

Connecticut Explored Curriculum Lesson Plan

Topic: Ivoryton's Industrial History

Article: "Ivoryton", Christopher Pagliuco, *Hog River Journal*, Fall 2008, Vol. 6, No. 4.
<http://connecticutexplored.org/issues/v6n04/IVORYTON.pdf>

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Description: This lesson, *Ivoryton's Industrial History*, encourages students to evaluate Ivoryton's factory life from multiple perspectives. After reading the article and analyzing it through the use of a Venn diagram, students will complete one of four possible projects including making a union poster, writing a screenplay, writing a speech, or devising a company strategy to discourage union membership.

State Standards Addressed:

Content Standard 1: Historical Thinking – Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time; contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature; researching historical sources; understanding the concept of historical causation; understanding competing narratives and interpretation; and constructing narratives and interpretation.

Content Standard 3: Historical Themes – Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Content Standard 4: Applying History – Students will recognize the continuing importance of historical thinking and historical knowledge in their own lives and in the world in which they live.

Content Standard 14: Economic Systems – Students will demonstrate that various economic systems coexist, and that economic decisions are made by individuals and/or governments, influenced by markets, cultural traditions, individuals and governments in the allocation of goods and services.

Essential Questions: What is it you really want the students to get from this? What very large questions in American history do you want them to answer?

Objectives: Students will be able: to list the many ways a factory could dominate the lives of workers during the industrial period, to analyze historical information from multiple perspectives, and to communicate the perspective of a factory owner or worker through a chosen medium.

Historical Background: Manufacturing grew rapidly in the early 1800s, as factories were constructed to take advantage of the waterpower provided by Connecticut's many fast-flowing rivers and streams. Though some businesses—such as the mills that grew up along Hartford's

Park River—were located in existing communities, many new towns were created at this time. In order to attract and maintain a workforce, many factory owners provided all their workers' needs: housing, churches, schools, libraries, and company stores where workers could find everything they needed for their families. While some factory owners were truly concerned with their employees' welfare, others tried to restrict their freedom and control their lives. Hours were long, work was hard, and often every member of the family, including young children, was employed.

Source: Connecticut History Online

Strategies: It is best to try to keep the students focused on the manager/worker conflict when implementing this lesson. The article covers a lot of history and some of it is not applicable to this lesson. Also, it is necessary to go from group to group to help students with their presentation skills. (See below for description of homework assignments). For instance, the union posters need to be understood by the workers without explanation. The poster should also appeal to the viewers' emotions and be fairly extreme in its viewpoint. The speech should be delivered in a way that appeals to the emotions of the workers. The dialogue should use props and capture the intense feelings concerning unionization. Students should keep in mind that just by meeting with the union organizer the worker was risking his livelihood. Finally, the union busting presentation should be dramatized as covert, something like a CIA meeting.

This lesson could best be utilized in the industrialization or progressive unit. There are strong connections to Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and Social Darwinism. After completing this lesson it would be logical to transition the class to imperialism. The role that ivory played in the factory may provide a convenient talking point. Since the article covers a variety of subjects, it would be worthwhile to go back to the article to refer to other topics.

Authentic Assessment Activity:

Lesson Part 1:

1. Students will read "Ivoryton" for homework the previous night.
2. As students read, they will fill out the middle section of the Venn diagram provided, which asks the students to list the clubs and buildings constructed or run by Comstock, Cheney and Co.
3. When the students have finished the article and completed the center section of the Venn diagram, they will proceed to complete the remainder. The students should explain how they think managers and workers might view the different clubs and buildings. The teacher may need to do one as a class to clarify.
4. The Venn diagram should be reviewed as a class and then the teacher should review that night's homework assignment

Lesson Part 2:

Homework Assignment

Now that you have considered the extent of social conflict in industrial society, choose one of the following assignments to complete for homework and to present the next day in class:

1. Draw a union poster using icons evocative of life in Ivoryton and social class conflict. On the back of the poster document at least five symbols and the message you were conveying on the front.

Be prepared to post and lead a discussion of the symbolism and images of your poster.

2. You are Samuel Merritt Comstock. It is 1898 and you are at a company picnic with your employees celebrating the factory's anniversary. But with rumors of union strike organizers lurking around town, tensions are high. You decide to use this opportunity to give a speech addressing your workers. Explain to your workers all you try to do for them and their families and how that will be endangered with unionization. This should be a real tearjerker and should reference information from the left side of the Venn diagram.

Be prepared to read your speech in class.

3. Write a dialogue/screenplay between a union organizer and worker. Be sure to communicate the covert and risky nature of such conversations as well as the conflicting sympathies of the participants. Be sure to reference information from the Venn diagram to help persuade the worker.

Be prepared to act out the dialogue in class.

4. As vice president of Comstock, Cheney and Co. you have been assigned the unsavory job of preventing the unionization of employees. Drawing upon details of life in Ivoryton you are to draw up a strategy using every factory resource to discourage, coerce, and even intimidate workers from joining a union. Gear your presentation as if you are reporting to Comstock himself. Use poster board or power point. Be sure to reference the leverage you have to control the employees from the Venn diagram.

Be prepared to present your strategy and tactics to the class (who will serve as Comstock) and answer questions.

Lesson Part 3:

Have students present their projects as if they were attending the company picnic. As the workers come into the classroom (the picnic) they could see the union posters. Then Comstock could read his speech (could be more than one). As workers leave, they are approached by union organizers (screen play). Finally, in a private conversation, Comstock gets briefed by his vice president of the devised strategy to prevent unionization.

Grading Rubric for Presentations:

Superior – The presentation draws examples from the readings on multiple occasions. The images or words demonstrate a thorough understanding of intricacies of the conflicting perspectives between the workers and management of the factory. The presentation also addresses the conflicting feelings within the worker or manager over unionization. While presenting, the student speaks audibly and slowly, maintaining appropriate eye contact and demonstrating a familiarity with the material. The actual presentation product is typed and well organized using proper grammar. The speech, poster, or dialogue is a style of language appropriate to the part played (either worker, owner or manager).

Good – The presentation draws examples from the readings on some occasions. The images or words demonstrate a limited understanding of the conflicting perspectives between the workers and management of the factory. The presentation partially addresses the conflicting feelings within the worker or manager over unionization. While presenting, the student speaks inaudibly and/or too quickly, maintaining appropriate eye contact and demonstrating some discomfort with the material. The actual presentation product is typed, organized, and uses proper grammar. Within the speech, poster, or dialogue is a style of language appropriate to the part played (worker, owner or manager).

Fair – The presentation draws at least one example from the readings. The images or words address the conflicting perspectives between the workers and management of the factory. The presentation does not address the conflicting feelings within the worker or manager over unionization. While presenting, the student speaks quietly and too quickly, lacking appropriate eye contact. The student seems uncomfortable with the material. The actual presentation product is typed, but lacks clear organization and lacks proper grammar. The speech, poster, or dialogue lacks a style of language appropriate to the part played (worker, owner or manager).

Poor – The presentation does not draw examples from the readings. The images or words do not address the conflicting perspectives between the workers and management of the factory. The presentation does not address the conflicting feelings within the worker or manager over unionization. While presenting, the student speaks too quietly and too quickly, lacking appropriate eye contact. The student is uncomfortable with the material. The actual presentation product may not be typed and lacks clear organization as well as proper grammar. The speech, poster, or dialogue lacks a style of language appropriate to the part played (worker, owner or manager).

Materials:

Article: “Ivoryton” [link <http://connecticutexplored.org/issues/v6n04/IVORYTON.pdf>]

Venn diagram (provided) blank form for student use and answer sheet

Construction paper, art supplies for student poster project.

Field Trip Options:

Lowell National Historic Park
67 Kirk Street
Lowell, MA 01852

Windham Textile and History Museum
411 Main Street
Willimantic, CT 06226

Annotated Bibliography

Engines of Enterprise An Economic History of New England, Peter Temin, 2000.

This is an ideal source for a broad history of the New England economy from 1770 to 2000. The reading is suitable for any high school aged student or above.

The Third Wave, Alvin Toffler, 1980.

In this bold book, Alvin Toffler address how economies impact society. Of particular value is the chapter “Breaking the Code”. This chapter discusses how we have applied production strategies to other, less applicable, aspects of our lives, such as schools.

American Welfare Capitalism, Eighteen Hundred and Eighty Through Nineteen Hundred and Forty, Stuart D. Brandes, 1976.

Stuart Brandes provides a very readable and concise investigation of welfare capitalism practices in the United States. Much of this directly relates to Ivoryton History.

The Roots of American Industrialization (Creating the North American Landscape), David R. Meyer, 2003.

Meyers book discusses the different aspects of the origins of American industrialization. This is particularly relevant to Connecticut’s industrial history, which includes Ivoryton.

The Piano: A History, Cyril Ehrlich 1990.

This is a broad history of nearly every aspect of the piano. This source is valuable for its explanation of the role the piano played in Victorian Society.