

Globe Skills Lesson 7

The Transcontinental Railroad - Grade 6+

Skills used Latitude & Longitude
 Tracing routes on a map
 Using legends
 Using scale to measure distance
 Using directions
 Critical thinking
 Solving problems

Vocabulary transcontinental railroad

Materials Needed Globe in Horizon Ring Mounting

Lesson

On your globe, circle the location where the Platte River joins the Missouri River. This location is at $41^{\circ}\text{N}/96^{\circ}\text{W}$ and is near the city of Omaha, Nebraska. This was one of the starting points for the last leg of a **transcontinental railroad**. When this segment of the **transcontinental railroad** was completed in 1869, trains could travel all the way from Omaha to the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco, California. Circle San Francisco at $38^{\circ}\text{N}/122^{\circ}\text{W}$.

Next, draw the following route on your globe. Starting at Omaha, go west along the Platte River to the northeastern corner of the state of Colorado (abbreviated CO). From that location, extend your line westward across southern Wyoming (WY) to a point at the northern tip of the Great Salt Lake. This location, near the northern end of the Great Salt Lake, was the site of Promontory Point, Utah. From Promontory Point, complete your line to San Francisco.

Use the globe's mounting ring scale to measure an approximate distance for this route. How far is it?

(1.) _____ This is the approximate distance along the railroad between Omaha and San Francisco. Would the actual distance of the railroad have been more or less than this figure? (2.) _____ Why? (3.) _____

The actual number of miles that trains traveled along this track was 1,775 miles. If it took passengers four days to travel this distance during the early years of the railroad, how many miles of travel did the passengers average per day? (4.) _____ How long would it take a modern jet airliner to travel from Omaha to San Francisco? (Use the great circle distance and the airliner speed shown on the globe's mounting ring to help determine the answer.)

(5.) _____

In places where land elevations vary greatly in a short distance the land is usually very steep, with

high cliffs, deep ravines, and rocky terrain. This makes laying railroad tracks very difficult and dangerous. Carefully study the route that you drew on your globe. Where on this route do you think the workers might have faced the most difficulty and danger? (6.) _____

What is another problem that the workers and the trains might have faced while crossing the mountains in winter? (7.) _____