Teaching history from
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

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Asian American Voices for Education

6th Grade Lesson Plan on
Geographies of Exclusion: Transnational Asian Migration through Canada and Latin America

Georgia Social Studies Standards

SS6G3 Explain the impact of location, climate, distribution of natural resources, and population distribution on Latin America.

SS6G5 Explain the impact of location, climate, distribution of natural resources, and population distribution on Canada.

Background Information

To master 6th-grade geography, students must understand that location, climate, and natural resources shape not only where people live but also how migration occurs. At the turn of the twentieth century, the geography of Canada and Latin America became deeply connected to Asian American history. After the **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882** restricted immigration through U.S. West Coast ports, many Asian migrants turned to Canada and Mexico as alternative routes into the United States.



The Canadian Corridor (SS6G5)

Because India and Canada were both part of the British Empire, many Punjabi Sikh men legally entered Canada as British subjects and settled in British Columbia, where forests supported a booming lumber industry. In 1908, however, Canada's Continuous Journey Regulation effectively ended South Asian immigration by requiring immigrants to arrive on a nonstop voyage from their home country - a route that did not exist from India.

Unable to reunite with their families and facing discrimination, many South Asian workers crossed the largely unmonitored U.S.-Canada border through the forests and mountains of the Pacific Northwest. They found work on American railroads and farms, illustrating how physical geography influenced migration.





Latin America and Mexico (SS6G3)

Following the abolition of slavery, countries across Latin America recruited Chinese and South Asian indentured laborers to work in mines, plantations, and railroad construction. Peru attracted Chinese and Japanese workers, while Mexico expanded railroads into its northern mining regions.
Because Chinese immigrants were barred from entering the United States directly, many traveled first to Mexico, then used its rail network to reach the U.S. border. The harsh deserts of northern Mexico made border enforcement difficult, allowing underground networks to emerge that helped migrants cross into the American Southwest.

Historical and Modern Connections

These migration patterns continued to shape history. During World War II, more than 2,200 Japanese Peruvians were deported to U.S. incarceration camps after pressure from the U.S. government. Decades later, **Tereza Lee**, whose story inspired the original DREAM Act, followed another transnational migration route: her family moved from South Korea to Brazil before settling in Chicago. Together, these examples show how geography, borders, and migration have remained deeply interconnected across generations.



Complete Article and Lesson Plan

Photo Credit:
(Top to Bottom, Left to Right)

1. Sikh sawmill workers of the North Pacific Lumber Company at Barnet, photographed by Philip Timms, B.C., Canada, ca.1900's. Via Vancouver Public Library/Public domain https://localhistory.vpl.ca/link/photos6438
2. Frederic Remington's "Chinese immigrant dying of thirst in the Mohave Desert, 1800s." Racist cartoon via https://crossculturalsolidarity.com/the-origins-of-border-crossing-and-border-policing/
3. PBS LearningMedia. (2021, February 24). Tereza Lee and undocumented Asian America: Asian Americans: Grades 6-8, 9-12 social studies teaching and Lesson Resources. PBS

Contact us at **info@aaved.org**

History is the context of "**now**", "**why**", and "**how**".

Teach interwoven history.



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