The Transcontinental Railroad

Unit 1
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
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 of Sacramento
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
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
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
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. Native Americans