

Open Up the Textbook (OUT)

Enlarge

Complicate

Contest

Vivify

Title: Chinese Miners and Prospectors

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In this OUT analysis, 4th grade students will study miners in order to better understand the following: What are the unique experiences of Chinese prospectors and miners in Nevada?

This OUT analysis provides students with documents that are meant to deliberately **vivify** and **enlarge** the textbook.

This strategy is implemented most effectively when students collaborate to analyze the texts in small, heterogeneous groups. The texts that accompany the textbook are complex and often include difficult vocabulary and syntax. (For a few words that are likely unknown to students and unidentifiable based upon context clues, helpful synonyms are provided in the footnotes.) Students should first annotate each text and then collaborate to answer the text dependent and specific questions that follow. Questions will highlight sourcing and perspective of the author, close reading of key details from the document that enlarge, complicate, contest, or vivify the textbook, as well as questions that help students corroborate (or not) the accuracy of individual documents. The writing task that follows is an independent activity wherein students will employ evidence from multiple sources to justify their analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

NVACS:

Literacy Standards

RI.4.1, RI.4.3, RI.4.4, RI.4.6, RI.4.10

L.4.5B

W.4.2, W.4.9

Social Studies Standards

H1.4.5, H2.4.4, H3.4.2, G7.4.4

****Note to Teacher-**Please discuss the derogatory nature of some of the terms associated with the Chinese in these texts before allowing students to work in small groups. Ensure that students understand why we view historical sources even if they contain language that does not align with current values. ******

Source A: The Textbook – *Nevada: Our Home*, G.P. BeDunnah et al., page 100.

Laws against the Chinese

Most miners didn't like the Chinese workers who moved to Nevada. They spoke a different language and had different customs. They also lived a different lifestyle and were willing to work for lower wages than white workers. Because of this, many miners were fearful that Chinese workers would take away their jobs.

They began treating the Chinese unfairly. They even passed laws to keep the Chinese from working in the mines or from owning mining land. The Chinese were only allowed to do things like wash laundry, chop wood, and cook meals for others. These were the lowest-paying jobs people could have.

Sometimes people's feelings about the Chinese turned violent. Angry white people burned homes and often beat the Chinese or the people who hired them. Sadly, the poor treatment of the Chinese happened throughout much of the West. Even the U.S. Congress passed laws against the Chinese that made it impossible for new immigrants to come to the United States.

News of gold in California brought thousands of gold seekers to the West. Most prospectors, or miners, only stopped in Nevada on their way to California. Prospectors look for valuable metals, or minerals, in the ground. Minerals are things that are mined, like gold, silver, and salt.

A Prospector's Life

Prospectors were very unusual people. Sometimes they spent their entire lives looking for precious metals, like gold and silver. They often wandered through the mountains or deserts for months at a time with only a few basic supplies. They packed things like food, clothes, blankets, and a pick and shovel.

Most prospectors lived in small, rough cabins built from branches, stones, and sagebrush. They ate simple foods, like potatoes, dried beans, meat, and coffee. They looked for gold from sunup to sundown. Some tried searching where no one else had looked. Some sold or traded everything they had for a night of drinking or gambling in nearby saloons. Then their search started all over again.

Source A Questions for Consideration

1. How were the Chinese treated?
2. What are some reasons that were the Chinese treated this way?
3. What evidence from the text shows how the prospectors were unusual? Give three examples from the text.

Sources B.1 & B.2: Primary Source– Photographs to Compare Groups of Miners



Source B.1 & B.2 Questions for Consideration

1. Describe the setting of each picture.
2. How are the working conditions of each miner portrayed differently in the pictures?



3. Do these pictures show differences in these groups, and is there textual evidence from source A to support this?

1 **Source C: Mark Twain's Observations about Chinese Immigrants**— Excerpted from
2 the book *Roughing It*, published in 1872.

3
4 Of course there was a large population in Virginia¹—it is the case with every
5 town and city on the Pacific coast. They are a harmless race when white men either let
6 them alone or treat them no worse than dogs; in fact they are almost entirely harmless
7 anyhow, for they seldom think of resenting the vilest insults or the cruelest injuries. They
8 are quiet, peaceable, **tractable**², free from drunkenness, and they are as **industrious**³ as
9 the day is long. A disorderly Chinaman is rare, and a lazy one does not exist. So long as a
10 Chinaman has strength to use his hands he needs no support from anybody; white men
11 often complain of want of work, but a Chinaman offers no such complaint; he always
12 manages to find something to do. He is a great convenience to everybody— even to the
13 worst class of white men, for he bears the most of their sins, suffering fines for their petty
14 thefts, imprisonment for their robberies, and death for their murders. Any white man can
15 swear a Chinaman's life away in the courts, but no Chinaman can testify against a white
16 man....

17 ...There were about a thousand in Virginia. They were penned into a "Chinese
18 quarter"—a thing they do not particularly object to, as they are fond of herding together.
19 Their buildings were of wood; usually only one story high, and set thickly together along
20 the streets scarcely wide enough for a wagon to pass through. Their quarter was a little
21 removed from the rest of town. The chief employment of Chinamen in towns is to wash
22 clothing....The house servants, cooks, etc. in California and Nevada, were chiefly
23 Chinamen. Chinamen make good house servants, being quick, obedient, patient, quick to
24 learn and tirelessly industrious. They do not need to be taught a thing twice, as a general
25 thing. They are imitative....

¹ Virginia is short for Virginia City

² Easy to deal with

³ hard working

Source C: Questions for Consideration

1. What did you learn about the lifestyle of the Chinese in Virginia City?
2. Describe the characteristics/attributes Mark Twain uses to describe the Chinese immigrants. Cite at least three examples.
3. How do the phrases, “They are a harmless race when white men either let them alone or treat them no worse than dogs” in line _____ and “as they are fond of herding together in line _____ indicate the author’s perspective of the Chinese?
4. Throughout the excerpt Mark Twain praises the characteristics of Chinese immigrants in Virginia City. However, what evidence exists that Chinese immigrants were often treated unfairly and unjustly while working in mining towns?

1 **Source D: *The Story of California From the Earliest Days to the Present.***
2 **by Henry K. Norton, 1924**

3
4 Probably the most **conspicuous** characteristic of the Chinese is
5 their passion for work. The Chinaman seemingly must work. If
6 he cannot secure work at a high wage he will take it at a low
7 wage, but he is a good bargainer for his labor and only needs the
8 opportunity to ask for more pay. This is true of the whole nation,
9 from the lowest to the highest. They lack inventiveness and
10 **initiative** but have an enormous capacity for imitation.

11
12 ...

13
14 The Chinese... ..had left a land of war and starvation where
15 work could not be had and food must be begged and here they
16 found themselves in the midst of work and plenty. They were
17 everywhere welcomed and their wages were such that they could
18 save a substantial part to send back to the families they had left at
19 home in China; or, if they did not wish to labor for masters, they
20 could go to the mines. Here they could take an old claim which
21 had been abandoned by the white miner and dig from it gold dust
22 which to them represented wealth untold. They were careful not
23 to **antagonise** these whites by prospecting ahead of them...

24

very easy to see or
notice

energy and desire
to do something

to cause someone
to feel hostile or
angry

Source D: Questions for Consideration

1. The author stereotypes and makes unfair statements about all Chinese. What are some examples of stereotypes or statements you read about the Chinese?
2. What evidence in Source D helps explain why the Chinese were interested in coming to the United States?
3. Reread lines 22 and 23. What can you infer “prospecting ahead of them” means? Why would the Chinese be careful not to “prospect ahead?”

Writing Task

This is an informational writing task based on NVACS standards: W.4.2 and W.4.9. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the texts as well as the ways in which the textbook was enlarged and vivified.

Writing to Inform

Throughout your readings of primary and secondary sources, you have learned what people thought of the Chinese in the 1870's and the type of work the Chinese did. You also learned how the Chinese were often stereotyped or described as all having specific beliefs and attitudes. In your culminating writing, answer this prompt:

Explain the stereotypes some had of Chinese immigrants and the ways in which many Chinese were treated.

When you answer to the prompt, be sure to

- Use evidence from at least four of the documents. Write a clear claim and provide all the appropriate pieces of evidence to support your idea. After each piece of evidence cited in a direct quote or paraphrase (your own words), please add the source letter in parentheses, for example (Source B).
- For each piece of evidence, clearly reason (explain) why this piece of evidence helps support your claim. Underline your reasoning. Reasoning can be in the same sentence or the evidence or come before or after the sentence that includes the evidence.
- Choose important vocabulary terms from the box below to include in your writing. Your teacher will tell you how many.

stereotype	industrious	penned	convenience
obedient	initiative	conspicuous	prospector