



# Global Conflict

## Post-Visit Lesson

Grades: 7th - 12th grade

Class Time Needed: 45 minutes

**Big Idea** Students will understand how the railroad contributed to healing and positive relationships with other countries after global conflict.

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### Maryland Curriculum Standards

#### Social Studies Framework

- (7th grade): Analyze major sources of tension, cooperation, and conflict in the world and the efforts that have been made to address them.
- Essential Question (High School): How did involvement in a global conflict change America?

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### Materials Needed

Each group needs:

- Map of United States (provided at end of lesson plan)
- "The Merci Train" article (provided at end of lesson plan)
- Device with Internet access
- Writing/ coloring utensils

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### Teacher Resources

- Merci Train Website (to find what gifts were included for each state)  
<http://www.mercitrain.org/>
- The Friendship Train Website (includes informational video on main page)

<http://www.thefriendshiptrain1947.org/>

**B&O Railroad Museum** 901 W Pratt St. Baltimore, MD 21223 | BORail.org | 410-752-2490 | edu@borail.org



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## Lesson Procedure

### Introduction:

Watch the Friendship Train video (<https://youtu.be/GOib1tddldM>) and read the attached article to understand the link between the Friendship Train and the Merci Train.

### Direct Instruction (Student Activity):

Students will either work individually, in pairs or in groups. The goal is to use the internet to find out what each state received in their car of the Merci Train. At the time, there were only 48 states (Hawaii and Alaska had not been added yet), so the Merci Train had 49 cars which each represented a state and one car represented the territories of Washington, DC and Hawaii. Each student may be responsible for 2-3 states OR each pair can search 3-5 states OR each group can find the answer for 8-10 states.

When students have discovered the items received by a state, they can write it on the US map inside the state borders. By the end of the lesson, each student should be able to write at least one gift inside or near each of the 50 states.

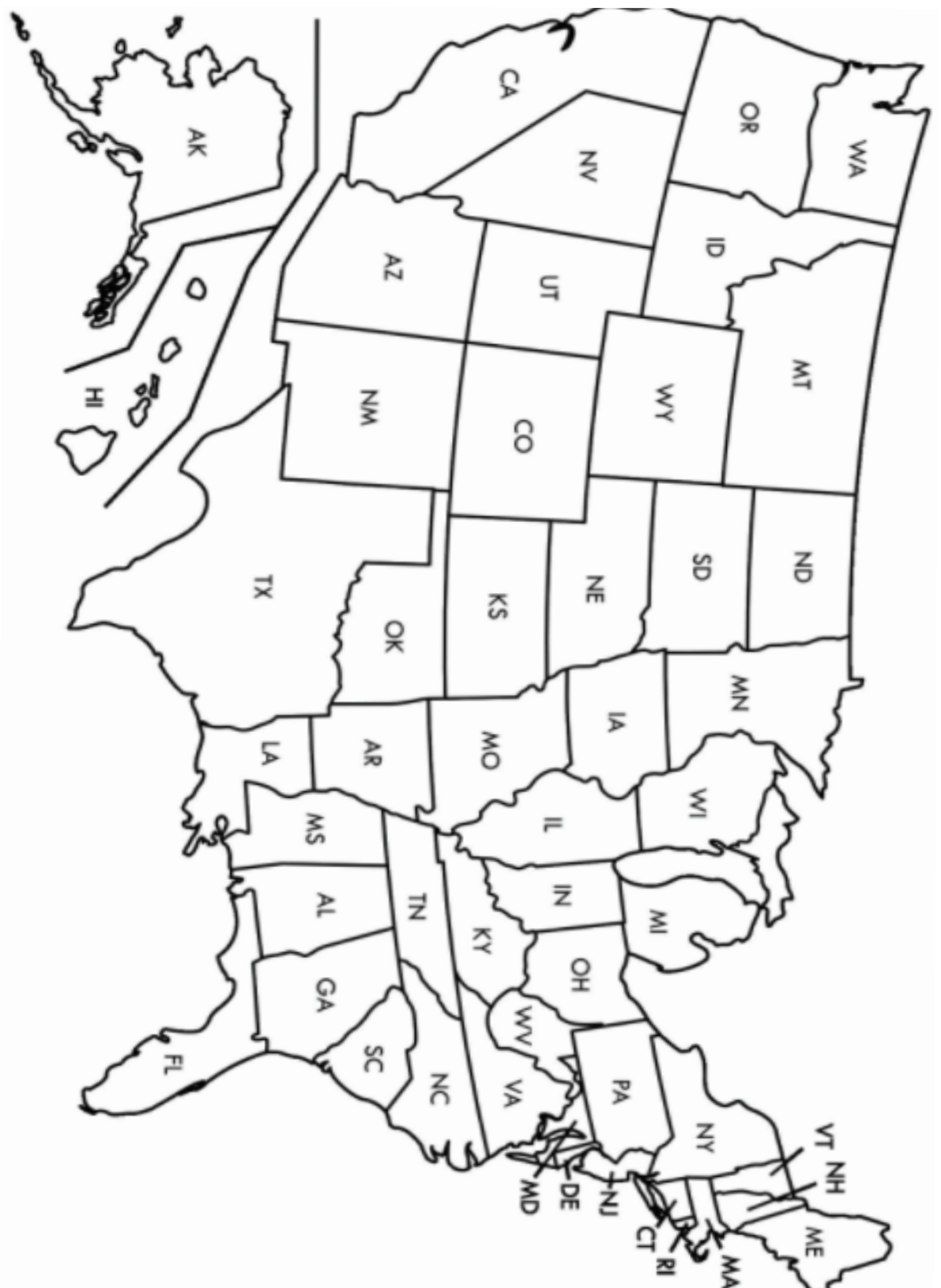
### Conclusion:

Prompt a class discussion with the following questions -

- Why did the Friendship Train include food and money when the Merci Train included many different types of gifts?
- How did the trains increase positive relations between the United States and European countries?
- Are there similarities among the gifts different states received? Differences?
- What would be a good way to show our support for other countries today?



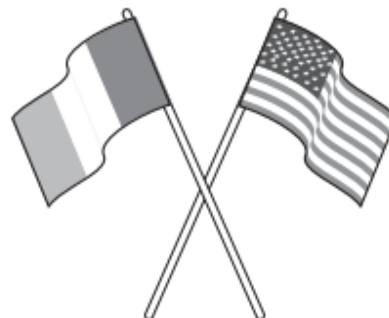
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# The Merci Train

by Rita J. Markel

On February 3, 1949, New York Harbor was an exciting place to be. Airplanes flew overhead. Whistles blew, and bells sounded. Small boats circled in the water. Crowds cheered from the docks. They were there to greet a ship that carried a very special cargo. Onboard were 49 railroad boxcars filled with gifts from the people of France to the people of America. There was one boxcar for each of the existing 48 states, and one to be shared by the District of Columbia and the Territory of Hawaii. These boxcars became known as the *Merci Train*.



Merci = a French word meaning thank you

Following the end of World War II (1939–1945), France was almost in ruin. Factories, roads, bridges, and farms had been destroyed by bombings. Many French people were without jobs or money. They had little to wear and little to eat.

In the winter of 1947, Americans set out to help. A train was sent across the United States, stopping in cities and towns along the way. At every stop, people gave whatever they could. Factories gave goods, clothing, and medicines. Grocers and farmers gave food. Families gave money. Even school children donated their pennies. The train's contents were then shipped to France.

By 1949, the French had begun to recover from the war's destruction. The Merci Train was their way of saying "thank you" to America for the help they had needed so badly. French citizens had filled the boxcars with gifts. They sent tapestries, china, statues—even Napoleon's sword. But most of the gifts were personal, like hand-made dolls, toys, children's drawings, postcards, scrapbooks, even wedding dresses. In short, the people sent the things they treasured most that had not been lost in the war.

But the boxcars themselves were perhaps the most meaningful of the gifts. On each, the French people had painted the coats of arm of all their 40 provinces. They added red, white, and blue stripes, the colors of both the French and American flags. Each car had an American eagle painted on its front. These boxcars, which had once been used to move troops into battle, would never again be used for war.