

Social Studies Content Themes for Elementary/Middle School
From
“The Making of Milwaukee Curriculum”

The Great Depression:

Teaching about The Great Depression in Milwaukee

The following activities are from “The Making of Milwaukee” on-line curriculum.

- **Creating Our Own Milwaukee Textbook**
- **Days of Our Lives (Writing Diary Entries)**
- **Who Am I? (Trivia Activity)**
- **What Am I? (Trivia Activity)**
- **Acting Out Missing Events (Timeline Activity)**

CREATING OUR OWN MILWAUKEE TEXTBOOK

1. Imagine that your students have been asked by a local publishing company to write a textbook chapter or chapters explaining the history of Milwaukee from 1914 – 1945, which includes Milwaukee during World War I, the Roaring 20’s, the Great Depression, and World War II (You may select any or all of these topics based on what video clips you show in this unit. You may also assign different topics to different groups). Students will use information from the video or other sources to create a textbook for other students on these topics. However, just as the people who make textbooks have limited space to describe events, students will only get to create a limited number of pages. (Use your own discretion based on the topic(s) for each chapter. For example, 3 might be a good limit).
2. Divide the students into groups (or you may assign students to do this individually) and ask them to discuss the following questions first:
 - Which individuals, groups, or events should be included in the textbook chapter(s)?
 - Why should these individuals, groups, or events be included?
 - Which individuals, groups, or events should receive the most attention and focus?
 - Why should these individuals, groups, or events receive the most focus?
 - What makes some information more important than other information?
3. If students cannot come to some agreement on the general content of the textbook chapter(s), this might be a good time for a class discussion on these same questions.
4. After students have discussed these questions have them list specific individuals, events, groups, and information related to these topics that they will include in their textbook page(s). They should also discuss where and how they will place

any text, photographs, captions, graphs, quotes from primary sources, or other elements of a textbook page. If students are working in groups, they might want to assign roles like text writer, graphic designer, editor, and an individual to select photographs (see archives).

Students can find images for their textbook pages by going to the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section of The Making of Milwaukee website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com. Use the “search” tool to locate images and photographs under the various pull down categories.

5. After students have completed their pages, have each group or individual present their textbook pages.
6. Then, return to the discussion questions listed above and have individuals or groups compare how their newly created textbook pages answered those questions.
7. Finally, this is a great opportunity to discuss how textbooks contain limited and missing perspectives from the past and the way some perspectives get attention over others. The activity should end with a discussion about the perspectives missing from the textbook pages. In fact, the teacher might have each group (or student if they are working on this individually) include a note with their textbook pages describing the missing perspectives and defending why these perspectives are missing.

Follow-up Learning Activity:

The teacher could ask students to look at their own textbooks that they use for the class and discuss the same issues about representation and which individuals, groups, and events get the most attention in relationship to the people, events, and ideas that are left out of the textbook.

DAYS OF OUR LIVES

Between 1914 and 1945 Milwaukeeans witnessed a wide range of events, experiences and emotions as war, peace, economic depression and war once again shaped the city and its people. Consider the following true story about a man named Les Greget adapted from the accompanying book, *The Making of Milwaukee*, at the beginning of the chapter entitled, *Hard Times and Wartime*. (The teacher may want to read or print this adapted story for the class before doing this activity or summarize the story for students).

Les Greget came to Milwaukee in 1922. He was good at working with his hands and with machinery. He was also looking for opportunities that he could not find in his hometown of Mayville, Wisconsin. He was able to get a good job at Falk Company in Milwaukee and began working on machines. After four years of hard work and studying, he advanced to working at a job where he drilled holes in gears that could be used on ships. “I thought I had it made,” he recalled. Les and his wife purchased a \$12,500

brick home on Milwaukee's Northwest Side and proceeded to live in a comfortable lifestyle during the 1920's.

The Great Depression rudely interrupted this good life for them. As the company did poorly, Les Greget lost his job, his savings, and finally his home. He and his wife were eventually forced to move into the top of a flat for \$45 a month. As the bad times got even worse, they asked their landlord to lower the rent to just \$20.

Then came World War II. Les Greget went back to his job even before the United States entered the war, turning out equipment for the Navy which was trying to build more ships. The Falk Company was swamped with orders for the rest of the war. As the fighting intensified, Les found himself working ten hours a day, seven days a week, for four-and-a half years, more than 1600 consecutive days without a single break!

1. Have students create scenarios like this one between 1914 to 1945 and write a series of diary or journal entries from the perspective of a Milwaukeean describing the changes this person has experienced over the years. To create their diary or journal entries, students should choose a gender, race / ethnicity, age, social class, job or role, and a few years between 1914 and 1945 that show changes in the person's life. (As an alternative, the teacher may also want to assign certain roles from these categories to students in order to have a wide range of experiences represented in the class. For example, a student could be assigned to be a white working class teenage female going to high school in 1927, then getting married, having a family struggling to survive the Depression in 1935, and then working in a war factory by 1943). Students can use any of the video clips from this unit to consider how individuals from different groups may have been affected by the rapid changes taking place during this period of time. It is up to the teacher's discretion to decide how many diary or journal entries each student should write. The following questions can assist students with thinking about what to write in their diary or journal entries:
 - What might happen during a typical day in the life of this person?
 - What experiences might this person have that would be similar to the experiences of other Milwaukeean during this period of time?
 - What experiences might this person have that would be different from the experiences of other Milwaukeean during this period of time?
 - How might this person's race, class, gender, age, or work affect this person's experiences and the way he or she responded to those experiences during this period of time?
 - What might be the benefits and drawbacks to this individual for living in Milwaukee during this period of time?
 - How might this person's life impact the lives of other people during this time?
 - How did this person somehow affect the way Milwaukee is today?
2. After the students write their diary or journal entries the teacher could select students who chose differing scenarios and have them share their diary entries with the rest of the class. Or, the teacher might want to have students get into

groups of 3 or 4 to share their diary entries with each other and report what they have learned to the rest of the class.

3. The following questions might serve as a good way to wrap up this activity:
 - What were the most significant factors that affected the lives of individual Milwaukeeans during this time?
 - What were the various ways that Milwaukeeans responded to the challenges that they faced during this period of time?
 - How did people's race, class, gender, age, and work experiences affect the experiences that individuals had in Milwaukee during this period of time?
 - How were the experiences of Milwaukeeans similar and different during this period of time?
 - What impact did the experiences of these individuals as a whole have on the way Milwaukee is today?

WHO AM I?

1. In the following activity students will be given 3 clues about a person who was famous during this time period (1914 – 1945) in Milwaukee's history. The teacher should read the first clue to students and ask them to guess who the person is. If no students guess correctly, the teacher should then read the second clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. Finally, if no students guess correctly, the teacher should read the third clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. If no student guesses correctly after the third clue, the teacher should read the answer. The first person to guess correctly wins. The teacher could assign point values for each clue given. For example, a correct guess after the first clue could be worth 25 points, a correct guess after the second clue could be worth 10 points, and a correct guess after the third clue could be worth 5 points.

An interactive version of this activity can also be found on-line by going to the homepage of The Making of Milwaukee website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com. Choose the "In the Classroom" section and click on "Interactive Lessons." Or, to go directly to this on-line activity, click here now:

http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/classroom/who_am_i/index.cfm

On-line directions are also given.

CLUE #1 : I was a welcome distraction to Milwaukee's worries during World War II

CLUE #2 : My story inspired a widely read children's book in the U.S.

CLUE #3 : I laid a clutch of eggs on a piling next to the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge

ANSWER : Gertie the Duck

CLUE #1 : My grandfather was known to some as “Alexander the Great” in Milwaukee

CLUE #2 : I was placed in charge of the entire Allied Air Service during World War I.

CLUE #3 : Milwaukee’s airport is currently named after me

ANSWER : Billy Mitchell

CLUE #1 : I issued a very strong warning against the Ku Klux Klan in Milwaukee during the 1920’s

CLUE #2 : I was on the cover of Time magazine for being one of the nation’s best public servants in 1936.

CLUE #3 : I served as Milwaukee’s mayor during the Great Depression

ANSWER : Daniel Hoan

CLUE #1 : I ran the *Milwaukee Leader*, a socialist newspaper in Milwaukee

CLUE #2 : I was convicted for speaking out against the government when my paper ran anti-war editorials during World War I

CLUE #3 : Congress refused to offer me my seat when Milwaukee elected me to the House of Representatives in 1918

ANSWER : Victor Berger

CLUE #1 : I was an assistant city attorney, a stirring singer, and a gifted speaker

CLUE #2 : I defeated Daniel Hoan to become mayor in 1940

CLUE #3 : I quit my job to join the Navy during World War II and declared, “My life is not my own. It belongs to my country.”

ANSWER : Carl Zeidler

WHAT AM I?

1. In the following activity students will be given 3 clues about a place that became famous during this time period (1914 – 1945) in Milwaukee’s history. The teacher should read the first clue to students and ask them to guess what the place

is. If no students guess correctly, the teacher should then read the second clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. Finally, if no students guess correctly, the teacher should read the third clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. If no student guesses correctly after the third clue, the teacher should read the answer. The first person to guess correctly wins. The teacher could assign point values for each clue given. For example, a correct guess after the first clue could be worth 25 points, a correct guess after the second clue could be worth 10 points, and a correct guess after the third clue could be worth 5 points.

CLUE #1 : I was Milwaukee's biggest defense contractor during World War II

CLUE #2 : I became part of a top secret project to build the first atomic bomb

CLUE #3 : Nearly 20,000 people, enough to fill a small city, worked in my place at the peak of World War II

ANSWER : The Allis Chalmers Company

CLUE #1 : I am a planned community built for working class families during the Depression

CLUE #2 : There are 2 other communities just like me in Ohio and Maryland

CLUE #3 : I was completed in 1938 to surround workers with nature

ANSWER : Greendale

CLUE #1 : I am currently located next to the downtown Milwaukee Public Library

CLUE #2 : I was initially the mansion of Alexander Mitchell

CLUE #3 : I used to house the Deustcher Club before it changed its name during World War I

ANSWER : The Wisconsin Club

CLUE #1 : I am located on Milwaukee's Northwest side, and I became the quintessential 1920's neighborhood

CLUE #2 : My orderly streetscapes reflected the influence of zoning – a 1920's innovation

CLUE #3 : The bungalow became the signature house in my neighborhood during the 1920's

ANSWER : Sherman Park

CLUE #1 : I am Milwaukee County's largest green space

CLUE #2 : A botanical garden was built inside me with funds from the New Deal

CLUE #3 : I am named after a person who created a master plan for Milwaukee County's Park System

ANSWER : Whitnall Park

ACTING OUT MISSING EVENTS

1. The teacher should divide the class into groups or pairs and have them act out one event that is missing from the timeline.
2. After the skit is over, the group should try to identify the event and discuss why this is important to include on the timeline.