

Challenge #4: Chinatown

This week's challenge explores the rich history of the neighborhood of Chinatown. When Chinese immigrants came to Chicago, they faced many challenges. In response, they made choices that shaped the neighbor of Chinatown making it an essential part of the city's identity.

Step 1

Visual Exploration: BEFORE reading the short article, *A Grave Injustice* for our *Hood by Hood:*

Discovering Chicago's Neighborhoods Challenge take a moment to explore the images in the article. When looking at the images ask yourself the following questions:

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can you find?

Step 2

Reading: Read the article *A Grave Injustice*

Step 3

Read Along with the Museum Audio: After reading the article read it AGAIN but this time you can read along with a member of the museum. They have some fun insights about the article!

Step 4

Video Discovery: Watch these short clips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wk82Z95XYsY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWIAv7yTqLE>

Step 5

Chicago Flag Neighborhood Star Activity:

The Chicago flag has 4 stars that signify important events to the city. However, the city is now 183 years old and many events have taken place since the flag was designed. As a large diverse city, different immigrants that came to the city changed the city. What if each neighborhood would add a 6th star to the flag to represent their neighborhood? Using the graphic organizer provided help design a neighborhood star for **China Town!**

Chinatown: A Grave Injustice

During the 1800s, Chinese immigrants faced many challenges in the United States. On May 6, 1886, the president of the United States, Chester A. Arthur, signed the *Chinese Exclusion Act* into law. The act banned Chinese immigrants from coming to the United States. This also meant that Chinese people living in the United States could not travel to China. If they did, they would not be allowed to come back home. For a while, Chinese people went without seeing or speaking to their families that lived in China.

In the 1870s, most Chinese people in the US lived in California. They lived there because they were helping build the railroads. Things were not good in California for Chinese people. White business owners did not want to hire them. White politicians also made local laws against Chinese immigrants. Because Chinese immigrants did not feel safe, they decided to move to places like Chicago.

The first Chinatown in Chicago was established in the 1880s near downtown. It was home to several Chinese families. Some of the challenges they experienced while living near downtown were rising rents and discrimination. One choice leaders in the Chinese community made was to move to a different part of the city, about three miles south of downtown Chicago.



Chicago History Museum, DN-0085864
Chinese City Hall Building. Chicago, 1928. CHM, DN-0085865

Moving to a new country or city can have many challenges. One of these challenges is learning how things are done in the new city. Some of the choices that Chinese immigrants in Chicago made were to help new immigrants. In 1928, the *On Leong Merchants Association* established a Chinese City Hall in Chinatown. Chinese City Hall was a place where Chinese immigrants who were new to Chicago could get help. The building also had a place for meetings, a school, and a shrine for religious practice. What made the building special was that it was built to look like the buildings in China. This building still

exists today at the corner of Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue.

Like all immigrants who come to the United States, Chinese immigrants also brought their traditions with them. For example, when someone passes away, their sons or daughters must tell all their relatives and friends. When visitors come to the funeral, they bring paper flowers, wreaths, and money. The mourning period usually last 49 days. On important holidays, families visit the graves of their relatives and friends. When they visit, they bring food to the graves. Some religions in southeast Asia burn money or other items that those who passed away might need in the afterlife. This tradition is very similar to the **Day of the Dead**. In almost all cultures, it is important to honor ancestors.

Another challenge Chinese immigrants faced in Chicago was finding a place to bury their dead. In 1944, the Rosehill cemetery in Chicago did not understand Chinese traditions, so they banned them from the cemetery. Chinese people who lived in Chicago then made the choice to bury their dead outside of the city. They buried them in places like Mount Auburn cemetery in Stickney, Illinois. Stickney is a suburb southwest of Chicago. In 1991, the new director of Rosehill Cemetery apologized to the Chinese community. Rosehill Cemetery is now open to everyone.

Chinese immigrants brought many changes to Chicago, and they made the city better. They made Chicago friendlier to immigrants by helping incoming Chinese immigrants. They contributed to Chicago's rich architectural design. They made the city better by bringing their traditions and culture to the city. Other Chinatowns in cities like New York and San Francisco are disappearing. However, Chicago's Chinatown is exceptional because Chinese Chicagoans continue to maintain the neighborhood. Chinatown will always be an important part of the city of Chicago.

 ***Do you know what the Day of the Dead is?***

Day of the Dead is a tradition in Mexico and Central America that happens from October 31 through November 2. It is believed that on those days, the souls of loved ones leave the underworld to visit their family members' homes. To welcome them, people build altars with the pictures of loved ones who passed away. They place flowers, sugar skulls, and a special kind of sweet bread on the altars, too. Then people visit the graves of their loved ones. They bring the favorite food and candy of their loved ones to pray and celebrate the memory of their lives.

Designing The Fifth Star on the Chicago Flag

What if each neighborhood added a fifth star to the Chicago flag to represent its neighborhood? For this activity you will design a star to represent the neighborhood you explored. Using what you learned about the neighborhood to help you design this star think about the following questions:

Questions	Draw a picture to represent your answer!
What was ONE challenge facing community members?	
What was ONE decision community members made about the challenges they faced?	
What was a change this community made to the city of Chicago?	

After exploring the challenges, decisions, and changes, choose ONE you want to represent neighborhood history and design your star. You can use markers, crayons, pencils, pens, and paints.

