

The Life of a Muckraker

PROGRESSIVE ERA



JACOB RIIS

PHOTOGRAPHED AND DEMONSTRATED TO THE WORLD WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE IN THE SLUMS. NEVER BEFORE HAD THE DISEASE AND CRAMPED QUARTERS BEEN CAUGHT ON CAMERA.



LINCOLN STEFFENS DISCLOSED POLITICAL CORRUPTION ESPECIALLY IN CHICAGO AND PHILADELPHIA.

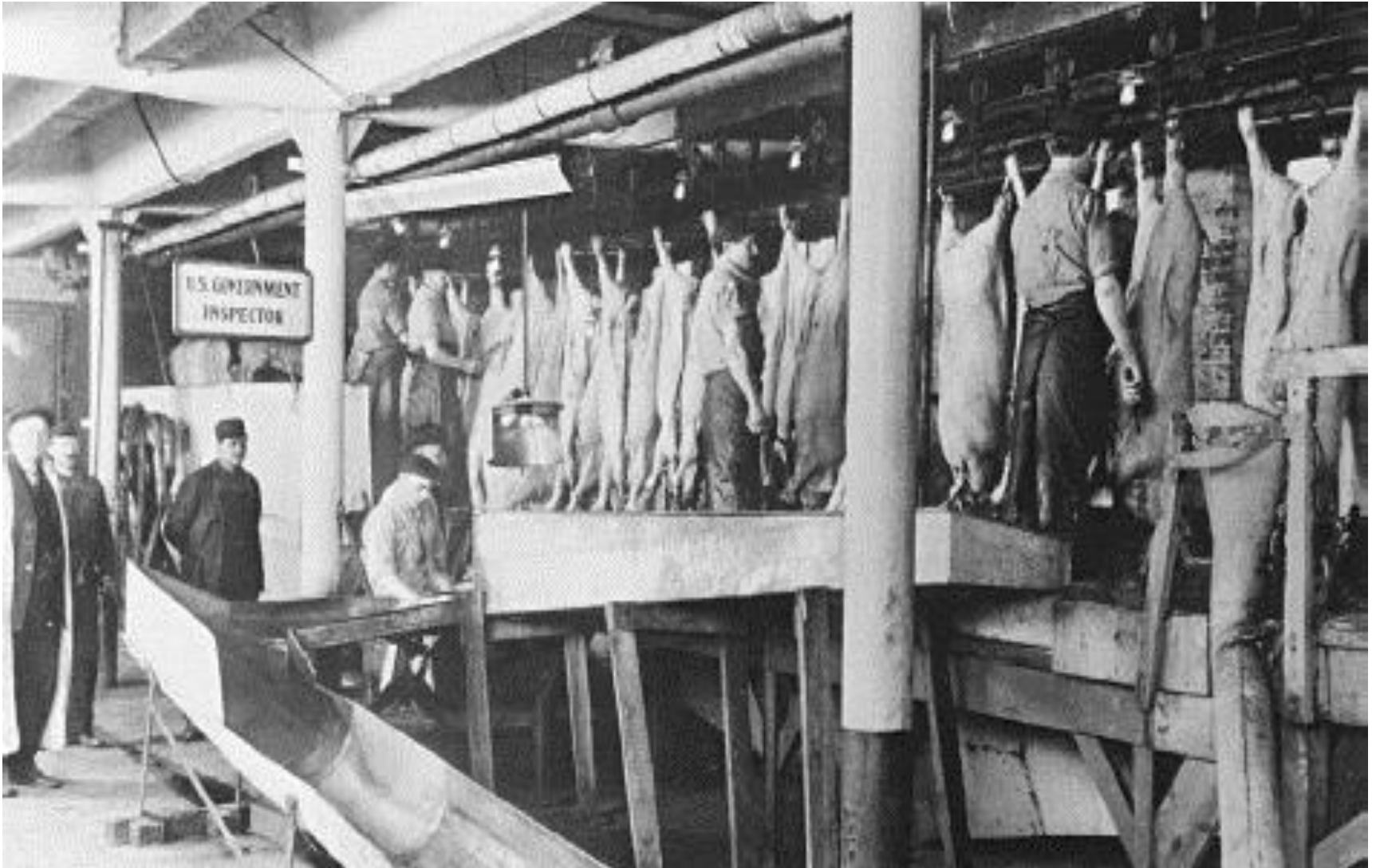


IDA TARBELL IS WELL KNOWN FOR EXPOSING OIL REFORMS.



UPTON SINCLAIR WROTE AND PUBLISHED "THE JUNGLE" IN 1906 WHICH EXPOSED THE DISGUSTING PROCESSES OF THE MEAT PACKING INDUSTRY.

Meat Packing Plants



Meat Packing Plants



New York Slums



The Bend

The Jacob Riis Collection #114 Museum of the City of New York

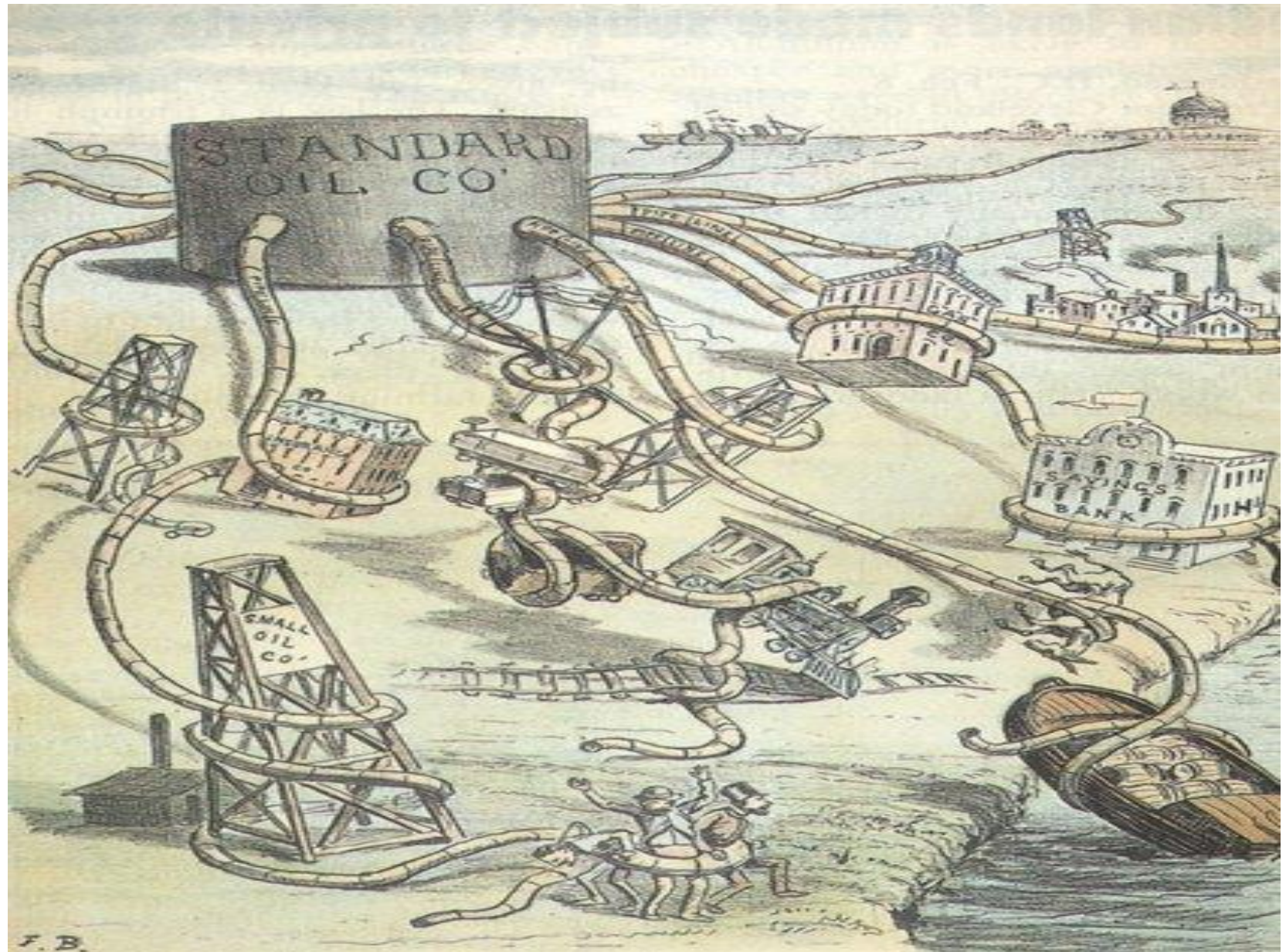
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New York Slums



Bundesarchiv, Bild 103-1082-0025-308
Foto: n.Ang. | 1910 ca.

Standard Oil Company



Overview of the Progressive Era

The 20th Century

Many far-reaching economic and social changes transformed American society in the 20th century, including innovations in science and technology, economic productivity, mass communication and mass entertainment, health and living standards, the role of government, gender roles, and conceptions of freedom.

The Progressive Era

Progressivism is an umbrella label for a wide range of economic, political, social, and moral reforms. These included efforts to outlaw the sale of alcohol; regulate child labor and sweatshops; scientifically manage natural resources; insure pure and wholesome water and milk; Americanize immigrants or restrict immigration altogether; and bust or regulate trusts.

Drawing support from the urban, college-educated middle class, Progressive reformers sought to eliminate corruption in government, regulate business practices, address health hazards, and improve working conditions. They also fought to give the public more direct control over government through direct primaries to nominate candidates for public office, direct election of senators, the initiative, referendum, and recall, and women's suffrage.

Overview of the Progressive Era

By the beginning of the 20th century, muckraking journalists were calling attention to the exploitation of child labor, corruption in city governments, the horror of lynching, and the ruthless business practices employed by businessmen, like John D. Rockefeller. At the local level, many Progressives sought to suppress red-light districts, expand high schools, construct playgrounds, and replace corrupt urban political machines with more efficient systems of municipal government. At the state level, Progressives enacted minimum wage laws for women workers, instituted industrial accident insurance, restricted child labor, and improved factory regulation.

At the national level, Congress passed laws establishing federal regulation of the meat-packing, drug, and railroad industries, and strengthened anti-trust laws. It also lowered the tariff, established federal control over the banking system, and enacted legislation to improve working conditions. Four constitutional amendments were adopted during the Progressive era including: authorizing an income tax; providing for the direct election of senators; extending the vote to women; and prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages.

Primary Source 1

from *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis (1890)

Be a little careful, please! The hall is dark and you might stumble over the children pitching pennies back there. Not that it would hurt them; kicks and cuffs are their daily diet. They have little else. Here where the hall turns and dives into utter darkness is a step, and another, another. A flight of stairs. You can feel your way, if you cannot see it. Close? Yes! What would you have? All the fresh air that ever enters these stairs comes from the hall-door that is forever slamming, and from the windows of dark bedrooms that in turn receive from the stairs their sole supply of the elements God meant to be free, but man deals out with such niggardly hand. That was a woman filling her pail by the hydrant you just bumped against. The sinks are in the hallway, that all the tenants may have access--and all be poisoned alike by their summer stench. Hear the pump squeak! It is the lullaby of tenement-house babes. In summer, when a thousand thirsty throats pant for a cooling drink in this block, it is worked in vain. But the saloon, whose open door you passed in the hall, is always there. The smell of it has followed you up. Here is a door. Listen! That short hacking cough, that tiny, helpless wail--what do they mean? They mean that the soiled bow of white you saw on the door downstairs will have another story to tell--Oh! a sadly familiar story--before the day is at an end. The child is dying with measles. With half a chance it might have lived; but it had none. That dark bedroom killed it

Primary Source 1

from *How the Other Half Lives* by Jacob Riis (1890)

Come over here. Step carefully over this baby--it is a baby, spite of its rags and dirt--under these iron bridges called fire-escapes, but loaded down, despite the incessant watchfulness of the firemen, with broken household goods, with wash-tubs and barrels, over which no man could climb from a fire. This gap between dingy brick-walls is the yard. That strip of smoke-colored sky up there is the heaven of these people. Do you wonder the name does not attract them to the churches? That baby's parents live in the rear tenement here. She is at least as clean as the steps we are now climbing. There are plenty of houses with half a hundred such in. The tenement is much like the one in front we just left, only fouler, closer, darker--we will not say more cheerless. The word is a mockery. A hundred thousand people lived in rear tenements in New York last year. Here is a room neater than the rest. The woman, a stout matron with hard lines of care in her face, is at the wash-tub. "I try to keep the childer clean," she says, apologetically, but with a hopeless glance around. The spice of hot soapsuds is added to the air already tainted with the smell of boiling cabbage, of rags and uncleanness all about. It makes an overpowering compound. It is Thursday, but patched linen is hung upon the pulley-line from the window. There is no Monday cleaning in the tenements. It is wash-day all the week round, for a change of clothing is scarce among the poor. They are poverty's honest badge, these perennial lines of rags hung out to dry, those that are not the washerwoman's professional shingle. The true line to be drawn between pauperism and honest poverty is the clothes-line. With it begins the effort to be clean that is the first and the best evidence of a desire to be honest.

Primary Source 2

from *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, 1906

It was only when the whole ham was spoiled that it came into the department of Elzbieta. Cut up by the two-thousand-revolutions- a-minute flyers, and mixed with half a ton of other meat, no odor that ever was in a ham could make any difference. There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white – it would be dosed with borax and glycerin, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one – there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit.

Primary Source 2

from *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, 1906

There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water – and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast. Some of it they would make into "smoked" sausage – but as the smoking took time, and was therefore expensive, they would call upon their chemistry department, and preserve it with borax and color it with gelatin to make it brown. All of their sausage came out of the same bowl, but when they came to wrap it they would stamp some of it "special," and for this they would charge two cents more a pound.

Primary Source 3

from *The Shame of the Cities* by Lincoln Steffens, 1902

The Philadelphia machine isn't the best. It isn't sound, and I doubt if it would stand in New York or Chicago. The enduring strength of the typical American political machine is that it is a natural growth—a sucker, but deep-rooted in the people. The New Yorkers vote for Tammany Hall. The Philadelphians do not vote; they are disenfranchised, and their disenfranchisement is one anchor of the foundation of the Philadelphia organization. This is no figure of speech. The honest citizens of Philadelphia have no more rights at the polls than the Negroes down South. Nor do they fight very hard for this basic privilege. You can arouse their Republican ire by talking about the black Republican votes lost in the Southern States by white Democratic intimidation, but if you remind the average Philadelphian that he is in the same position, he will look startled, then say, "That's so, that's literally true, only I never thought of it in just that way." And it is literally true. The machine controls the whole process of voting, and practices fraud at every stage. The assessor's list is the voting list, and the assessor is the machine's man. . . .The assessor pads the list with the names of dead dogs, children, and non-existent persons.

Primary Source 3

from *The Shame of the Cities* by Lincoln Steffens, 1902

One newspaper printed the picture of a dog, another that of a little four-year-old Negro boy, down on such a list. A ring orator in a speech resenting sneers at his ward as “low down” reminded his hearers that that was the ward of Independence Hall, and, naming the signers of the Declaration of Independence, he closed his highest flight of eloquence with the statement that “these men, the fathers of American liberty, voted down here once. And,” he added, with a catching grin, “they vote here yet.” Rudolph Blankenburg, a persistent fighter for the right and the use of the right to vote (and, by the way, an immigrant), sent out just before one election a registered letter to each voter on the rolls of a certain selected division. Sixty-three per cent were returned marked “not at,” “removed,” “deceased,” etc. From one four-story house where forty-four voters were addressed, eighteen letters came back undelivered; from another of forty-eight voters, came back forty-one letters; from another sixty-one out of sixty-two; from another forty-four out of forty-seven. Six houses in one division were assessed at one hundred and seventy-two voters, more than the votes cast in the previous election in any one of two hundred entire divisions. The repeating is done boldly, for the machine controls the election officers, often choosing them from among the fraudulent names; and when no one appears to serve, assigning the heeler [local political party worker] ready for the expected vacancy. The police are forbidden by law to stand within thirty feet of the polls, but they are at the box and they are there to see that the machine’s orders are obeyed and that repeaters whom they help to furnish are permitted to vote without “intimidation” on the names they, the police, have supplied.

Primary Source 4

from *The History of the Standard Oil Company* by Ida Tarbell, 1904

To know every detail of the oil trade, to be able to reach at any moment its remotest point, to control even its weakest factor—this was John D. Rockefeller's ideal of doing business. It seemed to be an intellectual necessity for him to be able to direct the course of any particular gallon of oil from the moment it gushed from the earth until it went into the lamp of a housewife. There must be nothing—nothing in his great machine he did not know to be working right. It was to complete this ideal, to satisfy this necessity, that he undertook, late in the seventies [1870s], to organize the oil markets of the world, as he had already organized oil refining and oil transporting. Mr. Rockefeller was driven to this new task of organization not only by his own curious intellect; he was driven to it by that thing so abhorrent to his mind—competition. If, as he claimed, the oil business belonged to him, and if, as he had announced, he was prepared to refine all the oil that men would consume, it followed as a corollary that the markets of the world belonged to him. . . .

Primary Source 4

from *The History of the Standard Oil Company* by Ida Tarbell, 1904

When Mr. Rockefeller began to gather the oil markets into his hands he had a task whose field was literally the world, for already, in 1871, the year before he first appeared as an important factor in the oil trade, refined oil was going into every civilized country of the globe. Of the five and a half million barrels of crude oil produced that year, the world used five millions, over three and a half of which went to foreign lands. This was the market which had been built up in the first ten years of business by the men who had developed the oil territory and invented the processes of refining and transporting, and this was the market, still further developed, of course, that Mr. Rockefeller inherited when he succeeded in corralling the refining and transporting of oil. It was this market he proceeded to organize. But the Standard Oil agents were not sent into a territory back in the seventies simply to sell all the oil they could by efficient service and aggressive pushing; they were sent there to sell all the oil that was bought. "The coal-oil business belongs to us," was Mr. Rockefeller's motto, and from the beginning of his campaign in the markets his agents accepted and acted on that principle. If a dealer bought but a barrel of oil a year, it must be from Mr. Rockefeller.

Graphic Organizer: The Life of a Muckraker

Muckraker	Name of Book/Article	Main Ideas
Jacob Riis		
Upton Sinclair		
Lincoln Steffens		
Ida Tarbell		

R	A	F	T
Jacob Riis	Family	Letter	Your personal Experiences in the slums of New York City and how you plan to help those who are less fortunate.
Upton Sinclair	President of the United States of America	Persuasive Letter	Write a letter expressing the need for reform in the meat packing industry.
Lincoln Steffens	Self	Diary Entry	Note your experiences and feelings of investigating the corruption in state and municipal governments.
Ida Tarbell	Relative or friend	Conversation	Discuss some of the business practices of Standard Oil and how you are going to change these practices in the U.S.
Scientist	Government	Interview	Explanation revealing the risk to the public of unsanitary working conditions in the meat industry.
Worker	Co-worker	Conversation	Craft a conversation between to co-workers about the corruption in the local government and how it impacts their lives personally.
Journalist	Public	News Paper Article	Write an article over the various “Muckrackers” and their accomplishments.
Muckracker	Local community	News Article	Child Abuse! Child Labor!
Fill-in-the-blank	Fill-in-the-blank	Fill-in-the-blank	Fill-in-the-blank

RAFT – Grading Rubric

Indicator	Poor (1) = 50	Fair (2) = 70	Good (3) = 85	Excellent (4) = 100
Content and Organization	Poor clarity of content, lack of organization, no flow to paper.	Fair clarity of content, basic organization with some elements of writing missing.	Good clarity of content, few errors in organization, most elements of writing are present.	Exceptional clarity of content, excellent organizational skills, all elements of writing are present and clearly stated.
Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization	Very Limited / No Use of Correct: Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, Variety of sentence structures.	Minimal use of correct: Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, Variety of sentence structures.	Adequate use of correct: Grammar Punctuation, Capitalization, Variety of sentence structures.	Neatly written; typed, Uses correct grammar, Uses correct punctuation, Uses correct capitalization, Contains a variety of sentence structures.
Historical Accuracy	RAFT contains very little information over the topic and contains no facts.	RAFT contains very vague information on the topic and contains only 1 fact.	RAFT is historically accurate but only contains 2 facts.	RAFT is historically accurate and contains at least 4 facts.