

The Transcontinental Railroad

This sample task contains a set of primary and authentic source documents about the Transcontinental Railroad and the migration of settlers to the West.

Benchmarks

The questions in this sample task address content related to the following social studies benchmarks:

G-1B-E4: *Defining and differentiating regions by using physical characteristics, such as climate and landforms, and by using human characteristics, such as economic activity and language*

H-1A-E3: *Identifying and using primary and secondary historical sources to learn about the past*

H-1D-E2: *Describing the social and economic impact of major scientific and technological advancements*

H-1C-E3: *Describing the causes and nature of various movements of large groups of people into and within Louisiana and the United States throughout history*

Contents

This sample task contains the following sections:

- [Primary and Authentic Source Documents](#)
- [Multiple-Choice Items](#)
 - assess content knowledge and comprehension of the sources
 - scaffold student understanding of the documents
- [Extended-Response Task](#)
 - measures student ability to develop and support claims based on content knowledge and evidence from the documents
- [Scoring Rubric](#)
- [Scoring Notes](#)
- [Printable Student Version](#)

Task Directions

- This sample task reflects the format of the task on the LEAP assessment for social studies in grade 4. Teachers may choose to use or modify this sample as part of an instructional lesson or as a formative or summative assessment.
- Teachers should provide students access to the printable student version of the task items, which excludes benchmark alignment, answer keys, and scoring information.
- Students should then read or review the sources and answer the questions.
- For additional specifications about the task, please see the [Assessment Guidance](#) for grade 4.

Primary and Authentic Source Documents

Read and study Documents 1 through 4 about the Transcontinental Railroad. As you read, you may take notes in the space next to the documents or on page XX in this answer document. Then use the documents to answer questions 1 through 5.

Document 1: Map of Transcontinental Railroad completed in 1869



Document 2: Excerpt from an account by Alexander Toponce, a witness to the nailing of the last spike of the Transcontinental Railroad

I saw the Golden Spike driven at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869. I had a beef contract to furnish meat to the construction camps of Benson and West...

On the last day, only about 100 feet were laid, and everybody tried to have a hand in the work. I took a shovel from an Irishman, and threw a shovel full of dirt on the ties just to tell about it afterward....

When they came to drive the last spike, Governor Stanford, president of the Central Pacific, took the sledge, and the first time he struck he missed the spike and hit the rail.

What a howl went up! Irish, Chinese, Mexicans, and everybody yelled with delight. "He missed it. Yee." The engineers blew the whistles and rang their bells. Then Stanford tried it again and tapped the spike and the telegraph operators had fixed their instruments so that the tap was reported in all the offices east and west, and set bells to tapping in hundreds of towns and cities...

Document 3: Advertisement

346

IF YOU WANT A FARM OR HOME
"THE BEST THING IN THE WEST"
Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe
RAILROAD
LANDS
IN SOUTHWEST KANSAS.

Temperate Climate, Excellent Health, Pure and Abundant Water.
GOOD SOIL FOR WHEAT, CORN AND FRUIT.
The Best Stock Country in the World.

Or to _____ For Full Information apply to
Agent, **LAND COMMISSIONER,**
A. T. & S. F. R. R., Topeka, Kas.
Muskunft erteilt, G. B. Schmidt, Deutscher Gen'l Agt., Topeka, Kan.

Knight & Leonard, Printers, Chicago.

Used with permission from the Kansas Historical Society
<http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/railroad-land-grants/16718>

Document 4: Excerpt from the diary of Abbie Bright, 1871

[May] 8th--Mrs. N and I walked to the river, I wanted to see the Indian tepees, When nearly there, a skunk blocked our way and we fled in haste.

Philip has been on his claim that long, has broke some land, and planted corn. He and some men have selected my claim, and when he goes to W[ichita] he will "file on it." Then no one can file on the same land.

He selected a suitable place, and plowed it for a garden, not having a harrow, he hitched the oxen to big brush and dragged it back and forth until it was well raked. The garden is about a mile from the Norths, I have no hoe yet, but with the help of a stick, I have managed to plant a number of seeds. Katura gave me garden seeds. I hope they will grow.

One day when going to the garden, I saw three antelopes and a coyote. There are three deer around, the men see them and I see their tracks in my garden. There is a heard of buffalo twenty miles out. The boys have promised to take me along when they go again. The last time they were out, they brought in a lot of meat, and that is what we are using now.

Provision is scarce—postatoes [potatoes] \$3, a bushel. The railroad 100 miles away, and the men on claims raising their first crop. Native cattle are very scarce, and the Texas cows are so wild they cannot be milked. Nevertheless, I get along very well and will stay here until I get tired.

Used with permission from the Kansas Historical Society

<http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-historical-quarterly-the-diary-of-abbie-bright-1870-1871-1/13214>

Multiple-Choice Items

Geography

Places and Regions

G-1B-E4: *Defining and differentiating regions by using physical characteristics, such as climate and landforms, and by using human characteristics, such as economic activity and language*

- 1 The map shows the route of the Transcontinental Railroad. The railroad passes through the Great Plains. Which is a correct statement about the Great Plains region?
- A The dry desert makes farming difficult.
 - B The rich soil makes farming productive.
 - C The number of trees makes logging productive.
 - D The lack of grass makes ranching difficult.

Correct response: B

History

Louisiana and United States History

H-1C-E3: *Describing the causes and nature of various movements of large groups of people into and within Louisiana and the United States throughout history*

- 2 What is a **main** reason people wanted to move west?
- A to find factory jobs in the cities
 - B to attend better schools
 - C to be able to vote in elections
 - D to have their own land

Correct response: D

History

World History

H-1D-E2: *Describing the social and economic impact of major scientific and technological advancements*

- 3 What is the **most** important impact of the Transcontinental Railroad?
- A It allowed American Indians to move to cities in the East.
 - B It allowed goods and resources to be shipped more easily.
 - C It provided construction workers with jobs for a few years.
 - D It provided the military with direct access to forts in the West.

Correct response: B

History

Historical Thinking Skills

H-1A-E3: *Identifying and using primary and secondary historical sources to learn about the past*

- 4** Which of the following statements can **best** be made based on the excerpt from the diary of Abbie Bright (Document 4)?
- A** Farming and hunting were the main ways of getting food in the West.
 - B** The railroad brought peace between American Indians and settlers.
 - C** Land in the West was very expensive and few could afford to purchase it.
 - D** The railroad meant people no longer needed horses to travel.

Correct response: A

Extended-Response Task

History

World History

H-1D-E2: *Describing the social and economic impact of major scientific and technological advancements*

- 5 Write a well-organized response on the lines provided on pages XX and XX in this answer document.

Explain how the Transcontinental Railroad changed the United States. Use the documents and your knowledge of social studies to describe at least three effects of the Transcontinental Railroad.

As you write, follow the directions below.

- Your response should have at least three paragraphs.
- Use evidence from each of the documents.
- Include information and examples from your own knowledge of social studies.
- Be sure to write clearly.

Use page XX in this answer document for notes and planning. Write your **final response** on pages XX and XX in this answer document.

Remember: The prewriting activities on page XX will not be scored. Only your response on pages XX and XX will be scored.

Scoring Rubric

The response should be scored **holistically** on its analysis and content. Each response should be given the score that corresponds to the set of bulleted descriptors that **best** describes the response.

Score	Social Studies Task Rubric Grade 4 – The Transcontinental Railroad
4	<p>The student’s response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides an in-depth explanation of how the Transcontinental Railroad changed the United States; • supports the claims with ample, well-chosen evidence that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ addresses or demonstrates understanding of four of the documents, and ○ integrates adequate relevant information beyond what is provided in the documents; • contains valid understandings and interpretations with no errors significant enough to detract from the claims.
3	<p>The student’s response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a general explanation of how the Transcontinental Railroad changed the United States; • supports the claims with sufficient and appropriate evidence that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ addresses or demonstrates understanding of three of the documents, and ○ integrates some relevant information beyond what is provided in the documents; • contains mostly valid understandings and interpretations, although less important ideas or details may be overlooked or misunderstood.
2	<p>The student’s response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a partial or limited explanation of how the Transcontinental Railroad changed the United States; • supports the claims with limited and/or uneven evidence that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ addresses or demonstrates understanding of two of the documents, and ○ integrates limited relevant information beyond what is provided in the documents; • contains some valid understandings and interpretations, but a few significant errors may be present.
1	<p>The student’s response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must include at least one valid understanding or interpretation that addresses the prompt and is stated in the student’s own words; • must demonstrate a minimal understanding of the topic; • may contain several significant errors.
0	The student’s response is incorrect, irrelevant, or too brief to evaluate.

Scoring Notes

A strong response

- references all four documents appropriately.
 - The route of the Transcontinental Railroad travels through the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. (Document 1)
 - The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad was celebrated due to it being a major transportation development in the country. (Document 2)
 - Advertisement of the land around the railroad showed availability of farming land. (Document 3)
 - People could claim land in the West by being the first person to file for it. (Document 4)

- applies the provided evidence as well as additional information about the Transcontinental Railroad and movement west. For example:
 - The Transcontinental Railroad was built through land that was not heavily settled.
 - The route of the Transcontinental Railroad connected the West Coast settlers to the population of the East Coast.
 - The railroad paved the way for settlers to claim land in the Great Plains.
 - Towns were built along the railroad route and unclaimed land provided new opportunities for those who moved west.
 - Travel was extremely difficult before the railroad due to threats of attacks, inclement weather, and lack of resources on the long journey.
 - Travel west was relatively easy after the railroad was completed.
 - The Transcontinental Railroad had a significant impact on population growth in the West.
 - Lands in the West provided fertile farmland for growing crops, which became staples of the American diet.
 - The Transcontinental Railroad affected the shipping of manufactured goods and raw materials across the country.
 - The improvement in transportation also contributed to:
 - the spread of ideas,
 - the spread of culture,
 - and the transformation of the American economy.

Printable
Student Version

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Use for notes and planning your response.
(This page will not be scored.)

