

Man vs. Machine: The Great Automobile Race of 1908

These lesson plans for grades 7th – 8th have been developed by Washoe County School District teachers, in accordance with Nevada State academic standards. The lesson plans focus on the 1908 New York to Paris Automobile Race and have been developed to use in conjunction with a visit to the National Automobile Museum (The Harrah Collection) (775-333-9300) on a field trip. They may be used in your classroom independent of the Museum's exhibit.

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Topic/Era: Industrialization and Inventions

Lesson Title: Man vs. Machine: The Great Automobile Race of 1908

Subject: United States History

Grade Level: 7th or 8th

Length of lesson(s): 2-60 minute class periods

Introduction:

The year was 1908, the location: New York City. One of the most amazing races of all time was set to begin: one that would test the spirit of six different race teams vying for the biggest sports trophy of all time. The race was to begin in New York City and end in Paris, France. In between, the competing teams would span the entire continents of North America and Asia, and move more than two-thirds the way across Europe, all the while racing in a machine that had been invented merely 15 years prior to the event: the gasoline-powered automobile. This was truly a tale of man vs. machine. People throughout the world doubted the vitality of these new machines—they were known to have difficulty going 20 miles, how in the world were these machines going to take people more than 13,000 miles? These six teams, representing 4 different nations, were set to race where roads were scarce and gas stations even scarcer.

The six cars involved were sponsored by 4 different nations. France had three cars entered in the race: the De Dion, the Motobloc, and finally the Sizaire. Italy, Germany and the United States all had one car in the race; the Italian car was known as the Zusta, the German car the Protos, and finally the United States car the Thomas-Flyer. The historical context of the race cannot be ignored: the year was 1908, just six years before the world would be pulled into a global conflict known as the Great War. The race pulled countries together that would be fighting against each other years later. The race would bring the participants together as they often had to help each other out of precarious circumstances during the race.

The race that began on a frigid February day in 1908 would end 170 days later. Along the way, the car would span the entire United States—from New York through the Great Plains through the Rocky Mountains and finally to California. The first car to quit the race, the French Sizaire, did not even make it out of the Hudson Valley. The second car to expire did so on March 17 in Carroll, Iowa, where the French Motobloc could not overcome a series of motor problems. The last French entry into the Great Race quit a day later as the owner of the De Dion took the car out of the race. From there, the cars would be shipped across the Pacific Ocean, where they would have to cover Japan. Once through Japan, the cars would once again be shipped across the Sea of Japan to Asia, where they would cross the Siberian Peninsula and all of Asia. The race officially ended on July 30, as the Thomas Flyer entered Paris welcomed by a cheering crowd.

By the end of the race, three cars had made it the 13,341 miles, proving to the world the car did in fact have staying-power. The fact that it was an American-made automobile that won the race helped to bolster the fledgling industry.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Evaluate the impact of the Great Race on the Automobile industry
- Analyze primary sources such as pictures in order to predict what the competitors went through during the Great Race
- Identify and label the different Regions the cars entered as they spanned the United States

Standards:

- **Geography 2.8.5** Evaluate the role regions have played in historical events
- **History 7.8.7** Describe the effects of industrialization and new technologies on the transformation of the United States

Materials List:

- Robert B. Jackson's Race Round the World pages 7-9
- Access to computers with Internet
- <http://www.thegreatautorace.com/race.htm>
- <http://www.greatrace.com/greatrace/aboutus/1908.php>
- <http://www.thegreatestautorace.com/index.html>
- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/7148462@N03/page2/>
- PowerPoint geography

In-class activities:

Day One

The Great Race Opener (15 minutes)

Opener: Students will read the intro in Robert B. Jackson's Race Round the World. These pages set the stage for the Great Race. While reading the pages (I prefer to have students partner read; however, they can read individually), students will answer the following question:

1. Why was the Great Race such a **BIG** deal? Explain all the obstacles that made the Great Race seem like a crazy idea:

After reading the section, discuss what the students learned about the Great Race. The main focus of the discussion should be all of the questions surrounding the automobile in 1908.

In-class internet activity w/ discussion questions (40 minutes)

The class will begin the activity about the Great Race. The activity itself has the students go to two different websites that deal with the Great Race. Basically, the activity picks up where the opener left off—it starts with a description of the Race and the participants involved. From there, students will learn about the planned route of the Race and the different cars that were entered. Next, students will analyze pictures that were taken during the actual race. The activity concludes with the students learning about the finish of the race, with the Thomas Flyer coming out on top!

Evaluation/Assessment Day One:

The final question of the Internet Activity is a critical thinking question in which students are expected to bring everything they learned together in order to evaluate the impact the race had on American Society as a whole.

Responses to this question will vary—but students who are “on” will mention that it proved the automobile was a reliable method of transportation.

Day Two:

Opener: Review responses from last question on the Internet Activity (prior lesson). Make sure to focus on the difficulties faced by the competitors as they raced around the world. (5-10 minutes)

Great Race PowerPoint w/questions (40 minutes): The PowerPoint can be presented in many different formats. If the teacher has an LCD projector, it can be presented whole-class w/ direct instruction. If there are no computers at all, the slides can be printed out and the students can work on the activity individually, in groups, or in stations. The PowerPoint is made so that it can be clicked through sequentially on a map. If the teacher or student clicks on each city on the map in order, the PowerPoint will automatically go to the slide that corresponds with that city. On that slide, students can click on RETURN TO MAP in order to go back to the map. From there, you can click on the next city in order to move through the journey taken by the Thomas Flyer. While visiting the different stops along the way, students are expected to analyze a minimum of FOUR different stops (emphasis on MINIMUM). There are a total of eleven stops along the way students can choose from. The analysis form requires students to focus on the impact geography played in the accomplishment of the Thomas Flyer.

Final Assessment: Fan Fold Project

The two day project culminates with a fan-fold comparison. This project requires students to compare and contrast the automobile in 1908 to the automobile today. In order to accomplish this, students will draw two separate pictures. The first picture will be of ANY scene from the Great Race. This picture should show the obstacles the participants were facing. In contrast to the first picture, the second picture should be of the automobile today. The picture should show how far the automobile has changed and advanced both since and due to the Great Race. The final aspect of the project is a written portion where the students will discuss everything in the pictures—this is the opportunity for students to show just how much they learned from this project! All of the fan-fold directions are attached!

Pages 7-9

Chapter 1 – *Times Square – The Great Race Begins*

On a cold incoln’s Birthday morning, six automobiles lined up in front of a cheering crowd in Times Square, York City. They were about to start the longest and most difficult road race ever to be held – from New York to Paris.

A Race Course Round the World

The route of their rugged contest had been planned to take them across the United States to the West Coast, then north into Canada and Alaska. Crossing the ice of the frozen Bering Strait, they would next race across the vast expanses of Siberia and Russia. After speeding through Europe, they were to finish their amazing 17,000-mile race in Paris.

Could It Be Done?

The New York-to-Paris race is all the more remarkable because it took place during the very early days of the automobile. The race was held in 1908, hardly fifteen years after the two Duryea brothers build the first successful gasoline automobile in the United States. In 1896, automobiles were so rare that one was exhibited in the Barnum and Bailey Circus; but in 1908, only a dozen years later, courageous motorists were preparing to race their frail cars nearly around the world.

Most automobile experts of the time predicted that the cars would not be able to finish the race. Compared with modern cars, the automobiles of 1908 were underpowered and uncomfortable. More important, they were not nearly as reliable. They broke down frequently, and often would not even start. Many reporters had seen motorists labor half a day to get their cars running, and then make several stops for repairs, for just a 20-mile trip. Attempting a trip of 17,000 miles seemed completely foolhardy to them.

Such a race was thought impossible for other reasons as well. Roads were poor and scare throughout the world, and gas stations or garages were even scarcer. Telegraph stations, the only means of fast communication in most places, were also widely scattered. In fact, most of the long route lay through sparsely settled or deserted country.

To complete the gloomy picture, the race was to start in the dead of winter. Ice and snow, and later, rain and mud would be certain to slow or stop the cars as they traveled across the difficult open country of three continents. Desert heat and the jagged mountain ranges of western United States, Japan, and Russia were additional hazards. How could these “new-fangled contraptions,” these “expensive playthings,” as many people then considered them, stand up under such driving conditions?

The Great Road Race Opener

Read pages 7-9 in Round Race Round the World and answer the following question:

1. Why was the Great Race such a **BIG** deal? Explain all the obstacles that made the Great Race seem like a crazy idea: _____



The Great Road Race Internet Activity Sheet



Section I: Setting the Stage

Visit the following website to learn about the background of the 'Great Race.'

<http://www.thegreatestautorace.com/index.html>

1. Describe the beginning of the Great Race: How did the race come about? Where and when did the race begin? _____

2. What countries were represented in the race? _____

For the next question, click on THE PEOPLE at the top of the page

3. Click on one of the people listed and answer the following for that person:

Name _____ Country _____ Car _____

How involved in the event _____

One other fact: _____

Now, click on THE ROUTE at the top of the page:

4. Using facts from the reading, describe why just making it across the United States would have been a HUGE deal: _____

5. What were some of the challenges the drives faced along the route? _____

Next, click on THE MACHINES at the top of the page. Complete the following chart to learn about the cars that were entered:

Country	Car	Description: (top speed, horsepower, facts)
	The Protos	
		60-horse power, top speed 60 miles per hour. Car was NOT built specially for the race. Instead, it was chosen just before
Italy		
	The De Dion	

Section III: The Race is on!!!!

Visit the following website to analyze the difficulties the contestants faced during the Great Race:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/7148462@N03/page2/>

6. Choose FOUR pictures to analyze. Provide a description of what is happening in the picture and then create a title for each image:
- a. Picture A Description: _____
Title: _____
 - b. Picture B description: _____
Title: _____
 - c. Picture C description: _____
Title: _____
 - d. Picture D description: _____
Title: _____

Section IV: The outcome

Read the following passage from Robert B. Jackson's Round Race Round the World and answer the questions below:

The Thomas Wins

Great crowds line the streets of Paris when the Thomas arrived, late in the evening of July 30th. Although an unimpressed policeman gave a ticket to the Americans for driving without headlights, the Parisians eagerly hailed the victors. Schuster drove the battered Thomas to the offices of *Le Matin*, the sponsoring newspaper, where the race committee officially proclaimed the American entry to be the winner of the New York-to-Paris race. The Thomas had covered 13, 341 miles on its own power, and it had traveled 8,659 additional miles by water, all within 170 days. Counting only the time on the road, the THOMAS had averaged 152 miles a day, a memorable accomplishment for almost 60 years ago.

The damaged THOMAS, still coated with mud and grime from around the world, was crated and shipped back to the United States, where many joyful celebrations were held. The largest reception took place in New York City, when the THOMAS crew drove their weather-beaten car from City Hall up to Times Square, the starting point of their ordeal. Then Schuster, Miller and Roberts drove the THOMAS out to Sagamore Hill, on Long Island, to meet President Theodore Roosevelt, who congratulated them on their achievement.

7. What was the outcome of the race? When did the race end? _____

8. **Critical Thinking:** Using what you learned from this activity, write a paragraph describing the importance of the Great Race and the American victory by the Thomas Flyer: _____

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____



Directions: You are expected to take notes on AT LEAST FOUR different slides. Please fill out the following information for your choices:

Stop 1: _____

A. Where is this picture taken (city and state) & Geographic Region?

B. Based on what you have observed list three things you have noticed from this picture. (hint: weather, season, geography, landforms, obstacles, etc...)

C. Explain how the geography in the pictures contributed to the obstacles the Thomas Flyer overcame?

Stop 2: _____

A. Where is this picture taken (city and state) & Geographic Region?

B. Based on what you have observed list three things you have noticed from this picture. (hint: weather, season, geography, landforms, obstacles, etc...)

C. Explain how the geography in the pictures contributed to the obstacles the Thomas Flyer overcame?

Stop 3: _____

A. Where is this picture taken (city and state) & Geographic Region?

B. Based on what you have observed list three things you have noticed from this picture. (hint: weather, season, geography, landforms, obstacles, etc...)

C. Explain how the geography in the pictures contributed to the obstacles the Thomas Flyer overcame?

Stop 4: _____

D. Where is this picture taken (city and state) & Geographic Region?

E. Based on what you have observed list three things you have noticed from this picture. (hint: weather, season, geography, landforms, obstacles, etc...)

F. Explain how the geography in the pictures contributed to the obstacles the Thomas Flyer overcame?

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

The Great Road Race Fan Fold Comparison

60pts.

Directions: Create a fanfold comparison poster about the Great Road Race of 1908. Use a fanfold rubric below for further instructions.

- ____ 15pts. **Illustration #1**
**Create an illustration that exhibits the view of the automobile during the Great Road Race of 1908. Your picture should represent a scene during the time of the race!!!! Be sure to use color and creativity to illustrate historical characters, symbols, and events.
- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 15-13pts. | Very Neat / Colored / Clearly Related to topic / Historically Flawless |
| 12-10pts. | Neat / Colored / Related to topic |
| 9-8pts. | Poor Organization / Limited Neatness / Inaccurate |
| 7-0pts. | Incomplete |
- ____ 15pts. **Illustration #2**
**Create an illustration that exhibits the automobile today. This illustration should show the progress of the automobile since the Great Road Race of 1908. Be sure to use color and creativity to illustrate historical characters, symbols, and events.
- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 15-13pts. | Very Neat / Colored / Clearly Related to topic / Historically Flawless |
| 12-10pts. | Neat / Colored / Related to topic |
| 9-8pts. | Poor Organization / Limited Neatness / Inaccurate |
| 7-0pts. | Incomplete |
- ____ 15pts. **Explanation Paragraph**
**Write a well-organized paragraph explaining impact of the Great Race on America. Make sure to focus on the impact of the race relative to the automobile.
- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 15-13pts. | Well Organize / Historically Accurate / Clearly Explain Views |
| 12-10pts. | Organized / Historically Accurate / Explain Views |
| 9-8pts. | Showed Effort to Explain Views |
| 7-0pts. | Incomplete |
- ____ 15pts. **General Presentation & Neatness**
Follow the specific instructions found on the back of this sheet to complete the fanfold. All pictures should be colored and the fanfold should be turned-in in final draft format.
- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 15-13pts. | Well Organized / Neat / Visually Appealing / Colored / Creative |
| 12-10pts. | Organized / Neat / Colored |
| 9-8pts. | Poor Organization / Limited Neatness / Colored |
| 7-0pts. | Incomplete |

____ **TOTAL** (____ **WOW POINTS!!**)

Comments:

Fan Fold Directions

1. Draw two differing pictures.
 - a. Draw picture #1 on the 'A' sheet (A-1 to A-11)
 - b. Draw picture #2 on the 'B' sheet (B-1 to B-11)

****Be sure to draw on the blank side of the paper**
2. After drawing the two pictures, cut them into strips along the lines on the backside of the paper.

****You should have strips marked A-1 up to A-11 and B-1 up to B-11.**

****Set the strips aside (Do not lose them!)**
3. Tape 'Fan Fold Sheet #1' (A-1, B-1, A-2, B-2 . .) to 'Fan Fold Sheet #2'

****Tape the two sheets with A-6 and B-6 touching right along the edge.**

****Tape only on the backside of the sheets (Blank Side)**
4. Glue A & B picture strips to the Fan Fold sheets where the letters and numbers match.

Ex. - Glue A-1 (Picture Strip) to A-1 (Fan Fold)

****Be sure to glue the picture strips with the drawing side face up.**
5. Once the glue has dried, fold the 'Fan Fold Sheet' like you would if you were making a fan. (Back and Forth)

****YOU HAVE JUST COMPLETED A FAN FOLD!! IF YOU LOOK FROM ONE ANGLE YOU WILL SEE YOUR PICTURE FROM ONE VIEW WHILE THE OTHER ANGLE SHOWS THE PICTURE FROM THE OTHER SIDE!!**

A1

A2

A3

A4

A5

A6

A7

A8

A9

A10

A11

B1

B2

B3

B4

B5

B6

B7

B8

B9

B10

B11

A1

B1

A2

B2

A3

B3

A4

B4

A5

B5

A6

36

A7

B7

A8

B8

A9

B9

A10

B10

A11

B11