Jessica Fontenot

Two Perfect Pages

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**Bridges**

Bridges are intriguing pieces of architecture. They reveal and represent so many things: beliefs, ingenuity, the time in which they were built, and pride. Two famous bridges are the Brooklyn Bridge in New York and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Both bridges represent a part of American history because of the unique vision and creativity of their designers. Not only do they provide functionality, but serve as works of art.

The Brooklyn and Golden Gate Bridge are classified as suspension bridges. This type of bridge is supported by many wire ropes that hang from large cables draped between towers. A suspension bridge is designed to withstand wind and allow movement. Both bridges are exposed to harsh weather, but the weather can vary due to their locations on different coasts. New York has four seasons and experiences snow, heat, wind, and rain. San Francisco doesn't usually encounter snow, but has dense fog, high winds, and rain. Both cities are coastal and can experience hurricanes and earthquakes.

It is common to see these bridges in movies, TV Shows, and photos because of their popularity. The Brooklyn Bridge is classified as Neo-Gothic style and has beautiful archways. It looks very old and classic. The Golden Gate Bridge looks more modern and has become iconic due to its orange paint color. I found very interesting that one of the reasons they painted it this color was for increased visibility in fog.

The Brooklyn Bridge was built in 1883 and took years to complete because they obviously did not have the technology and equipment we have today. The towers are built of limestone, granite, and Rosendale cement. After looking at early photos of this bridge being built, I couldn't help but think how dangerous it must have been to be involved in the construction (cables, painting) as a worker. One thing I found fascinating about this project is the engineer Washington Roebling developed decompression sickness during the early stages of the project and had to supervise from an apartment overlooking the bridge. But even more interesting is that he had his wife, Emily Roebling, help by running information back and forth from the job site. I wonder what that was like for her; as a woman in the late 1800s was she respected?

The Golden Gate Bridge, designed by Joseph Strauss and many other engineers, was built in 1937. Because of the advances in metal technology the engineers chose to use fabricated steel. The metal pieces were prefabricated and shipped from a company in Philadelphia, and then erected at the designated sites in San Francisco. Before construction began, the bridge faced opposition from the Department of War and the Navy because they argued the bridge could interfere with ship traffic and, if sabotaged, could block the entrance to one of the main harbors. During the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge, Joseph Strauss innovated safety nets that prevented the deaths of many steelworkers. It seems this would have been a safer working environment than that of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Both bridges still stand today because of the quality of construction and ingenuity of the engineers and designers. The Brooklyn Bridge remains a national landmark and is currently undergoing a renovation. The Golden Gate Bridge serves as an American landmark, and the government has made a large investment to retrofit it for better resistance against earthquakes. Both cities express pride in these accomplishments and have worked hard to keep the bridges open and safe to drive on.