

4th Grade

Breaking The Silence: Asian American History in Michigan

How have(do) Asian Americans shaped our state?



DAY PROJECT

Supporting Questions

1. What drew Asian Americans to Michigan?
2. Who are some notable Americans in our state and why?
3. What challenges have/do Asian Americans face in our state?
4. How do we better tell Asian American stories in our state?

Note: This inquiry spans several class periods. However, the inquiry time frame depends on how many featured sources the teacher chooses to use and any adaptations the teacher may make. Teachers are encouraged to modify the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. Teachers are encouraged to model historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading various sources.

4th Grade: Breaking The Silence: Asian American History in Michigan

<h3 style="margin: 0;">Compelling Question</h3> <h4 style="margin: 0;">How have (do) Asian Americans shaped our state?</h4>			
<p>Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards</p> <p>C3 Framework</p> <p>CCSS_ELA</p> <p>Learning for Justice Anti-bias Standards</p>	<p>Michigan K-12 SS Standards</p> <p>4 – H3.0.3 Use case studies or stories to describe the ideas and actions of individuals involved in the Great Lakes region.</p> <p>4 – G4.0.1 Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors (why they left, why they came) that influenced the migration.</p> <p>4 – C2.0.2 Describe how rights guaranteed by the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and Democratic Values are involved in everyday situations.</p> <p>C3 Framework Indicators</p> <p>D2.His.10.3-5. Compare information provided by different historical sources about the past.</p> <p>D2.His.16.3-5. Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7</p> <p>Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.</p> <p>Diversity</p> <p>9. Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.</p>		
<p>Staging the Compelling Question</p>	<p>Lead students in a visual thinking strategy. If time allows, conduct an interactive read-aloud of the book, <i>The Name Jar</i> (Choi, 2001). Have students consider why Unhei, a new immigrant from Korea, wished for an “American” name. Invite students to investigate how to break the silence by exploring the question, <i>How have(do) Asian Americans shaped our state?</i></p>		
<p>Supporting Question 1</p>	<p>Supporting Question 2</p>	<p>Supporting Question 3</p>	<p>Supporting Question 4</p>
<p>What drew Asian Americans to Michigan?</p>	<p>Who are some notable Americans in our state and why?</p>	<p>What challenges have/do Asian Americans face in our state?</p>	<p>How do we better tell Asian American stories in our state?</p>
<p>Formative Performance Task</p>	<p>Formative Performance Task</p>	<p>Formative Performance Task</p>	<p>Formative Performance Task</p>
<p>In small groups, students use Journey Boxes to explore the history of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Indians in Michigan.</p>	<p>Students create a visual representation of Asian American contributions to our state.</p>	<p>Students interact with the experiences of highlighted individuals using an interactive Google Slide presentation.</p>	<p>Students conduct a panel discussion and present the captured stories in an identified public space.</p>
<p>Featured Sources</p>	<p>Featured Sources</p>	<p>Featured Sources</p>	<p>Featured Sources</p>
<p>Source A: Dia’s Story Cloth: The Hmong People’s Journey of Freedom (Cha, 1996)</p> <p>Source B: Journey Boxes Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Indian</p>	<p>Source A: Cora Cooks Pancit (Gilmore & Valiant, 2014)</p> <p>Source B: Asian Americans Active in Michigan</p>	<p>Source A: I am American: The Wong Kim Ark Story (Brockenbrough, 2021)</p> <p>Source B: What challenges have/do Asian Americans face in our state?</p>	<p>Source A: Fred Korematsu Speaks Up (Atkins, 2017)</p> <p>Source B: Law Case Explained</p> <p>Source C: Invited Panelists</p>
<p>Summative Performance Task</p>	<p>ARGUMENT: Construct an argument supported with evidence that addresses the question, How do Asian Americans contribute to our state? (e.g. posters, podcasts, infographic, etc.).</p>		
<p>Taking Informed</p>	<p>Plan and execute a neighborhood march focusing on ending Asian hate crimes. Conduct a school assembly to share investigation findings. Organize an AAPI school or community celebration during May (AAPI Heritage Month). For additional</p>		

Action	ideas see: Mutterties & Swan (2019). Be the change: Guiding students to take informed action Social Education, 83(4), p. 232-237.
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Overview

Inquiry Description

This critical inquiry leads students through an exploration of Asian Americans' experiences in Michigan by investigating the compelling question, How have(do) Asian Americans shaped our state? Elementary students focus on the stories of struggle, strength, and successes of past and present Asian Americans. The supporting questions guide students to investigate what brought Asian Americans to our state, examine Asian American contributions, explore historical acts of resilience, and consider contemporary challenges faced by Asian Americans. In answering the compelling question and taking informed action, students are challenged to make the history and contributions of diverse groups of Asian Americans more visible.

Structure of the Inquiry

Students work through a series of supporting questions, performance tasks, and sources to construct an argument supported by evidence to address the compelling question: Breaking the Silence: How have(do) Asian Americans shaped our state?

Note: *This inquiry spans several class periods. However, the inquiry time frame depends on how many featured sources the teacher chooses to use and any adaptations the teacher may make. Teachers are encouraged to modify the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. Teachers are encouraged to model historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading various sources.*

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, students first participate in a see, think, wonder activity using the image of a group of Chinese students holding name cards. Students then interact in a read-aloud of the book, *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2001). Students consider why Unhei, a new immigrant from Korea, wished for an "American" name. Introduce and place words such as immigrant, Asian American, culture, foreign, and racialization on a Word Wall. Invite students into the investigation "How have/(do) Asian Americans shaped our state?" ***Note:** *It is important that this is not the only book read to students. We do not want students to only be exposed to a single story thinking that all Asians have arrived from a different country and are not Americans. Students also need to know that there are Asian American families that have arrived more than 150 years ago.*

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—What drew Asian Americans to Michigan—invites students to investigate the history of four particular groups in Michigan—Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Indians. To introduce the idea of immigration, students participate in an interactive read-aloud (Source A) of *Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom* (Cha, 1996). The formative tasks (Source B) ask students to work in small groups to explore the particular experiences of how

each of these groups arrive in Michigan using Journey Boxes. Groups share their findings with the class.

Note: When exploring the journey boxes:

- **Chinese Journey Box:** It is important to expose students to the fact that beyond the classical push and pull factors, US and western imperialism in China is the larger structural force that caused the poverty and civil war (push factors). Indeed, many Asians came to the US because the US/West went to Asia.
- **Japanese Journey Box:** It is important to expose students to the important distinction between internment vs. incarceration; evacuation vs. forced removal; Japanese vs. Japanese Americans; and, relocation centers vs. concentration camps (see [Words Matter](#)).
- **Filipino Journey Box:** Teachers are reminded to use these pictures with extreme care and caution, and guidance. Be sure to draw out the photographer's perspective and discuss how dehumanizing these photos are—exoticizing the other.

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question—Who are some notable Americans in our state and why?—introduces students to investigate Asian Americans active in our state. To introduce the idea of culture and being both Asian and American, students participate in an interactive read-aloud (Source B) of *Cora Cooks Pancit* (Gilmore & Valiant, 2014). The formative tasks (Source B) of a choice board invites students to explore a specific person involved in a particular area of Michigan life—politics, business, education, art, medicine, activists, or a person of their choice. Using the graphic organizer, students first record their findings and then create a visual representation—a class mural—of Active Asian Americans in our state.

Supporting Question 3

To answer the third supporting question—*What challenges have/do Asian Americans face in our state?*—students complete the interactive Google Slide presentation as a whole group. They are introduced to the harsh realities Asian Americans face by participating in a read-aloud of **(Source A)** *I am an American: The Wong Kim Ark Story* (Brockenbrough, 2021). Then as a whole group, students interact with each other as prompted in the formative tasks within the **(Source B)** interactive Google slide presentation regarding hate crimes, race-noticing, biases, and discrimination. They hear the stories of Vincent Chin, Lynet Uttal, and Catherine Chungs. They record their understanding of the challenges Asian Americans face and meet in small groups to begin thinking about how the study of the past helps us better understand present-day realities and the role we play in shaping a better future.

Supporting Question 4

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the historical context of different Asian groups coming to Michigan, the contributions they have and do make, and the challenges they face as Asian Americans. The final supporting question—*How do we better tell Asian American stories in our state?*--Students are invited to investigate the power of activism by participating in an interactive read-aloud of selected pages of (Source A) *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* (Atkins, 2017) and the **(Source B)** YouTube video that explains his lawsuit. The formative task involves students inviting (Source

C) 4 to 5 Asian Americans from the local community to come to the classroom to share their experiences of being Asian American in Michigan. Students will capture and share these stories in a public exhibit.

Summative Performance Task

In this task, students answer the compelling question using scaffolded writing prompts. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. Students are encouraged to include the historical context of Asians arriving in MI, ways they have helped shape our state, the challenges they face, and ways we can better tell their stories.

Possible ways for students to take informed action:

- Planning and executing a neighborhood march focusing on ending Asian hate crimes.
- Conducting a school assembly to share the findings of this investigation.
- Organize a school community of community celebration in May—AAPI Heritage Month.

Note: For additional ideas see: Mutterties & Swan (2019). *Be the change: Guiding students to take informed action* [Social Education, 83\(4\), p. 232-237](#).

Children's Literature

[Recommended Asian Children's Literature](#) (created by Dr. Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, University of Colorado Boulder)

Atkins, L., & Yogi, S. (2017). *Fred Korematsu speaks up*. N.p.: Heyday.

Brockenbrough, M., & Lin, G. (2021). *I am an American: The Wong Kim Art story*. Hachette Book Group.

Cha, D. (1996). *Dia's story cloth*. Lee & Low Books Inc.

Choi, Y. (2001). *The name jar*. Dragonfly Books.

Lazo Glimore, D. K. (2009). *Cora Cooks Pancit*. Shen's Books.

Building Teacher Content Knowledge

Lee, E. (2015). *The making of Asian America: A history*. Simon & Schuster Paperback.

Takaki, R. (2012). *A different mirror for young people: A history of multicultural America*. Seven Stories Press.

[Supplementing PBS' Asian Americans](#) (editors Naseem Rodríguez, Goulding, Osborne, Lin, Radhakrishnan, Yeh)

Wilkinson, S., & Jew, V. (Eds.). (2015). *Asian Americans: Voices from the Midwest*. Wayne State University Press.

Yoo, P. (2021). *From a whisper to a rallying cry: The killing of Vincent Chin and the trial that galvanized the Asian American movement*. N.p.: Norton Young Readers.

