

2012

## Lesson Plan: Comparative Working Conditions - An Oral History (grades 9-12)

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### Recommended Citation

Hons, Justin, "Lesson Plan: Comparative Working Conditions - An Oral History (grades 9-12)" (2012).  
*Project Documents*. Paper 16.  
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## Lesson Plan

### Course/Grade Level:

- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History

### Topic/Title:

- Comparative Working Conditions – An Oral History

### Historical Time Period(s):

- The Development of Modern America (1865-1920)

### Thematic Question:

- In what ways are working conditions today similar to those at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in what ways do they differ?

### Standards/Benchmarks/Indicators:

- Social Studies: History
  - B. Explain the social, political and economic effects of industrialization.
    3. Explain the causes and effects of the Industrial Revolution with emphasis on:
      - a. The changing role of labor and the rise of the union movement;
      - b. Changes in living and working conditions for the early industrial working class, especially women and children;
      - c. The growth of industrialization around the world.
- Social Studies: People in Society
  - A. Analyze the influence of different cultural perspectives on the actions of groups
    2. Analyze the perspectives that are evident in African-American, American Indian and Latino art, music, literature and media and how these contributions reflect and shape culture in the United States.
  - C. Analyze the ways that contacts between people of different cultures result in exchanges of cultural practices.
    3. Explain how advances in communication and transportation have impacted:
      - a. Globalization
- Social Studies: Economics
  - A. Compare how different economic systems answer the fundamental economic questions of what goods and services to produce, how to produce them, and who will consume them.
    2. Analyze the development and impacts of labor unions, farm organizations and business organizations on the U.S. economy

- Social Studies: Skills and Methods

A. Evaluate the reliability and credibility of sources.

### **Materials/Resources:**

1. Primary sources of working conditions at the turn of the twentieth century
2. Audio recording device

### **Motivation (Attention Grabber):**

- Tell the story of the time my father cut his leg with a saw 4” deep while at work. He attempted to collect worker’s compensation but the company fought him. He eventually went bankrupt before a judge ordered the company to pay what he was due.

### **Activities:**

1. Have students examine and analyze a variety of primary accounts of workplace conditions during the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both non-fiction and fiction (Examples: Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in NYC and *The Jungle*’s depictions of life in the slaughterhouses of Chicago).
2. Have students arrange an interview to be recorded with someone they know that works in a job they consider “difficult” in any way.
  - a. Work with students to construct 20 pre-arranged questions about work.
  - b. Have individuals craft 10 additional questions specific to their subject’s job.
  - c. Conduct role-play interviews in class to prepare for the real interview.
3. Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting this account to their own interview

### **Assessment:**

1. Have students select a primary source account from the turn of the century.
2. Use the contents of the Venn diagram to write a 4 paragraph essay.
  - a. Summarize the working conditions at the turn of the century.
  - b. Summarize the working conditions of the contemporary worker.
  - c. Explain how the two workers experienced different and similar conditions.
  - d. Provide your opinion on how much working conditions have or have not changed in the last 100 years.