

The Second Industrial Revolution

LITERATURE READING

The Transcontinental Railroad

One of the principal agents of industrial growth following the Civil War was the vast transcontinental railroad. After its completion in 1869, railroads linked cities in every state and serviced a nationwide market for goods. Freight trains carried natural resources, which supplied the raw materials for industry, as well as food for the growing urban labor force. Poet Walt Whitman pays tribute to the locomotive in this poem.

To a Locomotive in Winter

THEE for my recitative [piece for public performance],
Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-day declining,
Thee in thy panoply [splendid display], they measur'd dual throbbing and thy beat convulsive,
Thy black, cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the distance,
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple,
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack,

Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels,
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering [rushing];
Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent,
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee,
With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,
By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,
By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

Fierce-throated beauty!
Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging lamps at night,
Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all,
Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,
(No sweetness debonair [carefree] of tearful harp or glib [easy] piano thine,)
Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

From *Voices from America's Past*, vol. 2, *Backwoods Democracy to World Power*, edited by Richard B. Morris and James Woodress. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963.

■ UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. How does the train look and sound? How do Whitman's comparisons animate the locomotive?

2. Why does the poet say that the train's law of itself is complete?

3. Why does Whitman call the locomotive the "pulse of the continent"?

4. Why do you suppose Whitman focuses on the train during winter rather than another season?

5. What might the locomotive represent?

6. In what ways does the locomotive symbolize the industrial United States of the 1800s?

ACTIVITY

Choose a modern machine, such as the computer or cellular telephone, and write a poem in honor of it. Follow Whitman's example by using the senses to create vivid images describing how the machine looks and sounds. Show how this invention represents the age in which you live.

could be in the other world with them.

4. His tone is mournful but not angry, except when he speaks of revenge. His tone allows the reader to see things as they happened and to interpret the event in light of its historical context.

ACTIVITY

Tragedies may include: plane crash, school shooting, terrorist bombing. Students should offer probable methods by which these tragedies could be avoided.

BIOGRAPHY

1. He was trained as a warrior and learned to raid Mexican villages and pack trains. This enabled him to be a courageous leader in the Indian Wars later in life.
2. Possible answer: He fought for over twenty years when many American Indians resigned themselves to living according to the terms of white Americans.
3. Many students will be bothered by the fact that he spent his last decades as a prisoner of war and became a tourist attraction at fairs and public events.
4. Possible answer: Americans who wanted to live in the Southwest probably considered him dangerous and violent, while some people who had no vested interest in the region probably thought his fighting was justified.

ACTIVITY

Students' letters should provide adequate support for their argument.

CHAPTER 15

LITERATURE

1. Students may write that the locomotive has a black, cylindrical body, trimmed with brass and steel side bars and connecting rods. It has a large, protruding headlight in the front and other signal lamps, and spouts vapor from its smokestack. Its sound is described as a throb or beat, a pant or roar, shrieks, madly whistled laughter, and earthquake rumbles. By

comparing the locomotive to a person or animal, Whitman brings it to life.

2. Students may write that it runs on its own track and does not depend on outside influences. The way Whitman describes the locomotive, he makes it seem as if the machine operates independently, thereby increasing its power.
3. Students may write that its sound can be heard literally and figuratively throughout the country. Not only does it respond to the need for goods and transportation, but it also seems to control that need.
4. Students may write that regardless of the cold, ice, poor visibility, or any other condition that winter can introduce, the train keeps rushing along.
5. Students may write that the locomotive might represent economic leadership in the United States. Regardless of conditions, it keeps going everywhere with its train of cars following obediently behind it.
6. Students may write that this was a time when industry in the United States was growing rapidly in all directions. The locomotive represents forward motion, strength, and power. Its possibilities are endless, and its benefits are far-reaching.

ACTIVITY

Students should animate the machines in their poems and create a general metaphor for modern America.

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. The writer says that people could only purchase what Mr. Wanamaker wanted to sell. He was probably only partially serious. People got the best deals only on what Mr. Wanamaker purchased in bulk, but they could buy other things as well.
2. People wanted to take advantage of good deals.
3. Students may write that he probably used the adjective *Napoleonic* to describe Mr. Wanamaker's system because Napoleon conquered most of Europe in the same way the department store owner conquered his competition. He used the