



Who Belongs? Immigration, Disability, and the Making of Belonging

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Overview

Children notice inclusion and exclusion long before they have the language to explain what they are seeing. They recognize when someone is welcomed, when someone is left out, and when something feels unfair. As they grow, those observations become questions: *Why was someone treated differently? Who made that rule? Was it fair?* This curriculum unit uses Asian American immigration history to give students the historical knowledge and vocabulary to investigate the questions they are already asking about fairness, identity, and belonging.

Through the experiences of Asian American immigrants, students will explore how laws, government institutions, public health systems, and communities shaped who was permitted to enter, settle, and claim belonging in the United States, as well as how individuals and communities challenged those decisions. Using photographs, maps, artwork, oral histories, memoirs, poetry, and historical documents, students will discover that belonging is not simply a personal feeling but a historical process shaped by power, policy, and human action.

Students will examine Asian American immigration from the nineteenth century through the present, investigating how immigration policy, public health practices, disability classifications, and ideas about citizenship influenced who was welcomed and who was excluded. They will explore places such as Angel Island Immigration Station and encounter the voices of individuals and families whose lives were shaped by these systems. Rather than studying these events as isolated moments, students will identify recurring historical patterns and examine how people resisted exclusion, built communities, and expanded the meaning of belonging.

Throughout the unit, students will engage in a six-day Historical Connections Framework that moves from historical investigation to contemporary parallels and personal reflection. They will analyze primary and secondary sources, participate in collaborative discussions, develop academic vocabulary through repeated exposure to key concepts, and construct evidence-based responses supported by historical sources. Designed for multilingual learners and students with intellectual disabilities, the unit uses explicit vocabulary instruction, multimodal texts, structured inquiry, and predictable instructional routines to make rigorous historical thinking accessible to all learners. By the end of the unit, students will understand that belonging is continually shaped, challenged, and redefined through the actions of governments, communities, and ordinary people.

Demographics

I teach at River Terrace Education Campus, a Title I public school in Washington, D.C., where I previously served as an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher and will be transitioning into the role of Reading Specialist. River Terrace serves a diverse population of multilingual learners and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, complex communication needs, and medical fragility. Every student receives special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and many come from multilingual and immigrant families whose languages, cultures, and lived experiences enrich our school community.

My students bring tremendous strengths to the classroom, but they also demonstrate considerable variability in how they access, process, and communicate information. Reading comprehension, expressive language, executive functioning, and background knowledge vary widely, requiring instruction that is both highly scaffolded and intellectually rigorous. Many students benefit from explicit vocabulary instruction, visual supports, predictable routines, repeated practice, and opportunities to engage with content through multiple modalities. These supports are not designed to lower expectations. They provide equitable access to the kind of historical inquiry that all students deserve.

These instructional realities shaped every aspect of this curriculum unit. Rather than relying primarily on traditional textbooks, students investigate history through photographs, maps, artwork, oral histories, memoirs, poetry, government documents, and other primary and secondary sources. They learn to analyze these materials like historians by asking who created each source, whose perspectives are represented, what evidence is presented, and what questions remain unanswered.

Although this curriculum was designed with multilingual learners and students with intellectual disabilities in mind, its instructional principles benefit all learners. By embedding accessibility into every lesson, the unit demonstrates that rigorous historical thinking is not reserved for a select group of students. When provided with meaningful scaffolds and authentic opportunities to investigate the past, all students can analyze evidence, construct historical interpretations, and participate in thoughtful conversations about fairness, identity, community, and belonging.

Rationale

As a Black and Korean American educator, I have become increasingly interested in how histories often taught separately can illuminate one another. Asian American history is frequently presented as distinct from the histories of Black Americans, other immigrant communities, and people with disabilities, despite overlapping systems of race, citizenship, labor, health, and social value. Exploring these intersections can reveal shared historical patterns while honoring the distinct experiences of each community.

This perspective is also personal. I have wrestled with racial narratives, particularly the model minority myth, that often positions Asian American success against the experiences of Black Americans and other communities of color. Although this unit does not attempt to tell the broader history of Black and Asian American relations, my experiences shape how I approach Asian American history, not in isolation or

competition with other histories, but with attention to how different systems have shaped who is permitted to belong.

Disability offers another essential lens for understanding immigration history. Beginning in the late nineteenth century immigration officers evaluated immigrants not only by race or nationality, but also by their perceived health, independence, productivity, and economic value. Disability classifications and medical labels could determine whether individuals were admitted, detained, separated from family, or excluded altogether. For my students, many of whom have intellectual and developmental disabilities, complex communication needs, or multiple disabilities, this history offers more than an opportunity to understand the experiences of others. It provides a lens for examining how ideas about ability, independence, and human value are constructed, who has the power to define those standards, and how those judgments can shape a person's access and belonging.

At its heart, this unit is about helping students develop the language to understand the world around them. Historical inquiry provides more than knowledge of the past. It gives students the vocabulary and evidence to name patterns of exclusion, recognize acts of resistance, and imagine a more inclusive future. American history contains many examples of institutions drawing boundaries around who belonged, but it also contains countless stories of individuals and communities who challenged those boundaries. In the spirit of James Baldwin's belief that loving one's country includes the responsibility to critique it, I hope students leave this unit understanding that history is not only something they study. It is something they have the power to shape.^[1]

Content

Asian Migration Before Federal Exclusion

Asian migration to what is now the United States did not begin with the California Gold Rush, nor did it begin with federal immigration law. Filipino sailors were present in Spanish colonial Louisiana as early as the eighteenth century, and by the 1830s, Filipino fishermen had established Saint Malo in the wetlands of St. Bernard Parish, one of the earliest documented Asian settlements in the United States.^[2] Small numbers of South Asians also arrived in North America through European trade networks as sailors, servants, and, in some documented cases, as enslaved people.^[3] These early migrations remind us that Asian history in North America predates both the large-scale migrations of the nineteenth century and the federal immigration system that would later regulate who could enter, remain, and belong.

The federal government began drawing legal boundaries around national membership long before the era of Chinese exclusion. The Naturalization Act of 1790 limited eligibility for naturalized citizenship to “free white persons,” making race an explicit condition of access to naturalization.^[4] During the nineteenth century, federal immigration laws expanded the government’s authority beyond determining who could naturalize to regulating who could enter and remain in the United States. Together, these developments laid the legal foundation for a system that would increasingly define belonging through race, citizenship, and immigration status.

Chinese migration to the United States expanded dramatically beginning with the California Gold Rush and

continued as mines, railroad companies, farms, and other western industries demanded labor.[5] Many migrants came from the Pearl River Delta in southern China, a region disrupted by political conflict, economic pressures, natural disasters, and Western imperialism. At the same time, *Gam Saan*, or “Gold Mountain,” represented the possibility of earning money, supporting families, and improving one’s economic and social position.[6] Chinese workers became essential to the development of the American West as miners, railroad workers, and agricultural laborers.

Although Chinese migration became the largest and most visible early Asian migration to the United States, it was only one of several distinct migration stories. Japanese laborers migrated in significant numbers to Hawai’i to work on sugar plantations and later increasingly moved to the continental United States. Korean migration also included labor migration to Hawai’i, while Japanese colonial rule shaped later migration through students, political exiles, and picture brides. South Asian migrants from British India included laborers, farmers, students, and anticolonial activists whose migration was shaped by colonial rule and economic opportunity. Following U.S. colonization of the Philippines in 1898, Filipinos were classified as U.S. nationals rather than aliens, allowing them to migrate under a different legal framework from other Asian immigrants.[7]

Despite these different migration histories, a common pattern emerged. Asian migrants were often recruited or tolerated when their labor fueled economic growth but increasingly viewed as outsiders when they sought to settle permanently, own property, raise families, or claim citizenship. Long before Congress enacted federal exclusion laws, these ideas were already shaping life in the American West.

One of the clearest examples came from California. In *People v. Hall* (1854), the California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese witnesses could not testify against white defendants in criminal cases. The decision severely limited Chinese immigrants’ ability to seek legal protection when crimes against them depended on testimony from Chinese witnesses. More broadly, California law helped create conditions in which violence against Chinese immigrants could occur with little legal accountability. Racial exclusion was enforced not only through discriminatory laws but also through the actions of local officials, private citizens, and vigilante groups, blurring the boundaries between state authority and mob violence.[8]

The Page Act and the Gendering of Exclusion

Immigration laws did not affect everyone within an ethnic group in the same way. Race and gender shaped who could migrate, how immigrants were treated at the border, and whether they could establish permanent communities. The Page Act of 1875 restricted the immigration of contract laborers and women suspected of entering the United States for prostitution or other “immoral purposes.” Although the law did not explicitly target Chinese women as a group, federal officials enforced it most aggressively against them.[9]

The Page Act emerged from a broader anti-Chinese moral panic that portrayed Chinese women as prostitutes, carriers of disease, and threats to the nation’s moral health. Women therefore arrived under suspicion and were expected to prove their respectability through their family relationships, marital histories, and perceived sexual conduct. Wives and daughters of legally admissible men had stronger claims to entry, while women traveling independently faced greater scrutiny. Respectability became a gatekeeping tool that allowed officials to determine not only who could enter, but which forms of womanhood and family life deserved recognition.[10]

These policies also reinforced existing gender expectations within many Chinese communities. Men often migrated first to earn money while wives remained in China caring for families. Arranged marriages and

limited opportunities made independent migration more difficult for women. The Page Act reinforced these expectations by favoring women who could prove they were joining respectable husbands or fathers, turning social expectations into federal rules enforced through detention, exclusion, and family separation.[11]

The consequences reshaped Chinese American communities. Restrictions on women's immigration produced heavily male communities and prolonged transnational "split-household" arrangements where parents, wives, and children remained in their home villages while Chinese male laborers worked in the U.S. Anti-miscegenation laws further constrained family formation, while immigration restrictions made it difficult for wives and families in China to join Chinese men in the United States. Together, these restrictions contributed to heavily male "bachelor" communities that were then used to portray Chinese immigrants as incapable of assimilation. Immigration policy thus helped create conditions that were later used to justify further exclusion. The Page Act did more than restrict entry. It helped determine whose families were legitimate and who could build a permanent life in the United States.[12]

From Local Hostility to Federal Exclusion

The Page Act established the federal government's growing role in deciding who could enter the United States and who was allowed to belong. Its passage reveals a striking juxtaposition in the nation's claimed and aspirational values. After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment established citizenship for people born or naturalized in the United States and guaranteed equal protection, and the Fifteenth protected voting rights for Black men. Yet during this same period, the federal government was developing new systems for determining who could be excluded from those promises of belonging.

After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, Chinese laborers moved into other industries and continued building businesses and communities across the West. Their labor had been welcomed, but whether they should have equal rights and the opportunity to become citizens remained a controversial political question. Economic depression during the 1870s intensified anti-Chinese sentiment as Chinese laborers were blamed for taking jobs from white workers and accepting lower wages. Denis Kearney and the Workingmen's Party of California transformed this resentment into an organized political movement with the rallying cry, "The Chinese Must Go!"[13]

Anti-Chinese rhetoric was accompanied by organized violence. White mobs murdered Chinese residents, burned homes and businesses, destroyed Chinatowns, and forcibly expelled communities across the West. Local officials sometimes participated in the violence or failed to protect Chinese residents, while discriminatory laws, boycotts, and labor campaigns reinforced these racial boundaries.[14]

By the time Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, exclusion was not a new idea. Chinese immigrants had already been portrayed as a racial and economic threat, targeted through local policies, and violently driven from communities. Federal law transformed these practices into national policy. Exclusion increasingly operated through inspectors, documentation, detention, deportation, and the courts, giving racial prejudice the authority and reach of the federal government.[15]

Chinese Exclusion Becomes Federal Policy

Chinese exclusion did not operate through a single law or restriction. Over time, federal laws and court decisions created different barriers that determined whether Chinese immigrants could become citizens, enter the country, return after leaving, or remain in the United States. In *In re Ah Yup* (1878), a federal court ruled

that Chinese immigrants were ineligible for naturalized citizenship because they did not qualify as “white persons” under federal naturalization law as originally established in 1790. *In re Ah Yup* focused on naturalization rather than citizenship acquired by birth, a distinction the Supreme Court would later affirm in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*.^[16]

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 created a different barrier by suspending the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years. Congress went further with the Scott Act of 1888, preventing many Chinese laborers who had already lived in the United States from returning after traveling abroad, even when they held valid reentry certificates. When longtime California resident Chae Chan Ping challenged his exclusion, the Supreme Court upheld the law and affirmed the federal government’s broad power to exclude noncitizens.^[17]

The federal government also needed a system to enforce these restrictions. The Immigration Act of 1891 helped establish immigration enforcement as a permanent federal responsibility, creating an office to oversee immigration and expanding federal authority over inspection, exclusion, and deportation. The Geary Act of 1892 extended this authority into the lives of Chinese residents already in the country by requiring Chinese laborers to register and obtain certificates proving their right to remain. Without them, they could face arrest, detention, and deportation.

Chinese immigrants challenged these expanding powers in court. In *Fong Yue Ting v. United States* (1893), the Supreme Court upheld the government’s broad authority to deport noncitizens, while *Wong Wing v. United States* (1896) established one limit by ruling that immigrants could not be imprisoned as punishment without the constitutional protections of a criminal trial.^[18] Chinese immigrants also resisted beyond the courts through community organizations, public protest, refusal to comply with discriminatory laws, and coordinated legal challenges.^[19]

These laws created a complicated reality for Chinese immigrants and their families. A Chinese immigrant could live and work in the United States for years without being eligible for naturalized citizenship and, after the Scott Act, could leave the country only to be denied return. Yet their U.S.-born children were American citizens. In *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898), the Supreme Court affirmed that the Fourteenth Amendment protected birthright citizenship for children born in the United States to Chinese immigrant parents who were themselves barred from naturalization. Together, these laws and cases demonstrate that the rights to become a citizen, enter or return to the country, and remain within it were legally distinct, even as each shaped who was allowed to belong.^[20]

Documentation, Interrogation, and Credibility

Although *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* established an important constitutional limit on the federal government’s power by affirming birthright citizenship, it did not dismantle the immigration system created during the era of Chinese exclusion. Even after his Supreme Court victory, Wong Kim Ark continued to face lengthy interrogations and repeated demands to prove his citizenship each time he returned from trips to China. When he later attempted to bring his children to the United States, immigration officials subjected them to the same system of interrogation, ultimately denying admission to one of his sons after days of questioning. Like many Chinese Americans during the exclusion era, proving one’s legal status often required extensive documentation and corroborating testimony, sometimes including affidavits from white witnesses whose statements immigration officials considered more credible than those of Chinese applicants themselves.^[21] The Court had answered one constitutional question by confirming who could claim birthright citizenship, but it left the practical question of admission largely in the hands of immigration officials.

Over the following decades, immigration became a process of investigation rather than simple inspection. Officials increasingly asked: *Who are you? Can you prove it? Are your documents authentic? Is your testimony believable? Are you healthy? Can you support yourself?* Although race and nationality remained central to immigration law, documentation, interrogation, and medical inspection gave officials new ways to determine who qualified for admission.

This scrutiny took different forms depending on who was being examined. Under the Page Act, Chinese women's appearance, behavior, sexuality, and family relationships could be used to distinguish "respectable" women from suspected prostitutes.[22] Under Chinese exclusion, inspectors examined marks on men's faces and bodies that they associated with manual labor, using these physical features as evidence of social class and eligibility for entry.[23] As medical exclusion expanded, officials increasingly examined bodies for evidence of disease, disability, dependency, and perceived fitness.[24] Across these practices, the body itself became a form of evidence from which officials attempted to project morality, class, health, and ability.

Angel Island Immigration Station illustrates how this system operated in practice. Although often called the "Ellis Island of the West," that comparison obscures its distinctive role in enforcing Asian exclusion.[25] Chinese exclusion was never absolute. Merchants, students, diplomats, certain family members, and U.S.-born citizens returning from abroad remained eligible to enter. Determining who genuinely qualified led officials to compare documents and testimony, investigate family relationships, conduct medical examinations, and subject immigrants to extensive questioning.[26]

At Angel Island, family members were often questioned separately while officials compared answers about village layouts, homes, neighbors, and daily routines. Questions about the direction of a doorway, the number of windows in a house, or where family members slept were designed to uncover inconsistencies that might reveal fraud, yet memory, translation, literacy, trauma, and prolonged detention could all affect a person's ability to answer consistently. Memoirs and oral histories describe the process as exhausting, humiliating, and intimidating because even a small discrepancy could threaten family reunification.[27] As one anonymous detainee wrote, Chinese immigrants endured "a hundred kinds of oppressive laws." [28]

Angel Island therefore raises a larger question: *What happens when belonging depends upon answering another person's questions correctly?* Admission rested not only on legal eligibility, but also on an immigrant's ability to remember, communicate, and persuade officials that they were telling the truth. Increasingly, that same power extended beyond judging an immigrant's story to judging whether their body, health, and perceived capacity for independence made them fit to enter.

Public Health and Racialized Disease

Passing an interrogation at Angel Island did not guarantee admission. Immigrants also had to satisfy federal physicians that their bodies met the nation's standards for entry. The Immigration Act of 1891 made medical inspection a federal responsibility, initially targeting "loathsome or dangerous contagious diseases." Later laws expanded scrutiny to physical and mental conditions associated with becoming "likely to become a public charge." As Amy Fairchild argues, physicians therefore became more than protectors of public health; they also judged whether immigrants appeared capable of working, supporting themselves, and contributing economically.[29]

Nayan Shah's concept of racialized public health helps explain how scientific judgments could reinforce racial prejudice. When bubonic plague appeared in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1900, officials quarantined the neighborhood, restricted Chinese residents' movement, and subjected them to compulsory inspections while

allowing many white residents greater freedom. Disease was real, but judgments about who represented danger were shaped by race.[30]

At Angel Island, these ideas became part of the admission process. Asian immigrants underwent blood draws, stool testing, and examinations for conditions such as hookworm and trachoma.[31] Medical inspections did not affect everyone in the same way. The consequences varied by nationality, class, gender, and legal status. Chinese immigrants encountered medical inspection alongside exclusion laws and interrogation; Japanese picture brides diagnosed with treatable conditions could sometimes remain for treatment if their husbands paid the associated costs; and Korean immigrants sometimes relied on organizations such as the Korean National Association to advocate for their admission.[32] These differences also reveal how medical inspection intersected with economic inequality. Access to treatment could depend on an immigrant's financial resources.

South Asian immigrants faced particularly aggressive medical scrutiny at Angel Island. After officials reported hookworm in 65 percent of South Asian applicants in 1910, all South Asian passengers were examined for the parasite. Medical examinations became part of a broader effort to restrict South Asian immigration, with officials also using subjective judgments about “physical or mental defects” to determine whether immigrants appeared capable of earning a living. [33] For those permitted to receive treatment, cost created another barrier. Hookworm treatment required a \$50 deposit, while treatment for trachoma could cost as much as \$300. Immigrants unable to afford treatment could be forced to accept exclusion and return home. Wealth could reduce some barriers, but it did not eliminate racial suspicion. Fairchild shows that race and class shaped medical scrutiny differently across ports. In San Francisco, however, fears about Asian labor became intertwined with racial assumptions, contributing to more intensive physical and bacteriological examinations of Asian immigrants.[34]

Chinese detainees themselves understood these examinations as more than routine medical care. Poems carved into the Angel Island barracks described blood tests, hookworm examinations, and physicians alongside broader experiences of humiliation and injustice. One detainee connected blood draws and hookworm testing to a larger pattern of oppressive treatment by American authorities.[35] Medical inspection was therefore experienced alongside detention, interrogation, and exclusion rather than as a neutral scientific procedure.

The consequences of exclusion extended beyond admission decisions. Erika Lee and Judy Yung recount the experience of Soto Shee, a pregnant Chinese woman who arrived at Angel Island with her husband and seven-month-old son in 1924. After officials ordered her excluded, her infant son died at the immigration station. Still detained and denied release on bond to be with her husband, Soto Shee attempted to take her own life.[36] Her experience reveals how decisions made at Angel Island could shape families and futures as well as legal status.

Medical inspection therefore functioned as more than a public health precaution. Physicians helped determine whether immigrant bodies met national expectations for health, labor, productivity, and independence. Medical authority could make political judgments about race and economic value appear scientifically objective. The same government that questioned whether an immigrant’s story was believable also claimed the authority to determine whether an immigrant’s body was fit for admission. As these evaluations expanded beyond contagious disease, officials increasingly scrutinized intelligence, behavior, and perceived capacity for independent living.

Disability, Dependency, and the “Public Charge”

By the turn of the twentieth century, immigration officials were asking far more than whether an immigrant carried a contagious disease. They also evaluated intelligence, behavior, communication, physical ability, and perceived capacity for independent living. Federal law excluded immigrants classified as “idiots,” “imbeciles,” the “feeble-minded,” the “insane,” or physically or mentally “defective.” Although these terms are now recognized as offensive and medically inaccurate, they functioned as official legal and medical categories at the time. Officials could also deny admission to immigrants considered “likely to become a public charge,” a category closely tied to assumptions about whether a person could work and support themselves without becoming economically dependent.[37]

Douglas Baynton argues that disability was not a minor feature of immigration policy. It was one of its organizing principles. Immigration officials made subjective judgments about whether a person's body and mind fit their expectations of an ideal immigrant who was independent, employable, intelligent, and economically productive. Anyone who failed to meet that ideal could be viewed as a threat to the nation's economy and even its hereditary future. Disability became one of the primary standards through which immigration officials decided who was fit for admission and membership in the nation.[38]

One of the clearest examples of how race and disability became intertwined in nineteenth-century science is the historical diagnosis “mongolian imbecility,” the now-obsolete and offensive term once used for what is now recognized as Down syndrome. In the 1860s, British physician John Langdon Down described children with intellectual disabilities using the racial theories of his era. He claimed that their physical features represented a biological “reversion” toward what he called the “Mongol racial type,” drawing on a pseudoscientific racial hierarchy that positioned white Europeans as more advanced and other racial groups as lower on an imagined evolutionary scale. Down also developed a broader “ethnological classification” of intellectual disability that included Mongolian, Ethiopian, American Indian, and Malay types. Decades later, similar assumptions entered immigration medicine. In 1913, Public Health Service physician Carlisle P. Knight advised immigration physicians that supposed “ethnological types” of intellectual disability could be identified through racialized physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, facial structure, and cheekbones.[39] By linking disability to race, physicians transformed prejudice into seemingly objective medical knowledge.

Across the nation's immigration system, officials also attempted to identify less visible intellectual disabilities through questioning, puzzles, picture interpretation, and intelligence tests. At Ellis Island, psychologist Henry Goddard advocated using the Binet-Simon intelligence test to identify immigrants classified at the time as “feeble-minded.” Goddard presented psychological testing as an improvement over physicians' observations, claiming that the Binet scale could identify far more supposedly intellectually disabled immigrants and thereby increase the number excluded. Yet his own account revealed problems with this approach. Tests administered through interpreters created linguistic and cultural barriers, while examiners sometimes selected immigrants for further testing based simply on their observations in the inspection line.[40] Howard Knox and Eugene Mullan later developed other approaches to mental examination, including tests involving cubes, puzzles, photographs, and picture interpretation, eventually recognizing that culture and life experience could influence performance.[41] Even as the methods changed, they still rested on the belief that intelligence and an immigrant's capacity for independence could be measured and used to determine fitness for admission.

When physicians identified an immigrant as having a disease or physical or mental condition relevant to admissibility, they issued a medical certificate that immigration officials could consider in determining

whether that person would be admitted or excluded. Boards of Special Inquiry could weigh those findings alongside an immigrant's occupation, finances, family support, and testimony. The question was rarely limited to whether someone had a disability. Officials also attempted to predict whether that condition would interfere with a person's ability to work or make them "likely to become a public charge." Because these decisions depended partly on predictions about future independence and productivity, immigration officials exercised considerable discretion in deciding who was considered fit for admission.[42]

These judgments could have profound consequences for families. Historian Yukako Otori documents the case of nine-year-old Ruchel Nisselholz, who arrived at Ellis Island with her mother in 1908 to join her father, a naturalized U.S. citizen living in St. Louis. After immigration officials suspected that Ruchel had an intellectual disability, a Board of Special Inquiry classified her using the historical legal category "idiot" and ordered her excluded. Her father challenged the decision, arguing that his daughter's behavior reflected excitement or distress rather than intellectual disability, but officials upheld the exclusion. Because Ruchel was a child traveling with her mother, the decision effectively prevented both from joining her father in the United States.[43]

Yet disability did not automatically result in exclusion. Thirteen-year-old Nunziato Romeo arrived in 1909 with extensive facial scarring, the loss of one eye, and a deformed hand caused by childhood injuries. Despite his visible disabilities and his family's poverty, officials admitted him. Otori argues that immigration authorities distinguished between different kinds of disability: physical conditions acquired through accident could be viewed differently from cognitive disabilities that eugenicists increasingly associated with heredity and permanent dependency. In Nunziato's case, officials interpreted his survival and perceived intelligence as evidence of his potential rather than as proof that he would become dependent.[44] His admission reveals that officials were not simply determining whether an immigrant was disabled. They were deciding what a particular disability supposedly revealed about that person's future.

The experience of thirteen-year-old Pasquale De Rienzo reveals how consequential those distinctions could become. Pasquale arrived in Philadelphia in 1910 and was classified by officials using the historical diagnosis "idiocy." His father, Domenico, had already tried several times to bring his son to the United States. By Pasquale's 1910 arrival, Domenico had become a naturalized U.S. citizen, owned a business, and was in a stronger financial position to support his child. Nevertheless, Pasquale was detained while his father challenged the exclusion in federal court, arguing that his citizenship should permit his minor son to join him. The courts rejected that argument. While the case was still being contested, Pasquale died in detention in 1911. Only after his death was his body released to his father for burial near the family's Pennsylvania home.[45]

These cases reveal how disability intersected with citizenship, class, age, family structure, and emerging ideas about heredity. Immigration officials were deciding far more than whether a child had a disability. They interpreted whether a condition appeared physical or cognitive, acquired or hereditary, whether a family could provide support, and whether the child might eventually become economically independent. Under the growing influence of eugenic thought, these judgments also carried assumptions about which children could contribute to the nation's future, and which were imagined as permanent dependents.[46]

Throughout history, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have also been judged against expectations of intelligence, independence, and productivity. Although immigrants and people with disabilities experienced discrimination in different ways, examining these histories through an intersectional lens allows students to consider how race, immigration status, disability, gender, and other identities shaped people's

experiences in different and overlapping ways. Asian American history looks different when examined through the lens of disability, just as examining it through ethnicity, gender, or class reveals different forms of exclusion, resistance, and belonging. No single lens can explain a person's experience completely. For students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, this approach offers an opportunity not only to understand the past, but also to recognize themselves as part of the questions history asks about whose differences are accepted, whose are used to justify exclusion, and who has the power to decide.

Creating Belonging

Exclusion, however, was never the whole story. Asian immigrants did not simply live within the boundaries created for them. Through legal challenges, community organizing, writing, family relationships, and collective action, they created lives and communities even when the law questioned whether they belonged. At Angel Island, writing became one powerful way of asserting that belonging. The government documented immigrants' names, occupations, family relationships, medical examinations, interrogations, and legal decisions, reducing individual lives to case files to be investigated and judged. Within the detention barracks, however, detainees found another way to tell their stories. They wrote.

Between 1910 and 1940, hundreds of Chinese detainees composed poems on the walls of the Angel Island barracks, many first written in ink and later carved into the wood. Their writing recorded experiences that rarely appeared in government files, including loneliness, anger, humiliation, hope, and determination. Some poems also spoke directly to other detainees. Poems 61 and 62, for example, draw upon Chinese history and cultural memory to encourage those experiencing confinement, placing their struggles within a longer history of people who endured hardship without surrendering their sense of self.[47] Writing therefore became more than a record of detention. It allowed detainees to communicate with one another, interpret their experiences through their own cultural frameworks, and leave behind a record in their own voices.

The poems reveal why having the opportunity to tell one's own story matters. Official immigration records documented how authorities classified and judged immigrants; the barracks walls recorded how detainees understood what was happening to them. Their poetry preserved anger, grief, resilience, humor, and hope while allowing detainees to interpret their experiences in their own words. Hsy describes the layered body of Angel Island poetry as a collectively authored archive that documented shared experiences of detention.[48] For people whose experiences have often been interpreted through the assumptions of a dominant culture, using one's voice can itself become a form of agency.

A testimony, poem, memoir, or memory cannot erase what happened, but it can challenge who gets to explain what happened and shape how that history is remembered. In this sense, literacy becomes more than the ability to read and write. It includes the power to preserve memory, name injustice, tell one's own story, and ensure that other people's interpretations are not the only ones that survive. The Angel Island detainees could not control the immigration files being created about them, but they could leave their own words behind.

That preservation of immigrant memory also appears in Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*; her memoir reveals another dimension of belonging. While the Angel Island poems capture experiences of confinement, Lee traces the longer work of building a life through family, education, labor, and community. Government policies could separate families, restrict movement, and deny citizenship, but they could not eliminate the relationships through which immigrants cared for one another and created lives in the United States.

Growing up experiencing Japanese colonialism and racial discrimination in the United States, Lee describes a

childhood shaped by poverty, hard work, and uncertainty. Everyone contributed to the family's survival, whether by earning wages, caring for younger siblings, preparing meals, or helping with family businesses. Lee does not describe these ordinary acts as resistance, but they reveal how immigrant families endured discrimination through work, education, storytelling, shared traditions, and care. Her father's advice to "speak up for yourself when the occasion demanded and stand up for what is right" remained with her throughout her life.[49] His words suggest that resilience was not only about surviving hardship. It was also about learning when to use your voice.

Lee's family was part of a broader process of community building. Families, churches, mutual-aid societies, businesses, schools, and cultural organizations created spaces where immigrants could share resources, preserve traditions, care for one another, and develop a sense of belonging even when American law treated them as outsiders. Community celebrations were part of this process. In *Making an American Festival*, the Chinese New Year Festival brought together cultural traditions, public celebrations, community organizations, and American customs, creating a public expression of Chinese American identity and belonging.[50]

Women were central to this work. Immigration policies often restricted Asian women's movement and family formation while reinforcing expectations that women would enter as wives, mothers, and dependents.[51] Yet women's labor was essential to the communities immigrants built. Across different immigrant experiences, women cared for families, contributed to household economies, operated businesses, and helped create homes that could also become places of support for other immigrants.[52]

Those relationships also made broader political organizing possible. South Asian immigrants established the Ghadar Party to challenge British colonial rule, while Korean immigrants built organizations that provided mutual aid, supported schools, and raised funds for Korean independence. Asian immigrant workers also formed labor organizations and mutual-aid societies to confront discrimination and exploitation.[53] The relationships that sustained everyday life could also provide the trust, leadership, and networks necessary for organized resistance.

Solidarity and the Making of Asian American

For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Asian immigrants were identified through categories created by governments and immigration officials. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and South Asian communities had distinct migration histories, yet each encountered systems that questioned their place in American society.[54] These communities did not initially understand themselves as belonging to a single racial or cultural group. Over time, however, shared experiences of exclusion, labor organizing, and political struggle created opportunities for connections across ethnic lines.

During the late 1960s, activists increasingly embraced Asian American identity not as a claim that Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, and other Asian communities shared the same culture or history, but as a political identity that could create solidarity across those differences. At San Francisco State College, the Asian American Political Alliance brought together students from different Asian backgrounds around opposition to racism and imperialism and a commitment to collective political action.[55]

Asian American activists also built connections with other communities fighting for racial and social justice. During the Third World Liberation Front movement at San Francisco State, Asian American students joined Black, Latino, and other students of color in demanding greater educational access, ethnic studies, and a curriculum that reflected the histories of communities long excluded from the classroom. Working in coalition allowed students from different communities to learn from one another, recognize connections among their

struggles, and develop shared demands without erasing the distinct experiences that brought them to the movement.[56]

The emergence of Asian American political organizing therefore represented more than the adoption of a new label. It offered activists a way to define themselves collectively while building solidarity across differences. Throughout this history, the federal government repeatedly claimed the authority to determine who belonged through immigration laws, racial classifications, medical examinations, and citizenship policies. Asian American communities responded by building relationships through family, culture, literacy, care, advocacy, and solidarity that existed beyond what the government could control.

That lesson extends beyond Asian American history. Solidarity empowers us to hold space for diverse perspectives without requiring people to share the same history or experience oppression in the same way. It requires recognizing those differences while understanding how struggles can intersect and choosing to act together. The creation of *Asian American* as a political identity demonstrates what can become possible when communities preserve their differences while building a shared purpose.

Teaching Strategies

Reading Like a Historian: Disciplinary Literacy

This unit uses disciplinary literacy to teach students to approach sources as historians rather than simply memorize facts.[57] Students ask who created a source, why it was created, whose voices are represented, and what evidence it provides. They apply these questions to immigration laws, photographs, memoirs, poetry, maps, medical documents, and oral histories, learning that historical sources offer perspectives rather than complete accounts of the past.

Building Understanding Through Scaffolding

Because many of my students are multilingual learners and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, each instructional cycle follows a predictable routine. Lessons move from explicit modeling and guided practice toward collaborative inquiry and independent reflection. This structure draws on the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, providing support while gradually increasing student independence.[58]

Developing Academic Language and Thinking

Students repeatedly encounter a small set of high-utility concepts, including *belonging*, *exclusion*, *citizenship*, *identity*, *resistance*, and *advocacy*, rather than memorizing long lists of isolated terms.[59] They also reflect on what they know, how evidence changes their thinking, and which strategies help them understand complex sources, building greater independence as learners.

Designing for Access: UDL

Universal Design for Learning is embedded throughout the unit rather than added after barriers emerge.[60] Students encounter history through photographs, maps, poetry, memoirs, oral histories, and government documents and can demonstrate understanding through writing, discussion, art, multimedia, or oral

presentation. These options provide different pathways to the same rigorous historical thinking.

Building Connections Across Time

The Historical Connections Framework helps students connect new knowledge to existing ideas and organize information around larger concepts. Each cycle moves from a historical case study to a contemporary parallel and then to a personal or community connection. Returning to concepts such as *belonging*, *exclusion*, *identity*, and *resistance* helps students recognize patterns across time rather than viewing historical events in isolation.

Together, these strategies make historical inquiry accessible without reducing its complexity. Students are supported in analyzing evidence, making connections, and developing their own interpretations of the past.

Classroom Activities

Who Belongs? Immigration, Disability, and the Making of Belonging is organized into three instructional cycles that examine belonging from different perspectives. The unit is designed for approximately eighteen instructional days, although individual lessons can be extended or divided based on student needs and class length.

Each cycle follows the same six-day structure. Days 1 and 2 introduce and investigate a historical case; Days 3 and 4 repeat that process with a contemporary case. On Day 5, Same Same... But Different, students compare the two using evidence to identify meaningful similarities and differences. On Day 6, Making Connections, students turn the larger question inward and begin a personal vignette.

Across the three cycles, students respond to three different questions about their own experiences: Where have I experienced belonging or exclusion? How have other people's assumptions or support affected what I believed I could do? How have I helped create belonging for myself or others? Each reflection becomes a vignette for the culminating memoir.

Cycle 1: Who Was Allowed to Belong?

This cycle examines how immigration law and public rhetoric have shaped who is allowed to enter the United States. Across historical and contemporary sources, students consider the same questions: Who is being restricted? What problem or threat is presented? What reasons or evidence are given? What action is taken?

Day 1: Encounter the History - Chinese Exclusion

Learning Objective: Students will build background knowledge about Chinese exclusion and identify who was restricted and why.

Students will examine historical images of Chinese immigration using See, Think, Wonder and learn the vocabulary exclusion, laborer, immigration, admission, and citizenship. They will then examine the preamble and Section 1 of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 using four recurring questions: Who was restricted? How did the law describe the problem? What reasons were given for the restriction? What action did the government authorize?[61] Students will begin a recurring graphic organizer that they will use throughout the

cycle to organize evidence into four categories: who is restricted, how a threat or problem is described, what reasons or evidence are offered, and what action is taken.

Day 2: Investigate the History - Constructing a Threat

Learning Objective: Students will analyze how language, reasons, and evidence were used to justify Chinese exclusion.

Students will closely read selected portions of “The Chinese Exclusion Act,” published in the *Bisbee Daily Review* on June 30, 1905.[62] The editorial can be located on page 4 through the Library of Congress Chronicling America collection. Students will examine language including “menace,” “contaminating influence,” and “unholy invasion,” as well as the editorial’s racist comparison of Chinese and Black laborers. Using the recurring questions, students will consider how the writer constructs Chinese immigration as a threat, what reasons are offered for exclusion, and what action the writer advocates. Students will add evidence to their recurring graphic organizer.

Day 3: Encounter the Present - Immigration Restrictions Today

Learning Objective: Students will build background knowledge about contemporary immigration restrictions and identify the reasons given for limiting entry.

Students will examine the introduction and Section 1, “Policy and Purpose,” of the December 16, 2025 presidential proclamation *Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States*.[63] The teacher will introduce foreign national, visa, restriction, national security, screening, and vetting. Students will apply the same four questions to identify who is restricted, what threat is presented, what reasons are given, and what action is taken. Students will add evidence to their recurring graphic organizer.

Day 4: Investigate the Present - Justifying Restriction

Learning Objective: Students will analyze how reasons and evidence are used to justify contemporary restrictions on entry.

Students will closely read Section 1 of the proclamation, focusing on Afghanistan as one of the countries whose nationals remain subject to full entry restrictions. Students will identify how the proclamation frames concerns about screening, vetting, information sharing, national security, and public safety and how those concerns are used to justify restrictions on entry. Using the recurring questions, students will identify who is restricted, how the perceived threat is described, what evidence or reasoning is offered, and what government action follows. Selected portions of Section 6 will be used to examine who may qualify for exceptions.

Day 5: Same Same... But Different

Learning Objective: Students will compare and contrast historical and contemporary arguments for immigration restrictions using evidence.

Students will use the evidence collected in their recurring graphic organizers to complete a *Same Same... But Different* comparison of the Chinese Exclusion Act and *Bisbee Daily Review* editorial with the 2025 proclamation. For each of the four categories, students will identify at least one meaningful similarity and one important difference: who was restricted, how a threat or problem was described, what reasons or evidence

were offered, and what action was taken. Students will use evidence from the sources to support their comparisons during a Socratic seminar and consider how differences in historical context, targeted populations, legal authority, and scope prevent the policies and arguments from being treated as equivalent.

Day 6: Making Connections

Learning Objective: Students will connect themes of access and belonging to a personal experience and develop that experience into a narrative vignette.

Students will apply the ideas from the Same Same... But Different organizer to their own experiences: When have I wanted to enter, join, or become part of something? What rule, expectation, or barrier affected my ability to participate? How did it affect me? What helped me gain access or feel that I belonged? Students will select one experience and develop it into a short narrative vignette about belonging, exclusion, or gaining access. This will become the first of three vignettes for their culminating memoir.

Cycle 2: Who Was Considered Fit to Belong?

This cycle examines how health, disability, and ideas about independence have shaped immigration decisions. Across historical and contemporary sources, students consider the same questions: What is noticed about the person? What assumption or judgment is made? Who has the power to make that judgment? How does the judgment affect the person's access or belonging?

Day 1: Encounter the History - Medical Inspection

Learning Objective: Students will build background knowledge about medical inspection at Angel Island and identify how immigrants' bodies and health were evaluated.

Students will examine photographs and short passages from the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation's digital exhibit *Under the Microscope: Medicine and Immigration—The Role of the Hospital on Angel Island*.^[64] Using See, Think, Wonder, students will record initial observations and build background knowledge about the medical inspection process. The teacher will introduce key vocabulary, including inspection, admissible, disease, disability, public charge, and hookworm. Students will then begin the cycle's recurring graphic organizer, recording evidence in four categories: what officials noticed about immigrants' bodies or health, what judgment or assumption followed, who had the power to make that judgment, and how the decision affected admission, treatment, detention, or exclusion.

Day 2: Investigate the History - Medical Judgment and Exclusion

Learning Objective: Students will use firsthand and secondhand sources to explain how medical judgments affected Chinese immigrants at Angel Island.

Students will closely read Poems 47–49 from *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*.^[65] Students will add evidence from the poems to their recurring graphic organizer, identifying what was noticed about detainees' bodies or health, what judgments followed, who held the power to make those judgments, and how they affected access or belonging. Students will then compare the detainees' descriptions of medical inspection with the photographs and informational passages from the *Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation's Under the Microscope* exhibit introduced on Day 1. They will consider what each source reveals about medical inspection and what might be missing when the history is told only through institutional records.

Day 3: Encounter the Present - Health and Admissibility

Learning Objective: Students will build background knowledge about how health and support needs can influence contemporary immigration decisions.

Students will preview Amanda Seitz’s KFF Health News article, “Immigrants With Health Conditions May Be Denied Visas Under New Trump Administration Guidance,” using See, Think, Wonder with the headline, photograph, caption, and other text features.[66] After learning key vocabulary, including visa, public charge, chronic condition, inadmissible, and financial resources, students will read selected portions explaining how health and financial circumstances may factor into visa decisions. Students will add evidence to their recurring graphic organizer, identifying what health or support need is noticed, what judgment about dependency or admissibility follows, who has the power to make that judgment, and how the decision may affect a person’s ability to enter or remain in the United States.

Day 4: Investigate the Present - Disability and Immigration Enforcement

Learning Objective: Students will use evidence to explain how judgments about disability and support needs can affect contemporary immigration experiences.

Students will read selected portions of Alison Stine’s “The Danger ICE Poses to the Disabled Community” in Nonprofit Quarterly, focusing on individual experiences involving communication, mobility, medical care, and accommodations.[67] Students will add evidence from these individual experiences to their recurring graphic organizer, identifying what was noticed about each person, what assumptions or judgments followed, who held decision-making power, and how those decisions affected access or belonging. Students will then compare these lived experiences with the broader policy context examined on Day 3, considering how government policies and institutional decisions can shape individual experiences.

Day 5: Same Same... But Different

Learning Objective: Students will compare and contrast how judgments about health, disability, and support needs affected immigration experiences across time. Students will use the evidence collected in their recurring graphic organizers to complete a Same Same... But Different comparison of medical inspection at Angel Island and contemporary immigration policies and experiences related to health and disability. For each of the four categories, students will identify at least one meaningful similarity and one important difference: what was noticed about individuals, what judgments were made, who held decision-making power, and how those judgments affected access or belonging. Students will use evidence from the sources to support their comparisons during a Socratic seminar. They will consider how differences in law, historical context, rights, and consequences prevent the two periods from being treated as equivalent.

Day 6: Making Connections

Learning Objective: Students will connect themes of assumptions, ability, and access to a personal experience and develop that experience into a narrative vignette.

Students will apply a related set of questions to their own experiences: What did someone notice about me? What did they assume I could or could not do? How did that assumption affect my ability to participate or belong? What helped me show what I could do or get the support I needed? Students may plan through writing, drawing, oral storytelling, sequencing, or AAC before developing one experience into a short vignette.

about being understood, misunderstood, underestimated, or supported. This vignette will become the second of three for their culminating memoir.

Cycle 3: How Did People Create Belonging?

This cycle examines how Asian immigrants and refugees created belonging through support, advocacy, accommodations, and community. Across three different experiences, students consider the same question: What do people need in order to participate and belong, and how can others help create those conditions?

Day 1: Encounter the History - Finding Your Voice

Learning Objective: Students will explain how relationships and self-advocacy can help people respond to barriers to belonging.

Students will read pages 44 and 56 of Mary Paik Lee’s *Quiet Odyssey*.^[68] On page 44, Lee describes her father encouraging her to think independently and speak up for what is right. On page 56, she applies that lesson when she challenges racism and inaccurate representations of Asian history at school. The teacher will introduce barrier, support, advocacy, and belonging. Students will begin the cycle’s recurring graphic organizer by identifying four elements: What barrier existed? What did the person need? Who or what provided support? What changed?

Day 2: Investigate the History - Removing Barriers

Learning Objective: Students will explain how environments and accommodations can affect a person’s ability to participate and belong.

Students will read pages 67 and 145 of Kao Kalia Yang’s *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*.^[69] On page 67, Dawb’s uneven legs make walking on the hard ground of the refugee camp difficult. Later, in the United States, a modification to her shoes improves her mobility. Students will compare these experiences and consider how environment and access to accommodations can affect the impact of a disability. Students will also consider the linguistic barriers Yang encounters after migration. The teacher will introduce disability, accommodation, access, and environment. Students will add evidence to their recurring graphic organizer, identifying the barrier, what was needed, what support or change was provided, and what difference it made.

Day 3: Encounter the Present - Refugee Resettlement

Learning Objective: Students will identify barriers experienced by recently arrived refugees and the supports communities create in response.

Students will preview the photographs, captions, and selected portions of Héctor Alejandro Arzate’s “‘We Are There To Fill In The Gap’: Resource Center For Afghan Refugees Opening In Alexandria,” which describes a resource center established by Women for Afghan Women.^[70] The teacher will introduce refugee, resettlement, language access, community, and services. Students will add evidence to their recurring graphic organizer by identifying barriers involving language, education, healthcare, housing, employment, and navigating unfamiliar systems. They will consider what people needed, what forms of support were available, and how those supports could increase access and belonging.

Day 4: Investigate the Present - Building Community

Learning Objective: Students will use evidence to explain how communities can create conditions that help people participate and belong.

Students will investigate how Women for Afghan Women responds to the barriers identified on Day 3. Using the organization's United States programs page, students will examine examples such as case management, legal assistance, English and citizenship classes, mental health services, employment support, and youth programs.[71] Students will add evidence to their recurring graphic organizer, connecting specific barriers with the people, services, and relationships designed to address them. Students will consider what these examples reveal about how communities can create access and belonging.

Day 5: Same Same... But Different

Learning Objective: Students will compare and contrast how support and access shaped belonging across different Asian immigrant and refugee experiences.

Students will use the evidence collected in their recurring graphic organizers to complete a *Same Same... But Different* comparison of Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*, Kao Kalia Yang's *The Latehomecomer*, and Women for Afghan Women. For each of the four categories, students will identify meaningful similarities and differences in the barriers people encountered, what they needed, who or what provided support, and what changed as a result. Students will use evidence from the sources to support their comparisons during a Socratic seminar. They will consider how Lee's family helped her develop the confidence to advocate for herself, how changes to Dawb's environment increased her physical access, and how Women for Afghan Women provides resources and relationships that help newcomers navigate unfamiliar systems. Students will connect these examples to a larger pattern explored throughout the unit: immigrant communities have built networks of family, cultural organizations, mutual aid, and political solidarity that allowed people not only to endure exclusion, but also to support one another and create collective power.

Day 6: Making Connections

Learning Objective: Students will connect themes of support, access, and belonging to a personal experience and develop that experience into a narrative vignette.

Students will apply the same questions to their own lives: What barrier have I encountered? What did I need? Who or what supported me? What changed? They may also consider a time when they helped remove a barrier for someone else. Students will select one experience and develop it through writing, drawing, oral storytelling, sequencing, or AAC before creating their third memoir vignette. This final vignette asks students to consider how belonging can be created through support, access, advocacy, relationships, or community and how they can contribute to creating belonging for others.

Culminating Memoir

Together, the three vignettes tell a larger story about belonging. Students reflect on a time they experienced belonging or exclusion, a time when someone's assumptions or support affected what they believed they could do, and a time when they experienced or helped create belonging through support, access, advocacy, or community. Like the memoirs, poetry, and testimony studied throughout the unit, students' stories become a way to preserve their experiences in their own voices and consider how individual stories can shape the way

others understand identity, difference, and belonging.

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

- ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1: “Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.”

Throughout the unit, students analyze adapted primary and secondary sources, including immigration laws, photographs, poetry, memoirs, and contemporary texts. Using recurring questions and graphic organizers, students identify evidence and use details from sources to explain how laws, institutions, and communities shaped immigration, exclusion, and belonging.

- ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1: “Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.”

Collaborative discussion is embedded throughout the three instructional cycles. Students use evidence to compare historical and contemporary experiences during *Same Same... But Different* discussions and Socratic seminars. Students may participate through speech, AAC, gestures, symbols, writing, or other established communication systems.

- ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3: “Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.”

Students apply their study of memoir, poetry, and testimony to create three personal vignettes about belonging, assumptions, support, advocacy, and community. These vignettes become a culminating memoir in which students preserve and communicate their own experiences. Students may compose through writing, dictation, AAC, photographs, symbols, or other multimodal forms based on individual communication needs.

Resources

- Chinese Exclusion Act (1882). Selected portions of the preamble and Section 1 will be used to examine who was restricted, how exclusion was justified, and what action the federal government authorized.
- “The Chinese Exclusion Act,” *Bisbee Daily Review* (1905). Selected passages from the Library of Congress Chronicling America collection will be used to analyze how racialized language constructed Chinese immigration as a threat.
- 2025 Presidential Proclamation, *Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States*. Selected portions will be used to examine contemporary immigration restrictions, with particular attention to Afghanistan and the national security, screening, and vetting concerns presented as justification for restrictions on entry.
- Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, *Under the Microscope: Medicine and Immigration—The Role of the Hospital on Angel Island*. Photographs and informational passages will be used to introduce medical inspection, health classifications, and admissibility at Angel Island.

- Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910–1940*. Poems 47–49 on page 100 will be used to examine Chinese detainees’ experiences of medical inspection and compare their perspectives with institutional accounts.
- Amanda Seitz, “Immigrants With Health Conditions May Be Denied Visas Under New Trump Administration Guidance,” *KFF Health News*. Selected portions will be used to examine contemporary connections among health, financial resources, public charge, and admissibility.
- Alison Stine, “The Danger ICE Poses to the Disabled Community,” *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Selected individual experiences will be used to investigate how disability, communication, mobility, medical care, and accommodations can intersect with immigration enforcement.
- Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America*. Pages 44 and 56 will be used to examine family support, racism, education, voice, and self-advocacy.
- Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*. Pages 67 and 145 will be used to examine disability, environmental barriers, accommodations, migration, and access.
- Héctor Alejandro Arzate, “‘We Are There To Fill In The Gap’: Resource Center For Afghan Refugees Opening In Alexandria,” *DCist/WAMU*. Photographs, captions, and selected passages will be used to identify barriers experienced by Afghan refugees in the DMV and introduce community responses to resettlement needs.
- Women for Afghan Women, “United States.” Selected program descriptions will be used to investigate how community organizations respond to barriers through language access, legal assistance, education, healthcare navigation, employment support, and relationships.

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