



TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD ACTIVITY

A free [Online Learning](#) activity aligned with
Common Core & State Content standards for grades 4-8

Developed in partnership with



OVERVIEW:

Students will explore the stories of the California Chinese railroad workers who built the western half of the Transcontinental Railroad. By considering historical narratives on the same subject from two different online resources, students will practice combining historical information from multiple sources through notetaking and answering critical thinking questions.

APPROPRIATE FOR:

4th-8th grades

OBJECTIVES:

In this activity, learners will:

- Explore the stories of the California Chinese workers who built the western side of the Transcontinental Railroad using online resources from the California Museum and California State Archives.
- Synthesize historical information from multiple sources and exercise critical thinking skills.
- Draw conclusions on why the historical events they learned about are important today.

DIRECTIONS:

Use the guided questions to explore the lives of Chinese Transcontinental Railroad workers through the online exhibit and exhibit video linked below.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

- [Lim Lip Hong - Railroad Man](#) video from the California Museum's exhibit [Gold Mountain: Chinese Californian Stories](#)
- California State Archives' online exhibit [Making the Grade: California and the Transcontinental Railroad](#)

STANDARDS:**Common Core***Reading Informational Texts - Key Ideas and Details*

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| K-5 | Ask and answer questions about key details in a source |
| 6-8 | Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source |

Reading Informational Texts - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

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| K-5 | Use illustrations and details to describe the main ideas of a source |
| 6-8 | Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts |

History-Social Science California State Content Standards*Chronological and Spatial Thinking*

- K-5 Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same
- 6-8 Students explain how major events are related to one another in time; students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

- K-5 Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture
- 6-8 Students frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research; students distinguish relevant from irrelevant information.

Thank you for downloading this Online Learning resource! We hope you and your students enjoy using it. For additional downloadable resources in our free program, visit the [Online Learning](#) page on our website. For help or questions, contact the education department at reservations@californiamuseum.org.

Cover image by Alfred Hart, courtesy of Library of Congress.

PART 1: EXPLORE

Directions: View the online exhibit [Making the Grade: California and the Transcontinental Railroad](#), paying close attention to slides 11-16, which discuss the experience of Chinese workers on the Transcontinental Railroad in California. Next, watch the [“Lim Lip Hong - Railroad Man”](#) video from *Gold Mountain*. Use the questions below to take notes.

Making the Grade: California and the Transcontinental Railroad

1. Why was the Transcontinental Railroad so important to California? To the United States?
2. According to the exhibit, what were some challenges Chinese workers faced while building the Transcontinental Railroad?
3. What is the most interesting detail that you learned from this exhibit?

Lim Lip Hong - Railroad Man

1. According to the video, what were some of the challenges Lim Lip Hong and the other Chinese workers faced while building the Transcontinental Railroad?
2. Why do you think it took so long for Chinese workers to be recognized for their contributions? Why is this story so important to California history?
3. What is the most interesting detail that you learned from this video?

PART 2: REFLECT AND CONNECT

Directions: Use your notes and the online resources to answer the following questions.

1. Reflect on the dangers Chinese railroad workers faced building the Transcontinental Railroad. Why do you think Chinese workers were given the most dangerous jobs?

2. Lim Lip Hong became a railroad foreman, or construction supervisor, for the Transcontinental Railroad. How do you think his experience was different from the other Chinese railroad workers you learned about? Why might his experiences have been different?

3. What is one similarity between the two online resources you looked at? What is one difference? Think about the stories you learned in each, and how the stories were told.