

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

**Labor:**

**Teaching about Labor in Milwaukee**

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

- **Everyone Works (Discussing Chores and Jobs)**
- **Symbols of Life (Discussing a Union’s Seal)**
- **Designing Your Own Seal/Logo**
- **Labor Negotiations in Milwaukee (Simulation)**
- **Trying on Perspectives (Debating Points of View from Primary Sources)**
- **Photograph Discussion**
- **Laboring in the City (Research Modern Labor Union Issues)**

**EVERYONE WORKS**

1. Have students think about their least favorite job, house chore or even school task they have ever had to do. Then ask students to individually write answers to the following questions:
  - Describe your least favorite job, house chore, or even school task?
  - What made this your least favorite?
  - What made you decide to do this task?
  - Did you get any reward for doing it? If so, what was it?
  - Was it worth the reward? If no reward was given, would it have been worth any reward?
  - What would happen if you resisted or refused to do this chore?
  - Are there places where people are paid to do the chores that you do? Explain.
2. Using the think-pair-share teaching strategy, have students share and compare their answers with another student. Then ask some of them to share their answers with the rest of the class.
3. Use their responses to explain to students that many people who came to Milwaukee worked in very challenging jobs with often little pay in return. However, many were forced to do this labor to make a living for themselves and their families. When they refused or resisted, they often faced harsh consequences like getting fired from their jobs or being unable to support themselves or their families. In other words, progress often came with a fair share of struggle.

**SYMBOLS OF LIFE**

1. Show students the following image and allow them to study it

Image of Knights of Labor seal



Image from : [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_\(1865-1918\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_(1865-1918))

2. Discuss the following questions with students:

- What do you think this seal of the Knights of Labor represents?
- What do you think the motto “That is the most perfect government in which an injury to one is the concern of all” means?
- Use examples from the video to explain how some of the issues the Knights of Labor were fighting for relate to their motto.
- Do you think the government as described in the video fit the motto of the Knights of Labor? Explain with examples.
- What could be another possible motto for the Knights of Labor? Use video details for support.

## CREATING YOUR OWN SEAL/LOGO

*\*\*Note to teachers: One aspect of this lesson involves students creating a seal or logo for brewery workers in Milwaukee. While working at a brewery was a significant part Milwaukee’s history, this activity is not intended in any way to promote the use of alcohol. Make sure you have several strategies to deal with any potential comments or issues related to this topic before using this activity.*

1. The seal of the Knights of Labor represents a broad effort to gather laborers in various industries together and demand change. Imagine the workers in one of the specific industries of Milwaukee listed below hired your students to design and create a seal or logo that represents their labor demands and efforts. Have them draw a seal or logo that represents the organization.
  - Brewers
  - Iron workers
  - Motorcycle workers
  - Gear makers

- Meat Packers
- Tannery workers

2. Students should write a brief description of what they tried to represent in their seal or logo and share their designs with the rest of the class.

## LABOR NEGOTIATIONS IN MILWAUKEE

*\*\*Note to Teachers: One aspect of this lesson involves students involved in labor negotiations for brewery workers in Milwaukee. While working in a brewery was a significant part Milwaukee's history, this activity is not intended in any way to promote the use of alcohol. Make sure you have several strategies to deal with any potential comments or issues related to this topic before using this activity.*

1. In this activity, students will play roles of labor and management negotiators to see if they can come to an agreement on the same type of issues that were causing labor disturbances and unrest in Milwaukee during the late 1800's and early 1900's.
2. Students will be divided into groups of 4 with 2 students playing the role of negotiators representing the business owners and 2 students playing the role of negotiators representing laborers. (This can also be done with pairs of students with 1 student playing the role of the negotiator representing the business owners and 1 student playing the role of negotiators representing laborers). After the students have been divided into groups of 4 (or pairs of 2) they will represent one of the following Milwaukee companies:

| Name of Company                         | Work Done by this Company                |
|---|--|
| The Milwaukee Iron Company              | Create iron products from rails to nails |
| The Patrick Cudahy Meat Packing Company | Meat packing                             |
| Pfister and Vogel Tannery               | Tan cowhides into leather                |
| Miller Brewing Company                  | Brew beer                                |
| Allis-Chalmers Company                  | Manufacture heavy machinery              |
| Harley Davidson Motorcycles             | Produce motorcycles                      |
| Allen-Bradley Company                   | Create industrial controls               |
| A. O. Smith Company                     | Manufacture automobile frames            |
| Harnischfeger Company                   | Manufacture electric cranes              |
| Falk Company                            | Manufacture gears                        |
| Kearney and Trecker Company             | Manufacture machine tools                |

3. The goal of this activity is for each set of negotiators to gain the best terms for the

group they represent and avoid having workers go on strike. If no agreement can be reached on an issue, no one receives any points for the issue. The group with the most points at the end wins. In case of a tie, no one wins and no one loses. The teacher might want to offer a small prize to the winning group in order to motivate students. Furthermore, this activity might work best if the students are not aware of the point values received by the group they are negotiating with on each issue or even if none of the students are aware of the point values until after the negotiations are over on the issue. This is left up to the teacher's discretion.

4. Each group will be given the following number of points related to agreeing on a solution for the following labor issues
  - a. Laborers want a pay increase of at least one quarter a day to receive an average wage of \$1.50 a day.
    - 10 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 0 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if no raise is given.
    - 5 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 5 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if a raise of up to a quarter is given.
    - 0 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 10 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if a raise of a quarter or more is given.
  - b. Laborers want an eight hour workday with any time spent working over 8 hours receiving pay that is over their hourly wage.
    - 10 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 0 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if no 8 hour day is given.
    - 5 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 5 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if an 8 hour work day is given but there is no extra pay for working over 8 hours.
    - 0 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 10 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if an 8 hour work day is given and there is extra pay per hour for working over 8 hours.
  - c. Laborers want at least one week of paid vacation a year
    - 10 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 0 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if no paid vacation is given.
    - 5 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 5 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if 3 days of paid vacation are given per year.
    - 0 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 10 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if a full week or more of paid vacation is given.
  - d. Laborers want to receive money and assistance for any medical bills they might have over a year.
    - 10 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 0 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if no assistance for medical bills is given.

- 5 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 5 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if partial assistance for medical bills is given.
  - 0 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 10 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if full assistance for medical bills is given.
- e. Laborers want a full hour paid lunch break
- 10 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 0 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if no paid lunch is given.
  - 5 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 5 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if a 30 minute paid lunch is given.
  - 0 points for negotiators representing the business owners and 10 points for the negotiators representing the laborers if a full hour paid lunch is given.

5. Students should add other issues related to the video and their specific industries that the negotiators representing the laborers might demand and even attempt to agree on a point value for the negotiators representing the business owners and the negotiators representing the laborers related to their own issues. Once students have completed the activity, have a class discussion on the following questions:

- What was the least challenging part of coming to an agreement on these labor issues?
- What was the most challenging part of coming to an agreement on these labor issues?
- How were the results of your negotiations similar to other groups in the class?
- How were the results of your negotiations different from other groups in the class?
- What makes a person a successful or unsuccessful negotiator?
- How did your results compare to the results of labor negotiations discussed in the video? Why was it similar or different?

## **TRYING ON PERSPECTIVES**

1. After watching the video clip on the Bay View strike in Video Chapter 8, *Machine Shop of the World*, ask students the following questions:
  - What kinds of sources do you think were used to re-create this incident in Milwaukee's history?
  - How do historians know what happened at an event like this?
2. After discussing the way a historian might use sources like newspaper articles, interviews with people who were there, photographs, company records, and hospital records to retell the event, ask students to think about and discuss the following:

- According to the newspaper *The Sunday Telegraph* the workers who marched to the mill were “a vicious, lawless mob, bent on blood, robbery and destruction.”
- According to Robert Schilling head of the union representing the strikers, the actions of the guards were “cowardly, premeditated murder.”

*\*\* Both of the above quotes were taken from John Gurda’s 1995 book, The Making of Milwaukee, published by the Milwaukee County Historical Society. The quotes are found on the last two pages of the chapter entitled, “Wheat, Iron, Beer, and Bloodshed”*

3. After helping students understand the meaning of the word “premeditated,” discuss the following questions with them:
  - What challenges might a historian face if he or she had to explain what happened at the Bay View strike from these two sources?
  - How do both of these sources show bias?
  - Why might the newspaper present such a negative view of the strikers?
  - Why might the union leader present such a negative view of the guards?
  - What does this suggest about the importance for historians to examine multiple pieces of evidence before they describe an event?
  - What perspectives might be missing from the video’s retelling of the strike and how might this add to or possibly change the way the event was described?
4. Add missing perspectives by having students choose or assign one of the following perspectives that wasn’t discussed in the video’s description of the Bay View strike:
  - A close relative (e.g. parent, spouse, child) of one of the strikers killed
  - A close relative (e.g. parent, spouse, child) of one of the strikers who was not killed
  - The owner of the Iron Mill
  - A close relative (e.g. parent, spouse, child) of one of the guardsmen
  - The mayor of Milwaukee, Emil Wallber
5. Then have students create an imaginary primary source (e.g. letter, diary entry, interview) that discusses their view of the strike and the events surrounding the strike. Let students be creative with deciding where this person was when the shots were fired and how this person might react to the event but hold them accountable for defending their reasoning behind the ideas expressed in the primary source.
6. Have students share the missing perspectives with the class. Debate and discuss if their sources might accurately represent the missing perspectives and how these missing perspectives add to or even change the description of the strike from the video. A number of actual primary sources representing different points of view

from the Bay View strike can be found on the Wisconsin State Historical Society's webpage at: [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)

7. End the discussion by explaining to students that history is very challenging to write because it can never take into account every perspective involved in an event. However, good historians do their best to describe an event from multiple perspectives.

*This activity requires access to the accompanying book, *The Making of Milwaukee* by John Gurda, or the accompanying website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com)*

Photo Inside E.P. Allis Reliance Works.....Present day photo of Allis-Chalmers site  
(Photo in "Triumph of the Workingman" Chapter)      (Photo in the "Shifting Currents" Chapter)

*Then and now photographs for this activity can also be found by going to the "Image Library" of the "In the Classroom" section of *The Making of Milwaukee* website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com). Then choose "Business and Industry" from the pull down menu and use the "search" tool to find the Allis-Chalmers photos above.*

## **PHOTOGRAPH DISCUSSION**

1. Discuss the following questions about the two photographs showing the Allis-Chalmers factory in the 1894 and the same factory site today:
  - What are the men doing in the older photograph? What type of work might go on in the more recent photograph?
  - What might have caused this place to change from producing objects like the one in the older photograph to becoming a strip mall?
  - What might be similar or different about the working conditions for the people in the older photograph and the people who might work in the building in the newer photograph?
  - What might be similar or different about the type of people who are working in the older photograph and the type of people who might work in the building in the newer photograph?
  - In what ways might the change that has taken place between these photographs benefit the people of Milwaukee?
  - In what ways might the change that has taken place between these photographs hurt the people of Milwaukee?

## **LABORING IN THE CITY**

1. Have students research articles about modern day labor unions or labor issues in Milwaukee. (The article search on the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel website offers easy access to such articles. Go to [www.jsonline.com](http://www.jsonline.com) ).

2. After students read one or more articles related to a labor situation in Milwaukee they should write an essay comparing and contrasting the present-day labor situation to past labor situations described in the video focusing on the similarities and differences between the demands of the laborers involved.