

## D.A.R. American History Essay Contest 2009-2010

### “The Completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad”

Describe how you felt on May 10, 1869, when the golden spike was driven at Promontory Summit, Utah, to celebrate the completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad. Pretend you are either a settler planning to use the train to travel to your new home in the West, an Irish or Chinese worker who helped build the line, or a Native American whose way of life was greatly affected by the railroad.

### General Reference Resources

The American Eras Collection. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Group.1998.

This impressive set presents chronologies and detailed articles on different eras in American history. The set begins in the earliest days of the Colonial era and continues through the Civil War and beyond. An interesting feature of this set is that it includes separate volumes that respectively cover the events in the Eastern and Western United States. This allows the sometimes neglected history of the American settlement of the West to be studied in depth.

American History Through Literature 1820-1870. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Thomson Gale. 2006.

This book contains an article on the manner in which Chinese immigrants were viewed.

The Dictionary of American History. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1976.

This multi-volume set contains alphabetically arranged entries including a section on transportation.

Documents of American History. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 1988.

This set contains a copy of the Pacific Railway Act.

Encyclopedia of American History. New York: Facts on File. 2003.

This multi-volume set contains alphabetically arranged entries including a section on transportation and the Union Pacific railroad.

Encyclopedia of the American West. New York: Macmillan Reference. 1996.

This set contains entries on related topics like Transcontinental Railroad Surveys, Central Pacific Railroad, and Union Pacific Railroad.

Encyclopedia of the United States in the Nineteenth Century. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 2001.

This set contains an entry on the railroad and its place in history.

Great Events From History: North American Series. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Salem Press.1997.

This multi-volume set traces North American history with chronological entries including the Pacific Railroad Surveys.

Magill's Great Events From History: American Series. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Salem Press. 1975.

This three volume set summarized events and writings from the history of the Americas including material on the railroad.

The Oxford Companion to United States History. New York: Oxford University Press.2001.

This book contains over 1,400 alphabetical entries on topics from 400 years of American history. Notables like Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, Franklin Roosevelt, and Elvis Presley are included along with events like World War II, and topics like the Federalist Era.

The Reader's Companion to American History. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1991.

This comprehensive work contains more than 1,000 alphabetically arranged entries covering important people, events, and issues from American history.

Research Guide to American Historical Biography. Washington DC: Beacham Publishing. 1988.

This book contains bibliographical data for Abraham Lincoln and other notable figures from American history.

### **Circulating Materials on the Essay Topic in the Adult Area**

Ambrose, Stephen. Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2000.

This book by the noted historian traces the origins and completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Bain, David. Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad. New York: Viking. 1999.

This massive volume is considered to be the definitive work on the subject.

Klein, Aaron. Encyclopedia of North American Railroads. New York: Exeter Books. 1985.

This book contains alphabetically arranged entries on subjects like the Transcontinental Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Ward, James. Railroads and the Character of America 1820-1887. Knoxville, Tennessee : University of Tennessee Press. 1986.

Ward's book has a few references to the Transcontinental Railroad.

### **Juvenile Circulating Materials**

Blashfield, Jean. We the People: The Transcontinental Railroad. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Compass Point Books. 2002.

Blashfield's book provides a good look at the history of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Dunn, Joeming. Building the Transcontinental Railroad. \_ Edina, Minnesota: Magic Wagon. 2009.

Dunn's book is aimed at younger readers but it does a good job describing the making of the railroad.

Elish, Dan. The Transcontinental Railroad: the Triumph of a Dream. Brookfield, Connecticut: Millbrook Press. 1993.

This book covers the history of the massive construction project in easy to follow language.

Fisher, Leonard. Tracks Across America. New York, New York: Holiday House. 1993.

Fisher tells the story of the building of the railroad with a good eye for details that would appeal to young readers.

Miller, Marilyn. The Transcontinental Railroad. Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Company. 1 986.

Miller's book is a good, standard history of the railroad's construction and impact on the nation.

### **Magazine Articles**

Best, Gerald M. "Rendezvous at Promontory: The Jupiter and No. 199." Utah Historical Quarterly. XXXVII 1 Winter 1969:69-75.

Bowman, J. N. "Driving the Last Spike at Promontory, 1869." Utah Historical Quarterly. XXXVII. 1 Winter 1969:77-101.

Mann, David. "The Undriving of the Golden Spike." Utah Historical Quarterly. XXXVII. 1 Winter 1969: 124-134.

Shackleton, Lee. "United States Peacemaker: the Big Four Got Credit For Building the Central Pacific to Complete the First North American Transcontinental Railroad, But They Couldn't Have Done It Without the Help of One Man: Paiute Chief Johnson Sides." Trains Magazine. 69: 7 July 2009: 52-55.

Sienkiewicz, Henryk. "The Chinese in California." California Historical Quarterly. December 1955:301-316.

### **Internet Sites**

<http://www.cpr.org/>

The website for the Central Pacific Railroad Museum contains links to over a dozen articles about the history of the railroad, its founders, and its builders. The site also contains online transcripts of the United States Pacific Railway Commission's 1887 Report that trace the legislative history of the railway.

[http://cpr.org/Museum/Chinese\\_Laborers.html](http://cpr.org/Museum/Chinese_Laborers.html).

The Central Pacific Railroad Museum has a link that contains information about its colorful history and the use of Chinese immigrants as laborers during the construction of the railroad.

[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/hh40/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/hh40/index.htm)

This National Park Service site contains a brochure on the history of the Golden Spike historic site and the events that led up to the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

<http://www.bushong.net/dawn/about/college/ids100/history.shtml>

This site contains a brief history of the building of the railroad along with a bibliography of additional sources.