

“Beyond the Golden Spike”
An Investigation of
Union Station, Chinese Immigration, and the Transcontinental Railroad

In Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of
Union Station, Los Angeles, CA

8th Grade US History Lesson

Automobile Club of Southern California Archives
UCLA History-Geography Project

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Beyond the Golden Spike

Union Station, Chinese Immigration, and the Transcontinental Railroad

Context:

On May 10, 1869, the dream of a transcontinental railroad was realized at Promontory Point, Utah when Leland Stanford, then Governor of California, drove in the “golden spike” connecting the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads (actually he missed, but that’s another story). At long last, the United States was united, east to west, through the Transcontinental Railroad. For most students, the story often stops there, and they are left without truly understanding the importance and impact of that event, especially for the West Coast. A more detailed story is worth telling on the 75th anniversary of the opening of Los Angeles’s Union Station.

Students may also be aware of the well-documented role played by Chinese immigrants in building the Southern Pacific railroad, but less well-known is the fact that the original Chinatown of Los Angeles once sat where Union Station now stands. By taking part in this case study, students will explore what life was like for the Chinese who helped build the railroad, how they faced and overcame discrimination and prejudice. The 75th anniversary of Union Station not only celebrates its distinctively Californian architecture and connects its story with fundamental themes in the history of California history and the United States.

Inquiry Questions: “How did the transcontinental railroad transform the West? How did it impact the Chinese laborers who immigrated to California during the late 19th century?”

History-Social Science Content Standards:

8.12 – Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution.

8.12.1 – Trace patterns of agricultural and industrial development as they relate to climate, use of natural resources, markets, and trade and locate such developments on a map.

8.12.3 – Explain how states and the federal government encouraged business expansion through tariffs, banking, land grants, and subsidies.

8.12.4 – Discuss entrepreneurs, industrialists, and bankers in politics, commerce, and industry (e.g., Leland Stanford).

8.12.5 – Examine the location and effects of urbanization, renewed immigration, and industrialization (e.g., the effects on social fabric of cities, wealth and economic opportunity).

8.12.7 – Identify the new sources of large-scale immigration and the contributions of immigrants to the building of cities and the economy; explain the ways in which new social and economic patterns encouraged assimilation of newcomers into the mainstream amidst growing cultural diversity; and discuss the new wave of nativism.

Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills:

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

1. Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.
2. Students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires and the growth of economic systems.

Research, Evidence and Point of View

1. Students frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research.
2. Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.
3. Students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, sources used, author's perspectives).

Historical Interpretation

1. Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.
2. Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.
3. Students explain the sources of historical continuity and how the combination of ideas and events explains the emergence of new patterns.
4. Students recognize that interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.

Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies (6-8)

- RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- RH.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

RH.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

WHST.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources (primary and secondary). . . assess the credibility and accuracy of each source . . .

WHST.9 Draw evidence from information texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

English Language Arts Speaking and Listening Standards, Grade 8

SL.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

SL.3 Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. . .

Depth of Knowledge

Level 1: Students will be asked to recognize or identify, list or define specific information related to a study of the development of the West from 1870-1890, including the building of the transcontinental railroad and Chinese immigration.

Level 2: Students will be asked to analyze this information and create a poster or other presentation displaying the information so that it can be taught to the rest of the class.

Level 3: Students will be asked to analyze the evidence and decide how the transcontinental railroad transformed the West, how it impacted the Chinese who immigrated there, and whether the price of progress was worth the sacrifices made by people affected by it.

Level 4: Students will be asked to develop an oral argument supporting their position on the question: "Do the benefits of progress in building the transcontinental railroad justify the costs paid by the laborers and others affected by its construction?"

Source Material (See the *Bibliography* for a more extensive list of sources):

The articles, photographs, primary sources and packet materials have already been included in the Group Packets. You will not need to provide additional materials for the lesson.

Preparation/Equipment/Material Needed

1. Review the lesson and materials and decide how you want to arrange your classroom for the lesson. Although the intent is to use small, heterogeneous groups of four students working with a total of four packets, you could also have students work in pairs or do some of the packet lessons with the whole class. You may also wish to model one of the packets to the whole class for students who need more guidance (adjust accordingly).
2. Make enough copies of the picture for the Anticipatory Set for each group to have a quarter of the picture.
3. Prepare the Group Packets with enough copies of the *Note-Taking 4-Square* for each student in the group to have a copy. You may wish to put the Group Packets into manila envelopes or folders to make them easier to organize when setting up the Group Packets.
4. Have enough pieces of butcher paper or similar material so each group can prepare a poster for the gallery walk. An alternate activity would be to have each group prepare a PowerPoint presentation on their topic.
5. Make a copy of the *Evidence Collection Matrix Form* for each student

Summary of Materials:

- Picture for Anticipatory Set
- *Note-Taking 4-Square* handout (one for each student)
- Group Packet materials for Groups 1-4 (photos, text descriptions, etc.)
- Butcher paper, glue sticks, and markers for each group
- *Evidence Collection Matrix Form* (one for each student)

Introduction to Lesson:

Each group will do an investigation using primary and secondary sources to learn about the Transcontinental Railroad as well as Chinese immigrants in California during the late 19th century and their connection to Los Angeles's Union Station. The group will then create a poster answering the essential questions: **"How did the transcontinental railroad transform the West? How did it impact the Chinese laborers who immigrated to California during the late 19th century?"**

The posters will be displayed in a "Gallery Walk" as student representatives from each group gather information about the four different topics to take back to their groups, sharing what they have learned so that each group member has a complete set of notes. (An alternate activity would be to have each group present their posters to the whole class or make PowerPoint presentations.)

Finally, students will write a short argumentative essay on the topic, "Did the benefits of building the transcontinental railroad justify the costs paid by the laborers and others affected by its construction?"

Lesson Activities:

Time Frame: Two to three class periods.

- 1) **Anticipatory Set:** Have students examine the photograph of Union Station. Tell them that 2014 is the 75th anniversary of the opening of Union Station. After analyzing the photograph, ask students to look for evidence of where the station is located (Los Angeles, California) and what they can tell about the history of the station or California just by looking at the picture. (They may mention the architecture that looks like a mission, palm trees, that there was a need for large building to house the trains, etc.) What they won't be able to see is that "Old" Chinatown (the first Chinese settlement in Los Angeles) was originally located where the station stands today.
- 2) Tell them that part of studying history is looking at different sources to find out about people and events that may not be evident today (looking below the surface). This is an investigation to find out the rest of the story.
- 3) **Group Work:** Give each group a packet. Some groups may have the same packet.

Group Topics:

- Group #1**-Union Station & "Old" Chinatown
- Group #2**-Chinese Immigration and Working in the Mines
- Group #3**-Building the Transcontinental Railroad
- Group #4**-Chinese Laborers on the Transcontinental Railroad

- 4) **Processing:** Each group will prepare a poster (or PowerPoint) on their topic that includes the following information in a 4-square format:
 - Key Terms and Names
 - Photo representing the group/Quote
 - Changes in the West as a result of the construction of the railroad
 - Successes and Challenges of the Chinese Americans
- 5) One or two students in each group present their poster while the remaining students from each group listen to the other poster presentations, taking notes on their Evidence Collection Matrix form and returning to their original group to share the information.
 - There are several alternative methods for completing this part of the lesson. For example, students could gather evidence and present PowerPoint presentations to the entire class, while the rest of the students take notes on their Evidence Collection Matrix form.

Optional Extension: Have the students investigate: "How were the challenges faced by Chinese immigrants in the 19th century similar to the challenges faced by new immigrants to the United States today? How were they different?"

Differentiations/Adaptations/Scaffolding

ELL/Special Needs

1. Work through Group Packets as a whole class or in pairs for students who need more guidance.
2. Limit the number of packets or present as a “close” activity.
3. Have students draw pictures as part of their answers on the *Evidence Collection Matrix*.
4. Provide vocabulary words and/or activities before the lesson to assist with comprehension (word sorts, word bank ahead of time, etc.)

GATE

1. Have students do additional research on topics they are interested in to add information to their initial impressions. (See *Optional Extension*)
2. Have students write an essay answering the inquiry question, using the DBQ (Document Based Question) format.
3. Have student groups create the front page of a newspaper from the time detailing some of the important topics related to the railroads and urbanization.
4. Have students write a “Letter to the Editor” supporting or speaking out against one of the pieces of legislation from the period or the building of Union Station.

Assessment:

1. Students will be assessed based on the quality of evidence and detail on their group posters, presentations and the level of detail and critical thought included on their *Evidence Collection Matrix* handouts.
2. Students will also be assessed on the quality of their arguments as part of their presentations, essays and/or debates on the inquiry questions with emphasis placed on the evidence supporting their conclusions.

Appendix:

1. Picture for Anticipatory Set
2. Student *Note-Taking 4-Square* (for group work)
3. Packet Materials for each Group Packets 1 - 4.
4. Student *Evidence Collection Matrix*
5. Articles: “Etc. By the Editor-A Civic Triumph”, Westways Magazine, May 1939 for Packet #1 and “Appointment at Promontory,” Westways Magazine, May 1969 for Packet #4

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