

The Shaping of the Environment

NEH Lesson Plan for TCRR July 2013

Submitted by Eric Perkins

California 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.

1. Trace patterns of agricultural and industrial development as they relate to climate, use of natural resources, markets, and trade and locate such development on a map.
4. Discuss entrepreneurs, industrialists, and bankers in politics, commerce, and industry (e.g., Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Leland Stanford).
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, the conservation movement).

Day 1: Building the Transcontinental Railroad in the classroom

Mini-unit question: How was society and the environment changed with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad?

In this activity students will practice teamwork and communication as they work to build the transcontinental railroad. The class will be divided into two teams and each half will start building from their own side (Omaha, Sacramento). They will be given “to scale” measurements and just enough materials in order to lay track. Students will be encouraged to be the team that goes the farthest and non participants will lose points. At the end of the activity there will be a debriefing. Students will write about the challenges they faced in building and think of additional challenges the builders of the railroad may have encountered, emphasizing the environment.



Day 2: Effect of building the railroad on the environment— natural and human.

Students will examine pictures and text in order to describe the effect of the railroad on the environment.

- ❖ Students will complete the graphic organizer for images (last page).
- ❖ After reading the excerpt from Orsi, students will answer the question based on the text and the images: How did the railroad change society and the environment?

Image # 1

“On the Summit of Sierra Nevada Mountains” (1860/1870), Lawrence & Houseworth, publisher.

Located at <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt100015xh/>

Image # 2

Railroad tracks through a cut.

Located at http://cpr.org/Museum/Photo-Gallery/hart_046_detail.html

Image # 3

“Picnicing [sic] in the redwood groves – Russian River [ca. 1875-1880],” Charleton E. Watkins.

Located at <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf4k4007x0/?query=railroad&brand=calisphere>

Image # 4

“Sacramento City – China Slough from the Pioneer Flour Mills,” Lawrence & Houseworth publisher, 1866.

Located at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002719082/>

TEXT # 1

Two excerpts from “The Destruction of the Bison,”

“Other historians have attributed the destruction of the bison not to uniformed or civilian hunters but primarily to environmental factors. They have pointed to the impact of drought, the predation of wolves, domestic livestock’s pressure on plains forage, and exotic bovine diseases as the likeliest causes of the collapse of the bison population in the 1870s and early 1880s.” (129)

“By the end of the 1870s, the combination of human and environmental pressures had reduced the southern plains bison to a few hundred stragglers. The destruction then moved north. Just as the extension of the Santa Fe Railroad to Dodge City spurred the expansion of commercial hide hunting in the southern plains, the extension of the Northern Pacific Railroad to Miles City, Montana Territory, in 1881, made possible the slaughter in the northern plains.” (140)

TEXT # 2

Did the transcontinental railroad impact buffalo herds?

One might call this a "permanent corridor" that resulted in the demise of the bison in the West. Permanent railroad tracks, depletion of trees for railroad ties and bridges, and decreasing the wild game established an everlasting foreign presence in the indigenous West that would be changed to the American West with a new character called the "frontier." Something had changed forever! The white man may think that he owns the land, but he does not own the Earth. We are reminded of this important lesson, even the earliest white pioneers learned this important lesson trying to carve out homes made of sod on the plains. On the plains, we learn to look up when thunderclouds form and turn black. We are reminded of the power of Nature when it thunders and bright streaks of lightning shoot across the sky. We fear tornadoes, or else we are fools.

Source: Donald Fixico, Professor of American Indian History, University of Kansas. From *American Experience: Transcontinental Railroad*.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/interview/tcrr-interview/>

TEXT #3

From Orsi, Richard J. “Railroads and the Urban Environment: The Sacramento Story,” in *Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*. eds. Chris Castaneda and Lee Simpson.



Day 3: Continuity and Change over Time

1. Students will research the local history of El Dorado Hills and Clarksville, CA.

A Brief History of Clarksville by, Dr. John E. Thomson

The area around what is now known as Clarksville was long inhabited by the Maidu and Miwok groups of Native American Indians. These indigenous people lived off the land, and resided in villages scattered over an area that extended from the Sacramento Valley up into the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

In January of 1848, James W. Marshall discovered gold in the millrace of Sutter's Mill at Coloma on the American River and touched off the California Gold Rush.

The Indians, though weakened by the malaria epidemic of the 1830s, were still residing in the Sierra Foothills when the early gold-seekers and others began to arrive in the late 1840s. The immigration caused by the Gold Rush destroyed the Indian's arcadian way of life as gold seekers overran the foothills.

In 1848 or 1849, the Mormon Tavern, offering rough hospitality for gold seekers, was built by a Mormon named Morgan in the area just south of the present community of El Dorado Hills. The tavern later acted as a remount station during the short life of the Pony Express, from April 1860 through October 1861.

About the same time the Mormon Tavern was built, a man named Clarkson had a stopping place near Mormon Tavern known as Clarkson's Village. Clarkson's Village was near the junction of the stagecoach road from Sacramento and the freight road east to the Sierra mines which brought people, news, supplies, and mail to the gold fields. The town soon became the commercial and social center for the area, and boasted of four hotels in its heyday. By 1855 a post office was established there, and in the process the postal authorities renamed the town Clarksville.

By 1860 the Gold Rush boom was fading. In the process, the area around Clarksville moved to a more agricultural economy, and ranching became the major industry. The town's commerce suffered greatly when in 1864 the railroad coming east from Sacramento was routed to the south instead of passing through Clarksville. Though it continued to be a service center for the local ranchers, the town of Clarksville began a slow decline.

The advent of the Lincoln Highway (America's first transcontinental Highway) that was built through Clarksville in the early 1900s restored some life to Clarksville. The Lincoln Highway later became U.S. Highway 50, but when in the 1960s Highway 50 was rerouted to bypass Clarksville, the little community just faded away.

At the present time all that is generally left of Clarksville are the ruins of some frame building and few stone walls. The one standing building is the old school house, which has been added onto and maintained as a barn.

While much attention has been paid to other historical legacies such as the Gold Rush or the Spanish Missions, the area around Clarksville is rich with local history that cries out to be recorded and remembered.

The Clarksville Region Historical Society was founded in 2006 to identify and preserve documents, artifacts, records, and other objects of historical interest, educate the public and increase public awareness, and to enlist public support for the historical preservation and display of documents, artifacts, records, and other objects of historical interest related to historic Clarksville and the surrounding region. http://www.edhhistory.org/Short_History.htm



2. Students will look at a map, identifying the Placerville & Sacramento Valley Railroad and its course. Also identifying a general area of where Clarksville is located.

Map # 1

“Sacramento – Placerville Transportation Corridor Joint Powers Authority (JPA)”

Located at <http://www.sptc-jpa.org/map.html>

3. Students will answer the following questions using evidence from the texts, images, and maps.

Question #1: How has the railroad and transportation shaped the geography of your community?

Question #2: Should old rail lines be converted into multiuse trails (walking, biking, etc.)? Why or why not?



Image	What repeats?	What opposites are there?	What is out of place?