

BROOKLYN

CONNECTIONS



THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE

PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name

INTRODUCTORY READING

One of the greatest engineering **feats** of the 19th century, the Brooklyn Bridge opened with fireworks and fanfare on May 24, 1883. It connected New York State's two largest cities, Brooklyn and Manhattan, which were divided by the East River.

The Brooklyn Bridge was **conceived** by John Roebling, America's leading engineer. Roebling envisioned a suspension bridge, the first to use steel-wire cables, that would be the longest bridge in the world. Unfortunately, he died of **tetanus** after a minor injury at the bridge site. His son, Washington Roebling, supervised the actual construction, which began in 1870. First, two great granite towers were sunk into the bed of the East River. Then, large steel cables were draped between the towers. Finally, the bridge roadway was suspended from the cables. The total cost of the project was \$9 million.

Today, Brooklyn and Manhattan are no longer separate cities; they are both part of New York City. But John Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge still carries millions of travelers between them each year.



Document 1 - "New York Harbor." *Harper's Weekly* Nov 1873. Print.

1. Describe what you see in this image.

2. How do you think people travelled between Brooklyn and Manhattan before the Brooklyn Bridge was built? Based on this image, do you think it was safe?

3. During the winter, the river would sometimes freeze. How would this kind of weather affect the ability to travel between Brooklyn and Manhattan before the Brooklyn Bridge?

4. How might the Brooklyn Bridge have decreased the number of boats in the harbor?



1. What is happening in this picture?

2. Why are buildings being torn down?

3. How might this demolition and construction change people's lives?

4. How does the size of Brooklyn Bridge compare to other buildings in the image?



WORKING BENEATH SHOE OR EDGE OF CAISSON.

Working beneath shoe or edge of caisson.



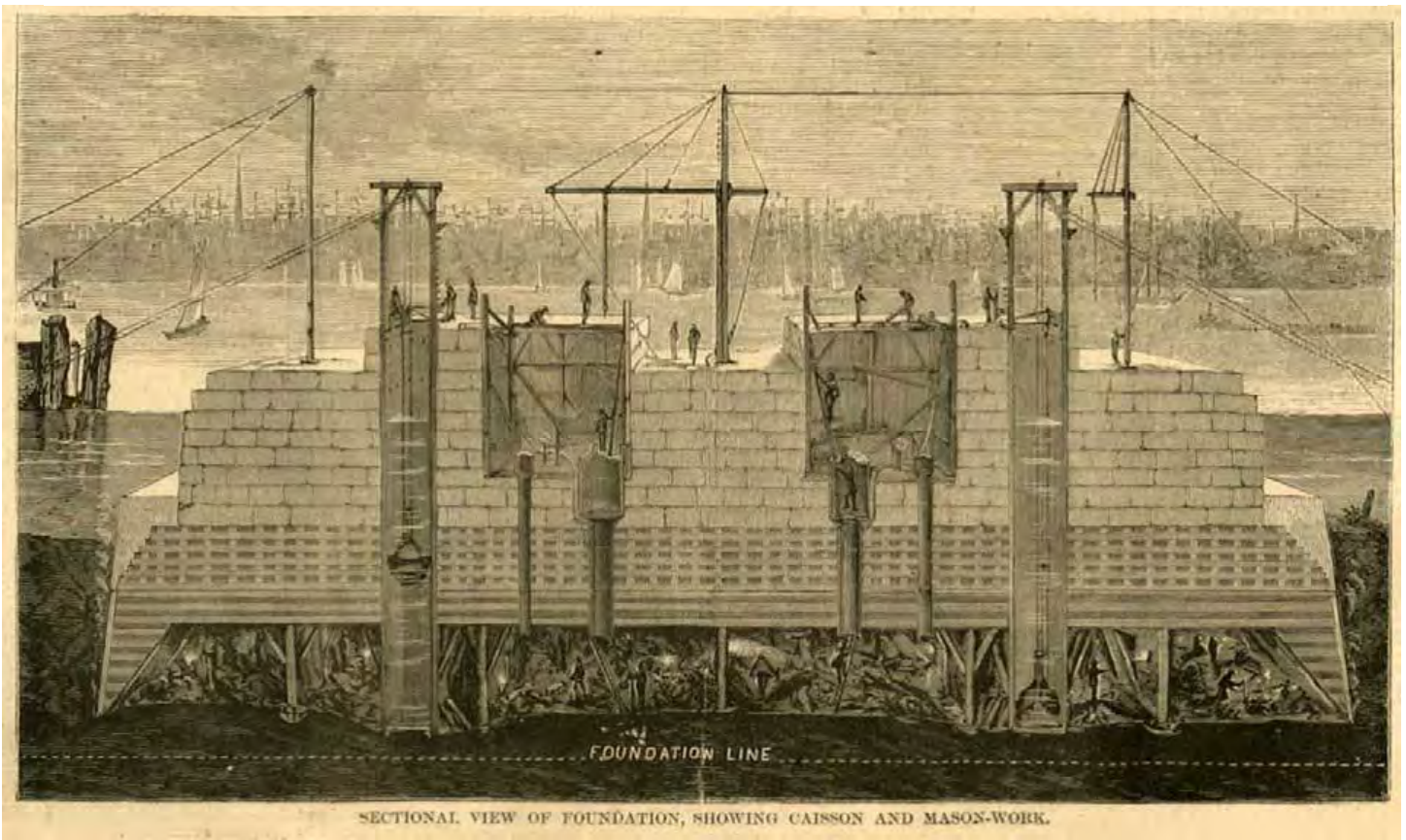
AIR CHAMBERS FOR THE INGRESS AND EGRESS OF WORKMEN.

Air chambers for the ingress and egress of workmen.



SENDING UP DÉBRIS THROUGH THE WATER SHAFT.

Sending up debris through the water shaft.



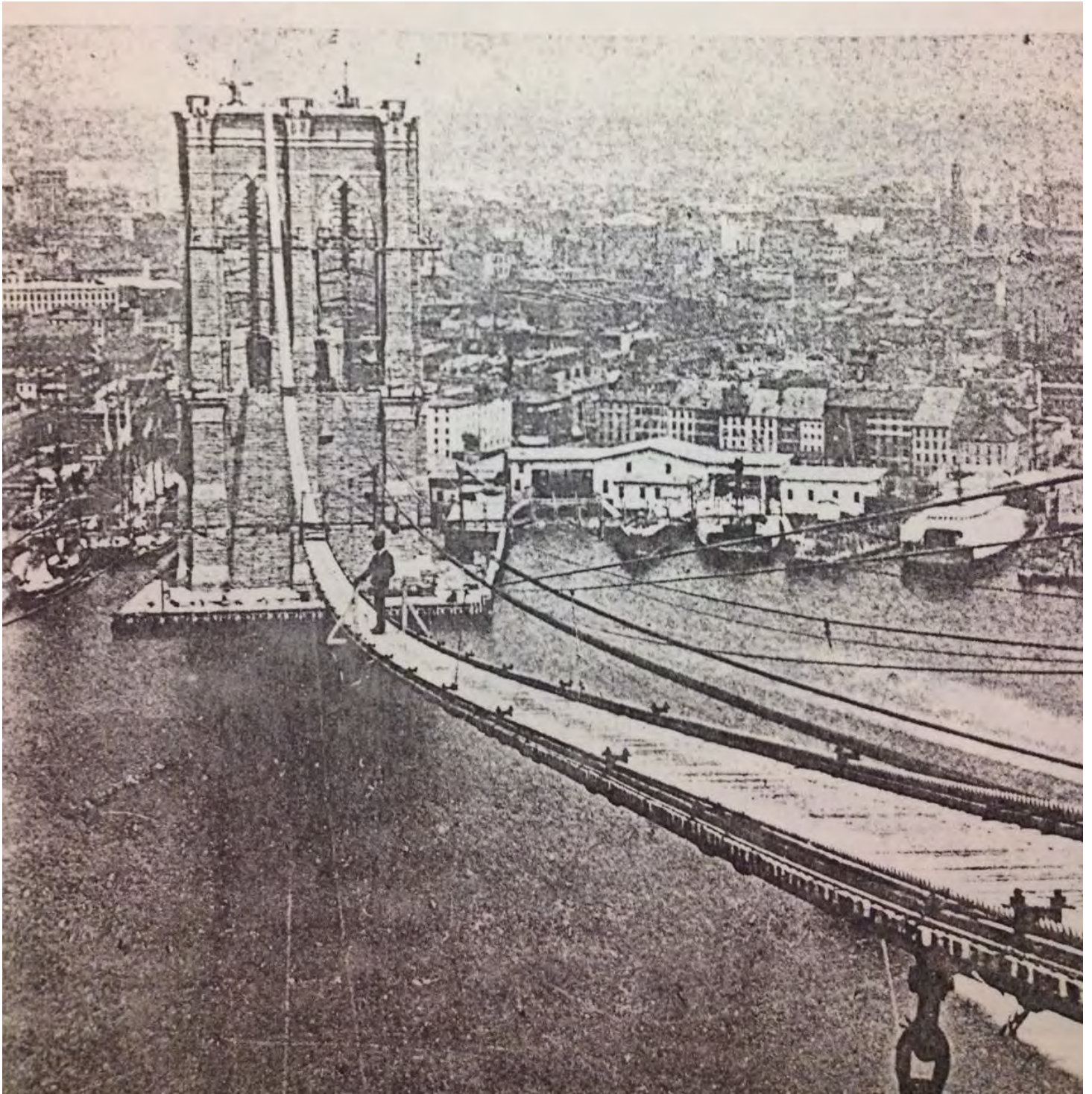
SECTIONAL VIEW OF FOUNDATION, SHOWING CAISSON AND MASON-WORK.

Sectional view of foundation, showing caisson and mason-work.

1. What is happening in these illustrations? Why are these workers underground?

2. Look at the illustration labeled “Sectional View of Foundation.” Describe what you see:

3. What do you think the conditions were like for the workers in these illustrations?



1. What parts of the Brooklyn Bridge have been completed in this photograph?

2. What does this photograph say about the working conditions on the Brooklyn Bridge?

3. How many years did it take to get to this point? How many more years are left before it is finished? Explain how you found your answer.

A MONUMENT OF IMMORTALITY.

I have thus, Mr. Chairman, briefly responded to the toast upon which I have been asked to speak ; and, as I close, I cannot forbear to express the solid satisfaction which the trustees, who have for years given an unpaid service to the construction of the East River Bridge, now feel, not only in view of its completion, but also of the character of the result attained. They will pass away ; generations will come and go ; but the monument will live. Centuries will roll away ; and the bridge though it may grow old in years, and in the far distant future be studied and used as the product of a bygone age, will still retain its strength. The cables will not snap, and the towers will not fall. The anchorages will be true to their trust. The massive arches will not collapse. The steel and the granite will not rot. Fire will not burn the bridge. Freight trains and Pullman cars will not break it. The winds will not shake it. Time and toil will not fatigue it. Its youth and its age will be alike periods of vigor. That bridge, Mr. Chairman, was built to stand ; and stand it will—so long, that we may as well call it immortal.

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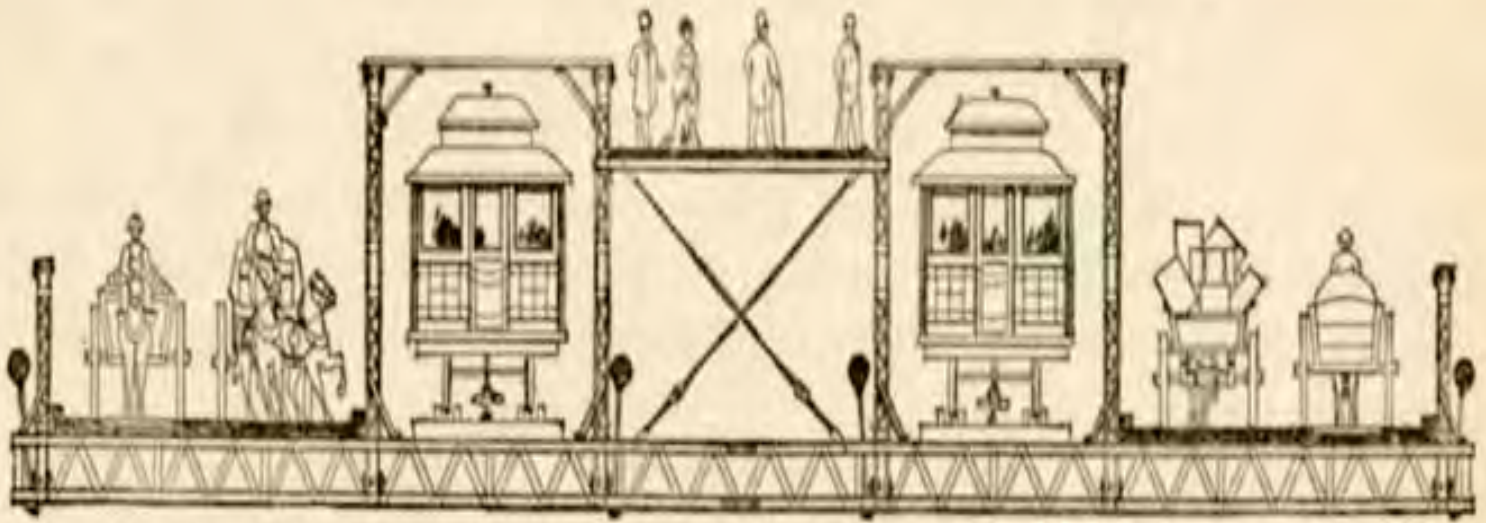
I have thus, Mr. Chairman, briefly responded to the toast upon which I have been asked to speak; and, as I close, I cannot **forbear** to express the solid satisfaction which the trustees, who have for years given an unpaid service to the construction of the East River Bridge, now feel, not only in view of its completion, but also of the character of the result attained. They will pass away; generations will come and go; but the monument will live. Centuries will roll away; and the bridge though it may grow old in years, and in the far distant future be studied and used as the product of a bygone age, will still retain its strength. The cables will not snap, and the towers will not fall. The anchorages will be true to their trust. The massive arches will not collapse. The steel and granite will not rot. Fire will not burn the bridge. **Freight** trains and **Pullman** cars will not break it. The winds will not shake it. Time and toil will not fatigue it. Its youth and its age will be alike periods of vigor. That bridge, Mr. Chairman, was built to stand; and stand it will – so long, that we may as well call it immortal.

1. Summarize the newspaper article in three sentences.

2. The article is an excerpt from a speech before the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge. How can you tell that the person speaking is not a reporter?

3. What do you think the speaker's opinion of the Brooklyn Bridge was? Why?

4. Do you think everyone agreed with this opinion? What other opinions might have existed before the Brooklyn Bridge opened?



SECTION OF BRIDGE, SHOWING FOOT, RAIL AND CARRIAGE WAYS.

1. What do you see in this illustration?

2. Describe the different ways people could cross the Brooklyn Bridge when it first opened.

3. Why was it important to have this many modes of transportation available?



THE GREAT BRIDGE—FIREWORKS AND ILLUMINATION, FROM THE BROOKLYN SIDE.—DRAWN BY CHARLES GEARAN.—[SEE PAGE 542.]

1. What does this illustration show you? What's being celebrated?

2. Based on this illustration, how do you think people felt about the Brooklyn Bridge?

3. How does the Brooklyn Bridge compare to the other buildings in this illustration?

Brooklyn May 27, 1883
 Dear Aunt
 I thought I would
 take the opportunity of
 writing a few lines to
 you hoping it will find
 you well as it leaves us
 at present
 Papa has sent uncle
 a paper with the picture
 of the bridge on it
 It will tell you all about
 it
 There was a great time
 here in Brooklyn on that
 day and I went down
 and saw it too
 and there was fireworks
 on the towers of the bridge
 and it was lovely.
 So we thought perhaps
 you would like to see
 something about it
 The President came from
 Washington to walk across
 the bridge and the
 streets was so crowded with
 people that we could
 hardly walk and you
 could not see where you were
 walking
 Papa and Orlando are
 working and are getting
 along pretty well
 I have another letter to
 uncle Melville so I close
 with love to all from
 your cousin
 Isaac Prescott
 24 Nassau Place
 Brooklyn

Brooklyn, May 27, 1883

Dear Aunt,

Thought I would take the opportunity of writing a few lines to you hoping it will find you well as it leaves us at present.

Papa has sent uncle a paper with the picture of the bridge on it. We will tell you all about it. There was a great time here in Brooklyn on that day and I went over and saw it too.

... there were fireworks on the towers of the bridge and it was lovely. So we thought perhaps you would like to see something about it.

The president came from Washington to walk across the bridge and the streets were so crowded with people that we could hardly see where we were walking.

Papa and Orlando are working and getting along pretty well. I have another letter to uncle Melville so I close with love to all from your cousin.

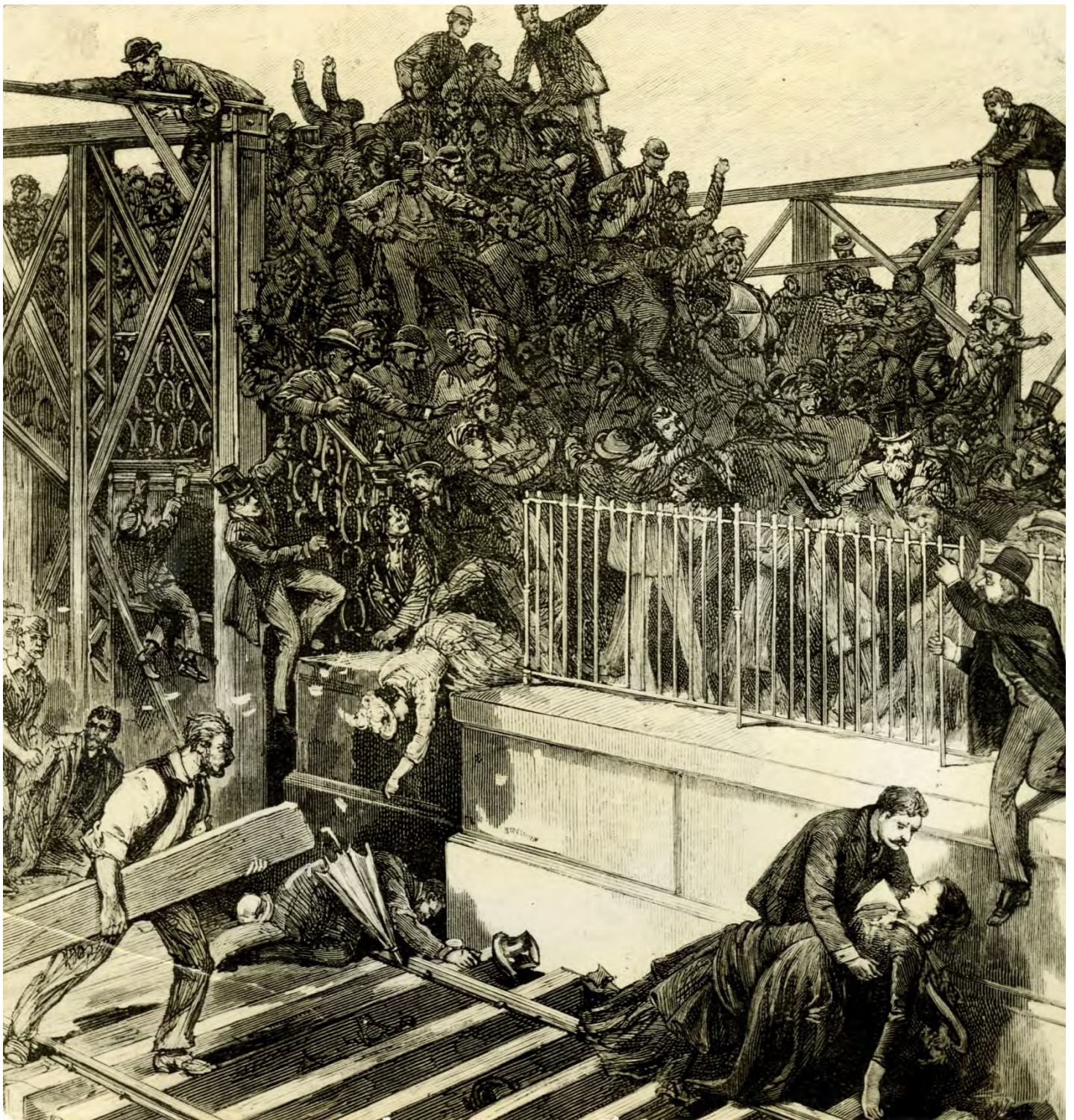
Isaac Prescott

1. What is this letter about?

2. How did the author feel about the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge?

3. Why do you think there were so many people at the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge?

4. The President of the United States (Chester A. Arthur) attended the opening of the bridge. What does that tell you about the Brooklyn Bridge? Explain your answer.



1. Describe the illustration.

2. A panic on the Brooklyn Bridge started after a woman screamed when her heel got caught in the space between the wooden walkway. What did people think was happening to cause them to run off the Brooklyn Bridge?

3. Why didn't people trust the Strength of the bridge after it opened?

4. Why are people piled up in the illustration? Do you think there were injuries?

Popularity of the Bridge.

The Bridge Trustees did not meet yesterday, as might have been expected, but the monthly statement of the treasurer, Mr. Alden S. Swan, was prepared for presentation and was given to the reporters. It is an interesting document in several particulars. As a justification of the low toll policy which the EAGLE advocated so long and which was at last adopted by a small majority it is especially valuable. It shows that the total receipts for the month amounted to \$51,753.69, or \$10,325.69 more than the receipts for August, 1884. So that not only have the people of the two cities been benefited by a lower toll, but this advantage has been gained hand in hand with an increase of revenue. Moreover, the limit of usefulness which in the judgment of far seeing men would eventually be reached by the bridge, namely, the transportation of 30,000,000 people annually, is being steadily approximated. The number of passengers who crossed the bridge in August was exactly 1,924,649, or at very nearly the rate of 21,000,000 a year. It is probable that the mere completion of the bridge improvements contemplated on the New York side and the increase of transportation facilities will bring the annual service of the structure up to the limit. The rapidity with which Brooklyn is growing bids us reflect that before many years have passed the old problem of transportation across the East River will again come up in another form.

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1. Summarize this newspaper article in three sentences:

2. People in Brooklyn and Manhattan had to pay a toll to cross the Brooklyn Bridge. According to this article, how much money did the Brooklyn Bridge make in one month from these tolls?

3. How many people did they estimate would cross the Brooklyn Bridge in one year? What does this tell you about the importance of the Brooklyn Bridge?

4. Read the final sentence again. Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement:

GLOSSARY

Bids Us Reflect: to think about something

Conceive: to make

Feat: a notable deed or accomplishment

Forbear: cannot hold back or keep from

Freight: goods or cargo carried by ship, train, truck or airplane

Justification: to offer a defense for something in the hope of being released from guilt

Pullman: railroad passenger car

Revenue: income produced or that the government collects for public use

Tetanus: dangerous infectious disease caused by a poison made by a bacterium that usually enters the body through a wound

Toll: a tax paid for a privilege or service