

**Aim:** Why did Americans pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882?

**HW:** Read & highlight documents on p. 52-55 and complete chart on p. 56.

**Focus Question:**

Why did Americans pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882?

**Do Now:**

Recall from our last lesson - what does the word "nativism" mean?

**Nativism**

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The belief that native-born white Americans are superior to newcomers.

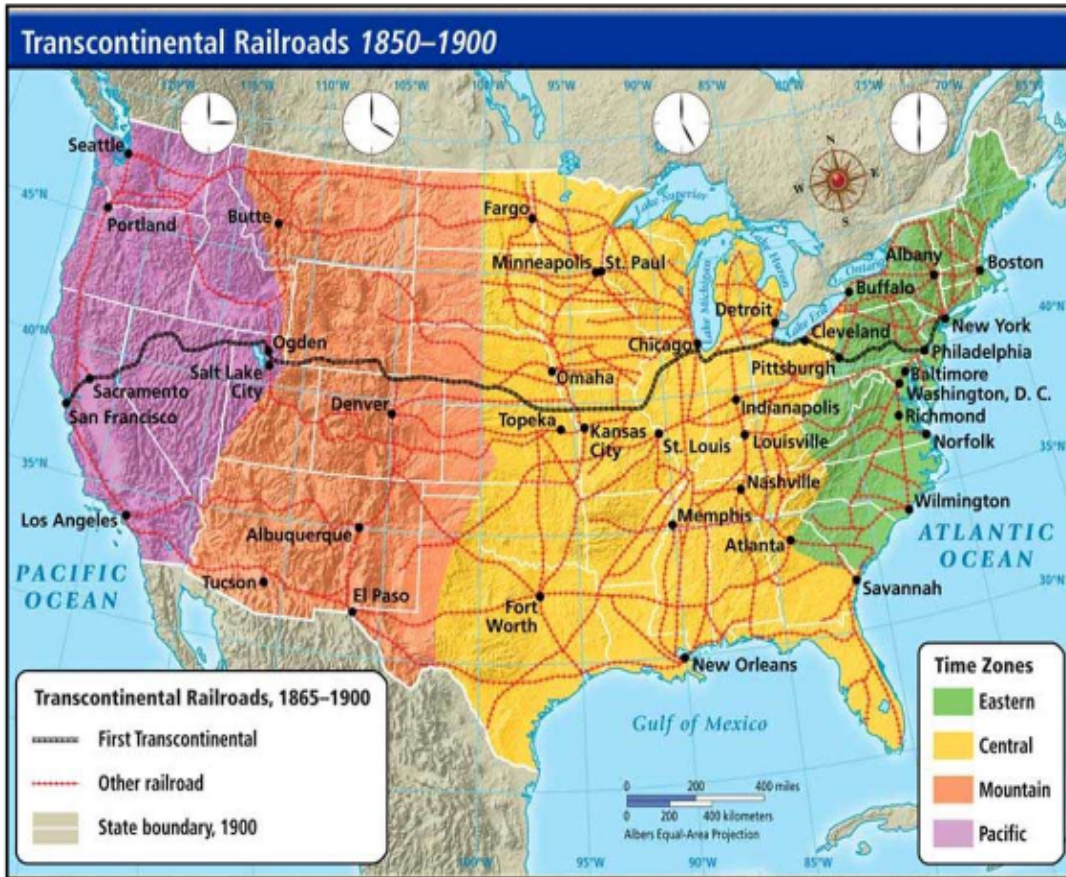
**Nativist:** A person who favors native-born inhabitants over immigrants, who has a negative view of immigration.

**Reasons for nativism:** fear of competition for jobs and housing, fear of religious and cultural differences.

- During the Civil War, the North passed laws that helped industry (because the Southern representatives couldn't block them).
- Congress passed the **Pacific Railway Act of 1863**: the government would give RR companies free land and loan them money to build the transcontinental railroad (afterwards, the RR companies were supposed to sell the land on both sides of the track and pay back the government, but they never ended up doing that).
- Two companies competed to get the most land and money: **Union Pacific** (built tracks from East to West) and **Central Pacific** (built tracks from West to East).

- On May 10, 1869, the Central Pacific Railway met the Union Pacific Railway in Promontory Point, Utah, marking the completion of the transcontinental railroad.





- The building of the railroad depended on the labor of hundreds of thousands of workers. In the West, most of the people who built the railroad were Chinese.

 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RdnGamE\\_t4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RdnGamE_t4)

18:30

*Use the timeline to generate hypotheses in response to this question: What happened between the 1860s, when Chinese were welcomed, and 1882, when they were excluded?*





## **Timeline of Chinese Immigration and Exclusion**

- 1848** Gold discovered at Sutter's Mill, California; many Chinese arrive to mine for gold.
- 1850** Foreign Miners' tax mainly targets Chinese and Mexican miners.
- 1852** Approximately 25,000 Chinese in America.
- 1854** Court rules that Chinese cannot give testimony in court.
- 1862** Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association forms.
- 1865** Central Pacific Railroad recruits Chinese workers; ultimately employs about 15,000 Chinese workers.
- 1869** First transcontinental railroad completed.
- 1870** California passes a law against the importation of Chinese and Japanese women for prostitution.
- 1871** Los Angeles: anti-Chinese violence; 18 Chinese killed.
- 1873** Panic of 1873; start of major economic downturn that last through the decade; blamed on corrupt RR companies.
- 1877** Chico, CA: anti-Chinese violence.
- 1878** Court rules Chinese ineligible for naturalized citizenship.
- 1880** Approximately 106,000 Chinese in America; California passes anti-miscegenation law (no interracial marriage).
- 1882** Chinese Exclusion Act: prohibits Chinese immigration (in one year, Chinese immigration drops from 40,000 to 23).
- 1885** Rock Springs Wyoming Anti-Chinese Violence.
- 1892** Geary Act—extends Chinese Exclusion Act.

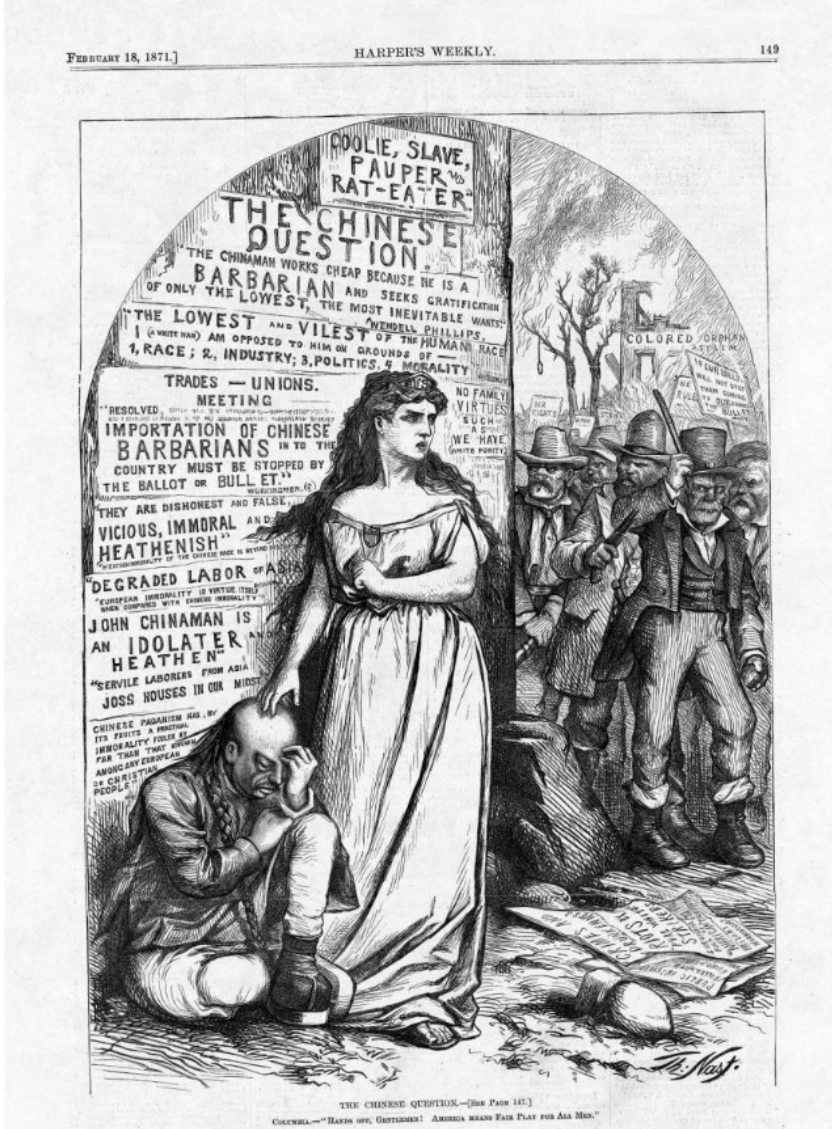
**Document A: Anti-Chinese Poster, 1882**

If this document were your ONLY piece of evidence, how would you answer the question: 'Why did Americans pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act?'



**Document B: Political Cartoon, 1871**

If this document were your ONLY piece of evidence, how would you answer the question: 'Why did Americans pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act?'



Source: The cartoon was drawn by Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly, a Northern magazine. In this cartoon, we see Columbia, the feminine symbol of the United States, protecting a Chinese man against a gang of Irish and German thugs. At the bottom it says "Hands off-Gentlemen! America means fair play for all men."

**Document C: Workingmen of San Francisco (Modified)**

If this document were your **ONLY** piece of evidence, how would you answer the question: 'Why did Americans pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act?'

We have met here in San Francisco tonight to raise our voice to you in warning of a **great danger** that seems to us imminent, and **threatens our** almost utter destruction as a prosperous **community**.

The danger is, that while we have been sleeping in fancied security, believing that the tide of Chinese immigration to our State had been checked and was in a fair way to be entirely stopped, our opponents, **the pro-China wealthy men of the land**, have been wide-awake and have succeeded in reviving the importation of this **Chinese slave-labor**. So that now, hundreds and thousands of Chinese are every week flocking into our State.

Today, every avenue to labor, of every sort, is crowded with **Chinese slave labor worse than it was eight years ago**. The **boot, shoe and cigar industries** are almost entirely in their hands. In the **manufacture of men's overalls and women's and children's underwear** they run over three thousand sewing machines night and day. They **monopolize nearly all the farming** done to supply the market with all sorts of vegetables. This state of things brings about a terrible competition between our own people, who must live as civilized Americans, and the Chinese, who live like degraded slaves. We should all understand that this state of things cannot be much longer endured.

**Vocabulary**

Imminent: about to happen

*Source: The document above is a speech to the workingmen of San Francisco on August 16, 1888.*

**Document D: Autobiography of a Chinese Immigrant  
(Modified)**

If this document were your **ONLY** piece of evidence, how would you answer the question: 'Why did Americans pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act?'

The treatment of the Chinese in this country is all wrong and mean. . .

There is no reason for the prejudice against the Chinese. The cheap labor cry was always a falsehood. Their labor was never cheap, and is not cheap now. It has always commanded the highest market price. But the trouble is that the Chinese are such excellent and faithful workers that bosses will have no others when they can get them. If you look at men working on the street you will find a supervisor for every four or five of them. That watching is not necessary for Chinese. They work as well when left to themselves as they do when some one is looking at them.

It was the jealousy of laboring men of other nationalities — especially the Irish—that raised the outcry against the Chinese. No one would hire an Irishman, German, Englishman or Italian when he could get a Chinese, because our countrymen are so much more honest, industrious, steady, sober and painstaking. Chinese were persecuted, not for their vices [sins], but for their virtues [good qualities].

There are few Chinamen in jails and none in the poor houses. There are no Chinese tramps or drunkards. Many Chinese here have become sincere Christians, in spite of the persecution which they have to endure from their heathen countrymen. More than half the Chinese in this country would become citizens if allowed to do so, and would be patriotic Americans. But how can they make this country their home as matters now are! They are not allowed to bring wives here from China, and if they marry American women there is a great outcry.

Under the circumstances, how can I call this my home, and how can any one blame me if I take my money and go back to my village in China?

*Source: The passage above is from Lee Chew, "The Biography of a Chinaman," Independent, 15 (19 February 1903), 417–423.*

**STEP 1:** Read the timeline carefully. Write your HYPOTHESIS for why the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882.

By 1882 the Chinese were no longer needed to build the railroad, an economic recession had hit, and workers' jobs were threatened.

**STEP 2:** Read document A-D. For each, write any evidence you find for what led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

	Based on this document, why did many white Americans support the Chinese Exclusion Act?
Document A Poster	
Document B Cartoon	
Document C Speech	
Document D Autobiography	

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	Based on this document, why did many white Americans support the Chinese Exclusion Act?	
Document A Poster	Democrats feel they will benefit politically (w/ elections) by excluding Chinese because many Americans are racist.	felt their jobs were threatened
Document B Cartoon	The Chinese immigrants were taking the jobs of the Irish + German immigrants.	
Document C Speech	Chinese are working like slave labor (low pay), and taking all the jobs in the boot, shoe, and cigar indust.	
Document D Autobiography	Chinese are not working as cheap labor, but are chosen because they are excellent workers.	

**Transcript: "The Artillery of Heaven" from PBS' *The West*, Episode 5 ("The Grandest Enterprise Under God"). Length = 7:30.**

While the Union Pacific moved west again across the Great Plains, in California the Central Pacific, after a fast start, had gotten stuck in the Sierra Nevadas. The mountains seemed impenetrable.

And to make matters worse, [Charles Crocker](#), whose job it was to break through them, could not seem to hold on to his workers: three out of five stuck with him just long enough to get a free ride to the railhead, then set out on their own for the Nevada gold fields. His plans called for a work force of 5,000. He had fewer than 600.

Desperate, he suggested to his superintendent of construction, James Strobridge, that he try the Chinese, who were eking out a living working the gold and silver tailings abandoned by others. Strobridge was against it: he thought the Chinese were too small, too frail; they had no experience building railroads. Crocker told Strobridge to give the Chinese a chance. After all, he said, they had built the Great Wall of China.

The first Chinese began turning up in early 1865, eager to work. They were already organized into work gangs, each with its own headman.

"Crocker expected that these fellows would come up there in one's and two's like the other nationalities, and he found that the Chinese sort of marched up there as one group, and all he had to do was to deal with the foreman of that group. Of course, he would be the clan leader."  
-Jack Chen

Before long, 11,000 Chinese were at work on the Central Pacific and Crocker was advertising for more in China.

But hard work alone was no match for the Sierra Nevadas. Strobridge worried that his Central Pacific was falling even further behind in their race with the Union Pacific, and soon armed the Chinese with black powder to blast their way through.

It took 500 kegs of it a day, week after week, to carve cuts through the foothills. And then they came up against a face they called Cape Horn: solid rock, nearly straight up and down, 2,000 feet above a raging river. There were no footholds, but the Chinese were told to make a ledge in the cliff wide enough for a train.

"My grandfather was one of the people that they put in the baskets because he was small and light, and what they did was, they would be lowered over cliffs and they would drill holes, and then they'd set the dynamite in them. And then they'd light the dynamite, and then they'd pull them up by these baskets. And then they had to get out of there before the dynamite exploded." -Maxine Hong Kingston

Huge masses of rock and debris were rent and heaved up in the commotion; then... came the thunders of the explosion like a lightning stroke, reverberating along the hills and canyons, as if the whole artillery of Heaven was in play.

Before the Central Pacific could get through the Sierras, the crews had to gouge out fifteen tunnels. They worked in shifts around the clock, but averaged just eight inches a day. And they

had to keep at in it every kind of weather.

"Charles Crocker had to punch the line through the Sierras that winter, the winter of '66, and the Chinese had to build the railroad, lay the tracks. So they built these tunnels under the snow to keep advancing the line. And sometimes there would be snow slides and entire crews of Chinese would be trapped under tons of snow. And their bodies would be left there and found the following spring. Sometimes the bodies were found with the picks and the shovels still in their hands." -Ronald Takaki

No one kept a precise count, but more than 1,200 Chinese died digging and blasting for Charles Crocker and the Central Pacific.

"When somebody died, you just didn't dig a grave for him and put him down in the grave. You went to a lot of trouble to get his remains back to the village that he came from, because a Chinese doesn't want to be buried anywhere. He wants to be buried where his ancestors were buried, because he wants to stick together." -Jack Chen

Finally, in 1868, after three long years of back-breaking, dangerous labor, the Central Pacific crews did what few had believed anyone could do: they broke out of the High Sierras.

John Chinaman, with his patient toil, directed by American energy and backed by American capital, has broken down the great barrier at last and opened over it the greatest highway yet created for the march of commerce and civilization around the globe. The Territorial Enterprise

The hardest part was behind them. The Central Pacific was back in the race.