

## *Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems*

### Lesson Unit 4

#### GRADES

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8-12

#### OVERVIEW

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Students will learn about the immigrant experience, through the eyes of Chinese immigrants on Angel Island through poetry and images. Students will learn and interpret media images of Chinese in America at the turn of the century. Students will learn about US immigration laws and policies.

#### OBJECTIVES

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- To learn and empathize with Chinese immigrants who were detained at Angel Island from 1910-1940 through reading their poetry and learning their history.
- To write a poem comparing Chinese detainees' experiences with others in history
- To provide an overview of the history of Angel Island.
- To analyze stereotypes and media images on the subject of Chinese immigration.
- To provide an overview of the immigration history as it relates to Angel Island.

#### TIME

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Each lesson ranges from 30 to 90 minutes.

#### MATERIALS

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- Access to <http://www.kqed.org/pacificlink> to stream video *Discovering Angel Island: The Story Behind the Poems*, or a VHS or DVD copy of the Video
- Access to <http://www.kqed.org/pacificlink> to view and stream Poetry of Angel Island
- Multiple copies of Images: "Anti-Chinese Bill," "The First Blow," "Judge Righteous Judgement," "Is it Right for a Chinaman to

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Jeopardize a White Man's Dinner?" "Uncle Sam's Farms in Danger,"  
"The Chinese Question" (attached)

- Access to internet to find a copy of the Chinese Exclusion Act at:  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47>

## LESSON ONE: Poetry

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1. Journal: Why would someone leave his or her country? What would it take for you to leave your country? What problems could you face immigrating to another country?
2. Discuss with students.
3. Website. Show and play poem number 7 in either Mandarin or Cantonese. Have the students read along in English. Have students answer the following questions:
  - a. Analyze each line. Rephrase each line in your own words.
  - b. What is the writer talking about?
  - c. What is the "Weaver Maiden met the Cowherd" mean?
  - d. How does was his journey?
  - e. Who are the "barbarians"?
  - f. What "abuse" do you think he experienced?
  - g. How does he feel about the country he is in?
  - h. What does the writer wish would happen?
  - i. Why would immigrants write on the walls?
4. Discuss with students.
5. Students now write their own poem based on their responses about the experiences of the immigrants. Make a connection between the immigrants' experiences to others in history who have been treated unfairly, oppressed, or who not been treated with cultural sensitivity. Have students brainstorm ideas, peoples, and events in history.

## LESSON TWO: Video Images

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1. Students look at images from the video. Turn off the sound. Students write down what they see for each image. Answer the following questions for each series of images.
  - a. Images of different nationalities of immigrants-7 images. (2:00)  
Who is in the picture? What is the nationality and gender of the people? What are the expressions on their faces? Are they happy? Scared? Why would they feel that way? Pause on the last image of the South and Central Americans. Imagine you are the one of the people standing. What thoughts or concerns would you have at the moment?
  - b. Image of poetry on the wall. (2:25)  
What language is the writing in? Why would the immigrants write on the walls? What would the subjects of their writings be?
  - c. Images of ferry, immigration station, armed guard, room no. 5, former detainee, barbed wire fence. (3:00)  
What do you see? If this were your first look of the United States, what would your feelings and thoughts be? Is this a welcoming place?

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- d. Image of interrogation with immigrant and interrogator. (5:51)  
Who is in the picture? What are the nationalities and genders of the people? Where are they? What are they doing? What are the expressions on their faces? Who is in power and how can you tell? Imagine you are the young man sitting to the left. What thoughts or concerns would you have at the moment?
2. Discuss with students. Make sure to explain the different experiences of immigration between the Chinese and other ethnic groups.
3. Writing options.
  - a. Pretend you are a Chinese immigrant. Write a letter home describing what the experience of immigrating to the US was like.
  - b. Pretend you are an immigrant, not from China. Write a letter home describing what the experience of immigrating to the US was like for the Chinese.
  - c. Pretend you are a reporter from San Francisco. Write a news article describing what the experience was like for immigrants.

## **LESSON THREE: Political Cartoons**

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1. Have several copies of the cartoons available. In pairs, students look at one of the political cartoons. Students answer the following questions for each photo.
  - a. Describe what you see in the cartoon.
  - b. Who is in the picture?
  - c. What is the nationality and gender of the people?
  - d. Where are they?
  - e. What are the expressions on their faces? Are they happy? Scared? Angry? Why would they feel that way?
  - f. What do the captions say? What is being communicated to the reader?
  - g. Who is being made fun of?
  - h. Describe how the images and words are stereotypes of the people or groups they represent.
  - i. Who is in power and how can you tell?
  - j. Imagine you are the one of the people in the cartoon. What thoughts or concerns would you have at the moment?
  - k. Who would you sympathize with most? Why?
  - l. If you could rewrite one of the cartoons, what would you have the people say or do that would present a more balanced point of view? Sketch it out and present to the class.
2. Discuss with students. Have students present their revised cartoons.

## **LESSON FOUR: Immigration**

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1. Go to the website or print the text for students. Go to the U.S. Immigration section under the History menu. Read the history of immigration laws from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Students work in groups of 2 to 4 depending on class size. Assign each group an immigration law and create an 8-1/2" x 11" poster of the law. Have students write down the law, illustrate it, and be prepared to

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explain it the class. There are eight distinct laws or court cases until 1921. Have students present them to the class.

3. As students present their posters, the class takes notes and writes a reflection on these questions: How did US immigration laws change over time? Why were changes made to immigration laws? Who did laws favor or disfavor and why? Are immigration laws fair today? Why or why not? If you could create a new US immigration law, what would it say? Explain your law to your peers.

4. Optional:

Get a copy of the Chinese Exclusion Act for students.

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47>

Answer the following questions.

- a. What was the purpose of the Chinese Exclusion Act? When was it passed?
- b. Why was there such a law against the Chinese?
- c. What threat did they pose? Was this real or imagined?
- d. Why wasn't there such a law applied to other ethnic groups?
- e. Would such a law be passed today? Why or why not?

## REFERENCES

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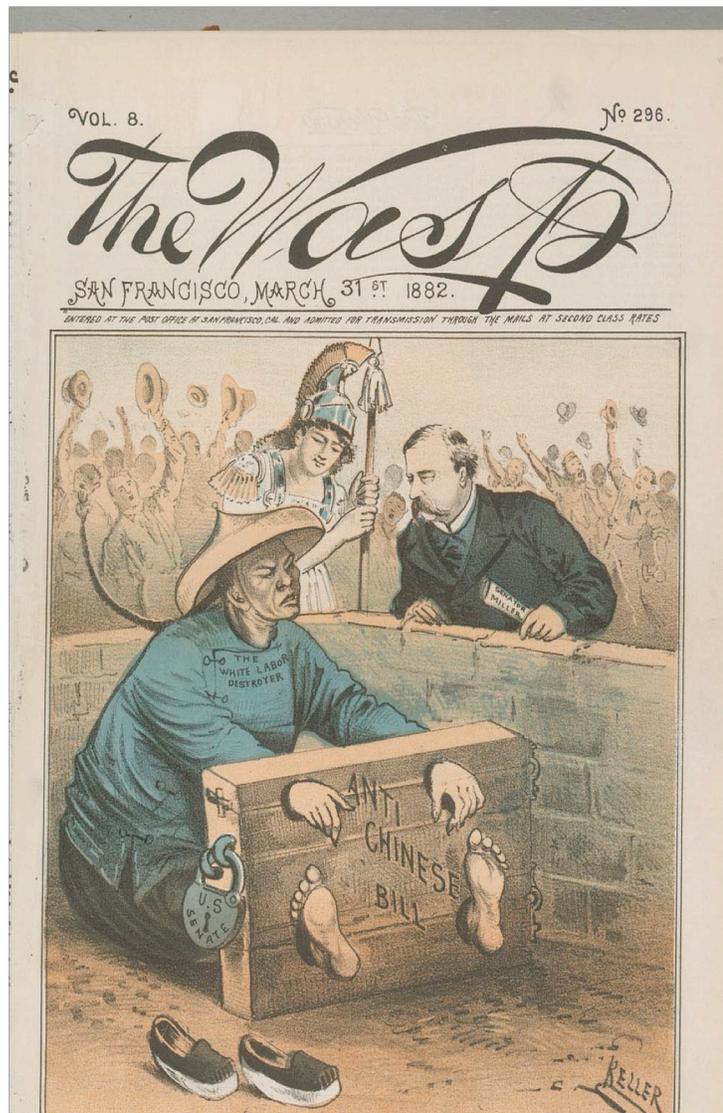
Images from the digitized collections at The Bancroft Library and The Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

*This lesson unit was developed by Lorianna Wong, a high school history teacher at Leadership High School in San Francisco, CA.*

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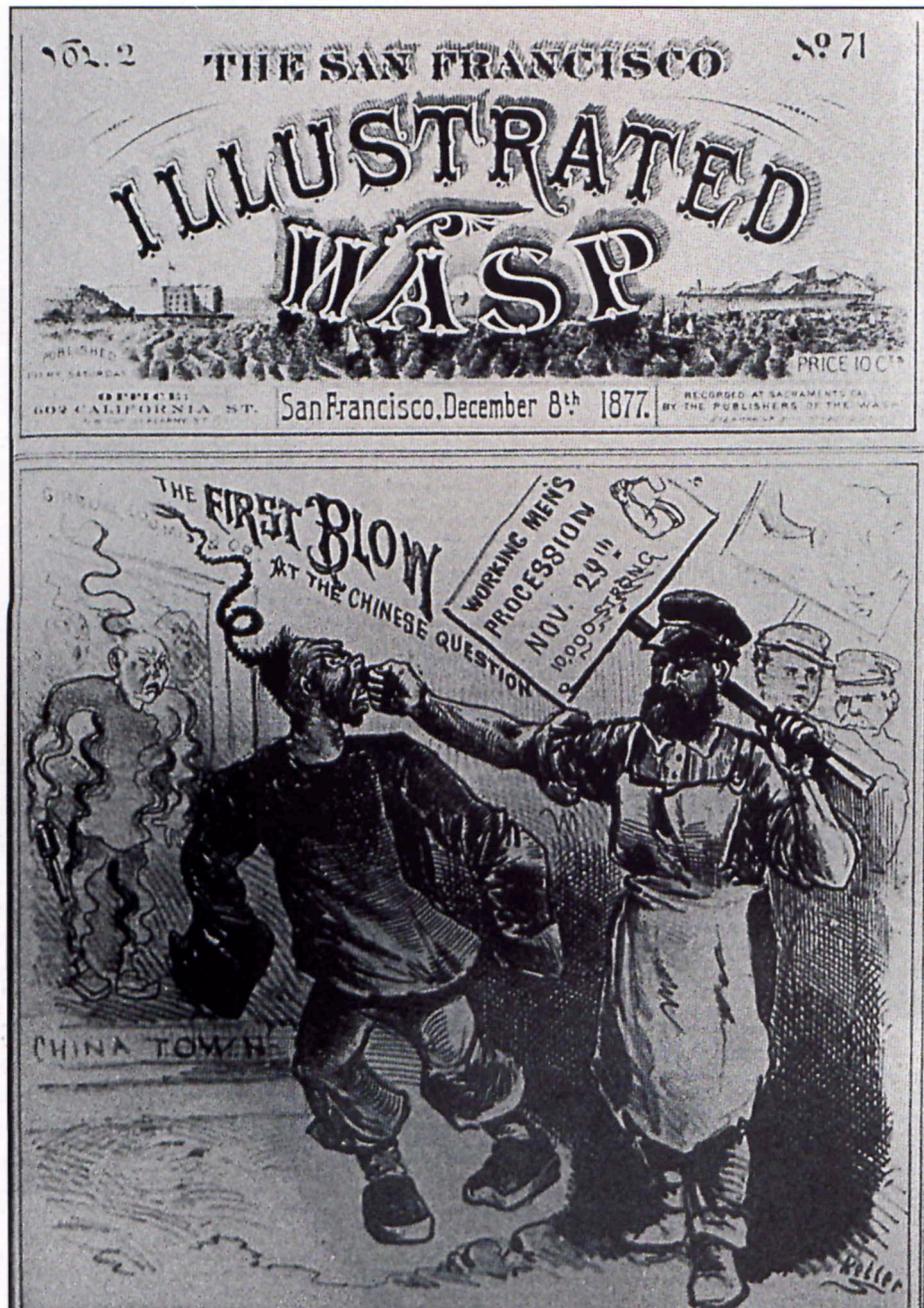
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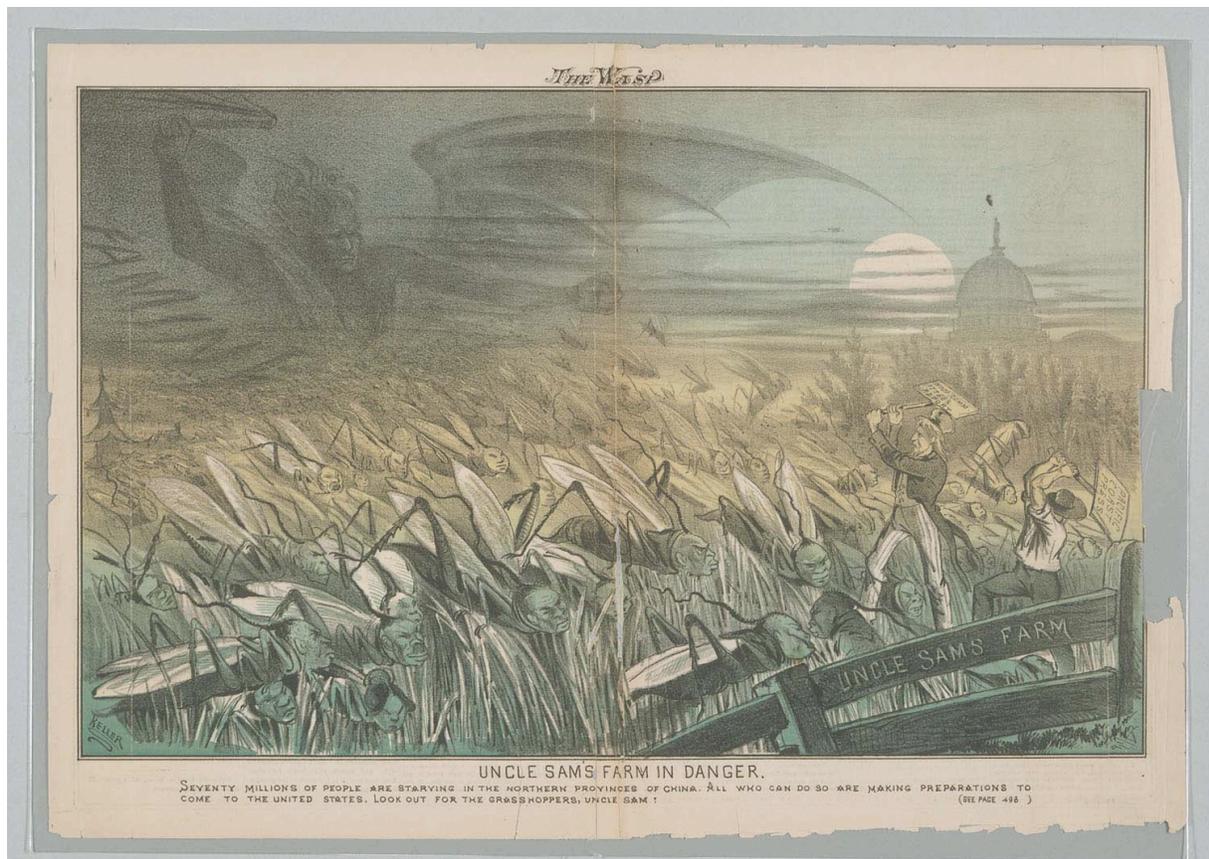
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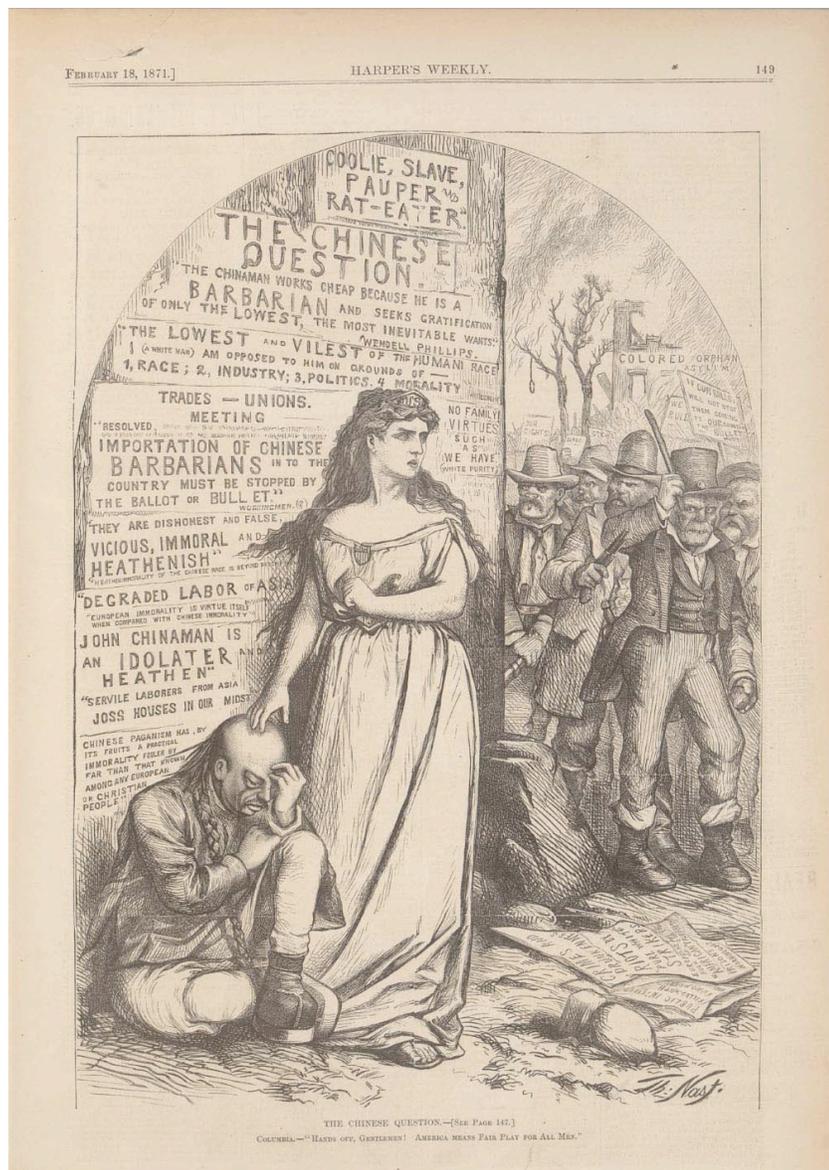
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