# Needed, Yet Rejected

Asian immigrants' work and the hostility they faced, 1865 to 1900

**SS24.US1.15a** "Describe the economic contributions of Asian immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century and the hostility they faced in the United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline at least three economic contributions and circle at least three examples of hostility. Write the same number beside one contribution and one hostile response that show a contrast.

### Work That Built Communities

1. In the late 1860s, Chinese immigrants helped the Central Pacific Railroad build its portion of the transcontinental railroad across the Sierra Nevada. Crews drilled through granite, cleared snow, and laid track through steep terrain. The finished line linked western markets to farms and factories farther east, making the movement of goods faster. Yet Chinese workers were often paid less than white workers and had to pay for their own food. Some white laborers claimed Chinese workers took jobs, even while railroad companies depended on their work. The workers' vital contribution did not protect them from unequal treatment.

2. After the railroad was completed in 1869, many Chinese immigrants worked on California farms, in fishing, and in small businesses such as laundries. Their labor helped supply growing towns with food and everyday services. Japanese immigrants also arrived in larger numbers in the 1880s and 1890s. Many worked on sugar plantations in Hawaii, which the United States annexed in 1898; others farmed in California. Plantation owners needed their labor, but Japanese workers faced low wages and difficult conditions. In California, some white residents treated Japanese farmworkers as unwelcome competitors rather than recognizing their role in producing crops.

3. Hostility toward Chinese immigrants went beyond unfair pay. In 1871, a mob attacked and killed Chinese residents in Los Angeles. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, barring most Chinese laborers from entering the United States. Three years later, white miners killed Chinese miners in Rock Springs, Wyoming, and drove others from their homes. Some opponents blamed Chinese workers for low wages, but employers' pay decisions and wider economic changes also shaped wages. Violence and exclusion targeted people who had helped build transportation routes, produce food, and serve communities. Their economic value and the hostility they faced existed side by side.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Chinese railroad workers help the economy, and what unequal treatment did they face?

2. Compare one economic contribution made by Chinese immigrants in California with one made by Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. What hostility or unfair treatment did each group face?

3. How does the passage challenge the claim that Chinese workers alone caused low wages? Include one contribution they made and one other factor that shaped wages.

4. What contrast does the Chinese Exclusion Act create with the work Chinese immigrants performed in the United States?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum label of 70 to 95 words about Asian immigrants' work and the hostility they faced between 1865 and 1900. Include one Chinese contribution, one Japanese contribution, one example of hostility toward each group, and an explanation of why their treatment was a contradiction.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.15a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline at least three economic contributions and circle at least three examples of hostility. Write the same number beside one contribution and one hostile response that show a contrast. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did Chinese railroad workers help the economy, and what unequal treatment did they face? | **They built track that helped goods move faster between western and eastern markets. They were often paid less than white workers and had to buy their own food.** |
| 2 | Compare one economic contribution made by Chinese immigrants in California with one made by Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. What hostility or unfair treatment did each group face? | **Chinese immigrants helped supply California towns with food and services, but faced violence and exclusion. Japanese immigrants worked on Hawaiian sugar plantations, but faced low wages and difficult conditions.** |
| 3 | How does the passage challenge the claim that Chinese workers alone caused low wages? Include one contribution they made and one other factor that shaped wages. | **Chinese workers helped build the railroad, which sped the movement of goods. The passage says employers' pay decisions and wider economic changes also shaped wages.** |
| 4 | What contrast does the Chinese Exclusion Act create with the work Chinese immigrants performed in the United States? | **Chinese immigrants helped build transportation routes and supply communities, yet the act barred most Chinese laborers from entering the country.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Chinese crews helped build the Central Pacific Railroad through the Sierra Nevada, speeding the movement of goods. Japanese immigrants worked on Hawaiian sugar plantations, helping produce a valuable crop. Yet Chinese immigrants faced violence, including attacks by white miners at Rock Springs in 1885. In California, some white residents treated Japanese farmworkers as unwelcome competitors, although their labor helped produce food. These reactions reveal a contradiction: employers and communities benefited from Asian immigrants' work while prejudice led others to deny those workers safety, respect, and fair treatment.

Accept other contributions and examples of hostility stated in the passage. For the museum label, look for accurate examples concerning both groups and a clear explanation of the contrast between economic reliance and hostile treatment.