

California Gold Rush: A Significant Service

INTRODUCTION – The Autry Museum of the American West is a museum located in Griffith Park in Los Angeles, California. The Autry Museum tells stories about the diverse peoples of the American West. During this lesson, you will learn about one of the many stories of the California Gold Rush.

In 1848, a man named James Marshall found gold on Sutter’s Mill located near Sacramento, California. As news about this discovery traveled around the world, thousands of people from other countries and different parts of the United States came to California to look for gold and to work during the California Gold Rush. The Native American and Mexican communities who had already been living on the land for a long time became outnumbered as more and more people came to California. Competition for gold, food, land, and other resources, combined with racism, led to the unfair treatment of and violence against certain groups of people.

PART 1 – When people think of the California Gold Rush, they often focus on the gold miners who looked for gold. You can learn about the jobs that people had during the California Gold Rush, such as gold miners, by looking at objects. Look closely at this image from the Autry Museum of a gold miner. Then find a round object called a gold pan on the lower right-hand side of the image. Circle the gold pan on the image below.



Gold miners used objects like gold pans to look for gold in the rivers. Find some other objects that gold miners used to do their job in the image above. Then circle the objects on the image.

Glossary

Communities: groups of people who have something in common such as culture, ethnicity, interests, location, race, or religion

Racism: discrimination or hatred based on race

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PART 2 – During the California Gold Rush, many people found other jobs selling different products and services. Bakers, barbers, launderers, and merchants were some of the other jobs that people had at the time. You will learn about another important job that people had during the California Gold Rush by looking at some images of objects from the Autry Museum. After looking at the objects in the images, you will make a **hypothesis** by answering the question: *What was the name of the job that used objects like these during the California Gold Rush?* Then you will prove or disprove your hypothesis by reading a job description. Start by looking closely at the objects in the images below.



Image #1



Image #2



Image #3

After looking closely at the objects in the images, answer the questions about the objects in the chart below. Write your answers in the space provided or on a separate document.

IMAGES	WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE OBJECT IN THIS IMAGE?	WHAT CAN THE OBJECT IN THIS IMAGE BE USED FOR?
Image #1		
Image #2		
Image #3		

Glossary

Hypothesis: an educated guess

Launderers: people who wash, dry, and iron clothes

Merchants: someone who sells items to others

Products: items for sale

Services: activities for sale that help others

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PART 3 – Image #4 is also from the Autry Museum. This image is somehow connected to the objects in Image #1, Image #2, and Image #3. Look closely at Image #4 below.



Image #4

After looking closely at Image #4, answer the questions below about this image. Write your answers in the space provided or on a separate document.

What is the name of the animal in Image #4?

The name of the animal is _____

What do you think these animals can be used for?

I think these animals can be used for _____

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PART 4 – The objects in Image #1, Image #2, Image #3, and Image #4 represent a job. Think about the job that used objects like the objects in the images below by looking at them together. (For Image #4, look at the animals in the image.)



Image #1



Image #2



Image #3



Image #4

After looking at the objects together, make a hypothesis by answering the question: *What was the name of the job that used objects like these during the California Gold Rush?* Write your hypothesis in the space below or on a separate document.

I think the name of the job that used objects like these during the California Gold Rush is a/an _____

I think this because _____

Glossary

Represent: serve as a sign or symbol

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PART 5 – Prove or disprove your hypothesis by reading the job description below. This job description gives information about the job that used objects like the objects in Image #1, Image #2, Image #3, and Image #4 during the California Gold Rush.

Job Description

Stagecoach drivers provided a much-needed service during the California Gold Rush. They drove stagecoaches pulled by animals that carried baggage, mail, people, and other items including gold. Many stagecoach drivers wore gloves. They also used tools like **reins** and whips to move their animals along different routes. The life of a stagecoach driver was not easy in the 1800s. They faced harsh conditions including extreme weather, robberies, and wild animals. Stagecoach drivers also traveled along difficult stretches of land such as deserts and mountains.

Despite the dangers that came along with the job, a well-known stagecoach driver named Charley Parkhurst drove his stagecoach safely along different routes. Charley was born in 1812 as Charlotte Darkey Parkhurst. Charley was **assigned female** at birth but lived most of his life as a **male**. Charley first became a stagecoach driver in the East. During the California Gold Rush, Charley moved to the American West to drive stagecoaches. Charley was a stagecoach driver for many years.

Glossary

Assigned: given a particular identity

Female: a girl or woman

Male: a boy or man

Reins: a strap that is fastened to a device (called a bridle) placed on the head of an animal (such as a horse) and that is used to guide and control the animal

Stagecoach: a carriage pulled by animals such as horses

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PART 6 – After reading the job description in **PART 5**, answer the questions in the chart below. Write your answers in the space provided or on a separate document.

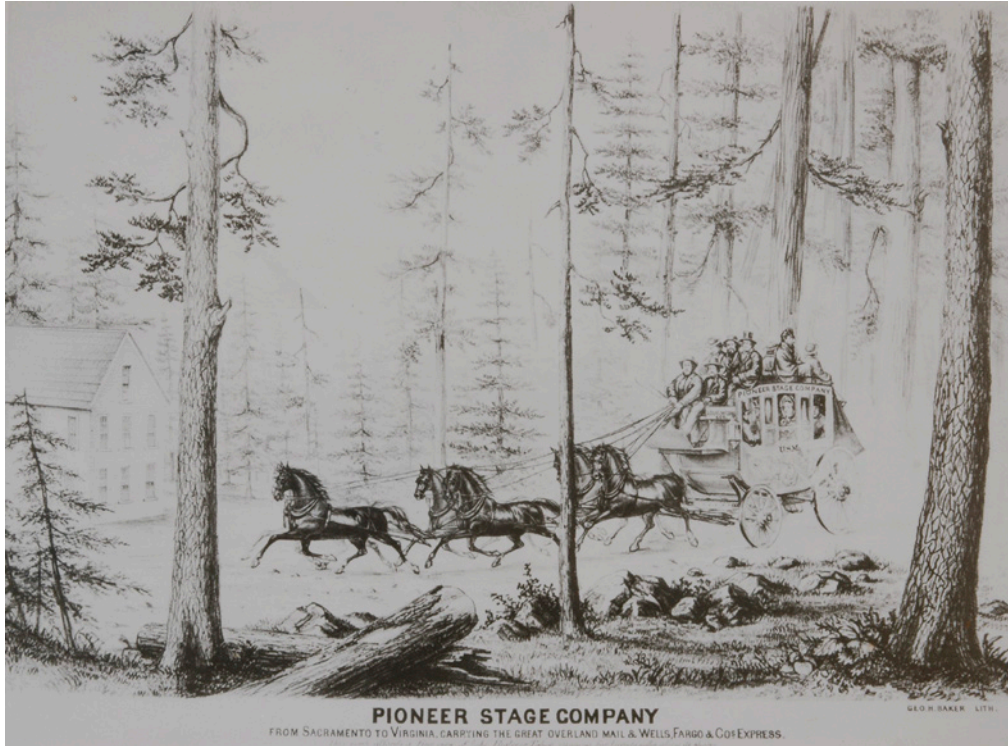
JOB DESCRIPTION QUESTIONS	MY ANSWERS
What is the name of the job being described?	
How would you describe this job? What types of things did someone with this job do?	
Which animals, supplies, and tools helped someone do this job?	
What were some of the challenges of doing this job? What was hard about this job?	
Who did this job? What was this person's name?	
Where did this person do this job?	
During which historical event did this person do this job?	
What is something new that you learned?	

Glossary

Historical event: an event from the past

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PART 7 – Being a stagecoach driver was one of the many different types of jobs that people had during the California Gold Rush. Look closely at this image from the Autry Museum of a stagecoach driver driving people through the forest.



Which person in the image above is the stagecoach driver? Look for some clues that might help you figure out who the stagecoach driver is. After you find the stagecoach driver, circle the stagecoach driver on the image above. Then explain how you figured out that this person is the stagecoach driver in the space below or on a separate document.

The person I circled on the image above is the stagecoach driver because _____

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PART 8 – After learning about the significant service that stagecoach drivers provided in the 1800s by looking at images of objects and reading a job description, think about something important that you do. This might include something important that you do at home (e.g. caring for pets, cleaning your room, or taking care of siblings); during the school day (e.g. being part of a club/group/team or having a class/school job); or outside of your home or school (e.g. being part of a club/group/team).

After thinking about something important that you do, answer the question below. Write your answer in the space provided or on a separate document.

What is something important that you do at home, during the school day, or outside of your home or school?

Something important that I do is _____

Think of one or more objects that represent this important thing that you do. These objects might include items that you use or wear while you are doing this important thing. Draw a picture of each object in the space below or on a separate document. Then write the name of each object near its drawing.

OBJECT DRAWINGS AND NAMES	
Object #1	Object #2
Object #3	Object #4

Glossary

Significant: important

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PART 9 – After drawing pictures of the objects that represent the important thing that you do in **PART 8**, write a description that gives more information about the important thing that you do. Plan your description before writing it by answering the questions in the chart below. Write detailed answers in the space provided or on a separate document.

DESCRIPTION PLAN QUESTIONS	MY DESCRIPTION PLAN ANSWERS
What is the name of the important thing that you do?	
How would you describe what you do? What types of things do you do?	
What helps you do this (e.g. animals, people, supplies, tools, etc.)?	
What do you like the most about doing this?	
What are some of the challenges of doing this? What is hard about it?	
Where do you do this?	
When do you do this?	
Why do you do this?	

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PART 10 – Write a description about the important thing that you do using your plan from PART 9. Write your description in the space below or on a separate document. Please include a title.

Title: _____

An important thing that I do is _____

The best way to describe what I do is _____

Some things that help me do this are _____

The thing I like the most about doing this is _____

Some of the challenges of doing this include _____

The place where I do this is _____

I do this when _____

I do this because _____

PART 11 – Share your drawings and your description with a classmate, family member, friend, teacher, or someone else.

Resources

Images

Braided rawhide and wood coach whip, circa 1930s. Autry Museum; 90.122.2

California Stage Company stagecoach, with three rows of seats, capable of carrying nine passengers. Built and operational circa 1850s. Acquisition made possible by the Ramona chapter, Native Sons of the Golden West, Autry Museum; 93.21.261

Lantern slide of a drawing, “A Primitive Outfit,” after a sketch from life in 1850 by J.W. Audubon, late 1800s to early 1900s. Autry Museum; LS.2837

Pair of brown leather gauntlets, circa late 1800s early 1900s. Estate of Audrey Coalman, Autry Museum; 2008.60.18

Photograph by A. Newman of a Paradise-Rodes Company stagecoach, late 1800s. Autry Museum; P.4113

Photograph of lithograph “Pioneer Stage Company,” by George H. Baker, circa 1900s. Purchased by the Southwest Museum Acquisition Fund, Autry Museum; P.38661

Text

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“Assign.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assign>. Accessed 4 Jun. 2021.

Bristow, Kathi. (2008). “Those Daring Stage Drivers.” *California Department of Parks and Recreation*, https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=25451. Accessed May 2021.

Chaddock, Don. (June 13, 2019). “Stagecoach Driver Charley Parkhurst Blazed Gender-Nonconforming Trails.” *California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation*, <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/insidecdcr/2019/06/13/unlocking-history-stagecoach-driver-charley-parkhurst-blazed-gender-nonconforming-trails/>. Accessed May 2021.

Harrington, Theresa. (Nov 29, 2017). “Teaching LGBT History Complicated by Historical Figures Who Didn’t ‘Out’ Themselves.” *EdSource*, <https://edsource.org/2017/teaching-lgbt-history-complicated-by-historical-figures-who-didnt-out-themselves/590542>. Accessed May 2021.

Placzek, Jessica. (April 25, 2019). “Meet Charley Parkhurst: The Gold Rush’s Fearless, Gender Nonconforming Stagecoach Driver.” *KQED*, <https://www.kqed.org/news/11742467/meet-charley-parkhurst-the-gold-rushs-fearless-gender-nonconforming-stagecoach-driver>. Accessed May 2021.

Resources

“Racism.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>. Accessed 18 May. 2021.

“Rein.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rein>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

“Represent.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/represent>. Accessed 4 Jun. 2021.

Do you want to see the work that you created on our Instagram or Twitter?

Ask an adult to send photographs of your drawings and your description along with your name and your age to outreach@theautry.org for a chance to be featured on our social media! Accepting work from artists of all ages. Must be 18-years or older to submit.