

Lesson Plan for:
Teaching American History: Westward Expansion

The Transcontinental Railroad: Linking the East to the West



The Last Rail is Laid

Source: <http://www.sfmuseum.net/hist1/rail.html>

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Class: U.S. History Unit: Westward Expansion

Grade Level: 9-12 Class Duration: 80 minutes x 5 days

Ability Level: Low Level Inclusion Class or Self-Contained Special Education Classroom

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

USI.15: Explain the varying roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments in the United States.

USI.16: Describe the evolution of the role of the federal government, including public services, taxation, economic policy, foreign policy, and common defense.

USI.19: Explain the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and describe how a democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process, through elections, political parties, and interest groups.

USI.21: Describe how decisions are made in a democracy, including the role of legislatures, courts, executives, and the public.

USI.26: Describe the causes, course, and consequences of America's westward expansion and its growing diplomatic assertiveness. Use a map of North America to trace America's expansion to the Civil War, including the location of the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails.

USI.27: Explain the importance of the Transportation Revolution of the 19th century (the building of canals, roads, bridges, turnpikes, steamboats, and railroads), including the stimulus it provided to the growth of a market economy.

USII.2: Explain the important consequences of the Industrial Revolution.

USII.3: Describe the causes of the immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and describe the major roles of those immigrants in the industrialization of America.

USII.4: Analyze the causes of the continuing westward expansion of the American people after the Civil War and the impact of this migration on the Indians.

USII.5: Explain the formation and goals of unions as well as the rise of radical political parties during the Industrial era.

USII.6: Analyze the causes and course of America's growing role in world affairs from the Civil War to World War I.

Topic: The Transcontinental Railroad: Linking the East to the West

Statement of Purpose: To provide students with an in-depth look at the construction of the transcontinental railroad, the people involved, and the reasons behind building it.

Raionale: This activity allows students the opportunity to learn how to research using the Internet. Special Education students often learn best using multi-sensory projects. The web quest and group projects allow students the opportunity to improve their research and collaboration skills, the map allows students the opportunity to visualize the path of the railroad, and the poster and diorama allow students the opportunity to present information in creative formats.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will increase their awareness of the hardships faced by workers building the transcontinental railroad.
2. Students will relate the hardships faced by pioneers through a web quest and group projects.
3. Students will follow a rubric to ensure accuracy of their projects.

Schedule of Lesson: Each day is an 80-minute period.

Outline/Timing for Transcontinental Railroad Lesson Plan:

- I. Day 1
 - A. Introduction: Railroad Spike
 1. Discussion – 10 minutes
 - B. Transcontinental Railroad – 10 minutes
 1. From East to West
 - a. Starting Point
 - b. Ending Point
 2. From West to East
 - a. Starting Point
 - b. Ending Point
 - C. Two Railroads – 10 minutes
 1. Union Pacific Railroad
 2. Central Pacific Railroad
 - D. Maps of the Railroad – 30 minutes

1. Overhead
 2. Student Maps to Create Own Map
- E. What *Didn't* Happen – 10 minutes
1. “Wild, Wild, West” Video Clip
- F. Introduction to Web Quest – 10 minutes

II. Day 2

- A. Computer Lab – Introduction – 10 minutes
- B. Web Quest – 70 minutes
1. Timeline
 2. Ethnic Groups
 3. Cost Estimates
 - a. Salaries
 - i. Types of Jobs
 - ii. Skilled v. Unskilled Workers
 - b. Materials
 - i. Railroad Supplies
 - ii. Worker Supplies
 4. Officials at Promontory, Utah
 5. Why the Railroad Was Built
 6. List of Websites

III. Day 3

- A. Group Projects
1. Partners from Partners List – Partner #2 – 10 minutes
 2. Choose Three Activities From the List – 70 minutes
 - a. Snapshot Report on a Railroad Official
 - b. Snapshot Report on an Ethnic Group
 - c. Poster of the Transcontinental Railroad
 - d. Newspaper Article About the Railroad
 - e. A Day in the Life of a Railway Worker
 - f. Diorama – Scene From Building the Railroad
 3. Homework: Complete Projects

IV. Day 4

- A. Movie: *Transcontinental Railroad* - 80 minutes

V. Day 5

- A. Group Presentations of Projects – 50 minutes
- B. Discussion – How Each Report Was Similar/Different – 15 minutes
- C. Discussion – How Today’s Immigration Debates Are Similar/Different From the Nineteenth Century – 15 minutes

Day 1

Introduction: Railroad Spike Discussion – 10 minutes

Materials: Railroad Spike

Questions:

What do you think this is?

How do you think this was used?

What famous event does this spike remind you of?

Transcontinental Railroad – 20 minutes

Materials: Handout for Power Point Presentation
Computer
Projector
DVD/TV

Questions:

Why do you think the Central Pacific line was shorter than the Union Pacific line?

What might the terrain have been like for each railroad company?

It took longer for the Central Pacific portion to be built; yet it was shorter.

Websites visited:

<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist4/practical.html>

<http://www.cpr.org/Museum/index.html>

<http://www.cpr.org/Museum/Maps/>

<http://www.uprr.com/aboutup/history/hist-ovr.shtml>

<http://web.archive.org/web/20001013034825/geocities.com/~ronkohlin/rr/transcon.htm>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr/index.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/iron/>

Maps of the Railroad – 30 minutes

1. Overhead
2. Student Maps to Create Own Map
- 3.

Website of outline maps:

<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/usa.html>

http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/pdf/us_nl.pdf

What *Didn't* Happen – “Wild, Wild, West” Video Clip 10 minutes

Scene of the driving of the spike in Promontory, Utah and Dr. Arliss Loveless' kidnap of President Grant.

Introduction to Web Quest – 10 minutes

Day 2

Computer Lab – Introduction – 10 minutes

Teacher will go over what is expected during the time the students are in the computer lab. The handout will be distributed and discussed.

Web Quest – 70 minutes

Materials:

Web Quest Handout

Computer

Pencils

Websites given to students on their web quest:

<http://www.cpr.org/Museum/index.html>

<http://www.uprr.com/aboutup/history/index.shtml>

<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist4/practical.html>

<http://www.nationalrrmuseum.org/>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/>

<http://www.nps.gov/gosp/history/history.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr/index.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/iron/>

Day 3

Group Projects

Partners from Partners List – Partner #2 – 10 minutes

At the start of the quarter, students do an activity where they choose 5 partners. They keep a copy of the list, and a list is given to the teacher. Whenever an activity requires partner work, the teacher picks a partner number at random. This ensures students have a variety of classmates to work with and are not working with the same person on each project. The partner list can have two to four people per group; anything larger tends to negate the benefits of getting students to work together in small groups.

Choose Three Activities From the List – 70 minutes

- Snapshot Report on a Railroad Official
- Snapshot Report on an Ethnic Group
- Poster of the Transcontinental Railroad
- Newspaper Article About the Railroad
- A Day in the Life of a Railway Worker
- Diorama – Scene From Building the Railroad

Students will be required to select three out of six activities from a list to complete with their partner. They will be allowed to start the activities during class and will be expected to complete their work independently and turn it in on day 5.

Materials:

- Handouts of the Activities
- Glue
- Construction Paper
- Modeling Clay
- Shoeboxes
- Website Pictures

Homework: Complete Projects – Due on Friday

Day 4

Movie: *The Iron Road*

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/iron/>

- or -

Movie: *The Transcontinental Railroad*

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr/index.html>

Both movies are part of PBS' *American Experience* series. The movie, *The Transcontinental Railroad*, is the newer of the two movies. Both sites have discussion questions you can use to guide your students through the movie.

Materials:

DVD/TV

Movie

Day 5

Group Presentations of Projects – 50 minutes

Students will present their projects to the class. Classmates will be given the opportunity to ask the presenters questions about their projects.

Discussion – How Each Report Was Similar/Different – 15 minutes

Questions:

- How was each presentation the same?
- What was unique about each presentation?
- What part of _____'s presentation did you like?
- Did you learn anything new from the presentations?
- What was the hardest part about completing your projects?

Discussion – How Today's Immigration Debates Are Similar/Different From the Nineteenth Century – 15 minutes

Questions:

- During the nineteenth century, laws were written preventing immigrants from Asia from having rights we take for granted today. How is that similar to what is happening today in Congress regarding the immigrants from Mexico?
- What is different about the situation today when compared with the situation in the nineteenth century?
- How do you feel about the debates?
- Do you think it is right to prevent people from immigrating to the United States?

Assessment:

The following rubric is for the map created in class on Day 1:

	1	3	5	Total
Title, Legend, Name	One out of three present	Two out of three present	All three present	
Locations of Starting and Ending Points	Only one present	Two out of three present	All three present	
Other Details	Few details present	Some locations present	Map has many details	

_____ Out of 15 = _____ %

The following rubric is for the web quest completed on Day 2:

	1	3	5	Total
Questions	1 to 5 questions answered.	6 to 10 questions answered.	11 to 14 questions answered.	
Questions	Most questions answered with sentence fragments. Answers are vague or not related to question.	Some questions answered with sentence fragments, most answered with complete sentences. Answers are somewhat vague.	Most questions answered with complete sentences. Answers are complete.	
Websites Visited	1 to 3 websites visited.	4 to 6 websites visited.	More than 6 websites visited.	
Websites	Only one extra website listed.	Two to three extra websites listed.	More than three extra websites listed.	

_____ Out of 20 = _____ %

The following rubric is for the group projects begun on day 3 and presented on day 5:

	1	3	5	
Projects	One project completed.	Two projects completed.	Three projects completed.	
Detail	Little detail to projects	Some detail on part of the projects, but not all.	Projects are detailed.	
Information	Little information present.	Some information present.	Projects are informative with many details.	
Teamwork	Little evidence of teamwork.	Most of project done by one partner.	Partners worked as a team on all aspects of project.	
Presentation	One partner presented.	Both partners presented, but one did most of the talking.	Both partners presented and shared in the discussion.	

_____ Out of 25 = _____ %

References:

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Materials: Listed with in the lesson plans.