

INTERPRETING PHOTOGRAPHS

Performance Standard 16A.H

Write an expository essay on river transportation in the United States from the late 1700s through the middle 1800s accordingly:

- *Knowledge*: Describe flatboats and steamboats, their beginnings and innovations, how they moved through water, the kinds of products they transported, and their advantages and disadvantages.
- *Reasoning*: Analyze and describe the effects of river transportation on the nation's economy (e.g., opening western territories and markets) and the environment of river valleys.
- *Communication*: Produce a one- to two-page, expository essay that is well-focused, well-organized, and well-detailed; express all ideas in a way that provide evidence of knowledge and reasoning processes.

Procedures

1. *In order to apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation (16A)*, students should experience sufficient learning opportunities to develop the following skills:
 - Describe the development of trade (particularly river transportation) in the United States from the late 1700s through the middle of the 1800s.
 - Assess the value of posed and candid photographs as primary sources (i.e, examine transparencies and/or historical drawings depicting forms of river transportation).
 - Write an expository essay using descriptive and analytical information.
2. Have students review and discuss the assessment task and how the rubric will be used to evaluate their work. Tell students they will be asked to combine their knowledge from the unit of study with information gathered from the photographs in order to create an essay.
3. Ask students to write a one- to two-page, three-part expository essay on river transportation between the late 1700s and the mid-1800s. The essay must address the following questions (suggested order):
 - (A) *Description of River Transportation*
 - (1) Beginnings and innovations of river transportation
 - (2) What did flatboats and steamboats look like?
 - (3) How did they move through water?
 - (4) What kind of products did they transport?
 - (B) *Effects of Expanding River Transportation on the Nation's Economy*
 - (1) How did flatboats and steamboats work together to open up the new Western territories?
 - (2) How did the steamboat impact the United States economy?
 - (3) How was the steamboat instrumental in opening western markets to trade with eastern port regions?
 - (C) *Effects of River Transportation on the Environment*
 - (1) What impact did the introduction of steamboat transportation have on the natural environment of river valleys in the United States?
 - (2) Why might this impact have seemed insignificant in the early part of the 1800s?
4. Evaluate each student's work using the Social Science Rubric as follows and add the scores to determine the performance level:
 - *Knowledge*: The description of flatboats and steamboats, their beginnings and innovations, how they moved through water, the kinds of products they transported, and their advantages and disadvantages were complete and correct.
 - *Reasoning*: The analysis and description of the effects of river transportation on the nation's economy and the environment of river valleys.
 - *Communication*: The essay was well-focused, well-organized, and effective; knowledge and reasoning were accurately and effectively communicated in the essay.

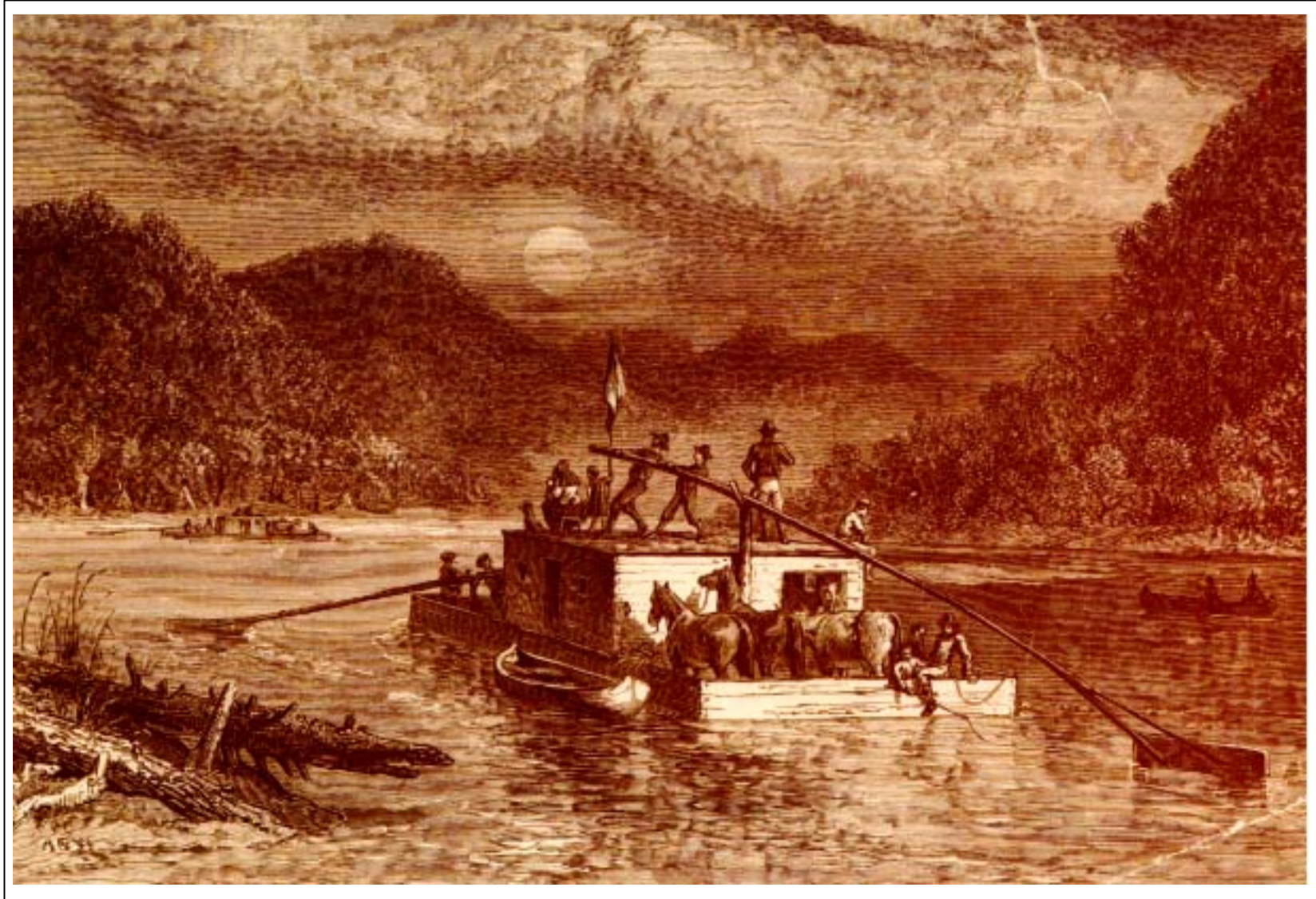
Examples of Student Work follow

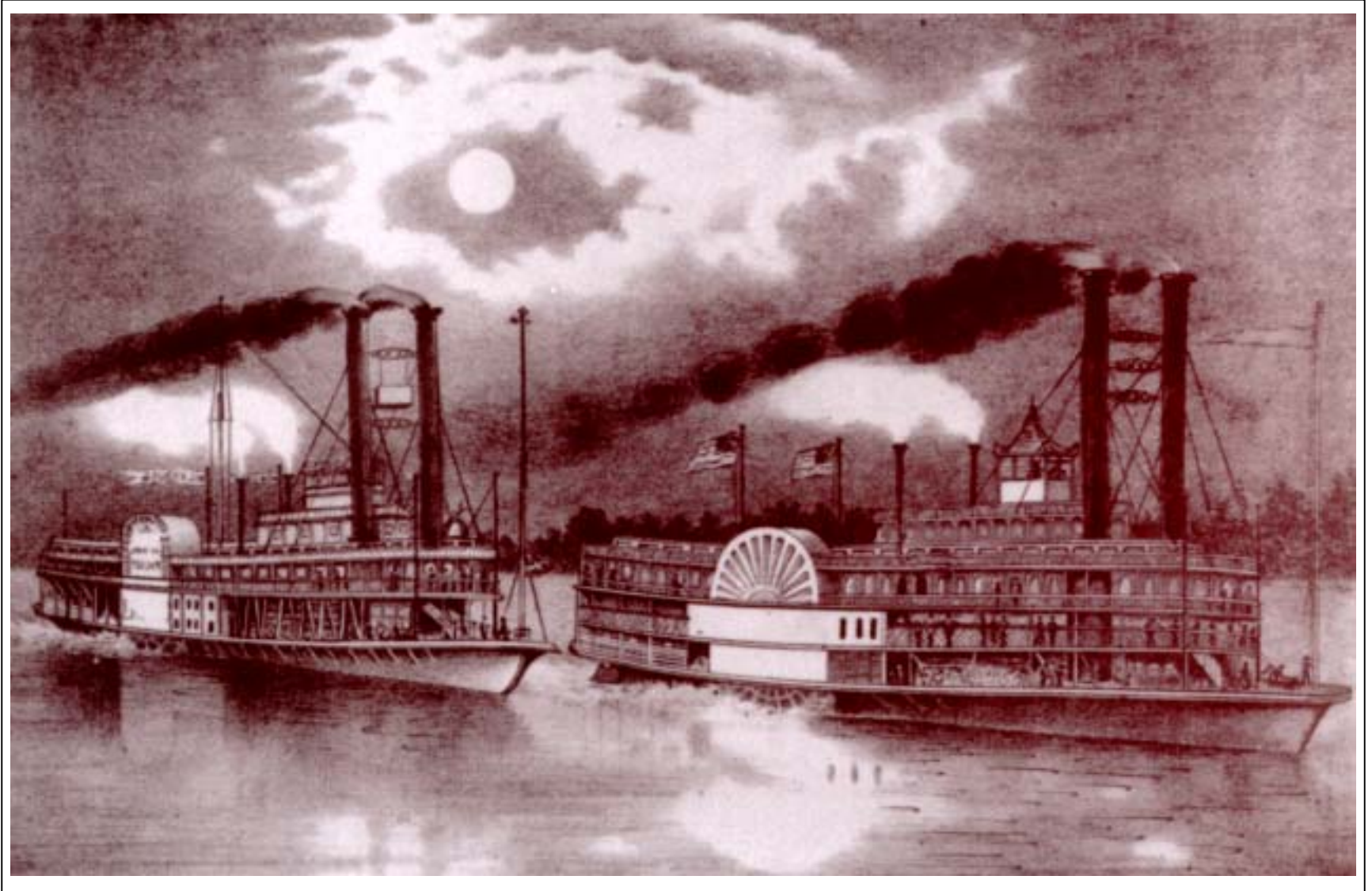
Resources

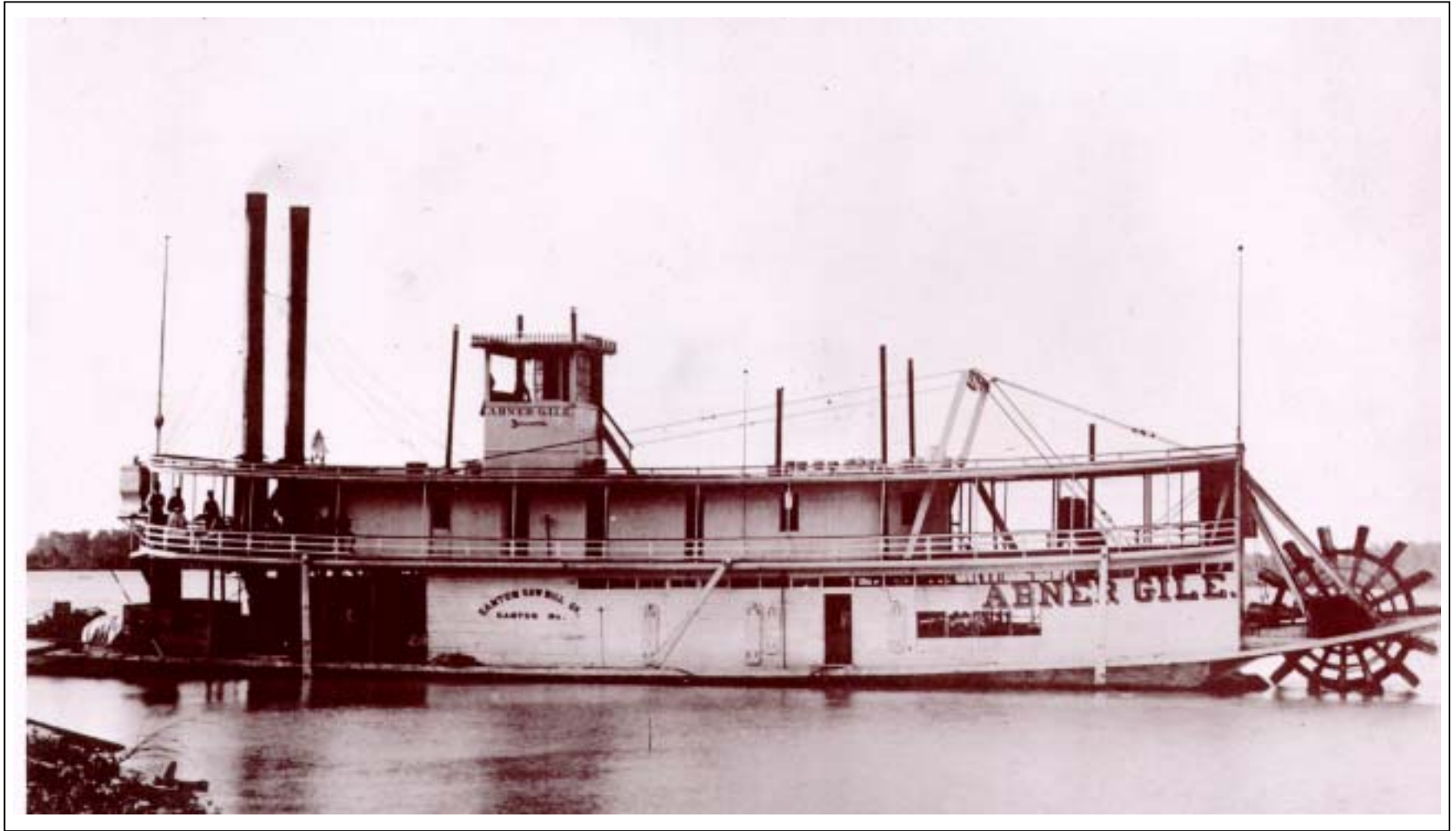
- Textbook references/information on the topic
- Transparencies depicting river transportation
- Social Science Rubric

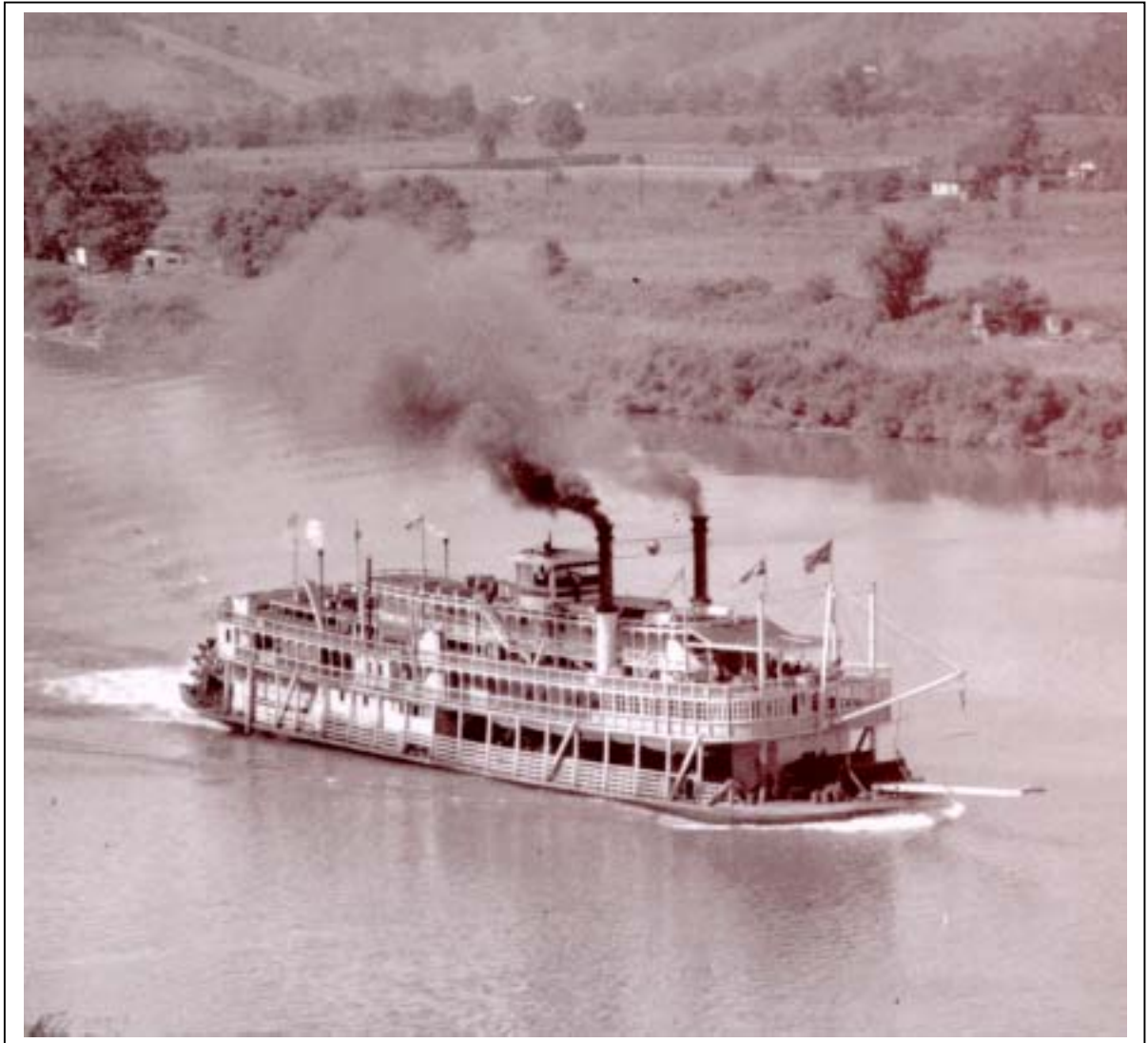
Time Requirements

- Two class periods









Photos Courtesy of
Illinois State Historical Library

When river travel started, America was opened to trade. Steamboats helped this because they introduced a new way to use river transport; power. They were the first boats to use a paddle powered by steam to move the boat. They were fast and reliable, but hurt the environment. Either way, steamboats were very important to river travel in the 1800's.

River transportation greatly increased in the 1800's. Flatboats were used for a long time because they were cheap, easily moved, and could be taken apart. But it had no power, so it couldn't travel upstream. Some people took it apart and made homes with its wood, but many had to find another way home. Steamboats put an end to some of this. They were introduced in 1811, and could move upstream with their steam-powered paddles. They carried people and freight, and you had to buy a ticket. Both of these boats made it easier for people to travel around the county, and helped settle the Western frontier because people could get there faster. Flat boats used the current to travel, so steamboats were a good choice for many people.

Steamboats helped open up trading in America. They brought many goods from the south to the north and from the north to the south. Farm goods, factory products, and other useful items were bought in places that they could not be bought in before. Trading centers and factories started popping up on rivers, even in small cities. Small boats could get into small harbors in these cities, and bigger boats went to the big cities. The economy was greatly helped because boats could bring goods on any river cheaply and quickly. Western territories could trade with eastern states because of these boats. Before boats, they had to bring goods by foot or wagon.

Steamboats also impacted the environment. People didn't care what was happening because they didn't need to. Many trees were cut down because of the great amount of wood needed to power the giant boats. They also let off poisonous smoke and dumped garbage in the water. People never really noticed the pollution because it was new to them and they weren't worried about it.

"Meets" (page 2)

In conclusion, boats helped to open up America to trade. They brought goods and people all over the country, and helped bring people to the west. They also polluted the air and water, and many forests were destroyed to power them. Steamboats changed the way people traveled and were a big part of the early 1800's.

Steamboats and Flatboats

Before steamboats, flatboats were the only way to travel. Flatboats had many problems though, and steamboats were a great improvement.

First, flatboats were very cheap. They were just wood, and they only floated downstream. They were very helpful to settlers, who just wanted to move further west. Homesteaders could travel on a flatboat, then when they arrived at their destination; they would take the flatboat apart and use the wood to build their new cabin. However, traders could only transport their goods down river, because they had no way to travel back over water. They'd have to journey back over land, because flatboats could not move upstream. When steamboats were invented, they revolutionized water travel. Now factories could trade goods both upstream and downstream, because steamboats had the power to fight the current. Steamboats allowed many more jobs to be opened up because they required large crews for the various jobs. The only problem with steamboats was that they hurt the environment. Steam and flatboats worked together to open up the West for settlers. First, the farmer would move on the flatboat and land along the river, then steamboats would be able to bring goods and supplies to him. Steamboats connected many new towns for trading. The steamboat design was new and ingenious. The boats had steam-powered engines, which turned paddle wheels to propel the boat forward. The invention of the steamboat changed America very much.

Merchants and farmers were able to trade their products on steamboats. Farmers could sell their cotton, and other farmed goods that didn't require refrigeration. Merchants could transport anything from blankets to glass to towns all along the rivers. Because of the steamboat, the economy grew rapidly. Factories could ship their merchandise cheaply and easily, and now small farmers and factories were connected. Also, steamboats helped people to travel faster. People could ride from port to port very quickly. The steamboat was very important to both western markets and eastern ports, because it was the first boat that could travel both ways, back and forth.

Steamboats were very bad for the environment during the early 1800's. They needed huge amounts of wood to burn, so many trees had to be chopped down for supplies. There was so much wood to be picked up at each port, that some of the passengers who paid the lowest fare would have to help load it onto the boat. Also, very thick, black smoke pumped out of the smokestacks from the fire. The boat's crew dumped all of their garbage overboard. The environment was not very important to the people during this time period, so this pollution seemed insignificant. They did not have many scientists studying the environment, or any protection groups such a long time ago, so no one really cared.

Steamboats largely advanced water travel during the early 1800's. Despite the pollution, America was very improved.