

## Lesson Two

### **Objectives:**

- Students will use the Mark Twain's Mississippi web site.
- Students will listen to and read the lyrics from the song, "Steamboat Bill," from the web site.
- Students will view relevant video clips from the web site on the role of the steamboat in the expansion of the United States, the life of Mark Twain, and American culture.
- Using the song and video clips, students will reconstruct the lives of steamboat workers on the Mississippi in the nineteenth century.
- Students will create a poster or pamphlet that highlights the attractions and difficulties of life as a steamboat worker.

### **Notes on the Lesson:**

This lesson is intended for history classes that have access to computers during class time so students can do research for the assignment.

### **Materials Needed:**

Students and teacher will access the song "Steamboat Bill" from the Mark Twain's Mississippi site at <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain/songs/bill.html>.

Students and teacher will access the relevant video clips, especially from the first five sections of the documentary film, *Mark Twain and the American Steamboat*, at <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain/video.html>.

### **Time Required:**

Two 50-minute class periods and time as homework will be needed to complete accessing the song and interpreting the lyrics, viewing the video clips, and making the poster/pamphlet.

### **Introduction:**

The steamboat played an important role in the development of the United States in the nineteenth century. Through the life of Mark Twain, and steamboat workers in general, students will understand the issues and conditions facing Americans living along the Mississippi River in the nineteenth century. The lesson allows students to employ multimedia resources, such as a song and video clips, to understand and reconstruct the social and economic life of steamboat workers. As an assessment, students will create a poster or tri-fold pamphlet advertising the excitements and drawbacks of steamboat workers' lives along the Mississippi.

### **Assignment:**

1. To "hook" students, the instructor should ask them to reflect on a contemporary song that provides information about how Americans live today. After surveying several responses briefly, the instructor should explain how the past can be reconstructed through many different types of sources, including not only print sources but also songs, cartoons, and artifacts.

2. Tell students they will use some resources from the Mark Twain's Mississippi River site to reconstruct life along the Mississippi River, focusing on the experiences of steamboat workers. Working with partners or a small group (3-4 students), students should listen to the song "Steamboat Bill" and also access the video segments from the web site above.

3. As students research, they should gather data in the accompanying chart. The teacher should encourage students to gather concrete detail as well as to identify general patterns of life in their research.

4. Upon completion of research, students should work in groups in class and/or for homework in the creation of a poster or tri-fold pamphlet that advertises the benefits and dangers/problems of working on a steamboat during this era. A rubric is provided to assist the instructor in evaluating student work.

## Lesson Two: Data Collection Sheet

Area	Data Collection	Conclusions
Working conditions		
Economic activities		
Leisure pursuits		
Travel opportunities		
Benefits		
Dangers		

## Lesson Two: Poster Rubric

### Research (10 pts.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- shows specific use of sources
- demonstrates use of illustrative detail
- employs a variety of sources and media

### Understanding (10 pts.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- addresses economic and social context
- makes an effort to connect workers' lives to context
- attempts to connect detail to historical context

### Creativity (10 pts.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- uses symbols or metaphors to make connections
- effectively employs evidence to illustrate historical context
- notes the complexity of workers' lives—both dangers and benefits

### Aesthetics/Neatness (10 pts.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- format is clear and legible
- effectively employs color and contrast
- effectively combines text and visuals

### Effort (10 pts.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: