Understanding Sikhs and Sikh American History

INTENDED FOR:

Grades 8 – 12
Length: Lesson plan designed for 90-135 minutes, but can be adapted to 45 minutes
Presentation: Use this powerpoint presentation to supplement your lesson plan.

LESSON SUMMARY

In this lesson, students will explore the history and experiences of Sikhs in the United States. Through media and historical archives, students will study how the community has been impacted by anti-Sikh hate incidents from the early 1900s to the present day. More importantly, however, students will analyze how the Sikh community responded to these incidents.

STATE STANDARDS

9TH GRADE - 12TH GRADE:
1. Content Area: Behavioral Sciences (BH)

Standard SS.BH2: Wisconsin students will investigate and interpret interactions between individuals and groups (Sociology). - page 23

BH2.a: Relationship of people and groups: Investigate how language and culture can unify a group of people. Evaluate the factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict among peoples of a country and the world (e.g., language, religion, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, social or financial inequity, political beliefs, access to resources, economics, environment).

Lesson plans are created by the Sikh Coalition, are open source and designed to be shared. This lesson plan was created in collaboration with the Sikh American History Project, www.sikhamericanhistory.org. For additional resources, visit www.sikhcoalition.org/educators.
2. Content Area: History (Hist)

Standard SS.Hist1: Wisconsin students will use historical evidence for determining cause and effect. - page 45

Hist1.a: Cause: Evaluate multiple events from different perspectives using primary and secondary sources and analyze intended and unintended causes from both long- and short-term perspectives. Evaluate how different groups and individuals contributed to the event or cause.

Hist1.b: Effect: Evaluate multiple events from different perspectives using primary and secondary sources and analyze intended and unintended effects from both long- and short-term perspectives. Evaluate how different groups and individuals contributed to the effect.

The framework notes 8th-12th grade, if that is the case then for 8th grade it would fall under the following standards:

1. Content Area: Behavioral Sciences (BH)

Standard SS.BH2: Wisconsin students will investigate and interpret interactions between individuals and groups (Sociology). - page 23

BH2.a: Relationship of people and groups: Summarize the role culture plays in personal and group behavior. Categorize factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict among peoples of a country and/or the world (i.e., culture, language, religion, political beliefs).

2. Content Area: History (Hist)

Standard SS.Hist1: Wisconsin students will use historical evidence for determining cause and effect. - page 45

Hist1.a: Cause: Use multiple perspectives to analyze and explain the causes of issues or events within and across time periods, events, or cultures

Hist1.b: Effect: Use multiple perspectives to analyze and explain effects of issues or events within and across time periods, events, or cultures.
LESSON FLOW

OPENING (10 minutes)

1. Opening question/activity: What role does the media play in the portrayal of identities?
   a. Have various recent examples about the role of media

BODY (25 minutes)

1. “Sikhs allowed to Land” – the importance of terminology
   a. Review the Key Vocabulary and emphasize the correct pronunciation of Sikh

2. 1907 Bellingham, Washington Riots
   a. Show headline and ask who has heard about it
   b. Provide history (Cahn)
   c. Mention various attacks across the West Coast (Stege)

3. Establishment of Stockton Gurdwara
   a. Provide brief history (Bainiwal), (YouTube)
   b. Activity: Give each group specific thing about Stockton Gurdwara that they learn and then share with other groups
      i. Feeling of belonging in foreign nation
      ii. “Hungry American” – helping broader society
      iii. 1914 delegation – Sikh American advocacy
      iv. “Mother India” by Katherine Mayo (1927) and Saund’s “My Mother India” – reclaiming the narrative

4. Post 9/11 America
   a. Series of news articles and headlines with images – analyze images and news coverage (Gohil and Sidhu), (Singh), (Sikh Coalition), (Ahluwalia)
      i. Discuss impact of 9/11 and misconceptions
   b. Religious identity - Turban Myths (Sikh Coalition and Daily Show)
      i. History of the turban and how its been viewed throughout the years

5. Oak Creek
   a. Provide history and collectively read/analyze Harpreet Singh Saini’s testimony (Saini)
   b. Activity: ask students to research different ways to how the Sikh community has responded post-Oak Creek
      i. Sample Response: Pardeep Kaleka and former white supremacist – Interfaith and solidarity work

Sikh American History Project, [www.sikhamericanhistory.org](http://www.sikhamericanhistory.org)
1. Review how Sikh principles and perspectives have guided Sikh Americans to show resilience over the past century.
   a. Submit reflection as exit assignment
**KEY VOCABULARY**

**SIKHI (SIKHISM)**  An independent world religion founded in the Punjab region of South Asia. Based on the teachings of Guru Nanak, it emphasizes the equality of all human beings and belief in one God.

**SIKH**  A follower of the Sikh faith; the term “Sikh” derives from sikhna, or to learn; therefore, “Sikh” directly translates to “learner.”

**TURBAN**  Historically worn by royalty in South Asia, the Gurus adopted this practice as a way of asserting the sovereignty and equality of all people. For a Sikh, wearing a turban asserts a public commitment to maintaining the values and ethics of the tradition, including service, compassion, and honesty.

**PUNJAB**  An area in Northern India that has been partitioned since 1947 between India and Pakistan, causing Sikhs to migrate to the portion located in India. This has stripped Sikhs of access to hundreds of historically significant sites located in Pakistan.

**GURDWARA**  Represent the religious identity of the Sikhs and are associated intimately with their spiritual and social practices. They are the very nucleus of the Sikh community and serve as a multipurpose institution.

**CHARDI KALA**  A worldview that embraces resilience and boundless optimism.
1. The Sikh Turban: Post-911 Challenges to this Article of Faith (Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion).
2. 1907 Bellingham, Washington Riots
3. Stockton Gurdwara: A Brief History (YouTube Video, 3min)
5. Harpreet Singh Saini’s testimony
6. Daily Show with Trevor Noah and Sikhs
7. Sikhism in the United States Survey by National Sikh Campaign
8. Sikhs in the United States Report by National Sikh Campaign
9. Sikh Coalition Post-9/11 Fact Sheet
10. “Holding my Breath” by Muninder Kaur Ahluwalia
11. PBS “Sikh Americans Push for Greater Visibility”