



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2026 Volume III: Asian American History and the Making of the U.S. Immigration System

Voices of Arrival: Asian American Immigrant Stories in California

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Introduction & Rationale:

I teach at Independence High School, a comprehensive suburban high school, in East Side San Jose, serving approximately 2,200 students. Of the student population, 21% are classified as English Language Learners (ELL). According to the Enrollment by Ethnicity from the California Department of Education, it shows the following breakdown: Asian 32.9%, Filipino 14.9%, Hispanic or Latino 43.5%, Pacific Islander 1.1%, African American 2.0%, White 2.6%, and Two or More Races 2.8%.^[1] Also, it is a Title 1 school, meaning it is a public school that receives supplemental federal funding based on a high number of low-income families in the attendance area.^[2]

Specifically, I am part of the English Language Development (ELD) Department, which is separate from the English Department. ELD adheres to the California English Language Development Standards, also referred to as the ELD Standards Framework. Although ELD at Independence High School is one of the largest programs in the district, the number of sections fluctuates each year depending on the actual enrollment. The high cost of living in California, unemployment, and the current political climate adversely impact the student enrollment numbers.

The ELD students come from a variety of places in the Americas and Asia (i.e., Argentina, China, Colombia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Vietnam). The program serves students who have resided in the country for less than three years. Many students I work with at the lower ELD levels enroll well into the school year. In some cases, students are admitted during the last month of school. Depending on their situation, students and their siblings could arrive here by themselves, with one parent, both parents, and/or stay with relatives and extended family. Not only are they new English students, but also in their families, they often take on adult responsibilities to support the household, such as working odd jobs, picking up siblings from school, cooking meals, and doing household chores. They carry the burden of family responsibilities on top of their personal commitment to education.

Looking past the language barriers and other obstacles they may face, the ELD students are typical teenagers. They are passionate about their sports (especially soccer); they love their music and fashion (trendy T-shirts or sports jerseys, baggy jeans, jewelry, and name-brand sneakers); they immerse themselves in social media as it is part of their identity, and it helps them to connect with family and friends all over the world. These

teens also find profound comfort or relief when speaking their home language- they can communicate in the way they see fit with no restrictions. Most importantly, the ELD students are courageous in taking academic risks in the classroom by showing up to English class and participating to the best of their abilities. They understand that San Jose, California is now their home (temporarily or long term), and mastering English is a necessary part of their quality of life and survival here.

Depending on their past experiences and exposures to the language, some students come to class with the English basics. The first thing I usually notice is that listening skills can be an initial strength. Students will nod their heads if they understand the information presented, or they will complete the task at hand, showing comprehension. In terms of speaking, they can also easily acquire some of the current English slang (whether appropriate for the classroom or not) from encounters with English speakers around the school site. Since reading and writing pose more challenges, I want to create many of these skill-based opportunities where students can connect these new learnings to their home language and culture, making the new information relatable.

My students are considered the 1.5- generation, a term referring to individuals who were born in one country and then immigrate to another country during childhood or adolescence. They are a transitional “in-between” group, caught culturally and linguistically between the first-generation immigrants, their parents who arrived as adults, and the second-generation immigrants, their siblings born in this new country. This label comes with a unique set of challenges as they navigate their new environment.[3]

My curriculum unit, “Voice of Arrival- Asian American Immigrant Stories in California”, is built around preparing my ELD immigrant students to share an aspect of their arrival story through writing poetry in English and the fluidity of speaking the target language. As immigrants, my students and their families are impacted by the climate around the current immigration system. They could have a multitude of experiences— positive or negative— and the classroom will be a safe space for them to share whatever the experience might be, using their newly acquired English talents. Whether presenting their story or listening to peers from different cultural backgrounds, all student experiences will be acknowledged and validated, cultivating a sense of belonging in the classroom.

Content Objectives:

In this curriculum, “Voice of Arrival: Asian American Stories in California”, ELD students will learn about California’s Asian American immigration history. They will analyze key policies and landmark cases shaping today’s immigration system. To build foundational knowledge, students will compare and contrast critical events of Asian Exclusion (1875-1943) with the present day. Students will also examine the experiences of different Asian ethnic groups and the legacies of exclusion. In parallel, students will discover that community groups came together to advocate for the newcomers. As the unit unfolds, students will gain an understanding of the nuances among the 1st-, 1.5-, and 2nd-generation by reading excerpts from narratives, graphic novels, and poems. Subsequently, they will become introspective when comparing the experiences of immigrants they read about in class to their own 1.5-generation experience. By the end of the unit, students will grapple with materials that affirm their right to a bilingual education. Through targeted vocabulary instruction, sentence frames, word banks, think-pair-share activities, graphic organizers, and the use of visuals, students will build the English skills to write and present their California arrival poem to all their peers, regardless of

cultural backgrounds.

The unit begins with targeted vocabulary instruction related to immigration and the experiences surrounding arrival. First and foremost, it is important to frontload or preteach vocabulary because the students will need to know these key words for reading comprehension and for all forms of communication. The academic vocabulary will set the stage for learning about the unit topics, and the vocabulary knowledge will empower the students to communicate their ideas within the classroom community. In addition, it will also serve to build background knowledge about the historical context where students will begin making connections to the material.

Mapping the Journey

Maps are crucial to learning history as students can visualize historical narratives and the long journeys across the terrain, oftentimes unforgiving. Immigrants may have had the choice to embark on these long journeys, or they may have had no alternatives. Students will have a working framework of the local demographics shaping California during the Asian Exclusion Era (1875-1943), a period of time in the history of the United States defined by federal legislation and government policies aimed at restricting and prohibiting immigration from Asia. The U.S. naturalization laws beginning with the 1790 Rule of Naturalization denied them a pathway to U.S. citizenship. In the present day (post-1965), students will look at landmark federal legislation that transformed the U.S. immigration policy and demographics. Students will see that each time period had its own set of challenges.

Students will view a traditional geographic map of the United States from 1959 (see fig. 1). This map illustrates that the United States is a nation of immigrants, through geographic boundaries established by the Immigration Act of 1917. Looking more closely at a 2023 interactive map of California (see fig. 2), it highlights the struggles of different immigrant groups and the cities in which they lived, raising a central question: how did we get here? To explore this question, students will turn to the National Geographic Society's resource, 'Immigration to the U.S. in the Late 1800s,' to trace the immigration from China and Japan to California, and they will look at the immigration map in *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America*. This will serve as a springboard into the creation of Angel Island Immigration Station in the San Francisco Bay (1910-1940).



Figure 1. Map showing the geographic boundaries established by the Immigration Act of 1917. Source: Daniela Passal, "The United States of America: A Nation of Immigrants" text panel, in *A Nation of Immigrants* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1959), courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection.



Figure 2. Connie Zheng, *How to Make a Golden State*, 2023, image transfer, ink, rice paper, and mixed media drawing, 154 x 295 cm (courtesy of the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection).

Angel Island opened in 1910 as an immigration processing center for immigrants coming to the United States from Asia. Immigrants packed up their belongings into modest possessions, such as a leather trunk (see fig. 3). Angel Island was established primarily to enforce the exclusion laws until its closure in 1940. Not only did the exclusion laws affect the Chinese and Japanese, but Filipinos (1934-1935), the Koreans (following the end of the Korean War in 1953), and the Vietnamese (following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975).



Figure 3. Kumataro Sugimoto, *Japanese Immigrant's Trunk*, late 1800s, leather and paper, courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Asian Exclusion Era (1875-1943) versus Present Day (Post-1965)

To understand the Asian Exclusion era, students need to know key acts and court cases defining the time, starting with the 1875 Page Act, which focused on preventing immigration from China and other parts of “the Orient”. California Congressman Henry Page authored this act, becoming the country’s first restrictive immigration law. It is also the precedent for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first significant federal legislation to explicitly suspend immigration for a specific nationality. This act banned Chinese laborers from entering the United States, barred current Chinese residents from naturalization, and subjected them to strict travel restrictions for ten years.[4] The Geary Act (1892) extended the Chinese Exclusion Act for 10 more years and required all Chinese residents in the U.S. to carry a government-issued Certificate of Residence. If one was found without a Certificate of Residence, the individual faced up to a year of hard labor followed by deportation.[5] With each additional act, students will realize that immigration was further limited.

Two Supreme Court cases challenged the constitutionality of the Geary Act: *Chan Chae Ping v. United States* (1889) and *Fong Yue Ting v. United States* (1893). In *Chan Chae Ping*, the Supreme Court ruled that Congress has total, unchecked power over immigration, meaning Congress can create any immigration law it wants, even if it breaks past treaties. Likewise, the Supreme Court ruled against *Fong Yue Ting*, declaring that the U.S. government holds absolute, “sovereign” power over immigration and established deportation as an administrative process rather than a criminal punishment. As a result, constitutional protections, such as the right to a jury trial, do not apply to deportation proceedings. Both men were eventually deported.[6]

Following the initial exclusion laws, the U.S. government continued to enact a series of more restrictive policies aimed at barring immigrants across Asia. These legislative barriers included: Asiatic Barred Zone (1917), banning immigrants from British India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East; The Johnston-Reed Act (1924), establishing a strict national origins quota system and effectively shutting down nearly all of the immigration from Asia; the Tydings-McDuffie Act (1934), creating a 10-year transition period for the Philippines to gain independence and severely restricted Filipino immigration to the U.S.; the Filipino Repatriation Act (1935) offering a free one-way passage to Filipinos in the U.S. who wanted to return to the

Philippines. In exchange, Filipinos permanently lost their right to re-enter the U.S. Soon after, the Philippines became part of the Asiatic Barred Zone, which is what the exclusionists wanted from the outset.[7]

The perceptions and attitudes on immigration and race drastically shifted with the pressures of World War II and the Cold War. The first repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act reflected the alliance between the U.S. and China during WWII and made way for the post-exclusion era immigration policies as a result of changing international relations.[8] Lawmakers were adapting the immigration laws to the times and the momentum of the Civil Rights movement. The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the discriminatory national-origins quota system that had governed U.S. immigration since the 1920s. It replaced the quotas with a preference system prioritizing family reunification and skilled laborers/professionals.[9] With an increased demand for the medical field, the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) opened pathways for Filipino nurses and other healthcare professionals to come to the U.S. to work and live for up to two years; however, many stayed beyond the two years.[10]

With its hands in foreign policy and military involvement in Vietnam, the U.S fueled the refugee crisis. Following the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War, 1.5 million refugees had fled Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The 1980 Refugee Assistance Act managed refugee resettlement, and it provided assistance to this vulnerable population. The act also incorporated the United Nations definition of a "refugee," established the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), and created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which solidified the U.S. commitment to protecting the refugees, trying to make amends for past mistakes.[11]

In the mid 1980s and 1990s, there were new policies aimed at controlling illegal immigration. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) made it illegal for employers to hire and recruit undocumented immigrants, while the Immigration Act of 1990 overhauled the preference systems by expanding quotas for family reunification, employment-based skills, and diversity visas, favoring Europeans.[12] Finally, the Immigration Act of 1996 strengthened U.S. immigration laws and added penalties for undocumented immigrants who reside in the country for defined periods of time and who commit crimes. It also sought to end mass immigration from Vietnam.[13] Today, the federal government is also trying to curb immigration.

Through an analysis of both time periods, students will recognize that the Asian exclusion was systematic and legalized: laws explicitly dictated who could enter the country, who was turned away, and who could own land. When drawing parallels and distinctions between the exclusion era and present-day immigration, post-1965, they will observe hardships and challenges faced by immigrants of the past and present, including but not limited to: being placed in detention centers, anticipating and preparing for interviews/interrogation using a coaching book (see fig. 4), being subjected to medical examinations, and forced separation from family. These are also concerns for the foreseeable future.

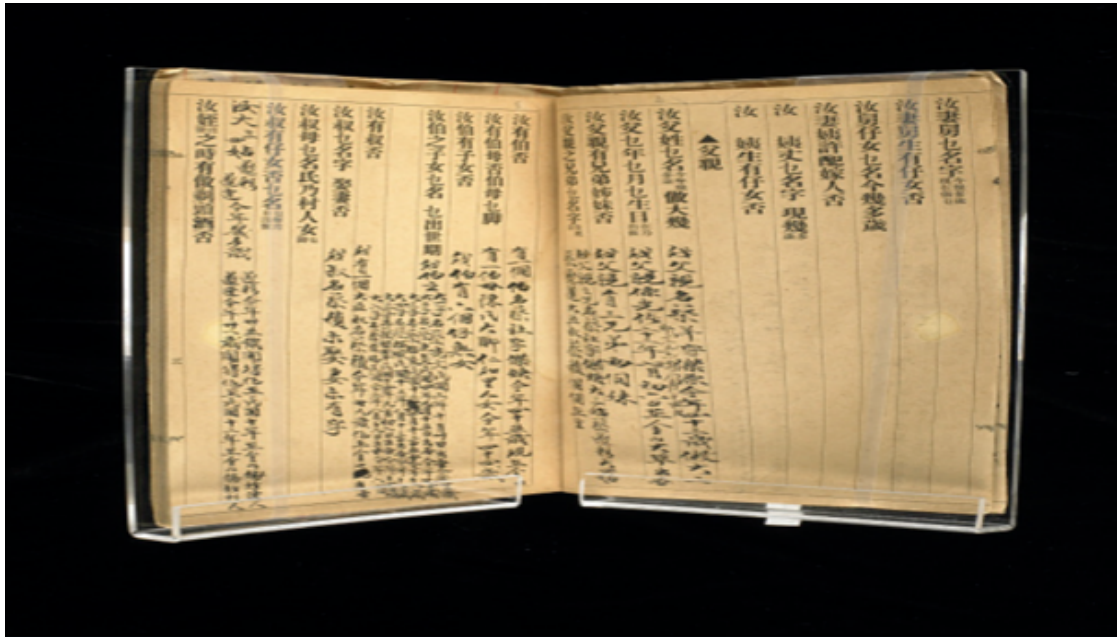


Figure 4. Photograph of the Choi Tsia coaching book, ca. 1937–1938, courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is prominent in San Jose and the Bay Area. There have been multiple walkouts at the school site and sites across the district. Despite the ordeals, immigrant communities rally together with advocacy groups in confronting the immigration apparatus in both the exclusion era and the present day. Community groups use their education and knowledge of the legal system to refute unfair rulings for the sake of human dignity.

1.5 Generation

Since my students belong to the 1.5- generation, born in one country and immigrated to another during childhood or adolescence, students will learn about what this label means- speaking more than one language and being caught in between two cultures. As part of the 1.5- generation, it is vital for students to successfully navigate between two different worlds- one that is their home and one that is their school. Adolescents living in bicultural worlds are best set up for success when they demonstrate positive American behaviors.[14]

Using narratives written from the 1.5- generation perspective, students will explore in depth the lives of these individuals who spent some part of their childhood in their birth country and then, due to different circumstances, moved with their families to California. The students will come to reflect on the 1.5- generation label and consider its connections to their own experiences, living in multigenerational families.

Also, during this time of transition, home language loss can occur over generations, and currently, this need is not addressed in the American education system.[15] Students need opportunities to connect their home language and culture to the school environment. Upon reading about the experiences of other immigrant teens, students will have the understanding that others have walked a similar path; this experience is not isolated to the people of their birth country. When students and their native language are acknowledged in the classroom, this “connection to one’s personal language identity may play a central role in adjustment, social interaction, and a sense of belonging among Asian and Asian American immigrant young adults” now living in America.[16] This is the groundwork necessary for students to acquire the language and comfort that

they need to share their arrival story.

Myth of the Model Minority

When engaging with the myth of the “model minority” for Asian Americans, students will learn the origin of this false concept. Following WWII, the U.S. used the EVP to bring a wave of highly educated Asian professionals and students to American universities and hospitals. This coincided with the Civil Rights movement, forcing the US to rethink its racially based immigration quotas. In direct response, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1965, which abolished the national quotas and established new preference categories based on family reunification and skilled workers. This opened the door for scientists, engineers, and medical professionals in Asia, contributing to the idea of the “model minority”. The success of these specific immigrant groups was used to downplay the ongoing realities of systemic racism. It also masked the diverse, complex struggles within the broader Asian American community, a detriment to all.[17]

Students will discover the implications of this myth in their lives. This stereotype puts all Asians, regardless of immigration and national histories or class background, into a cookie-cutter image of being very intelligent, hardworking, and having money and wealth. It is assumed that my Asian students, compared to students who are not of Asian descent, are quiet, good at Math, and that they abide by school rules, always making good decisions. The model minority myth “is often applied to Asian Americans, who, as a group, are often praised for apparent success across academic, economic, and cultural domains—successes typically offered in contrast to the perceived achievements of other racial groups”.[18]

One group negatively impacted by this stereotype is the Latino youth. Stereotypes about Latino youth include: teen pregnancy is commonplace, and it will lead to lower educational levels.[19]

Students will grapple with these generalizations as they navigate new cultural norms, values, and “interdependent strategies for navigating in the United States.” [20]

Right to a Bilingual Education

Students will gain new insight into their right to a bilingual education by closely studying the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). Chinese immigrant students in a San Francisco public school were placed in mainstream classes without English language support. These students were failing because they were subjected to the “sink or swim” mentality of learning. The Supreme Court ruled that merely providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum does not constitute equal treatment if they cannot understand the language of instruction.[21]

With the inclusion of the immigrant student narratives, students will see that it is possible to break through the language barrier. They will read about others who have also struggled with the English language and who have found success in learning to speak and write in English. They need to remember that they have a voice and important ideas to share. Language is a means by which we communicate those ideas. They will notice that the immigrant teens in the selected excerpts make mistakes, but they are determined and relentless in their pursuit of acquiring this new language.

Developing Identities Through Narratives and Storytelling

Storytelling serves as a bridge for English Learners. Storytelling “is an accessible way to start their journey to language fluency, as anyone can be a storyteller. It resonates with those from immigrant families or cultures

with rich traditions of oral storytelling, offering a connection to content and peers.”[22] As students transition from reading to writing, a student’s identity “often shifts from being the lone hero, overcoming adversity to succeed, to someone who is more critical of his or her literacy practices and who sees them more connected to relationships with others- either teachers or writing peers.”[23] Building on the relational shift, when students are listening to their classmates’ stories, they are strengthening “their political consciousness about other racial and religious groups” and share a sense of belonging.[24]

As the unit concludes, students will have the language framework to share an arrival memory through poetry written in English. We will be bridging the language gap in that safe space of the classroom. In this final culminating task, they can share their identity, learn about one another, find common ground across racial boundaries, and feel a sense of collective belonging.

Teaching Strategies:

Modeling

Modeling is an important strategy as it will provide students with proper guidance. By showing students how to think and the steps to follow, this practice clears up any confusion. When thinking aloud, teachers tangibly demonstrate to the students how to complete the task. This method also promotes the academic language of the classroom. Students will have the knowledge they need to be successful in completing the necessary work. Not only will modeling help build confidence, but it will also help foster independent learning.

Frayer Model- Four Square Adaptation for Vocabulary

To increase vocabulary development, the Frayer Model is useful, specifically the four-square adaptation. This graphic organizer is divided into four sections with a bubble in the center, prominently displaying the vocabulary word. It is set up in this way for students to organize the pertinent information, making sense of the new learning. Students will write the vocabulary word in the center bubble. Then, they will fill out the four remaining boxes with the following information: one box for the definition, one box for the word written in their home language, one box for a picture, and the remaining box for a sample sentence. As they get comfortable with the new unit vocabulary, the students will include different forms of the word as well. If a student struggles with pronunciation, the student is able to write down the word phonetically as a means to assist with correct pronunciation. Moreover, it is also a scaffold to support reading and writing.

Sentence Frames & Word Banks

To teach sentence structure as well as to increase vocabulary development, students will be asked to respond to open-ended questions on a regular basis. The question is first asked verbally and then written on the board. Students will be provided with sentence frames along with transition words to use as they complete the rest of the sentence independently. The sentence frame includes blanks for students to fill in. This will provide a structure for them to communicate their ideas.

Students will also need time to think about their response before they write. A word bank will allow students to see words without the stress of relying on memory. They can start making decisions about word choice and experiment with how selected words will communicate their idea. If students prefer, they can first write their

answer in their native language and then use an online dictionary to translate. Their home language will be encouraged in the classroom in support of learning English.

Think-Pair-Share

This is a collaborative strategy involving students working together to prepare for whole-class discussions. Students will be paired based on different home languages, if possible. They will be given time to think about the common goal, engage with one another, and share with the rest of the class. This strategy encourages all students to participate and practice using English to explain and elaborate on ideas. Lastly, this will help to continue building classroom community and oral communication skills.

Venn Diagram

This graphic organizer will help students to think logically and identify the characteristics of two or three things, depending on using the 2-circle or 3-circle Venn diagram. As we work on higher-order thinking and language skills, this will be used to compare and contrast the different time periods and unique groups of people that are part of the curriculum unit. When students are actively using this strategy, they are organizing ideas, making them more concrete and tangible. With its visual appeal, they are able to access the information easily and quickly.

Concept Map

The concept map is a visual representation of knowledge where students record information in boxes or bubbles. It is a strategy for active thinking, getting the details down, and practicing with elaboration. This visual also helps to illustrate relationships between ideas, making connections between the main idea and other information. This graphic organizer can be adapted to any topic that students need to take notes on and organize in a way that makes sense to them. This can be used both during and after reading.

Art can be incorporated into the concept map. Students can also draw doodles next to the information that they write down. They can also include terms in their home language to assist with new learning.

Visuals

New learners of English need to see visuals for many different reasons. Graphic representations will engage students and facilitate vocabulary development and comprehension, allowing them to be interactive in the classroom. They will be able to make important connections and talk about relationships.

Videos are also included here. Videos are particularly useful as they are good sources of information and speech production; they are interesting, and students can make use of the closed-caption feature to assist with understanding. Ultimately, when videos are included in lessons, the learning will resonate with the students as the real world enters the classroom.

Classroom Activities:

Activity One: Vocabulary

Objective:

Students need to know key unit vocabulary to be successful. Key vocabulary words related to arrival include: immigration, migration, assimilation, visa, refugee, asylum, undocumented, adapt, integration, alien, deportation, journey, and identity. This activity may take a few days to complete depending on comfort with the graphic organizer and website needed to complete the assignment.

Activity:

Students will learn new vocabulary using the 4-Square Adaptation of the Frayer Model. The teacher will model how to complete this graphic organizer using the word immigration. When modeling, the teacher will think aloud, vocalizing the internal thought process to complete the task. Students will write the target word in the center bubble. Using Google Translate, the teacher will demonstrate how to look up translations, define words, identify synonyms, and see sample sentences, as well as how to use the audio feature for students to listen to word pronunciations.

Next, the teacher will fill out the four remaining boxes with the following information: one box for the definition, one box for the word written in the students' home language, one box for the sample sentence, and the remaining box for an illustration of the word. When complete and after the teacher has addressed any questions, students independently complete the 4-Square graphic organizer for each word.

Upon completion, each student will present a word to the class before displaying it on the classroom vocabulary wall. The collaborative vocabulary wall will serve as a visual display for students to reference during reading and writing tasks, creating a stronger mental connection to the words.

Activity Two: Immigrant Stories

Objective:

In comparing and contrasting different immigrant experiences, students will analyze the common themes of struggle and resilience while developing their reading comprehension, paying attention to important details from the excerpts. Depending on the reading pace of the class, this activity may take a few days to complete.

Activity:

This lesson will open up with a warm-up question: "When moving to California, what is one struggle or challenge you faced?" Students will be encouraged to write down something other than language. To help facilitate a response, students will be given choice of sentence frames (i.e., When I moved to California, one struggle I faced was _____; It was difficult for me to _____ because _____.) Students will also have the ability to use a word bank (i.e., housing, new schedule, making friends, new transportation, climate, culture, new food, feeling homesick) as a classroom resource.

When responses are written down, students will be paired with a partner of a different ethnicity, if possible.

Students will take turns reading their responses to one another. Then, students will share their answers with the whole class. It is important to build in multiple opportunities for students to speak in class to practice their pronunciation and fluency, pausing naturally after thoughts or sentences.

After the warm-up is finished, students will read some passages from Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*. This is a Korean woman's memoir about migrating to the U.S. as a young child in the early 20th century. Students will focus on the author's experiences in her American school, which included harassment and prejudice from teachers and classmates. Students will use a concept map to examine these experiences. The concept map will include specifics of mistreatment along with supporting details of how she felt, who helped her, how she responded to these encounters, and the emotional impact. As students work, they will be encouraged to include symbols and/or illustrations to make complex ideas more tangible.

Students will then have an opportunity to share their work with a partner before the whole-class discussion. Students will be asked to write one detail on the whiteboard for discussion purposes.

Next, students will turn to excerpts from Gene Luen Yang's autobiographical graphic novel *Dragon Hoops*, which examines the history of the school's basketball team and the lives of the star players, two of whom are immigrants. Students will read about Jeevin Sandu and Qianjun "Alex" Zhao. Jeevin, a Punjabi teen who practices the Sikh faith, faces racial stereotypes and ignorant comments as both a member of the basketball team and a student off the court. Alex, an international exchange student from China, faces challenges of assimilating and adjusting to American school and the sports culture. They will also consider how exchange students may or may not have the same experiences as immigrants to this country. Utilizing the concept map strategy again, students will identify the main struggles, who helped them navigate their challenges, their responses, and emotional journeys in the face of adversity. Once more, students will interact with their peers by sharing their concept maps before the whole-class discussion.

Finally, students will now be ready to look at all of the narrative experiences together. They will compare and contrast Mary Paik Lee, Jeevin Sandu, and Alex Zhao using a 3-circle Venn diagram. The emphasis will be on their identity, their obstacles, their support system, and their resilience, their triumph over adversity. During this final review, students will include any personal connections they can make to different stories.

Activity 3: Sharing Arrival Poem

Objective:

For the culminating activity, students will paint an arrival memory and write their arrival poem. They will present both pieces of work to the class, practicing fluency, and building community through shared storytelling. This culminating activity will take a few days to complete, as time will be spent briefly analyzing the collection of poems, and there will be dedicated time for the art and writing portion.

Activity:

Students will read a selection of poems from *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigration on Angel Island, 1910-1940* and *Inside Out & Back Again*. Although these poems are from different time periods—Chinese exclusion and post-Vietnam War refugee migration—they share some common themes which are useful when paired together, such as immigration, family, loneliness, and resilience. Class discussion will center around what we see and hear in the poems, and how the speakers are feeling.

Next, students will sketch three to five arrival memories in their notebooks. After spending time with these memories, students will choose one memory to focus on. Using canvas and paint, they will recreate this memory in a non-verbal medium, experimenting with colors and alluding to different emotions.

Once they have a full painting, a representation of their memory, they are now ready to start crafting their poem. Students will then be given a poetry framework to assist with writing the poem. This framework will include lines specifying setting, imagery, internal feelings, and looking ahead. As students work, they will have access to class vocabulary and word banks.

Before presenting to the class, students will practice reading their poems in small groups. As students read their poems, their paintings will be displayed. After each presentation, each peer in the audience will write a positive comment on a Post-it note and stick it on the painting to show appreciation for the student's work and journey.

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Lee, Erika, and Judy Yung. *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. This resource includes a good map of arrivals from around the world. There are also pictures of the island and people there going through the process, arrival photos, and the detention center where immigrants were held.

Lee, Mary Paik. *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America*. Edited by Sucheng Chan. Illus. ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019. This is Mary Paik Lee’s life story growing up Korean American, overcoming hardships (i.e., poverty and racism) and through perseverance, finding success. The school scenes are of particular interest to show her resilience in confronting racism.

Medina, Diana. "Fluent in Expression, Rich in Identity: How Stories Transform English Learners." *The Educator's Room*, October 19, 2023. <https://theeducatorsroom.com/fluent-in-expression-rich-in-identity-how-stories-transform-english-learners/>. This addresses the value of storytelling and developing language skills.

"The Model Minority Myth." *The Practice*, November/December 2018. Harvard Law School Center on the Legal Profession. <https://clp.law.harvard.edu/knowledge-hub/magazine/issues/asian-americans-in-the-law/the-model-minority-myth/>. This dissects the flaws of the model minority stereotype.

National Geographic Society. "Immigration to the U.S. in the Late 1800s." National Geographic Education. Accessed July 8, 2026. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/immigration-1870-1900/>. This map shows the path of some immigrant groups to the U.S. from Europe, South America, and Asia.

National Museum of American History. 2026. "The History of Little Manila." *How Can You Forget Me: Filipino American Stories*. March 3, 2026. <https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/history-little-manila>. This is a video about the history of the Little Manila neighborhood in Stockton, CA, and its sanctuary against the ongoing threat of racism and violence.

Upshur, Jiu-Hwa Lo. "Magnuson Act Repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act." *EBSCO Research Starters*, 2023. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/magnuson-act-repeals-chinese-exclusion-act#full-article>.

Detailed information regarding the Magnuson Act, which repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and specifics about the changing views towards race and immigration.

Park, Chulwoo, Janet Y. Bang, and Mark Edberg. 2026. "Language Identity and Sense of Belonging Among 1.5-generation Asian and Asian American Immigrant Young Adults in the United States." *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, March. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000414>. The ability to speak multiple languages helps to shape 1.5 identity and sense of belonging.

Reimers, David M. "An Unintended Reform: The 1965 Immigration Act and Third World Immigration to the United States." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 3, no. 1 (1983): 9–28. This source discusses post-1965 immigration and migration from low-income nations.

Shankar, Shalini. 2011. "Asian American Youth Language Use." *Review of Research in Education* 35 (1): 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x10383213>. This article discusses how language is tied to youth identity.

Sone, Monica. *Nisei Daughter*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. This is Monica Sone's memoir about her experiences of growing up second-generation (Nisei) Japanese American and her life following the attack on Pearl Harbor, which consisted of facing prejudice, being relocated to an internment camp, and succeeding in getting her education.

Sugimoto, Kumataro. *Japanese Immigrant's Trunk*. Late 1800s. Leather and paper. National Museum of American History, Washington, DC. https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object/nmah_1289473. This is an image of a small trunk where one had to pack up their life's belongings into a limited space when moving to America.

Wang, Qi, Jessie Bee Kim Koh, and Qingfang Song. 2014. "Meaning Making Through Personal Storytelling: Narrative Research in the Asian American Context." *Asian American Journal of Psychology* 6 (1): 88–96. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037317>. Through the use of narrative, we can understand our experiences.

Waters, Mary C., and Reed Ueda, eds. *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. eBook. This resource is helpful to understand immigration policies from 1965 and beyond, along with the implications of these policies.

Williams, Bronwyn T. "Heroes, Rebels, and Victims: Student Identities in Literacy Narratives." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 47, no. 4 (December 2003/January 2004): 342–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40014780>. This shows the importance of the literacy narratives, where students can shift their identity in writing, and it is also a way to feel connected to others.

Yang, Kao Kalia. *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008. In this memoir, Kao Kalia Yang chronicles her family's escape from the genocide of the Hmong people in Laos, her survival in a Thai refugee camp, the settlement, and the start of her new life in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Yeh, C. J., Kim, A. B., Pituc, S. T., & Atkins, M. (2008). Poverty, loss, and resilience: The story of Chinese immigrant youth. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 55(1), 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.55.1.34>. When people listen to the stories of others, they will have awareness about other groups of people and feel a sense of belonging.

Zheng, Connie. *How to Make a Golden State*. 2023. Image transfer, ink, rice paper, and mixed media drawing, 154 × 295 cm. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. This map of California is a colorful presentation of all

people who have settled in California.

Annotated Bibliography for Students:

Bulosan, Carlos. *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History*. Introduction by Carey McWilliams. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. Students will read the excerpt. Bulosan persevered in his writing, though not perfect, when he was learning English, because he had something to say.

Chan, Sucheng, ed. *The Vietnamese American 1.5 Generation: Stories of War, Revolution, Flight and New Beginnings*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006. This is a collection of essays written by 1.5 generation California college students from different backgrounds sharing their stories about leaving Vietnam.

Chinese Americans United for Action (CAA). "Lau v. Nichols." February 4, 2026. <https://caasf.org/lau-v-nichols/>. This video is about the Supreme Court ruling that denying special instruction for non-English speakers was a violation of the Civil Rights Act. It also depicts the Chinese immigrants as active participants in demanding the right to an education.

Kiyama, Henry Yoshitaka, and Frederik L. Schodt. *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904–1924*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1999. This is a visual representation, Japanese manga (a Japanese comic book) about Japanese immigrant experiences in San Francisco during the Asian Exclusion Era.

Lai, Him Mark, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung. *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*. 2nd ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. There are many poems written by Chinese immigrants detained on Angel Island along with their English translations.

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out & Back Again*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011. In the form of poetry, Lai writes about her experiences fleeing Vietnam during the war and starting a new life in America.

Yang, Gene Luen. *Dragon Hoops*. New York: First Second, 2020. This graphic novel illustrates the story of an Oakland, CA, top high school basketball team, which included individual accounts of immigrant players.

Yang, Kelly. 2018. *Front Desk*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books. This graphic novel follows a 1.5-generation immigrant girl trying to balance school, learning English, and working the front desk at a motel with her family.

Appendix on Implementing District Standards:

Part I: Interacting in Meaningful Ways

Collaborate

1. Exchanging information and ideas with others through oral collaborative discussions on a range of social and academic topics

Students meet this standard when they are working in pairs, groups, or engaged in a whole group discussion. They will have ample opportunities to exchange ideas and build connections during the Think, Pair, Share activities and the whole-group discussion. They will showcase their learning during the final project, writing a poem and reading it to the class with confidence.

Interpretive

6. Reading closely literary and informational texts and viewing multimedia to determine how meaning is conveyed explicitly and implicitly through language

Students will be reading a variety of excerpts from narratives and graphic novels about the experiences of the 1.5 generation. They will also view visuals and watch short video clips related to the subject matter, identifying main ideas, supporting details, and language used to communicate to the audience. These activities will also boost students' critical thinking skills.

Productive

9. Expressing information and ideas in formal oral presentations on academic topics

For the culminating project, students will write a poem in English about their arrival to the U.S. and present this poem to the class. This formal presentation will help students build confidence and improve their communication skills.

Part II: Learning About How English Works

Expanding and Enriching Ideas

1. Using verbs and verb phrases
2. Using nouns and noun phrases
3. Modifying to add details

In both writing and speaking activities, students will practice with varied verb tenses, verb phrases, nouns, and noun phrases to add detail and elaboration in their communications. This grammar work is the core building blocks of English and more complex language, and it will help them to be more precise with what exactly they want to express.

Notes

¹ California Department of Education, "School Profile: Independence High," accessed July 10, 2026, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sdprofile/details.aspx?cds=43694274330name-brand031>.

² California Department of Education, "Title I, Part A School Allocations," last reviewed July 9, 2026, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/schoolallocations.asp,canname-brand>.

- 3 Park, Bang, and Edberg, "Language Identity and Sense of Belonging."
- 4 Lee and Yung, *Angel Island*, 6-7.
- 5 Lai, Lim, and Yung, *Island*, 8-9.
- 6 Hernández, *City of Inmates*.
- 7 Lee and Yung, *Angel Island*, 7-8.
- 8 Upshur, "Magnuson Act Repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act."
- 9 Reimers, "An Unintended Reform," 15.
- 10 Choy, *Empire of Care*.
- 11 Chan, *Vietnamese American 1.5 Generation*.
- 12 Waters and Ueda, *The New Americans*.
- 13 Fragomen, "The Illegal Immigration Reform."
- 14 Dao, "Refugee Representations."
- 15 Kwon, Sun, and Rheem, "Teaching While Becoming."
- 16 Park, Bang, and Edberg, "Language Identity and Sense of Belonging," 14.
- 17 "The Model Minority Myth."
- 18 "The Model Minority Myth," par. 1.
- 19 Gómez et al., "The New Majority."
- 20 Yeh et al., "Poverty, Loss, and Resilience," 39.
- 21 Chinese Americans United for Action, "Lau v. Nichols."
- 22 Medina, "Fluent in Expression, Rich in Identity," par. 15.
- 23 Williams, "Heroes, Rebels, and Victims," 343.
- 24 Dao, "Out and Asian," 11.

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