



Coming to America, Coming to Oregon

Exploring Immigration Trends from the Past to Present Day

Grade: Adaptable for 6-8

Overview

This lesson can be used to supplement a unit about the growth and development of the United States. Immigrants were a huge component of this growth. This lesson begins with a discussion that will help personalize the immigration experience for students. Students will then research and analyze a historic West Coast immigration controversy using the [Historic Oregon Newspapers](#) website. The lesson ends with students' analysis of present-day trends in immigration in Oregon and the United States.

Oregon Common Core State Standards

Language Arts Standards: See below for a full list of applicable standards.

- CCSS.ELA.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA.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.
- CCSS.ELA.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- CCSS.ELA.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Social Studies Standards: See below for a full list of applicable standards.

- Historical Knowledge 8.1: Evaluate continuity and change over the course of United States history by analyzing examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, or nations.
- Historical Knowledge 8.4: Evaluate the impact of different factors, including gender, age, ethnicity, and class on groups and individuals during this time period and the impact these groups and individuals have on events of the time.
- Historical Thinking 8.6: Use and interpret documents and other relevant primary and secondary sources pertaining to U.S. history from multiple perspectives.

Materials

- [Historic Oregon Newspapers](#) website
- Access to the Internet

- Copies of articles (optional)
- Copies of “Who’s Coming to America?” (optional)
- Copies of “Graphs of Immigration Data” (optional)
- World map
- Article research activity sheet
- Question activity sheet

Lesson

- *Introduction:* Introduce topic of study.
 - Explain that, whereas most U.S. immigrants of European descent entered the country through Ellis Island and other ports on the Atlantic Seaboard, the majority of Chinese, Japanese, and Pacific Islanders who immigrated arrived on the West Coast.
 - Utilizing a world map, a class discussion can be initiated centering on the details of geography, nineteenth-century transportation technologies, and socioeconomic factors that led to this unbalanced pattern of immigration.
- *Building background knowledge:* Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1880s.
 - Chinese laborers began immigrating to the United States in 1848. At first, they mostly came to work on the construction of transcontinental railroads. They also found work mining gold, harvesting fruit and vegetables, and processing salmon in canning factories. Chinatown districts sprang up in most cities and larger towns in Oregon and throughout the West. By 1882, however, the U.S. Congress passed the first in a series of Chinese Exclusion Acts, laws designed to severely limit the entry of Asian people into America.
 - ***Instructors should be forewarned: This area of study will expose a great deal of racial stereotyping and outright prejudice from Oregon’s past. It is good to address this at the beginning and provide the class with context on racial attitudes of earlier times.***
- *Discussion:* An excellent starting point is to view and discuss this article:
 - [“Chinese Flock to Portland for Winter” from *Portland Sunday Oregonian*, December 24, 1905.](#)
 - This is a photographic essay on “the most populous Chinatown in the Northwest.” We must be thankful for these photos because they offer us a rare glimpse at a turn-of-the-century Chinatown in the Pacific Northwest. Consider the culturally and racially biased manner in which these photos were originally presented to readers of the *Oregonian*.
- Some discussion questions to consider:
 - What sort of attitudes toward the Chinese are revealed in the photographs and the accompanying article?
 - What do you think about the way the pictures are captioned?
 - Are the newspaper’s criticisms of the Chinese immigrants fair or unfair? Why?
 - What are some things the Chinese people pictured here might have said if they had been asked to tell their side of the story?
 - How do you feel when observing these pictures?
- *Research:* Students will take an article with a key question to focus on conduct research.

- Split students into groups of 3 to 4 students, and assign an article to each group.
- Pass out copies of the article, or give students the link to the article.
- At the end of this lesson plan are links relevant to stories on East Asian immigration and Asian exclusion.
- Pose the following questions to focus students' research.
- Make sure to give students enough time to do research and share their findings and experiences.
- Monitor students, and offer support when necessary.
- Some focus questions to consider:
 - Why did Chinese workers first start coming to the United States?
 - Why did the Chinese sometimes have problems getting along in the dominant Euro-American society?
 - Why did some Americans begin to object to the presence of the Chinese in this country?
 - What are some ways that Americans tried to keep out Chinese immigrants?
 - Were other groups of people also affected?
 - How and why did some Asian immigrants try to get around laws against immigration?
 - How was the public debate circa 1848-1910 different and/or similar to the debates we are having about immigration today?
- *Debrief:* Bring students together to debrief their findings and share their feelings.
- Some debrief questions to consider:
 - What are some interesting facts you read about?
 - How do you feel about what you have read?
 - Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
 - Have you ever experienced something like the Chinese experienced?
- *Transition:* Begin with a brief overview of the earliest chapter of U.S. history in Oregon.
 - The first permanent U.S. settlement in Oregon was Fort Astoria, founded in 1811 by representatives of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company. This pioneering group of sailors and trappers consisted mostly of immigrant Scots, Canadian citizens of mixed French and Native American ancestry, and Native Hawaiian Islanders. Nonetheless, this was officially a U.S. venture, and the fort flew the U.S. flag.
- *Discussion:* Get students to continue to think about culture and race.
- Some discussion questions to consider:
 - Is it surprising to learn that our state's first settlers were such a culturally and racially diverse group?
 - In light of this fact, what should we make of the attempts of later generations of Oregonians to keep out the Chinese, other non-European immigrants, and African Americans?
 - Are there any groups of immigrants who might be made to feel similarly unwelcome today?
 - Why do you think so?
- *Activity:* As a class, read the article ["Who's Coming to America?"](#) from *New York Times Online Teacher Connections Network*, and study the [Graphs of Immigration Data](#).
 - Optional: Give each student a copy of the article and graph, or provide students with the link to both documents.
 - Split students into groups of 3 to 4, and pass out the question activity sheet.
 - Give students enough time to digest the information and find the answers.
 - Monitor students, and provide support when necessary.
- *Debrief:* Bring students together to debrief their findings.

- Some debrief questions to consider:
 - What answers did you get for question 1? Question 2? Question 3? Etc.?
 - What are your reactions to what you have read?
 - What are some facts you learned?
 - Is there something you highly agree or disagree with? Why?

Extension Activity Ideas

- *Newspaper editorial*: After students have researched and shared the information they found in their articles, have them create a newspaper editorial of their own. Give students the viewpoint of an Oregon journalist in the 1880s, persuasively arguing against the Chinese Exclusion Acts. This can be done in groups or individually. To give students more connection, have them create their own newspaper, complete with title, headings, layout, etc.
- *Interview*: Interview an immigrant in your own community to learn about his or her experiences and impressions of moving to the United States.
- *Current immigration policies*: Using current newspapers or online news sources, find editorial/opinion articles both for and against current immigration policies. Write a paper or presentation summarizing the two sides of this issue.
- *Family histories*: Research family histories and cultural backgrounds. Have students bring in an object that reflects their heritage. These objects may be an article of clothing, country flag, book or magazine, craft object, dish of food, etc. Use a “show and tell” method to lead discussion on diversity within the United States.

Relevant Links

- “A Chinese Protest,” *Willamette Farmer*, July 19, 1873: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn85042522/1873-07-19/ed-1/seq-2/>
 - Offers the Chinese perspective on immigration issues and U.S.-China relations
- “Free Versus Slave,” *Daily Morning Astorian*, February 23, 1886: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn96061150/1886-02-23/ed-1/seq-2/>
 - Equates Chinese “coolie” labor with slave labor
- “Hard to Enforce,” *Daily Morning Astorian*, October 27, 1888: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn96061150/1888-10-27/ed-1/seq-3/>
 - Issues of illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border in 1888
- “Japanese Immigration,” *Portland Oregonian*, May 9, 1900: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83025138/1900-05-09/ed-1/seq-2/>
 - Labor unionists argue to have exclusion acts extended to Japanese as well
- “Keep Out Coolies Is Labor’s Cry,” *Portland Oregonian*, September 7, 1905: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83025138/1905-09-07/ed-1/seq-11/>
 - American trade unions fear competition from low-wage immigrant labor
- “The Mindu,” *Coos Bay Times*, September 12, 1907: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn85033159/1907-09-12/ed-1/seq-2/>
 - Editorial with racist rhetoric typical of the time period
- “Trade Likely to Suffer by Exclusion,” *Salem Daily Journal*, December 13, 1901: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn99063956/1901-12-13/ed-1/seq-1/>
 - Offers economic arguments *against* legal exclusion of immigrants from Asia
- “Value of Our Salmon Fisheries,” *Willamette Farmer*, September 27, 1873: <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn85042522/1873-09-27/ed-1/seq-1/>
 - Article contains an early reference to the Chinese living and working in Oregon (Astoria)

Question Activity Sheet

1. Read the article, highlighting important/interesting facts.
2. Read the questions, and find the answers.
3. Be prepared to share your findings in class discussion.
4. Don't forget to write down any reactions you have from what you have read.

	Questions	Answers	Reactions
1.	What percentage of current Oregon residents were born in another country?		
2.	How does this compare with the number of immigrants living in the other Pacific Northwest states of Washington, Idaho, and Montana?		
3.	Which U.S. states have the highest percentage of foreign-born residents as of 2007?		
4.	What are factors that might lead more immigrants to settle in states such as New York or California, and fewer to move to states such as North Dakota or Mississippi?		
5.	Between 1900 and 2007, which two ethnic groups have experienced the greatest increase in immigration to the United States? Which group has experienced the greatest decrease in immigration?		

6.	Why were there few legal restrictions on immigration to the United States prior to 1875?		
7a.	As early as the 1800s, some native-born Americans were against allowing foreigners to move to the United States. What were the reasons these people gave to explain their opposition to immigration?		
7b.	To what extent are these reasons similar to arguments we sometimes hear against immigration today?		
7c.	How are they different?		

8.	What are reasons that might help explain why immigrant families from some countries have achieved higher levels of income than immigrants from other countries?		
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9a.	What are major differences between second-generation Americans (i.e., the children of immigrant parents) and their parents who came to the United States first?		
9b.	What does this say about U.S. culture?		
10.	Given the current trends in immigration, what are ways the United States might be expected to change in the future? In what ways might it remain unchanged?		

Continued list of applicable English Language Arts Standards

- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.10 Write routinely over extended timeframes (time for reflection and revision) and shorter timeframes (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Continued list of applicable Social Studies Standards

- Historical Thinking 8.8: Evaluate information from a variety of sources and perspectives.
- Historical Thinking 8.9: Construct or evaluate a written historical argument demonstrating an understanding of primary and secondary sources.
- Geography 8.10: Interpret maps to identify the growth and development of the United States.
- Geography 8.11: Identify and describe patterns and networks of economic interdependence, migration, and settlement.
- Government 8.18: Examine and analyze important U.S. documents, including (but not limited to) the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the 13th through 15th Amendments.
- Social Science Analysis 8.25: Critique data for point of view, historical context, distortion, or propaganda and relevance.
- Social Science Analysis 8.26: Examine a controversial event, issue, or problem from more than one perspective.
- Social Science Analysis 8.27: Examine the various characteristics, causes, and effects of an event, issue, or problem.
- Social Science Analysis 8.28: Investigate a response or solution to an issue or problem and, using research, support or oppose it.