

## *Golden Gate Bridge*

### *Teacher's Guide*

*Golden Gate Bridge* offers insights into topics in American history including the growth of urban areas in the Thirties, the development of the West, building projects of the New Deal that provided employment in the Great Depression, the relationship of the environment to big projects, the role of labor and labor unions, the democratic process in funding and approving big projects and more. Use part or all of the film, or delve into the rich resources available on this Web site to learn more, either in a classroom or on your own. The following activities are grouped into four categories: history, economics, geography, and culture. You can also read a few helpful hints for completing the activities.

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#### Civics

1. As the film explains, [Joseph](#)

[Strauss](#) ([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-strauss](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-strauss))

had bribes distributed to members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to secure their support for the Golden Gate Bridge project. Imagine that you are a young newspaper editor in San Francisco at the time, and you have just learned about these bribes. How could you respond in a way that would be in the city's long-term interest -- print an editorial condemning the bribes, print an editorial praising the project as necessary regardless of the maneuvers that might be necessary to make it happen, speak privately to Strauss on the matter, or something else? Write the editorial you would prepare or the message you would deliver to Strauss on this matter.

2. Read about some of the [opposition to the bridge](#)

([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/goldengate-opposition](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/goldengate-opposition)).

Then prepare a poster expressing either support for, or opposition to, the Golden Gate Bridge project. Your poster should reflect one of the arguments made for or against the bridge at the time it was being debated. Illustrate your poster with a drawing of the benefit or harm the bridge would bring to your community.

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#### Geography

1. Imagine that the class is a team of researchers hired by Joseph Strauss to make a presentation to San Francisco city officials on the need for, and feasibility of, the Golden Gate Bridge project. Divide the class into three groups. The first group should provide a geographic overview of the need for a bridge to enable San Francisco to continue growing. The second group should discuss the engineering and environmental challenges involved in building the bridge and explain how these will be overcome. The third group should give a political overview of the project, explaining which groups are likely to support the project and which are likely to oppose it (and why). During each group's presentation, students in the other two groups should play the role of the city officials and ask questions as appropriate.
2. The growth of San Francisco, which was both a cause and an effect of the building of the Golden Gate Bridge, was one sign of the increasing importance of the West in 20th-century America. Working in groups of three or four, prepare a graphic that illustrates the West's growing power. For example, you might prepare a bar graph comparing the population of New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles in 1850, 1900, 1950, and 2000, or a map showing how many representatives each state had in Congress in each of those years, or a bar graph comparing the population of the ten most populous states in the country in 1900 and 2000. Present your graphic to the class and explain what it shows, where you found the data for it, and how you used that data in making the graphic.

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#### History

##### 1. Read about [Joseph Strauss](#)

([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-strauss](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-strauss)), [Irving Morrow](#) ([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-morrow](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-morrow)), [Charles Ellis](#) ([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-ellis](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-ellis)) [Leon Moisseiff](#) ([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-moisseiff](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-moisseiff)), and [the men who built the bridge](#) ([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-workers](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-workers)). Then, working with a partner, write a dedication of no more than 50 words to the person(s) or organization(s) that, in your opinion, most deserve to be remembered by everyone who uses and enjoys the Golden Gate Bridge. When you are done, compare your dedication with what your classmates wrote. Which person(s) or organization(s) did the largest number of groups focus on? Of these dedications, which do you think is the best written, and why?

##### 2. Read about [Irving Morrow](#)

(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-morrow>), about the man who designed the Golden Gate Bridge's distinctive Art Deco features. Then do one of the following: (a) find a photo of another building or other object designed in the Art Deco style and explain what you like about the style, or (b) choose another building you have seen in your community or in books or video, find out what style of architecture it represents, and explain why you like it.

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#### **Economics**

1. When the federal government refused San Francisco's request for funds to help build the Golden Gate Bridge, Joseph Strauss led an effort to raise the necessary funds locally. Think of a recent public project in your community -- anything from a school field trip to a new park to construction of a professional sports stadium -- and find out how it was financed. Do you think this was the appropriate source of funds for this project, or do you think the funds should have come from some other source? Present your findings and your conclusions to the class.

2. Using the information on this website and other sources, work together as a class to find the answers to the following questions about bonds and their role in financing the Golden Gate Bridge:

- (a) What is a bond?
  - (b) Why do governments issue bonds?
  - (c) Why did voters in the six counties that sought to raise funds for the bridge have to vote to approve the bond issue?
  - (d) What is "collateral" and what did these six counties use as collateral for the bonds?
  - (e) What critical role did **A. P. Giannini** play in the financing of the project?
- ([www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-gianini](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/goldengate-gianini))

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#### Helpful Hints

#### Civics

1. Students might want to consider the question of whether they think the bridge could have been built without the use of bribes.
2. Posters might, for example, illustrate either the prosperity or the crowding and traffic that the bridge would bring to the counties north of San Francisco.

#### Geography

1. Groups should consult [Underwater Construction at the Golden Gate Bridge](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/goldengate-underwater/) (www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/goldengate-underwater/) and other information on this website in creating their presentations.
2. To introduce this activity, you might want to explore as a class the westward shift over time of the nation's "population center," or the point on the map that is in the center of the country in terms of population (rather than area). The U.S. Census Bureau determines the population center when it conducts a census.

#### History

1. You might note for students that a monument to Joseph Strauss near the bridge calls Strauss "The man who built the bridge" and states, "Here at the Golden Gate is the Eternal Rainbow that he conceived and set to form, a promise indeed that the race of man shall endure unto the Ages."

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2. The Art Deco Society of California has information on other Art Deco buildings in the San Francisco area and links to Art Deco societies in other areas.

### Economics

1. Alternatively, you might have the class research and then debate a single such project or category of projects. For example, should all public school activities and equipment (field trips, sports and band uniforms, and so on) be publicly financed, or should participating students and their families be required to help pay for them?

2. For extra credit, students could research the U.S. government's sale of "war bonds" several years after construction of the Golden Gate Bridge to help finance World War II.

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