

Name: _____

The Transcontinental Railroad, completed in 1869, was one of the most important achievements in American history. Stretching over 1,900 miles, it connected the East and West coasts of the United States, allowing people and goods to travel quickly across the country. Before the railroad, crossing the country could take six months by wagon or boat. After the railroad was built, the same journey could be completed in less than a week. This invention changed America forever by improving trade, strengthening national unity, and paving the way for future technology.

The Transcontinental Railroad is the greatest invention in American history because it united the nation in a way that had never been done before. Before the railroad, different regions of the country were isolated from each other. People in the East rarely traveled west, and those in the West struggled to communicate and trade with the rest of the country. President Abraham Lincoln, who strongly supported the railroad, once said, “The father of waters again goes unvexed to the sea,” meaning that the railroad would open up the entire country for travel and trade. By making movement easier, the railroad brought Americans together and helped create a stronger, more connected nation.

The Transcontinental Railroad also led to major success in trade, making it one of the most powerful economic inventions in history. Before the railroad, goods had to be transported by wagon, which was slow and expensive. After the railroad was completed, businesses could send products across the country in just a few days. This allowed industries like farming, steel, and coal to grow quickly. People could buy products from different parts of the country, making America wealthier and more successful. Famous inventor Thomas Edison understood the importance of technology in business, saying, “The value of an idea lies in the using of it.” The railroad was a perfect example of this—an idea that was put to use and changed America forever.

Not only did the Transcontinental Railroad improve trade, but it also helped lead to America’s overall success as a nation. It encouraged people to move west and build new towns, leading to the rapid growth of cities. It also helped the United States become a global power by allowing businesses to grow and expand. Without the railroad, America might not have become as strong and successful as it is today. The railroad laid the foundation for the modern United States, proving that it was the greatest invention of its time.

Some people might argue that inventions like smartphones or the internet are the greatest, but those inventions would not have been possible without the railroad coming

first. The railroad created a culture of innovation and progress. It allowed resources like coal and steel to be transported more easily, making later inventions like electricity and telephones possible. The internet and modern technology were built on a country that had already been connected by the railroad. Without the success of the Transcontinental Railroad, these later inventions might never have existed.

In conclusion, the Transcontinental Railroad is the greatest invention in American history because it united the nation, led to major economic growth, helped America succeed as a country, and made future inventions possible. Without it, the United States would not be the powerful, connected country that it is today. The next time you ride on a train or use modern technology, remember that it all started with the Transcontinental Railroad—the invention that changed America forever.

What is the main reason the author believes the Transcontinental Railroad is the greatest invention in American history?

- A. It helped people travel faster and more comfortably across the country.
- B. It made trade easier and allowed industries to grow rapidly.
- C. It united the nation, strengthened the economy, and made future inventions possible.
- D. It was the longest railroad ever built in the United States.

Why is A not the correct answer?

Why is B not the correct answer?

Why is D not the correct answer?

Why is C the best answer?