



Chinese Head Tax & Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 - Activity

Incorporating sources from UBC Library's Open Collections into your classroom can help students build their historical thinking through analyzing, contextualizing, and inferring using historical texts.

This activity will involve analyzing textual primary sources about Chinese immigration during the mid to late 1800s in Canada. The purpose of this activity is to give students practice in analyzing digital primary sources, to understand the context in which the sources were made, and to investigate the causes and consequences of opinions and actions on economic, political, social, and cultural historical practices.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Handouts (on back)

Computers to access Open Collections Digital Primary Sources

OPEN COLLECTIONS DIGITAL PRIMARY SOURCES

Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration (<https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0222445>)

British Columbia Legislative Assembly to the Lieutenant-Governor (<https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0063174>)

ACTIVITY

1. Give each student a copy of the handout on the back of this sheet. Have students form groups and read Mr. Robins' testimony on page 164-165 in *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration*. Explain that the students are going to examine the primary source to understand historical perspectives and to avoid imposing present day ideals on the past.
2. Have students share what they found with the class focusing on the creator's point of view and the message they created in the sources. Focus on the following discussion:
 - Who is Mr. Robins? What is Mr. Robins' point of view on Chinese labour?
 - How has his view changed over time? Why has his view changed in relation to Chinese labour?
3. Have students complete the second part of the handout by analyzing the *British Columbia Legislative Assembly to the Lieutenant-Governor*.
4. Have students share what they found with the class focusing on the creator's point of view and the message they created in the sources. Focus on the following discussion:
 - What decision has been made regarding Chinese immigration? How would this decision impact Chinese labour in British Columbia? How could this decision impact Chinese communities in British Columbia?
5. As a class discuss:
 - Thinking about these two documents, how has the perspectives mentioned by Robins' impacted policy in British Columbia in 1892? What are the reasons for this impact on policy?

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY

To recognize the vast differences in past and present worldviews engage students in the following creative thinking exercise:

- Thinking about modern day Canada what different perspectives on immigration exist between the past and the present? How have perspectives changed or stayed the same?
- If Mr. Robins' was walking around modern day Vancouver, what would he think about our actions in relation to immigration? How do you know?

For additional resources, including how to search Open Collections for primary sources, visit:
<http://guides.library.ubc.ca/PrimarySourcesEducators>

Bring British Columbia history to life in the classroom with UBC's Open Collections



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Primary Source Analysis

Primary Source: <i>Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration</i> Go to page 164-165		Primary Source: <i>British Columbia Legislative Assembly to the Lieutenant-Governor.</i>	
URL: https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0222445		URL: https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0063174	
What type of source is it?	When was it created?	What type of source is it?	When was it created?
Who authored/created it?		Who authored/created it?	
What point of view/position does Mr. Robins' represent?		What decision was made regarding Chinese immigration? How would this decision impact Chinese labour in British Columbia?	
How has Mr. Robins' view changed over time? Why has his view changed in relation to Chinese labour?		How could this decision impact Chinese communities in British Columbia?	

Modified from Use Primary Source Evidence Template – P. Seixas, *Historical Thinking* (<http://historicalthinking.ca/>)