



Industrialization and the Rise of Labor Unions

The Labor Movement

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	100 - 150 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	2 - 3 class periods
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

Should governments regulate businesses to protect the rights of workers? How do citizens, individually and collectively, influence government policy?

Summary

In this lesson students explore the problems that industrialization created for workers by examining a collection of photos and texts. Next, students read about the rise of labor unions in response to the problems previously identified and their overarching goals. To extend their learning, students view an interview with Oklahoma State AFL-CIO President Jimmy Curry and explain how labor organizations advocate for workers' rights historically and currently.

Snapshot

Engage - Students observe real photographs of factory workers and make inferences about working conditions during industrialization.

Explore - Students summarize significant labor conflicts and make generalizations about the relationship between labor, big business, and the government as the American economy became more industrialized.

Explain - Students read about the rise of labor unions and summarize their overarching goals.

Extend - Students view a video interview with Oklahoma State AFL-CIO President Jimmy Curry, learning about how labor organizations and unions have protected workers throughout history. Based on the interview, students identify how the concerns they learned about in the previous section have been addressed.

Evaluate - Students create an Exit Ticket summarizing their learning in response to a Frederick Douglass quote.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States History (9th through 12th grade))

USH.2.1E: Evaluate the significance of the Labor Movement on the organization of workers including the impact of the Pullman strikes, the Haymarket Riot, and the leadership of Eugene V. Debs.

Attachments

- [Issues-That-Labor-Unions-Protested-Chart.docx](#)
- [Labor-Conflict-in-the-Industrial-Age-Chart-with-Teacher-s-Notes.docx](#)
- [Labor-Conflict-in-the-Industrial-Age-Chart.docx](#)
- [Labor-Conflict-in-the-Industrial-Age-Reading.docx](#)
- [Labor-Movement-Photograph-Set.docx](#)
- [Lesson-Slides-Industrialization-and-the-Rise-of-Labor-Unions.pptx](#)
- [The-Rise-of-Labor-Unions-Reading-With-Teacher-s-Notes.docx](#)
- [The-Rise-of-Labor-Unions-Reading.docx](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Labor Movement Photograph Set (attached; one per student)
- Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Reading (attached; one per student)
- Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Chart (attached; one per student)
- Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Chart With Teacher's Notes (attached)
- The Rise of Labor Unions Reading (attached; one per student)
- The Rise of Labor Unions Reading With Teacher's Notes (attached)
- Issues That Labor Unions Protested Chart (attached; one per student)
- Internet access

Engage

Teacher's Note - Lesson Context

Students should have prior knowledge about the impacts of industrialization of the American economy including the rise of big business, the growth of factories and railroads, and the impacts this had on laborers.

Divide students into small group so 3-4. Give each student a copy of the **Labor Movement Photograph Set**. Assign each group 1 of the 6 photos to analyze. Display **slide 3** and ask students to use their prior knowledge and the observations they make in response to their assigned photo to answer this question:

What problems did industrialization create for workers?

Once students have had a few minutes to discuss their photograph and determine a response, ask each group to share their photo observations and their response with the whole class. Please use **slides 4 - 9** to display each photo as the groups are discussing them with the class. After all groups have shared, work with the class to summarize the major issues workers faced as the American economy became more industrialized. You can use **slide 10** to create a class list of major issues facing workers. **Slide 11** contains potential responses.

Tell students that because of these issues, many American citizens noted the changing relationship between workers, big business, and the government and began to question the role the government should play in regulating the economy. Display **slide 12** and tell students that throughout this lesson they will consider the following essential questions: *Should governments regulate business to protect the rights of workers? and how do citizens, individually and collectively, influence government policy?*

Consider sharing also the learning objectives on **slide 13**.

Explore

Display **slide 14** and tell students that working with their small groups, they are going to read about four events that characterized the relationship between workers and business owners as well as the relationship between business interests, the government, and workers, playing out across the country in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Distribute the **Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Reading**, and tell students that as they read about each event, they should consider the following questions and record their responses in the **Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Chart**:

What happened during each of these events?

What do these stories tell us about the relationship between workers, big business, and the government as the American economy became more industrialized?

Tell students that they should summarize each of the four events before moving on to answer the second question.

When students have finished reading and filling out their chart. Ask representatives from the various groups to share their responses with the whole class until you have reviewed each section of the chart as a whole class. Then, summarize the main ideas that students shared with the class, adding any additional information if needed. Please see the **Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Chart With Teacher's Notes** to help you facilitate this activity and discussion. Conclude this discussion by noting that the late 19th century and early 20th century boasted a surge in labor activity and organizing in effort to leverage collective power of workers as well as the power of the government to counteract the powers of big business.

Teacher's Note - Modeling + Chunking

If you feel your students would benefit from modeling how to approach this assignment, consider asking them to read about the first event, the Haymarket Affair. Then, give them a few minutes in their groups to discuss how they would summarize this event. Next, call on a few groups to share their thinking with the class and then using their ideas create a summary that the class can write down in the first section of their chart.

Additionally, you might choose to chunk this assignment by letting small groups work together to create their summaries but calling the class back together between each event in effort to provide greater support and scaffolding. Then you could ask students to work on their response to the second question and then call students back as a whole class to finalize their responses.

Explain

Display **slide 15** and tell students that they are now going to read **The Rise of Labor Unions Reading**. As students read with their groups ask that they use the [Why-Lighting](#) strategy to highlight any information that answers this question:

What were the overarching goals of labor unions?

As students highlight relevant information that should make notes in the margins explaining their reasoning.

After students have had time to read and Why-Light their article ask representatives from each group to share at least one piece of information that they highlighted and explain their reasoning. Summarize the main ideas that students took away from this article. Please see **The Rise of Labor Unions Reading With Teacher's Notes** to help you facilitate this activity and discussion.

Next, display **slide 16** and show students the image of the fish. Explain to student that they are going use the [Caption This](#) strategy to individually create a 2-3 sentence caption that explains how the image represents the goals of the labor unions. Students should include evidence from the reading and the previous class activities and discussions to support their response. If time allows, ask students to share their captions with their small groups and/or with the whole class.

Teacher's Note - Possible Student Response

This image represents the goals of the labor unions by showing that while the big fish, representing big business, has the power to exploit workers, represented by the little fish, individually, if workers collectively organize they can find power in numbers to make changes to the economic system. Workers did this by forming labor unions to demand that the government create laws to regulate business. Taking collective actions, labor unions fought for laws that would shorten the work day, end child labor, require fair wages, and create safer working conditions.

Teacher's Note - Technology integration option

Rather than having students write their captions on a piece of paper or notecard, you could instead, include the image on [Padlet](#) board or LMS discussion board and ask that students post their captions there.

Extend

Display **slide 17**. Pass out a copy of the **Issues That Labor Unions Protested Chart** to each student. Ask students, based on what they have learned so far throughout the lesson, to share out the major issues they believe labor unions were fighting to resolve. As students share, make a class list. Consider typing students' issues into the chart on slide 17 and having students write them down on their charts in the "Issue" column. **Slide 19** shows examples that students may mention. Before moving on to the next activity of the lesson, make sure students have filled in the "Issues" column on their charts.

Continue to **slide 18**. Show students the [video interview](#) with Oklahoma State AFL-CIO President, Jimmy Curry. AFL-CIO stands for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. In the video, Mr. Curry explains the influence of labor organizations, how labor organizations have worked throughout history, and how they continue protecting workers. As students watch the interview, ask them to take notes in the right-hand "Resolutions" column of their chart about how labor organizations have addressed the issues recorded on left side.

Teacher's Note - Additional Information about the AFL-CIO

According to [the AFL-CIO website](#): "The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) works tirelessly to improve the lives of working people. We are the democratic, voluntary federation of 55 national and international labor unions that represent 12.5 million working men and women. We strive to ensure all working people are treated fairly, with decent paychecks and benefits, safe jobs, dignity, and equal opportunities." For more background information on the Oklahoma State AFL-CIO, visit their website [here](#).

After the video, display **slide 19**. Ask for volunteers to share their notes on how labor unions helped to fight each issue. Sample responses can be seen on **slide 20**.

Display **slide 21**. As a follow-up, ask students to consider the lesson's essential questions on the slide:

Should governments regulate businesses to protect the rights of workers?

How do citizens, individually and collectively, influence government policy?

Give student groups 3–4 minutes to discuss in small groups, and then ask groups to share out their answers. Remind students that there is not a right answer, but they need to support their answers with evidence and reasoning. Students can use information they learned in the lesson, and can draw from their own previous knowledge and experience. Conclude the discussion by noting that many of the protections we take for granted upon entering the workforce exist only because those who came before us fought for those rights to be secured through the creation of new laws.

Evaluate

Have students turn in the Labor Conflict in the Industrial Age Chart from the Explore section as well as their Caption This response. These can serve as assessments for this lesson.

If time allows, assess their understanding of the labor movement further by displaying **slide 22** and using the following prompt as an [Exit Ticket](#):-

How does this quote from activist, Frederick Douglass, "Power concedes nothing without demands," relate to the organization of labor unions during industrialization?

Students can submit their responses on a notecard, in a notebook or alternatively, on a LMS discussion board. Consider asking several students to share their responses with the whole class.

Teacher's Note - Possible Student Response

Douglass's quote relates to the organization of labor unions during industrialization because in this case, the 'power' of big business was unchecked by government regulation and they were free to exploit workers for their own economic benefit, mainly larger profits. It was only when labor unions 'demanded' that the power of big businesses be limited through the creation of laws, that big business had to 'concede' in the form of higher wages, shorter working hours, and safer working conditions.

Resources

- AFL-CIO. (n.d.). About us. AFL-CIO. Retrieved from <https://aflcio.org/about-us>
- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125>
- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). Caption this. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/82>
- K20 Center. (2020, February 27). ICAP—Impacts of industrialization on workers [Video File]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/XPpiKksCITY>
- K20 Center. (2020, November 17). Padlet. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077>
- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). Why-lighting. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128>
- Oklahoma State AFL-CIO (2016, August 23). Oklahoma State AFL-CIO. Retrieved from <https://unionhall.aflcio.org/oklahoma-state-afl-cio>