The Pony Express and the Transcontinental Railroad

After the Gold Rush, a road was built from Tipton, Missouri to San Francisco, California. It took three weeks to travel between these two cities. For many people, three weeks was too long. People wanted to receive their mail more quickly.

In 1860, a company in Missouri started the Pony Express. The Pony Express was a new way of delivering mail. Every ten miles along the road, there was a relay station. A Pony Express rider would take a bag of mail and then ride his horse at full speed to the next relay station. At the next station, the rider would take more mail and switch to a fresh horse.

Each rider would continue picking up mail and switching out horses. After traveling seventy miles on seven different horses, the rider would hand the mail over to a new rider and rest. This would continue over and over until the mail reached San Francisco. Instead of it taking three weeks for mail to arrive, the Pony Express took a little more than ten days. The Pony Express sped up the delivery of the mail considerably and was one of the early versions of the postal service. Although the Pony Express was useful, it wasn't enough.

Settlers continued to want faster, more reliable means of moving people and goods. Americans eventually agreed that a railroad was needed. A transcontinental railroad was an expensive prospect. No private business could afford the project without help from the government. In 1863, Congress passed a law that agreed to pay for a transcontinental railroad by loaning money to private companies and giving them land.

In 1963, the Central Pacific Railroad began laying railroad tracks in California. They began laying tracks and headed east. In 1964, the Union Pacific Railroad started laying tracks in Nebraska. They began laying tracks and heading west. They goal was for the two companies to eventually meet up. On May 10, 1869, the Central Pacific track was finally linked to the Union Pacific track at Promontory Point, Utah. This track was driven in with a golden spike.

By the time these two railroad companies completed the track, other companies had begun the task of building other railroads. There were as many as six other transcontinental railroads being built by the time the first one was completed. These transcontinental railroads helped settlers move west more quickly and in greater numbers.

At the end of the Civil War, many Americans were beginning to move west in order to start over. In 1865 in July, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley wrote an editorial that encouraged people to settle westward. He wrote: "Go West, young man, and grow with the country." The *New York Tribune* was an important newspaper and many Americans took Greeley's advice. As a result, the phrase "Go West, young man" became well-known throughout the country.

The Pony Express and the Transcontinental Railroad Questions

Multiple Choice:

1. The Pony Express had a relay station every how many miles:

        a. seventy
        b. ten
        c. twenty-five
        d. fifteen

2. In 1963, this company began laying railroad tracks in California:

        a. the Central Pacific Railroad
        b. the Union Pacific Railroad
        c. the California Railroad
        d. the Transcontinental Railroad

3. This man coined the phrase "Go West, young man":

        a. Lawrence Tipton
        b. Abraham Lincoln
        c. Horace Greeley
        d. Jesse James

4. The final track of the first transcontinental railroad was laid in:

        a. San Francisco, California
        b. Tipton, Missouri
        c. Lincoln, Nebraska
        d. Promontory Point, Utah

True or False:

____ 5. In 1863, Congress passed a law that agreed to pay for a transcontinental railroad by loaning money to private companies and giving them land.

____ 6. The first transcontinental railroad was completed on May 10, 1869.

____ 7. Instead of it taking three weeks for mail to arrive, the Pony Express took less than five days.

The Pony Express and the Transcontinental Railroad Answers

Multiple Choice:

1. The Pony Express had a relay station every how many miles:

         a. seventy
         b. ten
         c. twenty-five
         d. fifteen

2. In 1963, this company began laying railroad tracks in California:

         a. the Central Pacific Railroad
         b. the Union Pacific Railroad
         c. the California Railroad
         d. the Transcontinental Railroad

3. This man coined the phrase "Go West, young man":

         a. Lawrence Tipton
         b. Abraham Lincoln
         c. Horace Greeley
         d. Jesse James

4. The final track of the first transcontinental railroad was laid in:

         a. San Francisco, California
         b. Tipton, Missouri
         c. Lincoln, Nebraska
         d. Promontory Point, Utah

True or False:

__T__ 5. In 1863, Congress passed a law that agreed to pay for a transcontinental railroad by loaning money to private companies and giving them land.

__T__ 6. The first transcontinental railroad was completed on May 10, 1869.

__F__ 7. Instead of it taking three weeks for mail to arrive, the Pony Express took less than five days.