



Ethnic Studies Lesson 5H: Asian Americans—South Asian and Sikh Americans

TOPIC:

ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

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

Themes:

1. Identity
2. History and Movement

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.

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 unique experiences and contributions of South Asian and Sikh American communities to American society, including challenges they have faced and their impact on cultural diversity. (11.2)

Lesson Purpose

Students will investigate the geography and statistics of South Asian immigration to the US as well as the unique experiences of South Asians and Sikh Americans.

Essential Questions

Where are South Asian Americans from, why did they come to the US, and what are their unique experiences?

How do these experiences challenge Asian American stereotypes?

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

Materials

[University of Washington, America's Great Migrations Project: Mapping Asian American and Pacific Islander Migrations](#)

[Fox 5 News: South Asians in America: Redefining the American Dream](#)

[Sikh Coalition: Sikhs in America](#)

[Unit 5 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

East Indian

Sikh

South Asian

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask students what they know about where South Asia is. As a class, show the [University of Washington, America's Great Migrations Project: Mapping Asian American and Pacific Islander Migrations](#). Mid-page, click on the "Born outside US states by decade" map. Zooming and moving on the map is made possible with the arrow icon. Zoom in on India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Ask students to note the number of Asian Indian foreign-born in the US in the 2017 census and the number of Chinese foreign-born during that time.
- Go through the decades to show students that it wasn't until 1980 that South Asian numbers began to grow in the US. Before leaving the site, show students the tab on "National background by state" and click through the years.
- Break the class into pairs and have students log into the Migrations Project site. Using 3 x 5 cards, have students research the South Asian Americans and write one question for another group to answer. On the back side of the card, students should list three clues (such as what tab to use, what year to look at, what part of the map to start in, etc.,) before listing the answer. Students should cover the hints and answer with a sticky note. When students have completed their quest, they can share their questions with another group and rotate groups until all questions have been answered.

Step 2:

- Ask students what they know about South Asians in America. Do they know of South Asian stereotypes? As a class, ask students to watch [Fox 5 News: South Asians in America: Redefining the American Dream](#) (video 6 minutes, 18 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on what

are surprising aspects of South Asian Americans. How has learning this information challenged stereotypes? When students have finished watching the video, have them share their notes. Help students reflect on the 1965 Immigration Act event card to understand why many South Asian immigrants may have come with higher education expectations.

Step 3:

- Ask students what they know about Sikh Americans from Punjab. Using a group reading strategy such as popcorn or round robin, have students read [Sikh Coalition: Sikhs in America](#). As students read, they should take notes on what makes this group unique from other Asian American stereotypes. When students have finished reading, as a class, have them share their notes.
- Have students watch [NBC News: Do You Know What a Sikh Is?](#) (video 3 minutes, 25 seconds). As students watch, they should take notes on any additional information they learn about what a Sikh American is. How does learning about the Sikh American experience help challenge Asian American stereotypes?

Step 4:

- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "Where are South Asian Americans from, why did they come to the US, and what are their unique experiences? How do these experiences challenge Asian American stereotypes?" 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

As time permits and for homework, have students watch [South Asian American Digital Archive: Kala Bagai](#) (video 4 minutes, 12 seconds). As students watch, students should take notes on how the South Asian experience of entering through Angel Island in California was both different from and the same as those of the Chinese and Japanese immigrants. How does learning the individual story of Kala Bagai help challenge any stereotypes of South Asians or Asian Americans? Students should write a short paragraph and cite their sources carefully.

Additional Readings and Resources

Bernstein, David E. *Classified: The Untold Story of Racial Classification in America*. Bombardier, 2022.

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

Sowell, Thomas. *Migrations and Cultures: A World View*. Basic Books, 1996, chap. 7.

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

KNOW

WONDER

LEARNED

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