Name: _____ Date: _____

When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

Circle group

Picture a country where nearly every town had its own time. For much of history, that was normal. People set clocks by the sun. Noon came when the sun was highest. The sun gets there earlier in the east and later in the west. So a town a few miles away could be a few minutes ahead or behind its neighbor.

For farmers and shopkeepers, this did not matter much. Travel was slow. No one saw the small gaps. The railroads changed that. A train could pass through many towns in one afternoon. Each town's clocks did not match. Timetables got confusing. A traveler could miss a connection. Some railroad companies kept their own time. They printed several different times in one timetable.

The fix came from the railroads. On November 18, 1883, the big railroads in the United States and Canada began to use standard time. The land was split into time zones. All the clocks in a zone showed the same hour. Many cities soon agreed. A shared time made life easier.

Some towns said no at first. They liked their own local noon. Years went by before standard time became national law in the United States, in 1918. The change shows how a new invention can change habits. When you check a clock, you use an idea the railroads helped make normal.

Questions

1. How did people long ago decide it was noon?

_____

_____

2. Why did towns a few miles apart have different times?

_____

_____

3. What did the railroads start using on November 18, 1883?

_____

_____

4. When did standard time become national law in the United States?

_____

_____

5. Why did different local times matter once trains came?

_____

_____

6. Why did many cities agree to the new system?

_____

_____

Words to know

timetables: lists showing when trains or buses arrive and leave
connection: a second train or bus a traveler changes to
standard: the same everywhere, set as a common rule
zones: areas set apart for a certain purpose

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

Triangle group

Imagine a country where nearly every town had a different time. For much of history, that was normal. People set their clocks by the sun, and noon came when the sun stood highest in the sky. Because the sun reaches that point earlier in the east and later in the west, a town just a few miles away could be a few minutes ahead or behind its neighbor.

For farmers and shopkeepers, this hardly mattered. Travel was slow, so no one noticed small differences. The railroads changed everything. A train could cross many towns in a single afternoon, and each town's clocks disagreed. Timetables became confusing, and a traveler could miss a connection or worry about a collision of schedules. Some railroad companies kept their own time and printed several different times in a single timetable.

The solution came from the railroads themselves. On November 18, 1883, the major railroads in the United States and Canada began using standard time. The continent was divided into time zones, and all the clocks inside a zone showed the same hour. Many cities soon agreed, because a shared time made life simpler.

Some towns objected at first, since they preferred their own local noon. Years passed before standard time became national law in the United States, in 1918. Still, the change shows how a new invention can force people to change habits. Every time you check a clock, you use an idea that railroads helped to make ordinary.

Questions

1. How did people in the past decide when it was noon?

_____

_____

2. Why did towns a few miles apart have different times?

_____

_____

3. What did railroads begin using on November 18, 1883?

_____

_____

4. When did standard time become national law in the United States?

_____

_____

5. Why did different local times matter once trains arrived?

_____

_____

6. Why did many cities agree to the new system?

_____

_____

Words to know

timetables: lists showing when trains or buses arrive and leave
connection: a second train or bus a traveler changes to
standard: the same everywhere, set as a common rule
zones: areas set apart for a certain purpose
objected: said that they disagreed with something

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

Square group

Imagine a country in which nearly every town kept a different time. For much of history, that was entirely ordinary. People set their clocks by the sun, and noon arrived when the sun stood at its highest point in the sky. Because the sun reaches that position earlier in the east and later in the west, a town only a few miles away could be several minutes ahead of or behind its neighbor.

For farmers and shopkeepers, this scarcely mattered. Travel was slow, so nobody noticed such small differences. The railroads altered everything. A train could cross many towns in a single afternoon, and each town's clocks disagreed with the next. Timetables became bewildering, and a traveler could easily miss a connection. Some railroad companies maintained their own time and even printed several different times within a single timetable.

The remedy came from the railroads themselves. On November 18, 1883, the major railroads of the United States and Canada began operating on standard time. The continent was divided into time zones, and every clock within a zone displayed the same hour. Many cities soon agreed to follow, because a common time made daily life considerably simpler.

Certain towns protested at first, since they preferred to keep their own local noon. Many years passed before standard time became national law in the United States, in 1918. Nevertheless, the change illustrates how a new invention can compel people to alter their habits. Each time you glance at a clock, you rely on an idea that the railroads helped to make ordinary.

Questions

1. How did people in the past determine when it was noon?

_____

_____

2. Why could two towns a few miles apart keep different times?

_____

_____

3. What did the major railroads begin using on November 18, 1883?

_____

_____

4. In what year did standard time become national law in the United States?

_____

_____

5. Why did differing local times become a problem once trains appeared?

_____

_____

6. Why did many cities agree to follow the new system?

_____

_____

Words to know

timetables: lists showing when trains or buses arrive and leave
connection: a second train or bus a traveler changes to
standard: the same everywhere, set as a common rule
zones: areas set apart for a certain purpose

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

Easier · 222 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.5

1. They set clocks by the sun, with noon when the sun was highest.
2. The sun gets highest earlier in the east and later in the west.
3. Standard time with time zones.
4. In 1918.
5. A train passed through many towns fast, so the different times made timetables confusing.
6. A shared time made life and travel easier.

Triangle: When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

This passage · 242 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.4

1. They set clocks by the sun, with noon when the sun stood highest.
2. The sun reaches its highest point earlier in the east and later in the west.
3. Standard time with time zones.
4. In 1918.
5. A train crossed many towns quickly, so the clashing times made timetables confusing.
6. A shared time made life and travel simpler.

Square: When Every Town Kept Its Own Time

Harder · 256 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9

1. They set their clocks by the sun, with noon when the sun stood at its highest point.
2. The sun reaches its highest point earlier in the east and later in the west.
3. Standard time, with the continent divided into time zones.
4. In 1918.
5. A train crossed many towns quickly, so the clashing times made timetables bewildering.
6. A common time made daily life and travel considerably simpler.