



BIG IDEA:

The transcontinental railroad changed the way people and goods traveled across America, saving people time and money. It was a monumental engineering feat that connected the eastern and western coasts of the United States. The two main railroad companies involved in the construction were the Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad. They faced many challenges as they laid tracks through rugged terrain, deserts, and mountain ranges. The railroad line also highlighted and continues to highlight the great beauty and wonderment of the United States. Students can apply research and their imagination to US depictions of landscape and artifacts along the transcontinental line.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will understand how the transcontinental railroad increased efficiency for travel and transportation of goods.

Students will begin to develop research skills.

Students will create an artistic representation based on research.

FOCUSED LEARNING STANDARDS:

(2nd Grade) Social Studies 4-Science and technology have changed daily life.

(2nd Grade) K-2.ICT.2.a.-Develop basic skills for locating information using digital learning tools and resources.

(2nd Grade) 3PR-Create artworks based on imagination and observation of familiar objects and scenes.

(3rd Grade) Social Studies 7-Transportation and communication move people, products and ideas from place to place.

(3rd Grade) 3-5.ICT.2.b.-Use appropriate search techniques to locate needed information using digital learning tools and resources.

(3rd Grade) 1PR-Demonstrate skill and expression in the use of art techniques and processes.

MATERIALS:

United States map (original transcontinental line), research capabilities, butcher paper, drawing/coloring materials

KEY VOCABULARY:

Transcontinental, travel, transportation, goods, landscape, construction, landmark

STEPS:

- 1) Ask students how they get from one place to another (walk, bike, car, bus, plane, train, boat, etc.). Discuss how they might get somewhere far away (car, plane). Discuss how trains used to be the fastest form of travel.
- 2) Share the United States map and point out the first transcontinental route. Discussion questions to ask:
 - How long do you think it would take to walk that route?
 - How did trains improve transportation?
 - What did trains carry?
 - How does transportation today look different in terms of traveling long distances?
- 3) Have students pick a location along the transcontinental route to research, in groups or individually. Encourage students to find out more about the location and consider landmarks, architecture, and landscape.
- 4) Ask students to create an interpretation of their location on butcher paper. Remind students to include important features from their research like landmarks and landscapes. Have students share with the class.

DISCUSSION:

Ask students the following reflection questions:

- What differences and similarities did you notice along the transcontinental route through your research?
- Can you think of any challenges that might have occurred while building the transcontinental railroad. Can you think of any challenges or issues after construction?

It's important to note that the construction of the transcontinental railroad also had negative implications. Native Americans were displaced from their communities and environmental damage occurred. These negative consequences can be discussed with your students in developmentally appropriate ways.