

Graphic Organizer: English III: Writing: Module 1: Lesson 8: Section 3 Making Connections Between a Text and Current Historical Events

Instructions: Print this handout and chunk the text according to the directions in the Making Connections lesson for English III. When you finish the first exercise, click on the “Check Your Understanding” link in the lesson to see how the text was chunked.

This excerpt is from a speech by U.S. Representative Horace Davis of California. Davis’s speech led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that barred Chinese people from immigrating to the United States.

The question of Chinese immigration is regarded by the people of California with an intense interest of what citizens on this side of the continent have but little conception. Twenty-eight years ago the pioneer Chinaman was welcomed with an eager curiosity, but with no foresight of the eventful consequences of his coming. Today, he is found in every village, in every mining camp, utterly an alien in the body-politic, and like some foreign substance in the human body, breeding fever and unrest till that system is relieved of its unwelcome presence. On the question of restricting his coming, our community is almost a unit; except a few men who profit by his cheap labor, the sentiment of the people is nearly unanimous. It includes both political parties, all nationalities, all classes of the community.

The anti-Chinese societies include every nationality; both political parties have repeatedly expressed the same views on this subject in legislative enactments as well as in political platforms. . . .

In the city of San Francisco, my own home, this opposition is most keenly felt, as the body of Chinese is larger there than at any other point in the United States; and many thousands of unemployed men say with great bitterness that but for their presence, work and bread would be plenty. For months past life and property have been threatened by this agitation, and to the wisdom of Congress we appeal to grant us that quiet and relief which our own Legislature has no power to give us.

Believing as I do, that the indifference of Congress on this subject has arisen mainly from a lack of knowledge concerning the Chinese, I will ask your candid attention while I describe their social condition in California. I will then show you, first, that the presence of so large a foreign body unable or unwilling to assimilate to our ways renders them a dangerous element to society and a grave peril to the State; second, that their presence is a menace to free labor; and lastly, that the experience of other countries in dealing with this class of immigrants gives us no reason to hope for any change in these respects. . . .

Uncle Sam and a woman hold their ears in barracks where each bed is labeled with a nationality, such as German, Englishman, Russian, etc. The Irishman is upset and pointing at Uncle Sam. The caption reads ‘Uncle Sam’s Lodging House.’ Uncle Sam asks the Irishman why he is all the time ‘kicking up a row?’

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This persistent fondness with which the Chinamen cling to their nationality and separate themselves from other men, their incapacity to change their ways and adapt themselves to their surroundings—this alone renders them most undesirable immigrants, and it has been and is today, always and everywhere, their most marked trait.

They are the most conservative of men. Arriving at their present form of civilization many centuries ago, their development seems to have been arrested and ages of uniformity have fixed the type. And this rigidly crystallized national sentiment has nothing in sympathy with the social and political thought of a free people. . . .

Over against this picture I hardly need to draw that of the European immigrant. He comes to this country to settle for life. He brings with him his wife and children. He adopts our language, mingles with our people, and becomes an American. And even if with the first generation the love of the fatherland strives with his affection for his new home, the next generation become American citizens. But with the Chinese the so-called immigration is simply an ebb and flow from the shores of Asia of a tide of men hopelessly foreign, without wish or intention to make this their home. . . .