



## **Weekly Discussion Questions 3/31/2025**

[Apple, Charles. "Ponies Away!" \*The Spokesman-Review\*, 30 Mar. 2025, p. D7.](#)

### **Classroom Discussion Questions College Level**

**To what extent can the Pony Express be considered a technological or entrepreneurial success despite its short lifespan?** Evaluate the business model and historical context of the Pony Express. What lessons can be drawn from its initial effectiveness and rapid obsolescence? How do these lessons apply to modern innovations?

**How did the creation and failure of the Pony Express reflect broader themes of American expansion, innovation, and risk during the 19th century?** Discuss how the Pony Express fits into the larger narrative of westward expansion and communication development in the U.S. What does it reveal about American attitudes toward progress and the frontier?

**What role do historical myths—such as Buffalo Bill’s claimed involvement—play in shaping public memory and national identity?** Analyze how mythmaking influences our understanding of history. Why do some stories endure despite being inaccurate, and what impact does that have on how we interpret the past?

### **Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 9-12**

**Was the Pony Express a success or a failure?** Consider both the short-term accomplishments and the long-term impact of the Pony Express. What factors contributed to its rapid rise and quick decline? Could it be seen as a necessary step toward more advanced communication technology?

**What does the story of the Pony Express tell us about innovation and risk-taking in American history?** The founders of the Pony Express took on a major financial and logistical challenge. What does this tell you about entrepreneurship and innovation in the 1860s? Are there modern parallels today?

**How do myths like Buffalo Bill’s Pony Express story shape our understanding of history?** William “Buffalo Bill” Cody claimed to be a rider, though there’s no evidence to support it. Why do you think stories like his endure, even when they’re proven false? How does mythmaking affect our collective memory of historical events?

### **Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 6-8**

**Was the Pony Express successful or not?** The Pony Express delivered mail quickly, but it didn’t last very long. Do you think it was a success or a failure? What helped it work at first, and what caused it to end?

**Why did the Pony Express take such a big risk?** The people who started the Pony Express spent a lot of money and built stations across the country. Why do you think they took such a big risk? Can you think of any modern examples where people try something new like that?

**Why do stories like Buffalo Bill’s still get told?** Buffalo Bill said he was a Pony Express rider, but there’s no proof that he was. Why do you think people still tell his story? How can legends or myths change the way we see history?

## **Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 1-5**

**Was the Pony Express a good idea?** The Pony Express helped people send mail fast, but it only lasted a short time. Do you think it was a good idea? Why or why not?

**Why did people try something new like the Pony Express?** The people who started the Pony Express worked hard and spent a lot of money. Why do you think they wanted to try something new?

**Why do people tell stories about Buffalo Bill?** Buffalo Bill said he was a Pony Express rider, but he really wasn't. Why do you think people still talk about him and tell his story?