



Impacts of Industrialization on Workers

The Industrial Revolution



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Grade Level	8th Grade	Time Frame	2 class period(s)
Subject	ICAP, Social Studies	Duration	100 minutes
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

How did the early industrialization of the American economy impact workers in the 19th and 20th centuries? Should governments regulate businesses to protect the rights of workers?

Summary

In this lesson about the Industrial Revolution, students will begin by observing photographs of factory workers and analyzing primary sources to make inferences about working conditions during the Industrial Revolution. Based on the information they gather, students will write a letter protesting working conditions they feel are unjust. As an extension, students will view a video interview with Oklahoma State AFL-CIO President Jimmy Curry and explain how labor organizations advocate for workers' rights historically and currently. This lesson includes optional modifications for distance learning. Resources for use in Google Classroom are included.

Snapshot

Engage

Students observe real photographs of factory workers and make inferences about working conditions during the Industrial Revolution.

Explore

Students analyze a real report describing working conditions in the Lowell Mills from 1845.

Explain

Based on the information they gathered, students use the RAFT strategy to write letters protesting working conditions they feel are unjust. Next, as a class, students make a list of the major issues that workers protested in their letters.

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

The Paint a Picture activity responses and RAFT strategy serve as assessments for this lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies Practices (8th Grade))

8.9: The student will analyze the social and economic transformations of the early nineteenth century.

8.9.1: Explain the impact of the Industrial Revolution in the North including the concentration of population, manufacturing, and transportation.

Attachments

- [Issues Workers Protested Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Issues Workers Protested Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Issues Workers Protested Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.docx](#)
- [Issues Workers Protested Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.pptx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Paint a Picture Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.docx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Chart—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.pdf](#)
- [Paint a Picture Photo Set—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Photo Set—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Paint a Picture Photo Set—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.docx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Photo Set—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.pdf](#)
- [Paint a Picture Primary Source Document—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Primary Source Document—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Paint a Picture Primary Source Document—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.docx](#)
- [Paint a Picture Primary Source Document—Impacts of Industrialization on Workers.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Issues Workers Protested Chart (attached; one per student)
- Paint a Picture Chart (attached; one per student)
- Paint a Picture Photo Set (attached; one per group of 3-4 students)
- Paint a Picture Primary Source Document (attached; one per student)
- Internet access
- Student devices with Google Docs (optional)

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Context

It is suggested that this lesson be taught after students have some background knowledge of the Industrial Revolution and how it changed the economies of the northern and southern regions of the United States. Students should have an awareness of the growth of industry and manufacturing during this time period and its impact on cities, especially in the North.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Begin by displaying **slide 3**, showing the lesson's Essential Questions. Explain to students that as part of their study of the Industrial Revolution, they will be exploring these questions: *How did the industrialization of the American economy in the 19th century impact workers? Should governments regulate businesses to protect the rights of workers?*

To begin this exploration, invite students to participate in a Paint a Picture strategy. This activity will use a series of photographs to paint a figurative picture in the students' minds of working conditions during the Industrial Revolution. Place students in small groups of 3–4, then distribute a copy of the attached **Paint a Picture Photo Set** to each group and the **Paint a Picture Chart** to each student. Display **slide 4** and ask students to work with their groups to first write down in the "observations" column of their charts what they see. Next, ask students to continue working together to write down in the "inferences" column of their charts what they can infer or conclude about how industrialization impacted workers based on their observations.

Optional: Scaffolding And Time Management

Students might benefit from analyzing Photograph #1 as a whole class. This would provide an opportunity to make sure students understand the difference between an observation and an inference. Students could then finish the remaining four photographs within their groups. Additionally, for the sake of time, you may choose to have students to analyze fewer than five photographs. You could pick and choose which photos you would like them to look at. Or, you might divide the photos up between student groups, having each group analyze one additional photo, then share their observations and inferences with the whole class.

Teacher's Note: Photograph Titles

Please note that the photographs in this section are part of a collection done by photographer Lewis Hine for the National Child Labor Committee, in an effort to bring attention to child labor issues in the late 19th and early-20th centuries. The titles included with the photos in the Lesson Slides and in the Photo Set include vivid and powerful details about the terrible conditions that workers had to endure. You may wish to discuss these titles with the students.

Possible Student Response For Photograph #1

Observations: Young boys are working with large equipment. They are wearing no safety gear, and working inside a dark and dirty workplace. **Inferences:** Children this young should not be working. The large equipment they are working with could be potentially dangerous, and they have no safety gear on. The dirty environment could lead to health problems.

As students finish their photo analyses, use **slides 5–9** and ask student groups to share their observations and inferences for each photograph with the whole class.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make use of this lesson in an online or distance learning environment, consider creating multiple copies of the attached Paint a Picture Chart using Google Docs. Assign students to each copy of the handout and have them collaborate virtually. Students can add notes to the document and collaborate as a group using the "chat" feature in the document. You may also consider making this activity a discussion board post to which your students can respond directly. [Download all attachments](#) to use in [Google Classroom](#).

Explore

Display **slide 10**. Invite students to continue painting a picture of working conditions during the Industrial Revolution by exploring a primary source document—an excerpt from a report published by Massachusetts lawmakers after investigating the working conditions at the Lowell Mills, a 19th century textile mill in the city of Lowell, Massachusetts. Distribute a copy of the attached **Paint a Picture Primary Source Document** to each student and ask them to read the text. After reading, ask students return to working with their groups and use the [Categorical Highlighting](#) strategy to highlight any information that shows what the working conditions in the Lowell Mills were like. This strategy encourages students to read for and select information from a certain category or categories within a text. In this case, the category is "working conditions."

After students have finished highlighting, invite student groups to share out some of the information they selected. This discussion should summarize major points that students have observed from the text about working conditions and experiences in the Lowell Mills.

Next, display **slide 11**. Have students, working with their groups, use the information from their charts and from the text to create a 2–3 sentence response to the following question: *Based on your inferences from the photos and the information from the text, what conclusion can you make about how industrialization of the American economy impacted workers?* Students should use evidence from the photos and/or text to support their claims.

Possible Student Responses

The industrialization of the American economy negatively impacted many workers. Many workers had to work incredibly long hours with few breaks. They were paid very little, and young children were working. Additionally, workers were often exposed to dangerous and dirty work environments which posed risks to their health and safety.

Once student groups have finished, call on each group to share their responses, summarizing major points about how workers during the Industrial Revolution were often oppressed by their working conditions.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

Consider creating having students respond to this question in a discussion board post or through the use of an application such as [VoiceThread](#) or [Flip](#). [Download all attachments to use in Google Classroom.](#)

Explain

Display **slide 12**. Explain to students that workers began organizing to protest working conditions they felt were unjust. Students can work individually or as a group to use the [RAFT](#) strategy. In this RAFT, the "**role**" is a factory worker, the "**audience**" is a business owner or Congress, the "**format**" is a letter, and the "**topic**" is working conditions. Ask students to answer the following question in their letters: *If you were a factory worker during the 1800s, what issues regarding your working conditions would you protest or fight to change?* To answer this question, students should compose a letter of complaint in the voice of a worker and should include at least three specific issues they are protesting, with explanations of how to improve their working conditions. Students can write this letter on notebook paper, in a composition book, or on a Google Doc.

Once students have finished their letters, display **slide 13**. Pass out a copy of the **Issues that Workers Protested Chart** to each student. Ask students to share out the issues they discussed in their letters. As students share, make a class list. Consider typing students' issues into the chart on the slide and having students write them down on their charts in the "Issue" columns. **Slide 14** shows examples that students may mention. Before moving on to the next section of the lesson, make sure students have filled in the "Issues" column on their charts.

Extend

Continue to **slide 15**. Show students the [video interview](#) with Oklahoma State AFL-CIO President, Jimmy Curry. (The full URL for the video is listed in the Resources below and linked on slide 15). 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 addressed have addressed the issues recorded on left side.

Additional Information On 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](#). Full URLs for both sites can be found in the Resources below.

After the video, display **slide 16**. Ask for volunteers to share their notes on how how labor organizations helped to fight each issue. Sample responses can be seen on **slide 17**.

Display **slide 18**. As a follow-up, ask students the question on the slide: Should governments regulate businesses to protect the rights of workers? 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.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make use of this lesson in an online or distance learning environment, sort students into pairs or small groups and assign each group its own Google Docs. Facilitate a class discussion in text or on video about whether governments should regulate businesses to protect the rights of workers. [Download all attachments to use in Google Classroom.](#)

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 Paint a Picture activity responses from the Engage and Explore sections, and the RAFT strategy from the Explain section. These can serve as assessments for this lesson.

Resources

- AFL-CIO. (n.d.). About Us. AFL-CIO. <https://aflcio.org/about-us>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google Classroom. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Flip. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1075>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). RAFT. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/158>
- K20 Center. (2020, February 27). ICAP—Impacts of industrialization on workers [Video File]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/XPpiKKsCITY>
- Oklahoma State AFL-CIO (2016, August 23). Oklahoma State AFL-CIO. Oklahoma State AFL-CIO. <https://unionhall.aflcio.org/oklahoma-state-afl-cio>