

Northwest History Consortium

Homestead Workers: Worthy of a Monument?

Lisa Stettler
11th Grade

National Standard

Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900) / Standard 3

Standard 3: The rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes.

Standard 3B: The student understands the rise of national labor unions and the role of state and federal governments in labor conflicts.

Grade 7-12: Explain the ways in which management in different regions and industries responded to labor organizing workers. [Formulate historical questions]

Grade 5-12: Analyze the causes and effects of escalating labor conflict. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

Grade 7-12: Explain the response of management and government at different levels to labor strife in different regions of the country. [Compare competing historical narratives]

BACKGROUND

Students will have been exposed to information about economic problems in the US during the late 1800's—the general laissez-faire policies of the US government toward big business; the tremendous growth of big business, technology, and the innovation of business models (i.e., horizontal and vertical integration); the efforts of labor to organize; anti-labor business and government policies; and the working conditions and wages in industry.

PROBLEM

What values and beliefs should be used to evaluate information about the Homestead Strike of 1892 in order to advise city council on whether to proceed with a monument to steel workers?

SCENARIO

The city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was a key producer of steel for the United States throughout its industrial era. Along with other industrial cities in the US, its workers made the United States a world leader in steel production, helping to catapult the US to its position as one of the wealthiest nations in the world. To express its pride in the common workers' role in making the US a leader in the world economy, the Pittsburgh City Council has decided to erect a monument to celebrate workers' sacrifices in the nearby Homestead Strike of 1892. Construction of the monument has begun.

However, a group of prominent local business owners has become alarmed by the monument. Considering the difficulty of remaining competitive in the current economic downturn, this business group is particularly concerned that the monument will encourage workers to become more aggressive in demanding better working conditions and wages. Conceding to these demands could increase costs for US businesses; denying them could lead to strikes that would slow production. This group of business people is putting pressure on the council to halt

Northwest History Consortium

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construction of the monument.

Meanwhile, labor organizations have become aware of the pressure these businesses are putting on the Pittsburgh City Council and have organized to oppose the business group. In the current era of falling union membership and US corporations shipping jobs overseas, they see the monument as an opportunity to remind the public of the importance of American workers and rally people to their cause. They are marching with pickets at the monument construction site encouraging the public to “Save our Monument! Save the American Worker!”

TASK

The Pittsburgh City Council does not want to alienate the votes of business or labor. So, rather than resolve the issue itself, it has appointed a commission (including you) to investigate the historical conditions that helped create the strike and then advise the council on whether the construction of the monument should proceed.

RESOURCES

Internet

Frick, Henry Clay. “Frick’s Fracas: Henry Frick Makes His Case” from the *Pittsburgh Post*, 8 July 1892. History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web (George Mason University). ©1998 – 2010. Fairfax, VA. 5 July 2010 <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5349/>>.

“Governor Robert Emory Pattison.” 2010. Pennsylvania Office of Administration. ©2010. Harrisburg, PA. 5 July 2010 <http://www.bse.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_6_2_40621_4284_468316_43/>.

Graybill, Stuart D., Ph.D. “Homestead Lockout and Strike of 1892.” Sacramento City College. 2010. Sacramento, CA. 5 July 2010 <<http://web.scc.losrios.edu/graybis/documentproblems>>.

“Homestead Strike.” 2010. ExplorePAhistory.com. ©2010 WITF, Inc. Harrisburg, PA. 5 July 2010 <<http://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=782>>.

“The Homestead Strike.” 1999. Public Broadcasting System (WGBH). ©1995 – 2010. Boston, MA. 5 July 2010 <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/peopleevents/pande04.html>>.

“Homestead Strike of 1892 [audio interview].” Senator John Heinz History Center. ©2010. Pittsburgh, PA. 5 July 2010 <<http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/secondary.aspx?id=209>>.

Northwest History Consortium

Homestead Workers: Worthy of a Monument?

Johnson, Stephanie.. “Battle of the Mononagahela: Homestead Steel, 1892.” 2008. Pennsylvania Center for the Book (Penn State University). ©2007 - 2010. University Park, PA. 5 July 2010 <<http://www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/Homestead.html>>.

Mintz, Steven. “Industrialization and the Working Class: Homestead Period: 1880-1920.” 5 July 2010. Digital History (University of Houston). ©2006 – 2010. Houston, TX. 5 July 2010 <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=229>.

Wolff, Leon. “Battle at Homestead” excerpt from *Lockout*, Harper and Row, 1965, published in *American Heritage Magazine*, 1965: 16.3. AmericanHeritage.com. ©2008 – 2010. Rockville, MD. 5 July 2010 <http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1965/3/1965_3_64.shtml>.

ASSESSMENT

1. Individual students will complete a pre-write and post-write that assesses their understanding of the conditions that caused labor unrest at Homestead, including perspectives and actions of labor, government, and management.
2. Groups and individuals will be evaluated using a rubric that assesses the following understandings and behaviors:
 - Process
 - Group list of hunches, known information, and unknown information is thorough and reflective.
 - Group list of what needs to be done is thorough and clearly assigns responsibilities to members of group.
 - Group problem statement shows clear understanding of task.
 - Individuals meet daily goals for information gathering; resources retrieved are relevant, valid.
 - Individuals participate in discussion to share information.
 - Individuals participate in discussion to reach conclusion for recommendation to city council.
 - Individuals participate in presentation of group conclusion.
 - Content
 - Student summarizes research in her/his own words and includes all significant points.
 - Group recommendation includes explanation of management and government perspectives and actions in response to Homestead Strike.
 - Group recommendation includes explanation of labor perspective and actions at Homestead.
 - Group recommendation uses historical perspectives and actions above to support recommendation to city council.

Northwest History Consortium

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REFERENCES/CITATIONS

“History Standards for Grades 5-12 United States.” UCLA National Center for History in the Schools. 2005. Los Angeles, CA. 5 July 2010 <<http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/era6-5-12.html>>.

Stettler, Lisa. “Homestead Workers: Worthy of a Monument?” NWESD Organization. 2008. Anacortes, WA. 5 July 2010 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/6.3_HomesteadWorkers.Stettler.11.pdf>.