Unit One addressed the big picture of labor market realities—which industries are growing, which are shrinking, and technology’s impact on the market. They learned about the different types of employers in Transportation and Warehousing and read about current issues that affect workers.

Unit Two addressed the inner workings of the job-seeker. What are her interests and passions? What kind of work environment will she enjoy? What careers should she consider based on what she knows about herself, and what factors might influence someone making a career change? Students also learned to navigate career database websites, assess their own interests and conduct a group research project about careers in the Transportation and Warehousing sector.

In Unit Three, students considered what it takes to prepare for a career in Transportation and Warehousing. They learned about common career pathways and considered how career movement happens in this sector. Students learned about different training and educational opportunities available for someone interested in this field.

In Unit Four, students get an insider’s view of the industry. They hear from Transportation and Warehousing workers themselves, through firsthand accounts and interviews in text and video, and discuss what they learn. Then they conduct further research on Transportation and Warehousing careers of interest.
1. VIDEO NARRATIVES IN TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING

Students watch and discuss videos about Transportation and Warehousing careers, then respond to them in writing.

2. CAREER NARRATIVES IN TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING SERIES

Students practice reading, research and note-taking skills by reading Transportation and Warehousing career narratives, then conducting further research on a Transportation and Warehousing career of their choice.

2.1 • Using Question Stems as a Reading Strategy: Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing

Students develop and answer questions about career narratives as a reading technique.

2.2 • Computer Research: Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing

After reading a Transportation and Warehousing career narrative, students learn more about the career by reading descriptions of it on a career database, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, for example.
Video Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing

Students view short videos about workers describing their jobs in the Transportation and Warehousing sector and write responses to questions about the videos. The following page describes and provides links to short videos on various careers in the sector. YouTube has hundreds of short videos on dozens of careers. Teachers may use the ones listed or find additional ones.

PREP

- Pre-screen and select a video that students will view, using the recommended lists on the following pages or other videos that you find.
- Adapt the Transportation and Warehousing Career Video Narratives worksheet to the video you choose.

MATERIALS

- Requires use of a computer and projector.
- Transportation and Warehousing Career Video Narratives worksheet

EXPLAIN

1. Analyzing data about careers is important, but it’s also helpful to hear about how workers in the field experience their jobs. If you meet someone who works in a field you are interested in, what questions would you ask them?
   - What they do at work, how they got their job, what they like and don’t like about it, and advice for newcomers to the field.

2. Today we are going to watch a video about working as a _______________. We are going to watch it twice. The first time, listen for the main ideas. Which career does the video describe? Does the worker seem to like his/her job? How do you know? Then, you are going to read a series of questions about the video, and watch it a second time with these questions in mind. After watching a second time, you are going to write responses to the questions.
3. Play the video. Have a brief discussion about what students learned about the career and the worker's experience of it.

4. Distribute the *Transportation and Warehousing Career Video Narratives* worksheet. Ask students to read the questions, but not write anything yet.

5. Play the video a second time.

6. Ask students to complete the *Transportation and Warehousing Career Video Narratives* worksheet.

7. Discuss the responses as a class.
Video Narratives About Careers in Transportation and Warehousing

The videos listed below depict a variety of Transportation and Warehousing careers. YouTube has hundreds more which can be found by doing keyword searches for careers, for example, “flight attendant career.”

CAREERS IN TRANSPORTING PEOPLE

A Day in the Life of a Metro Transit Bus Operator
A bus driver describes her experience on the job and shares her recent promotion to a dispatcher position. (5:50)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75VhPwxBPY

Becoming a Cruise Ship Captain
This video features the first woman in the United States to become a cruise ship captain and describes the preparation and skills needed for the position. (3:54)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=143&v=vcbwaV91H4

What it’s Like to be a Flight Attendant
A flight attendant walks through a typical day of work as a flight attendant, including her required tasks and interactions with colleagues. (4:00)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j59pglFb_aQ

All Hands on Deck: Being a Deckhand
A deckhand describes the day-to-day duties on board a ship, placing a special emphasis on safety. (4:42)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8mRRZnZZ4

Becoming a Helicopter Pilot
This video provides an overview of the requirements of being a helicopter pilot while describing the realities of the job. (4:52)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pbSJO_YxlE
CAREERS IN TRANSPORTING AND STORING MATERIALS AND PRODUCTS

Life as a Bike Messenger
A bike messenger provides a glimpse of what it takes to be a bike messenger. (3:09)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LuPbNi98M

Hand Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers
This video explains the function of hand laborers and freight, stock, and material movers as well as the different settings in which they work. (1:39)

Being a Truck Driver
A truck driver explains the benefits and drawbacks of being a truck driver. She also discusses the challenges of being a woman in an industry dominated by men. (3:53)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kL__0hqpxDM

A Day in the Life of a U.S. Postal Service Mail Carrier
A mail carrier discusses the pros and cons of delivering mail for a living. (7:03)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nl0I03biz1o

Supply Chain Management: What is it?
This video provides a detailed overview of Supply Chain Management as a field. If time permits, watch this video prior to the career-specific video below. (8:04)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mi1QBxVjZAw

Meet a Supply Chain Analyst
A Supply Chain Analyst describes the various responsibilities of the position. (5:04)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZS-zco2pu0
Transportation and Warehousing Career Video Narratives

Write complete responses to the questions below, based on the video narrative.

1. Which career(s) does this video describe?

2. What does the person/people in the video do at work?

3. What kinds of activities do you see the person doing, or what kinds of activities does the person describe as being part of the job?

4. Does the main speaker (or speakers) in the video enjoy his/her job? What does s/he like about it?

5. What kind of preparation is required for this career?

6. What are some advantages and disadvantages of working in this field, according to the speaker(s)?

7. Does the video make you more interested in this type of career or less interested? Why?
Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing Series

Students learn about Transportation and Warehousing careers from workers themselves, while practicing reading strategies such as developing and answering questions from question stems.

**ACTIVITIES IN THIS SERIES**

2.1 • Using Question Stems as a Reading Strategy:
Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing
- Train Conductor
- U.S. Postal Service Worker
- Flight Attendant
- Automotive Mechanic/Technician

2.2 • Computer Research: Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing
Lesson Guide

Section 2.1

Using Question Stems as a Reading Strategy: Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing

Students read one or more Transportation and Warehousing career narratives, then develop and answer questions as a reading strategy.

PREP

In the preceding class, have students sign up to read the Transportation and Warehousing narrative of their choice. It’s okay if there is a career that no one signs up for. Be prepared to discuss the utility of this activity for students who are interested in sectors other than Transportation and Warehousing.

Examples of uses include improving reading skills, practicing developing questions about reading, expanding vocabulary, learning about Transportation and Warehousing professions they may come in contact with in their work in a different sector.

MATERIALS

- Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing Sign-up
- Career Narrative Questions handout
- Career Narratives

EXPLAIN

1. Distribute the Career Narrative Questions handout. Ask students to complete the first three prompts explaining why they chose the story, what they predict it will be about and what they expect to learn from reading it. If some students don’t remember which narrative they chose, refer to the sign-up sheet.

2. Ask students to annotate their reading, marking parts they thought were important, interesting, surprising or confusing.

3. Distribute the career narratives, and give students time to read and annotate.

4. When students have finished reading, direct them back to the questions handout. Explain that research shows that when people ask their own questions, they remember more of what they read. Here, part of the question is written for them, and part of the question they will have to fill in. Ask students to complete the questions. You may want to have students read aloud a few of the questions once they are completed, or you can circulate to check progress.

5. After students write the questions, ask them to answer the questions, either by exchanging papers with a partner, or by answering their own questions.

NOTE

For guidance on teaching annotation, see “How to Teach Annotation” in the User’s Guide, found at www.tinyurl.com/cunycareerkits.
## Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing Sign-up

In the space below, sign up to read a story about one of the following careers:

- Train Conductor
- U.S. Postal Service Worker
- Flight Attendant
- Automotive Mechanic/Technician

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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Career Narrative Questions

Before reading the story, complete the statements below:

1. I chose the story about being a __________________ because ____________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

2. I predict this narrative is about __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

3. I expect to learn __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________________ from reading this narrative.

After reading the narrative, complete and answer the following questions:

4. What does a ___________________ do every day?

5. What are the best parts of being a ___________________?
6) What are the challenges of being a _______________?

7) Why did _______________ say _______________? What does it mean, and why is it important?

8) What is one surprising and/or interesting thing you learned about being a _______________?

9) What else do you want to find out about being a _______________ that’s not explained in the article?

10) Do you think you would want to be a _______________? Why or why not?
Train Conductor at Amtrak

Amtrak was created in 1971, a year after Congress passed the Rail Passenger Service Act to revive train travel in America (the name “Amtrak” is a combination of the words “America” and “track”). Every year, over 30 million people ride Amtrak trains, and more than 20,000 people work at Amtrak, on its trains and in its stations nationwide.

Longtime Amtrak conductor David Pryor talks about what it’s like to work on a train, what kinds of challenges arise, and why train travel makes him optimistic.

How did you end up working for Amtrak, and how long have you been working there?

I was about 27 years old and working as a bank manager prior to Amtrak. I was looking in the classifieds in the newspaper—this was before the internet age—hoping to further my career and possibly go work at another bank. But I saw that Amtrak was seeking train attendants for a job with free travel and excellent benefits. I saw the ad in October of 1989, and by January of the following year, I was hired. Since 1991, I’ve been a conductor for Amtrak. I’ve been with the company for 27 years; I might as well say half my life.

What different roles have you had at the company?

I started as a Train Attendant. The attendants are the ones who make sure that the passengers are having a comfortable trip; they work the sleeping cars as well.
They keep the passengers informed of delays, and make the beds—144 to be exact—on the train going cross-country. I did that for two years and then applied to be an Assistant Conductor. I worked as an Assistant Conductor for a year before being promoted to a Lead Conductor, and I’ve been doing this job ever since.

In addition to being a conductor, I became a Safety Instructor in 1997. When we had an unfortunate incident—a crash back in the 1990s—the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) made it mandatory that we have evacuation policies in place. I instructed the required evacuation classes, which we still use today.

I also worked as a Train Master for a couple of years and was supervising around 30 conductors and engineers for the Michigan service trains. I basically made sure that all the trains were staffed adequately and that all regulations were being followed. Sometimes, I’d be hiding in a bush beside the tracks with a radar gun to make sure trains were going the right speed. We also worked with the signal systems, which prevent train collisions, to make sure the crews were complying. I did that for a couple of years before going back as a conductor because I really missed working directly with crew and passengers.

**Have you always wanted a job that involved travel?**

Well, I’ve always liked to travel. I grew up in a big family, and we traveled quite a bit. That was one of the things that caught my attention when I saw the ad for this job: it was 100 percent free travel. I was young and had no dependents, so I kind of jumped on it.

As an attendant, I worked from Chicago to New Orleans, to San Antonio, New York, L.A., San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle—so I’ve been in each direction of the country. I’m originally from Chicago, which is good because it’s a connecting point for all our Amtrak trains.

You learn so much about people by working the train. The railroad is like a smaller version of society. The conversation with people on a daily basis is so refreshing. It was such a difference from my banking background, where I was dealing with people’s money and I had to be serious about everything. The railroad is different: People are on vacation, they are traveling to happy events, and it’s very easy to play off of that.

**Has this job changed your view of American society?**

One thing I’ve learned is that we get so much negative information from the media, especially now with the internet. Working on the trains, you see that people are actually still nice. In my 27 years, I’ve seen many people helping complete strangers.

Just the other day, for example, I saw a young person helping a senior who I thought was her grandmother. She was helping her get on the train and everything. I told her that we have limited seating and I didn’t want to separate
them, but she said, “Oh, no. I’m just helping her out. I’m going on to Portland, and I think she’s getting off somewhere in Montana.”

Whenever I experience that type of thing, it reminds me that there are still good people. That’s true of the crewmembers too, because the conductor sets the tone for his or her train. I’m known for being a pretty uplifting, positive person. When I come on the train and have that courteousness and professionalism about myself, it’s infectious with the crewmembers and that goes right on to the passengers.

**What are some of the challenges of your job?**
**And what is the key to doing it well?**

One drawback is the non-traditional hours. Amtrak trains run all over the country, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so somebody’s always working.

Sometimes we have delays because of an accident or a freight-train derailment, and it can take several hours to reroute a train over different territory. There have been times where we had to cancel the train due to a broken bridge that we couldn’t cross. That’s when a conductor really steps up and takes control in transferring crew members and passengers to alternate transportation while staying in contact with Amtrak’s control center in Delaware.

Midwest winters can be pretty brutal, so that’s another drawback. If a road is plowed poorly, the train will go right through the drift and kick up all that snow. If the train breaks down, we have to troubleshoot the problem right then and there out in the cold to get the train moving again.

Back in the mid-’90s, I was on a train route from Chicago to New York and there was ice buildup in between the trains. The last two cars became separated while we were going 80 miles-an-hour—thankfully they were baggage cars and not passenger cars. We basically had to stop the train, close down the railroad, and connect the train back together again. You have to handle electrical cables, communication cables, air hoses, and more.
In addition to these mechanical issues that come up, we have a schedule to worry about as well. While you’re troubleshooting issues, you’re holding up freight trains and other passenger trains.

But you just try to do the best that you can. When this happens to me when I’m out on the road now, I’m not 

timidated

by it because I just go into conductor mode and do what I have to do. The main thing is to keep that train on schedule as much as you possibly can, because people have plans and they have to get places. But even with all that, it’s still a rewarding career.

**How has working on the trains changed in your 27 years?**

When I first started as a train attendant, the last five rows of each car was the smoking section. That’ll give you an idea of how long I’ve been doing it for, right? Then we went to separate smoking cars, and then down to a smoking room, and now we have smoking stops.

When I first started, we used to all have the old conductor punches. Each conductor could choose the shape of the hole they punched in the ticket. Mine was a crescent moon. Actually, I still have my punch just for the kiddies at Christmas time. Nowadays, though, people have smartphones and we can electronically scan the ticket right off the phone.

**How does your work relate to your identity?**

Well, it relates to my identity because I appreciate when people are having a good time. All people really want is to be treated with a little bit of respect. They like to be informed when there are delays. Even if it takes longer than 

anticipated

, you’ve got to let them know, I learned early in my career. Also, I really like that trains take so many cars off the road. I’m part of a greener mode of transportation. I see not just the country but also the world going in that direction. I really think rail transportation is going to take off, especially with high-speed rail. I probably won’t be around for it because I’ll be retired, but I’m certainly looking forward to it.

**VOCABULARY**

- **Revive:** Make new again, make more energetic and complete.
- **Optimistic:** Expecting positive results
- **Prior:** Before
- **Adequately:** To a satisfactory level
- **Dependents:** People who are supported, financially or otherwise, by another person, such as children
- **Crewmembers:** People who work on a train, boat or plane
- **Derailment:** When a train goes off the tracks
- **Brutal:** Extremely difficult
- **Drift:** Large pile of snow
- **Intimidated:** Nervous or afraid
- **Anticipated:** Expected
- **Greener:** Healthier for the natural environment
A Day in the Life of a U.S. Postal Service Worker

Adapted from http://usustatesman.com/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-postal-worker/

Jody Crompton, a mail carrier for the United States Post Office in Providence City, said learning about people and making friends on her mail route is one of the best parts of her job. She said that “you kind of learn about people with the mail that they get. You’re kind of like a fly on the wall.” A skiing magazine, missionary letters, postcards from grandparents and friends, clothing catalogs and bulky packages can tell you a lot about an individual’s interests and activities.

Describe a normal work day

Crompton’s day starts early, beginning at 7 a.m. at the Providence City Post Office. By the time she has arrived, a semi-truck has brought all the mail up from Salt Lake City and the post office clerks have sorted them into each postal worker’s case—a big box with slots for each of the deliveries or stops. Crompton then sorts the mail into each individual slot, 600 total on her route.

“I usually spend three to four hours in the morning sorting the mail. Then they bring us the flats (magazines and bigger envelopes), and then the parcels,” she said. “Then we put it into the trucks and go out and deliver it.” On a good day, it takes her about three and a half hours to deliver the mail. Crompton said the actual delivery is her favorite part of being a mail carrier. “It’s fun when there are people out and about,” she said. “There are people on my route that I almost consider friends now. I’ll see people around town and know who they are.”

What are some challenges in your job?

She said snow during the winter makes the delivery process much harder and slower. “On a snowy day in the winter, delivery can take four and a half hours,” she said.

Just like in movies and books, Crompton said mail carriers actually do worry about dogs. “Dogs are a really big problem,” she said. “I’ve actually had a dog rip my shirt before.”

Crompton said a common pet peeve of mail carriers is when people park in front of their mail boxes, which actually creates a safety issue for mail carriers. “We’re supposed to get out of the truck as little as possible,” she said. “But every time a person parks in front of a mailbox we have to take off our seat belt, park the truck, put on the emergency brake, turn it off and get out of the truck… I know people just don’t think about it, but they don’t realize that we’re dealing with it 50 times a day and it gets to be annoying.”

Crompton said postal workers also get frustrated when they get phone calls from
customers expecting them to know where their late package or letter is, or to complain about getting the wrong mail. “People get really upset if they get the wrong mail, but sometimes it is really difficult,” she said. “There are lots of repeating house numbers; in one neighborhood I have four different houses that have the house number 455, so you really have to pay attention.”

Nuts and bolts of this career
Crompton has worked for the postal service for about six years, but didn’t get her own route until about two years ago. “A mail carrier position is a really hard job to get,” she said. “You have to kind of luck into it and a lot of people have to wait a few years.”

Crompton started as a mail carrier substitute being paid hourly and then had to wait for one of three Providence routes to open up, which usually only happens when someone retires. “Once people get the job, they don’t usually give them up until they have to,” she said. “It’s a lot of waiting and hoping for things to fall into place.”

In addition, Crompton said mail carriers receive about $45,000 salary and good benefits—decent for a job that doesn’t require any education beyond a high school degree and training on driving the trucks and how to handle the mail.

Future of the post office?
Even though it may seem that instant communication like e-mail and cell phones has decreased the importance of “snail mail,” there is still a certain novelty about a crisp blue uniform, white truck and hand delivered postcards and letters.

“Something about the mail truck is friendly,” she said. “People answer the door thinking I’m a solicitor, but as soon as they see my truck or uniform, their expression changes. It’s a nice feeling that you’re bringing something that people want and that they want you there.”
Career Spotlight: Flight Attendant


Photo: U.S. Air Force photo/ Staff Sgt. Stephe110e Wade
https://www.scott.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/159776/375th-operations-group/

Being a flight attendant isn’t your typical 9-to-5 job. Flight attendants can expect 4 a.m. wake-up calls, irregular hours, delays, flight cancellations and weekends and holidays spent working. The trade off, though, is having flexibility, getting to see the world and not having to take your work home with you.

Danny Elkins has been a flight attendant with Delta since it acquired Pan American World Airways’ North Atlantic routes in 1991. We spoke to him to find out what it’s really like to be a flight attendant.

Can you describe your usual workday?
Each workday really depends on the length of the flight and my rotation. These days I generally fly from my base in Atlanta to the West Coast, including Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and other destinations. After meeting with my fellow flight attendants on board, we perform the required safety and security checks before helping passengers board.

We also prepare beverage carts and food carts for cabin service. If I’m working in the first-class cabin, I have meals to cook and I work with pilots to discuss details of the flight.

After we finish our drink and snack service in the cabin, I engage with customers and make sure I’m visible in the aisles to keep them well taken care of. We are there for their safety and comfort, and because every interaction counts, I make the most of it when I’m in the aisles.

What is the hiring process like?
I haven’t been a flight-attendant candidate for 35 years [laughs], but I do help recruit our new hires, so I know a thing or two about the process. Our workplace culture is important to us, so we have to make sure those we hire can not only serve to keep our customers safe and comfortable on board, but also fit well within our organization.

We use a variety of techniques, including video interviews, question and answer sessions, and in-person meetings to evaluate candidates to see if they’ll be successful as a flight attendant. It’s a rigorous process, but we make sure it’s fun and engaging for prospective crew members.

What are some useful skills for a flight attendant to have?
It’s important to have patience and be a good listener when you’re a flight attendant. Flying can be challenging at times, so I do whatever I can to make my customers’ travel experience as fun and easy as possible.

Also, because our passengers are as diverse as the places we fly, their wants and needs vary...
greatly. But I have tools at my disposal to make sure they have a great experience on board the aircraft.

**Do you speak any languages in addition to English?**

I studied Spanish in school and was ultimately hired to fill a language position. I’ve been based in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and now Atlanta, and have had the opportunity to speak Spanish on a daily basis both at home and at work on the plane.

Nearly all flights to Latin American destinations or to Spain have flight attendants on board who speak Spanish. Depending on the size of the plane, Delta often has several language-qualified flight attendants on board. Our customers value and appreciate having someone on board who can speak their native tongue and can act as a resource for them for any onboard translations.

**Do you have any advice for breaking into the industry?**

Do a little research on the company and the industry. Familiarize yourself with important milestones and happenings, or learn about the airline’s community involvement.

If you’re given an opportunity to interview, come dressed for the part—usually business attire. We flight attendants take pride in our uniform and the way we look on board the aircraft and in the airports we serve, so it’s important that you look the part.

**What’s the average pay for a flight attendant?**

It depends on your schedule and experience. I have the option to fly as few as 45 hours per month or as many hours as I want, as long as I meet the required rest mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). So it varies depending on how much flexibility I want in my schedule—that’s part of why I love this career.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, flight attendants earn on average $46,000 a year, and the top 10% earn more than $70,000 a year.

**How do you choose where to fly?**

There’s a lot of flexibility as a flight attendant, but our seniority determines where we can fly and on what days. Our scheduling is computer-based, so I can give the computer up to 40 criteria, for example: start times, aircraft type, weekends off, international versus domestic destinations, long layovers, etc. With those criteria, the computer will try to build a schedule with as many of those choices satisfied as possible—dependent on my seniority.

Right now, I generally choose to work a one-day trip to Mexico and back on Mondays. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, I will work a three-day trip and spend the night in places like Chicago and then San Francisco, flying to a number of destinations in between.
Best part of the job
The best part is being able to have dinner in San Francisco one week and go to the beach in Puerto Rico the next—all while getting paid. And like I mentioned earlier, the flexibility is great. In addition, I’ve taken some amazing vacations over the years. My job gives me the opportunity to take friends and family with me at little or no charge to places that wouldn’t have been an option had I not been a flight attendant.

Worst part of the job
Because we are a global airline, we fly to destinations halfway around the world. Changing time zones can take a toll on your body, but we have strategies to deal with the effects. Long layovers can also help to reset your body clock.

Most surprising thing about being a flight attendant
The training we go through when we get hired and the recurrent training we have to take and pass on a yearly basis—it is both intense and difficult. The classes refresh our memory on how to handle different types of fires, medical issues, evacuation drills, and security, to name a few.

Also, customers are often surprised to know the backgrounds of many of our flight attendants. I have flown with flight attendants who are also attorneys, real-estate agents, nurses, court translators, teachers, pilots, and many other professions that require advanced degrees.

Common misconceptions about the job
We’re commonly thought of as waiters and waitresses on a plane, but the training and our real purpose for being on board goes far beyond service. We are there for our customers’ safety, security, and comfort, and that means we wear many hats. We are trained and can be called to address medical issues, disorderly passengers, a fire, aircraft evacuation, and a number of other unexpected circumstances.

One word that describes being a flight attendant
Adventurous. Anybody who wants to take a job as a flight attendant is probably adventurous. Every day we leave our families, homes, and our comfort zone to travel to cities with different cultures, languages, and customs, all for the thrill of adventure.

I started this career at 22, left my home in North Carolina, and soon found myself living in NYC, flying around the world. Both my home life as well as my professional life became an instant adventure.

VOCABULARY

Seniority: A ranking in order of the amount of time an employee has worked in a business. Employees who have worked in a business for the longest have greater seniority than those who have been employed for a shorter time, and are sometimes entitled to greater privileges, such as choice in schedules.

Recurrent: Ongoing, continued
A Day in the Life of an Automotive Mechanic/Technician

Cars used to be something that you would tinker with. A couple decades ago you could pop the hood, find the problem, and fix it yourself. Today, that’s much harder to do. Cars have computers and special casings all over that make it harder for the average person to work on them.

Being an automotive mechanic is no longer about simply knowing your car parts and replacing what’s broken—although that’s still part of it; it’s also about being able to diagnose what’s wrong in the first place. You have to know your way around a computer, have good people skills, and not be afraid of getting dirty. It involves a little bit of everything. We talked with Jesse Adams about this quickly-shifting career.

1. Tell us a little about yourself, and how you came to work with cars.

My name is Jesse Adams, and I’m an automotive technician at a Toyota dealership. Starting around when I was four years old, I liked taking things apart to see how they worked. From simple things like toys to more complex things like clocks, I’d take apart anything I could get my hands on.

As I grew older, I gained hands-on experience in many trades by working with my father. He is an Electrician, but he also performed all of our family’s home repairs and construction projects. From replacing copper pipes, to building a deck, and doing anything electrical, my father handled almost everything. But when the car had a problem, it went to a Mechanic. That stood out to me. Not to mention, every cool guy on television was or had been a mechanic.

2. What was your path to becoming a mechanic and technician?

What kind of training and certifications did you need?

I didn’t have a chance to take any automotive classes in high school, but I figured anything I learned would help me in life in some way. Upon graduating, I chose to attend Nashville Auto Diesel College, where I also maintained a 4.0 GPA (Grade Point Average).
Some people choose to jump into the automotive repair industry with no schooling and only on-the-job training, but they are at a disadvantage these days. Computers, networks, and electronics in today’s automobiles require more than just a mechanic. Technicians are able to diagnose and repair these complex non-mechanical, digital systems as well as perform the work of a mechanic.

At Nashville Auto Diesel College, I studied not only the mechanical systems like brakes, engines, and transmissions, but also the electronics that run them. While doing so, I worked at a tire store, mostly putting up tires and sweeping the shop. It was enough to get my foot in the door. After getting through school, I started changing oil and rotating and changing tires. That’s the entry level job everyone starts with. You get covered in oil and dirt everyday, and it’s just not fun.

Slowly but surely, though, you gain skill and trust from your employer and move on to brakes and maintenance work. Then you start performing mechanic work—diagnosing and repairing noises and vibrations, replacing gaskets and water pumps, and even tearing down engines and transmissions. At the same time, you start to diagnose check-engine lights and electrical problems, using computers, scanners, voltmeters, and similar tools to find what sensors or wires have failed.

As you progress in your work as a technician, you’ll want to seek out certifications to show your employers and customers that you know what you are doing. Many national chains as well as car makers offer training and certifications that are required for their employees. The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence also has certifications that are industry standard. They have tests to certify a technician in several areas of expertise. I have all of mine except for the transmission certifications because I hate transmission work.

3. Tell us a little bit about an average work day.

After I have my coffee, I get to work on a repair order my service advisor or dispatcher gives me. The repair order will describe the customer’s concerns. Most of the time, it’s an oil change, tire rotation, a brake noise or some other type of routine maintenance. Sometimes, though, it’s more interesting, like when the customer hits the brakes and the horn goes off. In any case, I handle the customer’s concerns and usually do an inspection of the vehicle.
A lot of people think this inspection is just a way for the repair shop to sell more services and take more of their money. That’s not the case. When inspecting the vehicle, a technician can see which parts are worn or might cause damage to other parts. This proactive approach often saves the owner money in the long run.

After the inspection, if any concerns are found, the technician reports them to the customer along with a diagnosis of the customer’s concerns stated on the repair order. If a customer decides to repair the vehicle, that’s when you get to take it apart, replace or fix something, then put it back together. Once a repair order is finished, the vehicle is returned to the customer and I receive another repair order and start the whole process over again.

4. How do you find work as a mechanic? What’s the job market like? And are you in a union?

Finding work as a mechanic is generally pretty easy. Most places will always take a resume, and really good technicians can be hard to find in some places. Generally, the more trained and certified a technician is, the better their chances of being hired. I have no experience with union shops, though there are some. Some states require a state certification for professional technicians.

5. What’s the earning potential for an automotive technician?

The earning potential for a technician is all over the place. Who you work for, what city or town you’re in, and how hard you work are all determining factors. Dealerships sometimes don’t offer the best wages, but the working conditions can be better—most of the special tools required for that brand of car are provided, and there is an opportunity to become a bit more specialized. Independent shops may offer a bit better pay, but the hours may be longer, the equipment may not be as new, and working on all brands of automobiles can be more difficult.

Starting out as an oil changer, most people can expect to make minimum wage, maybe a bit more. As you move up and gain more skill, you can get a better hourly wage. But by that time, the flat-rate system will play a role and the largest factor of your annual earnings will be work ethic. Some high quality technicians in the industry can make a six-figure income, but I’d say average would be closer to $40k-$50k.

6. What’s the best part of your career?

The satisfaction comes from disassembly, reassembly, diagnosing problems, and
helping people. Working with your hands to remove parts, using all manner of tools to perform all kinds of tasks—both are satisfying in their own right.

Add to that, solving problems using your head, and these physical tasks become even more fulfilling. When you top it off by returning what you’ve repaired to the person who owns it and see they are ecstatic that their baby has been fixed, it makes you feel kind of like Superman. That satisfaction is the main reason I chose this field. If I were an old man lying in a hospital ready to die, I could look back at my life as an Auto Technician and be proud of what I had done, fixing cars for people. Some people wouldn’t be able to say that.

7. What’s the worst part?

Over time, the work you do as a technician takes a toll on your body. That’s the part that I really hate about this career. My hands hurt, my back hurts, and my knees hurt sometimes, and I know it won’t get any better.

8. What’s the biggest misconception people have about your job?

A lot of people think mechanics and technicians aren’t very smart. In truth, they have critical thinking skills and problem solving skills that are better than most people’s. When a vehicle comes in with a noise or warning light, it’s like a puzzle that we need to solve. We only have a few clues before we begin to investigate the cause of the problem. We not only need these skills, but also the knowledge of how the systems of each vehicle work so that we can figure out not only what happened, but why. Technicians are smart, knowledgeable, mechanically-inclined people who, through repairing and maintaining vehicles, gain the satisfaction of helping people and keeping the world turning.

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**VOCABULARY**

- Tinker: Fix by trying a number of possible solutions
- Automotive Mechanic: Someone who repairs and maintains cars
- Trades: Jobs in the Construction sector, such as electricity, plumbing or carpentry
- Diagnose: Determine the cause or source of a problem
- Expertise: To have a lot of knowledge in a subject; to be an expert
- Proactive: Taking steps to prevent future problems
- Flat rate: Getting paid per project, rather than at an hourly wage
Section 2.2

60 MINUTES

Computer Research: Career Narratives in Transportation and Warehousing

Students conduct additional research on the career they read about in the previous Career Narrative activity, using a career database.

PREP

- Explore the following career database websites and choose one for this activity:
  - [www.careerzone.ny.gov](http://www.careerzone.ny.gov)—The New York State career database
  - [www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com)—A subscription-based career database. Requires a login and password. Many programs have subscriptions to this database.

- Choose a career from the database and be prepared to navigate to, explore and discuss this example career with students.

MATERIALS

- *Researching Careers Online* worksheet
- Computers are required for this lesson.

EXPLAIN

1. If students have not previously used the database you have chosen to use for this activity, give a brief introduction to the website (*refer to Career Database Lessons in Unit 2 for database information*). Emphasize the ways the database is organized and how students can use it to find careers.

2. Ask students to navigate to the website. Look at a sample career as a class, discussing what information is included and how it is organized.

3. Distribute *Researching Careers Online* worksheet. Ask students to explore careers related to the one they read about in the Career Narratives and complete the worksheet.

4. If time remains, students can research the career of their choice, paraphrasing the information they find.
Researching Careers Online

Use the career database to answer the questions below.

1. What are some careers that are similar or related to the career narrative you read in the previous lesson? Find at least 6 and list them below:

2. Choose one of the careers you listed above. Write four questions you would like answered about this career.

3. Research the career listed above, and write the answers, in your own words, to the questions you wrote in #2.
Nothing ever comes to one, that is worth having, except as a result of hard work.

– Booker T. Washington

Born a slave on a Virginia farm, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON (1856-1915) rose to become one of the most influential African-American intellectuals of the late 19th century. In 1881, he founded the Tuskegee Institute, a black school in Alabama devoted to training teachers. Washington was also behind the formation of the National Negro Business League 20 years later, and he served as an adviser to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Although Washington clashed with other black leaders such as W. E. B. Du Bois and drew ire for his seeming acceptance of segregation, he is recognized for his educational advancements and attempts to promote economic self-reliance among African Americans.

Source: http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/booker-t-washington