Labour History Project Working People: A History of Labour in BC



**The Age of Steamers**

Film Summary: This vignette provides insight into the role that steamship transportation played in the lives of workers in the early years of transportation. Not only was the steamship important to resource workers to get to the job, but for many isolated communities, steamships were a connection to the outside world.

**Curriculum Application: Social Studies 9**

**The Essential Question:**

How did steamships play a role in building community in early British Columbia?

What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option. (15 minutes)
2. Extension questions are provided to explore the role of transportation in making change in contemporary society.
3. Students can pursue research questions about workers and transportation today.
4. Students will explore how the physical environment influences the nature of political, social, and economic change in early British Columbia.
5. Students will explore *technological* revolutions in transportation technology and the impact they have on societies past and present.
6. Students will assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their historical significance at particular times and places, and from group to group.

Learning Standards

**Materials and Resources Provided**

[The Age of Steamers- Working People-A History of Labour in British Columbia](https://www.knowledge.ca/program/working-people-history-labour-british-columbia)

* **Lesson Activity**
* **Appendix 1**
* Student Handout: Age of Steamers Discussion Questions

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[SS Sicamous Society. History of the Paddlewheeler on the Okanagan Lakes](http://sssicamous.ca/history-of-the-sicamous/)

[The Bowen Island Heritage Society has historical information on the Union Steamships](https://www.bowenheritage.org/history.html)

[Steamboats on the Kootenay Lake](http://archive.historybenchmarks.ca/fr/lesson/374) a Historical Benchmarks lesson plan

[Historic Yale Site](http://historicyale.ca/features/historic-yale/)

[S.S. Moyie National Historic Site](http://klhs.bc.ca/index.html)

**Vignette Questions**

1. What were some of the geographic challenges faced by workers trying to get to the resources of British Columbia’s interior in the mid to late 19th century?
2. In what ways did the steamships positively help workers and communities?
3. In what ways did the steamships negatively affect workers and communities?
4. What risks were involved in early steamship transportation in BC?
5. Why did the steamship age end?

**Lesson Activities**

1. Distribute the backgrounder information (Lesson Activity 1) and discuss the pre-viewing questions as a class.
2. View vignette and have the students respond to the questions above individually or in small groups. Discuss responses as a class
3. Explore the impact of transportation technology and change in other parts of the Province of British Columbia. Coastal communities were greatly affected by the Union Steamhip Companay; the Okanagan and Kootenay Lakes both operated Steamship services in their regions.
4. Create a map of early British Columbia and locate the important inland waterways and communities that developed along the trade routes.
5. Explore how technological innovations have created new transportation opportunities in your region of the province? Discuss the positive and negative impacts of these changes.
6. Extension opportunity, students pursue some of the recent issues in transportation safety listed on the discussion handout. (Appendix 1)

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Wayne Axford and the LHP