Work and Exclusion

Chinese immigrants and the nineteenth-century economy

USH.C.1.4.D "Describe the contributions of Chinese immigrants to the national economy and nativist opposition to their continued immigration."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways Chinese immigrants strengthened the economy, circle two examples of opposition, and label one contribution and one opposing action with the same number to show a contradiction.

Building an Economy, Facing Exclusion

1 In the 1860s, thousands of Chinese immigrants worked for the Central Pacific Railroad. Crews blasted tunnels through the Sierra Nevada, laid track, and faced dangerous weather. Their labor helped connect the nation's eastern and western rail networks in 1869. The new route moved passengers, farm goods, and manufactured products across the country faster than earlier routes. Railroad companies profited, and businesses far from the tracks gained access to wider markets. Chinese workers were essential to this growing national economy.

2 Railroads were only one part of the story. Chinese immigrants also mined gold, raised crops in California, and ran laundries, restaurants, and shops. Farmers sold food to towns and cities, while small businesses served workers and travelers. These jobs brought goods and services to local communities and supported trade beyond them. Yet economic contributions did not protect Chinese immigrants from hostility. During the 1870s, economic downturns sharpened competition for jobs, especially in western cities.

3 Some labor leaders and politicians blamed Chinese workers for low wages and claimed that excluding them would protect white workers. These claims ignored the value of Chinese labor and drew on racist ideas that Chinese people could not belong in American society. Mobs sometimes attacked Chinese communities, and lawmakers pushed restrictions. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which suspended immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years. A nation that benefited from their work had closed a major route for future immigration.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Chinese railroad workers help businesses beyond the railroad?

2. Choose one job Chinese immigrants did besides railroad work. How did it support a community?

3. What did opponents claim about Chinese workers, and what other idea fueled their opposition?

4. How did the Chinese Exclusion Act contrast with the economic role described in the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 55- to 75-word museum caption explaining the contrast between Chinese immigrants' economic contributions and the opposition they faced. Include two kinds of work, one reason opponents gave, and the effect of the 1882 law.

ANSWER KEY

Work and Exclusion

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.1.4.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways Chinese immigrants strengthened the economy, circle two examples of opposition, and label one contribution and one opposing action with the same number to show a contradiction. 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 businesses beyond the railroad?	**They helped connect rail networks, allowing businesses to move goods faster and reach wider markets.**
2	Choose one job Chinese immigrants did besides railroad work. How did it support a community?	**For example, Chinese farmers raised crops and sold food to towns and cities.**
3	What did opponents claim about Chinese workers, and what other idea fueled their opposition?	**They blamed Chinese workers for low wages. Racist ideas that Chinese people did not belong also fueled opposition.**
4	How did the Chinese Exclusion Act contrast with the economic role described in the passage?	**Chinese immigrants helped build the economy, but the act stopped Chinese laborers from immigrating for ten years.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

From mountain tunnels to California farms, Chinese immigrants helped build rail lines and grow food for western markets. The railroad linked businesses across the country, while farm products fed growing communities. Yet some politicians blamed Chinese workers for low wages and treated them as outsiders. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 stopped Chinese laborers from immigrating for ten years. The country relied on their work while restricting future immigration.

Accept any two kinds of work and accurate economic effects supported by the passage. Captions should distinguish opponents' claims from historical fact and explain the contradiction between economic benefit and exclusion.