
Sample Lesson 29: The Sikh American Community in California

Theme: History and Movement

Disciplinary Area: Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 2, 3

Standards Alignment:

HSS Framework Alignment

- Chapter 7: Grade Four, California: A Changing State
- Chapter 11: Grade Seven, World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times
- Chapter 12: Grade Eight, United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict

LESSON PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW:

This lesson introduces students to the history of Sikh immigration to the United States West Coast, patterns of settlement, and how the Sikh community has responded to the challenges and opportunities it has encountered in California over time. This lesson plan can be used at any time immigration is being discussed but is designed to explore the history of Sikh contributions to California.

Key Terms and Concepts: assimilation, integration, stereotype, identity, racism, religion, culture, migration, diaspora, farming, industry, economy

Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to ...):

- Students will be able to understand Sikh identity, Sikh migration to California, and Sikh contributions to California's history through articles and videos.
- They will have opportunities to address essential and compelling questions through tasks such as creating lists and graphics, writing paragraphs, and conducting arguments with evidence from featured historical and contemporary sources.

Essential Questions:

1. What is Sikhism?
2. How did Sikhs immigrate to California?
3. How did Sikhs shape California's history?

Lesson Steps/Activities:

This lesson has been structured into three parts to address the three essential questions. It is expected to take four to five 40-minute class periods but can be adapted as necessary.

1. What is Sikhism?

The first essential question has students understand the fundamental beliefs and practices of the Sikh religion. The formative performance task asks students to list the important tenets of Sikhism using featured sources.

The featured sources for this question are two short video clips from the CNN show *United Shades of America* with W. Kamau Bell and an informational chapter about Sikhism from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Featured source A (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link345>) is a video clip (4 minutes and 40 seconds) that provides an introduction to Sikhism. Featured source B (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link346>) is a video clip (3 minutes and 8 seconds) on the Sikh turban. Featured source C (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link347>) is a short chapter about Sikhism from the National Council for the Social Studies bulletin, *Teaching About Religion in the Social Studies Classroom*.

Formative Performance Task: Make a list of the important tenets of Sikhism.

2. How did Sikhs immigrate to California?

For this question, students create a graphic that shows how Sikhs immigrated to America, noting the contextual factors that impacted the community using featured sources.

Featured source A (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link348>) is another short video segment from *United Shades of America* with W. Kamau Bell. The clip discusses farming and Sikh immigration to the United States. Featured source B (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link349>) is a world map of Punjab, India, illustrating the route Sikhs took to the United States. Featured source C (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link350>) is a 2012 newspaper article by Benjamin Gottlieb in *The Washington Post* entitled “Punjabi Sikh-Mexican American community fading into history.” Featured source D (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link351>) is a 2011 speech by Bruce La Brack entitled “A Century of Sikhs in California.”

Formative Performance Task: Create a graphic that shows how Sikhs immigrated to California, noting the contextual factors that impacted the community.

3. How did Sikhs shape California’s history?

For this question, students write a paragraph about one of the featured case studies, focusing on how that example shaped an aspect of American history.

Featured sources A–C are case studies on the following: Narinder Singh Kapany (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link352>), Dalip Singh Saund (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link353>), and the 2012 Assembly Bill 1964 policy (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link354>). Together, these sources focus on three unique and compelling stories of how the Sikh community has shaped American history.

Formative Performance Task: Write a paragraph about one of the case studies and how that example shaped an aspect of California’s history.

Summative Performance Task:

Argument

How have Sikh Americans responded to the challenges and opportunities in California? Construct an argument (in detailed outline, poster, or essay format, for example) that discusses this compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from the historical and contemporary sources.

Taking Informed Action

- **Assessment:** Examine how the CNN show *United Shades of America* on the Sikh community in Northern California attempts to raise awareness about Sikhism.
- **Application:** Discuss how using popular media and pop culture may shape attitudes toward Sikhs.
- **Action and Reflection:** Determine how you might help the Sikh community with their campaign.

Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:

These areas are integrated into the lesson plan and summative performance task.

Materials and Resources:

Sources for Essential Question 1: **Source A:** Video, *United Shades of America*, W. Kamau Bell, “Introduction to Sikhism” segment (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link355>); **Source B:** Video, *United Shades of America*, W. Kamau Bell, “Sikh Turban” segment (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link356>); **Source C:** Chapter, “Teaching About Sikhism” (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link357>) in an NCSS publication.

Sources for Essential Question 2: **Source A:** Video, *United Shades of America*, W. Kamau Bell, “Farming and Immigration” segment (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link358>); **Source B:** “World Map of Punjab, India, and immigration route to United States” (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link359>); **Source C:** Article, “Punjabi

Sikh-Mexican American community fading into history” by Benjamin Gottlieb (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link360>); **Source D**: Speech, “A Century of Sikhs in California” by Bruce La Brack (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link361>).

Sources for Essential Question 3: **Source A**: Case study, Narinder Singh Kapany (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link362>); **Source B**: Case study, Dalip Singh Saund (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link363>); **Source C**: Case study, AB 1964 policy (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link364>).