

Tracks and Choices

Identify challenges, opportunities, and contributions during westward expansion.

5.4.F “identify the challenges, opportunities, and contributions of people from various American Indian and immigrant groups such as the settlement of the frontier and building of the Transcontinental Railroad.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each challenge, circle each opportunity, and number each contribution in the passage. These details show how different groups experienced change in the West.

People Along the Railroad

- ① In 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad joined tracks at Promontory, Utah. On the western part, the Central Pacific Railroad hired thousands of Chinese immigrants. They blasted tunnels through the Sierra Nevada Mountains, laid track, and cleared snow. Workers faced dangerous explosions, winter storms, low pay, and unfair treatment. Railroad jobs gave many Chinese workers a chance to earn money, even under harsh conditions.
- ② On the eastern part of the railroad, the Union Pacific employed many Irish immigrants. Irish workers graded the land, laid rails, and repaired tracks. Their work helped connect western towns with eastern cities, so people and goods could travel more quickly. Workers lived in crowded camps and faced sickness, accidents, and prejudice. Like Chinese workers, many Irish immigrants saw railroad work as a chance to earn wages.
- ③ American Indian nations already lived across the lands where settlers and railroads moved west. Lakota and Cheyenne people faced the loss of land as treaties were broken and more settlers arrived. Bison herds, an important food source, also declined. Some American Indian people worked as guides, interpreters, or traders, sharing important knowledge of the land. However, their choices were often limited by United States policies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What was one contribution Chinese immigrants made to building the railroad, and what was one challenge they faced?

2 What opportunity did railroad work offer many Chinese and Irish immigrants?

3 Why did Lakota and Cheyenne people face challenges as settlers and railroads moved west?

4 Name one contribution from immigrant railroad workers and one contribution from American Indian people.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose either Chinese immigrants, Irish immigrants, or American Indian people from the passage. Write a three-sentence museum label that tells one contribution, one challenge, and one opportunity or limited choice for that group.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each challenge, circle each opportunity, and number each contribution in the passage. These details show how different groups experienced change in the West. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What was one contribution Chinese immigrants made to building the railroad, and what was one challenge they faced?	They blasted tunnels, laid track, or cleared snow. They faced dangerous explosions, winter storms, low pay, or unfair treatment.
2	What opportunity did railroad work offer many Chinese and Irish immigrants?	It gave them a chance to earn money or wages.
3	Why did Lakota and Cheyenne people face challenges as settlers and railroads moved west?	Treaties were broken, more settlers arrived on their lands, and bison herds declined.
4	Name one contribution from immigrant railroad workers and one contribution from American Indian people.	Immigrant workers laid track, graded land, repaired tracks, blasted tunnels, or cleared snow. American Indian people worked as guides, interpreters, or traders and shared knowledge of the land.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Irish immigrants helped build the Transcontinental Railroad by grading land, laying rails, and repairing tracks. They faced sickness, accidents, crowded camps, and prejudice. Railroad work gave many Irish immigrants a chance to earn wages.

Accept any passage-based contribution, challenge, and opportunity or limited choice. For the open response, check that all three required ideas match the selected group and are historically supported by the passage.