

8th Grade - History Social Studies

How did the California Gold Rush of 1849 lead to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882?	
Standards and Content	US.8.8 - Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
Staging the Compelling Question	Do you remember our study about how the Gold Rush transformed San Francisco? Do you remember our study of the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act? Today we are going to revisit your previous work and tie the California Gold Rush and the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act together.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What was the importance of the Foreign Miners' tax that was passed by the California Legislature in 1850?	What part did the Transcontinental Railroad play in the California Gold Rush?	Why did the treatment of the Irish workers on the Transcontinental Railroad differ from the treatment of the Chinese Workers?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Write a newspaper editorial explaining why the Foreign Miners' tax was unfair to certain people.	Write two paragraphs explaining the connection of the Transcontinental Railroad to the California Gold Rush and the growth of San Francisco.	Write two paragraphs. Imagine you are a worker on the railroad. Compare and contrast the experience of being an Irish worker and then a Chinese worker.

C3 TEACHERS

Featured Sources	
Source A: shec.ashp.cuny.edu Foreign Miners' License	
Source B: Wikipedia.com Foreign Miners' Tax Act of 1850	

Featured Sources	
Source A: Smithsonian American Art Museum "The Gold Rush and Western Expansion"	
Source B: History.com "10 Ways the Transcontinental Railroad Changed America"	
Source C: LOC.gov "San Francisco 1850"	
Source D: LOC.gov "Vue de San Francisco"1860	

Featured Sources	
Source A: Smithsonian Magazine, April 2022 "What archaeologists are learning about the lives of the Chinese Immigrants Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad"	
Source B: PBS - American Workers "Workers of the Central and Union Pacific Railroad"	
Source C: History.com "The Transcontinental Railroad's Dark Costs: Exploited Labor, Stolen Lands" by Lakshmi Gandhi, Oct. 8, 2021	
Source D: The Guardian.com "The Transcontinental Railroad"	

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT: How did the California Gold Rush of 1849 lead to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882? Construct an outline that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION: Why were the Chinese Immigrants already in the United States ineligible for Naturalization after the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882? Do you agree or disagree with the Naturalization part of the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act? Write a paragraph explaining your answer. Please cite examples from your reading. - Source A: History.com Aug. 24, 2018 "Chinese Exclusion Act" - Source B: Wikipedia.com "Chinese Exclusion Act" - Source C: History.state.gov, Office of the Historian "Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1943"

Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND Research the COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States from 2020 to the present. Examine the treatment of Asian Americans in the United States since the onset of COVID-19.
	ASSESS Has the treatment of Asian Americans been fair? Is there any relationship to the way Chinese Americans were treated during the California Gold Rush of 1849 through the repeal in 1943 of the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion act of 1882? ACT Students will examine several sources and write a letter to their Congressperson showing the results of their research and offering several suggestions of what they believe should be done about the situation.

How did the California Gold Rush of 1849 lead to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882?

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry requires students to use prior knowledge about how the California Gold Rush of 1849 caused gigantic growth in San Francisco, which in turn spurred the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad to get that wealth circulating through the United States. It also requires them to use prior knowledge about the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882. The focus is how the chain of events - the Gold Rush and the building of the Rails, ultimately led to the passage of the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act.

This inquiry can be done in five days, one class period each for:

- Introduction of the Compelling question, discussion of prior lessons on the CA Gold Rush and the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act, and Supporting Question 1
- Supporting Question 2
- Supporting Question 3
- Summative Performance Task
- Summative Performance task and class discussion

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question, “How did the California Gold Rush of 1849 lead to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks and featured sources to construct an argument supported by evidence while also acknowledging competing perspectives.

The first supporting question, “What was the importance of the Foreign Miners’ tax that was passed by the California Legislature in 1850?” has students reflecting on the implied bias of the tax and the people that had to pay it. The second supporting question, “What part did the Transcontinental Railroad play in the California Gold Rush?” will have students examine the two primary immigrant groups that built the transcontinental railroad, the Chinese and the Irish. The third supporting question, “Why did the treatment of the Irish workers on the Transcontinental Railroad differ from the treatment of the Chinese Workers?” will have students examine the treatment of Irish as opposed to the Chinese and reflect on why the two groups were treated differently.

Staging the Compelling Question

Previous work should include a study of how the California Gold Rush of 1849 transformed the city of San Francisco, and a look at the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act. How are these two things related? Why are they related? Students can look at their previous work and use it to make connections to the compelling question, “How did the California Gold Rush of 1849 lead to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882?”

Accommodations for students with Individual Education Plans could include:

- Create a list of facts about the California Gold Rush
- Three things about San Francisco that were different after the Gold Rush of 1849
- How were Chinese immigrants treated in society?
- Were other Asian immigrants treated the way the Chinese immigrants were?

Supporting Question 1

The inquiry begins with Supporting Question 1 “What was the importance of the Foreign Miners’ tax that was passed by the California Legislature in 1850?” This question, the sources and the task help prepare the student for answering the compelling question by being one of the legs that the compelling question rests on. This is also a visual accommodation; I would have my students visualize a chair, or I would draw a rough sketch of one on the board. By answering and understanding this question the students are prepared to tackle the other leg, or the second supporting question.

The Formative Performance Task requires students to write a newspaper editorial explaining why the Foreign Miners’ tax was unfair to certain people. Writing the editorial gives a deeper understanding of the Miners’ Tax and its consequences. An accommodation to writing would be to accept a drawing or a comic strip showing why the tax was unfair to certain populations.

Other accommodations could be:

- A list of the important highlights of the Miners’ Tax Act
- A newspaper editorial or blog explaining what the Miners’ Tax is
- A self-reflection - how would the Miners’ Tax affect me?

Supporting Question 2

The inquiry continues with Supporting Question 2 “What part did the Transcontinental Railroad play in the California Gold Rush?” This question, the sources and the task help prepare the student for answering the compelling question by being the second of the legs that the compelling question rests on. Answering this question along with the first supporting question prepares the students for comparing the experiences of the Irish and the Chinese. The Formative Performance Task requires students to Write two paragraphs explaining the connection of the Transcontinental Railroad to the California Gold Rush and the growth of San Francisco.

Accommodations for the writing could be:

- creating a drawing showing how San Francisco was affected by the California Gold Rush
- a skit, with the student preparing and submitting storyboards as well as performing the skit
- creating a list of industries in San Francisco that originated during/after the Gold Rush and their importance to San Francisco’s growth
- writing and performing a song about the growth of San Francisco because of the Gold Rush

Supporting Question 3

The inquiry concludes with Supporting Question 3 “Why did the treatment of the Irish workers on the Transcontinental Railroad differ from the treatment of the Chinese Workers?” This question, the sources and the task help prepare the student for answering the compelling question by looking at the building of the Transcontinental Railroad from the perspective of first an Irish worker, then a Chinese worker.

The Formative Performance Task requires students to write two paragraphs that contrast the perspectives and experiences of Irish and Chinese railroad workers.

Teachers may direct student to include what workers were paid and how much tools, food, and lodging cost.

Accommodations for the writing could be:

- Writing a brief paragraph from the Irish perspective. Then write a brief perspective from the Chinese perspective. Draw a sketch representing each perspective.
- Write a brief skit with two parts; part one an Irish worker and part two a Chinese worker. The skit should describe their experiences. Students can submit a storyboard in addition to the script and the performance of the skit.
- Write and perform a song about the experiences of the Irish workers and the Chinese workers.

Summative Performance Task

At this point, students have used prior knowledge about how the California Gold Rush of 1849 caused gigantic growth in San Francisco, which in turn spurred the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad to get that wealth circulating through the United States. They have also used prior knowledge about the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims.

In this task, students will construct an evidence-based argument using multiple sources to answer the compelling question, “How did the California Gold Rush of 1849 lead to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882?”

Students’ arguments may vary, but could include:

- The California Gold Rush of 1849 led to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882 by drawing Chinese workers into our population larger numbers than other immigrants.
- The California Gold Rush of 1849 led to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882 by pitting Chinese workers against Irish workers during the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.
- The California Gold Rush of 1849 led to the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882 because Asian immigrants were always treated unfairly.

An extension to the summative performance task would be to explore the question “Why were the Chinese Immigrants already in the United States ineligible for Naturalization after the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act of 1882? Do you agree or disagree with the Naturalization part of the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion Act? Write a paragraph explaining your answer. Please cite examples from your reading.”

Students would examine additional sources and draw from the sources when constructing an evidence-based answer.

- Source A: History.com, Aug. 24, 2018 [“Chinese Exclusion Act”](#)
- Source B: Wikipedia.com [“Chinese Exclusion Act”](#)
- Source C: History.state.gov, Office of the Historian [“Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1943”](#)

A Taking Informed Action task would be for students to research and examine the treatment of Asian Americans in the United States since the onset of COVID-19. Has the treatment of Asian Americans been fair? Is there any relationship to the way Chinese Americans were treated during the California Gold Rush of 1849 through the repeal in 1943 of the Chinese Immigration and Exclusion act of 1882? Students will examine several sources and write a letter to their Congressperson showing the results of their research and offer several suggestions of what they believe should be done about the situation.

Supporting Question 1: Featured Sources

Source A: shec.ashp.cuny.edu - [Foreign Miners' License](#)

Source B: Wikipedia.com - [Foreign Miners' Tax Act of 1850](#)

Supporting Question 2: Featured Sources

Source A: Smithsonian American Art Museum - ["The Gold Rush and Western Expansion"](#)

Source B: History.com - ["10 Ways the Transcontinental Railroad Changed America"](#)

Source C: Library of Congress - ["San Francisco 1850"](#)

Source D: Library of Congress - ["Vue de San Francisco" 1860](#)

Supporting Question 3: Featured Sources

Source A: Smithsonian Magazine, April 2022 - ["What archaeologists are learning about the lives of the Chinese Immigrants Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad"](#)

Source B: PBS.org - [PBS - American Workers "Workers of the Central and Union Pacific Railroad"](#)

Source C: History.com - ["The Transcontinental Railroad's Dark Costs: Exploited Labor, Stolen Lands" by Lakshmi Gandhi, Oct. 8, 2021](#)

Source D: The Guardian.com - ["The Transcontinental Railroad"](#)