

Lesson Nine

Objectives:

- Students will use the interactive map at the Mark Twain’s Mississippi site to chart the building of railroads in the Mississippi Valley over time.
- Students will use the search feature at the NIU site to identify portions of Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi* relevant to assessing the impact of railroads on the development of the Mississippi River.
- Students will compare Mark Twain’s account with a statistical report on the balance of river and rail traffic during the nineteenth century.
- Teachers will provide students with background from an historian on the impact of transportation developments in the Mississippi Valley via a short essay and video clip.
- Students will apply their understanding of the impact of transportation and economic changes in the nineteenth century as they affected a variety of different groups by creating a fictional primary source.

Materials Needed:

Brief article on “Market Revolution” from Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History—http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0193-13184_ITM OR if your library does not have an account, teachers may also try the following at Sparknotes—<http://www.sparknotes.com/history/american/precivilwar/section6.rhtml>

Anderson, Alexander D. *The Mississippi and Tributaries: A Commercial and Statistical Review*. Washington, D. C.: National Republic Printing House, 1881—<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/navigate.pl?lincoln.3529> (Chapters III and IV)

Mark Twain’s Mississippi interactive map—<http://atlas.lib.niu.edu/Website/twain/viewer.htm>

Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*—<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/navigate.pl?lincoln.3553>

Gregg Camfield’s essay “Economic Development”—<http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain/economic.html>

Gregg Camfield’s essay “Steamboats and Railroads”—<http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain/video.html>

Time Required:

One class period is required for projection of the map, identifying and reading the selections from Mark Twain, and collecting data from the statistical source. Teachers may assign the historian’s on-line essay and video clip for homework. One additional period will be needed for a brief discussion of the student findings and for students to create their primary sources.

Introduction:

Historians have concluded that a “market revolution” occurred in mid-nineteenth century. This revolution created a new matrix of economic activities, especially in the recently settled lands of the Mississippi Valley. With this lesson, students will explore the impact of railroad building on various economic activities and social groups through a variety of different sources. The lesson culminates with students creating their own primary sources as they imaginatively portray the market revolution’s impact on a variety of groups.

Assignment:

1. The teacher can introduce the concept of “market revolution” in U.S. History. The first articles listed above will provide some context. Teachers can highlight the following features of the market revolution while students begin completing the worksheet that accompanies the lesson:

- The adoption of the cotton gin and expansion of Southern agriculture.
- Mechanization of agriculture in the West, especially with the steel plow and the reaper.
- The expansion of roads, canals, and the increasing use of ocean-going steamships.
- State and national sponsorship of railway building.
- The adoption of interchangeable parts and mechanization in production.

2. To illustrate the transportation changes, teachers should project* the interactive map from the Mark Twain’s Mississippi site. Beginning in 1840 and going forward to 1900, teachers should select “railroads” and “create gradient map.” This will clearly indicate the rapid expansion of railroads, especially after 1860.

* If teachers do not have projection ability, they can assign students to create the map on individual computers.

3. As students proceed through the lesson, teachers can reinforce the instruction that they gather evidence and make conclusions on the worksheet below. From the map, teachers should ask students to characterize the pace of railroad building in the period, 1840-1900. Next, teachers should briefly survey student thoughts about the possible economic and social effects of railway expansion, listing these on the board.

4. Teachers can now remind students that Mark Twain both piloted a steamboat and wrote often of the Mississippi River in his stories. Students will access his autobiographical *Life on the Mississippi*, on-line at NIU, and use the search feature to find references to “railroads.” There are several; students should read those paragraphs/sections and identify the effects of the railroads on river traffic/steamboats on the worksheet.

5. Students can now access the relevant sections (Chapters III and IV) from Anderson’s statistical account of economic activity from the site above. Students should attempt to cull 3 to 4 specific pieces of information on the relative balance of economic activity or trade that was carried on via river versus rail traffic over the course of the nineteenth century.

6. For homework, teachers can supply students with the site address for the essay on “Economic Development” and the video clip “Steamboats and Railroads” by historian Gregg Camfield from

the Mark Twain's Mississippi site. Teachers can remind students to pay particular attention to the effects of transportation developments on the overall economy and various groups. Questions from the worksheet will help focus reading and viewing.

7. The following day teachers should lead a brief discussion asking students to identify the most important effects of the market revolution on the economy and society of the United States in the nineteenth century. Appropriate responses might include the following:

- New job opportunities in emerging industries and factories.
- The creation of a national and global market for goods.
- A consumer revolution in the types and number of goods available.
- The marginalization and extinction of traditional industries and handicrafts.
- Dislocation of certain workers and occupations due to economic changes.
- Union victory in the Civil War due in part to the industrial and infrastructure advantage of the North, with the consequent divergence in economic development between North and South.
- The gradual imposition of a capitalist ethos on frontier life, including reform and religious movements to eliminate violence and drunkenness while promoting frugality and self-discipline.
- Teachers can also compare the market revolution of the nineteenth century to the communications revolution that took place in the late twentieth century.

8. To conclude the lesson, teachers can divide students into the groups below and have them create an imaginary primary source from the period 1840-1900 which conveys the impact of the market revolution on their particular group. The idea here is for students, based on previous use of primary sources, to capture the ideas of point of view (based on identities such as gender, class region, etc.), tone, purpose, and other factors of analysis. The primary source can be completed in small groups or individually depending on instructional needs and class size. Encourage students to be specific and to include their group's attitude toward the changes occurring in the period. Groups: **1) factory workers, 2) slaves/former slaves, 3) women, 4) steamboat pilots, 5) railway workers, 6) industrialists, 7) farmers.**

Note: For classes with limited experience with primary sources, it may be useful to have students access a representative source that demonstrates several factors of analysis (point of view, tone, etc.). As an example, students can access the following document—testimony given by a young female railroad worker to a commission investigating the Pullman Strike (1894):

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/athome/1850/voices/curtis/jennie.htm>.

Lesson Nine: Worksheet

1. Identify 4-5 features of the market revolution.
2. From the map, A) characterize the pace of railroad building in the period, 1840-1900 and B) speculate as to the effects of this building on the American economy/society.
3. Based on Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, list 2-3 effects of railroads on the life of the Mississippi Valley and steamboats.
4. From Anderson's statistical study, list 3-4 pieces of evidence that demonstrate the impact of railroad building over time.
5. From the historian's essay ("Economic Development") and video clip ("Steamboats and Railroads"), explain in a brief paragraph what impact transportation and other

economic/technological developments had on the U.S. economy and society in the period, 1840-1900.

6. In a group or individually create a primary source account typical of your assigned group. Be sure to include both illustrative detail and attitudes towards these changes from the perspective of your group.

Source Information:

Text: