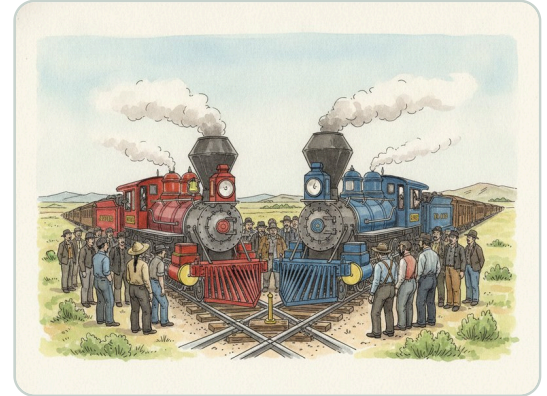


The Transcontinental Railroad

Read the text. Then answer the questions on the next page.

- 1 In the early 1860s, no railroad connected the eastern United States to California. Travelers faced months in a covered wagon or a long voyage by ship. Building a railroad across the West was an enormous job that took two companies and thousands of workers to finish.
- 2 Two companies built the railroad from opposite ends. In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a law that set the plan in motion. The Central Pacific started in Sacramento, California, and built east. The Union Pacific started near Omaha, Nebraska, and built west. The government gave each company land and loans for every mile of track. So the two raced to lay the most.
- 3 The Central Pacific workers had to cut a path through the Sierra Nevada mountains. Most of these workers came from China. More than 10,000 of them worked on the line. They blasted 15 tunnels through solid granite. Some days they moved forward only a few inches. Deep snow and avalanches made the job even more dangerous.
- 4 The Union Pacific crews built quickly across the Great Plains but had troubles of their own. Many of these workers came from Ireland, and many had been soldiers. The land was flat, so they could often lay more than a mile of track in a day. But few trees grew on the plains. Wood and iron had to be hauled in from far away. The crews also worked through hot summers and bitter blizzards.
- 5 On May 10, 1869, the two lines met and joined the country together. The meeting place was Promontory Summit in Utah. A crowd cheered as a final spike made of gold was set in place. The news flashed by telegraph to cities across the nation. A trip from coast to coast now took about a week, not several months.



The Transcontinental Railroad: Questions

Go back to the text to find your proof. Underline it in the color shown.

1. What is the topic of this text?

- ☐ the building of the transcontinental railroad
- ☐ the state of California
- ☐ covered wagons

2. Which sentence tells the main idea of the whole text?

red

- ☐ The Central Pacific started in Sacramento, California.
- ☐ Building a railroad across the West was an enormous job that took two companies and thousands of workers to finish.
- ☐ Few trees grew on the Great Plains.

3. What is the main idea of paragraph 3?

orange

- ☐ Granite is a very hard rock.
- ☐ Avalanches are dangerous.
- ☐ The Central Pacific workers had to cut a path through the Sierra Nevada mountains.

4. Write two details from paragraph 2 that tell more about its main idea.

yellow

5. What is paragraph 5 mostly about?

green

6. Which would be the best new title for this text?

- ☐ The Snowy Sierra Nevada
- ☐ Laying Rails Across the West
- ☐ How to Send a Telegraph

The Transcontinental Railroad: Answer Key

Answers are in green. The proof is where to find each answer in the text.

1. What is the topic of this text?

- ☒ the building of the transcontinental railroad
- ☐ the state of California
- ☐ covered wagons

Proof The topic is named in the title and comes up in every paragraph.

2. Which sentence tells the main idea of the whole text?



- ☐ The Central Pacific started in Sacramento, California.
- ☒ Building a railroad across the West was an enormous job that took two companies and thousands of workers to finish.
- ☐ Few trees grew on the Great Plains.

Proof Paragraph 1: “Building a railroad across the West was an enormous job that took two companies and thousands of workers to finish.”

3. What is the main idea of paragraph 3?



- ☐ Granite is a very hard rock.
- ☐ Avalanches are dangerous.
- ☒ The Central Pacific workers had to cut a path through the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Proof Paragraph 3: “The Central Pacific workers had to cut a path through the Sierra Nevada mountains.”

4. Write two details from paragraph 2 that tell more about its main idea.



The Central Pacific started in Sacramento and built east. The Union Pacific started near Omaha and built west.

5. What is paragraph 5 mostly about?



How the two lines met in 1869 and joined the country together.

6. Which would be the best new title for this text?

- ☐ The Snowy Sierra Nevada
- ☒ Laying Rails Across the West
- ☐ How to Send a Telegraph

Proof It tells what the whole text is about, not just one part.