

# THE GOLDEN SPIKE

Grade Level: 3 to 5

## IN THIS LESSON

Students will read a historical fiction narrative called *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* to learn about the history of the railroads. They will then explore and interpret railroad artifacts and write their own inscription for the ceremonial Golden Spike.

## OBJECTIVES

- To learn about what train travel was like in the 19th century
- To provide greater understanding of the impact of the railroads on American culture
- To learn how to interpret visual information and improve visual literacy
- To develop creativity and writing skills

## ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

**Goal 3:** Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

**Goal 4:** Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

**Goal 5:** Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

### SOCIAL SCIENCE

**Goal 16:** Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

## SUGGESTED ARTIFACTS

- Train whistle
- Conductor hat
- Train schedules
- Lantern
- Model train
- Railroad memorabilia including maps, advertisements, posters, postcards, and pamphlets

## ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Copies of *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/transportation/index.php>)

Copies of the artifact image set for *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* ([http://www.greatchicagostories.com/pdf/artifacts/artifacts\\_joseph.pdf](http://www.greatchicagostories.com/pdf/artifacts/artifacts_joseph.pdf))

Copies of the background information for *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/transportation/background.php>)

Copies of the *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* vocabulary words (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/transportation/vocabulary.php>)

Copies of the *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* discussion questions (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/transportation/reading.php>)

Artifact Analysis worksheets (<http://www.greatchicagostories.com/classroom/artifact.php>)

Photograph Analysis worksheets ([http://www.greatchicagostories.com/pdf/worksheets/elementary/photograph\\_wk\\_elem\\_edited2.pdf](http://www.greatchicagostories.com/pdf/worksheets/elementary/photograph_wk_elem_edited2.pdf))

Yellow construction paper

Art supplies

*This lesson is part of the History Connections & Artifact Collections project, made possible by a generous grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation.*

*This lesson was developed and written by Helene Barnett.*

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### ACTIVITY

#### DAY 1

1. Distribute copies of the story *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* from the Chicago History Museum's *Great Chicago Stories* website. Have students read it aloud.
2. Lead students through the vocabulary words and discussion questions that accompany the story.

#### DAY 2

1. Distribute copies of the background information for *Joseph's Railroad Dreams*. Review the paragraph on "Chicago and the Railroads" with students.
2. Divide students into small groups. Distribute two artifacts and one photograph from the *Joseph's Railroad Dreams* artifact image set to each group. Also distribute Artifact Analysis and Photograph Analysis worksheets. Have groups fill out the appropriate worksheets.
3. Have each group give an oral presentation about their artifacts.

#### DAY 3

1. Review the significance of the Golden Spike, the ceremonial last spike marking the completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad, driven in Promontory Summit, Utah, in 1869.
2. On chart paper or on the board, brainstorm a list of the ways that transportation unites our country. Have students imagine they are attending the ceremony when the Golden Spike was driven. What would they feel, see, hear, and say?
3. Tell students some special words were written on the Golden Spike. Have them draw a picture of the spike on yellow construction paper and include what they think the inscription said.
4. At the end of class, post a large drawing of the spike (that you have made in advance) that includes the proper inscription: "May God continue the unity of our Country, as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world." Discuss the meaning of the inscription. Have students post their drawings around the room.

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### **ASSESSMENT**

See the teamwork rubric calculator at Teachnology.com.

**[http://teach-nology.com/web\\_tools/rubrics/teamwork/](http://teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/teamwork/)**

### **EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

Have each student choose an artifact from the artifact kit and incorporate it into a short story about the railroad.