



# Ethnic Studies Lesson 5E: Asian American Experience During the Cold War

**TOPIC:**

ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY

**GRADE LEVELS:**

11-12

**TIME:**

1½ HOURS

## California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

**Themes:**

2. History and Movement
3. Systems of Power
4. Social Movements and Equity

**Values and Principles:**

1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
5. Challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, and imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices on multiple levels.
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

## California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

**English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**

Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)

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. (RI.11-12.2)

**Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**

History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)

Analyze the impact of US immigration policies on Asian American communities during the Cold War period, including the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. (11.11)

Examine the shifting demographics of Asian Americans in the United States during the Cold War era and evaluate the factors contributing to these changes. (10.9)

## Lesson Purpose

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Students will research US immigration policy for Asian Americans during the Cold War period. Students will also analyze shifting Asian American demographics, as well as the Asian American response to civil rights issues during this time period.

## Essential Questions

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*How did US immigration policy change for Asian Americans during the Cold War period?*

*How did these changes impact Asian American demographics and the Asian American response to civil rights issues?*

*How has life changed for Asian Americans over the last 150 years?*

## Materials

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[PBS: McCarthyism, Asian Americans](#)

[National Park Service: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study](#)

[Japanese American Citizens League History](#)

[PBS: The Fight for Ethnic Studies | Asian Americans](#)

[Unit 5 KWL Chart](#)

## Vocabulary

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Cold War

McCarthyism

McCarran-Walter Act of 1952  
(also known as the Immigration  
and Nationality Act of 1952)  
Hart-Celler Immigration Act  
of 1965

chain migration

Yellow Peril

model minority

Herrenvolk

Japanese American Citizens League

Asian American Political Alliance

Third World Liberation Front

## Lesson Steps

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### Step 1:

- As a class, ask students what they already know about how Asian Americans were treated during the Cold War. Have students watch [PBS: McCarthyism, Asian Americans](#) (video 7 minutes, 3 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on the reason why Chinese Americans went from allies during World War II to enemies from 1950 to the 1990s. When students have completed the video, have them

share their notes as a class. Remind students that the Cold War was an escalation of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, but any country that was communist was drawn into that conflict.

### *Step 2:*

- Print pages 8 and 9 (pages 229 and 230 in the study) of [National Park Service: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study](#), and make enough copies for pairs to mark on. Break the class into pairs. As the pairs read the study the first time, have them underline the who, what, where, when, and why of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, and the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act in paragraphs 1 and 2. When student pairs read the study the second time, have them circle the unintended consequences of these acts in paragraphs 3 and 4. When the students read the article for the third time, have them star or highlight the main idea of the article in paragraph 1 and the conclusion sentence in paragraph 4.
- When students have completed the reading, have them share their notes with one other pair. When students have completed their sharing, as a class, have students create an event card for the 1952 and 1965 Acts. Place the event cards on the timeline. As a class, discuss the unintended consequences of these acts and share the main idea of turning Asian Americans from the “Yellow Peril” to “Model Minorities.”

### *Step 3:*

- Continue work in pairs. Have student pairs look at [Japanese American Citizens League History](#). Have pairs look at civil rights activism by decade—i.e., have pairs 1 and 2 identify interesting activity from 1929 to 1945, pairs 3 and 4 from 1946 to 1949, pairs 5 and 6 from 1950 to 1959, pairs 7 and 8 from 1960 to 1969, pairs 9 and 10 from 1970 to 1979, pairs 11 and 12 from 1980 to 1989, pairs 13 and 14 from 1990 to 1999, and pairs 15 and 16 from 2000 to the present. Students should note how many activities JACL was involved in and remark on some notable activities.
- When students have completed the reading, as a class, have the pairs share their research.
- As a class, watch [PBS: The Fight for Ethnic Studies | Asian Americans](#) (video 7 minutes, 4 seconds). As students watch, have students take notes to answer the question, “How did changing immigration policies affect the makeup of Asian American citizenry? How did that educated citizenry respond to the growing Asian American civil rights movement?” When students have finished watching the video, as a class, have students share their notes.

### *Step 4:*

- As a class, ask students this lesson’s questions, “How did US immigration policy change for Asian Americans during the Cold War period? How did these changes impact Asian American demographics and the Asian American response to civil rights issues?” Also ask this unit’s question, “How has life changed for Asian Americans over the last 150 years?” Make note of what was learned on this unit’s KWL chart—along with additional questions.

## **Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection**

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As time permits, and for homework, have students read [Think: NBC Opinion, Analysis, Essays: Coronavirus fears show how ‘model minority’ Asian Americans become the ‘yellow peril’](#). As students read, have them take notes to answer the questions, “How do stereotypes limit our views of people? Why are stereotypes so persistent?” Students should write a long paragraph that includes a main idea, claims, evidence, and a conclusion. Students should be careful to accurately cite their sources.

## Additional Readings and Resources

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[National Park Service: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study, 275-276 \(Early Organizations and Campus Activism\)](#)

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 133-179.

**NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES:** America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

**Ethnic Studies 5A: KWL Chart**

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**KNOW**

**WONDER**

**LEARNED**

<p><i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i></p>	<p><i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i></p>	<p><i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i></p>