The Triumph of Industry

Geography and History

In 1830, only 23 miles of railroad had been laid in the United States. By 1860, the railroads had built 30,000 miles. By 1900, they had built 193,000 miles. The Union Pacific, Santa Fe, Central Pacific, Northern Pacific, and Southern Pacific Railroads connected cities in every corner of the country. In the late 1800s, it took approximately 10 days to travel by train from New York City to San Francisco, a distance of nearly 3,000 miles. The vast amount of territory that the railroads covered and the speed with which they traveled made it possible to connect people and businesses previously separated by impassable stretches of landscape. Study the images below, and refer to the map entitled “Major Railroads in 1905” in Section 1 of your textbook. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

The Railroads

Questions to Think About

1. To whom do these two handbills appeal? For what purposes?
2. List the cities within about 500 miles of Nebraska that farmers could reach by railroad in 1905.
3. About how many miles would cattle have to travel from Cheyenne, Wyoming, to Chicago, Illinois? How far from Chicago to New York City?
4. Draw Conclusions Why might farmers want to move to lands in Nebraska? Why might cattle ranchers want to ship their cattle on railroads?