

The Pony Express And the West

Group Website, Senior Division

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1,192 student-composed words

2:45 video

490 words process paper

Process paper

We chose our topic organically. I was sitting in class, thinking about potential topics, and as the Pony Express popped into my head, my partner looked at me and said “what about the Pony Express?” We accepted it as an option and considered a few other potential topics, but we could not mutually agree on any besides the Pony Express. It relates to the annual theme in two key ways. The first is obvious, it connected the two coasts of our country with the fastest mail line ever up to that point in time. The second is how the Pony Express serves as an emissary of the time period. It is one of the most iconic symbols of the west. It built the careers of the likes of Wild Bill Cody and first created the image of the lone rider galloping off into the desert.

We divided our project into three main parts: an overview of the history of the Pony Express, profiles of some of the incredible people and places that participated in the Pony Express, and the important impact it had on American culture that makes it relevant today. From the beginning, that defined how we organized our research. Most of our research was conducted over the internet, but I also own some relevant books at home. My favorite part of research was learning about the Pyramid Lake War, since there were several conflicting accounts. I had fun searching for corroboration. I also am familiar with the area, having been camping at Fort Churchill (which was constructed because of the war).

Each category fulfills a function distinct from the other categories. The overview page provides a strictly factual account of the Pony Express. Sadly, the word-count restrictions of NHD websites makes it difficult to go into high detail, so it mostly serves as an overview for context. The profiles page is my personal favorite part of the website. The stories are what make the west special. The Pony Express itself is an excellent story, filled with adventure, moral quandary, scandal, good and evil, and other excitement. The influence page highlights the importance of the pony express (and other mail) in conveying a sense of the western frontier. We (mostly my partner while I did most of the research) used the website makers various tools to experiment with media embeds and hyperlinks to best present our information in a way specialized to fit its purpose in our website.

Our historical argument is that the Pony Express is influential today because it touches on popular themes that have come to represent the West as a frontier, including self-sufficiency, daring adventure, and manifest destiny.

Our topic is significant to history primarily because of its cultural impact. They were the heroes of their contemporaries and the idols of the future. The Pony Express will always feature prominently in retellings of the West, be it through live shows, movies, heritage sites, or literature.