

Name: _____

The Transcontinental Railroad

By Anita Venegas

The United States measures nearly 3,000 miles (4,800 km) from the Pacific Ocean in the west to the Atlantic Ocean in the east. Today, cross-country travel only takes several hours by airplane or a few days by car. This wasn't always the case. At one time, just traveling large parts of the country—not all of it!—took



Union Pacific Railroad, would build west



Preview

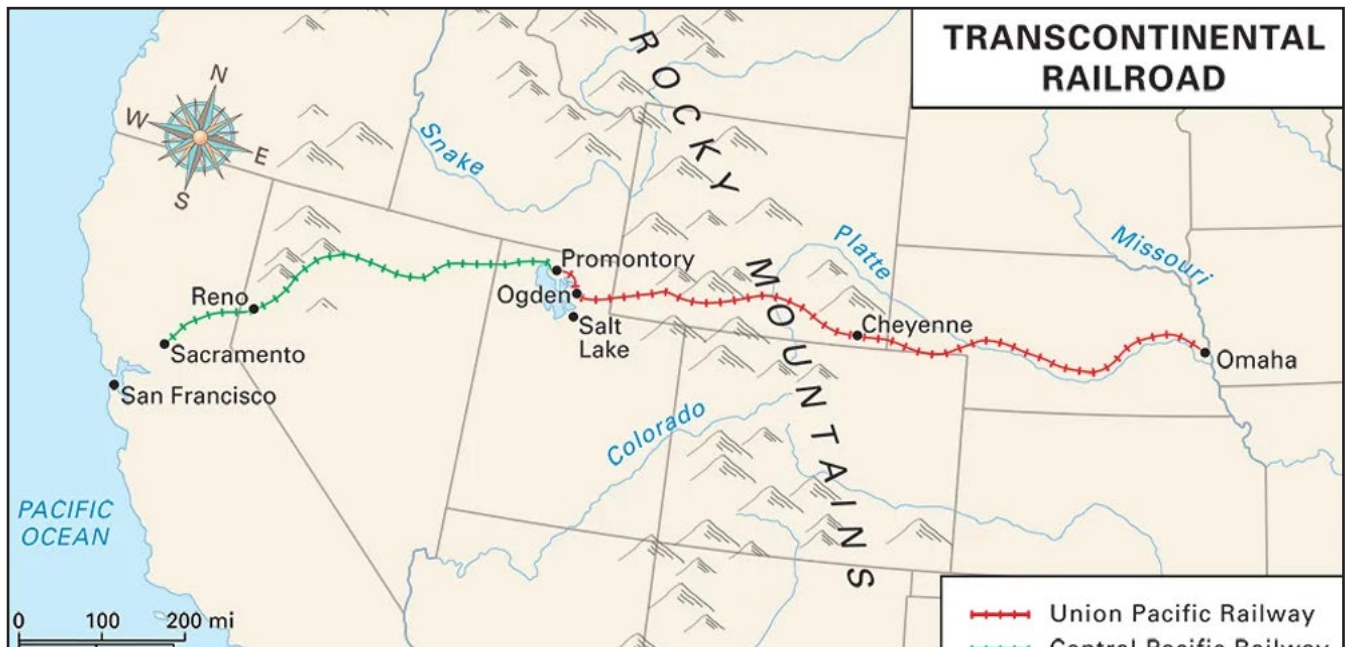
Please log in to download the printable version of this worksheet.

Another was picking the route. Private investors met with lawmakers about both problems. The recent discovery of gold in California helped persuade Congress to step in. Starting in 1853, Congress ordered land studies to find the easiest, most cost-effective route.

Engineer Theodore Judah had built the first railway west of the Mississippi. He got investors like Leland Stanford, future founder of Stanford University, to make the Central Pacific Railroad company. He also proposed a path east from Sacramento, California through the Sierra Nevada. A second company,

An early challenge was finding workers. Many Union Pacific workers were Irish, German, and Italian immigrants who had recently arrived in America. Some were even paid in land so they could help establish towns along the route. Soldiers who left the Civil War also worked with Union Pacific.

Conditions were particularly bad for Central Pacific workers. They faced sweltering summers and deadly winter snowstorms. They also spent days blasting through mountains without modern tools. Charles Crocker was chief of construction. The first 50 Chinese



Preview

Please log in to download the printable version of this worksheet.

Work on the Union Pacific had its own dangers. Native Americans did not welcome the railroad. The work split up their land and scared away animals. Interactions between natives, workers, and settlers were frequent and often violent. The workers kept going.

Seven years and about 1,776 miles (1,858 km) of track later, the route was completed. On May 10, 1869, the last nail joined the eastern and western tracks at Promontory Point, Utah. Leland Stanford used a silver hammer to pound in the "Golden Spike." In all, 19 tunnels

was low, but the work was respectable. They worked as baggage handlers, brakemen, and ticket takers. Settlers moved farther west to claim land. Travel now took fewer days and cost less. People in the east received needed resources from the west. Goods like farm produce also moved more quickly and cheaply by rail. The Transcontinental Railroad gave a major boost to the growth and wealth of America.

Name: _____

The Transcontinental Railroad

By Anita Venegas

1. What were two of the biggest benefits investors expected from a transcontinental railroad?
 - a. decreased transportation times and decreased shipping costs
 - b. increased shipping costs and decreased transportation times
 - c. decreased workers' wages and increased shipping costs
 - d. new markets for products and wealthier travelers
2. Reread the following sentence from the article.

Starting in 1853, Congress ordered land studies to find the easiest, most cost-effective route.



- b. The Union Pacific Railroad had more investors.
 - c. The Union Pacific Railroad had twice as many employees.
 - d. Central Pacific workers had more difficult terrain to overcome.
4. Based on the text, which statement would the author agree with?
 - a. The Civil War had little effect on the Transcontinental Railroad.
 - b. Everyone in the U.S. supported the proposed route.
 - c. Making the Transcontinental Railroad required lots of cooperation.
 - d. Congress was most interested in creating a sense of national unity.
 5. Choose one of the benefits mentioned in the last paragraph. How would it have given a "major boost" to the country's growth or wealth?

Name: _____

The Transcontinental Railroad

By Anita Venegas

The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. _____ impressed | a. a belief or value, especially about how to act |
| 2. _____ investors | b. supplies or materials, especially natural ones |



- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 6. _____ unite | f. to join together as one |
| 7. _____ violent | g. someone who comes to live permanently in another country |
| 8. _____ resources | h. people who fund projects with the expectation of turning a profit |
| 9. _____ immigrant | i. terribly hot; so hot as to cause suffering |
| 10. _____ proposed | j. spanning across a continent |

Name: _____

The Transcontinental Railroad

By Anita Venegas

In the article, "The Transcontinental Railroad," you read about the creation of the first cross-country railroad in the United States.

On the lines below, explain what the Union Pacific and Central Pacific branches of the railroad were and the differences between them. Which would you have preferred to work on? Why?



Preview
Please log in to download
the printable version of this worksheet.

ANSWER KEY

The Transcontinental Railroad

By Anita Venegas

1. What were two of the biggest benefits investors expected from a transcontinental railroad?
 - a. **decreased transportation times and decreased shipping costs**
 - b. increased shipping costs and decreased transportation times
 - c. decreased workers' wages and increased shipping costs

Preview

Please log in to download
the printable version of this worksheet.



Choose one of the benefits mentioned in the last paragraph. How would it have given a "major boost" to the country's growth or wealth?

Answers will vary.

ANSWER KEY

The Transcontinental Railroad

By Anita Venegas

Preview

Please log in to download
the printable version of this worksheet.



another country

8. b resources

h. people who fund projects with the expectation of turning a profit

9. g immigrant

i. terribly hot; so hot as to cause suffering

10. c proposed

j. spanning across a continent