

Date Reviewed

February 2023

Course

[Social Studies 4](#)

Topic

Canadian Pacific Railway

Big Idea

Demographic changes in North America created shifts in economic and political power.

Essential Question

How did the building of the railway change Canada?

Learning Standards**Content**

Students are expected to know the following:

- economic and political factors that influenced the colonization of British Columbia and its entry into Confederation
 - Canadian Pacific Railway

Curricular Competencies:

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments (significance)

Core Competencies

[Communication](#) - I can tell the story of the Canadian Pacific Railway using 5W+H.

[Thinking](#) – I can consider the impact of building the railway on Chinese workers and Indigenous peoples.

[Personal and Social](#) - I can explain how the railway united Canadians and shaped our identity.

First People's Principles of Learning

Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.

Introduction

- Show the video [The Whistle](#) (1:40).
- Explain that Canada is the 2nd largest country in the world for land size. When Canada became a country, people needed a more efficient way to travel across this great land than by foot or canoe. The government decided to build a railway to connect Canada and Canadians from coast to coast.

Pre-Assessment

- [Think Pair Share](#): Why would having a railway be important for the new country of Canada?

Interactive Learning Activities

Part 1: What is the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)

- Show the show video [The Story of the Canadian Pacific Railway](#) (0:50). Explain that “transcontinental” means across the continent.
- Ask: How would building a railway help build the country of Canada?
(*brought settlers and immigrants, transported goods and materials, connected eastern and western Canada*)
- Project the website [CP Connecting Canada](#). Scroll through the images in the timeline. Explain that building the railways is one of Canada’s greatest feats of engineering.
- Ask: How did the geography (land) of Canada make building a railway challenging? (*swamps, bogs, rivers, prairies, and mountains*)
- Provide students with the reading [Building the Trans-Canada Railroad](#) and the handout “CPR 5W+H”. Read aloud the article section by section, stopping to model how to take 5W+H notes (You can skip over the sections **The Northwest Rebellion** and **Chinese Workers in BC** as those will be covered in Parts 2 and 3.)

Part 2: How did the CPR affect Indigenous people?

- Explain that First Nations and Métis groups were living on the land that the railway was going to be built on.
- Read aloud the section **The Northwest Rebellion** in [Building the Trans-Canada Railroad](#).
- Ask:
 - Why were First Nations and Métis unhappy about the railway?
 - How did the railway help the Canadian government control Indigenous peoples?
 - Why would Indigenous people not see the railway as a positive symbol of Canadian unity?

Part 3: How did Chinese workers contribute to building the CPR?

- Explain that building the railway in BC was difficult because of the many mountains. Building tunnels through the mountains was dangerous, and the most dangerous jobs were often done by Chinese workers.
- Show the Heritage Minute video [Nitro](#). Ask why Chinese workers would have been willing to do such dangerous work.
- Read aloud the section **Chinese Workers in BC** in [Building the Trans-Canada Railroad](#). Ask:
 - What was life like for the Chinese railroad workers?

- What challenges did the Chinese railroad workers experience?
- How did the Chinese railroad workers help shape British Columbia and Canada?
- Show the image [The Last Spike](#). Ask:
 - Who is shown in the picture? (*Men who owned/managed the CPR company and white working men*)
 - Who is missing from the photograph? (*There is not a single Chinese Canadian worker in the photograph. In fact, they were cleared from the area before the photo was taken.*)
 - Why might this be? (*Discuss the anti-Asian racism of the time.*)

Post-Assessment

- Provide students with the handout “Building the CPT: T-Chart”. Have students use this graphic organizer to list the benefits and problems of building a railway connecting western and eastern Canada.
- Have students respond to the essential question: How did building the railway change Canada?

Extension Activities

- Encourage safe behaviour around tracks and trains by having students play the [CP Rail Sense](#) game.

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Materials and Resources



CPR 5W+H

What is the CPR?

Why was the CPR built?

Who built the CPR?

Where was the CPR started and where did it end?

When was the CPR started and completed?

How was the CPR built?

Answer Key: CPR 5W+H

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| <p>What is the CPR?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canadian Pacific Railway• Railway that goes across Canada |
| <p>Why was the CPR built?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To unite Canada• To get BC to join Canada• Bring settlers and immigrants to new parts of Canada• More efficient way to transport goods across the country |
| <p>Who built the CPR?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prime Minister John A. MacDonald• surveyors• workers, including Chinese workers in BC |
| <p>Where was the CPR started and where did it end?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• started in Montreal, Quebec• ended in BC, first in Port Moody and later in Vancouver |
| <p>When was the CPR started and completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promised to BC in 1871• surveyed the land from 1872-1882 (10 years)• started construction in 1882• completed last spike in 1885• first passenger train in 1886 |
| <p>How was the CPR built?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surveyors found the best and shortest route• Had to cut down trees, flatten hills, blast tunnels, build bridges• Made wooden railway ties, laid steel rails on each side, hammered spikes to hold in place, and filled in with gravel |

Building the CPR: T-Chart

| Benefits | Problems |
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How did building the railway change Canada?
