

Vietnamese American Experiences Model Curriculum
California Department of Education
Community Placemaking and Racial Conflict on the Texas Gulf Coast
Grades: 11–12

Author: Ann Trần

Area of Study: Vietnamese Departures and Transit

Compelling Question: How did Vietnamese build communities as they attempted to survive and traverse the hardships of life in transit?

Lesson Question (Supporting Question):

- Why did Vietnamese refugees first relocate to the Texas Gulf Coast?
- What struggles did they face with Texas locals, and how did they overcome these challenges?
- How did Vietnamese refugees establish community and place for themselves in the Texas coastal region?
- How are different conceptions of Vietnamese and Vietnamese American negotiated by intersectional identities such as age or generation, gender, class, religion, and migration journeys?

Lesson Materials:

- Supplies:
 - Access to laptop device
- Readings:
 - 1979 Seadrift Incident
 - Vietnamese Fishermen's Ass'n v. KNIGHTS
- Videos:
 - “Seadrift” trailer
 - Huỳnh Công Tử Oral History, timestamp 38:31—49:23
- Handouts:
 - Court Case Terminology

- Link to handouts:

<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/k6xsahwrzzo8u9z3hz64plng71utxzeo>

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to trace the motivations of Vietnamese refugee migration to Texas and the Gulf Coast, identify the local responses to refugee resettlement in Seadrift, Seabrook, Rockport, and other small coastal communities in Texas and impacts of racial conflict by answering text dependent questions and creating a medium of choice.

Ethnic Studies Theme: This lesson connects to the ethnic studies theme of *power and oppression* from the Asian American Studies Curriculum Framework (Asian American Research Initiative, 2022). Students will consider war, migration and imperialism as contexts shaping citizenship and racialization. Students will explore how United States' migration policies induced Vietnamese resettlement to various parts of the United States and racial tensions in communities.

For additional guidance around ethnic studies implementation, refer to the *Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum* (2021) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/esmc.asp>.

Historical Thinking Skills: This lesson will facilitate student proficiency in *historical perspectives*, one of Seixas' historical thinking skills (Seixas & Morton, 2013). To demonstrate the use of evidence to write historical fiction that accurately conveys the beliefs, values, and motivations of historical actors. Students consider how taking the perspective of historical actors means inferring how people felt and thought in the past. It does not mean identifying with those actors. Valid inferences are those based on evidence.

Standards Addressed:

HSS-11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11–12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS-ELA-LITERACY.W.11–12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Lesson Assessment:

Students will choose from one of the following assessment options:

- Newspaper Article: Students must write an informational newspaper article that describes the Vietnamese refugees experiences of settling on the Texas Gulf

Coast. The article should be historically accurate and set in the same time period. The newspaper article should also include a minimum of four key terms from the vocabulary list.

- **Social Media Post:** Students will create three different social media posts in the perspective of a Vietnamese refugee relocating to the Texas Gulf Coast. Each social media post should include a photo, caption, and relevant hashtags. The three posts should reflect the chronicles of Vietnamese refugees prior to entering Texas, their time at Texas, and the impacts thereafter.
- **Storyboard:** Students will create a six-box storyboard that reflects the experiences of Vietnamese refugees on the Texas Gulf Coast. Each storyboard box should include a visual component and a one to two sentence description. Students are to incorporate a minimum of four key terms from the vocabulary list.

Suggested Amount of Time: 80–90 minutes

Lesson Background:

In 1975, following the fall of Sài Gòn, the US Gulf States resettled about 15 percent of the initial 130,000 first-wave refugees from Southeast Asia, including Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. Many came to Texas because of its warm weather and economic opportunity, settling in large numbers in Houston and the Galveston Bay. Those that resettled along the coast were attracted to the fishing industry, because many of the Texas Vietnamese fishermen had worked as shrimpers and fishermen in their hometowns in Central and South Vietnam and they were familiar with working on boats at sea. Starting out, they used kinship networks to pool their savings to buy boats and fishing equipment. Vietnamese fishermen also worked overtime, catching everything from snails and conch to fish. They would sell the items, like fish heads, white fishermen did not want to their community members. In 1979, after a murderous dispute between a Vietnamese shrimper and a white fisherman in Seadrift resulted in the latter's death, the Ku Klux Klan got involved to frighten and torment refugees in the area. The clan burned Vietnamese-owned boats as a demonstration of white superiority and tasked its followers to disrupt peace in Vietnamese neighborhoods to avenge the white fisherman's death. Many refugees moved away from Seadrift to other coastal towns or to Houston, away from the site of racial violence. Others left the fishing industry and entered different occupations. In the aftermath of the Seadrift event, many journalists and elected officials condemned the violence of the KKK. Vietnamese fishermen had the support of numerous Christian organizations and churches behind them, as well as the legal aid of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which helped them win a court case against the KKK.

This lesson contains content that may be sensitive for some students. Teachers should exercise discretion in evaluating whether the resources are suitable for their class and provide a content warning to their students at the beginning of the lesson.

Lesson Procedures:

1. Warm-Up/Meditation (five minutes)
 - a. Have students imagine what it would be like if they were going to live in a new country. How would they feel, or if students have personally experienced this, have them reflect on how that moment was for them. Teachers can also ask students if they have talked to their family about their migration story? (Optional for students to close their eyes).
 - i. Check in for two minutes.
 - ii. Tell students to keep these thoughts in mind as the lesson begins. Teachers can optionally provide time for sharing.
2. Content introduction: “Seadrift” trailer (five minutes)
 - a. Have the students watch the trailer for “Seadrift”. (<https://youtu.be/QzYeVAPNgBY>). Teachers should provide content warning that the trailer may include violent acts. Should students need to step away, teachers should provide that space.
 - b. Ask the students to answer these discussion questions as a class:
 - i. What do you know about this event? What have you heard, and if you haven’t, why do you think you haven’t learned about this event?
 - ii. How do you feel about this event?
 - iii. What questions do you have?
 - iv. Alternatively, teachers can have students engage in a See-Think-Wonder thinking activity.
3. Building Background: Introduce students to the history of Vietnamese migration and resettlement in the Texas Gulf Coast by providing the following passage (or utilizing the lesson background):
 - a. “The immigration of Vietnamese refugees to the Texas coast radically transformed the coast’s cities and towns. Before 1975, there was not a single Vietnamese American living on the Texas coast. After the initial migration of Vietnamese refugee families to the Texas coast in 1979, Texas shrimping and crabbing cities and towns were home to, by proportion, more Vietnamese than anywhere in Texas. According to the 1980 Census, the population of Kemah was over 7% Vietnamese; Palacios and Seadrift were both over 5% Vietnamese. Port Arthur was over 2%

Vietnamese. Other Vietnamese communities established themselves in Rockport, Beaumont, Anahuac, Galveston and Port Aransas. News traveled quickly throughout the US that Vietnamese could shrimp and otherwise work in the seafood industry on the Gulf Coast, and thousands of refugees who were desperately seeking work with no formal education migrated to Texas and other Gulf Coast states. Because of their initial poverty, Vietnamese families working as shrimpers, crabbers, seafood processing workers, boat repairmen, and small business operators often lived in mostly-Vietnamese trailer parks, as opposed to the housing projects, apartments, and homes of the Vietnamese living in major Texas cities like Houston" (Ha, "Vietnamese Texans")

4. Vocabulary Building (15 minutes)

- a. Have students define key terms in their own words. If time permits, students can create vocabulary matrixes for each term as well.
 - i. Kinship network
 - ii. Model minority myth
 - iii. White power
 - iv. Economic distrust
 - v. Racial violence
 - vi. Anti-immigrant distrust
 - vii. Ku Klux Klan
 - viii. Texas Emergency Reserve
 - ix. Southern Poverty Law Center
 - x. 13th Amendment
 - xi. 14th Amendment
 - xii. The Refugee Act of 1980
 - xiii. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890
 - xiv. The Civil Rights Act - 42 USC. sections 1981, 1982, 1985(c), and 1986

5. Interacting with first source (15 minutes)

- a. As a class, listen to the oral history of Huỳnh Công Tử (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=im2v00bOkfw>)
 - i. Play segments 38:3–49:23. (Teacher to turn on closed captioning on Youtube video for English translations)
 - ii. As they listen to the oral history, instruct students to note sentences and terms that stand out to them. Teacher should be modeling interactions with this first source.

iii. Ask them to discuss in groups:

1. What is your major takeaway from this person's experience?
2. Why is his story important to understanding the Vietnamese American refugee experience? How is it different from the narratives you already know?
3. For Vietnamese language speakers: Do you think the interpreter's translations were accurate? Why or why not?

6. Interacting with a second source (15 minutes)

- a. Students will read an article on the Seadrift incident (<https://nolachinese.wordpress.com/2021/07/30/1979-seadrift-incident/>)
- b. After reading the article, have each student write or record the key details of the event: who was involved, description of event, location, dates and times, consequences and effects. This can be done with a partner.
- c. Have students reflect on the narrative and ask any questions they have about the incident they read.
- d. Teacher Note: If the students are struggling with the material, break down the story into bullet points on the board and have students share their thoughts on the subject.
- e. If you notice sensitivity to terms like 'white power' or 'Ku Klux Klan,' ask students if they can provide some examples of where these terms have come up before in other history classes. Can they tell you the context of these terms for other racial and ethnic groups?

7. Interaction with third source (20 minutes)

- a. Separate the class into five groups. Provide them with scaffolding "Court Case Terminology" (see handouts)
- b. Each group will closely read one section of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) court case Vietnamese Fishermen's Ass'n v. KNIGHTS: (<https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/543/198/1460786/>) and summarize in three to five sentences the context and main ideas of the excerpts in a shared Google worksheet.
 - i. Groups should be divided as follows:

1. Group 1: Introduction
2. Group 2: Statement of Facts, sections A & B
3. Group 3: Statement of Facts, sections C and Conclusions of Law, part A
4. Group 4: Conclusions of Law, part B & C
5. Group 5: Final Judgment

ii. Optional Text Dependent Questions:

1. Answer the following questions after reviewing the SPLC court case:
 - a. Who was the defendant and plaintiff in the court case?
 - b. What laws and civil rights acts did the Ku Klux Klan violate?
 - c. How did the Texas Emergency Reserve try to intimidate the Vietnamese fishermen?
 - d. How were the Vietnamese refugees affected by the actions of the KKK?
 - e. What was the final outcome of the court case?
 - f. In your opinion, was this court case successful in achieving the desired outcomes?

8. Cultural Production (15 – 20 minutes)

- a. Students will choose from one of the following assessment options (the final product can be open to a written, visual, or audio narrative):
 - Newspaper Article: Students must write an informational newspaper article that describes the Vietnamese refugees experiences of settling on the Texas Gulf Coast. The article should be historically accurate and set in the same time period. The newspaper article should also include a minimum of four key terms from the vocabulary list.
 - Social Media Post: Students will create three different social media posts in the perspective of a Vietnamese refugee relocating to the Texas Gulf Coast. Each social media post should include a photo, caption, and relevant hashtags. The three posts should reflect the

chronicles of Vietnamese refugees prior to entering Texas, their time at Texas, and the impacts thereafter.

- Storyboard: Students will create a six-box storyboard that reflects the experiences of Vietnamese refugees on the Texas Gulf Coast. Each storyboard box should include a visual component and a one to two sentence description. Students are to incorporate a minimum of four key terms from the vocabulary list.

9. Reflection (10 min)

- a. Allow students to share their final products with their peers. Once each student has finished sharing, ask students to reflect on one of the prompts:
 - i. What are some similarities and differences that you find between current, more recent events involving refugees and immigrants and the experiences of Vietnamese Texan refugees in the 1970s and 1980s?
 - ii. What factors do you believe contributed to the actions and behaviors of white fishermen toward Vietnamese refugees? Do you think these behaviors and attitudes still remain today towards the refugees and other groups, or have they changed?
 - iii. What stereotypes existed about the Vietnamese that led to their image as economic threats on the Texas Gulf Coast? Why do you think certain stereotypes like this exist, and what other examples of misperceptions can you think of in American history that also led to racial tension and conflict?
 - iv. Students can also compare this to other current day events.

Scaffolding:

- **Representation:** Consider the following method to support with multiple means of representation:
 - Link key vocabulary words to definitions and pronunciations in both dominant and heritage languages
 - Provide electronic translation tools or links to multilingual glossaries on the web
- **Action and Expression:** Consider the following method to support in presenting their learning in multiple ways:
 - Use story webs, outlining tools, or concept mapping tools

- Provide graphic organizers and templates for data collection and organizing information
- **Engagement:** Consider the following method to support with lesson engagement:
 - Invite personal response, evaluation and self-reflection to content and activities

For additional ideas to support your students, check out the UDL Guidelines at CAST 2018 <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>.

Multilingual Learner Supports:

- **Emerging:** Consider the following method to support with emerging students:
 - Reading: Preview the text content with pictures, videos, demos, charts, or experiences
- **Expanding:** Consider the following method to support with expanding students:
 - Reading: Use guided reading
 - In a shared or interactive writing format, chart out characters, setting, problem, and events (including orientation, complication, and resolution). Add theme, as appropriate.
- **Bridging:** Consider the following method to support with bridging students:
 - Reading: Use focused questions to guide reading
 - Students use inquiry posing their own questions and wonderings to guide shared research experiences.

For additional guidance around scaffolding for multilingual learners, please consult the following resources:

- *English Learner Toolkit of Strategies*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/ujkdc2xp1dqjzrlq55czph50c3sq1ngu>
- *Providing Appropriate Scaffolding*
<https://www.sdcoe.net/educators/multilingual-education-and-global-achievement/oracy-toolkits/providing-appropriate-scaffolding#scaffolding>
- *Strategies for ELD*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/dcp15ymah51uwizpmmt2vys5zr2r5reu>
- *ELA / ELD Framework*
<https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/resources/6537/ela-eld-framework>
- *California ELD Standards*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/vqn43cd632z22p8mfzn2h7pntc71kb02>

Enrichment Opportunities:

1. Little Saigon, Houston - Have students explore the Little Saigon community in Houston. Students are to create a flyer, brochure, or advertisement to highlight the community, or even a small business, in this region to attract folks to visit. The creation should include events, culture, religion, cuisine, art, organizations, and language.
2. “Vietnam: The Fishermen and the Sea” - Students can complete a webquest/scavenger hunt on each of the three parts of this website: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/vnfishermen>. Students can have a discussion surrounding the significance of the fishing industry as it pertains to the livelihood of the Vietnamese people.
3. Virtual Q&A Session with “Seadrift” Filmmaker - Provide the following virtual Q&A session for students to watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3oMdY6eXwk&t=2s>. Students can make note of new learnings, and questions that they would pose if they had an opportunity to connect with the film directors.
4. “Lost at Sea” Oral History - Have students read the story of Vu Thanh Thuy from the Houston Asian American Archive: <https://magazine.rice.edu/winter-2016/lost-sea>. This resource also allows them to learn more about the Vietnamese population in Houston, Texas.

Works Cited:

- American Initiative. 2022. *Asian American Studies K-12 Framework*.
<https://asianamericanresearchinitiative.org/asian-american-studies-curriculum-framework/>
- Britt, K. 2020, May 11. *English learner toolkit of strategies*. California County Superintendents.
<https://cacountysupts.org/english-learner-toolkit-of-strategies/>
- California Department of Education. 2021. *Ethnic studies model curriculum*.
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/esmc.asp>
- California Department of Education & English Learner Support Division. 2012. *California English Language Development standards (Electronic Edition) kindergarten through grade 12 (F. Ong & J. McLean, Eds.)*. California Department of Education.
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/eldstndpublication14.pdf>
- California Educators Together. (n.d.). *ELA / ELD framework*.
<https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/resources/6537/ela-eld-framework>

CAST. 2018. *The UDL guidelines*. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Huỳnh Công Tử Oral History. (n.d.). Wwww.youtube.com. Retrieved December 6, 2023.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=im2v00bOkfw>

San Diego County Office of Education. (n.d.). *Providing appropriate scaffolding*.
<https://www.sdcoe.net/educators/multilingual-education-and-global-achievement/oracy-to-olkit/providing-appropriate-scaffolding#scaffolding>

Sexias, P. & Morton, T. 2013. *The big six: Historical thinking concepts*. Nelson Education.

Southern Poverty Law Center. 2011, July 15. *A look back: SPLC case brought justice to Vietnamese fishermen terrorized by Klan*. Southern Poverty Law Center.
<https://www.splcenter.org/news/2011/07/15/look-back-splc-case-brought-justice-vietnamese-fishermen-terrorized-klan>

Tsai, T., B., Aplin-Martin, B., Wilson, D., Galloway, R., Pham, S., & Nguyen, T. 2019. *Seadrift . First Run Features*. <https://youtu.be/QzYeVAPNgBY>

Tulare County Office of Education. (n.d.). *Strategies for ELD*.
<https://commoncore.tcoe.org/Content/Public/doc/Alpha-CollectionofELDStrategies.pdf>

Vietnamese Fishermen's Association v. Knights, etc., 543 F. supp. 198 S.D. Tex. 1982. Justia Law. (n.d.). <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/543/198/1460786/>

何嶸W. H. 2021, July 30. 1979 *Seadrift Incident*. Researching Chinese American History in New Orleans 紐奧良華僑歷史研究.
<https://nolachinese.wordpress.com/2021/07/30/1979-seadrift-incident/>

Supplementary Sources:

ABC13 Houston. 2018, May 13. *Klan rally against Vietnamese fishermen in Texas 1981*. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/1Jic2kOPPOU>

Hà, T. 2008. “Vietnamese Texans.” in *Asian Texans: Our Histories and Our Lives*. Ed. Irwin Tang. University of Texas Press.

Mehden, F. R. von der. (n.d.). *Vietnamese*. Texas State Historical Association.
<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/vietnamese>

SEADRIFT: A documentary Screening and LIVE Q&A with Director Tim Tsai. (n.d.). Wwww.youtube.com. Retrieved January 24, 2024.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3oMdY6eXwk&t=2s>

Tsai, T., & Filmmaker, D. 2018, November 25. *Decades After Clashing With The Klan, A*

Thriving Vietnamese Community In Texas. NPR.org.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/11/25/669857481/decades-after-clashing-with-the-klan-a-thriving-vietnamese-community-in-texas>

UPI. 1981, January 28. *Shrimpers angry; KKK proposes “Viet Cong Watch”* - UPI Archives.
UPI.

<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/01/28/Shrimpers-angry-KKK-proposes-Viet-Cong-watch/3916349506000/?fbclid=IwAR1dRaJKQLDiiqUhAK5u1HOEmm5zzSvLi6CqA98zuSZdKiENY4LZozBhqw0>

Vietnam: The Fishermen and the Sea. (n.d.). Wwww.rfa.org. Retrieved November 16, 2023.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/vnfishermen/>