Third Grade

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Robert Fulton's Steamboat

LITTLEPATRIOTS

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Key Themes

- Creative Liberty
- Community
- Teamwork
- Risk-taking and Experimentation



Core Values

- Community
- Liberty
- Life

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Define inventor, innovator, and visionary, and give examples of how these people make ideas real and improve the world.
- Explain how perseverance (not giving up) and ambition (wanting to reach a goal) helped Robert Fulton succeed in creating the steamboat.
- Describe how Robert Fulton used creativity and vision to solve problems and imagine ways to improve transportation.
- Explain how transportation was difficult in the early 1800s and how the Industrial Revolution and steam engines changed how goods and people moved.
- Explain how Fulton's inventions, the steamboat, and river transportation helped families stay connected, goods travel faster, and communities grow.
- Identify ways they can use creativity, perseverance, and problem-solving to improve things in their own lives and communities.

Key Terms

01 **ambition:** a strong desire to reach a goal or do something great.

02 **apprentice:** a person who learns a skill or job by working with someone who already knows how to do it.

03 **engineer:** a person who uses science, math, and design to solve problems and make things better.

04 **Industrial Revolution:** a time in history when machines began to do work that people used to do by hand.

05 **innovator:** a person who improves an idea or makes something work better.

06 **inventor:** a person who creates something new that did not exist before.

07 **liberty:** freedom.

08 **perseverance:** not giving up when something is hard.

09 **river transportation:** the process of moving people and goods along rivers.

10 **steamboat:** a boat that moves using steam from a fire instead of just paddles or sails.

11 **steam engine:** a machine that uses steam from boiling water to make machines move.

12 **visionary:** a person who uses creativity to imagine the future and thinks about how their ideas can help many people.

Introduction

TELL Students 📷🔑

Hello, Little Patriots! Today we are going to talk about innovators, inventors, and visionaries—and what those big words mean. An **inventor** is a person who creates something new that did not exist before. **[Reference Inventor Image]** An **innovator** is a person who improves an idea or makes something work better. **[Reference Innovator Image]** A **visionary** is a person who uses creativity to imagine the future and thinks about how their ideas can help many people. **[Reference Visionary Image]** Now, let me ask you a question.

ASK Students

What is your favorite toy, game, or device to use at home or at school?

TELL Students 📷

Every toy, device, bicycle, sports tool, art supply, and even playground equipment started as an idea in someone's mind. **[Reference Toy, Bicycle, Sports Tool, Art Supply Images]** Someone looked at a problem or a need and thought, "What if I could make this better?" That person was an innovator. Now, let me ask you another question.

ASK Students

Do you think toys, tablets, or games just appeared one day all by themselves?

TELL Students

That's right—let me explain. An inventor worked hard to turn an idea into something real. They had to think creatively, try new things, and sometimes even fail before they succeeded. Now let's think bigger. People who imagine how their ideas can help many people—not just today, but in the future—are called visionaries. Visionaries see the big picture. Their ideas can change how people live, learn, and play. Let me ask you one more question.

ASK Students

Can kids be visionaries too?

TELL Students

Absolutely! Some of you may become visionaries for your generation.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)
Now let's look around our classroom together.

ASK Students
What are some things we use every day?

TELL Students 📷
Every one of these items exists because someone had a vision, used creativity, and worked hard to make an idea come to life. Innovators, inventors, and visionaries help make our world better—and one day, that could be you. One of those visionaries was Robert Fulton. **[Reference Robert Fulton Image]** Robert Fulton was also an inventor and innovator who believed rivers could do more than just flow—he believed they could connect people and places. At a time when travel was slow and difficult, Fulton imagined a new way to move people and goods by using steam power. His steamboat helped connect cities and helped America grow.

ASK Students
How did Robert Fulton use creativity and hard work to help make life better for people in America?

TELL Students 📷🔑
Robert Fulton's success did not happen right away. He had to show **perseverance**, which means not giving up when something is hard. **[Reference Perseverance Image]** Many people doubted his idea, but Fulton kept working, fixing problems, and trying again until his steamboat finally worked. Robert Fulton was also able to succeed because of liberty. **Liberty** means freedom—the freedom to think, create, and try new ideas. In the United States, people have the freedom to use their talents and skills to make life better for others. **[Reference American Flag Image]** That freedom allowed Robert Fulton to be creative, to use his skills, and to do something great. Just like Robert Fulton, you live in a country where you have liberty. When you use your creativity, practice perseverance, and work hard, you can turn ideas into something meaningful—and maybe even become a visionary who helps shape the future of America.

Introduction

ASK Students

How did perseverance and liberty help Robert Fulton turn his idea into something great?

TELL Students

Perseverance helped Robert Fulton because he did not give up, even when his steamboat ideas were hard and when other people doubted him. A **steamboat** is a boat that moves using steam from a fire instead of just paddles or sails. **[Reference Steamboat Image]** The fire heats water to make steam, and the steam helps the boat move through the water. Steamboats were very important because they could carry people, food, and other goods much faster than boats that only used sails or were rowed by hand. Robert Fulton kept trying, fixing problems, and working until his steamboat finally worked.

ASK Students

How did the steamboat make traveling and moving goods easier? Why is liberty important for inventors, innovators, and visionaries?

TELL Students

Liberty helped Robert Fulton because he had the freedom to be creative and to try new ideas. In the United States, people are free to think, create, and try new ideas. Because Fulton had liberty, he was able to use his skills and creativity to build his steamboat and help connect people and cities. Fulton's perseverance and liberty allowed him to turn his idea into something great. Now let's watch a Star Spangled Adventures cartoon to learn more about Robert Fulton. As you watch, listen carefully for:

- How does Robert Fulton keep trying even when things are difficult?
- How did he help other people?
- How did his creativity and hard work change America?

WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Ep. 18: Fulton's Steamboat

Lesson

TELL Students 📷

After the American colonies gained independence from Great Britain in 1776, many people in the United States began moving to new places. **[Reference American Flag Image]** They explored lands farther south and west, which was exciting, but traveling was slow and difficult. Today, if we want to visit family or friends who live far away, we can use cars, buses, or airplanes. But in the early 1800s, people did not have those choices. Back then, there were very few ways to travel. People depended on horse-drawn carriages, wagons, or boats, especially when they needed to move goods like food, tools, and supplies from one place to another. **[Reference Horse-drawn Carriage, Wagon, Boat Images]** Traveling long distances took a lot of time and hard work.

ASK Students

What problem do you hear in this story that inventors might want to solve?

TELL Students 📷

The problem in the story is that traveling and moving goods took a very long time and was very hard. People had to use horses, wagons, or boats, and it could take days or even weeks to get where they were going. **[Reference United States Map]** This made it difficult to visit family, deliver food and supplies, and for communities to grow. Because of this problem, inventors started asking important questions like, "How can we make travel faster?" and "How can we move people and goods more easily?" People began to ask these questions during a time called the Industrial Revolution.

ASK Students

What do you know about the Industrial Revolution?

TELL Students 📷🔑

In our Star Spangled Adventures cartoon, we learned that this time period was also the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The **Industrial Revolution** was a time in history when machines began doing work that people used to do by hand. **[Reference Industrial Revolution Image]** Liberty the Eagle explains that many of these machines were powered by the **steam engine**, which is a machine that uses steam from boiling water to make machines move. **[Reference Steam Engine Image]**

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

Because of the steam engine, goods such as clothing, tools, and other products could be made faster and cheaper than ever before. This new technology helped the United States grow and prepared the way for inventors like Robert Fulton to find better ways to move people and goods across the country.

ASK Students

Why was the steam engine an important invention during the Industrial Revolution?

TELL Students 📷🔑

The steam engine was an important invention during the Industrial Revolution because it helped machines do work much faster than people could by hand. With the steam engine, goods like clothing, tools, and other products could be made quicker and cheaper, which helped towns and cities grow. It also made it possible for inventors to think of new ways to move people and things across the country. Thankfully, there were creative people like Robert Fulton. **[Reference Robert Fulton Image]** He was born in 1765 and started out as a jewelry apprentice, learning to work with his hands. An **apprentice** is a person who learns a skill or job by working with someone who already knows how to do it. As a jewelry apprentice, Robert Fulton learned how to make jewelry by working with an experienced jeweler. **[Reference Jeweler Image]**

ASK Students

Can you think of something you would like to learn by practicing with someone who already knows how to do it?

TELL Students 📷

Later, Robert Fulton became interested in painting and art. He loved creating beautiful pictures, and he wanted to get better at it. To learn more, he traveled all the way to Europe to study with expert artists. While he was there, he had the amazing chance to paint a portrait of Benjamin Franklin, who was very famous at that time! **[Reference Benjamin Franklin Image]** That was a big honor, and it showed how talented Robert was. But even though Robert was very skilled, his paintings didn't make him much money. Life was not easy, and he had to figure out how to earn a living.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

Instead of giving up, Robert showed perseverance, which means not quitting even when things are hard. He kept trying new ideas and used his creativity to solve problems. These early experiences—learning a skill as an apprentice, studying hard in Europe, and working through challenges with his art—helped Robert Fulton develop the perseverance and creativity he needed later to build a successful steamboat that would help people travel and connect across America.

ASK Students

What does it mean that Robert Fulton didn't give up even when things were hard, and how do you think that helped him later?

TELL Students

While Robert Fulton was in Europe, he started exploring new interests beyond art. One thing he became very interested in was engineering. An **engineer** is a person who uses science, math, and design to solve problems and make things better. **[Reference Engineer Image]** Engineers help build bridges, machines, buildings, and even boats! Robert Fulton wanted to use his skills to improve transportation. He studied how to make canals and ships work better, so people and goods could move quickly and safely. **[Reference Canal Image]**

ASK Students

If you were an engineer like Robert Fulton, what problem would you try to solve to help others?

TELL Students

In 1797, Robert Fulton started working on a submarine called the *Nautilus*. **[Reference *Nautilus* Image]** He hoped the French Navy would buy it, but they weren't interested at the time. Even though this idea didn't work out, it encouraged him to keep learning. His hard work and creativity eventually caught the attention of Robert Livingston, a lawyer from New York who had helped draft the Declaration of Independence. **[Reference Robert Livingston Image]** Together, they would work on ideas that would change transportation in America forever. Now, we are going to watch a Learn More with Liberty video to see how Robert Fulton used engineering to design and build his famous steamboat. As you watch, think about how he used perseverance, creativity, and problem-solving to make his ideas real!

Lesson

WATCH
Engineering a Steamboat

TELL Students
Both Fulton and Livingston had a big idea: They wanted to use steam to successfully power boats. There was already a steamboat built in 1787, but it was too expensive to operate. Fulton and Livingston dreamt of making an affordable steamboat for everyone who needed to travel on rivers. With Livingston's help, Robert Fulton brought an English steam engine to America and used it in a steamboat he had designed. He used his art skills to draw detailed plans for his steamboat, which was unusual at that time. **[Reference Steamboat Plans Image]**

ASK Students
What were Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston able to do when they worked together?

TELL Students
In 1806, Fulton returned to America and built *the North River Steamboat of Clermont*. On August 17, 1807, it was time for the steamboat's first trip from New York to Albany. This was a risky test because steam engines were still new and could explode. **[Reference Steamboat Image]** The trip had a few problems at first, just like we saw in the Star Spangled Adventures cartoon, but Fulton managed to fix them, and the steamboat traveled from New York City to Albany in 32 hours. That might seem like a long time today, but it was a big deal back then!

ASK Students
How did Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston persevere? What encouraged them to keep going when things were difficult?

TELL Students
Less than a month later, Robert Fulton's steamboat, the *Clermont,* began carrying passengers on a one-way trip costing $7. **[Reference Clermont Image]**

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

It also helped transport goods up and down the Hudson River and created new jobs and industries. Thanks to Robert Fulton and others like him, America grew, and people found new ways to make a living by moving their products to sell. Robert Fulton's journey—from being a jewelry apprentice, to an artist, and finally to the first commercial steamboat—shows us something very important. He had **ambition**, which means a strong desire to reach a goal or do something great. Even when people laughed at him and at Robert Livingston in the Star Spangled Adventures cartoon, he kept working hard and did not give up. That is what we call persistence—continuing to try even when things are difficult. Fulton's story teaches us that with creativity, curiosity, hard work, and ambition, we can overcome challenges and make the world a better place. And remember, you can do the same—approach problems with curiosity, think creatively, and work hard, and you, too, can make a difference!

ASK Students

What is something in your home or school that needs to be improved? What can you do to make improvements?

TELL Students 📷🔑

Robert Fulton's story shows us how perseverance, ambition, creativity, and vision can work together to make a big difference. He didn't give up when people doubted him; he kept trying new ideas, and he imagined a way to change transportation in America. His work with the steamboat helped goods and people move more quickly and safely than ever before. As we learned in the Star Spangled Adventures cartoon, **river transportation**—which means moving people and goods along rivers—changed American life. **[Reference River Transportation Image]** Goods could travel faster, which made them cheaper and easier for people to get, and it also allowed families to stay connected, even if they lived far apart. Back then, people didn't have cars or planes to visit family or travel long distances, so steamboats made a huge difference in how people lived and worked.

ASK Students

Why was the steamboat so important for moving goods and keeping families connected before we had cars and planes?

Lesson

TELL Students 📷

Robert Fulton's creativity and perseverance helped him figure out better ways to move people and goods across rivers. Even when others doubted him, he kept trying, fixing problems, and thinking of new ideas. This shows that he had vision, which means he could see the big picture and imagine how his ideas could help many people. Fulton's life experiences—starting as a jewelry apprentice, then becoming an artist, and later learning about engineering and inventions—taught him to work hard, be creative, and never give up. **[Reference Robert Fulton Image]** Each step helped him gain the skills he needed to become a visionary. And because he lived in the United States, a country that values liberty—which means freedom to think, create, and try new ideas—he was able to use his talents to change transportation. Just like Robert Fulton, you can use your curiosity, creativity, and perseverance to solve problems and imagine new ways to help others. Even small ideas can grow into something that changes the world, especially when you are free to try and work hard to make them real.



Design Your Own River Transport!

Objective

Third-grade students will use creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork to design a simple model of a boat or water transport, applying what they learned about Robert Fulton, innovation, and river transportation.

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Recyclable materials (e.g., cardboard, paper cups, straws, small containers, aluminum foil, rubber bands)
- Tape or glue
- Small containers of water (for testing if boats float)
- Optional: small toy figures or coins to act as "passengers"

Instructions

1. Warm-Up Discussion:
    - Ask: "What problems did Robert Fulton want to solve with his steamboat?"
    - Ask: "What does it mean to be creative and have vision when you design something?"
    - Remind students that Fulton had to think creatively, try new ideas, and not give up.
2. Design Phase:
    - Students will sketch a boat or river transport design on paper first.
    - Encourage them to think about:
        - How it will move on water
        - How it can carry passengers or goods
        - What makes it faster or safer than just a regular boat
3. Build Phase:
    - Using recyclable materials, students build a model of their design.
    - Remind them that inventors test and improve their ideas—it's okay if it doesn't work the first time!
4. Test Phase:
    - Fill a small container with water and test each boat.
    - Ask students:
        - Does it float?



- Can it carry "passengers" (coins or toy figures)?
- What can you improve?

5. Share and Reflect:
   - Students show their boats to the class and explain:
     - What problem they were trying to solve
     - How their design is creative
     - How they practiced perseverance if it didn't work right away
   - Teacher connects this to Fulton's vision and inventions and the impact of river transportation on America.

Third Grade Assessment

NAME: _____ DATE _____

Part 1: The following statements are True or False. Circle True if the statement is true. Circle False if the statement is false.

1. Robert Fulton started as an apprentice artist. Being an artist was his passion.
True / False

2. Before the steamboat, it was difficult to travel along rivers.
True / False

3. Robert Livingston did not support Robert Fulton.
True / False

4. Robert Fulton began his engineering career studying shipbuilding. He designed a submarine named the *Nautilus* that he tried to sell to the French Navy.
True / False

5. Robert Fulton's first successful steamboat in America was called the *Hudson*.
True / False

Part 2: The following questions are multiple choice. Circle the correct answer.

6. Who was Robert Fulton's business partner?
   a. George Washington
   b. Benjamin Franklin
   c. Andrew Jackson
   d. Robert Livingston

7. What was the name of the first steamboat that sailed up the Hudson River?
   a. *Beaufort*
   b. *Clairvoyant*
   c. the *Clermont*
   d. *Belleview*

Answer Key: Third Grade Assessment

1. Robert Fulton started as an apprentice artist. Being an artist was his true passion.
(True, False)

2. Before the steamboat, it was difficult to travel along rivers.
(True, False)

3. Robert Livingston did not support Robert Fulton.
(True, False)

4. Robert Fulton began his engineering career studying shipbuilding. He designed a submarine named the *Nautilus* that he tried to sell to the French Navy.
(True, False)

5. Robert Fulton's first successful steamboat in America was called the *Hudson*.
(True, False)

6. Who was Robert Fulton's business partner?
   a. George Washington
   b. Benjamin Franklin
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   d. Robert Livingston

7. What was the name of the first steamboat that sailed up the Hudson River?
   a. *Beaufort*
   b. *Clairvoyant*
   c. *the Clermont*
   d. *Belleview*

Resources

"Studying the past makes it possible for us to understand the human story across time."(NCSS, 1921)

"Knowledge and understanding of the past enable us to analyze the causes and consequences of events and developments and to place these in the context of the institutions, values, and beliefs of the periods in which they took place." (NCSS, 1921)

"The study of people, places, and environments enables us to understand the relationship between human populations and the physical world." (NCSS, 1921)

"Questions related to identity and development, which are important in psychology, sociology, and anthropology, are central to understanding who we are." (NCSS, 1921)

"The study of individual development and identity will help students to describe factors important to the development of personal identity." (NCSS, 1921)

- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OP-CO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf
- https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/steamboat
- http://www.southernlancasterhistory.org/robert-fulton-birthplace
- https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/whomade/fulton_hi.html
- http://www.southernlancasterhistory.org/robert-fulton-birthplace
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/whomade/fulton_hi.html
- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OPCO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/17/opinion/l-why-fulton-achieved-steamboat-success-003087.html
- http://www.southernlancasterhistory.org/robert-fulton-birthplace
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/17/opinion/l-why-fulton-achieved-steamboat-success-003087.html

Resources

- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OPCO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf
- http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/fulton.htm
- https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/steamboat
- https://lemelson.mit.edu/resources/robert-fulton
- https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Portals/46/docs/recreation/OPCO/montgomery/pdfs/10thand11th/ahistoryofsteamboats.pdf

Images

Inventor



Credit: Canva Pro

Innovator



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Visionary



Credit: Canva Pro

Art Supplies



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Toys



Credit: Canva Pro

Sports Tools



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Robert Fulton



Credit: Wikipedia

Perseverance



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

American Flag



Credit: Canva Pro

Steamboat



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Carriage



Credit: Canva Pro

Boat



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

United States Map



Credit: Canva Pro

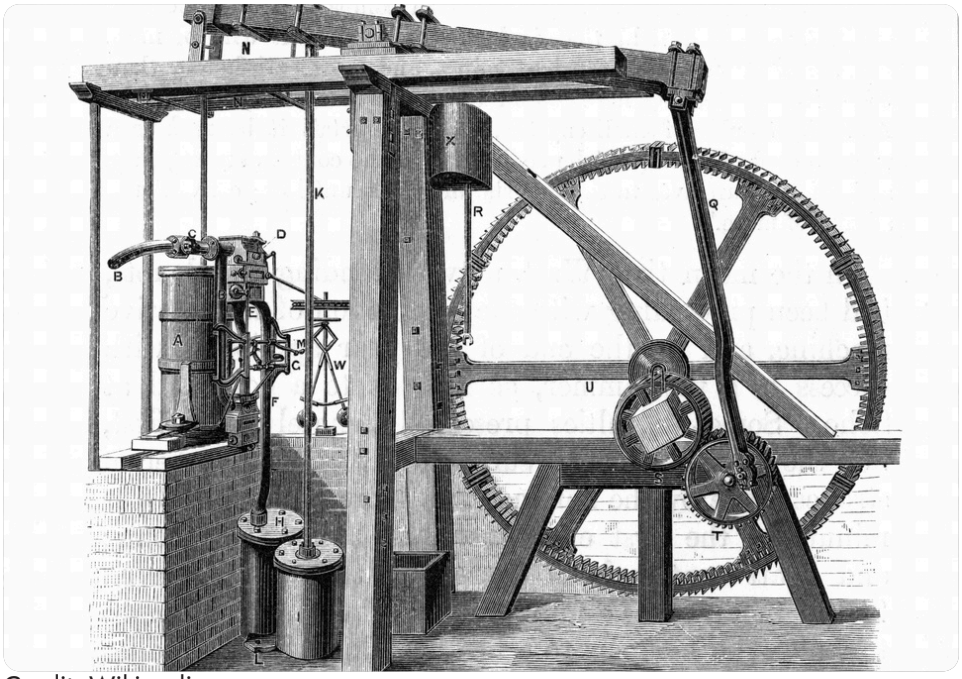
Industrial Revolution



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

Steam Engine



Credit: Wikipedia

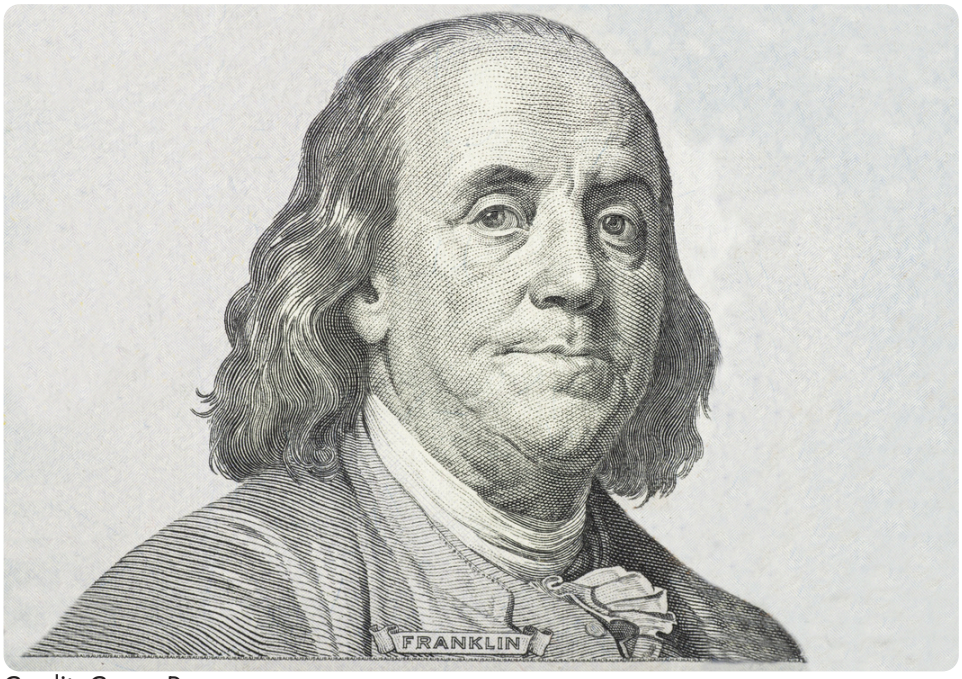
Jeweler



Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Benjamin Franklin



Credit: Canva Pro

Engineer



Credit: Canva Pro

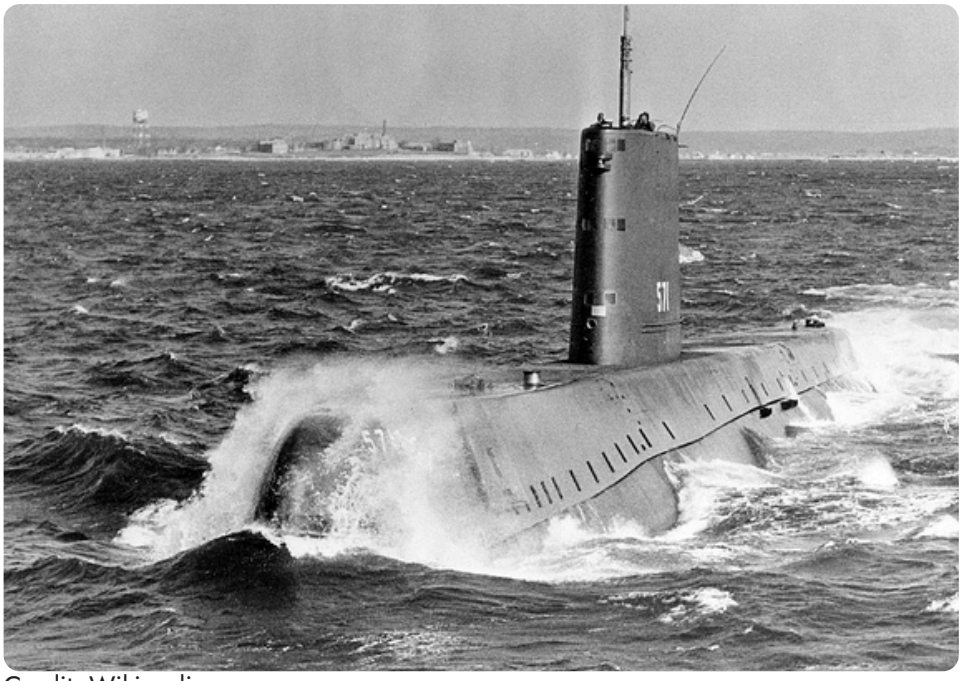
Images

Canal



Credit: Canva Pro

Nautilus



Credit: Wikipedia

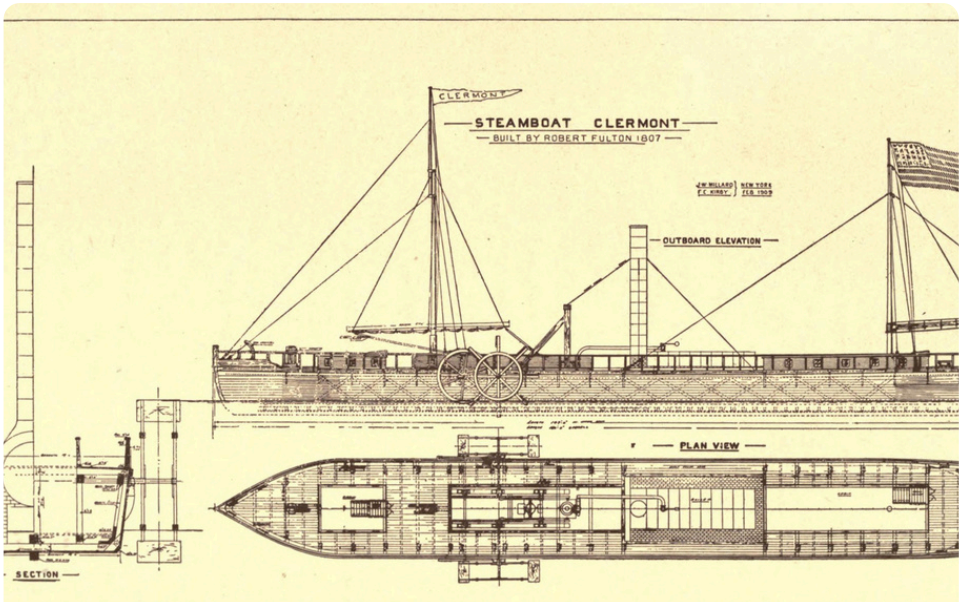
Images

Robert Livingston



Credit: Wikipedia

Steamboat Plans



Plan of the Clermont reproduced by the Hudson-Fulton Celebration Commission

Credit: Canva Pro

Images

Clermont



Credit: Wikipedia

River Transportation



Credit: Canva Pro

Notes