



Examining the Inequitable Treatment of Asians in the US: A Civics Unit for Newcomer ELs

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Introduction

“Our ultimate goal in learning about anything is to try to create and develop a more just society.”- Yuri Kochiyama, Human Rights Activist¹

The above quote summarizes very well my motivation for creating the following unit. In large part, it encapsulates what our learning objectives should be for all instruction that takes place in the current political and social climate. Due to recent events in the United States, the public sphere has been increasingly inundated with the concepts of systemic racism and social injustice. Moreover, many school districts, including my own, are pivoting to an “Equity Creation”² mindset, which includes extensive training for staff on establishing and maintaining equity and equality in the public school system, as well as guidance on having productive conversations about race within the district and greater community.

Calvin R. McCullough Middle School is one of Colonial School District three intermediate schools, serving students in grades 6-12. McCullough,³ in addition to being Colonial’s STEAM magnet school, is also home to a newcomer program for English Language Learners. The Colonial Middle School Newcomer Program (CMSNP) is the only program of its type in the state of Delaware. Students in the Newcomer Program are transported from all three feeder schools in the district based on their language proficiency and parental approval.

Once enrolled, students are immersed in multi-grade level classrooms with other newcomer students where they are provided instruction focused on both language and content acquisition. Students spend half of their core instructional time on math and science, and half on English and social studies with myself. They attend lunch and elective classes with mainstream students.

As an ESL teacher, I am well aware that my students have an uphill battle ahead of them when it comes to acquiring language and literacy skills in English. Although my instruction addresses the academic and linguistic gaps that exist, the reality is that these students also come to me having very little understanding of the majority versus minority dynamics that impact the United States politically, economically, and socially. For this reason, I have chosen to focus my work on the creation of a social studies curriculum unit that allows newcomer English Learners to discuss how minority groups are portrayed in our media and historical texts, with a specific focus on the history and challenges of Asian Americans as a minority group.

Rationale

For many reasons, the social studies classroom has now become the ideal setting for discussions about these topics with the student population. Through the lens of historical thinking and analysis of sources and current events, social studies teachers are being encouraged to include race and equity in the United States as parts of the everyday routine. As mentioned previously, my students have little to no prior knowledge of United States history. Therefore, it is not apparent to them that the “white vs. black/brown” dichotomy is one that is tightly woven into the fabric of the United States. Of course, they begin to make observations that certain stereotypes exist for different groups of people, but they are unaware as to why their American teachers and peers seem so intently focused on the idea of tolerance. To complicate matters, their countries of origin are frequently far more homogenous than those in the US. Most originate from places with an immigrant demographic between 0.2 and 4% of the total population.⁴ This means that, despite having moved to a nation composed of 13.7% non-US born individuals, they have no awareness of the ongoing struggle for equality that has existed here for centuries.

In both daily life and the media, my students are exposed to stereotypes about different groups of people. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has directly led to a rise in anti-Asian and sinophobic media content over the past two years.⁵ Furthermore, hate crimes towards Asians increased by 150% in 2020. For anyone who works in the education field, it is common knowledge that middle schoolers live on apps such as Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, and Tik Tok, etc. Many times this results in a misunderstanding for students as to what is harmless parody and what is racism and/or prejudice. A study by Croucher et al.,⁶ an inquiry group from Massey University’s Department of Communications in New Zealand, concluded that, “...the more a social media user believes their most used daily social media is fair, accurate, presents the facts, and is concerned about the public (social media believe), the more likely that user is to believe Chinese pose a realistic and symbolic threat to America.” Indeed, it is easy to see how an impressionable 13-year-old could mistake posts discussing people eating bats and #Kungflu as being factual.

According to a 2021 podcast on the effects of the pandemic on people of Asian descent,⁷ “People perceived to be ‘Chinese’ or ‘Asian’ have been associated with the coronavirus and consequently are suffering from discrimination, unfair treatment, and racism; including, in some cases, physical attacks”. This has been a catalyst for widespread misinformation, generalization, and even hysteria in my classroom regarding “Chinese food”, culture, behaviors, and beliefs. For this reason, it seemed necessary to create a unit that will focus on the history of Asian-Americans as a minority group in the United States.

Politically, it has been common since the passage of the Civil Rights Act for candidates to utilize a minority group in order to create coalitions that will allow them to secure votes. Nixon’s “Southern Strategy”⁸ encoded his speeches with language that capitalized on the economic insecurities of white voters, labeling blacks as a threat to their prosperity. The GOP has continued to utilize this method since, expanding their rhetoric to include many other immigrant populations. During his campaign for the 2016 election, Trump alluded to the “threat” posed by east and southeast Asian immigrants, saying, “Our jobs are being stolen...like candy from a baby”.⁹ Although the prejudice here is not overt, the implication to his audience is that Asians should be regarded as a danger to hard-working Americans like themselves.

Created for use in my social studies classroom, the unit will also include a short lesson on the concept of bias and the ways in which bias can impact how we view and treat those unlike ourselves in a society. This starting

point is rooted in sociological theory, and intended to become a frame of reference later in the unit when we begin to discuss how racial bias factors into policy creation that subsequently disadvantages minority groups.

In a study that utilized this assessment, Raj Ghoshal et al., professors of sociology at Goucher College,¹⁰ found that, “those taught about unconscious prejudice as an intellectual abstraction may regard it as other peoples’ problem or as a figment of sociologists’ imaginations”. In short, students need to understand how their own bias, although it may be unconscious, affect how they categorize information. While students may not initially see the connection between unconscious bias and minority rights, this activity provides an opportunity to discuss which adjectives they collocate with which groups and why.

Content Objectives

My proposed curriculum unit will focus on the inequitable treatment of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans throughout US history to address the requirements of Civics Anchor Standard Two: *Students will understand the principles and ideals underlying the American political system [Politics]*. Furthermore, this is concurrent with the grades 6-8 Civics standard a: *Students will understand that the concept of majority rule does not mean that the rights of minorities may be disregarded and will examine and apply the protections accorded those minorities in the American political system.*¹¹

More concisely, further description will be provided in this thematic unit on how to address the topics of (1) the definition of majority and minority rule, (2) The development minority rights in American democracy, (3) The history of Asian Americans and Asian immigrants as a minority group, (4) Legislation and policies that have impacted the rights of Asian Americans throughout history , (5) Contributions by Asian Americans to US society, (6) COVID-19 as a catalyst for reemergence of anti-Asian discrimination, and (7) Vilification of certain races and ethnicities as a strategy for building political coalitions.

Part I: Bias and Minority Groups

The first part of this unit will begin with a general overview of how racism and prejudice impact our rationale and decision-making skills. Replicating a method used by sociologists, students will take a version of Harvard’s Implicit Association Test¹² adapted for their language level. The test presents two groups, i.e., “male” and “female”, and asks participants to place different words with the group they feel most strongly associated with that word. For example, “kitchen”, “bold”, “experienced”, “organized”, etc. We will then discuss the results as a class and consider whether responses that indicated unconscious bias were surprising, especially to those who understood bias to mean only overt racism or prejudice as is often depicted in movies, on TV, and social media.

Having established some understanding of unconscious bias, the unit will shift to a brief set of case studies of how these concepts have impacted various minority groups throughout history, including the Latin American, Native American, and African American demographics. These case studies will be taken from a webpage created by Brigham Young University’s School of Education.¹³ The site includes some introductory information on the experiences, culture, and history of the aforementioned demographics. Time will be spent examining the characteristics of a minority group in the United States vs those of the majority, as well as the importance of minority rights in maintaining a truly representative democracy.

Students will then break into small groups. Each group will select a minority and create a Google Slide¹⁴ detailing the challenges they have faced throughout American history, a short explanation of laws or policies that affected them, as well as an image that they feel best depicts the struggles of this demographic. Student groups will then demonstrate what they have learned by presenting their slide to the class.

Part II: Asian Americans as a Minority

At this point in the unit, students will be introduced to vocabulary that will reappear throughout the unit. Vocabulary words will include *minority*, *majority*, *majority rule*, *ethnicity*, *race*, *policy*, *coalition* and *bias*. It is important for newcomer English learners that vocabulary instruction be very intentional. An article published in the literary journal *The Reading Teacher*,¹⁵ recommend based on research conducted by the authors that, “instruction designed for ELs provide explicit instruction on these words that involves child-friendly definitions, examples of use, and attention to multiple meanings. “For this reason, students will begin this unit in much the same way that they begin almost all units in my classroom: by creating a new section of their vocabulary notebook for the words and definitions they will encounter in coming lessons. This is the first step in a multi-faceted approach to vocabulary instruction that will be further explained in the section below on teaching strategies.

Armed with a solid first exposure to the relevant context and vocabulary, students will segue into a more concentrated study of Asian Americans as minorities. Beginning with a discussion of the current COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on the perception, and ultimately racist experiences of, Asians in the United States today, students will engage in a “gallery walk” of recent headlines and quotes from various sources related to China’s role in the COVID pandemic. Sources in the gallery walk will include the “China virus” conspiracy theory, coverage of attacks on Asian Americans and the impact of COVID on Chinese-owned businesses. They will identify and discuss similarities that they see in how Asians are being characterized as a minority group by creating a word splash of adjectives (drawing on inspiration from the IAT detailed above) that represent the public perception of Asians as a result of COVID.

To provide a more humanistic perspective for students, they will attend a presentation given by the Asian and Pacific Islander Student Association (APSA)¹⁶ at the University of Delaware. Members of APSA will detail their own life experiences as part of this minority group, with a specific focus on the ways in which COVID-19 has influenced more evident bias, both conscious and unconscious, in their everyday lives.

Part III: Asian American Rights Over Time

Following this section, the students will delve further into the inequity and inequality faced by Asian Americans not only today, but throughout US history. Utilizing curriculum materials comprised of primary and secondary sources representing Asian American groups throughout differing time periods, the third part of the unit will cover three major examples of laws and policy that have impacted Asian Americans. In connection with the learning objectives of our current civics unit, students will analyze how the marginalization of Asian Americans was an intentional and systematic example of inequality over time.

The first significant historical event students will learn about is the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).¹⁷ A brief video entitled *The Chinese American Railroad Workers*¹⁸ will summarize one of the earliest waves of Asian immigration to the United States spurred by the building of the transcontinental railroad between 1863-1869. Although it was clear that the infrastructure of the country was benefiting from the increased numbers of arrivals from China, this was in fact a catalyst for the politicization of Asians as a minority group. As Chinese

immigrants began to settle on the west coast of the US over the coming decades, an anti-Sino sentiment also began to develop. To better illustrate these events, students will read the book *Coolies*¹⁹ by Yin. *Coolies* depicts the story of Shek and his younger brother Wong, who make the journey from their homeland in China to become railroad workers.

This text will allow students to more clearly comprehend the discrimination, low wages, and poor working conditions faced by Asian Americans during this time. This will springboard into a discussion of how bias led white Americans to form a coalition against Asian American workers. the Workingmen’s Party began to assert that Asians were stealing American jobs and causing wages to plummet, with party leader Denis Kearney even going as far as to end all of his speech with the phrase, “And whatever happens, the Chinese must go.”²⁰ Similar anti-Asian sentiments among working class political constituencies eventually lead to President Chester A. Arthur signing the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned Chinese and other nationalities of Asian laborers from entering the US for the next sixty years. Students will explore this concept further by completing a Venn diagram representing the treatment of Chinese American immigrants with the treatment of immigrants today, drawing on their own background knowledge for the latter part. Students will then compare Venn diagrams with a partner and discuss any commonalities they find.

The second event students will consider is the internment of Japanese American during World War II. My students, like many others, complete a unit in ELA each fall on the novel *Number the Stars*²¹ by Lois Lowry, which takes place during the Holocaust. Keeping in mind that they frequently lack any background in US or European history, this novel study is the only extent to which they have had exposure to the events of World War II, or to the concept of the demonization of a racial or ethnic group by a government. The topic of Japanese-American internment will be entirely new to them. Studying the event will provide students with a contextualized example of a coalition identifying a minority group as being at fault for or a danger to their well-being, and then systematically placing them in concentration camps. Before any direct instruction on this event is provided, students will view a slideshow of pictures taken by famed Great Depression photographer Dorothea Lange.²² The photos depict various scenes in the Western US during the period of Japanese internment. After viewing the slideshow and reading any included captions, students will complete and “I Notice, I Wonder” worksheet which records their impressions of what is happening in the photos and discuss their observations as a class.

The discussion will then pivot to the graphic novel *They Called Us Enemy*²³ by George Takei of *Star Wars* fame. This short but impactful text recounts Takei’s personal experiences as a young child being taken to the “relocation” center following President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s authorization of Executive Order 9066,²⁴ which initiated the arrest and imprisonment of Japanese Americans, regardless of birth country. After reading Takei’s account, students will discuss why an anti-Japanese coalition was formed during World War II and how it affected Asian minorities.

Part IV: Minority Rights for Asian Americans

The students will also study instances in which Japanese Americans advocated for their own rights during and after the war. Two case studies will be presented as an example, beginning with *Korematsu v. US (1944)*.²⁵ This case exposes not only the discrimination of Executive Order 9066, but also the majority rule’s complicit role in withholding their rights. In 1942, a young man named Fred Korematsu attempted to disguise himself so as to avoid deportation to a relocation camp. When he was finally arrested, he embarked on a trial represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, claiming that his detention was a discriminatory

infringement of his rights as an American citizen. In December 1944, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that Korematsu had violated federal law by evading his deportation and that it was a matter of “military necessity”.

The unit’s second case study will be the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.²⁶ The passage of this bill was a direct result of efforts by the Japanese American Citizens League to obtain reparations for survivors of Japanese internment camps. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, many younger members of the community began to question the injustice that many of their parents had simply accepted after the end of the war. Specifically, Senator Daniel Inouye and Congressmen Robert Matsui campaigned for former prisoners to be compensated for the emotional and physical distress caused by their confinement. Following testimony from survivors detailing the violation of their rights, the bill was passed. This elicited not only monetary reparations but also the first formal apology issued by the federal government acknowledging their error.

The unit will culminate in a final project where students create a Instagram “post” (actually a poster) under the hashtag “stopasianhate”,²⁷ composed of a timeline that includes the various laws and policies that have impacted Asian Americans throughout US history and analyze whether the changes in these policies enable Asian Americans to enjoy equal rights and representation as a minority group in today’s society. Their post presentation will include at least 2 pieces of evidence either supporting the claim that Asian Americans either have equal representation and rights in the present time, or that they do not. The purpose of this as a closing activity is for students to demonstrate that they understand what minority rights are as well as the strategies that majority coalitions use to gain stronger political support by mischaracterizing a minority group. Simultaneously, the use of the #stopasianhate allows students to reflect on the connection between bias and the content that they consume on social media applications.

As an optional extension activity for the unit, students can choose an Asian American individual from a set of options provided by the teacher. Students will use provided resources to research that individual and their accomplishments/contributions to the United States. Students can also describe any challenges that their chosen subject experiences as an Asian American prior to their achievement. They can then make a Google Slides or Padlet presentation to share with the class as a way of celebrating Asian American heritage or observe Asian American Pacific Islander month in May.²⁸

Teaching Strategies

Along with my considerations regarding the theory of language acquisition and textual content, I knew I wanted to create something that utilized the basic methodologies of teaching ESL. While many programs rely heavily on the use of translation and computers to convey meaning of grade-level texts to students, I see them as a tool which can often become a crutch if overused. If students never learn to negotiate meaning in the second language, they will have a difficult time increasing proficiency. Thus, all of the strategies listed below are designed to allow access to content presented in English, with some L1 support where appropriate.

Visual Supports

The literature incorporated in the unit will appear in English and include a strategy vital to any teacher of English Language Learners: visual support. While the picture books, by Common Core Standards, are not

considered middle school level texts, the students will have the opportunity for exposure in this unit in the form of the unabridged version of the Chinese Exclusion Act as well as other primary source texts. However, the so dubbed father of language acquisition, Stephen Krashen²⁹ states that students require comprehensible input in order to increase their language proficiency. This means that information presented in a lesson needs to be *i + 1*, or just slightly above their ability to comprehend at their present proficiency level. Thus, the text will ultimately be accessible through the use of accompanying visual aids, video clips, audio, etc. The images will be hand-selected by the teacher using Google to support student comprehension of the main ideas of the text at various points.

Chunking

Given the length and rigor of some of the primary source texts in this unit, they will be presented in manageable chunks rather than as a whole. Separating reading materials into smaller sections is a proven method to increasing comprehension, especially for students who are still mastering fluency or lack the vocabulary necessary for comprehension.³⁰ In some cases, the texts will be limited to certain excerpts which have been selected to focus on key vocabulary words and main ideas which will help students to more easily access the learning objectives. In addition to presenting students with chunked text, they will also utilize pre-reading strategies of identifying and defining unfamiliar words, using graphic organizers, and creating pictures to demonstrate comprehension.

Reading Apprenticeship

The Reading Apprenticeship program is an instructional method created by non-profit organization WestEd³¹ that supports the socio-emotional and cognitive needs of students as a means of helping the students to build background and use prior knowledge in order to engage with and think critically about texts across content areas. Reading Apprenticeship is comprised of several different instructional routines which allow students to interact with text using metacognitive skills.

One of the routines that will be applied throughout this curriculum unit is “Talking to the Text”. “Talking to the Text” is a version of annotation in which students first notice and record their own “inner conversation” as annotations in the margins while reading the text for the first time. Then, the students share their metacognitive process by discussing their annotations in groups. Finally, the class discusses their annotations as a whole group while the teacher acts as a resource rather than the center of instruction. Using the “Talking to the Text” routine is a way of simultaneously activating English Learner Students’ higher order thinking skills while also involving use of their language skills to comprehend the text.

Lingt

Hockly & Dudeney³² propose three questions to evaluate whether the use of technology is effective for vocabulary instruction with English Language Learners: “Are we increasing their motivation and engagement?”, “Are we allowing them to practise and produce language in useful ways in class?” and lastly, “Are we giving them the opportunity to take their language learning out of the classroom and have extra exposure to English?” My content will meet all three of these criteria by providing students with a way to interact meaningfully with language in a way that closely mirrors the ways in which they use it in real life through the use of Lingt.³³ Lingt is a speaking practice platform that allows students to make short recordings of themselves speaking, which are then posted to a forum within the application that only the students and myself can access. This tool is perfect for English Language Learners because it has a very simple and user-

friendly interface for recording, and includes a feature that allows the teacher to post specific prompts, images, or videos for the students to respond to. Completed responses are privatized. This lowers the affective filter by keeping students' expressions to short bursts, as well as removing the anxiety of asking students to present their ideas in the traditional whole group presentation.

Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a pedagogical methodology developed by Asher.³⁴ This strategy teaches new vocabulary by requiring students to respond physically with gestures, props, etc. to input that they hear in the second language. Asher purports that students are more likely to process and internalize language when they involve a simultaneous response from the central nervous system. Total Physical Response can be as simple as one gesture to indicate the meaning of a verb, or a whole series of commands students must follow to pantomime the actions of characters in a text.

Authentic Listening

The development of strong listening comprehension skills is crucial to the success of ELs in classes with native English-speaking teachers. As students spend nearly double the amount of time listening as they do speaking and three times as much time as they do reading or writing, their ability to understand a non-sympathetic native speaker of English determines their academic success almost as much as their level of literacy.³⁵ Self-paced listening to authentic source materials is an ideal means of strengthening listening skills. Authentic materials are those featuring native or native-like speakers of the target language created for real-world purposes. For example, a podcast, a YouTube video, an interview on a talk show, etc. By exposing students to authentic listening tasks with the proper scaffolding, we can slowly improve their understanding. In this unit, several authentic materials including a PBS documentary will be utilized.

A wonderful tool to use for this purpose is a program called Edpuzzle,³⁶ which allows teachers to assign listening content that includes questions and notes inserted at various points to support comprehension. Teachers can upload a YouTube video, screencast of their own creation, or copy of an assignment made by another teacher on the site. From there the video can be cropped to include only relevant parts, as well as modified to include closed captioning, multiple choice or open-ended questions of the teacher's design, or inserted notes to clarify content. Videos that include questions can be automatically or self-graded to measure student comprehension. Students can also rewatch (but not skip) sections of the assigned video to review before answering a question.

Gallery Walk

One of the simplest strategies utilized in this unit is called a gallery walk.³⁷ Bowman refers to this strategy as, "One of the most versatile learner-centered activities" The students simply circulate through some type of content provided by the teacher, which could be anything from writing, to pictures, to the work of other students. After they have the input, students can interact with it in a variety of ways, for example, completing a graphic organizer (as they will do in my unit), having a class or partner discussion, or adding something to the content of their own creation. Gallery walks encourage students to think critically about the topics being presented to them. They also give English Learners the opportunity to process input receptively before having to respond to it, as they might in other types of strategies such as a Socratic seminar. In addition, a gallery walk can be used to introduce new topics as well as review what has been previously learned.

Classroom Activities

Since the main goal of my classroom is to facilitate the acquisition of language through a communicative approach, students will spend a minimal amount of time as “receptacle” of information and instead use language to examine concepts in a meaningful way and engage their critical thinking skills to process ideas being presented in the second language (L2). In some cases, differentiated versions of materials will be provided to ensure language does not hinder comprehension of the content. Scaffolded materials may or may not include simplified English versions of worksheets or versions including first language support. The activities will incorporate all four domains of language (reading, writing, listening, and speaking)³⁸ to ensure that students develop all aspects of their language proficiency throughout the unit.

Information Gap³⁹

Following their lessons on four of the most important events in Asian American history students will be asked to identify these significant events and match them with a brief summary. In this activity, students will receive a graphic organizer packet with boxes for each of the four studied events (Chinese Exclusion Act, Internment during WWII, and the Civil Liberties Act of 1988) Each student’s packet will have a different one of the boxes completed for them, detailing one of the covered events and/or a summary. Students will be given time to read their completed organizer and to ask the teacher any questions about it. Then, students will move about the room and find a student who has a different completed box from them. They will first make note of that student’s name on the corresponding page of their packet, to ensure they do not speak with the same person twice. Next, they will explain the information on the completed space of their organizer to the other student, allowing time for the student to copy the notes onto their own blank. Once they have done so, they will have an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions before moving on to find a different student with a different completed space that they lack. They will repeat this process until their entire organizer is completed and they have reinforced the new concepts by explaining and discussing them multiple times with other students.

IAT

Since this unit begins with an introduction to the concept of unconscious bias, the first conducted activity will be an adapted version of the Implicit Association Test created by the teacher developed by Harvard sociologists. The test will provide a tactile chance for students to evaluate their own biases by making connections between categories of people and their perceived attributes. After the students completed their test, the teacher will lead a discussion in which students analyze their answers for trends in how they responded and ask for student opinions on how and why they made certain associations. This will solidify the concept of bias as being a part of every person’s perspective on the world, as well as a driving force behind how people categorize input.

Minority Group Google Slide

To provide students with background knowledge on minority and majority groups in the United States, students will work in groups and use a website provided by the teacher to summarize the experiences of a minority group. Each group will be assigned a minority (i.e., African Americans, Native Americans, Latino, etc.) to read about and create a Google Slide addressing some key information about that group and their involvement in US history. They will identify examples of events that demonstrate how this group was/is disenfranchised, describe laws/policies that impacted them, and select an image that represents them in their

struggle to obtain equal rights from the American government.

Vocabulary Journal

Following the need for explicit vocabulary instruction of ELs as detailed above, students will keep a vocabulary journal for the terms in this unit. Although old-fashioned compared to today's more "flashy" methods of teaching vocabulary, I have personally found directly teaching the meaning of each word to be very effective in ensuring student retention in my practice; The vocabulary journal serves as an anchor for students to reference as they continue to work with the chosen words in different contexts throughout the unit. Research shows that students need at least 17 different exposures to a new word in order to retain it;⁴⁰ by having a vocabulary journal at their disposal at all times, students can regulate their own interactions with the terms. With newcomer and beginner level EL students, it can also be helpful to offer translations of the vocabulary in the first languages of the students using a reputable online dictionary.⁴¹ This encourages metalinguistic connections. In addition, each word and definition is accompanied by an image to aid in comprehension.

Word Splash

In the first part of the unit, students will explore how Asian Americans are portrayed in our society via various types of media. Students will be presented with primary sources focused on Asian American discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. As students generate a list of words they think accurately represent the treatment of Asian Americans as a minority group, the teacher will keep a running list and assemble the terms into a "word splash". A word splash⁴² is a visual representation of words connected by a central idea that are arranged into a single image. The benefit of this activity is that students can more easily determine the main idea of a conversation or discussion topic. The word splash can remain displayed in the classroom throughout the unit to remind students of the enduring understandings of the unit. See below for resources to create a word splash.

Immigrants Then vs Now Venn Diagram

At the close of the unit's second part, students will reflect on the treatment of Asians as a minority group in the past versus today. Having studied the history of Asian workers in the 19th century as well as the Chinese Exclusion Act, students will work in partners to identify the similarities and differences between the perception and rights of Asians at that point in history versus most recently. The purpose of this activity is to help students ascertain how although the infringement of rights may be less overt in 2021, Asians are still subject to very similar types of prejudice as they were in 1880. Illustrating this point using a graphic organizer⁴³ creates a solid foundation for students to examine how democracy has both negatively and positively impact their rights as a minority group in the next part of the unit.

I Notice, I Wonder

As the third part of the unit continues, students will move on to studying Japanese internment during World War II. Although students will likely have no background on Japanese internment, they will have had exposure to study of a similar event, the Holocaust. For this reason, students will be introduced to the internment through the lens of what they already know about government-sponsored incarceration. As an opening activity, students will view a slideshow of photographs by Great Depression photographer Dorothea Lange of various scenes from the period of internment. They will view the pictures *before* being given any information about the historical event we are studying. As they do so, they will complete notes for each picture on an "I

Notice, I Wonder”⁴⁴ graphic organizer. This worksheet requires students to record their individual observations, as well as any questions they have. The exercise enables students to think critically about the input and utilize inductive reasoning skills, versus traditional deductive instruction. Students will then discuss their responses as a class before the teacher moves into a more direct lesson about Japanese internment.

Book Studies

The two texts utilized in this unit are *Coolies* by Yin and *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei. Both books center on key events in Asian American history, the building of the transcontinental railroad and the internment of Japanese Americans during the second world war, respectively. Both books are below grade level for my grades 6-8 students, however, due to their limited language proficiency, they are much more accessible for entering and beginning level EL students. Additionally, the subject matter that they address remains developmentally appropriate for middle school students. The teacher will read each text aloud to students as a class, as well as ask students to reread certain excerpts in groups in order to emphasize specific areas of the text that correlate to unit objectives.

#StopAsianhate Post

The culminating project of this unit will be a “social media post” (actually a poster). Students will select the social media platform of their choice (i.e., Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and create a poster mimicking the format of that platform. Their “post” must meet the criteria of including a timeline outlining significant events in Asian American history, in conjunction with policies and laws that have impacted the rights of Asian Americans as minorities. The “post” should juxtapose these facts with how Asians have been characterized in the wake of the global pandemic in order to encourage its audience to form a coalition against anti-Asian sentiments.

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Appendix on Implementing District Standards

In order to ensure that the learning outcomes were appropriate for each grade represented in the class, I have selected standards from the state of Delaware middle school History grade band including:

This curriculum unit is written to focus on Delaware grades 6-8 Civics standard a: *Students will understand that the concept of majority rule does not mean that the rights of minorities may be disregarded and will examine and apply the protections accorded those minorities in the American political system.* The standard is intended to ensure students understand how the relationships between different coalitions impact the rights of minority groups, as well as how the structure of American democracy includes safeguards to attempt to offer equitable involvement in our government to all constituencies. The unit will address this standard through the focused study of Asian Americans as a minority group and the events that have impacted them throughout US history.

The unit is designed to go beyond simple memorizing the definitions of terms like “majority rule”, “coalition” and “minority rights”. Rather than an overview of each minority group and their experiences in the political system, students will delve further into the history of a minority group that is not always a visible topic within our education system. Having invested themselves more strongly in the narrative of Asian Americans, students will explore the standard’s subject matter of Asian Americans within the American political system and how preservation of their rights in the shadow of majority rule has manifested itself over the course of the country’s history.

Overarching Understandings and Questions of the Unit

The unit will be divided into four general sections focusing on the following **Essential Questions**: (1) What is a majority group? A minority group? (2) Why are certain groups demonized throughout US history? (3) Why are minority rights an essential part of a representative democracy? (4) Who are Asian Americans? How are

their experiences similar to other minority groups in the US? (5) Which legislation/policies have negatively impacted Asians as a minority group throughout US history? Which have positively impacted them? (6) How has the perception of Asian Americans changed over time? (6) How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected Asian Americans? (7) What can individual citizens do to reduce inequity for Asian Americans?

The **Enduring Understandings** for this unit are based off the standards described above; The objectives following this unit are that students will understand that *the position of a majority group within a society allows them to have power, resources, and opportunities over other group*. They will recognize that *minority groups are any group that is not part of the majority*. They will know that *democracy as a form of government encourages all groups to participate in the government*. They will be aware that *in the US, minority groups, for example, Asian Americans, have not always enjoyed equal rights*. They will be able to summarize how *minority rights for groups such as Asian Americans have developed over a long period in US history*. They will be able to explain how *Asian American rights have been impacted by a series of events, policies, and laws throughout the course of US history*.

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