



## Lesson Guide

# What do you really know about Mahjong?

### **Vocabulary List** *(list of words or phrases that are related to the topic for which the lesson guide is being created for)*

1. **Mahjong**: A Chinese social game played with usually four people in a table with 136 or 144 rectangular tiles. The goal of the game is to win the most points at the end of the game.
2. **Mahjongg** : The American variation of the traditional Chinese game Mahjong often has an alternative spelled with a double “g”. American Mahjongg utilizes racks to hold the tiles, jokers and a different set of rules.
3. **Unassimilable**: Not being able to assimilate or absorb into the a specific culture
4. **Chinoiserie**: Imitation of Chinese culture in Western art and products, which emerged in the 18th century
5. **Confucius**: A Chinese philosopher and politician of the sixth century b.c. who founded Confucianism

### **Suggested Discussion Topics**

1. What is your perception of mahjong after learning about its history? Do you think of it more than as a gambling game? Are you interested in playing mahjong?
2. Why was mahjong so popular in the U.S. during the 1920s? How is mahjong popularity related to Asian American experiences of exclusion and discrimination?
3. What are innovative ways to play mahjong? What kind of materials have people used and are currently used to play mahjong?
4. What are resources in the local community to play mahjong? What groups (e.g., clubs) are playing mahjong?
5. What social functions does mahjong serve for different ethnic groups? For example, what is the importance of Japanese Americans being able to play mahjong in incarceration camps?
6. What is the relationship between gender and mahjong? How has mahjong contributed to gender stereotypes for Jewish American women?
7. What do you think lead to the new surge in interests in mahjong among the younger generations?
8. How has mahjong evolved after it has been introduced from China to the U.S. and how has different cultures changed its rules?



## Suggested Activities

1. [Learn to play mahjong](#). First, describe the objective and basics of mahjong to the students. Second, in the practice period, test students on the rules and strategy of mahjong. The, in the game period, break the classroom in to a group of four students.
2. Students can get creative by printing, cutting, and folding their own handmade [Paper Mahjong](#) set. See tutorial on the website for proper mahjong folding techniques.
3. Different family and cultures have different house rules for playing mahjong. Write a short essay to explore the story and house rules of one family and how the rules have changed over generations.