



THE RISE OF THE AUTOMOBILE

INTRODUCTION

During this lesson students will critically analyze the time period that saw the rise of the car, as well as the current move towards fuel-efficient vehicles. By the end of this lesson students will understand the circumstances and events that led to the rapid increase of the automobile in the United States in the early 1900's. Students will also examine current events to understand why fuel-efficient cars nowadays are gaining popularity and compare and contrast the two different historical periods. Students will read articles, write a prompt and discuss to try to gain perspective on how the early development of the automobile impacts the current discussion on energy efficient vehicles. Finally, students will hone their research skill to make conjectures about the trend of fuel-efficient cars and discuss why the movement is gaining momentum.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Grade Level & Subject: Grades 8-12: Language Arts, Social Studies

Length: 1 Class Period

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Discuss the era in history that led to the creation and development of the automobile
- Understand why the automobile experienced a rapid increase in popularity during the 1900's
- Analyze how the automobile impacted the development of certain trends in the U.S.
- Comprehend the fuel-efficient vehicle movement
- Make conjectures about future trends of the automobile in society today

National Standards Addressed:¹

This lesson addresses the following [Standards for the English Language Arts](#) from the [National Council of Teachers of English](#):

- **Content Standard:** [NL-ENG.K-12.4 COMMUNICATION SKILLS](#)
 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- **Content Standard:** [NL-ENG.K-12.7 EVALUATING DATA](#)
 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of

¹ <http://www.education-world.com/standards/>

sources (e.g. print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

- **Content Standard:** [NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS](#)
 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g. libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

This lesson addresses the following [National Standards for History](#) from the [National Center for History in the Schools](#):

- **Content Standard:** [NSS-US.H.5-12.6 ERA 6: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRIAL UNITED STATES \(1870-1900\)](#)
 - Understands how the rise of corporations, heavy industry, and mechanized farming transformed the American people.

Materials Needed:

- Overhead Projector/Smartboard
- Blank Paper
- Markers, Crayons, Colored Pencils, etc.
- Chalkboard/Dry Erase Board
- **Reproducible #1 – Early 1900's Car Ads**
- **Reproducible #2 – History of the Automobile**
- **Reproducible #3 – History of the Automobile – Answer Key**
- **Reproducible #4 – The Automobile: Then and Now**
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Assessment:

Students will be assessed through the following activities:

- Completion of a car ad with a catch-phrase and 3 reasons why to buy the car
- Answers to the questions on **Reproducible #2 – History of the Automobile**
- An organized and well written 1000 word essay in answer to the writing prompt
- Participation in class discussion

LESSON BACKGROUND

Relevant Vocabulary:

- **Alternative Fuel:** A fuel other than gasoline for powering motor vehicles, such as natural gas, methanol, or electricity.²
- **Biodiesel:** A clean-burning, non-toxic, non-petroleum based fuel that is produced from any vegetable oil or animal fat. Biodiesel dramatically reduces air pollution and is less hazardous to human health.³

² "Alternative Fuel Entry." *Oxford Dictionaries Online*. Retrieved July 6, 2011 from <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/alternative+fuel?region=us>.

³ "Emission Controls and Bio-Diesel to Reduce School-Bus Pollution." *Department of Ecology*. Retrieved 1 April 2011 from <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2003news/2003-214.html>.

Background Information:

The United States has been preoccupied with the automobile for quite some time. However, this would never have happened without ingenuity and great effort, largely on behalf of Henry Ford. While the first true gasoline powered car was not invented until 1885/86 by Karl Friedrich Benz in Germany⁴ it only took a few decades before it gained mass popularity in the U.S. In 1908, Ford started selling the Model T, a vehicle meant for “the great multitude,” for \$850.⁵ Ford’s Model T helped turn cars from a luxury item into a necessity for families and people all over the United States. Besides creating the demand for cars, with the help of the assembly line Henry Ford was also able to turn out enough cars to meet this great need. Cars allowed people new access to their country; they could more easily take trips, visit new landscapes and meet new people. Automobiles also aided the transportation of goods and services in a way never seen before. In effect, the shipping economy has never been the same in this country. In addition, medicine, food, books, magazines and more all became more readily available.

One hundred years later and almost every family in the United States own at least one car. Now the topic of conversation has changed. The quick growth of the transportation infrastructure has not been completely positive. Especially in urban areas, transportation has become the number one cause of pollution.⁶ Cars, trucks, planes, boats and the rest have contributed to environmental degradation, as well as, health problems in the human population that cannot be ignored. These problems have brought the topic of energy-efficiency under a spotlight. With a troubled economy and a questionable stake in the future of oil, the potential savings of energy efficient cars seems promising for many. While we are in the midst of discussion about greener, cleaner alternatives, there is an opportunity to reflect back on how and why the current transportation system grew in certain ways. By understanding these developments, certain historical trends begin to take shape and it becomes important to analyze the current movement towards fuel-efficiency and whether it will succeed.

Resources:

- **Every Day Mysteries: Fun Science Facts** *The Library of Congress*
- <http://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/auto.html>
- **Alternative Transportation** *Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs*
<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eoeesubtopic&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Energy,+Utilities+%26+Clean+Technologies&L2=Alternative+Transportation&sid=Eoeea>
- **Clean Fuels: Alternative Fuel Options** *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
<http://www.epa.gov/oms/stateresources/rellinks/altfueloptions.htm>

⁴ “Who Invented the Automobile?” *The Library of Congress*. Retrieved July 7, 2011 from <http://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/mysteries/auto.html>

⁵ “Henry Ford.” *The Library of Congress American Memory*. Retrieved July 7 2011 from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/jul30.html>.

⁶ “Mobile Source Emissions – Past, Present, and Future.” *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*. Retrieved July 7, 2011 from <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/inventory/overview/pollutants/index.htm>.

LESSON STEPS

Warm-up: *Car for Sale!*

1. Pass out a piece of blank paper and coloring tools (crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.) and ask students to spend 5 to 10 minutes drawing an ad for a car, it could be real or imaginary. Make sure that they include a catch-phrase and three reasons why someone should buy their car.
2. Once they are finished, show students the car ads in **Reproducible #1 – Early 1900's Car Ads** on the overhead projector or SmartBoard.
3. Ask students to compare and contrast the real ads of the early 1900's with their own ads.
 - a. How are the ads different? How are they the same? *Answers will vary but point out to students that car buyers of the past and today were concerned with speed, style, safety and price.*
 - b. What differences exist for someone looking for a new car in 1905 and today?
4. As students discuss the differences, keep a list on the board of what aspects a car owner of the past looks for in a car versus a car owner of today. There should be overlap.

Activity One: *Cars: Now and Then*

1. Discuss with your class the role of cars in modern life.
 - a) Does anyone know what country invented the first car and when? *The first car was invented in France in 1769 by Nicholas – Joseph Cugnot. It was steam powered.*
 - b) When was the first electric car invented? *The actual answer of 1832 will likely surprise students who will guess a much later year. The electric car was invented in Scotland by Robert Anderson.*
 - c) Why do you think electric cars don't have more of a presence in the world today? *The electric car did not become popular and was later phased out largely because batteries at the time were not strong enough to power cars for great distances. They were also more expensive than alternatives.*
2. Ask students what was happening in the U.S. in the early 19th century. How did these events affect the relationship between people and transportation systems? *The Spanish-American War ended in 1898 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, immigration is rising, Industrialization is creating fast-paced modernization, people are migrating to cities, The Great Migration is continuously seeing African American move north, trains are developed, the nation's population was on the rise, and the economy was booming, etc.*
3. Ask students what changes in transportation have occurred recently. *Biodiesel, electric cars, ethanol, and other alternative fuels and energy-efficient vehicles are in development.*
4. Pass out **Reproducible #2 – History of the Automobile** and have students read the articles and answer the questions at the bottom of the page.
5. Allow students enough time to fill in the answers before reviewing with the class using **Reproducible #3 – History of the Automobile – Answer Key**. When students supply answers, ask them follow-up questions to guide their thought process to analyze the articles and use their personal background information to fully understand the time period and the significance of the development of the car.
6. Hand out **Reproducible #4 – The Automobile: Then and Now** and ask students to write a 1000 word essay that compares the development of the car and its swift gain in popularity in the early 1900s with the development of newer technologies. Students should use the

articles from **Reproducible #2 –History of the Automobile**, the Internet and other legitimate outside resources to assist them in writing their prompt. Allow them the remainder of the class period to do research and have them complete the assignment for homework.

Wrap Up: *Discussion*

1. Reinforce what students have learned in this class by start a discussion. Ask the following questions:
 - a. Why do you think people in the early 1900's so quickly took to cars? How did it change people's lives? *Answers will vary but make sure that the influence on migration is mentioned.*
 - b. What world events are happening right now that might be affecting the increased interest in fuel-efficient cars? *Rising prices of oil, climate change, globalization, economic turmoil, etc.*
 - c. What would make people more receptive to buying fuel efficient cars? *Answers will vary.*
 - d. In 50 years from now, what type of fuel will most cars use? Why? *Answers will vary.*

Extension:

1. **Fuel Alternatives:** Have students research the various types of alternative fuels and energy efficient vehicles (biodiesel, ethanol fuel, electric cars, solar powered cars, etc.). Set the classroom up for a debate and have students discuss the pros and cons of each type of automobile.

CONCLUSION

Students will leave this lesson with an understanding of the time period that saw the automobile's rise in popularity. Students will investigate the circumstances and events that allowed the car to become integral to life in the United States. Students will also compare and contrast events of the past to the current rise in popularity of fuel-efficient vehicles. Students will develop their communication and analytical skills by writing and discussing the historical themes present during these influential periods of time. Finally, students used their own research and background knowledge to make conjectures about future developments of energy-efficient vehicles.

LESSON PLAN CREDITS

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The History of the Automobile⁷



Starting in the late 1700's, European engineers began tinkering with motor powered vehicles. Steam, combustion, and electrical motors had all been attempted by the mid 1800's. By the 1900's, it was uncertain which type of engine would power the automobile. At first, the electric car was the most popular, but at the time a battery did not exist that would allow a car to move with much speed or over a long distance. Even though some of the earlier speed records were set by electric cars, they did not stay in production past the first decade of the 20th century. The steam-driven automobile lasted into 1920's. However, the price on steam powered engines, either to build or maintain was incomparable to the gas powered engines. Not only was the price a problem, but the risk of a boiler explosion also kept the steam engine from

becoming popular. The combustion engine continually beat out the competition, and the early American automobile pioneers like Ransom E. Olds and Henry Ford built reliable combustion engines, rejecting the ideas of steam or electrical power from the start.

Automotive production on a commercial scale started in France in 1890. Commercial production in the United States began at the beginning of the 1900's and was equal to that of Europe's. In those days, the European industry consisted of small independent firms that would turn out a few cars by means of precise engineering and handicraft methods. The American automobile plants were assembly line operations, which meant using parts made by independent suppliers and putting them together at the plant. In the early 1900's, the United States had about 2,000 firms producing one or more cars. By 1920 the number of firms had decreased to about 100 and by 1929 to 44. In 1976 the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association had only 11 members. The same situation occurred in Europe and Japan.

The first automobile produced for the masses in the US was the three-horsepower, curved-dash Oldsmobile; 425 of them were sold in 1901 and 5,000 in 1904--this model is still prized by collectors. The firm prospered, and it was noted by others, and, from 1904 to 1908, 241 automobile-manufacturing firms went into business in the United States. One of these was the Ford Motor Company which was organized in June 1903, and sold its first car on the following July 23. The company produced 1,700 cars during its first full year of business. Henry Ford produced the Model T to be an economical car for the average American. By 1920 Ford sold over a million cars.

At the beginning of the century the automobile entered the transportation market as a toy for the rich. However, it became increasingly popular among the general population because it gave travelers the freedom to travel when they wanted to and where they wanted. As a result, in North America and Europe the automobile became cheaper and more accessible to the middle class. This

⁷ The Center for Lifelong Learning & Design, "The History of the Automobile." *Department of Computer Science and the Institute of Cognitive Science at the University of Colorado at Boulder*. Retrieved June 6, 2011 from <http://l3d.cs.colorado.edu/systems/agentsheets/New-Vista/automobile/>.

was facilitated by Henry Ford who did two important things. First he priced his car to be as affordable as possible and second, he paid his workers enough to be able to purchase the cars they were manufacturing. This helped push wages and auto sales upward. The convenience of the automobile freed people from the need to live near rail lines or stations; they could choose locations almost anywhere in an urban area, as long as roads were available to connect them to other places. Many states in the US established motor fuel taxes that were used only to build and maintain highways helping the auto highway system become self-supporting.

Popularity of the automobile has consistently moved with the state of the economy, growing during the boom period after World War I and dropping abruptly during the Great Depression, when unemployment was high. World War II saw a large increase in mass transit because employment was high and automobiles were scarce. The rapid growth of car owners after World War II, particularly in the United States and Western Europe demonstrated the population's favor towards automobiles. During the war, automobile motors, fuel, and tires were in short supply. There was an unsatisfied demand when the war ended and plenty of production capacity as factories turned off the war machine. Many people had saved money because there was little to buy, beyond necessities, in the war years. Workers relied heavily on mass transportation during the war and longed for the freedom and flexibility of the automobile.

A historian has said that Henry Ford freed common people from the limitations of their geography. The automobile created mobility on a scale never known before, and the total effect on living habits and social customs is endless. In the days of horse-drawn transportation, the practical limit of wagon travel was 10 to 15 miles, so that meant any community or individual farm more than 15 miles from a city, a railroad, or a navigable waterway was isolated from the mainstream of economic and social life. Motor vehicles and paved roads have narrowed the gap between rural and urban life. Farmers can ship easily and economically by truck and can drive to town when it is convenient. In addition, such institutions as regional schools and hospitals are now accessible by bus and car.

Yet, the effect on city life has been, if anything, more prominent than the effect on the farms. The automobile has radically changed city life by accelerating the outward expansion of population into the suburbs. The suburban trend is emphasized by the fact that highway transportation encourages business and industry to move outward to sites where land is cheaper, where access by car and truck is easier than in crowded cities, and where space is available for their one or two story structures. Better roads were constructed, which further increased travel throughout the nation. As with other automobile-related phenomena, the trend is most noticeable in the United States but is rapidly appearing elsewhere in the world.

Before the automobile, people both lived in the city and worked in the city, or lived in the country and worked on a farm. Because of the automobile, the growth of suburbs has allowed people to live on the outskirts of the city and be able to work in the city by commuting. New jobs due to the impact of the automobile such as fast food, city/highway construction, state patrol/police, convenience stores, gas stations, auto repair shops, auto shops, etc. allow more employment for the world's growing population.

DOE and EPA Release 2011 Annual Fuel Economy Guide⁸

Release date: 11/03/2010

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Energy (DOE) released the 2011 Fuel Economy Guide, providing consumers with information about estimated mileage and fuel costs for model year 2011 vehicles. Choosing a more fuel efficient vehicle in a class will save consumers money and reduce carbon pollution.

“Increasing fuel efficiency is important for our environment, our economy and our health - and it helps families save money at the pump,” EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson said. “This guide will help consumers make the right choice for the environment and for their wallets when buying a car.”

“This year’s Fuel Economy Guide will allow consumers to choose fuel efficient vehicles that will save them money at the pump, while helping to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and limiting carbon pollution,” said Energy Secretary Steven Chu. “Fuel efficient vehicles help reduce driving costs for American families while continuing to deliver the highest standards of vehicle performance.”

Fuel efficient models come in all types, classes, and sizes. The 2011 Fuel Economy Guide can help consumers easily identify the most fuel efficient vehicles that meet their needs. Overall, the best fuel economy performers are hybrids, but the 2011 fuel economy leaders also include fuel efficient clean diesels as well as gasoline models.

Each vehicle listing in the guide provides an estimated annual fuel cost. The estimate is calculated based on the vehicle’s miles per gallon (mpg) rating and national estimates for annual mileage and fuel prices. The online version of the guide allows consumers to input their local gasoline prices and typical driving habits to receive a personalized fuel cost estimate.

For the first time, the guide includes medium-duty passenger vehicles, which are generally large sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and passenger vans. These vehicles were not previously subject to fuel economy measurement and labeling requirements.

EPA and DOE will provide additional fuel economy information online as more 2011 vehicles, including electric and plug-in hybrid cars, become available.

In addition to being available on the EPA/DOE website and in automobile dealer showrooms, the Fuel Economy Guide is also readily accessible from many mobile devices (fuelconomy.gov/m).

⁸ “DOE and EPA Release 2011 Annual Fuel Economy Guide.” U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved July 7, 2011 from <http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/e77fdd4f5afd88a3852576b3005a604f/a877dcd0291b1034852577d00057820c!OpenDocument>.

Name: _____

Date: _____

History of the Automobile Questions

Directions: Carefully read the two articles provided. One is about the history of the automobile and the other is a current article about fuel efficient cars today. Use the information from both articles to answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1. Why did combustion engines (powered by oil) and not steam or electric powered cars become popular in the early 1900's?

2. What were Henry Ford's contributions to the popularization of cars?

3. How did the popularity of cars change life for many Americans?

4. Why are people today interested in buying fuel-efficient cars? What are the side effects of continuing to use fossil fuel dependent cars?

6. What fuel efficient alternatives are being researched / developed?

7. If fuel efficient vehicles become popular, how will this affect the lives of people around the world?

History of the Automobile Questions – Answer Key

Directions: Carefully read the two articles provided. One is about the history of the automobile and the other is a current article about fuel efficient cars today. Use the information from both articles to answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1. Why did combustion engines (powered by oil) and not steam or electric powered cars become popular in the early 1900's?

Combustion engines became popular in the early 1900's largely because the low cost of oil at the time. The steam engine was much more expensive and was sometimes dangerous. The electric car, on the other hand, was not able to gain significant popularity because at the time the only batteries that were existed lacked significant power to allow people to go great distances.

2. What were Henry Ford's contributions to the popularization of cars?

Henry Ford made his cars cheap enough that the middle classes could afford to buy them. This greatly increased the numbers of people investing in his product. He also fairly and even generously compensated his employees so the many people who worked for him could afford to buy his cars work for him for a long time. Henry Ford also used the assembly line to rapidly manufacture cars, which allowed more cars to be sold.

3. How did the popularity of cars change life for many Americans?

Cars changed life enormously. Previously, people had to stay close by their homes but with the invention and mass distribution of cars, Americans were able to leave their homes and venture into unexplored areas. Cars also had great effects on the economy and status of living. Farmers could drive their produce or meat to town to sell, salesman could drive their goods to nearby towns and people good buy supplies from other areas of the country. Cars also allowed greater access to hospitals and schools. Another effect was that many businesses and industries moved to the suburbs surrounding cities where land was cheaper. Eventual shops, restaurants and families followed the businesses by moving to the suburbs as well.

4. Why are people today interested in buying fuel-efficient cars? What are the side effects of continuing to use fossil fuel dependent cars?

People today are interested in buying fuel-efficient cars because it saves money and it better for the environment. Fossil fuel dependent cars rely on fossil fuels will one day run out, therefore they are more expensive and will continue to increase in cost. Fossil fuels releases pollutants into the air that causes land, air and water pollution, negatively effects biodiversity, causes health problems for people and animals, degrades our environment, etc.

5. What fuel efficient alternatives are being researched / developed?

Biodiesel, electric cars, solar cars, etc.

6. If fuel efficient vehicles become popular, how will this affect the lives of people around the world?

Fuel efficient vehicles would help reduce the world's dependence on fossil fuels, which will have many political and economic effects since oil is one of the most sought after commodities in the world. Fuel efficient vehicles would be better for the environment and hopefully allow it to combat the effects of climate change and other environmental harm that has been caused.

The Automobile: Then and Now

Directions: Write a 1000 word essay on the automobile. You may address any of the following questions to get you started but you must address both the development of the first cars in the 1900's and the future of the energy-efficient vehicle movement of today. You must also cite at least two sources. Please use the back of this paper if you need more space.

Why similarities and differences do you see between the development of the first cars and the development of cars today? How have concerns of the car buyer changed the market? How will the development of new technologies (biodiesel, ethanol, electric, solar, etc.) impact the United States economically? Socially? What are the differences in the world today compared to when cars first became popular? Do you think people will be more or less receptive to fuel-efficient alternatives? Why? How do you think someone like Henry Ford today could make fuel-efficient vehicles more popular? Do you think the fuel-efficient alternatives will gain popularity? Fade away? Why?

[illegible]