



Standards Addressed:
Social Studies - SS5.2.3, SS5.2.4
ELA -RI.4.1, RI.4.3

Culture Clash!

Transcontinental Railroad (Upper Elementary)

Description: Students will read an article and investigate the workers on the Transcontinental Railroad. They will investigate challenges, struggles, evidence of culture along the route, and then compare and contrast the two main cultural groups using a graphic organizer.

Background Information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kI0lxIMMb9E>

This short video provides a good overview of the Transcontinental Railroad.

The majority of the work on the Transcontinental Railroad was completed by individuals who did not belong to the “American” mainstream culture. Irish immigrants and Mormon men primarily comprised the Union Pacific workforce, while Irish and predominantly Chinese workers made up the Central Pacific Workforce.

Activity Overview:

1. (Optional) Show the YouTube video to provide an overview of the Transcontinental Railroad.
2. Review definition of culture with students. Boston University describes culture as “all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation.”
3. Explain to students that they are going to be reading about the Transcontinental Railroad and comparing and contrasting the cultures of the workers who built the railroad.
4. Have students access *Workers of the Central and Union Pacific Railroad* article. Instruct students to read through the article, looking for evidence in differences in cultures of the workers of the Transcontinental Railroad. Have students annotate on printed copies of the article, or take notes about their findings.
5. Reconvene class to discuss. Show Andrew Russell’s Champagne Photo and discuss.
 - a. Who made up the men who built the transcontinental railroad?
 - b. In what ways were their cultures and experience similar? What ways were they different?
 - c. Why do you think that the Chinese workers were known for being healthier?
6. Have students complete the graphic organizer, “Portrait of a Transcontinental Railroad Worker”, indicating different noticings of culture, experience and treatment.

Materials Needed:

Computer

Workers of the Central and Union Pacific Railroad Article

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/tcrr-workers-central-union-pacific-railroad/>

A Note for the Teacher:

The article written to a higher academic reading level. Some scaffolding may be necessary for students to successfully access information. To extend learning, students may conduct additional research.



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U.S. Department of the Interior
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The Champagne Photo - Andrew J. Russell

Discussion Question:

Who do you see in the image above? Do you notice anyone who appears to be missing from the photo? Why do you think that is?



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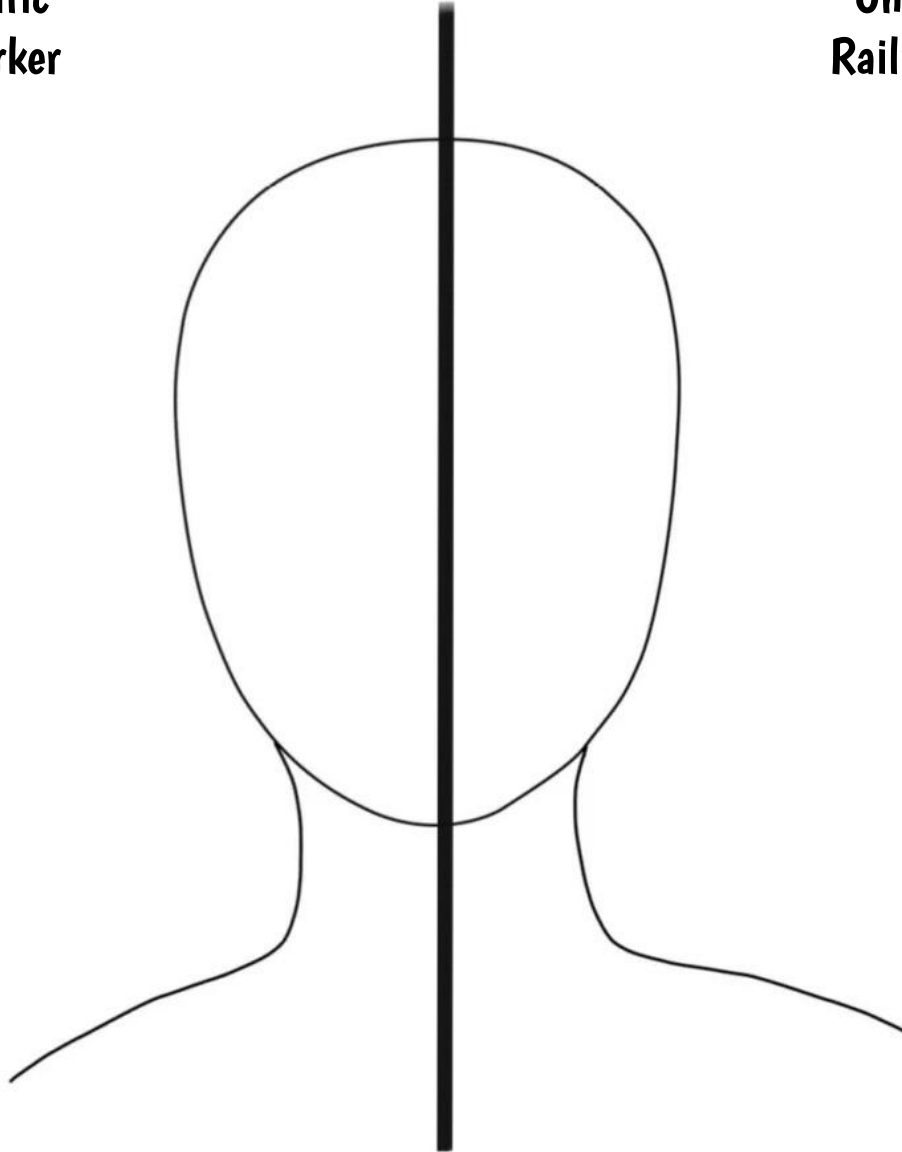


Portrait of a Railroad Worker

Directions: Use the graphic organizer below to compare and contrast the cultures and treatment of Irish and Chinese railroad workers. You may draw/write to explain your thinking.

**Central Pacific
Railroad Worker**

**Union Pacific
Railroad Worker**



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