

Labor in the Progressive Era

The Basics

Subject Area(s):

7th Grade/Middle School Social Studies/American History

Standards:

Kyrene School District Social Studies Standards (based on Arizona State Standards)

- S1C7PO5 – Analyze the impact of industrialization on the U.S., including: factory conditions, unions
- S1C7PO6 – Describe the following Progressive Reforms that resulted from the Industrial Revolution: labor unions

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The Lesson

This unit is set during the Progressive Era, approximately 1890-1920. During this time, Americans were experiencing many changes. We were industrializing, thousands of immigrants were coming in each year, and we saw a rise in corruption in both business and politics. All of this led to many people seeing the need for changes to be made. Most times these changes were social, economic or political. This project will focus on social changes, in particular working conditions. Songs in this unit can be used as primary sources, giving students a window into the world of factory workers during this time period.

Introduction:

Students generally don't understand what it meant to work in a factory at the turn of the century. It is important that they see what many people experienced, including kids their age, and the fact that this was their reality for most of their lives. The purpose of these lessons is for students to understand working conditions for many Americans, as well as what changes people felt needed to be made. Rather than focusing on individual, well-known labor leaders, students in these lessons will learn more about the workers and what they did to try and change their situation. The songs used in these lessons can be seen as primary documents. They will help students understand what the workers were experiencing and what they did to try and change their situation.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand factory conditions at the turn of the 19th century.
- Students will be able to understand how workers tried to change their working situation.
- Students will be able to use songs as a primary source.

- Students will be able to use knowledge learned to create a product about industrialization and the rise of labor unions.

Resources/Materials

Picture

Workers in a Philadelphia Factory, 1902. 1902. Photograph. The History Project, University of California Davis, Davis, California. *The History Project.* University of California Davis. Web. 11 July 2013. <http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/ic/image_details.php?id=4626>.

Children's book

Markel, Michelle. Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909. New York: Balzer + Bray 2013

Songs

"Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine"

- Background – In May 1930, Grace Lumpkin submitted "A Southern Cotton Mill Rhyme" to the *New Masses*. She does not believe that it had ever appeared in print before she had submitted it. Lumpkin said that she had heard it while waiting at a National Textile Workers Union Hall in Charlotte, North Carolina. Several songs were sung in the time waiting for the meeting to start. One man, only known as Mr. McDonald, got up to sing this song. He explained that he had heard it many years earlier while working at a loom next to a man in Buffalo, South Carolina. The man started singing it, making up the words as he went. It then spread from worker to worker. No one is really sure where the melody came from. From 1956 on, the name of it was changed to "Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine".
 - Green, Archie. Wobblies, Pile Butts, and Other Heroes: Laborlore Explorations. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993.
- Music – Traditional. No printed music available.
- Recommended Recording – Seeger, Pete. "Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine." Rec. 1957. *American Industrial Ballads.* Pete Seeger. Smithsonian/Folkways Records, 1991. CD.
- Lyrics – [http://www.themusic-world.com/artist/pete seeger/lyrics/let them wear their watches fine](http://www.themusic-world.com/artist/pete%20seeger/lyrics/let%20them%20wear%20their%20watches%20fine)

"Rebel Girl"

- Background - Joe Hill (1879-1915) had been an immigrant worker before his work of writing songs for the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World). Hill admired the work of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, a speaker for the IWW, and best known female member of the organization. He admired her ability to be so dedicated to the

organization, and yet still have time to be a single mother. He believed that the IWW was overlooking a valuable resource in women members, that women workers were often overlooked, and that the organization should do a better job in recruiting women. The song "The Rebel Girl" was written for Flynn and to hopefully bring more women into the IWW.

- Adler, William M. The Man Who Never Died: The Life, Times, and Legacy of Joe Hill, American Labor Icon. New York: Bloomsbury, 2011.
- Music - Hill, Joe *The Rebel Girl* Rebel Song Book: Eighty-Seven Socialist and Labor Songs for Voice and Piano. Ed. Friedman, Samuel H. New York: Rand School, 1935. Print.
- Recommended Recordings – Dickens, Hazel. "The Rebel Girl." Rec. 1990. *Don't Mourn - Organize! Songs of Labor Leader Joe Hill*. Various Artists. 1990. CD. [Joe Hill, arranged and adapted with additional original material by Hazel Dickens.]
- Lyrics – from the liner notes of the CD, "Don't Mourn – Organize! Songs of Labor Songwriter Joe Hill". See lyrics below.

"Bread and Roses"

- Background – James Oppenheim (1882-1932) wrote a poem "Bread and Roses" that was published in American Magazine in December 1911. It became linked to the 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, after a labor publication mistakenly claimed that the phrase 'bread and roses' came from the strike. It is believed that music was put to the poem around the time of the strike, and the workers might have sung the song while on strike.
 - Watson, Bruce Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream New York: Viking 2005
 - Fowke, Edith and Glazer, Joe. Songs of Work and Protest New York: Dover Publications, 1973.
- Music – Words by James Oppenheim. Music by Caroline Kohlsaat. From: Fowke, Edith and Glazer, Joe. Songs of Work and Protest New York: Dover Publications, 1973.
- Recommended Recording -
Joan Baez and Mimi Farina, performers. 1979?. "Bread and Roses" by Mimi Farina. YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWkVcaAGCi0> [From the LP, "Bread and Roses Festival of Music - Various Artists", released 1980, Fantasy Records. Recorded live at the Greek Theater, U.C. Berkeley, October 5-7, 1979.]
- Lyrics – Fowke, Edith and Glazer, Joe, Songs of Work and Protest New York: Dover Publications 1973

Discussion Questions and Vocabulary

Picture

- What do you see?
- What is happening in the picture?
- When do you think this picture was taken? Where? How can you tell?
- What, if any, issues/problems do you think there would be working in a place like this?

“Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine” – using the strategy The Story Behind the Song

- What strikes you most about this song?
- What is the purpose of the song: to entertain, convince or persuade, express an emotion, encourage, tell a story?
- How does the music help to tell the message of the song?
- What emotions does the song express?
- In your own words, what is the message of the song?

Vocabulary:

- Looms: machines for combining two or more threads or yarn to form cloth
- Shuttles: a device used in weaving to carry the thread back and forth from side to side through the threads that run lengthwise
- Whizz: moving quickly
- Toil: to work hard and long
- Keen: to cut or sting

“The Rebel Girl” – using the strategy I Can Hear it Now

- Imagine: who is singing this song?
- What are they feeling and thinking?
- Put yourself in the picture – where are you? What are you doing?
- After the song is over, what do you think happened next?

Vocabulary:

- Thoroughbred: bred from the best stock through a long line

“Bread and Roses” – using the strategy of graphic organizers

- How is this song different from “The Rebel Girl”? How is it similar

Vocabulary:

- Drudging: tiring
- Drudge: to do hard, menial or monotonous work
- Idler: inactive

Procedures

Lesson 1

- Put the picture up on the screen for all to see
- Ask students the discussion questions (see above) and give them time to discuss each one in a Think/Pair/Share
- Discuss the picture with the whole class
- As we have been studying in class, times were a changing in the U.S. With the rise of industrialization, big business, and immigrants, there were many changes, both good and bad.
- Before playing the song, ask students to consider: what is the mood of the song? What is the singer saying? Play the song “Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine” once
- After listening to the song, discuss the questions they were asked to consider.
- Go over the difficult vocab in the song.
- Play the song a second time, this time with lyrics in front of the students
- Give the students the discussion questions (see above) and have them discuss them in pairs
- Put students into groups and have them share their answers to the questions with each other
- Give each group a large piece of paper (like butcher paper)
- Have students brainstorm words (not phrases) they think accurately describes the message of the song. Place those words on one half of the large paper
- On the other half of the paper, the groups will draw a picture they believe accurately depicts the message of the song.
- Put papers up around the room and allow time for students to do a gallery walk
- Closure for the lesson – What was this song about? How is it similar or different from the picture? What were working conditions like for many people at the turn of the century?

Lesson 2

- Review what they have learned about working conditions in factories and mills at the turn of the 20th century – make a list on board or under document camera.
- Have students in pairs brainstorm ways that workers could try and change their situation.
- Play the song “The Rebel Girl”
- After the song is over, go over some of the difficult vocab. Then ask the students to listen to the song again, but this time use the first three discussion questions above. Play the song a second time
- Provide the lyrics for the students if necessary. Have them discuss the last question with a partner. As a class, go over the discussion questions.
- Give the students a blank piece of paper (like computer paper). On one side, they should draw a picture as if they were there and what it would have looked like. On the other side, they should draw what they think would happen next after the song was over.
- Have students take out a piece of paper. Let them know they will be doing a Double Bubble map (from Thinking Maps – it is a compare/contrast graphic organizer)

- In first bubble they should write “The Rebel Girl” (song) and in the second write “Brave Girl” (book)
- Next, read the book Brave Girl by Michelle Markel to the class (this is a 25 page illustrated children’s book)
- Either while listening to story or afterwards, students can be filling in the graphic organizer.
- The story may need to be read a second time to help students really see the differences and similarities between the song and story
- Then allow students, first in pairs and then in small groups, to compare graphic organizers and the chance to add to or change what they have.
- Closure to lesson – discuss some of the similarities and differences between the song and the book. What were people doing to try to make changes to their working conditions?

Lesson 3

- Students should pull out the compare/contrast graphic organizer from previous lesson.
- Go over the similarities again. Hopefully one of them will be that the book and song were about women.
- In pairs, have students discuss: Why do you think the book and the song were about women? What kind of role do you think women played in creating change in working conditions?
- Play the song “Bread and Roses” once.
- Ask students what they think the song is about.
- Hand out the lyrics. Go over any difficult vocab. Play the song a second time
- Ask students: In “Bread and Roses” what words or phrases stood out to you? Why?
- Have them create a Double Bubble Map (a Thinking Map – can use any kind of compare/contrast graphic organizer) to compare “The Rebel Girl” and “Bread and Roses”
- After a chance to fill out the graphic organizer, allow them to get with a partner or in small groups to compare and adjust their organizer.
- Use the discussion questions (see above) to talk about both songs.
- Using the graphic organizer from lesson 2 and this lesson, have students draw four scenes. Scene one should be about working conditions – this can be based on the book, the song “Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine” or the picture they saw. Scenes 2-4 should be about how workers tried to change their situation and be based on the book, “The Rebel Girl” and “Bread and Roses”.
- The pictures will be their ticket out the door for the day.

Closure

- Have students create a list of what working conditions were like and what the workers wanted to see changed (this is to review what they have learned in the previous lessons)
- Choose one of the three songs presented in class or research on your own. Create a picture book, a digital picture book, a 1-act play, or a song (minimum of 4 verses) to

show what you have learned about working conditions, how people tried to change them, why they wanted to change them, and in particular, the role women played in these changes. The song that you choose must appear somehow in your final product.

Evaluation

- There are informal evaluations at the end of each lesson.
- In the closure activity, this would be the final evaluation. A rubric or checklist would be used for their final project.

Reflection

This plan offers a variety of ways for students to show their understanding and learning. Students of all levels could be successful in each of these activities. I try to create a variety of learning experiences so that all students' learning styles can be matched. Not all students do well with typical paper/pencil evaluations. By giving them the chance to be creative, show what they have learned, and be able to choose how they present their learning, I believe is invaluable. In this plan, students are working individually, with a partner and in groups. This gives them a chance to clarify what they have studied and to share what they have learned.

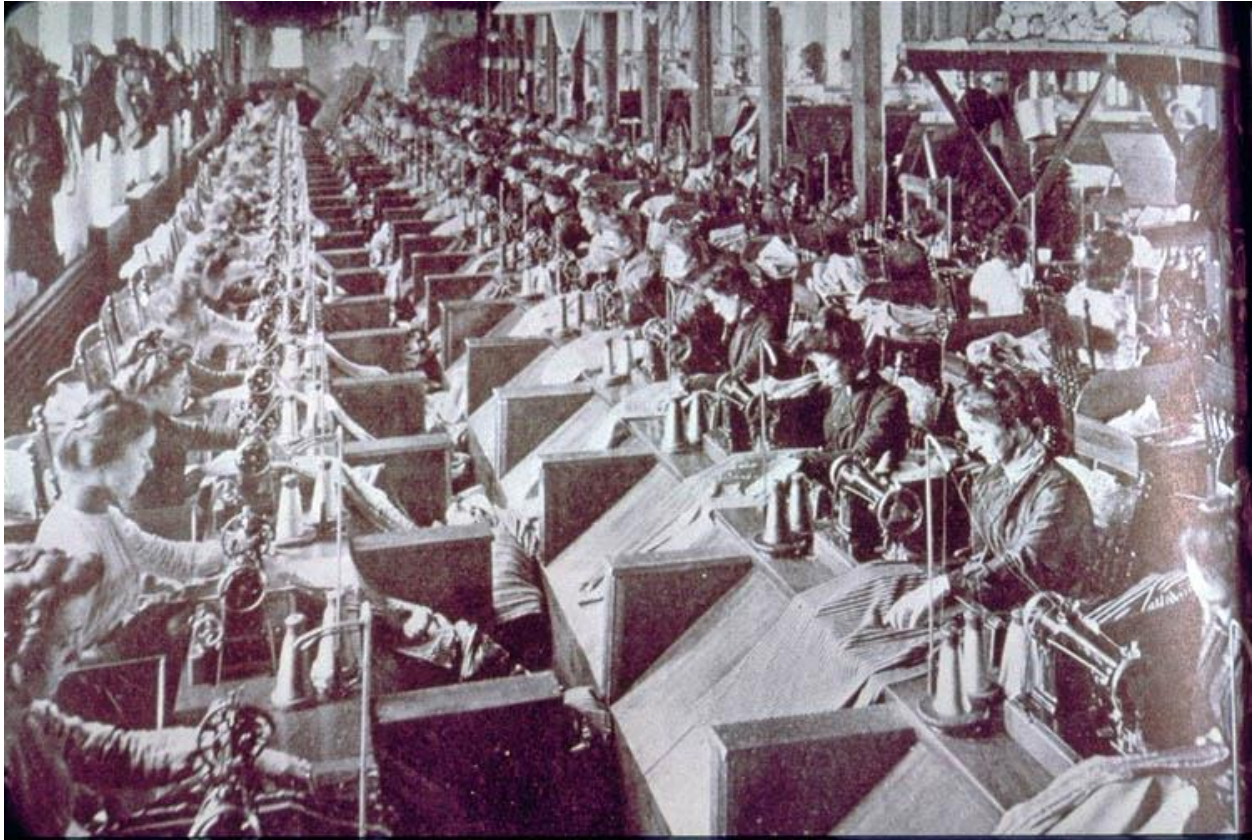


Photo Source: http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/ic/image_details.php?id=4626

“The Rebel Girl” lyrics as performed by Hazel Dickens
(on liner notes it says “Joe Hill, arranged and adapted with additional original material by Hazel Dickens/©1990 Happy Valley Music, BMI)

There are women of many descriptions
In this cruel world, as everyone knows
Some are living in beautiful mansions
And are wearing the finest of clothes
There’s the blue-blooded queen or the
Princess
Who have charms made of diamonds and
Pearls
But the only and thoroughbred lady
Is the rebel girl

She’s a rebel girl, a rebel girl
She’s workingclass,
The strength of this world
From Maine to Georgia you’ll see

Her fighting for you and for me
Yes, she's there by your side
With her courage and pride
She's unequalled anywhere
And I'm proud to fight for freedom
With a rebel girl

Though her hands may be hardened
From labor
And her dress may not be very fine
But a heart in her bosom is beating
That is true to her class and her kind
And the bosses know that they can't
Change her
She'd die to defend the workers' world
And the only and thoroughbred lady
Is a rebel girl

She's a rebel girl, a rebel girl
She's workingclass,
The strength of this world
From Maine to Georgia you'll see
Her fighting for you and for me
Yes, she's there by your side
With her courage and pride
She's unequalled anywhere
And I'm proud to fight for freedom
With a rebel girl
Yes, I'm proud to fight for freedom
With a rebel girl