

# Chinese Exclusion & Angel Island: Discussion Notes

## VOCABULARY

**Citizenship:** the status of being a citizen, usually associated with a legal identification that allows an individual recognized as a citizen certain rights and duties. These may include the right to vote, work, and live in the country as well as duties to follow the country's laws, pay taxes, or serve in the military.

**Coolie:** term used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century to describe Asian laborers (usually of Chinese, south Asian, Filipino, or Indonesian descent) engaged in a slavery-like trade. Some coolies were indentured servants, some willingly signed misleading contracts, some sold themselves to pay off debts, and some were victims of kidnapping or violence who were forced into labor against their will. Today the term is used as a racial slur, particularly in South Africa.

**Naturalization:** the legal process by which a non-citizen is allowed to become a citizen of a country. This can occur through an application process, legislation, marriage, or parental action.

## Lesson Plan Reading List

### ***The Road to Exclusion: Coolies, Railroads, and Gold Mountain***

Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror for Young People* (2012, adapted by Rebecca Stefoff)

Russell Freedman, *Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain* (2013)

Yin, *Coolies* (2001)

### ***Related Student Reading***

David Wong, *Escape to Gold Mountain: A Graphic History of the Chinese in North America* (2012)

Jewell Parker Rhodes, *Sugar* (2013)

Teacher Resources for *Sugar*:

<http://jewellparkerrhodes.com/children/books/sugar/sugar-education-resources/>

Laurence Yep, *The Dragon's Child: A Story of Angel Island* (2008)

Teacher Resources for *The Dragon's Child*:

<http://files.harpercollins.com/PDF/ReadingGuides/0060276924.pdf>

Shaun Tan, *The Arrival* (2006)

The author's reflections on the book process:

<http://www.shauntan.net/books/the-arrival.html>

## Timeline of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Events & Legislation affecting the Chinese in America

- 1848** Gold discovered in California
- 1842-1852** China defeated by the British in the first Opium War  
Series of floods and crop failures in southern China lead to poverty and threats of famine among peasant farmers
- 1850** California imposes Foreign Miner's Tax – enforced mainly against Chinese
- 1852** 20,000 Chinese enter San Francisco, CA as part of the gold rush
- 1854** *People v. Hall* rules that Chinese cannot give testimony in court against Whites
- 1857** San Francisco, CA opens a school for Chinese children
- 1859** Chinese excluded from San Francisco public schools
- 1862** California imposes a "police tax" of \$2.50 a month on every Chinese  
Coolie Act prohibits American participation in the coolie trade
- 1865** Central Pacific Railroad Co. recruits Chinese for the transcontinental railroad
- 1867** 2,000 Chinese railroad workers strike for a week  
Southern planters in Louisiana and the Deep South recruit Chinese workers from California, China, and Cuba to work on sugar and cotton plantations.
- 1868** U.S. and China sign Burlingame-Seward Treaty recognizing the right of citizens to emigrate
- 1869** Completion of transcontinental railroad
- 1870** Chinese railroad workers in Texas sue company for failing to pay wages  
75 Chinese workers from California hired to work at a North Adams, MA shoe factory to break a strike by White laborers
- 1872** California's Civil Procedure Code drops law barring Chinese court testimony
- 1875** Congress passes the Page Law, barring entry of Chinese, Japanese, and "Mongolian" prostitutes, felons, and contract laborers (coolies)

- 1877** Anti-Chinese violence in Chico, CA
- 1878** *In re Ah Yup* rules that residents of Asian descent are not eligible for naturalization (only Whites and people of African descent)
- 1879** California's second constitution prevents municipalities and corporations from employing Chinese
- 1880** U.S. and China sign treaty giving the U.S. the right to limit but "not absolutely prohibit" Chinese immigration.  
Section 69 of California's Civil Code prohibits issuing of licenses for marriages between whites and "Mongolians, Negroes, mulattoes and persons of mixed blood"
- 1882** Chinese Exclusion Act suspends U.S. immigration of laborers for ten years
- 1885** Chinese American family successfully sues the San Francisco School District for access to public schools, resulting in a segregated Oriental School  
Anti-Chinese riot in Rock Springs, Wyoming where white coal miners attack Chinese workers
- 1886** Residents of Tacoma, Seattle, and many places in the American West forcibly expel the Chinese  
Chinese laundry owners win when *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* rules that a law with unequal impact on different groups is discriminatory
- 1888** Scott Act renders 20,000 Chinese reentry certificates null and void
- 1889** *Chae Chan Ping v. U.S.* upholds constitutionality of Chinese exclusion laws.
- 1892** Geary Law renews exclusion of Chinese laborers for another ten years and requires all Chinese to register.
- 1898** *Wong Kim Ark v. U.S.* rules that Chinese born in the U.S. cannot be stripped of their citizenship
- 1904** Chinese exclusion is extended without a time limit
- 1906** San Francisco fire after an earthquake destroys city birth records, providing an opportunity for Chinese to claim U.S. birth and to allow "paper sons" to enter

## Immigrant Accounts Note-Taking Guide

- What is the immigrant's name and country of origin?
- Describe the immigrant's experience traveling for her/his home to America.
- What challenges did the immigrant encounter?
- Describe the immigrant's work in America.
- Describe the immigrant's family.
- What information was of particular interest to you?
- If you could ask the immigrant two questions, what would they be?

## Credits

**Timeline:** Student Online Resources for *A New History of Asian America* by Shelley Sang-Hee Lee (<http://www.routledge.com/cw/lee-9780415879545/s1/students/>)  
Ancestors in the Americas Asian American History Timeline  
(<http://www.cetel.org/timeline.html>)