



Helper: A Utah Railroad Town

GRADE 7

Helper: A Utah Railroad Town

By Jill Ison

Summary

Students will discover how the small town of Helper grew due to railroads and coal mines. Students will learn how Helper received its name, what made it thrive, how railroads and coal mines led to its growth, and who lived there.

Main Curriculum Tie

SOCIAL STUDIES: UT Standard 2.6. Students will explain how agriculture, railroads, mining, and industrialization created new communities and new economies throughout the state.

Additional Curriculum Ties

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.1](#). Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#). Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2.B](#). Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2](#). Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7](#). Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1](#). Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Time Frame

Three time periods that run 45-60 minutes each

Group Size

Students will work in pairs, as a class, and individually to complete this assignment.

Life Skills

Aesthetics Character Communication Employability
 Social & Civic Responsibility Systems Thinking Thinking & Reasoning

Bibliography

Notarianni, Philip. "Helper," Utah History Encyclopedia. https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/h/HELPER.shtml
"Carbon County." UEN. <https://www.uen.org/counties/carbon.shtml>

Materials

“Tribute to Utah 2005.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqR0-FUQyp0> (3 minutes 21 seconds)

“The History and Legacy of Helper.” Good4Utah.com. <https://www.good4utah.com/tour-tales/the-history-and-legacy-of-helper/201645653> (2 minutes 43 seconds)

Wikipedia: “List of Cities and Towns in Utah.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_and_towns_in_Utah

Background for Teachers

Helper, Utah, a small community in Carbon County, was first settled in the early 1880’s. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad arrived in 1881-82 and helped to boost the population. By 1891, the railroad had completed the change over from narrow gauge to standard gauge railways. This also led to growth for Helper. With vast coal deposits found in Carbon County, the railways proved helpful in transporting coal from the mines to outside areas. Both the coal mines and the railroad attracted immigrants from around the world to establish this diverse community.

Student Prior Knowledge

Students should have a general understanding of what railroads and coal mines are.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to explain how railroads and coal mining led to the development and growth of Helper, Utah.

Instructional Procedures

Students will watch informative videos, read and analyze informational text, read and analyze maps, make predictions, and answer questions in pairs, as a class, and individually to develop an understanding of how railroads and coal mines lead to the development of Helper, Utah.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

The informational text is provided in two different formats. The first provides scaffolding for lower level learners. The questions have been embedded in the text. This version can be shared digitally to allow students to use speech to text and text to speech. The latter version can be printed in a worksheet form. Prior to sharing answers in pairs, students are given their questions to know what to look for in the video. Difficult vocabulary has been defined within the text.

Extensions

Visit the Helper Mining and Railroad museum in Helper, Utah in person or online.

Research the origins and significance of “Big John,” the town’s giant statue of a coal miner overlooking Helper Main Street.

Learn about the various mine disasters in Helper, Utah.

Choose one group of immigrants that settled Helper, Utah and follow both the push and pull factors that led them there.

Assessment Plan

Students will answer the questions and complete the activities listed on the three worksheets provided. A teacher may choose to pay particular attention to questions requiring students to complete a paragraph. Students should be able to support their answers with evidence found in the texts provided.

Part 1: What's in a Name?

Teacher Instructions

Background (Read by teacher):

On May 10, 1869, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad met together in Promontory, Utah, and drove the golden spike that linked the railroads from the East Coast to the West Coast across the United States. This was the first transcontinental railroad. Prior to this time, travel across the country could take more than 4 months. Now the trip took just 4 days. The transcontinental was Utah's first railroad, and it launched a new age of railroad building in the state. Many new communities formed as a result, and many new industries were started as well. This lesson will take you on a journey to just one of those communities.

Attention Grabber (Read by teacher):

Amalga, Bicknell, Cornish, Elmo, Elsinore, Eureka, Henefer, Hurricane, Toquerville, Mona, Tooele, Duchesne.

What do all of these have in common? (Ask for student responses.) They are all cities and towns in Utah. Many Utah cities have unique names. Where did the names come from? What do they mean?

Tribute to Utah 2005

Teachers may show students the YouTube video "Tribute to Utah 2005": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqR0-FUQyp0> (3 minutes 21 seconds).

Worksheet

Teacher passes out the worksheet "What's in a Name?" Students complete the worksheet before moving to the next activity.

Name: _____

What's in a Name? Worksheet

1. One Utah city was directly named after the role it played in assisting with the railroad. Which city do you think it is?
Circleville, Centerville, Enterprise, Heber, Helper, Hatch, Midway, Portage

2. Go to "List of Cities and Towns in Utah" at Wikipedia.org to complete the rest of this worksheet.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_and_towns_in_Utah

List any 3 Utah cities from the website above and include the etymology behind their names. **Etymology:** *the study of the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history.* You may want to look at the city in which you live. Be sure to glance at the cities in the box above.

City	Etymology

Try to determine which city was named for providing locomotives the boost they needed to get trains over the mountain.

City that was named because of the role it played helping with the railroad	Etymology

The name of a city or county often tells a lot about the community, how it was formed, what brought people there, and what resources the location has to offer. Helper, Utah is located in Carbon County. Go to UEN.org and search for Carbon County. <https://www.uen.org/counties/carbon.shtml>

What is the origin of the name of Carbon County? Carbon County received its name from . . .

Both coal mining and railroads played an important role in founding Carbon County and Helper, Utah.

What's in a Name?

Group Activity

Together as a class, watch "The History and Legacy of Helper" found at Good4Utah.com.
<https://www.good4utah.com/tour-tales/the-history-and-legacy-of-helper/201645653> (2 minutes 43 seconds).

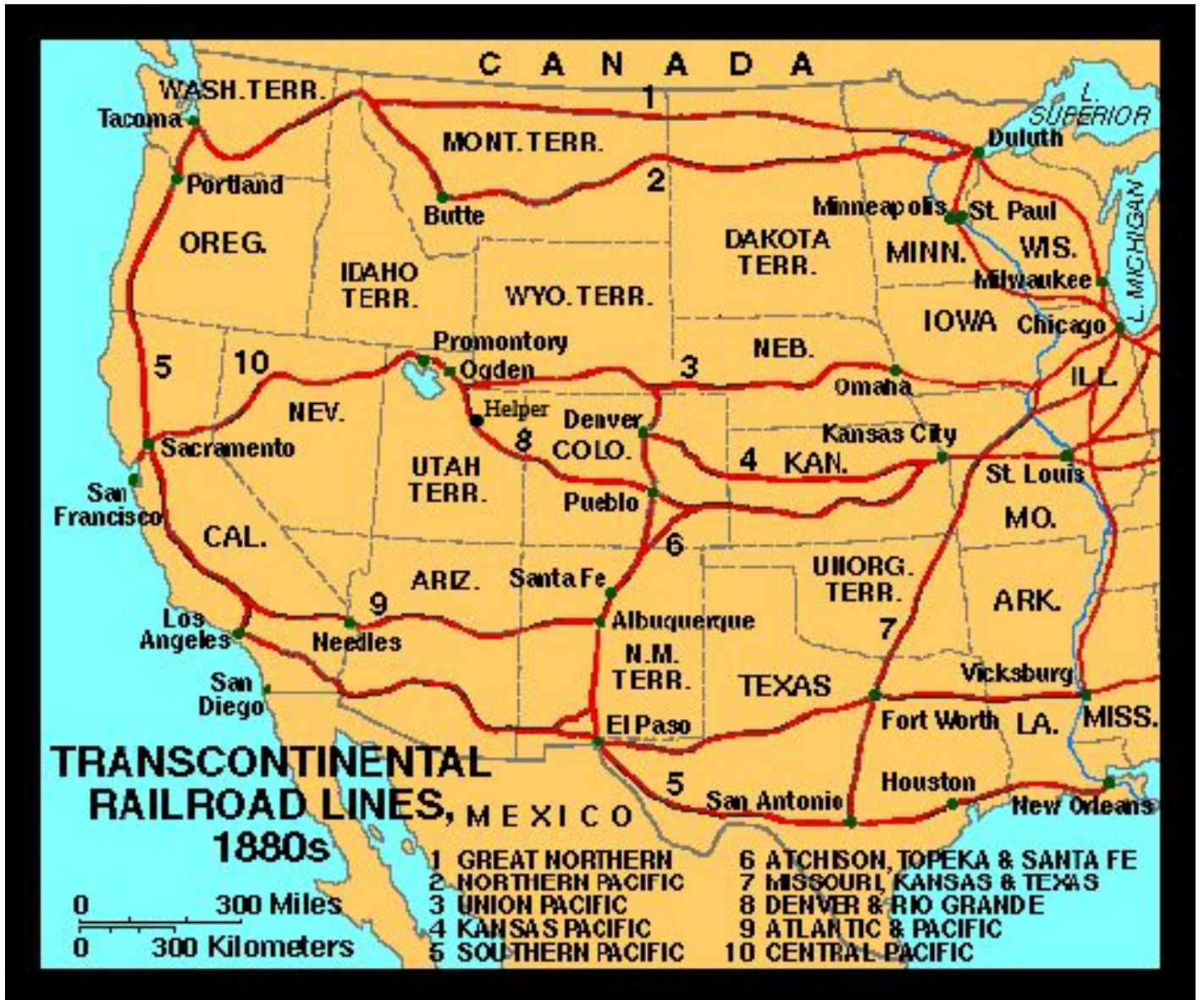
Before you start, arrange your students into groups of 3. Write the following 3 questions on the board. (If you prefer to have students work in pairs with an elbow partner, you may leave off question #3, or have the pair of students take turns discussing #3.)

1. How do the railroad and the mines work together?
2. What brought people from around the world to Helper?
3. What were some of the dangers associated with mining?

Directions (Read by teacher): Each of you will be assigned a number from 1-3. You will be responsible for answering the question that matches your number, so listen closely to the video. After the program, I will give you 45 seconds to answer your question and explain it to the group. Be sure to use your 12 inch whisper.

Name: _____

Part 2: Mapping Activity



Source: Copyright ©2008-2018 ushistory.org, owned by the Independence Hall Association in Philadelphia, founded 1942. <http://www.ushistory.org/us/36a.asp>

Mapping Activity

1. Using a blue colored pencil, trace the Union Pacific Railroad (labeled with a 3) from Omaha to Promontory.
2. Using a green colored pencil, trace the route of the Central Pacific Railroad (labeled with a 10) from Sacramento to Promontory.

These two routes were joined at Promontory Point on May 10, 1869. This connection made it possible for people and goods to be transported from one end of the country to the other. However, Helper, Utah still did not have direct access to the railroad. Helper, Utah was located in an area that would later be named Carbon County. This area was named after the element carbon because of the vast amounts of coal that were found there.

People wanted to get the carbon from Carbon Country to the coal stoves in Sacramento, California; Omaha, Nebraska; and Denver, Colorado. They would need a railroad connecting the coal mines to the main rail lines. In 1881-82, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was built. This would open up endless possibilities for the people of Helper.

3. Use a purple colored pencil to trace the Denver & Rio Grande route (labeled with an 8) from Ogden (through Helper and Pueblo) up to Denver.

Now that you have connected Helper, Utah to the rest of the nation, make some educated guesses about what life may have been like in Helper. Using the clues you have been given about the resources available and the new connection to faraway places, use your imagination to visualize the people living there. Who were they? Where did they come from? What did they do to earn their money?

Write a paragraph answering the above questions and detailing your view of this community:

How do you think the arrival of the railroad impacted the population of Helper? How many people do you think lived there in the 1880's prior to the railroad? How many people do you think lived there just two decades later? Do you believe the population stayed the same, grew, or declined? Why do you believe this?

Write a paragraph answering the above questions and explaining your reasoning behind your theories:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their paragraph response to the questions above.

Next, read the following article to see if your guesses were correct.

Part 3. The History of Helper

The following article will be shared in 2 formats. The first is useful for teachers who wish to share the document in a digital format, such as Google Classroom or Canvas. Students can answer questions from their computers using the spaces provided. The second format is useful for teachers who wish to print the assignment in a worksheet form.



Helper, Utah

By Philip F. Notarianni

1) Helper is located approximately 120 miles southeast of Salt Lake City in Carbon County. Known as the "Hub of Carbon County," and situated seven miles north of Price, the county seat, Helper has always reflected an ethnically diverse population, with southern and eastern European groups rising to positions of prominence within the community.

2) The initial settlement of the Helper area commenced in the early 1880s with the arrival of Teancum Pratt and his plural wives Annie and Sarah. However, only after the arrival of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway in 1881-82 did Helper begin to develop as a population center. Pratt also mined coal, supplying the residences throughout the fledgling town.

How did the arrival of the railway affect Helper? Why do you think it had this effect?

3) By 1887 the D&RGW had erected some twenty-seven frame residences, with more built later in the year. This was done in anticipation of making Helper a freight terminal upon the changing of the line from narrow to standard gauge, which began in 1889. Here, "helper" locomotives would stand in readiness to aid trains traveling up the steep grade to Soldier Summit, thus the name Helper.

Why would it be important to change the railroad gauge (the spacing of the rails) to the standard size being used by other railroads in the country? How might this change affect Helper's population and industry?

4) The track changeover was completed in 1891, prompting the Salt Lake *Tribune* to announce that the "new town of Helper" was started in the spring of that year. In 1892 the town became the division point for the railroad; Helper was the union station of the eastern and western divisions, the terminals being Ogden and Grand Junction, Colorado. With this distinction came a new hotel, depot, and other buildings.

5) Helper's growth proceeded in a slow but deliberate fashion bearing little resemblance to booming metal-mining towns. The first amenities (services or conveniences*) offered the few settlers and numerous railroad workers included three saloons, one grocery store, and one clothing establishment. A school was built in 1891. By 1895 the D&RGW buildings and shops at Helper were lighted by electricity, and two reservoirs for water had been constructed.

6) Ethnic diversity (a variety of cultures and countries*) was destined to become a chief characteristic of Helper. Industrial expansion, coal mining, and railroading required a great amount of unskilled labor. In 1894 the railroad's passenger department established an immigration bureau to advertise Utah Territory. This move coincided with the influx of the numerous immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and from Asia.

7) Chinese laborers were brought in at an early date to work the Carbon County mines and railroads. By the late 1890s, Italians and Austrians (primarily Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbians) began to arrive. In 1900 Helper's population was listed at 385 people. Sixteen different nationality groups were represented. "Merchant" and "laborer" comprised most of the occupations for these early immigrants.

8) After the unsuccessful coal miners' strike of 1903-04, Italians, blacklisted from the mines at nearby Castle Gate, ventured into Helper to establish businesses and farms along the Price River. The influx of strikers into Helper accelerated its growth, with the newly established farms offering needed agricultural products.

9) The twentieth century was launched in Carbon County (which had been formed in 1894 from Emery County) in a shroud of uncertainty, largely due to the strike situation. Greek and Japanese immigrants were brought in to break the strike, and thus new ethnic groups came onto the scene. Helper, along with Price, was fast becoming the center of the Carbon County coalfields, providing service functions to the outlying camps. A 1903-04 business directory listed sixteen separate businesses in Helper; by 1912-13 the number had grown to twenty-nine, with a population of about 850. Helper townsite was regularly organized and incorporated in 1907 with a president of the town board and members of the board serving the community.

What was Helper's population in 1900?	What was the population by 1912-13?

What were some of the main factors that led to this population growth? List 3 different groups of immigrants who arrived in Helper during this time. What were some of the contributing factors that brought them to Helper?

10) By 1914-15 there were 71 businesses listed for Helper, with 84 in 1918-19, and 157 for the years 1924-25. Many of Helper's business enterprises were associated with specific ethnic groups (groups of people who share a common cultural background*), but this fact illustrated the business opportunities then available in the town, enabling immigrants to "break the ranks of labor." Italian and Chinese-owned businesses were joined in the 1910s and 1920s by Slavic, Greek, and Japanese establishments. Specialty shops, cafes, coffee houses, saloons, theaters, general mercantiles, and various service-oriented businesses formed Helper's commercial district. Some ventures, such as the Mutual Mercantile Company, were joint operations between different ethnic groups.

Compare paragraphs 6 & 10. How did the role of immigrants change from the early 1890's to 1924-25? What does it mean to "break the ranks of labor" mentioned in paragraph 10?

11) Ethnic identities, the existence of both inter- and intra-group rivalries, new waves of immigration, and Helper's position as a neutral ground for labor influenced the town's social landscape. Helper became known as the area "hub" because it was nestled among various mining camps, and it served as a city of refuge where strikers and union organizers as well as national guardsmen could congregate during tense times. Customs and lifestyles associated with various ethnic groups continued; however, through interaction many eventually were changed and modified in the Helper environment.

12) While the Great Depression hit the entire county, Helper's position as a railroad center provided some stability. Helper's city hall had been built in 1927, and a civic auditorium was constructed in 1936. The D&RGW developed "bridge traffic," acquiring trade from other major roads that wanted transcontinental connections.

In your opinion, what are some of the ways that the railroad might have helped the community get through the Great Depression, a time a terrible economic hardship?

13) Coal production increased during World War II and continued strong through the 1960s. With this, the city of Helper also prospered. Upturns and downswings plagued the industry in the 1970s, with new lows reached in the 1980s and early 1990s. Helper continues to ride the tide of these fluctuations and, as any town influenced by the mining industry, seeks to survive during bad economic times.

Write a paragraph explaining how mining and the railroad led to the creation and growth of Helper, Utah. Be sure to use evidence and examples from the text. Your paragraph should have a topic sentence that answers the question in the prompt and should include at least 4 specific examples from the text.

Reflect back on your predictions about life in Helper, Utah. How accurate were your guesses? What did you get right? What surprised you? Why?

*These definitions were added to the original article.

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From Philip F. Notarianni, "Helper," *Utah History Encyclopedia*.

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The History of Helper Worksheet

Read the article "Helper" by Philip F. Notarianni and answer the questions below.

How did the arrival of the railway affect Helper? Why do you think it had this effect?

Why would it be important to change the railroad gauge (the spacing of the rails) to the standard size being used by other railroads in the country? How might this change affect Helper's population and industry?

What was Helper's population in 1900? _____

What was the population by 1912-13? _____

What were some of the main factors that led to this population growth?

List 3 different groups of immigrants who arrived in Helper during this time.

1. _____

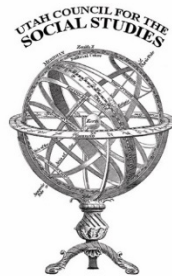
2. _____

3. _____

What were some of the contributing factors that brought them to Helper?

Compare paragraphs 6 & 10. How did the role of immigrants change from the early 1890's to 1924-25?

What does it mean to "break the ranks of labor" mentioned in paragraph 10?



Lesson plans on the Transcontinental Railroad created with the support of Spike150, the Utah Division of State History, and Utah Council for the Social Studies.

