



High School Program

Educator Resource Guide

The Six

DIRECTOR: Arthur Jones

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: China

RUNNING TIME: 102 min.

LANGUAGE: English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese

Website
& Trailer



The Titanic sank in 1912, leaving only 705 survivors. Among them were six Chinese men whose stories were forgotten until now. Unlike other survivors, they were denied entry to America due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. Lee Bing, Fang Lang, Chang Chip, Ling Hee, Ah Lam, and Chung Foo's stories were lost to history. Director Arthur Jones leads his crew through years of fact-checking and meticulous research that takes them across the globe to uncover the untold lives of these men. The film shifts its focal point from the fascinating facts regarding their escape from the Titanic itself (James Cameron, an executive producer, admits they inspired the iconic rescue in his 1997 blockbuster), to the generational legacy of their families and lives built in its wake.

Masterfully intertwining the history of American immigration policy at the time of the Titanic to contemporary views on race and citizenship, *The Six* uncovers the sacrifices and discrimination these men suffered, and finally grants them their rightful place in history.

Primary Curriculum Interest

- Law 12
- 20th Century World History 12
- Social Justice 12
- Political Studies 12

Other Curriculum Interests

- Explorations in Social Studies 11
- Social Studies 9 / 10

Read more about these curriculums at curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum

Content consideration for teachers

This film explores many instances of anti-Asian racism in early 20th century media, laws, immigration policies

If you have any questions about this film and its content, please contact VIFF at education@viff.org.

About VIFF

VIFF is the leading presenter of international cinema in Western Canada. Operating both the annual Vancouver International Film Festival and the VIFF Centre, VIFF brings hundreds of films from dozens of countries to British Columbia screens every year.

Why are film festivals important?

- Film festivals such as VIFF generally include screenings, talks, and events that serve as a catalyst for a diverse community to discover, discuss and share the creativity and craft of storytelling on screen.

- For filmmakers, showcasing their film at an international festival such as VIFF allows them to build an audience, meet other filmmakers and even win awards to help fund future films.
- It is in VIFF's mandate to encourage understanding of the world's cultures through the art of cinema.

Before Viewing

Ask students what they already know about Titanic? Where and how have they learned of it, and whose stories on board the ship have we heard most about?

What do students know about Asian experiences in the early 20th century?

Define institutional racism, individual racism, prejudice, stereotype, oppression

After Viewing

- What aspects or scenes of the film stood out to you? What images stayed with you? What surprised you?
- Why do you think the filmmaker chose to follow the stories of these six passengers? What makes this story about Lee Bing, Fang Lang, Chang Chip, Ah Lam, Chung Foo and Ling Hee so significant?
- Titanic is the most widely known sea disaster of the 20th century. Yet, few people knew about these six Chinese survivors, even within China. What could be some reasons for that?
- How would you explain this film to a friend who never saw it? Why were they on board and what happened after the disaster? What parts of their stories stood out for you?
- How did the filmmakers and researchers tell this story? What were all the different methods and film elements that were used? (Animation, interviews, archival materials, rebuilding a lifeboat, cold water tests, meeting and interviewing descendants)
- Identify the film's themes (E.g.: What does *The Six* have to say about poverty, perseverance, resilience, institutional racism, family, inequality)
- What social and political issues are depicted in the film? What sources of information does the filmmaker consult? What sources do the researchers use? Who is interviewed for context?
- What was the racial climate of the early 1900s in USA and Canada like towards Asian communities? What were Yellow Peril and the Exclusion Acts in both countries?
- Have students research Yellow Peril, the Head Tax, and the Exclusion Acts in Canada for context. How are these represented in media and newspaper comics in the early 20th century?
- Where did you see Canadian connections in this film and story?
- The Titanic sank over 100 years ago, why look at these stories a century later? Why bother?
- What parallels can be drawn with these histories and today?
- These six stories could have been a book or a website – why choose to make a documentary? What does this medium offer that is unique for storytelling? How might your experience have felt different in a different media form?
- At the end of the film lead researcher Steven Schwankert says:

“Surviving Titanic was not by any means the greatest obstacle they overcame in their life. Titanic was really just a bump in the road for them, as significant as it might seem.

They never gave up. They never gave up on the night of April 14th. And they never gave up in the rest of their lives...and I think there's a lot we can learn from that.”

What do you think he meant by that, what could be learned?

Activity: Histories Untold

Whose stories are often told in history books, and whose are overlooked? In the film, lead researcher Steven Schwankert contemplates how people feel their family history is not important, or difficult histories are shameful. But they are important. Break out into groups of two, and take turns roleplaying as an interviewer and interviewee. Ask your classmate to describe a story from their family history. Maybe it was a big event or a small memory.

Next, write a shot list for a short documentary about this moment in your classmate's life. What would you need to know about them? Who would you interview? (E.g.: their family, friends, neighbours, teachers? A subject expert?) What questions would you need to ask? What footage would you need, and from which locations? How would you shoot it? (E.g. close-ups, landscape shots?)



Director Profile

Arthur Jones is a British filmmaker based in Shanghai, China. His work includes *The Poseidon Project* and *A Farewell Song*, the latter of which was backed by Channel 4's BritDoc foundation and won the Special Jury Prize for Documentaries at the Syracuse International Film Festival. He has also

made commissioned films for the Special Olympics, the World Expo and Shanghai Disneyland. Arthur also regularly directs for NatGeo, BBC and Discovery. He was the China correspondent for the Hollywood film magazine *Variety*.