布朗克斯, 1952年11月, 美国华人博物馆 (MOCA) 馆藏, [mocanyc.org/collections/stories/the-chin-family-in-sam-wah-laundry-on-creston-street-in-the-bronx/](https://mocanyc.org/collections/stories/the-chin-family-in-sam-wah-laundry-on-creston-street-in-the-bronx/)
- Activity Sheet 5: Identifying Inferences and Implications
- Source 5: Charlie Chin, “Bachelor Society,” *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*, Public Affairs Television, Inc., 2003, [pbs.org/becomingamerican/ce\\_witness5.html](https://pbs.org/becomingamerican/ce_witness5.html)
- Activity Sheet 6: Who, What, When, Where, Why, When, and How
- Source 6 and Activity Sheet 7: Excerpts from Shiree Teng, “Women, Community, and Equality: Three Garment Workers Speak Out,” *East Wind* 2, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1983). Available at [Marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/east-wind/east-wind-2-1.pdf](https://Marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/east-wind/east-wind-2-1.pdf).

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## Chinese Immigration to the United States, World War II to 1965

by Madeline Hsu, University of Maryland, College Park

During World War II, the Sino-US alliance against Japan forced the United States to repeal its openly racist Chinese exclusion laws (1882–1943). Chinese thereby became the first Asians to gain rights to citizenship by naturalization and escape the longstanding category of “aliens ineligible for citizenship” that was used to legally discriminate against Asians. Symbolically, China gained an immigration quota on a par with most favored European nations even though the rigged system of allocating numbers admitted only 105 Chinese per year, compared to more than 65,000 for British and Irish. The War Brides Acts enabled Chinese American men to sponsor spouses and fiancées to immigrate. For the first time between 1946 and 1950, more Chinese women than men immigrated to the US, which ameliorated severe gender imbalances and transformed Chinese American communities from male dominated to family centered through the arrival of children holding birthright citizenship. Working-class families also sought to challenge residential discriminations that had limited housing options to Chinatown ghettos or combined living-working quarters over stores and laundries to seek housing in suburban areas with more room and better schools. Alongside increasing family migrations, Chinese from all parts of China immigrated as students and as refugees.

These new immigration influxes derived from the international alliance between the US and Kuomintang (KMT)-ruled Taiwan and the US desire to demonstrate support for anti-communists around the world. Congress enacted policies favoring highly educated Chinese as refugees, asylum seekers, and white-collar and professional workers. Even during Chinese exclusion, which chiefly targeted Chinese laborers racialized as slavish “coolies,” international students had been welcomed under the belief that as future leaders of their homeland, they would forge stronger Sino-US relations drawing on positive experiences of US civilization and modernity. The Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949), and China’s conversion to communist rule prevented these elite, usefully trained Chinese intellectuals from returning home. Through legislation such as the 1948 Displaced Persons Act and the 1953 Refugee Relief Act, Chinese intellectuals were able to seek asylum or enter as refugees. Between 1945 and 1966, about 35,000 Chinese immigrated through these statuses. The US embargo of communist China prohibited Chinese Americans from maintaining ties to families left behind and required ostentatious displays of affiliation with the KMT—particularly by major organizations such as the Chinese Six Companies.

Reforms of general policy shaped Chinese immigration in ways highly recognizable today. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act introduced the preference system that prioritized admitting skilled workers and families of US citizens. The law reduced the racial discrimination of past legislation by ending the racial restriction on citizenship and allocating immigration quotas to all countries. Nonetheless, Europeans retained privileged immigration access with 85 percent of immigration quotas allotted to northern and western European countries while the Chinese quota was only 205. Although they had received only a symbolic quota, Chinese managed to immigrate in far greater numbers because many arrived as students, a “side-door” with no numeric caps that positioned Chinese to seek employment and then have their employers apply for them to convert to permanent residency status.

Between World War II and 1965, political, economic, and social transformations positioned Chinese and other Asian Americans as “model minorities.” The racialization of Asians shifted to emphasize their compatibility with Americans through values such as hard work; economic aspiration; education prioritization; over-representation in STEM, medical, and entrepreneurial fields; suburban residences; and family unity. Chinese immigration increased even as immigration policies screened for those displaying such “model minority” traits. The 1965 Immigration Act has enshrined these preferences in general immigration law while providing all countries with the same admission quotas—enabling far higher levels of immigration by Chinese who disproportionately arrive through the skilled worker preference.

*Madeline Y. Hsu is a professor of history at the University of Maryland, College Park, and director of Global Migration Studies. She is the author of Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882–1943 (2000) and Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction (2016).*



## LESSON 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON CHINESE IMMIGRATION FROM WORLD WAR II TO 1965

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces students to historical information that will help them understand the meaning of later documents.

Students will be able to

- Analyze a secondary source using close-reading strategies
- Understand the impact of the Hart-Celler Act
- Identify ways in which Chinese immigrants and their children created businesses, formed communities, and petitioned for rights
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in American includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the US for generations

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) and other legislation that eased obstacles to immigration change the Chinese American community?
- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Optional: Historical Background: “Chinese Immigration to the United States, World War II to 1965” by Madeline Hsu, Professor of History, University of Maryland, College Park
- Optional: Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing an Essay

#### PROCEDURE

1. You may choose to discuss the context or share the Historical Background with the class to provide them with a general overview of Chinese in America during this period. Students need to have prior knowledge that includes but is not limited to
  - The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act with the passage of the Magnuson Act (1943): During World War II the US and China were allies. In support of the alliance, the US Congress passed the Magnuson Act, which repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. It permitted some Chinese immigrants already residing in the country to become naturalized citizens and established an immigration quota of 105 visas per year.

- The enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act): President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act as part of his civil rights legislative agenda. It abolished national origins quotas and overhauled immigration policy. The population of people of Chinese ancestry in the US increased from approximately 106,000 in 1940 to 1.6 million in 1990 (.10% of the US population in 1940 to .66% in 1990).
- a. You may read the Historical Background out loud, have the students read it to themselves, or “share read” the text with the class. To “share read” the text, distribute the handout and have the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
  - b. Distribute Activity Sheet 1 and have the students select at least three important or informative phrases or sentences. Reconvene the class to discuss their selections.
2. Closing Activity: You may choose to introduce one or more of the Essential Questions to guide class discussion centering on the history of Chinese immigration to the United States during this period.

## LESSON 2

### CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION, 1950

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

This lesson explores the experience of a Chinese American child attending school for the first time, recalled in adulthood.

Students will be able to

- Analyze a primary source using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of written text
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in America includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the United States for generations

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 1: Excerpt from Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (University of Washington Press, 2019; orig. Harper, 1950). This book is available from Johns Hopkins University, [muse.jhu.edu/book/81764](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/81764).
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking

#### PROCEDURE

1. Opening activity: Ask students to make a list of what they believe to be American cultural values that permeate their lives. Ask students what they believe to be Chinese cultural values. Then ask them how their life at home differs from their life at school. This can be done as a whole-class activity, in pairs or individually.
2. Distribute Source 1, excerpts from Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, with Activity Sheet 2. The students may read the text individually or you may share read it as described in Lesson 1.
  - a. Have the students complete the critical thinking responses in groups or pairs.
  - b. Review findings with the class by posing the question: How does Jade Snow Wong negotiate between Chinese and American values? The students may recognize that the conflicts many children face as they mature may be exacerbated for immigrant children and the children of immigrants.
3. Closing Activity: Review the Essential Question as a whole class or a pair/share in which two students turn to each other to respond to each other's answers to the question.

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.



## LESSON 3

### CHINESE AMERICAN YOUTH CULTURE, 1940s–1960s

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces students to different elements of culture among Chinese American students in the 1940s through the 1960s.

Students will be able to

- Interpret, analyze, and demonstrate understanding of visual materials
- Richly describe what they see in photographs and infer the significance of what they see
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of primary sources
- Identify ways in which Chinese immigrants and their children created businesses, formed communities, and petitioned for rights
- Understand the impact of the passage of the Hart-Celler Act
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in America includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the US for generations

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 2: The Chien Hua Basketball Team, Los Angeles, CA, ca. 1945, Shades of LA Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, [tessa2.lapl.org/digital/collection/photos/id/80796/rec/1](https://tessa2.lapl.org/digital/collection/photos/id/80796/rec/1)
- Source 3: Ed Ford, Americanized Chinese Gals on Mott St., New York, NY, April 27, 1965, New York World Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/resource/cph.3c13493/](https://loc.gov/resource/cph.3c13493/)
- Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Photograph
- Activity Sheet 4: Identifying Cultural Values

#### PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Sources 2 and 3 with Activity Sheets 3 and 4.
  - a. Each photograph represents a different aspect of Chinese youth culture in America.
    - i. Chinese basketball leagues existed in California since the early 1900s. These basketball leagues resisted

- racial stereotypes that non-Chinese people imposed upon the community. Basketball helped construct a counternarrative to the perception that Chinese people, particularly men, were nerdy, politically inactive, and passive.
- ii. The young women are walking on Mott Street, which is one of the oldest streets in New York City's Chinatown. We do not know their birth place, but we do know that their style and manner of self-presentation are quintessentially American. In many ways this photograph is representative of how American-raised children have been influenced by wider social norms.
- b. Students will analyze the photographs by detailing observed evidence in Activity Sheet 3 and explaining the meaning of the observed evidence. This can be done in pairs or individually.
  - c. After studying the photographs, students will fill in Activity Sheet 4, identifying cultural values found in the images, in order to address the summary questions:
    - i. What do these images tell us about Chinese people in America?
    - ii. How do these images provide evidence of a desire to hold onto traditional Chinese values?
    - iii. How do these images provide evidence of a desire to embrace American culture?
  - d. In a general discussion, you may choose to address some of the following questions:
    - i. What common theme was used to select the photographs chosen?
    - ii. What do these images tell you about the subjects' lives?
    - iii. What might motivate someone to take such a photograph?
    - iv. What other images would you like to have if you were a historian creating a narrative of this time period?
    - v. What generalization can one make about Chinese in America during this time period based solely on the two photos selected?
2. Closing Activity: Ask students what the photographs suggest about how Chinese American students expressed their sense of belonging in the United States.

## LESSON 4

### CHINESE AMERICANS AND FAMILY LIFE, 1952

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

The lesson encourages students to consider the historical relationship between work and family life.

Students will be able to

- Interpret, analyze, and demonstrate understanding of visual materials
- Richly describe what they see in photographs and infer the significance of what they see
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of primary sources
- Identify ways in which Chinese immigrants and their descendants created businesses, formed communities, and petitioned for rights
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in America includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the US for generations

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 4: The Chin Family in Sam Wah Laundry on Creston Street in the Bronx, November 1952. Posted on June 10, 2019, Museum of Chinese in American (MOCA) Collection, Chin家经营Sam Wah洗衣店, 位于纽约布朗克斯, 1952年11月, 美国华人博物馆 (MOCA)馆藏, [mocanyc.org/collections/stories/the-chin-family-in-sam-wah-laundry-on-creston-street-in-the-bronx/](https://mocanyc.org/collections/stories/the-chin-family-in-sam-wah-laundry-on-creston-street-in-the-bronx/)
- Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Photograph (see handouts for Lesson 3)
- Activity Sheet 5: Identifying Inferences and Implications

#### PROCEDURE

1. Opening Activity: If you did not have the students read the Historical Background in Lesson 1, you may choose to distribute the essay and Activity Sheet 1 as part of this lesson (see Materials and Procedure for Lesson 1). In particular, the students should know the following:
  - a. Between 1940 and 1990, the population of the United States doubled, and the number of people with Chinese ancestry increased dramatically. Immigration was facilitated by legislative changes, including the Magnuson Act (1943) and the War Brides Act (1945 and 1946). The population increase indicated that Chinese people in

the United States included both immigrants and people whose ancestors might have arrived a hundred years earlier. A single family might include people who had immigrated from China and their children born in the United States.

- b. In the early decades of Chinese immigration, the immigrants had included more men than women. This was no longer the case by the mid-twentieth century, by which point Chinese families often owned small businesses. Since the 1980s, Chinese immigrants have often been employed as workers either in high-tech industries or in the manufacturing sector. Many American cities include a Chinatown that is a hub for small businesses, places of worship, services with Chinese-speaking personnel, and community activities.
2. Distribute Source 4, the photograph of the Chin family with Activity Sheet 3 (see the Materials for Lesson 3) and Activity Sheet 5.

Information about this photograph from the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) - “In the 1930s, Dong Wong purchased Sam Wah Laundry, located on Creston Street in the Bronx, NY. Due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the hand laundry was one of the few accessible businesses that allowed Chinese immigrants to make a living, although the trade required many to work extremely arduous hours around the clock. The laundry remained family owned until 1982, when the family decided to close the business and move to New Jersey after husband and owner Quock Chin was killed in an attempted robbery.” Note that Chinese men turned to laundry ownership because they were shut out of other types of work and didn’t have the English skills or capital to make other choices. Because washing and ironing was considered women’s work, it was not seen as a threat to White male workers.

- a. Students will use the Analyzing a Photograph activity sheet to note observed evidence and explain the meaning of the observed evidence. This can be done as a whole class, in groups, in pairs, or individually.
  - b. Students will record on Activity Sheet 5 three implications and three inferences about the photograph. Be sure students understand that inferences are conclusions reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning—a conclusion or opinion that is formed because of known facts or evidence—and that implications are something that is suggested by the text, but not explicitly stated—it is a conclusion that can be drawn from inferences made.
 

Some inferences might include, but are not limited to: the family owns the business, they are proud of their business, education is important. Some implications might include, but are not limited to: family is central in their lives, everyone in the family has to work in the business, they work hard because they want a better future for their children.
  - c. Based on their findings, students title the photograph.
3. Closing Activity: Review the Essential Question.

## LESSON 5

### BACHELOR SOCIETY AND A NEW GENERATION, 2003

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

This lesson helps students explore what remained of a bachelor society consisting of older men through the eyes of a younger observer.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of primary sources
- Identify ways in which Chinese immigrants and their descendants created businesses, formed communities, and petitioned for rights
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in America includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the US for generations

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) and other legislation that eased obstacles to immigration change the Chinese American community?
- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 5: Charlie Chin, “Bachelor Society,” *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*, Public Affairs Television, Inc., 2003, [pbs.org/becomingamerica/ce\\_witness5.html](https://pbs.org/becomingamerica/ce_witness5.html)
- Activity Sheet 6: Who, What, When, Where, Why, When, and How

#### PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Source 5 (“Bachelor Society”) and Activity Sheet 6. Students should know that at the time of the passage of the Exclusion Act, the vast majority of Chinese in the US were men who had come as temporary laborers. Exclusionary laws only permitted the entry of Chinese wives of merchants. This restriction lasted until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act). In California, laws prohibited American citizens of Chinese descent from marrying women who were not Chinese. As a result, through the mid to late twentieth century, there remained a “bachelor society” of older men among the Chinese immigrant population.
  - a. Students will read the text (you may choose to share read the text with the class as described in Lesson 1).

- b. They will summarize the text using the questions on the activity sheet. This can be done in groups or pairs.
  - c. Have the students restate the central idea(s) found in the text in their own words.
2. Closing Activity: Ask the students to address the Essential Questions orally or in writing.



## LESSON 6

### WOMEN GARMENT WORKERS, 1983

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will investigate how changes in immigration laws changed the lives of Chinese immigrant women in the 1980s. The source focuses on the agency Chinese women workers gained with unionization.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of primary sources
- Identify ways in which Chinese immigrants and their descendants created businesses, formed communities, and petitioned for rights
- Understand that the community of Chinese people in America includes immigrants and people whose families have resided in the US for generations

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) and other legislation that eased obstacles to immigration change the Chinese American community?
- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 6/Activity Sheet 7: Excerpts from Shiree Teng, “Women, Community, and Equality: Three Garment Workers Speak Out,” *East Wind* 2, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1983). Available at [Marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/east-wind/east-wind-2-1.pdf](https://Marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/east-wind/east-wind-2-1.pdf).

#### PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Source 6/Activity Sheet 7 with excerpts from interviews with three women garment workers in 1982.

The article these excerpts come from begins, “It was a hot and humid morning in late June when I [Shiree Teng] first met Mrs [Shui Mak] Ka, Alice Tse and Wing Fong Chin, all of whom are active garment workers in New York’s Chinatown. They were amongst the many speakers who would address the rally that day called by their union—Local 23-25 of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU). . . . the role of workers and unions and the fight for women’s equality brought me to conduct three personal interviews with these women. Their individual stories and backgrounds may differ, yet they share aspirations, strength, and hope that should only

serve to guide us in the future.”

All three women were union activists. Wing Fong Chin was the chair of the Executive Board of Local 23-25 and Alice Tse was a shop chairperson. Shui Mak Ka had emigrated from China ten years earlier. She was fifty years old and was a gynecologist, obstetrician, and medical doctor in China, but in the US she worked in restaurants and garment factories.

- a. The students read the excerpts from the interviews with the women and answer the accompanying critical thinking questions on the activity sheet.
2. Concluding Activity: Review the Essential Questions.

## LESSON 7

### CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

BY NINA WOHL (created in 2023)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, the students review the work completed in Lessons 1–6. They will share what they have learned in a written response to the prompts provided.

Students will be able to

- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of written text
- Explain how Chinese people in America responded to legislation targeting them for exclusion

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) and other legislation that eased obstacles to immigration change the Chinese American community?
- What opportunities for continuity and change did Chinese immigrants and their descendants seize?

#### MATERIALS

- Sources 1–6 from the previous lessons
- Activity Sheets 1–7 from the previous lessons

#### PROCEDURE

Students will write an essay on one of the following prompts. This can be done in class or as a homework assignment. They will develop an analytical thesis statement and use the sources and evidence provided in class to support their thesis.

#### Prompts

- Which new opportunities did post–World War II Chinese immigrants and their families most embrace in the United States?
- What are the characteristics of post–World War II Chinese American community? How have they changed over time?
- What are some ways that the children of immigrants have experienced American life differently from their immigrant parents?
- How have Chinese Americans expressed dedication to their families? How have they expressed pride in individual accomplishment?

*Nina Wohl taught high school social studies in the New York City Department of Education for thirty years. She was a senior education fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History during the 2022–2023 academic year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

Recommended Time for Completion: Three 45-minute periods. You may choose to teach two lessons each period and assign the summative assessment as homework.

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. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. This unit explores the impact the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) had on the lives of Chinese people in America. It explores how Chinese and Chinese American people built and maintained communities.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## Chinese Immigration to the United States, World War II to 1965

by Madeline Hsu, University of Maryland, College Park

During World War II, the Sino-US alliance against Japan forced the United States to repeal its openly racist Chinese exclusion laws (1882–1943). Chinese thereby became the first Asians to gain rights to citizenship by naturalization and escape the longstanding category of “aliens ineligible for citizenship” that was used to legally discriminate against Asians. Symbolically, China gained an immigration quota on a par with most favored European nations even though the rigged system of allocating numbers admitted only 105 Chinese per year, compared to more than 65,000 for British and Irish. The War Brides Acts enabled Chinese American men to sponsor spouses and fiancées to immigrate. For the first time between 1946 and 1950, more Chinese women than men immigrated to the US, which ameliorated severe gender imbalances and transformed Chinese American communities from male dominated to family centered through the arrival of children holding birthright citizenship. Working-class families also sought to challenge residential discriminations that had limited housing options to Chinatown ghettos or combined living-working quarters over stores and laundries to seek housing in suburban areas with more room and better schools. Alongside increasing family migrations, Chinese from all parts of China immigrated as students and as refugees.

These new immigration influxes derived from the international alliance between the US and Kuomintang (KMT)-ruled Taiwan and the US desire to demonstrate support for anti-communists around the world. Congress enacted policies favoring highly educated Chinese as refugees, asylum seekers, and white-collar and professional workers. Even during Chinese exclusion, which chiefly targeted Chinese laborers racialized as slavish “coolies,” international students had been welcomed under the belief that as future leaders of their homeland, they would forge stronger Sino-US relations drawing on positive experiences of US civilization and modernity. The Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949), and China’s conversion to communist rule prevented these elite, usefully trained Chinese intellectuals from returning home. Through legislation such as the 1948 Displaced Persons Act and the 1953 Refugee Relief Act, Chinese intellectuals were able to seek asylum or enter as refugees. Between 1945 and 1966, about 35,000 Chinese immigrated through these statuses. The US embargo of communist China prohibited Chinese Americans from maintaining ties to families left behind and required ostentatious displays of affiliation with the KMT—particularly by major organizations such as the Chinese Six Companies.

Reforms of general policy shaped Chinese immigration in ways highly recognizable today. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act introduced the preference system that prioritized admitting skilled workers and families of US citizens. The law reduced the racial discrimination of past legislation by ending the racial restriction on citizenship and allocating immigration quotas to all countries. Nonetheless, Europeans retained privileged immigration access with 85 percent of immigration quotas allotted to northern and western European countries while the Chinese quota was only 205. Although they had received only a symbolic quota, Chinese managed to immigrate in far greater numbers because many arrived as students, a “side-door” with no numeric caps that positioned Chinese to seek employment and then have their employers apply for them to convert to permanent residency status.

Between World War II and 1965, political, economic, and social transformations positioned Chinese and other Asian Americans as “model minorities.” The racialization of Asians shifted to emphasize their compatibility with Americans through values such as hard work; economic aspiration; education prioritization; over-representation in STEM, medical, and entrepreneurial fields; suburban residences; and family unity. Chinese immigration increased even as immigration policies screened for those displaying such “model minority” traits. The 1965 Immigration Act has enshrined these preferences in general immigration law while providing all countries with the same admission quotas—enabling far higher levels of immigration by Chinese who disproportionately arrive through the skilled worker preference.

*Madeline Y. Hsu is a professor of history at the University of Maryland, College Park, and director of Global Migration Student. She is the author of Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882–1943 (2000) and Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction (2016).*

---

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

---

### Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing an Essay

Which phrases or sentences in this essay are the most important or informative? Select three and give the reason for each selection.

Phrase 1:

Why is this phrase important or informative?

Phrase 2:

Why is this phrase important or informative?

Phrase 3:

Why is this phrase important or informative?

Source 1: Excerpt from *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, by Jade Snow Wong, 1950

When she was six, Jade Snow's world expanded beyond her family life. Daddy started her in an American public grade school. Before she left home, Daddy and Mother both took her aside and gave her solemn instructions: "Jade Snow, at school a teacher will be in charge, who is as your mother or your father at home. She is supreme, and her position in all matters pertaining to your education is as indisputable as the decisions of your mother or father at home. Respect her accordingly."

Thus, Jade Snow accepted another authority in her life. The schoolteacher was a little Chinese lady dressed in foreign clothes. She spoke the foreign "English" language, although when necessary she could explain in Chinese to her pupils. However, she discouraged them from speaking their accustomed language.

Although Miss Chew had the authority of one's parents and occasionally scolded some pupils who overlooked this fact, she never spanked anybody! School life was comparatively simple, since for some hours each day Jade Snow became less actively concerned with what was proper or improper. In fact, she sometimes became actively concerned with what was really fun to do!

New games in the foreign language were learned—"Farmer in the Dell," "Go Walking Round the Valley," "London Bridge Is Falling Down." Instead of learning about the virtuous Wellington as a boy, Jade Snow memorized a poem about Jack and Jill who climbed a hill to get water but somehow lost it all.

Instead of opening on the left-hand side and reading from right to left in vertical rolls like Chinese books, the new books with gay, colored pictures opened on the right-hand side and were read horizontally from left to right.

Source: Kathryn Uhl, Leslie Bow, and Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019; orig. 1950)



NAME

PERIOD

DATE

### Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking

<p>Critical Thinking Question 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the major claim being made by the author in this piece?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What textual evidence supports the author's claim?</li> <li>• Does the claim that is being presented appear to be based on fact or opinion?</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Thinking Question 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the textual structure of this piece?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cite evidence of the text structure taken from this piece.</li> <li>• How does this structure affect the effectiveness of the text?</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Thinking Question 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the best (most convincing or most thought-provoking) parts of the piece?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cite textual evidence to support your opinion.</li> </ul>
<p>Critical Thinking Question 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize, in your own words, the overall message of this piece.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What evidence in the text supports your summary?</li> </ul>

Source 2: The Chien Hua Basketball Team, Los Angeles, CA, ca. 1945



*(Shades of LA Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

Source 3: Americanized Gals on Mott St., New York, 1965



*Photograph by Ed Ford (NYWTS Newspaper Photograph Collection, Library of Congress)*

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

### Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Photograph

Photograph title:

Photograph date:

	Observed Evidence	Meaning of the Observed Evidence
Setting		
Central Figures or Objects		
Action		
Mood or Theme		

---

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

---

### Activity Sheet 4: Identifying Cultural Values

Identify cultural values reflected in each photograph.

Source 2:

Title of Image:

Date of Image:

Cultural Value(s):

Evidence from photo to support to support your answer:

Source 3:

Title of Image:

Date of Image:

Cultural Value(s):

Evidence from photo to support to support your answer:

What do these images tell us about Chinese people in America?

How do these images provide evidence of a desire to hold onto traditional Chinese values?

How do these images provide evidence of a desire to embrace American culture?



Source 4: The Chin Family in Sam Wah Laundry, The Bronx, NY, 1952



*(Museum of Chinese in America Collection)*



NAME

PERIOD

DATE

### Activity Sheet 5: Identifying Inferences and Implications

Identify three inferences and three implications you can draw from the photograph of the Chin family.

- Inferences are conclusions reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning; a conclusion or opinion that is formed because of known facts or evidence.
- Implications are something that is suggested by the photo, but not explicitly observed; it is a conclusion that can be drawn from inferences made.

Inferences	Implications
(1)	(1)
(2)	(2)
(3)	(3)

Based on the inferences and implications drawn from the photograph, what should it be titled?

### Source 5: “Bachelor Society,” by Charlie Chin, 2003

Chinatown was the central base. Every Sunday, my father would go to get the paper, the groceries, and bring us back the latest news, the latest rumors, the latest stories that were going around. And on special occasions, like holidays, we'd all go to Chinatown.

Chinatown was small in those days. We're talking about the '50s, my earliest memories. It had a very stable community. It was predominantly men. I didn't know why when I was young. But I always noticed that when I walked down the street with my father, I must have been under the age of ten, other men would come across the street to say hello to my father. Total strangers would shake his hand and then look at me, tossle my head or offer me candy or something. For many of them, [it was] because they had children of their own in China which they had not seen in years and the sight of a child in Chinatown was remarkable at that time.

The so-called bachelor society was made up of men who were bachelors only in the sense that they were here, because of the laws, by themselves. They all had wives and children in China who could not join them here. This lasted well into the early '60s. As late as the '70s, you still could find the old Toishan uncles who were still living in little apartments, some of them six or seven in an apartment where they had been for 20, 30 or 40 years from the days when they first came over-and, trapped by time. The People's Republic of China had been founded; there was no way for them to get back home. In many ways they had lost touch with their families. They had been set adrift, cut off, because there was no way for them to get back. The world that they knew was gone.

Source: Charlie Chin, “Bachelor Society,” *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*, Public Affairs Television, Inc., 2003.

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

**Activity Sheet 6: Who, What, Where, Why, When, and How**

Formulate your own question for each interrogatory word, answer the question based on your reading, and cite evidence from the text for each answer.

WHO \_\_\_\_\_?

Response:

Textual Evidence:

WHAT \_\_\_\_\_?

Response:

Textual Evidence:

WHERE \_\_\_\_\_?

Response:

Textual Evidence:

WHY \_\_\_\_\_?

Response:

Textual Evidence:

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

WHEN \_\_\_\_\_?

Response:

Textual Evidence:

HOW \_\_\_\_\_?

Response:

Textual Evidence:

In Your Own Words, restate the central idea(s) in the text.

Critical Thinking Question

To what extent did historical patterns of change and continuity affect Chinese life in America?

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

### Source 6/Activity Sheet 7: Excerpts from “Women, Community, and Equality,” by Shiree Teng, 1983

<p><b>On UNION ORGANIZATION</b></p> <p>Wing Fong Chin:</p> <p>“In 1955, there were a total of 8–10 garment factories in Chinatown. There was no union back then. Soon thereafter, the union learned about women sewing in Chinatown and sent people down to do organizing. The bosses really disapproved and disliked the idea of workers joining the union. Whenever union people came down to the shops, they would send all the garments into the basement and send us home for the day. At first we didn’t know what was going on.</p> <p>After two to three months, we found out about the union. In 1957, many of us started to join. At the time, the older ladies did not like the idea either. They would say things like, ‘Oh, the union is only here to take our money. We shouldn’t join.’ But they did not understand all the benefits the union would provide for us in return. The more progressive minded workers, including myself, would ask, why not join the union? . . . Most of us worked nine or ten hours a day back then including Saturdays and sometimes Sundays. After we joined the union, the hours were considerably cut down and the piece rates went up. The union contract gave us many improvements. Ever since, anyone new into the factories would automatically sign up. . . . It just became a natural practice to join the union.</p> <p>Today, some workers are still wary of the union. I would tell them about the old days when there wasn’t any union benefits. The boss used to take all our holiday money. Now we have maternity benefits, vacations . . . the union has really helped to improve things for Chinese workers.”</p>	<p>(1) What is the major claim being made by Wong Fong Chin?</p> <p>(2) What textual evidence supports her claim?</p> <p>(3) Does the claim that is being presented appear to be based on fact or opinion? Why?</p>
---	---

Source: Shiree Teng, “Women, Community, and Equality: Three Garment Workers Speak Out,” *East Wind* 2, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1983).

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

### On VITAL ISSUES FACING CHINESE WOMEN

Alice Tse

“The second problem I see is with the children. The mothers who have to work long hours worry about their children’s safety and what they are learning everyday. This is a real problem for women who don’t have a lot of time to spend with their children.

. . . [Another problem is that] my husband doesn’t like what I’m doing. . . . His thinking is quite conservative and traditional. He is a waiter in a Chinese restaurant and he sees my job as superior to his. He doesn’t like that, and feels threatened. I think it’s because he has a lot of self-pride, and at the same time, feels sorry for himself. I try to tolerate the situation for the sake of the kids. Being the wife, I try to leave enough time to take care of the house and not take work related problems home with me. It’s not very easy!

. . . The cultural habits of the American-born are different from that of the immigrants. But people can change and adapt. There really shouldn’t be such a big gap between the two. Immigrants should try to learn English in order to communicate.

The American-born should try to learn some of the old school of thought since some of the traditional teachings are not all without basis, like: respect, trust, loyalty, manners, righteousness, uprightness, and shame. These teachings are valid, up to a degree. For example, I think some Chinese American women are too Western-minded when it comes to marriage and divorce. There isn’t the patience and tolerance to go through changes. For immigrants, divorce is rare. Women brought up here are more impetuous.”

Shui Mak Ka

“. . . According to the old prophecies, a proper woman isn’t supposed to leave the front door of her house by more than three steps. Her feet would be bound so that she really couldn’t. For hundreds of years, the man was the sole money-maker and reinforced many of the feudal ideas. But today, women are stepping outside of the home and making a living. The situation is beginning to change. The main problem still, is that women have always seen themselves as housewives in the main. They tend not to be very career minded or motivated. Outside of the kitchen and the home, their interests are not as developed. . . .

I think today’s men also need to wake up to reality. They should understand that the thousand years of women tolerating everything that men did, and accepted them, doesn’t mean it is right. For us women, it’s not liberation for liberation’s sake. It’s a matter of the times. . . . In order for women not to be taken advantage of in this society, we need to learn the political system here. We need to understand the laws that govern this society, and understand the reasons why the inequality between men and women exists. I think equality means the ability of women to participate in all the affairs of the community and in society.

But to do so, they really need to break away from the bondage of the home. For Chinese mothers, they come home, cook, clean, and wait for their husbands.”

Wing Fong Chin

“To my daughter, whatever you say as being Chinese, they think it’s silly. They tell you this is America, and things are different here. You can’t force them to believe in anything. They have a mind of their own.”

Source: Shiree Teng, “Women, Community, and Equality: Three Garment Workers Speak Out,” *East Wind* 2, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1983).



NAME

PERIOD

DATE

(4) What is (are) the major claim(s) being made by these women?

(5) What are the best (most convincing or most thought-provoking) parts of the p

Cite textual evidence to support your opinion.

(6) Summarize, in your own words, the overall message of this piece.

What evidence in the text supports your summary?