

Grades 9-12

Future of America's Past, "Transcontinental"

In THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S PAST, notable scholar Ed Ayers takes viewers to the sites of complex and evocative chapters in American history. Throughout the series, Ayers meets with public historians working to preserve the past, from National Park Service rangers to curators and community activists. He visits the sites - both familiar and unknown - of monumental events and brings on guests who offer a range of perspectives.

High in the Utah desert in 1869, two locomotives met, and a golden spike was hammered into new rails: the first transcontinental railroad was complete. To mark the 150th anniversary of this feat, Utah organized a statewide effort called "Spike 150," with exhibitions and events engaging a diverse public. Host Ed Ayers visits to learn about the railroad's promise of prosperity. He considers the human costs, with a descendant of a Chinese American railroad builder and a Native American tribal leader. And he discovers how the environment and photography played key roles on the rails.

After watching this episode, choose from the following questions and/or tasks to extend your learning

Question Box 1

- Provide an objective summary of Future of America's Past "Transcontinental".
- What interaction influenced future events? Provide evidence.
- What is the significance of the Transcontinental Railroad?
- What is the significance of the Golden Spike?
- What was the railroad promise of prosperity?
- Describe the Spike 150 Celebration?
- What was the statewide effort to plan the Spike 150 Celebration?
- Why does this celebration attract the attention of a diverse public?
- What were the human costs of building the railroad?
- Describe the Chinese involvement in the construction of the railroad?
- How were the Native Americans involved?
- How did this railroad affect the lives of Native Americans?
- What was the overall effect of the Transcontinental Railroad to the development of the West?

Question Box 2

- What did you find most interesting and why?

- How much did you know about the subject before we started?
- How do you feel about this program? Why?
- What parts of it do you particularly like? Dislike? Why?
- What did you enjoy about this program?

Box 3 (Tasks)

- History connects us to our humanity and our inhumanity. What's a story in our past that connects you to the inhumanity of people? Why is that story so telling for you? What's a story in our past that connects you to the humanity of people? Why is that story so telling for you?
- Who else but American's could build 10 miles of track a day? Who else but American's could build through granite mountain? What did those Americans look like? Why are their stories untold? What other stories do you know that remain untold?
- Draw a map of the Transcontinental Railroad from the east to the west. Include the stopping points it made along the way. Describe each of those locations and tell how the railroad changed that location. Did it improve it or not?

Box 4 (Enrichment)

- How did the transcontinental railroad affect the buffalo population? How did they become decimated? How did that affect the Shoshone?
- What was the Bear River massacre? What happened? Why is this not in your history books?

Box 5 (Extend/Real-Life)

- Many people don't think of a career with a railroad, however there are many careers available within a railroad.
- Brainstorm a list of job titles for people who work at a railroad.
- Research possible careers with Union Pacific.
 1. Operations Management Training Program
<https://up.jobs/careers/omt/index.htm>
 1. Watch the video.
 2. Select one of the career options on the page to learn more about the position.
 2. Railroad Operations <https://up.jobs/careers/railroad/index.htm>
 1. Watch the video.
 2. Select one of the career options on the page to learn more about the position.
 3. Compare and contrast the two positions you selected.
 4. Write one paragraph discussing which position would be the best for you and why you selected that position.
 5. Share what you have learned about working for a railroad with a family member.