

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

The Stuff They Left Behind

Understanding History through Artifacts and Architecture

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From the Days of
Modern Times



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The Stuff They Left Behind From the Days of Modern Times

Use these beautiful photographs of artifacts and architecture either *before* you read from a living history book, to create interest in a time period, or *after* you read, to clarify and elaborate on what was read. The leading thoughts and discussion questions below will give you some ideas, but be careful to allow plenty of time for careful looking and encourage students to share their own observations and make their own personal connections.

Transcontinental Railroad

Photo Credit: Andrew J. Russell

Restoration: Adam Cuerden



It took six years and thousands of workers to build the railroad tracks across the entire United States, tunneling through mountains and spanning great rivers and cliffs. One team started in the East and another in the West. This picture is called “East Meets West.” When the tracks finally reached each other, the owners drove a golden spike into the rails to celebrate. Thanks to their efforts, travel time from coast to coast was reduced from six months to one week.

What do you notice about the two locomotives? Can you learn anything about the land in Promontory Summit, Utah, where the tracks met? What stands out to you when you look at the people in the picture?

Alexander Graham Bell Telephone

Photo Credit: Library of Congress



This is a picture of Alexander Graham Bell placing the first long-distance telephone call from New York to Chicago. Where do you think these men are? What do you notice about the telephone? How have telephones changed since this call was made?

Several people took part in this telephone test: the mayors of Chicago and New York delivered statements; a cornetist played the Star Spangled Banner into the telephone; Bell and his friend, William D. Hubbard, chatted about their dreams when they exhibited the first telephone more than 15 years earlier; and an engineer recited Tennyson’s poem, “Charge of the Light Brigade.” What would you have included in the ceremony?

Eiffel Tower (construction)

Paris, France

Photo Credit: Unknown



Gustave Eiffel designed this tower as part of a celebration of French independence. His name is the one that people attach to the work, but it took many, many more men to create the Eiffel Tower.

In Eiffel’s workshops off-site, about 50 engineers and designers made 5,329 drawings to show each piece that would be needed to build the tower. Another 100 workers followed those drawings to create the 18,038 parts that were then partly assembled and transported to the construction site. Why would the drawings be important? Which part would you have liked to draw?

On the building site another 120 workmen finished assembling the various parts then raised them into place using temporary wooden scaffoldings and small steam cranes. Once they were in position, the men fastened the pieces together with rivets, driving the hot rivets into place with hammers. More than 2.5 million rivets were used in the project, but only one-third of those were fitted on the construction site; most of them were set in Eiffel’s workshop.

Would you have liked to work at the off-site shop, constructing the iron pieces, or at the tower site, assembling the pieces into place? Why?





