



**TITLE**

# SIKH & U.S. IMMIGRATION HISTORY

GRADE LEVEL: 6-12TH

**DISCIPLINE:** History, English

**TOPIC:** Sikh identity, history, and culture; U.S. immigration history (1907 Bellingham Riots, Asiatic Exclusion League, National Origins Act of 1924)

**STANDARDS:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1, 6-8.2, 6-8.4, 6-8.5, 6-8.6, 6-8.7, 6-8.8, 6-8.9  
\*Recommended as a supplement for middle/ intermediate school history, APUSH (Period 7), AP Gov. Integrated with the following periods of U.S. History: The Progressive Era (1896-1916) and the start of WWI.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Understand the origins of Sikh immigration in the United States
- Analyze the historical context that preceded the 1907 Bellingham Riots
- Discover the connection between Sikh history and U.S. immigration Acts

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- Who are the Sikh, and how did their immigration story contribute to U.S. immigration history?
- Why is it important to understand the development of the Asiatic Exclusion League and subsequent immigration acts? How can we see their impacts today?
- How can immigration legislation impact the way the American public perceives immigrants?

**KIT INCLUDES:**

- Introduction Video, ["Who Are the Sikhs?"](#) Sikh Coalition
- Sikh [Awareness Presentation](#) Handout
- [Sikh & U.S. Immigration History Presentation](#) (Student-Facing)
- Concentric Circles Activity (Slide 15, Presentation)
- Student Handout: [Primary Source Analysis Research](#)
- Activity (Slide 25, Presentation)

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- [Sikh & U.S. Immigration History Educator Guide](#)
- [Sikh & U.S. Immigration History Presentation \(Student-Facing\)](#)
- [Student Handout: Primary Source Analysis](#)

**CLASSROOM HOURS NEEDED:**

Varies based on chosen activity and can be adapted to fit different instructional periods. Specific activities will include recommended timeframes.

**FINAL ASSESSMENT TYPE:**

Primary Source Analysis; Research Activity

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## INTRODUCTION

This lesson plan focuses on a general overview of Sikhism (also known as Sikhi), Sikh immigration to the United States, and how Sikh immigrants played a role in the development of early immigration laws. Despite its geographical and cultural similarities to Hinduism or Islam, it is important to emphasize that Sikhism is a religion distinct from either Hinduism or Islam.

Educators should begin the lesson plan by familiarizing themselves with the [background information](#) necessary to facilitate this lesson plan. This can be found in the [Sikh & U.S. Immigration History Educator Guide](#), which also contains additional resources and labeled links for further reading.

The next pages breakdown how the presentation and handouts should interact to engage students meaningfully.

## DAY 1: SIKHISM BACKGROUND 30 MINUTE INTRODUCTION

This segment is recommended to be a short introduction at the end of a class period prior to a full period of instruction for the next portions of the lesson plan.

### INTRODUCTION

Begin the class segment with the introduction video "[Who Are the Sikhs?](#)" (4 min).

Follow the video with a discussion prompt. Educators are recommended to use Mentimeter's "Formative Assessment" feature with the flowing grid setup so students feel they have the space to share their thoughts anonymously. This will also allow students to see other peer's responses.

#### Discussion Questions (5 min)

What did you learn about Sikhism after watching the video?

What questions remain about the Sikh community after watching the video?

After collecting responses, briefly share out some of the perspectives from the Mentimeter poll.

### HANDOUT

[Share this handout](#) from the Sikh coalition with students. Ask them to read over it in groups of two or four. (10 min)

**Discussion Questions:** Ask students to answer these questions as a group. (10-15 min)

What did you learn about Sikhism after reading the handout that you didn't already know?

What are the core beliefs of Sikhism?

Ask students to review the handout again briefly as a homework assignment prior to the next day's class.



## DAY 2: SIKH IMMIGRATION & THE 1907 BELLINGHAM RIOTS TIMEFRAME SUBJECTIVE

### PRESENTATION

Ask students to keep in mind the information they learned from the handout yesterday as they go into the lesson today.

- Present slides 3-13 from the [Sikh & U.S. Immigration History Presentation](#).
- IMPORTANT: Some of the primary source excerpts from the presentation contain racialized slurs that are offensive and may be emotionally damaging. Make sure you have established clear classroom norms and thoroughly explain the context of sources from this era. A helpful resource for doing this can be referenced in Diversify Our Narrative's ["Difficult but Necessary Conversations"](#) Webinar.

**Additional Resource** (Optional: Watch the documentary, "[Present in All That We Do](#)" (58 minutes) - Draws connections between the 1907 "Anti-Hindu" riot in Bellingham, Washington to contemporary struggles for immigrant rights in Whatcom County.

### ACTIVITY: CONCENTRIC CIRCLES DISCUSSION (SLIDE 15)

Ask students to stand in two concentric circles. The students inside and outside circles should face one another so that each student is standing across from a partner. Alternatively, if your classroom doesn't allow for concentric circles, you might have the students stand in two lines facing one another. In this case, when students move to face their new partners, the student bumped off the end of the line moves to the space at the start of the line.

For the first section, the outside circle will share their answers to the question while the inside circle listens actively. Then for the second section, the inside circle shares while the outside circle listens. For the third section, the pairs discuss their ideas, commenting on places of similarity and difference while offering evidence to support their thinking.

Students will use this activity to answer the discussion questions presented on Slide 15. After each round of discussion (round = once all three sections are completed), have one pair share out their thoughts about the answers to the question.

### TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENT: PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS ([Student Handout](#))

The student handout ask students to analyze a primary source about the Bellingham Riots using the SPY method. This handout is meant to help students contextualize the events that were discussed in the presentation and think about how public opinion can be influenced by narratives in the media. Students are also encouraged to think about the biases and contexts that the author has when writing the document.



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### DAY 3: ASIATIC EXCLUSION LEAGUE & THE NATIONAL ORIGINS ACT OF 1924 (TIMEFRAME SUBJECTIVE)

#### PRESENTATION

- Review slides 16-20 from the Sikh & U.S. Immigration History Presentation.
- For the discussion, educators are encouraged to either have students repeat the concentric circles activity or engage in groups to answer the questions.

#### RESEARCH ACTIVITY: HUMAN TIMELINE

- Split students into groups of four and have them conduct research on the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Immigration Act of 1891, the 1917 Immigration Act, and the 1924 Immigration Act. Assign one immigration act to each student, or ask students to delegate among themselves.
- Ask each student to create a digital collage OR other visual representing the Act they were assigned. Each student must also come up with a short, 3 minute presentation explaining their collage and the details of the Act they were assigned.
- Encourage students to try and find clippings from primary sources to include in their collage. Have students present their completed digital collages to the class in the correct chronological order to which they occurred.

#### DISCUSSION: SLIDE 25

- Ask students to reflect on their findings from the collages and answer the discussion questions in their groups.
- Have two or three groups share out their answers.

#### SOURCES

<https://www.saada.org/item/20110714-238>  
[https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1062&context=cel\\_pubs](https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1062&context=cel_pubs)  
[http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham\\_intro.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham_intro.htm)  
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act#:~:text=The%20Immigration%20Act%20of%201924%20limited%20the%20number%20of%20immigrants,of%20the%201890%20national%20census>  
 Remaining sources can be found on the Educator Guide.