

Grade 9

Lesson 3

Historical Perspectives



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A full list of contributors to *Bamboo Shoots: Chinese Canadian Legacies in BC* can be found at www.openschool.bc.ca/bambooshoots.

Images included in this lesson:

- Page 3: Group in front of Chinese School, Fisgard St., Victoria, ca. 1901
Image F-07784 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives
- Page 14: W.A. Cumyow casting a ballot
University of British Columbia Libraries Special Collections,
Won Alexander Cumyow fonds/BC 1848/9

Lesson Plan

Theme

- Different groups of Canadians had diverse values, beliefs, and motivations, which shaped their attitudes towards important issues and events.
- Historical perspectives are shaped by the historical conditions present at the time.

Focus Question

What were the perspectives of different Chinese Canadians at different points in BC's history?



Overview

The students investigate the historical perspectives of Chinese Canadians at different points in BC's history to attempt to understand their views, beliefs, and attitudes. The students analyze a variety of evidence about the circumstances, beliefs, worldviews, and values that existed at the time. They also anticipate how different people thought or felt about specific events and issues in Chinese Canadian history.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will attempt to understand the historical context and perspective of a Chinese Canadian, from the time of early immigration to the Head Tax period.
- Students will also examine the perspectives of a variety of people about a specific event in BC's early history.

Historical Thinking Competencies

- Explaining different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, and events, and distinguishing between worldviews of today and the past (perspective)
- Understanding that social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional contexts shaped people's lives and actions in four distinct historical periods in BC history
- Recognizing presentism in historical accounts

Lesson Preparation

Teacher Backgrounder

Chinese Canadians could and did vote as British subjects. There was a municipal election in the late 1860s, affecting the mayoral race, just before BC entered Confederation, and there were a good number of Chinese voters in this election. The voter roll in the archive shows this. However, voting worked in obscure ways in this time period. How were eligible voters counted? There wasn't a centralized process. Often, a birth certificate was required to prove citizenship, which may have been a barrier to voting. Chinese people may have been voting in Victoria at the time, and they legally could vote in other areas such as New Westminster. However, they may have been excluded from voting in elections elsewhere through regional discriminatory practices. Various levels of government were disenfranchising Chinese people in different ways.

Amor de Cosmos used an anti-Asian platform to rise to political power in BC, and was an early example of politicians doing this. Coal baron Dunsmuir is a parallel for Amor de Cosmos. Dunsmuir approved of Chinese labour, and hired many of them to work in his mines. But once he became premier of BC, his political ambitions made him succumb to the pressures of the day, and change his attitude.

The labour movement at the time turned against the Chinese people, and this may be confusing for students, Weren't all lower class workers suffering the same exploitation? But instead of working together to fight for workers' rights, white labourers took up an anti-Asian policy, and targeted their protests against people who didn't have a say because they didn't have the vote—the Chinese people whom they saw as “taking their jobs.” To help bring this mistake to light, ask the students to look at the numbers. Do you think seven people working against three would get what they want? How effective would that be? What if they organized with the Chinese people to work ten-people strong against the people exploiting them as wage labourers? It wasn't until later that white labourers began to work with Chinese people to fight for workers' rights. It's hard not to demonize the labour movement of the time, so this is a good opportunity to explore perspective taking without presentism, while still maintaining that there is a moral right and wrong within the story.

This organization against Chinese workers saw them as tools of the capitalist, which empowered people like Amor de Cosmos. The sentiments were paralleled or echoed by those being expressed in California. (See the Californian pamphlet in Archive Package: Loss of the Franchise).

The First Nations' perspective will be about drawing comparisons—from their point of view and experience, they know that anything could be done to you if you can't vote. Your children can be removed to reserves, etc. First Nations and Chinese people were treated in parallel ways by governments during this time period.

Someone who had just disembarked from a ship from China would be arriving with so much hope about this new land, and the potential for thriving here. What did the loss of franchise for a newly arrived Chinese Canadian mean? What would they have expected when they arrived? How was their actual experience of *Gum San* affected by Confederation?

Tips

Familiarize yourself with the two major events used in this lesson by reading the Historical Backgrounder: Chinese Disenfranchisement – 1872 and the Story Sheets in the Archive Packages.

Materials:

Blackline Masters and Rubrics are included at the end of this lesson plan. Other support materials, as well as an editable version of the lesson plan, can be found in the Grade 9 Teaching Materials on the website www.openschool.bc.ca/bambooshoots

- Archive Package: School Segregation
- Archive Package: Loss of the Franchise
- Historical Backgrounder: Chinese Disenfranchisement – 1872 (one per student)

Vocabulary

presentism:
making a judgment about the past using present-day perspectives, values, or beliefs

segregation:
setting a group of people apart from other people

worldview:
a philosophy of life or conception of the world

- Blackline Master 1: Reading the Archive Package Documents (one per student)
- Blackline Master 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events (two per student)
- Rubric 1: Assessing Observations and Inferences
- Rubric 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events

Lesson Sequence

Part A: Introduction to Historical Perspective Taking: Class Discussion

(Estimated Time: 20 minutes)

- I. Introduce the students to the concept of perspective taking. You may wish to start by introducing students to the Historical Thinking Project's definition of perspective taking after a couple of discussion-provoking questions.
 - » How do we learn someone else's perspective in the present world?
 - » How might we learn the perspective of someone who lived in the past?

Definition from *The Historical Thinking Project*:

Taking historical perspective means understanding the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional settings that shaped people's lives and actions in the past. At any one point, different historical actors may have acted on the basis of conflicting beliefs and ideologies, so understanding diverse perspectives is also a key to historical perspective-taking. Though it is sometimes called 'historical empathy,' historical perspective is very different from the common-sense notion of identification with another person. Indeed, taking historical perspective demands comprehension of the vast differences between us in the present and those in the past.¹

I From "Historical Perspectives" (The Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness)
<http://historicalthinking.ca/historical-perspectives>

2. Introduce the concept of presentism with a hypothetical situation, such as the following:
 - » Ask the students who were born outside of BC (or outside of the city, or neighbourhood, if necessary) to stand up. Tell the class these students are no longer allowed to go to this school, but have to go to a school up the road in a smaller building with no heat, and not enough resources to go around. And the parents and other adult relatives of the students who must go to the smaller school don't have a say in this plan.
 - » Ask: Is this acceptable today? Why or why not? (The students who had been standing can sit down now. The class will respond from their present-day thoughts and judgments.)
3. Tell students you're going to shift time now, and consider a school segregation that happened in the early years of the 20th century. In 1922, Chinese students protested the segregation of their schools in Victoria, BC.
4. In Step 2, you made a split based on whether the students were born in the province (or city, or neighbourhood). Most of the students who were segregated in Victoria in 1922, however, were born in BC—and unless you were First Nations, almost everyone's parents in BC in the early 20th century were born outside of BC.
5. How could we find out how those students and their community were feeling, and what they were thinking? How about the school staff? Do you think it would have been hard? Think of the Meares Expedition, and the Chinese carpenters and shipwrights who came across the Pacific to help build a schooner and fort at Nootka Sound. Do we have a way to understand the perspectives of Meares? What about the Chinese labour crew? What about the First Nations people who lived there? Why is it difficult to get a clear picture of their perspectives? If we looked at the beliefs, values, conditions, and circumstances of the people at the time, would we know everything about their perspective? Why or why not?

6. Discuss: When we use our current lens to look at the decisions people made in the past, we don't get a clear picture. We have to set aside our values and judgments for a moment to avoid what's called *presentism*. So how can we do this, and do our best to represent the perspectives of people in historical periods? Can we look at archival materials and get a sense of how people felt and thought at the time? What do you think would be some of the best sources when doing historical perspective taking?

Part B: Assignment

(Estimated Time: 60 minutes)

Stage I: Archive Package Introduction

1. Tell the students they will be taking different perspectives on their choice of one of two events. You may choose to introduce each event with the story that introduces the topic: Jon Joe's story introduces the story of the Victoria School Segregation and 1922–1923 protest, and Won Alexander Cumyow's story introduces the loss of the franchise.
2. Distribute the Historical Backgrounders on both events to each student. Tell the students they will be looking at worldviews within and outside of the Chinese Canadian community, and at those who are for and against discriminatory regulations and laws. The students read about the two events, and decide which event they wish to take perspectives on.
3. The students use the Archive Package for their chosen event (School Segregation or Loss of the Franchise). Each package contains the fact sheet on the option's event, as well as documents and photos related to the event. The students can access the Archive Packages through the Grade 9 Gallery on the website. If your students will not have access, you could print and distribute copies of the Archive Package documents for them to work with in small groups.

4. The students use Blackline Master I: Reading the Archive Package Documents to guide their examination of the text items. If they're working in groups, ask each group to complete Blackline Master I for each assigned document. If they're working on their own, ask them to complete Blackline Master I for at least two of the Archive Package documents that they read.
5. Before the students go away to read on their own, use Blackline Master I: Reading the Archive Package Documents – Sample to demonstrate how students might use the guiding questions to examine one of the articles.
6. Explain the need to identify details from the text (find evidence) to support a response that may involve drawing inferences.

Note: Many of the artifacts are newspaper articles without an author attribution. What can they find out about the newspapers? What conclusions can they draw about the people who wrote for the newspapers?

7. Refer to Rubric I: Assessing Observations and Inferences to introduce students to the criteria they'll need as they answer questions about the Archive Package items using Blackline Master I: Reading the Archive Package Documents.

Stage 2: Research Different Perspectives

Option A: School Segregation

Take the perspectives of three of the following people. Describe how each person likely saw the issue of segregation, and the protest that led to its demise. Cite the evidence you use to make your inferences about the person's likely perspective.

1. A Chinese Canadian student in a class that was segregated in 1922
2. A Victoria school board official or Municipal School Inspector
3. A Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) member who is also a parent organizing the school strike
4. A member of the Victoria Trades and Labour Council
5. The lawyer who helped the school protesters
6. A teacher in an affected school

The students should use Blackline Master 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events to organize their notes about each of the three chosen perspectives.

Remind the students not to resort to stereotypes, or assume that certain groups or individuals in the past acted or thought in a certain way. All inferences being made must be based on evidence from their sources. Remind the students that, to get a perspective on the cultural setting of the time period for these events, they can also return to the Lesson 2: Archive Packages and look through the items for 1885–1922 and 1923–1946.

If You Have More Time

With more time, the students can write perspectives paragraphs for all six points of view given for their chosen option.

Option B: Loss of the Franchise (1872)

Take the perspective of three of the following people. Describe how each person likely saw the Chinese Canadians' loss of the franchise. Cite the evidence you use to make your inferences about the person's likely perspective.

1. A Chinese Canadian with voting rights who then was unable to vote after BC entered Confederation
2. Amor de Cosmos, who rises to political power by being anti-Asian
3. A labour union member
4. A First Nations person
5. A recent arrival from China—someone who comes to BC just as the change is happening

If You Have More Time

With more time, the students can write perspectives paragraphs for all five points of view given for their chosen option.

Students should use Blackline Master 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events to organize their notes about each of the three chosen perspectives. Introduce the students to the criteria with the Rubric 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events.

For students using the *Bamboo Shoots* unit in a cross-disciplinary setting, consider blending Social Studies and English criteria, and have the students write paragraphs in the voices of the three points of view.

Remind the students not to resort to stereotypes or make assumptions about certain groups or individuals in the past as acting or thinking a certain way. All inferences being made must be based on evidence from their sources. Remind the students that to get a perspective on the cultural setting of the time period for these events, they can also return to the Lesson 2: Archive Packages and look through the items for 1857–1884.

Stage 3: Pair and Class Discussions

Knowing what you know about the worldview of the three people you chose, what plausible predictions can you make about what these people might think about another issue during the same time period, or a future time period?

Note: The students could look through the Time Shuffle game cards to consider other events, or select one from a list that you provide. Some other events or issues might include:

- *Chinese Immigration Act*
- The rising cost of the Head Tax
- Chinese are barred from joining professions
- Anti-Asian riots of Vancouver
- Chinese Canadians forming labour unions during World War I
- World War II begins and Chinese Canadians are not allowed to volunteer
- Charter of the United Nations is signed
- Voting franchise in BC is extended to Chinese people
- Chinese Adjustment Statement Program
- Universal Immigration Policy
- Apologies for historical anti-Chinese legislation

Perspective Taking

is an opportunity to consider Chinese-First Nations relations, and the perspectives of both groups. A great way to introduce their relationships is through one of two videos listed in the Additional Resources:

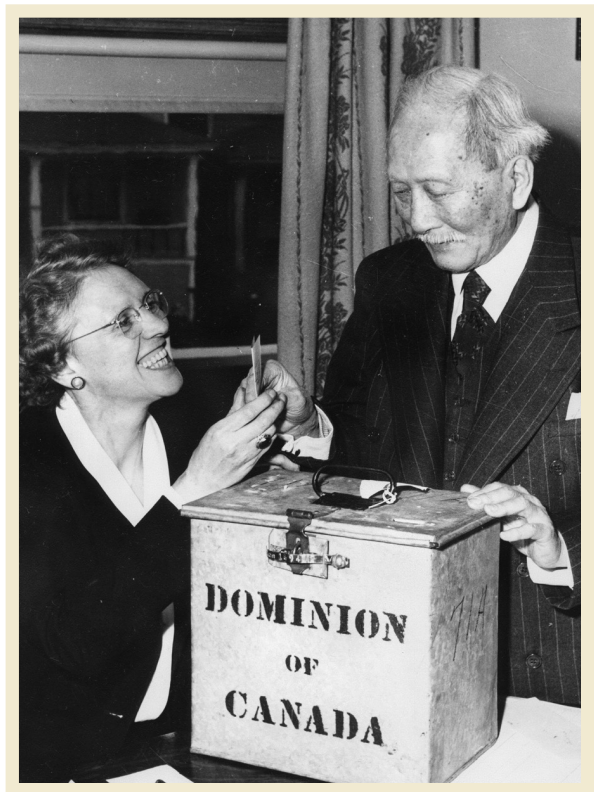
- Interview with Larry Grant
- *Cedar and Bamboo*

Students can look back through the relevant time period's Archive Package from Lesson 2 for evidence. They can use the same Blackline Master 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events for this Step, or write their predictions in paragraph form.

Part C: Opposing Perspectives Pairing and Class Discussion

(Estimated Time: 20 minutes)

1. Have the students pair up with someone else studying the same option (School Segregation or Loss of the Franchise). The first student shares his or her strongest perspective, and the second student shares an opposing perspective that she or he studied.
2. Then have a class discussion, inviting the students to share what they learned about the different perspectives on either the school segregation or the loss of the franchise, and the second events they chose to consider in Stage 3 of Part B. Encourage the students to discuss the evidence they found, or the lack of evidence. Were they tempted to project beliefs and values onto any of these people in light of a lack of evidence about an issue or event? How did they work to avoid that?



Summary of Assessment

Assessment will focus on the student's ability to plausibly take the historical perspective of a selection of viewpoints in one time period in BC's Chinese Canadian history. This will be done by anticipating the historical perspective on two specific issues.

The students will be assessed in their ability to:

- Understand the historical context that existed at the time (worldviews, beliefs, and values).
- Make plausible evidence-based inferences about their character's worldviews, beliefs, and values perspective on either the Victoria school segregation or the Chinese Canadians' loss of the franchise.
- Make plausible predictions about what each person might think about another issue in the same or future time period.
- Consider multiple perspectives in a specific time period or on a given issue.
- Use evidence and understanding of the historical context to answer questions about why people acted as they did (or thought as they did) even when their actions seem at first irrational, inexplicable, or different from what we would have done or thought.

Use Rubric 1: Assessing Observations and Inferences and Rubric 2: Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events.

Extension Ideas: Historical Perspectives

The students can be asked to find examples from their own schooling experience (history or social studies education) in which particular historical perspectives and aspects were overlooked.

From the library or storage in the school, old textbooks can be collected and brought to class. Students can examine the topics and historical perspectives conveyed within the texts, and compare them with more recent books.

Anticipate any topics or perspectives not covered in previous or recent texts. Provide leading questions to guide the students towards ways of understanding and explaining reasons for which particular views are present at the expense of others.

Blackline Masters

Blackline Master 1

Reading the Archive Package Documents

Reading the Archive Package Documents – Sample

Blackline Master 2

Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events

Reading the Archive Package Documents

Title:	
What do you know about the author and the intended audience?	
What do you think is the likely reason for this document's creation? Highlight evidence that supports your conclusion.	
Do you think the information in the document is reliable or not? Highlight evidence that supports your conclusion.	

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Reading the Archive Package Documents – Sample

<p>Title:</p>	<p>Chinese in the Schools: Denied that their Presence in Classes Results in Disorder</p>
<p>What do you know about the author and the intended audience?</p>	<p>The author is a reporter working for The British Colonist who was at a school meeting.</p> <p>No other author is given a byline, and the report in the article includes quotes from a meeting. The audience would be the readers of this newspaper—so people fluent in reading the English language.</p>
<p>What do you think is the likely reason for this document's creation? Highlight evidence that supports your conclusion.</p>	<p>The headline seems to be in response to an opinion. "Denied that their presence in class results in disorder" means that someone had to have thought that Chinese students in the school were causing disorder to begin with. Otherwise, it would not make sense for this article to "deny" it.</p> <p>The article also refers to this as a second call for a report from teachers, saying their report of the classroom peace has not changed.</p> <p>"...as far as the teachers were concerned, the presence of the Chinese boys was not to the slightest degree a discordant note."</p> <p>So the author of the document probably wanted to report the truth to a public concerned with Chinese children in the schools in light of pressures to keep students segregated:</p> <p>"Mr. Eaton stated afterwards, with respect to the reported subversion of order in classes caused by the inability of the Chinese to understand what they are told, that there was absolutely nothing to warrant such rumors and, in fact, that they were pure fabrications."</p>
<p>Do you think the information in the document is reliable or not? Highlight evidence that supports your conclusion.</p>	<p>I think so—it's in a reputable newspaper and appears to be free of editorial opinions. It reports on what happened, what Mr. Eaton stated, and factual events. No personalizing or opinions are given.</p>

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Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events

Check one:

- School Segregation
- Loss of the Franchise
- Other: _____

Profile	What can you find out about this person's worldview? What plausible, evidence-based inferences can you make about the perspectives of this person regarding your chosen event? Consider the following questions: What were this person's opinions? Why did this person think that way? Can we tell? Point to evidence.	Evidence (Clues from Documents)
1.		

Profile	What can you find out about this person's worldview? What plausible, evidence-based inferences can you make about the perspectives of this person regarding your chosen event? Consider the following questions: What were this person's opinions? Why did this person think that way? Can we tell? Point to evidence.	Evidence (Clues from Documents)
2.		
3		

Assessment Rubrics

Rubric 1

Assessing Observations and Inferences

Rubric 2

Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events

Assessing Observations and Inferences

Criteria:	Emerging	On-Track	Extending
Identifies accurate and relevant details from the document(s)	Core details still need to be identified.	Identifies core relevant and accurate details.	Identifies core relevant and accurate details and additional details.
Provides plausible and imaginative inferences	Still needing to provide plausible inferences that build on the observations made.	Provides plausible inferences from the observations made.	Provides many varied and imaginative inferences that are highly plausible.

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Assessing Historical Perspectives on Events

Name: _____

	Emerging	On-Track	Extending
Offers plausible perspectives	The perspective needs further development, or the opinions and predictions could use further examination for plausibility.	The perspective is stated clearly and most opinions or predictions are plausible.	A complete perspective is given, and the opinions or predictions of opinions are highly plausible.
Supports with evidence	Some perspectives given still need to be supported with relevant and accurate evidence.	Supports perspectives with accurate evidence.	Uses evidence and a deep understanding of the historical context to give thorough reasoning for perspectives on the event.

Adapted from The Critical Thinking Consortium

