Railroads and Trains

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This lesson would be part of a unit or theme on Pennsylvania History. It is aimed at 3rd grade and is connected to the 3rd grade PA Standards. I would start this lesson after discussing the basic geography of Pennsylvania and giving some background on the developing industries, such as steel, in the early 1900’s.

For about a week before starting this lesson, I would set up a reading center with various books focusing on early transportation, trains and railroads, and early industries to peak curiosity and allow students to gain knowledge on their own. Students would then all be shown selected clips from *The Great Train Robbery* and *A Romance of the Rail*. This would provide some background knowledge of what trains of that era looked like, sounded like, how they operated, etc.

I would then show various photos of trains and different railroads from around Pennsylvania. Students would analyze photos and discuss pros and cons of using trains and railroads for transportation, both then and now. Students could share personal stories of railroads or trains. We would also discuss other transportation options of that era and pros and cons of each.

I would then display the Pennsylvania Railroad Map. We would analyze and discuss features the map. As a class we would discuss how and why our geography led to the use of railroads for many of our industries. We would focus specifically on how Pittsburgh was known as a steel making town and big industrial area. Connections to smaller towns and their factories and plants would be made. Students would discuss how these industries helped our area grow and prosper.
Students would complete various activities, such as:

- Using Venn Diagrams to compare/contrast transportation methods from then and now.
- Research railroads or trains using the Internet.
- Create a bulletin board or posters using a railroad theme, vocabulary, pictures, maps, etc.
- Create timelines of transportation.
- Create “future” transportation methods that would benefit our area.
- Read books on trains, railroads, transportation.
- Use the Library of Congress web site to explore in more detail and view more of any of the topics we discussed.
- Analyze individual photos and respond in journals.
- In small groups, create mini histories of a small Pennsylvania town using the Library of Congress site, Internet, library, etc. and share with class.
- Visit or do a virtual tour of trains/railroads.
- Interview a person who witnessed the growth of the industries in Pennsylvania, worked for the railroads, worked in the mills/factories, etc.

Assessments would consist of teacher observations, participation in discussions, completed projects/activities, and quizzes.
From Library of Congress:


From Donora Digital Collection:

“Tracks and Trains”. Photos:Rows 11, 12,13.

“Related Links”. Bruce Drisbac. *American Steel and Wire Company Photograph Collection*. “A Train Runs Along The River 1915-1917”. [http://images.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/i/image/imageidx?sid=05be1eeac07526bb09afd576df5032fb;g=imls;med=1;g1=drisbach;rgn1=drisbach_all;size=20;c=drisbach;lasttype=boolean;view=entry;lastview=thumbnail;subview=detail;cc=drisbach;entryid=x-200102.107.dr;viewid=DR0107.TIF;start=101;resnum=105](http://images.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/i/image/imageidx?sid=05be1eeac07526bb09afd576df5032fb;g=imls;med=1;g1=drisbach;rgn1=drisbach_all;size=20;c=drisbach;lasttype=boolean;view=entry;lastview=thumbnail;subview=detail;cc=drisbach;entryid=x-200102.107.dr;viewid=DR0107.TIF;start=101;resnum=105)

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“Related Links”. Bruce Drisbac. *American Steel and Wire Company Photograph Collection*. “View of Train From the River 1915-1917”. [http://images.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/i/image/imageidx?sid=05be1eeac07526bb09afd576df5032fb;g=imls;med=1;g1=drisbach;rgn1=drisbach_all;size=20;c=drisbach;lasttype=boolean;view=entry;lastview=thumbnail;subview=detail;cc=drisbach;entryid=x-200102.106.dr;viewid=DR0106.TIF;start=101;resnum=104](http://images.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/i/image/imageidx?sid=05be1eeac07526bb09afd576df5032fb;g=imls;med=1;g1=drisbach;rgn1=drisbach_all;size=20;c=drisbach;lasttype=boolean;view=entry;lastview=thumbnail;subview=detail;cc=drisbach;entryid=x-200102.106.dr;viewid=DR0106.TIF;start=101;resnum=104)

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Collection: [Drisbach Image Collection](http://images.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/i/image/imageidx?sid=05be1eeac07526bb09afd576df5032fb;g=imls;med=1;g1=drisbach;rgn1=drisbach_all;size=20;c=drisbach;lasttype=boolean;view=entry;lastview=thumbnail;subview=detail;cc=drisbach;entryid=x-200102.106.dr;viewid=DR0106.TIF;start=101;resnum=104) Digital ID
Pennsylvania Standards

History

8.1.3 A. Understand Chronological thinking and distinguish between past, present and future time.

- Calendar time
- Timelines
- Continuity and change
- Events (time and place)

8.1.3 B. Develop an understanding of historical services

- Data and historical maps
- Visual data from maps and tables
- Mathematical data from graphs and tables
- Author or historical source

8.2.3 B Identify and describe primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in Pennsylvania history.

- Documents, Writings and Oral Traditions (e.g., Penn’s Charter, Pennsylvania “Declaration of Rights”)
- Artifacts, Architecture and Historic Places (e.g., Local historical sites, museum collections, Independence Hall)
- Liberty Bell
- Official Commonwealth symbols (e.g., tree, bird, dog, insect)

8.2.3 C. Identify and describe how continuity and change have influenced Pennsylvania history.

- Belief Systems and Religions (e.g., Native Americans, early settlers, contemporary religions)
- Commerce and Industry (e.g., jobs, trade, environmental change)
- Innovations (e.g., technology, ideas, processes)
- Politics (e.g., rules, regulations, laws)
- Settlement Patterns (e.g., farms, towns, rural communities, cities)
- Social Organization (e.g., relationships of individuals, families, groups, communities; ability to be educated)
- Transportation (e.g., methods of moving people and goods over time)
- Women’s Movement (e.g., changes in roles and rights over time)