**Unit 4: Geographic and Economic Change Shape the Nation (1824-1865)**

[Topic 2: Chinese Immigrants on the Trans-Continental Railroad](https://www.thinkport.org/tps/inquiry-kits.html?unit=04&topic=02)

Source 4, “Mark Twain’s Observation about Chinese Immigrants in California”

This excerpt was written by Mark Twain in 1872.

There are seventy thousand (and possibly one hundred thousand) Chinamen on the Pacific coast. There were about a thousand in Virginia. They were penned into a "Chinese quarter"--a thing which they do not particularly object to, as they are fond of herding together. Their buildings were of wood; usually only one story high, and set thickly together along streets scarcely wide enough for a wagon to pass through. Their quarter was a little removed from the rest of the town. The chief employment of Chinamen in towns is to wash clothing. They always send a bill, like this below, pinned to the clothes. It is mere ceremony, for it does not enlighten the customer much. Their price for washing was $2.50 per dozen--rather cheaper than white people could afford to wash for at that time. A very common sign on the Chinese houses was: "See Yup, Washer and Ironer"; "Hong Wo, Washer"; "Sam Sing Ah Hop, Washing." The house servants, cooks, etc., in California and Nevada, were chiefly Chinamen. There were few white servants and no Chinawomen so employed. Chinamen make good house servants, being quick, obedient, patient, quick to learn and tirelessly industrious. They do not need to be taught a thing twice, as a general thing. They are imitative. If a Chinaman were to see his master break up a centre table, in a passion, and kindle a fire with it, that Chinaman would be likely to resort to the furniture for fuel forever afterward.

All Chinamen can read, write and cipher with easy facility--pity but all our petted voters could. In California they rent little patches of ground and do a deal of gardening. They will raise surprising crops of vegetables on a sand pile. They waste nothing. What is rubbish to a Christian, a Chinaman carefully preserves and makes useful in one way or another. He gathers up all the old oyster and sardine cans that white people throw away, and procures marketable tin and solder from them by melting.

**Emerging ESOL / Reader**

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Source 4, “Mark Twain’s Observation about Chinese Immigrants in California”

This excerpt was written by Mark Twain in 1872.

**Vocabulary**

* **quarter -** part of a town where people from the same country live
* **one story -** no upstairs
* **narrow -** skinny

About 70,000 people from China live in the United States near the Pacific Ocean. They have to live in the “Chinese quarter”. They like to live very close. The houses are made of wood and are one story. The streets are very narrow. The place is away from the rest of the town.

1. Where did most Chinese people in the United States live?

Most Chinese in the United States lived \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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2. Write one thing about the Chinese Quarter.

The Chinese Quarter was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you think the Chinese really liked where they lived? Tell why or why not.

I think the Chinese \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ like where they lived because

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Intermediate ESOL / Reader**

**Unit 4: Geographic and Economic Change Shape the Nation (1824-1865)**

[Topic 2: Chinese Immigrants on the Trans-Continental Railroad](https://www.thinkport.org/tps/inquiry-kits.html?unit=04&topic=02)

Source 4, “Mark Twain’s Observation about Chinese Immigrants in California”

This excerpt was written by Mark Twain in 1872.

**Vocabulary**

* **bill -** a paper that tells how much to pay for a job

About 70,000 Chinamen live on the Pacific Coast of the United States. They live close together in the “Chinese Quarter”. They like being in tight houses and roads. The houses are made of wood and are only one story high. The Chinese quarter is away from the rest of the town. Most of the people there wash clothes to make money. They pin the bill to the clean clothes when they give them back. People do not understand them. It costs $2.50 to clean 12 shirts, much less than white people want for doing the same job. Signs on Chinese wash-houses say, “Washing” or “Washer and Ironer” or “Washer”. Most of the people who are servants or cooks in houses are Chinese men. There are no Chinese women or white people working in houses.

1. Write 4 words that tell about the Chinese Quarter.

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\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What did many Chinese do for work?

Many Chinese worked as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Why do you think most house servants were Chinese men?

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**Advanced ESOL / Reader**

**Unit 4: Geographic and Economic Change Shape the Nation (1824-1865)**

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Source 4, “Mark Twain’s Observation about Chinese Immigrants in California”

This excerpt was written by Mark Twain in 1872.

**Vocabulary**

* **for a living** - to make money at a job

There are 70,000 Chinamen living on the Pacific Coast of the United States. They are crowded into the Chinese Quarter in small, wooden houses that are one story tall. They seem to like living very close together on very narrow streets. The Chinese Quarter is outside of town. Most Chinese wash clothes for a living. They pin a bill to the clean clothes but most customers do not understand it. It costs only $2.50 to get 12 things cleaned, much less than a white person would charge for the same job. Many Chinese wash-houses have signs that say, “Washing” or “Washer and Ironer” or “Washer”. Most of the house servants and cooks are Chinese men, no Chinese women or white people. The servants are quick, obedient, patient, smart, energetic, and hard-working. A Chinese worker needs to see a job done only once to learn it. If his master cuts up a table to build a fire, the Chinaman would then always use furniture to make fires.

All Chinamen can read, write and do numbers easily. In California, they rent small pieces of land so they can have gardens. They raise vegetables even from the sand and don’t waste anything. If a white person (Christian) throws something away, a Chinaman takes it to save carefully and use somehow. They collect old fish cans that people throw away and melt them. Then they sell the melted metal.

1. Name three ways Chinese men made a living.

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1. Why would the Chinese do so many hard, dirty jobs?

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1. Do you think that living in the Chinese quarter helped or hurt the Chinese?

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| **BONUS** - Make a T-chart that shows the points of view of the Chinese and the whites about:* where the Chinese live
* the jobs Chinese have
* each other
* how much money the Chinese make
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