

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade 7: Lesson 13** Read about and learn the history of the steam engine.

### **The Effect of Railroads on American Life (Excerpt)**

**By Teen Kids News**

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In the mid 1800s, the only thing stopping Americans from settling the West was the fact that only a long, perilous wagon journey could transport you there. Then, in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, the first practical railroad was built. Over time, railroads changed the face of America. They first were used to transport freight, but eventually revolutionized travel, helped fulfill the dream of Manifest Destiny, and created jobs in the railroad industry. Many possibilities were seen in the railroads, and many lives were changed because of them.

Around the mid 19th century, the Industrial Revolution started. This was a period of industrial growth. Gradually, machines took the place of hand tools. Steam engines and flowing water in water mills began to take the place of what used to be power provided by humans and horses. The factory system was also invented as well as interchangeable parts, two inventions that changed the way products were manufactured. Horse-drawn wagons had delivered coal for steam-powered factory machines. With the increase of factory-made goods, a new transport system was needed to carry freight...

...There were many apparent advantages of railroads that improved American life and the economy and industry. Before railroads, goods shipped from England would be sent up rivers on barges. Those barges would travel about five miles per hour, while railroads could easily travel at approximately thirty-five miles per hour. This would save a lot of time and money and could ship more perishable items longer distances. Also, trains could be built anywhere. They were not restricted to only waterways. These advantages made railroads popular among traders and merchants.

Railroads were also popular among citizens. The earliest passenger train was the 136-mile long South Carolina railroad. Soon there was a rise in business travel because of the convenience of trains as well as travel for pleasure. Before the construction of railroads, traveling away from your home was uncommon. Second homes, as well as summer and winter resorts, were created on the Atlantic coast and also farther west to encourage people to travel west. From the late 1800s to mid 1900s, trains were the preferred form of transportation for long distance travel. Travelers could have their own bedroom compartment and could roam the halls of the cars. The dining car's food was similar to that of a fine restaurant...

Soon, railroads became an important part of American life and the American economy and industry. Railroads were essential to the development of western agriculture and industry. Trains transported perishable produce to markets. They brought in raw material from far away and could ship goods throughout the country. Manufacturers could now be located anywhere, as railroads were now branched all around the country in many remote places. Trains were also being placed inside cities; subways were developed above ground as well as underground. Railroads also created wealth for those who promoted and funded them. As railroads grew, investors were still hesitant about their profitability. As soon as railroads proved to be profitable, investors were eager to invest capital in the industry...

From the time of its invention, the railroad brought success to the United States. Trains transported freight around the country. No form of transportation had ever been able to send perishable goods so far away. Americans soon began to travel away from home for business and for pleasure; something that was rare before railroads. Thousands of jobs were created in the railroads and train building industries. A surge of immigrants came from Asia and Europe, creating a demand for even more jobs, in search of better lives or a job opportunity on the railroad...So many possibilities were seen in the railroad. Railroads have changed the entire face of America and have had a great effect on the country's history.

**Questions:**

1. Why was there a need for a new transport system during the Industrial Revolution?
2. What was one major difference between shipping freight by barge and shipping freight by railroad?
3. What was it like to be a passenger on a passenger train in the late 1800's to the mid 1900's? Be sure to use examples from the text to support your answer.

**Independent Practice:** Please use your notes from today's lesson to write a summary paragraph about the entire text we read. You can use any of the phrases or the summary sentences you have already written to help you. Since you are summarizing the entire text, you will need several sentences to capture the central ideas.

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