

PRAIRIE LOTUS



Paired
Texts

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

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 - “To My Mother” Poem & “Uncle Sam’s Farm” Song
 - Historical Documents – Maps, Catalog, *Godey’s Lady Book* & More!
- Digital Links for Google Drive™
- Answer Keys!

PAIRED TEXTS

Transcontinental Railroad

Name:

Prairie Lotus: Paired Text 17

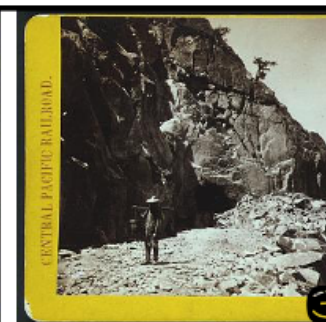
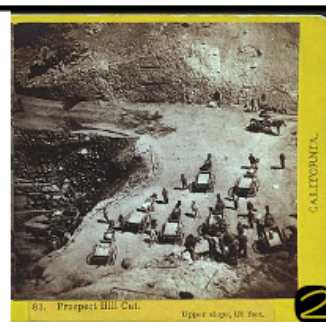
From the moment Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States, they made positive contributions throughout the country. They aided in the development of California's agriculture and wine sector, established businesses, and built thriving communities that we can still recognize in the form of Chinatowns. They did this all in the face of the violence, racism, and exclusionary laws. The fact their presence now goes almost unremarked speaks to their fortitude¹ in overcoming those challenges to make a permanent and ever-growing impact. And yet, the path from outsider to acceptance was long and dangerous. Chinese labor on and development of the famous **transcontinental railroad** offers an illustrative example of that fact.

The Need for Speed

Even as the United States was rapidly industrializing and expanding its reach across the vast North American continent, travel hampered² the country's ability to sustain growth. If a person wanted to journey from the East Coast to the West Coast, they had two options. Voyagers could either travel across land or trek by sea around the tip of South America or across the Isthmus of Panama and then by ship again up the coast to California. Both options were dangerous, expensive, and very long. To ease the challenges it posed, Congress passed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862. The goal was to link the country in order to boost the flow of people, goods, and trade from coast-to-coast. The government hired two companies to construct the 2,000-mile route, which would shorten the trip to five days. In 1863, the Central Pacific Railroad Company laid the first tracks in California and began to work east; the Union Pacific Railroad Company started in Nebraska and built west.

By 1865, the Central Pacific faced numerous problems. Pushing through the Sierra Nevada range's solid granite proved back-breaking and treacherous. Many either refused to take on the back-breaking work or quit due to its dangers. Hoping to solve this problem, the Central Pacific's foreman, **James Harvey Strobridge**, decided to hire Chinese laborers. At the time, racist attitudes made hiring Chinese immigrants rare. Counter to the era's prejudiced beliefs, though, the workers proved to be skilled, hard-working, resilient, and resourceful. Eventually, Chinese laborers constituted approximately 90% of the Central Pacific workforce. Despite formidable³ obstacles, progress never relented,⁴ and the Central Pacific's tracks continued inching onward through the land.

CENTRAL PACIFIC RAILROAD PHOTOS



1 – Summit tunnel, before completion.

2 – Prospect Hill Cut. Upper slope, 170 feet; shows Chinese workers with horse-drawn carts.

3 – Heading of east portal Tunnel No. 8; shows Chinese railroad worker with a shoulder pole. (c. 1865)

10 Nonfiction Readings

Engaging Text Features

Comprehension & Analysis Questions

Key Terms & Glossary

PAIRED TEXTS

Dangerous Work

The railroad's construction meant literally conquering mountains. Workers had to use explosives to carve out the space needed for tracks and 15 tunnels along the way. Laborers averaged mere inches of progress per day since holes for explosives had to be hand-drilled. The longest tunnel, over 1,700 feet long, took two years to dig out. The laborers also had to cut forests, build bridges, and construct retaining walls. They did it all without machinery. Dirt and stone was hauled out by handcarts. Not only was the work incredibly difficult, the climate proved daunting⁵ as well. Laborers endured avalanches, freezing temperatures, and some of the worst winters ever recorded. For the Chinese workers, who mostly hailed from humid, south China, the snowy, bitter cold was yet another formidable obstacle.

Despite their heroic, tireless efforts, Chinese workers were paid between 30-50% less than their white counterparts. Even while receiving these lower wages, they were still tasked with the most hazardous⁶ jobs. For instance, when the need arose to blast out the side of steep cliffs, Chinese workers were lowered down the side in handwoven baskets to place explosives. After placing the explosive, the worker could only hope to be pulled up in time before it detonated. Sadly, the dangerous work undoubtedly cost the lives of a significant number of workers. In a sad reflection of the times, the exact number remains unknown because Chinese immigrant deaths were not considered important enough to track.

Honoring Chinese Contributions

After six years of backbreaking work, the railroad's completion was celebrated at Promontory Point, Utah on May 10, 1869. In another sad reflection of the times, the Chinese workers' contributions were not acknowledged despite the fact it was their drive and ingenuity that had made the feat possible. The **Golden Spike Ceremony** honored the work of both railroad companies with images capturing the celebration. Yet, not a single Chinese laborer was included. Even when the railroad's 100th anniversary was celebrated, the role of Chinese immigrants in its construction was flatly ignored. The Secretary of Transportation commemorated⁷ the moment by stating, "Who else but Americans could drill ten tunnels in mountains 30 feet deep in snow?" The reality is that the accomplishment would not have been possible without Chinese immigrants. Appreciation for those contributions is long overdue but beginning to gain traction. Today, there is a renewed effort to recognize the role Chinese immigrants played in building a transcontinental railroad. Still, as with many aspects of culture and society in the United States, credit is often owed to the marginalized,⁸ such as the Chinese immigrants willing not only to overcome mountains but also racism as they built and left a permanent legacy in the country.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

¹ Fortitude: courage in pain or adversity

² Hampered: to restrict or interfere with the movement or operation of

³ Formidable: offering serious difficulties

⁴ Relented: to become less severe, harsh, or strict

⁵ Daunting: to lessen the courage of ; make afraid

⁶ Hazardous: dangerous or risky

⁷ Commemorated: celebrate (an event, a person, or a situation) by doing or building something

⁸ Marginalized: (of a person, group, or concept) treated as insignificant or peripheral

Common Core-
Aligned
Material

Historical
Documents

Make
Connections
Across Texts

Critical
Thinking
Questions

“To My Mother” Poem

Name: _____

Prairie Lotus: Paired Text 8

Poem Reading & Analysis

The poem “To My Mother,” as mentioned in *Prairie Lotus*, is included in McGuffey’s Sixth Eclectic Reader. Since the poem is important to Hanna, let’s read and analyze its meaning to develop a better understanding of her character.

TO MY MOTHER.

1. I KNOW thou art gone to the land of thy rest;
Then why should my soul be so sad?
I know thou art gone where the weary are best,
And the mourner looks up and is glad;
Where Love has put off in the land of its birth,
The stain it had gathered in this,
And Hope, the sweet singer that gladdened the earth,
Lies asleep in the bosom of bliss.
2. I know thou art gone where thy forehead is starred
With the beauty that dwelt in thy soul,
Where the light of thy loveliness can not be marred,
Nor thy heart be flung back from its goal;
I know thou hast drunk of the Lethe that flows
Through a land where they do not forget;
That sheds over memory only repose,
And takes from it only regret.
3. This eye must be dark, that so long has been dim,
Ere again it may gaze upon thine;
But my heart has revealings of thee and thy home,
In many a token and sign;
I never look up, with a vow, to the sky,
But a light like thy beauty is there;
And I hear a low murmur, like thine, in reply,
When I pour out my spirit in prayer.
4. In the far-away dwelling, wherever it be,
I believe thou hast visions of mine;
And the love that made all things as music to me,
I have not yet learned to resign.
In the hush of the night, on the waste of the sea,
Or alone with the breeze, on the hill,
I have ever a presence that whispers of thee,
And my spirit lies down and is still.
5. And though like a mourner that sits by a tomb,
I am wrapped in a mantle of care;
Yet the grief of my bosom – oh! Call it not gloom –
Is not the black grief of despair.
By sorrow revealed, as the stars are by night,
Far off a bright vision appears;
And hope, like the rainbow – a creature of light,
Is born, like the rainbow, in tears.

1. To whom does the author write the poem?
2. Where has the person gone?
3. How does the speaker feel?
4. According to the speaker, what kind of person is the deceased?
5. When the deceased drinks from the Lethe, what happens?
6. How does the speaker keep the deceased with them?
7. How does the speaker connect with the deceased?
8. What does the speaker hope the deceased sees?
9. What will the speaker not give up?
10. When does the speaker feel connected with the deceased?
11. What happens to the speaker’s sadness? What does it turn into?
12. How does the speaker’s sadness turn into the feeling identified in #11?

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Variety of
Texts to
Engage ALL
Learners

Use to
Differentiate

Use for
Centers or
Rotation Model

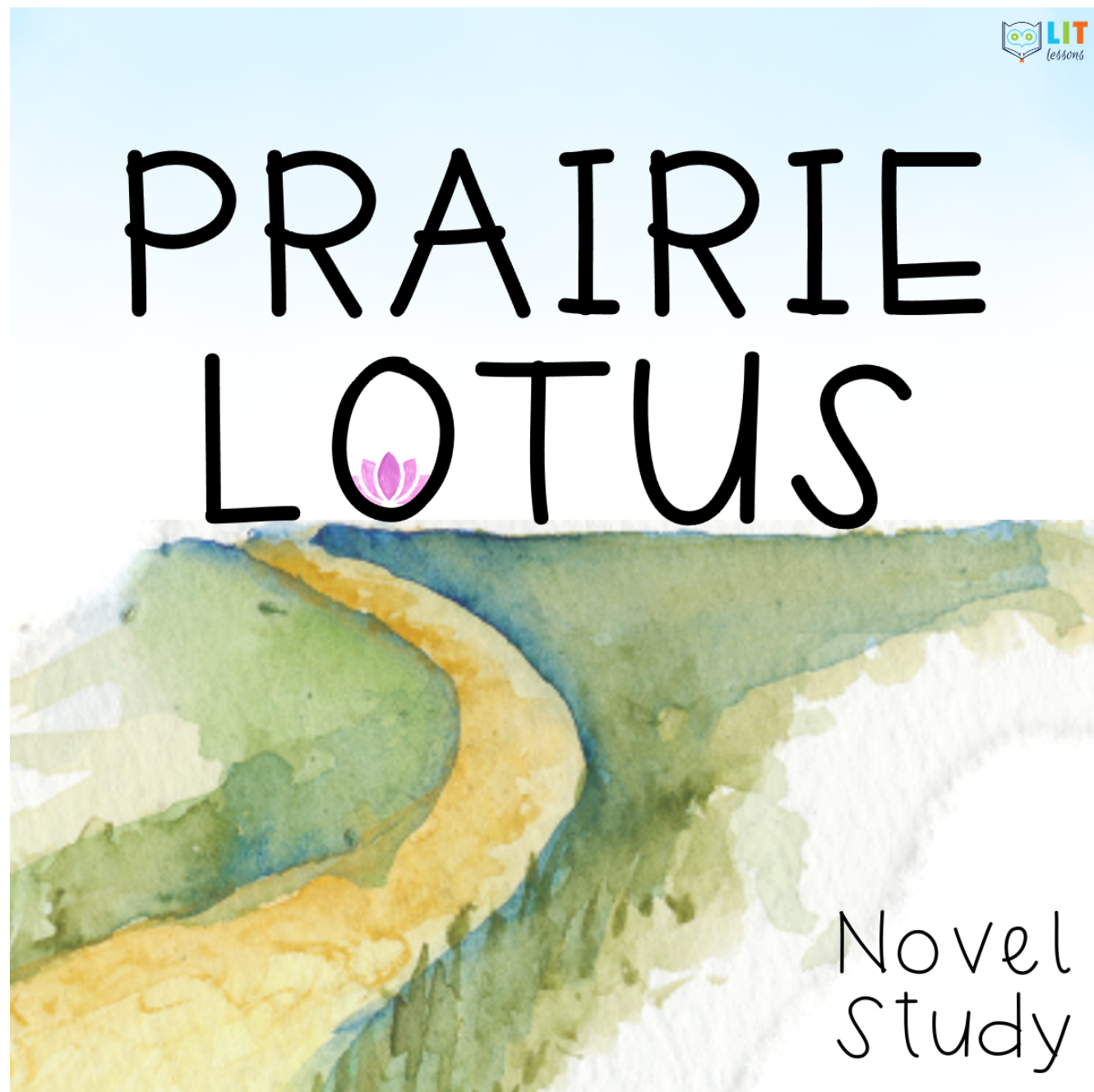
Cross-
Curricular
Learning

RESOURCE ALSO INCLUDES...

Answer Keys • Google Drive™ Links

BUNDLE & SAVE!

This resource is part of a comprehensive unit on *Prairie Lotus*! Click the cover below to preview all the resources available.



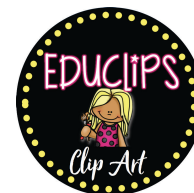
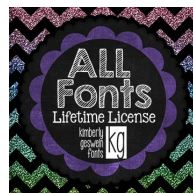
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