

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**  
**SECONDARY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

**GRADE SEVEN (7)**

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

**WEEK 11 LESSON TWO (2)**

**Topic:** A Glimpse of Our History.

**Sub-Topic:** The six ethnic groups from which Guyanese have descended

**Objectives:** Students will:

- Explain the way of life of the:
  - Chineses
  - East Indians

**Concept:** We must have respect and appreciation for the culture of different ethnic groups in Guyana.

**Content:**

THE CHINESE

The first Chinese immigrants came in 1853 in an attempt to correct the labour problem on the plantation after emancipation. The first batch arrived on the “Glentanner” and was mostly assigned to Windsor Forest, Pouderoyen and La Jalousie. Other batches came from 1859 until 1866. This period was regarded as the heyday of Chinese Immigration. In 1874 another shipment arrived from China but about 1879 Chinese immigration to Guyana ended. It seemed less expensive to bring immigrants from India than from China. It was only when East Indians were difficult to obtain that Chinese were contracted.

Some Problems of Chinese Immigration

- A higher bounty was paid for Chinese than for other immigrants.
- Disturbances in the northern provinces of China forced migrants to the southern provinces. These provinces became the recruiting centres – Hong Kong, Canton, etc.
- No women came with the first immigrants. It was not until 1860 that the first women arrived on the “Whirlwind”.

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After the indentureship period, some Chinese emigrated to Trinidad, Jamaica and Suriname. A few returned to China. Others who were lured by the incentives offered accepted to be re-indentured for a further five years. A few left the sugar plantations dissatisfied with the low wages and poor living conditions. These turned to rice planting and business. Chinese settlements were established at Hopetown about thirty miles up the Demerara River. In Georgetown, the Chinese opened shops and sold charcoal and Shingles.

Some Problems Faced By Chinese On Their Settlements

- Agriculture proved difficult because of poor drainage which caused flooding during the rainy season.
- They had to dig dams and canals.
- Birds ate their rice crops.
- They found it difficult to dry the rice sufficiently.
- They seemed interested in the quick returns from cash crops.
- Because the charcoal business was not very profitable, the Chinese moved to Georgetown and set themselves up as shopkeepers breaking the Portuguese monopoly of the retail trade. Hopetown eventually became deserted and the land was leased to the Chinese Association. During the 1940s – 1970s, many Chinese became, not only shopkeepers and owners of supermarkets but also merchants in the import and export business.

Chinese owned laundries and restaurants. The prosperous Chinese sent their sons to study in the UK, US and Jamaica. Among these were graduates in engineering and medicine.

THE EAST INDIANS

By the end of the Apprenticeship System, the labour situation on the sugar cane plantations in Guyana was in crisis. The first batch of 396 East Indians arrived in Demerara and Berbice on 5th May 1838.

Some Difficulties Of The East Indian Immigrants

- It was difficult for East Indians to become acclimatised.

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- Their mortality rate was high because of the harsh labour conditions and the poor diet.
- By July 1838 the Indian Government had suspended the immigration system.
- When the Portuguese withdrew their labour from the plantation, the number of East Indian immigrants increased.
- By 1848 the British Government again suspended immigration because of financial problems. On the European market, the planters had to compete with cheaper sugar produced by colonies like Cuba that had free slave labour.
- East Indians had inherited the miserable conditions on the plantations that once affected the Africans. No provision was made for the coming of the East Indians. They occupied the logies that were previously used by the slaves.

By 1854 the East Indians were indentured for five years. It was in the interest of the planters to isolate the indentured servants on the estates. They were encouraged to preserve their own religious beliefs. The planters helped them to construct their temples and mosques and discouraged any intermarriage with Creoles.

At the end of the five year indentureship period, East Indians were offered land instead of a return passage and they were encouraged to re-indenture for a further period. Those who left the estates went into the towns and villages seeking jobs. By entering the trading business, they challenged the Portuguese monopoly. Some became farmers and eventually got into rice cultivation.

East Indian settlements included Helena, Bush Lot on the West Coast of Berbice and Windsor Forest on the West Coast of Demerara.

Activity

1. Use any relevant material to do additional reading on the Chinese and the East Indians.
2. Write two separate reports on the following:
  - Chinese
  - East Indians

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Homework

1. Could you name some other villages the East Indians and Chinese settled in?

Reference

1. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-school-community-definition-members.html>
2. Ministry of Education Social Studies teacher's guide level 7 pages 45 to 47
3. Ministry of Education Curriculum guide page 6
4. New Horizon in Social Studies book 7 pages 98 to 99