
The Transcontinental Railroad

Unit 1

Standard & Objective

U.S. 1 Explain how the Homestead Act and the Transcontinental Railroad impacted the settlement of the West.

Objective: Scholars will be able to describe the impact the transcontinental railroad had on westward expansion and its effects on the American economy.

The Railroad Boom

- In 1865, America had 50,000 miles of railroad, primarily in the Northern states
 - No railroads went West
 - America experienced a tremendous railroad boom after the Civil War
 - Over 150,000 miles of track was built between 1865-1895
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Transcontinental Railroad

- Construction for the 1st Transcontinental Railroad was started in 1863
 - Gov. granted over 200 million acres of land for the project and offered low interest rate loans
 - It ran from Sacramento, California to Omaha, Nebraska
 - Union Pacific RR began laying track Westward out of Omaha
 - Central Pacific RR began laying track Eastward out a Sacramento
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The Golden Spike

- On May 10th, 1869, at Promontory Point, Utah, the “Golden Spike’ was driven into the ground uniting both the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads
 - 1st railroad line connecting the East to the West
 - Travel time about 4-5 days from NY to California
 - Considered one of the greatest architectural achievements in American History
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The Railroad's Impact

- Transportation of people and goods was quicker and cheaper
 - 1865 – it cost \$3.45 to ship a barrel of flour from NY to Chicago
 - 1890 it costs .68 cents
 - New jobs – Irish/Chinese
 - Westward Expansion – Safer/Quicker/Cheaper
 - Established Time Zones
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Turn and Talk:

How did the transcontinental railroads transform the West?

The Pacific Railway Act of 1862

- Began the U.S. railroad boom of the late 19th century
 - Gave the Union Pacific & Central Pacific permission to build the railway
 - Began westward construction from Omaha, NE in 1865
 - Difficulties included blizzards, desert heat, angry Native Americans, general labor, money, engineering, & equipment troubles
 - Workers came from a variety of sources, and at the height of construction, numbered 10,000
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In-Class Assignment:

Analyzing Primary Sources: The Pacific Railway Act of 1862

Read the Pacific Railway Act of 1862
and answer the following questions
in complete sentences.

Exit Ticket:

1. Why was the transcontinental railroad beneficial to America?

- a. The railroad was built over mountains that were impassable in stagecoach
- b. Railroads provided a faster, safer, and cheaper transportation
- c. Railroads allowed people to bring their furniture to the Great Plains
- d. Railroads crossed rivers which were difficult to cross earlier

2. Which group lost the most from the building of the railroads?

- a. Settlers
- b. The government
- c. ~~Western citizens~~
- d. Native Americans