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Questions from ***Building the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad***

*A lesson from the B&O Railroad Museum*

*This sheet includes culminating questions from each section of the lesson found at:* [*http://www.eduborail.org/NPS-2.aspx*](http://www.eduborail.org/NPS-2.aspx) *so that this lesson can be easily completed on computers.*

**Getting Started/Inquiry Question**

Oil on canvas by Stanley M. Arthurs, 1928. From the collections of the B&O Railroad Museum. This painting is depicting a scene in Baltimore, Maryland in 1828.

1. What do you see in this painting?
2. What is written on the stone?
3. What do you think these people are doing?

***Map 1:* The Goal of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad**

The goal of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was to connect Baltimore, Maryland with the Ohio River near Wheeling, Virginia (now part of West Virginia). The railroad would connect the transportation of goods flowing north and south on the Ohio River with the port of Baltimore.

1. The locations along the B&O’s route are identified with the year that the railroad company constructed the line to that point. How many years did it take the B&O Railroad to build its line from Baltimore to Wheeling, Virginia?
2. How long did it take the B&O to build its line from Baltimore to Washington, D.C.?
3. Baltimore, Washington, and Wheeling are all located next to a similar geographical feature. What is it?
4. What obstacles might the builders of the B&O Railroad have encountered?

***Reading 1:* Origins of the B&O Railroad**

* 1. What were the sources of Baltimore’s economic prosperity during the early 19th century? What geographical characteristics gave Baltimore an advantage over other port cities in the country?
  2. What developments posed a threat to this prosperity? What was the proposed response to this threat?
  3. Why do you think many people skeptical about the idea of building a railroad from Baltimore to the Ohio River?
  4. What geographical factors made building the B&O Railroad such a difficult job?

**Reading 2: Laying of the Foundation Stone, Mr. Morris’ Speech**

1. Why did Mr. Morris believe that constructing the nation’s first railroad would benefit not just Baltimore, but Maryland and the rest of the United States?
2. What does Mr. Morris believe would be influenced by the completion of the railroad?
3. What geographical elements does Mr. Morris refer to as being obstacles that the railroad must surpass?

**Reading 3: The Washington Connection**

1.      Why was building a line connecting Baltimore to Washington not part of the original plans for the B&O?

2.      Why do you think they changed their minds and decided to build the line?

3.      Why was the specific route taken of importance to the people in Maryland?

4.      What was the most challenging part of construction of the Washington Branch?

5.      What does the passage about the man falling to his death tell you about the life of a laborer on a railroad construction crew?

6.      Why do you think the Washington Branch was so successful?

**Image 1: The Laying of the First Stone**

* 1. How would you describe the scene illustrated in the painting?
  2. Why are there so many people around the “First Stone?”
  3. Why do you think they chose July 4th for the date of this event?
  4. What do you think was the significance of Charles Carroll of Carrollton being the guest of honor at the event?
  5. What do you think he meant by his statement of this being the second most important thing he has ever done?
  6. Why was such an event considered so important for the American people?

***Image 2:*** **Crossing Water, the Thomas Viaduct**

1. Why were viaducts and bridges built by railroad companies?
2. This viaduct was constructed by the B&O Railroad in 1835; why do you think it is still around today?
3. Compare the “road” provided by the viaduct to the “road” you see on the banks of the Patapsco River below the bridge?
4. What difficulties would those who built this viaduct have faced when constructing it in the 1830s?
5. Which do you think would present the more difficult challenge when building a railroad: crossing waterways or mountains?

***Image 3:*** **Geographical Obstacles, Tarpean Rock**

1. Why were tunnels and narrow passages like this one built by railroad companies?
2. How do you think the railroad created the “hole” in the rock formation?
3. What difficulties would those who carved this passage have faced when constructing it in the 1830s?
4. Which do you think would present the more difficult challenge when building a railroad: crossing waterways or mountains?

***Image 4:* Crossing Mountains, Point of Rocks Tunnel**

1. Why were tunnels and narrow passages like this one built by railroad companies?
2. How do you think the railroad constructed this tunnel?
3. Notice that the railway is adjacent to a canal. What problems do you think could occur with the two companies so close?
4. As trains were built bigger and bigger, what problems could you foresee with this passageway?

***Image 5:* The Road, Strap Rail**

1. Why was a road made of smooth rails easier for a wheeled vehicle to roll over than a road made of dirt?
2. What were the advantages and disadvantages of strap rail?
3. Why was dirt placed in between the rails and overtop the wooden ties?