

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Read the following example of a real student essay. Identify the following aspects of the writing rubric:

Organization: Using a highlighter, highlight the essay's thesis. Circle in pen the essay's subclaims. Underline each paragraph's topic sentences using a green colored pencil, and each concluding sentence using red.

Evidence/Explanation: Underline the evidence used to prove the subclaims using blue colored pencil. Underline the explanation for each piece of evidence in orange.

Benefits of The Transcontinental Railroad

“Ring out, oh bells. Let cannons roar in loudest tones of thunder. The iron bars from shore to shore are laid and Nations wonder” (W. F. Bailey, *The Story of the First Transcontinental Railroad*). These words are an excerpt from a poem which was read at the celebration of the opening of the Pacific Railroad, in Chicago, on May 10, 1869. A new era was beginning. The railroads, laid down by The Union Pacific and The Central Pacific in wasteful competition with one another, made a better and freer life possible for millions by: expanding commerce and increasing spending, connecting people through transportation, providing land for homes, as well as a way to support those homes.

The Pacific Railroad expanded commerce and increased spending; which in turn, made a better, freer, American life feasible. As the print titled Ten Minutes for Refreshments (Document 2) shows, railroads brought in numerous travelers that spent money and gave towns a better economy. This gave American business owners and employees the money necessary to live a better life, and travelers the freedom to stop and eat during their travels across the nation. The short comment, “Agriculture and the Railroad Interest”, in Volume 5, Issue 8, of the journal *Manufacturer and Builder* inquires, “Where would agriculture be in the far West without railroads to take the products to a good market” (Document 3)? Without the railroads, agricultural goods would not be shipped to places that would pay for it as easily. With the railroads, farmers could ship and sell their goods. This gave them more money, and money leads to a better life. In a letter to his mother Frithjof Meidell wrote, “Here in America it is the railroads that build up the whole country” (Document 2). The railroads built up the country by widening markets which brings higher prices and reaches new customers.

Not only did the railroad expand commerce and increase spending, but the Pacific Railroad connected people through transportation as well. In a passage from “The American Railroad,” Lyman Abbott described railroad travel when he said, “...after a week of luxurious though weary traveling, in which he has been in the keeping of half a dozen different companies, and has traversed over three

thousand miles of country, he set down in the station at San Francisco” (Document 1). This explains how a traveler was able to easily get from one side of the country to another in relative comfort while getting to know new people. In addition to bringing people together on the trains, the trains brought people together at the stations. In Meidell’s letter he also wrote, “Even the old apply woman sets off at a dogtrot when she hears that whistle to sell her apples to the passengers” (Document 2). She may not have been strong enough to go to her customers, but the railroads provided the opportunity to connect with them as the railroads brought people to her. Meeting with new people on and off the train created a better and freer life for Americans by bringing them together in places where they would otherwise not have connected.

Along with connecting people, building the Pacific Railroad provided land and homes for American citizens to build a better life for themselves. Meidell noticed that the railroads were like bloodlines to human organs. He said, “They seem to put new life into everything” (Document 2). He realized that towns need people to thrive but without railroads the people cannot supply for their own needs; however, with the right transporters “...it is really remarkable how rapidly the stations are transformed into little towns” (Document 2). As evidence by the picture of a farmhouse next to the Southern Pacific Railroad’s line in Tulare County, California (Document 3), the railroads provided opportunities to families who owned homes, such as the one pictured, near the railroad. This house has easy access to transport their agriculture which produces an honest living and means to own a home. Owning land makes living your life better and more free.

In conclusion, the railroad companies that built the Pacific Railroad in all of their wasteful competition, made a better and freer life possible for millions of Americans by: expanding commerce and increasing the spending of travelers, connecting people through train transportation, and by providing land for homes through the Pacific Railway Act. The railroads provided the means by which many Americans were able to live a better life.