

Chinese Railroad Workers: Their Contributions to an Industrial and Urban America

NEH Lesson Plan for TCRR July 2013
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Michigan Framework in U.S. History

F2 Geographic, Economic, Social, and Demographic Trends in America to 1877

1. Describe the major trends and transformations in America prior to 1877 including:
 - Changing political boundaries of the United States
 - Regional economic differences and similarities, including goods produced, and the nature of the labor force.
 - Changes in the size, location, and composition of the population
 - Patterns of immigration and migration
 - Development of cities
 - Changes in commerce, transportation, and communication

This lesson will weave through many of the above themes. It will also have connections to the following standards:

Michigan State Standards

6.1 Growth of an Industrial and Urban America

1. Factors in the American Industrial Revolution (Increase in labor through immigration and migration)
2. Urbanization
 - Location and expansion of major urban centers
 - The growth of cities linked by industry and trade
 - The development of cities divided by race, ethnicity and class
 - Resulting tensions among and within groups
 - Different perspective about immigrant experiences in the urban setting

Historical Investigative Question:

What were Chinese Railroad Workers' contributions to the geographic, economic, social, and demographic trends in America to 1877?

This lesson is designed for use in a regular United States History classroom to enhance Foundational Expectations and the Growth of an Industrial and Urban America. It will highlight the contributions made by Chinese Railroad Workers. It can be a stand-alone lesson or it can be a lead in to the Chinese Exclusion Act.



Lesson Plan Outline

Length: 2 Days

Objectives:

Students will understand how Chinese labor impacted geographic, economic, social and demographic trends in America to 1877.

Students will understand how the Transcontinental Railroad impacted the growth of an Industrial and Urban America.

Resource List:

- ❖ Personal Power Point slide presentation on Transcontinental Railroad, Donner Summit, the Chinese Tunnels and Wall, and Chinatown. This part of the lesson is optional since it will be a personal reflection of my experiences and photos along with notes. Examples of pictures for power point are posted on Tumblr.
- ❖ Secondary source reading handout, “Strangers from a Different Shore, A History of Asian Americans”, by Ronald Takaki. As a supplemental or alternate source students can read “The Indispensible Enemy, Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California”, by Alexander Saxton. Both articles can be found in the Landmarks Transcontinental Railroad course reader.
- ❖ Primary documents from Stanford University website, [Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project](#).

Lesson Procedures:

Day 1

This class period will be held in a computer lab to access digitized primary source documents

Anticipatory set /warm up: Approximately 5-10 minutes

- ❖ Ask students: From experiences or from World History class, what do you know about Chinese history or culture? I assume most students will know about the Great Wall of China. Others might say Confucius, Marco Polo, paper, gunpowder or Chinatown. Using the Great Wall as a reference point, briefly discuss its importance in regards to political, economic, and geographic implications. What might have been some hardships in building the Great Wall? How did this and other ideas create change?
- ❖ Explain many Chinese immigrated to the United States to work in gold mines and later recruited to work on railroads. Students may already be aware that the Chinese helped build the Transcontinental Railroad from prior knowledge and lessons; If not this may be a good starting point.

Primary Documents Analysis: Approximately 25 minutes

- ❖ Students will work with multiple visual and textual sources and compare different pieces of evidence. They may use the **CAAMPS Document Analysis Worksheet** or other primary document analyses strategies.
- ❖ Students will log on to Stanford's website [Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project](#) . The teacher will act as a guide and project the website on the screen.
- ❖ Direct students to click the link "Research Materials" and access both the *photographs* and then *documents*. Look through the photographs and have students choose two photos to analyze. Students will also be directed to the documents and choose one for analysis and corroboration.
- ❖ Students will use the CAAMPS worksheet to record their ideas.
- ❖ Time permitting students can read through the "Timeline" link.

Wrap up

- ❖ Conduct a whole group discussion to share what photos and documents students chose and why.

Homework

- ❖ Distribute Takaki reading to each student. Have students read closely, highlighting and annotating the article. In preparation for small group discussion, they should identify two things they believe is interesting or insightful.

Day 2

Warm up: Approximately 5-7 minutes

- ❖ Ask students to state one thing they found insightful or interesting from the homework.

Optional Power Point Presentation: Approximately 10 minutes

- ❖ The presentation will reflect many of the ideas found in the Takaki article and some primary source analysis. It will highlight building the tunnels, the snow sheds, the Chinese wall and end with a picture of Chinatown.

Discussion Groups: Approximately 10 -15 minutes

- ❖ Divide students into groups of 4-6 to discuss reading.

Evaluation:

- ❖ Have students use the secondary source reading and evidence from primary source analysis to write a one page account of a Chinese worker. The paper or journal entry will need to support an argument outlining the contributions made by a Chinese



immigrant. It will be graded showing evidence understanding connections to the learning objectives.

