

1 This lesson was submitted by a member(s) of the public for consideration by the  
2 Instructional Quality Commission at its November 18–19, 2020, meeting. Certain  
3 edits have been proposed by CDE. Inclusion in this Box link does not indicate  
4 that the lesson has been approved for use in the Ethnic Studies Model  
5 Curriculum.

## 6 **Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the Model** 7 **Minority Myth**

8 Theme: History and Movement

9 Disciplinary Area: Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies

10 Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 2, 5, 7

11 Standards Alignment:

12 CA HSS Analysis Skills (9–12): Historical Research Evidence and Point of View 1–3

13 CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RH.9–10.1, 2, 8, 9; WHST.9–10.1A and B; SL.9–10.1A-D,  
14 9-10.3

15 CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.9–10.1, 5, 9, 10a

### 16 **Lesson Overview:**

17 This 3 day lesson introduces students to the complexity of the term ‘Asian American,’  
18 ultimately coming to understand the various ethnic groups and politics associated with  
19 the identity marker. Additionally, students will also be exposed to the concept of the  
20 model minority myth. This course will provide for students the implications that result  
21 when lumping all Asian groups together and labeling them the Model Minority. For  
22 example, marginalized groups (i.e. Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asians) suffer from  
23 being cut out of programs and resources. It presents a false narrative that Asian  
24 Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have overcome racism and prejudice. It glosses  
25 over the violence, harm and legalized racism that AAPIs have endured, i.e. the Chinese

26 massacre in Los Angeles 1871, the annexation of Hawaii, shooting of Southeast Asian  
27 school children in Stockton. Furthermore, students will understand how this label for  
28 AAPIs becomes a hindrance to expanding democratic structures and support, and worst  
29 how it creates a division among the AAPI community and places a wedge between  
30 them and other oppressed groups including but not limited to African American, Latinx,  
31 and American Indian communities.

32 **Key Ethnic Studies Terms and Concepts:**

33 Assimilation, stereotype, identity, model minority [myth](#), racism, anti-blackness, data  
34 disaggregation

35 **Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to**

- 36 1. Analyze the misconceptions of the model minority to describe Asian Americans  
37 and Pacific Islanders.
- 38 2. Differentiate the various identities, nationalities, and ethnicities that make up the  
39 Asian American and Pacific Islander community.
- 40 3. Learn to analyze [statistical data and](#) legislation that directly impacts communities  
41 of color.
- 42 4. Actively dispel stereotypes and the model minority myth

43 **Essential Questions:**

- 44 ● What does Asian American mean? And who is Asian American and Pacific  
45 Islander?
- 46 ● How has the model minority myth been used to oppress and/or stymie certain  
47 Asian American and Pacific Islander communities?

- 48 • What are the dangers of the model minority myth?
- 49 • What are ways you can dispel the model minority myth?

## 50 Lesson Steps/Activities:

### 51 Day 1

- 52 1. Place four large pieces of flip chart paper in each corner of the room along with three  
53 to five markers. Engage the class by asking students **What does Asian American**  
54 **mean? What does Pacific Islander mean?**
  - 55 2. Before delving too deeply into discussion, divide the class up into four groups. Each  
56 group is assigned to a corner and instructed to take ten minutes as a group to  
57 respond to the aforementioned question. Also ask the groups to **list the various**  
58 **ethnic groups that comprise 'Asian American and Pacific Islander'.**
  - 59 3. After about ten minutes, signal for the groups to stop what they are doing. Allow  
60 each group to share what they discussed with the class. After each group has  
61 shared, provide a definition for Asian American and Pacific Islander and begin listing  
62 some of the various ethnic groups (see below for a sample list).
- 63 Sample Ethnic Groups (this list is in no way exhaustive - listed in the order of  
64 population according to the 2010 Census):
- 65 Chinese
  - 66 Filipino
  - 67 Indian
  - 68 Vietnamese
  - 69 Korean
  - 70 Japanese
  - 71 Pakistani

72 Cambodian  
73 Hmong  
74 Thai  
75 Laotian  
76 Bangladeshi  
77 Burmese  
78 Indonesian  
79 Malaysian  
80 Fijian  
81 Samoan  
82 Hawaiian  
83 Micronesian  
84 Polynesian

85 Definition of Asian American: The term Asian American was born out of the Asian  
86 American Movement (1968-1975) as a means of identifying people of Asian descent  
87 living in the United States. During the late 1960s, the term was largely seen as  
88 radical and unifying, a rejection of 'oriental' and other pejoratives that were  
89 associated with people of Asian descent. The collective coining of the term was an  
90 act of self-naming and self-determination, and aligned with the broader goals of the  
91 Asian American and Pacific Islander movement—equality, justice, and anti-racism.

92 4. After sharing the definition and ethnic groups listed above, reiterate that Asian  
93 American and Pacific Islander is a loaded term that encompasses dozens of  
94 different Asian ethnic groups that have settled in the U.S., with large populations  
95 settling in California.

96 5. Ask students if [what impact stereotypes on a group this diverse might have on](#)  
97 [groups of people who are stereotyped? Then ask students if](#) they know what the  
98 model minority myth is. If students are able to answer, move to the article. If not,  
99 describe the model minority myth and explain to the students that they will be

examining the effects of racial stereotypes that are perceived to be positive can in fact be harmful. For example, the teacher can describe the effects of stereotype threat.

6. Ask students to read the article "'Model Minority' Myth Again Used As A Racial Wedge Between Asians And Blacks' in Code Switch (see link in resource list). Note that this article references William Petersen's 1966 New York Times article that inherently pitted Japanese Americans (arguably Asian Americans more broadly) against African Americans, with Petersen identifying the latter group as the "problem minority." Following internment, Japanese Americans were able to achieve some level of social and economic mobility, rendering them the "model minority," for their ability to thrive in the face of adversity unlike their African American counterparts. After reading the NPR piece, explain to students that the Petersen article is first time the term "model minority" was used (or coined) and marks the beginning of the stereotyping of Asian Americans as inherently "smart" and "successful". Ask students to reflect on the main points of the NPR article and discuss how and why the model minority myth is used as a wedge group.

7. Tell students that they will gain an understanding of the diversity of AAPI communities by exploring statistics on education and poverty. Split the class into groups of three and instruct half of the groups to review educational data and the other half economic data.

Education: Guide groups to investigate high school and college graduation rates. (<https://aapidata.com/policy/education/>)

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Economic: Guide groups to investigate income and poverty among AAPI groups and with the rest of the U.S. (<https://aapidata.com/policy/poverty/>)

Each student group will report their findings to the class. Each group will write their findings for their assigned part on the board or a sheet of poster paper. For example, one group can describe how Asian American and Pacific Islander groups vary in terms of reading and math test scores; another group can summarize the educational attainment of various Pacific Islander groups.

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For homework, have students answer the following questions. Students can use the resources at the end of the lesson to help them answer the questions. Tell students that each question requires at least two examples/arguments:

- How are Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic groups similar and different in terms of their education and economic experiences?
- How might the “model minority myth” be an obstacle for advancement for Asian Americans?
- How can the “model minority myth” be used to drive a wedge between Asian Americans and other communities of color in policies and services.
- Knowing that AAPIs are not a monolithic “model minority” and that each ethnic group fares differently economically and educationally, how might policies change to be more inclusive of those groups in need in terms of jobs, services, government funding, employment, small business, education, etc?

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146 Create a chart of arguments and counter arguments

147 Sample Chart (Create more arguments and counter arguments through class

148 discussions)

Arguments of the Model Minority Myth	Counter Arguments to the Model Minority Myth
All Asians are smart and successful	Not all AAPI are successful and rich, in fact the majority are working class and live in poverty. Especially when data is disaggregated by ethnic group for example the poverty rate among Pacific Islanders, Cambodian and Hmong Americans is considerably higher than Indian and Chinese Americans. Lumping all Asians together, covers over the disparities within and among the AAPI population. It renders these groups invisible and hurts the poorest groups who need financial aid and assistance. (if there are Asian students in the class, make an effort to draw out their experiences in group and whole class discussions as a part of sharing their stories)

Arguments of the Model Minority Myth	Counter Arguments to the Model Minority Myth
Asians are the model minority because they overcome adversity better than African Americans	<p>It's a form of anti-black racism. The model minority myth has been used to put a wedge between the AAPI and African American communities and is an effort to peel off AAPIs from the Civil Rights Movement. It has also been used by the media to disparage the African American community for standing up for their rights.</p> <p>"During World War II, the media created the idea that the Japanese were rising up out of the ashes [after being held in incarceration camps] and proving that they had the right cultural stuff," said Claire Jean Kim, a professor at the University of California, Irvine. "And it was immediately a reflection on black people: Now why weren't black people making it, but Asians were?"</p> <p>These arguments falsely conflate anti-Asian racism with anti-black racism, according to Kim. "Racism that Asian-Americans have experienced is not what black people have experienced," Kim said. "Sullivan is right that Asians have faced various forms of discrimination, but never the systematic dehumanization that black people have faced during slavery and continue to face today." Asians have been barred from entering the U.S. and gaining citizenship and have been sent to incarceration camps, Kim pointed out, but all that is different than the segregation, police brutality and discrimination that African-Americans have endured." (Chow, Kat)</p> <p>It is important that AAPIs not only stand up for their rights but also stand with African Americans in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement and support the end to police brutality. Justice for one oppressed group leads to justice for all.</p>
All Asians are good at math and computers, they are nerdy.	Not all AAPIs are good at math or want to be mathematicians or scientists. Parent, peer, media pressure to do well in math and become a scientist, doctor or lawyer is very limiting to AAPI youth, and causes them to feel like failures, if they don't live up to these stereotypes.
All Asians are...	(Counter Argument)



## Day 2

~~1. Start the class by asking students to share their counter arguments with the groups that they were in yesterday. After each group mate has shared their counter arguments, ask the groups to share what they believe to be the strongest counter argument with the entire class.~~

~~2. Be sure to provide your own analysis of Petersen's article and a counter argument.~~

~~Stress that Petersen's article and the term 'model minority' helped render 'Asian American' monolithic. Also point out that the experience that Petersen mentioned was not reflective of all Asian-Americans, as Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups remain largely marginalized and are disproportionately impacted by poverty, mental health issues, low wage jobs, access to higher education, among other barriers.~~

1. Start the class by telling students that they will share their answers to the homework questions. Split the class into four groups and assign one question to each group. Have students take notes on their in-group discussion and prepare to report to the rest of the class what answers they came up with.

~~3. To better illustrate the problems with 'model minority,' play a short video, "Why Data Matters When It Comes to Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders and Education" (see resources). Following the screening, explain what it means to disaggregate data and its connection to the model minority myth.~~

4.2. Point back to the flip chart papers around the room that lists the various ethnic groups within AAPI. Underscore how this term that was intended to be a unifying identity-marker has created some problems, including rendering smaller ethnic

groups (often those in the most need) less visible, and not being inclusive enough of a term, especially for those of the Asian diaspora that have origins from islands in the Pacific (i.e. Filipinos, Melanesians, Polynesians, etc.), hence the more updated identity-marker, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

**5.3.** During the second half of class hand out copies of the law signed by Governor Brown on September 25, 2016 California Assembly Bill 1726 (Data Collection). Have students take turns reading the bill aloud popcorn style. After the in-class reading, provide necessary context on what a bill is, and summarize how bills become laws. Additionally, define any words or terms students may be struggling with. In groups, have students discuss the purpose of the bill, impact that it will have on AAPI communities, and how the legislation helps dispel the model minority myth.

**6.4.** As homework, ask students to complete a “mini bill analysis” of Assembly Bill 1726 using the worksheet below.

### Day 3

The key method to dispel the model minority myth is by telling the true stories of yourself, your family and your community. By writing down, speaking aloud and sharing your stories, you actively counteract the stereotypes and master narrative developed to pigeon hold Asian American and Pacific Islanders as a monolithic group with one identity, one experience and one role. No AAPI individual fits the model minority stereotype in all its facets. Take time in your class for students to first Think, Write, and then Share on 3 questions:

1. What is your ethnic background?

2. What stereotype is there of your ethnic group that you do not identify with?

Why? Explain in detail with facts about your experience, your background, your values, your goals, your dreams, your family, your community.

3. How will you actively dispel these stereotypes?

Application, Action, and Reflection: Students will read and analyze an article, [demographic data](#), and a legislative document, providing their own informed critiques, opinions, and feedback on the sources. ~~Students will further analyze how the document supports or argues against the model minority myth.~~ Students will also tell their stories as a way to dispel the harmful stereotypes that the media and society imposes on their ethnic group.

## Materials and Resources

“Why Data Matters When It Comes to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and Education” Article and videos  
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/why-data-matters-when-it-comes-asian-americans-pacific-islanders-n621196>

“How Does a Bill Become a Law?” Infographic/Handout  
<https://www.usa.gov/how-laws-are-made>

Asian Americans Are Still Caught in the Trap of the ‘Model Minority’ Stereotype. And It Creates Inequality for All  
<https://time.com/5859206/anti-asian-racism-america/>

~~Peterson, William. “Success Story, Japanese-American Style” New York Times, 1966. Digital pdf download:  
[http://inside.sfuhs.org/dept/history/US\\_History\\_reader/Chapter14/modelminority.pdf](http://inside.sfuhs.org/dept/history/US_History_reader/Chapter14/modelminority.pdf)~~

California Assembly Bill 1726 (Approved by Governor September 25, 2016. Filed with Secretary of State September 25, 2016.)  
[https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160AB1726](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB1726)

223 Chow, Kat, 'Model Minority' Myth Again Used As A Racial Wedge Between Asians And  
224 Blacks', Code Switch, April 19, 2017  
225 [https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-](https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-blacks)  
226 [again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-blacks](https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-blacks)

227 Wu, Ellen. The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model  
228 Minority. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014

229 NPR Education. Asian-Americans are Successful, but No Thanks to Tiger Parenting:  
230 [https://www.npr.org/2014/05/12/311857049/asian-americans-are-successful-but-no-](https://www.npr.org/2014/05/12/311857049/asian-americans-are-successful-but-no-thanks-to-tiger-parenting)  
231 [thanks-to-tiger-parenting](https://www.npr.org/2014/05/12/311857049/asian-americans-are-successful-but-no-thanks-to-tiger-parenting)

232 PBS LearningMedia. America By the Numbers: Model Minority Myth:  
233 <https://www.pbs.org/video/america-numbers-model-minority-myth/>

234 Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story", TEDGlobal 2009:  
235 [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/tr](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript)  
236 [anscript](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript)

237 [Fuchs, C. \(August 22, 2017\). Behind the 'Model Minority' Myth: Why the 'Studious](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/behind-model-minority-myth-why-studious-asian-stereotype-hurts-n792926)  
238 [Asian' Stereotype Hurts. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/behind-model-minority-myth-why-studious-asian-stereotype-hurts-n792926)  
239 [america/behind-model-minority-myth-why-studious-asian-stereotype-hurts-n792926](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/behind-model-minority-myth-why-studious-asian-stereotype-hurts-n792926)

240 AAPI Data: Demographic Data & Policy Research on Asian Americans & Pacific  
241 Islander: <https://aapidata.com/>

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243 Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles – Model Minority Myth Lesson  
244 Resources: [https://advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/curriculum-lesson-plans/asian-](https://advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/curriculum-lesson-plans/asian-americans-k-12-education-curriculum/episode-3-lesson-1)  
245 [americans-k-12-education-curriculum/episode-3-lesson-1](https://advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/curriculum-lesson-plans/asian-americans-k-12-education-curriculum/episode-3-lesson-1)

246  
247 [National commission of Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education.](http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2013_iCount_Report.pdf)  
248 [‘iCount: A Data Quality Movement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and Higher](http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2013_iCount_Report.pdf)  
249 [Education’. http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-](http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2013_iCount_Report.pdf)  
250 [content/uploads/2015/08/2013\\_iCount\\_Report.pdf](http://care.gseis.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/2013_iCount_Report.pdf)

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252 ▲  
253  
254 **Background Information/Context**

255 [How can being an upstanding American citizen be a double-edged sword? During the](#)  
256 [post-World War II era and after nearly a hundred years of anti-Asian sentiment and](#)  
257 [legislation, many Asian Americans hoped to be seen as more American and accepted](#)

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by American society. They didn't want to be viewed as a threat to national security like Japanese Americans were when they were imprisoned during WWII. Instead, they wanted to be seen as "good Americans" and desired to assimilate and Americanize, which developed into the idea of the "model minority myth," recasting Asian Americans as prime examples of representing the quintessential American values of opportunity, meritocracy, and the American Dream. Toy Len Goon, the first ever Asian American named American Mother of the Year in 1952 was an early example of what it meant to be a "model minority."

During the 1960s, as the Civil Rights Movement continued the fight for equality of all Americans, and the federal government invested in social welfare programs such as the War on Poverty and Great Society, the concept of the "model minority" became a stereotype used to pit Asian Americans against other communities of color, particularly Black Americans. News publications ran articles extolling the ways Asian Americans capitalized on the American Dream with their work ethic and emphasis on education. By doing this, it delegitimized centuries of systemic oppression and racist policies that shaped the experiences of Black Americans.

This stereotype also hid how Asian Americans were discriminated against based on racist policies, such as being excluded from living in certain neighborhoods and from being fully accepted members of American society. It created a limited perspective on the Asian American community, where they were seen as one monolithic group. In reality, this community has consisted of diverse ethnicities from a variety of countries and cultures, comprising over ten different languages. Thus, socio-economic success was not universal, and praising Asian Americans as a "model minority" called into question the fact that there were many within the community who did not get the services and government assistance they needed.

The "model minority myth" has persisted well after the stereotype developed. Media publications such as *Time*'s 1987 cover story "Those Asian American Whiz Kids" and articles analyzing the work ethic of Asian Americans in response to Amy Chua's 2011 book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* illustrated that the "model minority myth" is still being perpetuated.

289 **Bill Analysis Worksheet**

290 Bill Information (Name, Legislative Year, and Author):

291 What does this bill aim to do? What does it address?

292 What, if any, are the social and/or economic benefits of this bill?

293 Does this bill directly or indirectly impact your community and/or family? If so, how?

294 Do you agree with what this bill seeks to do? Please explain.

295 Beyond legislation, what can be done to address the issue this bill calls attention to?