



What is Freedom?

Dee Anne Squire, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the theories of freedom our nation was founded on and compare them to the reality many citizens found. We will discuss ways we, as a people, can come closer to the ideal.

Objectives:

- Students will gather information from literary works.
- Students will organize that information to help them create and support a claim.
- Students will write an argumentative essay to support their opinion of Chinese treatment during the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.
- Students will explore ideas that will help them make different choices in their treatment of others.

Context:

7th or 8th grade Language Arts

Materials:

- *Dragon's Gate* by Laurence Yep (if more intensive reading is desired) – enough for each student to have a copy
- *Coolies* by Yin (if time a shorter activity is desired) – either a classroom set or one copy and the ability to share it with the class
- Writing materials for all students

Time Span:

4 class periods of 45 minutes (More time will be required to read *Dragon's Gate*)

Task:

1. Discussion Activity
 - a. Begin with a fish bowl discussion. Arrange desks in two concentric circles. Have students count off as a 1, 2, or 3. Put the 1's in the middle circle and the 2's and 3's in the outside circle.
 - b. Read the following statement to all of the students and discuss its meaning:

I shook my head, things still didn't add up.
"You said everyone was free and equal in America."
He spread his arms in exasperation.
"They're better in theory than in practice" (Yep 116).
 - c. Ask the center group to talk about examples or non-examples of this statement using events from the history of our nation. Other students should watch and listen to the conversation making notes about the things they notice.
 - d. Next the 2's will go into the center circle and the 1's will move to the outer circle. The 2's will discuss that statement in light of our modern society. Once again looking for examples and non-examples in our nation's current events.



- e. Finally the 3's will move into the center, leaving the 1's and 2's outside. This group will reflect on the examples of the past two groups and discuss what we might need to change in ourselves and our society to make freedom a practice.
2. Writing Activity
 - a. Hand out the T-chart for students to collect information on. Depending on time, read either the picture book, *Coolies* by Yin, or *Dragon's Gate* by Laurence Yep. Help students, as needed, to find evidence that will fit on both sides of the T-chart.
 - b. Once students have completed the reading and the T-chart, hand out the essay outline, instruct students to use the T-chart to complete their outline.
 - c. With the completion of the outline, students are ready to begin writing their essay. Have them use the outline sentences as their topic sentences and add meat to create a six-paragraph essay expressing their argument about the amount of freedom had by the Chinese Railroad workers.
 3. Follow-up Discussion
 - a. Return to the discussion format from the first activity. Organize three groups and discuss the same three questions. Encourage students to use information from their reading and/or research to support the discussion.
 - b. Ask students that are acting as observers to make notes about the current discussion and use their other notes to compare the two discussions. How have things changed from the discussion on the first day? Did learning about individual parts of history change our perspective on freedom?

Extensions:

The Chinese were not the only group that worked on the transcontinental railroad, nor the only group affected by its construction. Students could research other groups such as the Irish or the Native Americans. Students could also research the impact on wildlife, such as the buffalo.

Rationale:

The history presented in history books is often communicated through the eyes of the dominant culture, not taking into account the stories of the many other cultures involved or the price they paid. The building of the transcontinental railroad is just such a story. We celebrate its completion as a triumph of man over nature and take pictures of the great leaders, but fail to see those that provided the daily labor and built it rail by rail. It cannot be denied that the railroad saved many lives as well as providing a vital linking of our nation. It is responsible for helping our nation to grow and thrive. It is important that we still teach the cost of that great advancement that came from the ill-treatment Chinese Laborers, Native Americans, the Irish, and all of the common people who did the day-to-day work. The next generation, through knowledge, can change that practice in the future.



Resources:

Yep, Laurence. *Golden Mountain Chronicles: Dragon's Gate*. New York NY: Harper Trophy, 1995. Print.

Yin. *Coolies*. New York, NY: Puffin Books, 2001. Print.

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Question: Were the Chinese Railroad workers free and equal to the other railroad workers? While reading the book, look for evidence that will fit in both sides of your T-chart. Record quotes and page numbers when available for the evidence you have gathered.

Chinese workers were treated equally

Chinese workers were NOT treated equally

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

1. Read both sides of your T-chart carefully. Select the side you agree with the most. In one sentence, clearly state your claim. Remember choose one side and make it clear what you support in your claim.

Claim _____

2. Look over your T-chart. Find the side you supported in your claim statement. Read through all the evidence you gathered. Circle your three strongest pieces of evidence on your T-chart. Create a topic sentence below for each of the three pieces of evidence you will be using in your essay
Evidence #1 _____

Evidence #2 _____

Evidence #3 _____

3. Look at the opposite side of your T-chart. What is the strongest piece of evidence you recorded for the opposite point of view? Create a counterclaim statement below using that strongest piece of evidence.

Counterclaim _____

4. Now take a good look at your counterclaim, do you have evidence on the side you are supporting that would show why this counterclaim is wrong? It should be evidence that you have not used before and that will make sense as a rebuttal to this counterclaim. State that evidence in one clear statement that will begin your rebuttal.

Rebuttal _____



Perspectives

Jana Patchett, Wasatch Range Writing Project

Summary:

In this lesson, students will collaborate in small groups (three to four members) to complete three tasks based on four different perspectives of the people who were greatly influenced by the Transcontinental Railroad.

Objective:

- Students will research different aspects of the transcontinental railroad.
- Students will generate three short pieces based on their research.
- Students will present their research and final pieces to their peers.

Materials:

- Instruction sheets for each group
- Access to computers for research
- Presentation boards (three panel or poster board)

Time Span:

3 to 4 class periods of 45 minutes

Procedure:

1. Break the class up into four groups.
 - a. Settlers
 - b. Chinese Railroad Workers
 - c. Irish Railroad Workers
 - d. American Indians
2. Hand out instruction sheets to each group.
3. Allow class time to follow all instructions and produce the written requirements.
4. Present work to the other groups.

Extensions:

- Instead of doing this as a group project, have individuals take on the tasks for one group. Have them put together a presentation board with their research, dress up as their character, and present their work in character.
- Work through all of the resources as a class. Have students pick one of the projects to do in each of the four groups.
- As a class, put together a display of all four perspectives.



Resources:

“Chinese Immigration and the Chinese in the United States.” *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration, Feb. 2018,
www.archives.gov/research/chinese-americans/guide

Murphy, Jim. *Across America on an Emigrant Train*. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 1993. Print.

Otfinoski, Steven. *Building the Transcontinental Railroad: an Interactive Engineering Adventure*. Capstone Press: North Mankato, MN, 2015. Print.

Brodsky Schur, Joan. “The Transcontinental Railroad.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service,
www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/lesson_plans/lesson01.htm.

Yep, Laurence. *Golden Mountain Chronicles: Dragon's Gate*. New York, NY: HarperTrophy, 1993. Print.

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Group 1: Settlers

References for this project:

1. *Across America on an Emigrant Train* by Jim Murphy
2. Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum <http://CPRR.org/>
3. Maps of the Railroad from the Library of Congress
<https://www.loc.gov/maps/?fa=subject%3Arailroads&dates=1870-1879&st=grid>

You are a group of passengers on a journey from New York to California. You will need to do some research in order to create three items to present to your classmates. These items are:

- Map showing your journey. Include the following:
 - Important landmarks and cities
 - Mountains
 - Rivers
 - Important events based on your diary
 - Change of railroads
 - A key to read the map
- Diary of the journey. You can have one narrator, or several. Be sure to include the following:
 - Pictures/drawings of what you saw and experienced
 - Description of the overall emotional and physical health of the company
 - New things you have experienced
 - Weather
 - Specific things about the railroad journey (how the railroad car was decorated, the tunnels, how it was to sleep on a train)
 - One entry for each day of your journey (about 10)
 - Be sure to include parts of your back story – who you are, why you are moving to California, what you like to do, who influenced you to move
- Create a Packing List



Group 2: Chinese Railroad Workers

References for this project:

1. *Dragon's Gate* by Laurence Yep
2. *Building the Transcontinental Railroad* by Steven Otfinoski
3. National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/research/chinese-americans/guide>
4. History Detectives <http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/chinese-immigration/>

You are a group of Chinese workers for the Central Pacific Railroad. You will need to do some research in order to produce three pieces of writing to present to your classmates. These pieces are:

- Mini-research paper on the area of China you are from. Include:
 - Habitat: weather, plants and animals, where in China (may include a map)
 - Customs
 - Population: how many people, living conditions, available work, educational opportunities
- Letters home that include:
 - Compare and contrast your experience in America to your life back in China
 - Discuss working conditions: what you do, quality of food, how people treat you
 - Describe people you meet and/or people you work with or your employer
 - Explain historical information like the strike or the winter of 1865-1866
 - Be sure to include parts of your back story – why you decided to come to America, who influenced you, dreams and expectations for your future
 - Write at least 10 letters
- Haiku
 - A three line poem with a specific syllable pattern
Line 1 has 5 syllables
Line 2 has seven syllables
Line 3 has five syllables



Group 3: Irish Railroad Workers

References for this project:

1. *Building the Transcontinental Railroad* by Steven Otfinoski
2. How to Write a Limerick <https://www.poetry4kids.com/lessons/how-to-write-a-limerick/>

You are a group of Irish workers for the Union Pacific. You will need to do some research in order to produce three pieces of writing to present to your classmates. These pieces are:

- Mini-research paper on Ireland. Include:
 - Habitat: weather, plants and animals
 - Customs
 - Population: how many people, living conditions, available work, educational opportunities
- Letters home that include:
 - Compare and contrast your experience in America to your life back in Ireland
 - Discuss working conditions: what you do, quality of food, how people treat you
 - Describe people you meet and/or people you work with or your employer
 - Explains historical information
 - Be sure to include parts of your back story – why you decided to come to America, who influenced you, dreams and expectations for your future
 - Write at least 10 letters
- Limerick
 - A Limerick is a five lines poem with a specific rhyming structure and rhythm
 - Check out the website listed in the references for this project for help



Group 4: American Indians

References for this project:

1. *Death of the Iron Horse* by Paul Goble
2. National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/treaties>
3. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown
4. PBS's Archives of The West Episodes 5-8 <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/>

You are a member of a Native American Tribe. You will need to do some research in order to produce three pieces of writing to present to your classmates.

- Mini-research paper on your tribe. Include information about:
 - Food
 - Housing
 - Clothing
 - Customs
 - May include pictures and maps
- Chant/Lament
- Speech or letter to the U.S. Government
 - Explain what your people were promised by the U.S. Government
 - Summarize how the Railroad is complicating life for your tribe
 - Describe how your tribe and two others are reacting to the changes
 - Propose at least 2 solutions that would help your tribe maintain its life style and allow the railroad to expand



Transcontinental Railroad in Pictures: A Study in Photojournalism

Paula Simonson, Weber Reads

Summary:

Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

Context:

This lesson is designed for any secondary ELA classroom but can be easily adapted to history classrooms. This lesson would also be a cross-curricular format for English and History classes.

Materials:

- Classroom set of depression era photos by Dorothea Lange
- Classroom set of various images and/or photos from various stages of the building of the transcontinental railroad
- Access to Chromebooks and Internet
- Pencil or pen, notecards

Time Span:

5 to 10 class periods of 45 minutes, depending on the desired final outcome and presentation of projects

Procedures:

1. Begin with an introduction to photojournalism by giving students a set of depression-era photos by Dorothea Lange. Do not provide any history or background. Ask students to analyze photos and then use a notecard to write a short summary about what they noticed and what they believe the photographer was attempting to communicate.
2. Once students have completed writing, have a guided classroom discussion and allow a time of sharing.
3. Optional - After discussion, allow students to read and annotate *The Migrant Experience*. This will help give some understanding and context to the Lange photographs. Once they have



completed the article, hand the photographs back and ask them to write again, using the information they have learned from the article. Ask them to include how ideas about the images changed from the first viewing. To shorten the lesson, simply provide students with some historical information about the Great Depression and then move to the next step.

4. Ask students to write original one to two sentence summaries for each photograph.
5. Now that you have introduced students to the power of photojournalism, read aloud the introduction at the beginning of *Death of the Iron Horse* by Paul Goble. Give students time to ask questions and/or share what they may know about the building of the transcontinental railroad. Next, read the entire book to the class.
6. Now provide each student with a set of photographs and prints from the Internet or from the box of resources provided by Weber Reads. You may choose to give the same set of images to all students or select images which capture different stages and impacts of the building of the railroad. For example, one set may depict the arrival of immigrants to the United States to help build the railroad. Another set may capture the impact of the railroad on the wildlife or buffalo populations in the west. Another set of photographs may focus on the Native Americans and the impact they had on the railroad. There could be some which show the changes in American West as a result of the railroad, etc.
7. Give students time to analyze and write briefly about the images and what the images clearly depict. Once they have completed writing, move students into groups based on image sets. Have students discuss the images in small groups and then share briefly with the rest of the class. Students should be prepared to discuss whether they believe the image adequately portrays the events or not.

Extensions:

- Have students continue research on a particular element or impact of the railroad and complete a final project which can be in the form of a pictorial collection which will be completed on Google Slides, Prezi, or any presentation format you choose. Pictures must be organized in a logical or chronological order and should each have an original caption which details the time and the significance of the photo in the collection. Students can work individually or in groups based on assigned topics.
- You may choose to have students create a written research paper to go along with the project outlining the positive and negative impact that the transcontinental railroad had on America.
- Ask students to bring the research close to home and research the meeting of the railroad in Utah and/or the history of Union Station in Ogden.
- Introduce students to images which have been used by media to manipulate how they see and understand certain historical events and analyze how viewers can be impacted without knowing the details/context surrounding an image. See the Washington Post article in the resources below.

Rationale:

Students will be given the opportunity to consider the impact of photographs or prints while using written and verbal language to express how they were affected by the images and to use appropriate language and writing skills to create accurate summaries or captions for photo collections. They will also gain a deeper understanding of historical events that shaped the American West, the indigenous people, and wildlife. Students will also practice the importance of good research while finding a relevant collection of photos for final presentations.



Resources:

Fanslow, Robin A. *The Migrant Experience. Voices from the Dust Bowl: the Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection, 1940 to 1941*. American Folklife Center; Library of Congress, 1998. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/todd-and-sonkin-migrant-workers-from-1940-to-1941/articles-and-essays/the-migrant-experience>.

Goble, Paul. *Death of the IRON HORSE*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1987. Print.

Murphy, Jim. *Across America in an Emigrant Train*. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 1993. Print.

“Dorothea Lange.” *Willem De Kooning. Woman I. 1950–52* | MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/artists/3373>

Nardo, Don. *The Golden Spike: How a Photograph Celebrated the Transcontinental Railroad*. North Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books, 2015. Print.

Schmidt, Samantha and Kristine Phillips. *The crying Honduran girl on the cover of Time was not separated from her mother*. Morning Mix: The Washington Post, June 22, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/06/22/the-crying-honduran-girl-on-the-cover-of-time-was-not-separated-from-her-mother-father-says/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5e10251b5872

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