# THE CHINESE BUILD THE RAILROAD!

**Ken Wortley**  
7th - 12th Grade

**National Standard**  
Era 6: Grades 7-12 / Standard 2B  
**Standard 2B:** Explain the rising racial conflict in different regions, including the anti-Chinese movement in the West and the rise of lynching in the South.

**Washington State Social Studies EARLs**  
7th Grade  
4: History - The student understands and applies knowledge of historical thinking, chronology, eras, turning points, major ideas, individuals, and themes in local, Washington State, tribal, United States, and world history in order to evaluate how history shapes the present and future.  
4.1: Understands historical chronology  
4.2: Understands and analyzes causal factors that have shaped major events in history  
4.3: Understands that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events  
4.4: Uses history to understand the present and plan for the future

**NOTES**

Students need to have a firm background in literacy-based learning, and they are expected to use the Socratic Method of group discussion.

The teacher will provide the class with three or four resources that they can read critically as a group. The classroom teacher will also begin this lesson with the reading of the picture book *Coolies* by Chris Soentpiet to assist with the building of background knowledge.

The students can also do the Quick-Write as a pre-assessment; it gives the teacher the background levels of the students.

**BACKGROUND**

“The Great Event” was the joining of two railroad lines, making it possible to go from coast to coast by train. What would take days now took only an 11-12 hour trip to the west from the east.

Two companies built the railroad. The Central Pacific (starting in the west) and the Union Pacific (coming from the east). The government was giving subsidies for each mile of railway track that was laid, and each side wanted to lay more track than the other. Laying tracks on flat land was not too difficult, but most of the west involved working through mountains and valleys. Also, conditions for laying the tracks were dangerous and hard. They laid the tracks by putting heavy metal rails on top of wooden cross pieces called ‘ties,’’ and the Union Pacific used 40 railroad cars to haul the 400 tons of rails, timber, fuel, and food for each mile of track.

The Central Pacific Railroad sent ships to China to recruit workers. Some 7000 Chinese workers came to California just to build the railroad, and they were paid a $1.00 a day. These workers worked incredibly hard, long hours and were treated with contempt.
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The historic connection of the two lines made the country smaller, and the states became truly united. New immigrants could travel to the West for a new life, and people in the West could buy and trade goods from the East.

“In California in 1865, the Central Pacific experienced a severe labor shortage. By "labor shortage", what is meant is ‘a shortage of white laborers’, as the Central Pacific had hired only white men (mostly Irish) up to this point in time. It was not a shortage of men, as there were many men in California, but a shortage of men willing to work on the railroad, especially after silver had been discovered in Nevada that year. After all, there was free gold (in California) or silver (in Nevada) to be had, if only one looked hard enough. In fact, it was the 1849 gold rush that brought thousands of Chinese looking for this "free gold" over from China. By the early 1860's, newspapers estimated that 42,000 Chinese labored in northern California [Howard 225].”

In 1865, Charles Crocker, amid much dispute, began hiring Chinese workers to fill in for the white labor shortage. This was a decision that profoundly changed the course of race relations in the West. Around the same time the Union Pacific Railroad was also experiencing racial issues.

As the railroad pushed across the prairie lands moving west, they began to constantly run up against Native American raiding parties. Some of the land across which the railroad was being built had been bought by the government from white owners, but much more of it was simply taken from land previously promised to the Native Americans.


SCENARIO

On May 10, 1869 the rails met at Promontory Point, Utah. The news of the event was telegraphed immediately to the rest of the nation. The whole nation celebrated the linking of the East and West Coast, and the United States was never the same again. It was now a united nation linked by steel rails, and there was so much to celebrate when the two lines were connected. The golden spikes were quietly replaced by Chinese workers, and this allowed incredible travel to be complete.

A Chinese imperial ambassador was dispatched to the scene upon countless complaints from Chinese families who have complained about their loved ones’ treatment and the general working conditions.
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TASKS

You are on a special commission to investigate the building of the railroad and the working conditions of the workers who came from China. A full report will be given to the president of the United States and the emperor of China.

- Work in groups to investigate the working conditions of workers in general on this important project.
- Compare the working conditions of the Chinese.
- Discuss and present the findings in a Socratic Circle Method.

RESOURCES


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Washington State history textbook, chapters, and pages pertaining to this unit.

ASSESSMENT

Use a Quick-Write to begin the lesson. Ask, “What do you already know about:

• Chinese Immigrants”?
• The building of the Transcontinental Railroad”?

Gather information on what the student’s prior knowledge is before beginning this unit.

When the Socratic discussion is going on, the students are responsible to:

• Participate.
• Students are to record their observations of the inner group discussing and finally an evaluation of the Socratic seminar.

When the unit on Chinese Immigration is complete ask the students to respond to their original Quick-Write and complete it with what they have learned, plus a more deeper thinking question that applies to the present-day situation.

Grading: use the rubric at this URL from the Washington State CBA assessments:


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REFERENCES/CITATIONS


The Chinese Build the Railroad!


In order to satisfy the requirements of the Operating Standards for Ohio Educational Agencies Serving Children with Disabilities ("Ohio Operating Standards"), the Board of Education adopts the model policies and procedures promulgated by the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Exceptional Children (ODE-OEC), which is incorporated by reference into this policy. The district has a standard grading procedure, as well as additional notations that indicate work in progress or incomplete work. Grades indicate the extent to which the student has acquired and demonstrated the necessary learning. In general, students are assigned grades based upon test results, homework, projects, and classroom participation.

Pride Surveys Questionnaire for Grades 6 thru 12 Standard Report. 2015-16 Pride National Summary November 04, 2016. PSurvRelyDsE. 12th Graders 6,630 7,179. Total. 53,086 55,208. NOTE: Pride Surveys constantly monitors drug trends among students and modifies the questionnaire from time to time when new drug use behaviors exhibit themselves. In recent years, there has been an increase in the concern over the abuse of over-the-counter and prescription drugs. In order to track these behaviors, three new drug categories were added to the 2009-10 Pride Surveys Questionnaire for Grades 6 to 12. In looking at overall illicit drug use (i.e. denoted as any use of any of the illicit drugs), in the following tables, you will note an increase... The National Standards in K-12 Personal Finance Education were designed to guide classroom education, extra-curricular learning and the development of financial education programs, materials and tools. Throughout the country, educational requirements are established by states, territories and local jurisdictions—such as cities, counties and school districts— to best meet local needs. Jump$tart recognizes personal finance as a multi-disciplinary subject and the National Standards draw from a number of academic areas including mathematics, economics, business and consumer science. Likewise, the 2015 National Standards in K-12 Personal Finance Education are intended to support educational endeavors in these other subject areas, as well. Enrollment (7th - 12th Grade). Welcome to the Fremont Unified School District. Below, you will find information to assist parents/guardians start and complete the enrollment process. Secondary school enrollment: Enrollment is completed at the school site. Please visit your home school for enrollment. If you are not sure which school is your home school, click on School Locator. (BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS, PLEASE READ CAREFULLY): 1. Students must be living in Fremont, CA at the time of enrollment for current school year. 2. A student cannot be enrolled in an FUSD school for the current school year if they are currently enrolled in another public or private school for the current school year.