

Teaching history from **DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:**

First Grade Lesson on Chinatowns in the U.S. and Latin America

GA Social Studies Standards

SS1G2 Identify and locate the student's city, county, state, nation (country), and continent on a simple map or a globe.

SS1G3 Locate major topographical features of the earth's surface.

a. Locate all of the continents: North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Antarctica, and Australia.

b. Locate the major oceans: Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific, Southern, and Indian.

Chinatowns are a popular tourist attraction in cities like San Francisco, New York City, and Los Angeles, but did you know that they exist all over the world? While most people associate Chinatowns with authentic food, colorful souvenirs, and garment factories, they have a long history grounded in labor and racism that is often unknown.

In the 1800s, many Chinese left their homes to come to the United States. While their labor was essential to the completion of the railroad, Chinese workers were often viewed very negatively by their Irish counterparts and by U.S. citizens broadly. This led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers. Consequently, prospective Chinese sojourners looked elsewhere for work, and many Chinese opted to emigrate to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chinese contract laborers were recruited after the end of the slave trade to fill labor shortages on sugar plantations in Cuba and sugar and

cotton plantations as well as guano mining in Peru. Between 1847 and 1874, 125,000 Chinese immigrated to Cuba to work on plantations; thousands more immigrated to work in other areas after Cuban independence. When labor contracts ended, some Chinese returned home while others stayed and signed new contracts or worked as free laborers. Chinese who settled in Cuba and Peru created ethnic enclaves where they established businesses. Today, Havana has the largest Chinatown in Latin America.

Chinese laborers migrated to northern Mexico starting in 1876. Chinese in Mexico held a wide range of occupations: most laborers worked in



agriculture or in unskilled jobs in cities, while a larger number were merchants and skilled artisans. Some only intended to stay in Mexico for a short time, later crossing the border into the United States. Although there were only 1,023 Chinese in Mexico in 1895, after an official treaty was established between Mexico and China in 1899, the numbers rose quickly. By 1926, there were 24,218 Chinese in Mexico, making up the second largest foreign population after Spaniards. However, anti-Chinese sentiment grew due to economic concerns during the Mexican Revolution. In the state of Sonora, laws were passed that relegated Chinese houses and stores to specific neighborhoods (known as barrios chinos) and required that Mexicans make up 80% of the workforce for foreign-owned businesses. These anti-Chinese views ultimately led to the expulsion and deportation of Chinese across the country to different degrees. Some Chinese headed inland to Mexico City, where they built businesses around the city's historic center and formed a small Chinatown.

Unfortunately, like many Chinatowns around the world, barrios chinos in Mexico, Cuba, and Peru have mostly gone into decline as fewer ethnic Chinese continue to live in them due to other economic and housing opportunities. Recent Chinese immigrants have settled in Argentina and Brazil, where they have created Chinatowns in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, in addition to smaller Chinatowns in Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, French Guiana, and Venezuela.



Complete Article and Lesson Plan



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