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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2006 Volume II: The Supreme Court in American Political History

Chinese Immigration, Exclusion and the Chinese-American Experience

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by Deborah Samuel

Chinese immigration to this nation is a shameful chapter in our history. Chinese men flocked to our western coast in search of gold in the 1840's and in search of work on the railroads later in the century. Many were lured under false pretenses, and streets paved with gold and opportunity were not to be found as expected. Discrimination was awful and intense. The efforts made by the Chinese to protect their rights in our court system set many important precedents for immigration and for civil rights. This curriculum unit tells that story. The teacher can use this unit to expand that knowledge base for themselves as well as their students; to produce an empathy for Asian Americans; to provide background information that will assist students in their understanding of the characters in the novels about the Chinese-American experience; to reduce racial prejudice against Asian Americans as we see that fundamentally, we share similar struggles and goals no matter what our race. It could be used in a history class as well as an English class in preparation for reading literature involving Chinese Americans.

(Developed for English, grades 11-12; recommended for History and English, High School grades)

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