

Name: Julia Blakely

Title: From Amalgamated Association of Steel Workers to Amalgamated as One

Length of Lesson: Two days

Subject and Grade Level: U.S. History 11 and (an elective) Indiana History 9-12

State: Indiana

Abstract: This lesson examines an aspect of late 19th - early 20th century organized labor: the growing unrest of laborers who experienced both overwhelming bargaining and strike failure, leading to a growing socialist movement calling for a change in government and economic policies, led by Indiana's Eugene V. Debs.

Lesson Plan:

Introduction, Overview, and Rationale:

This lesson serves as a compliment to U.S. History's Industrialization unit (and also Indiana History 9 -12 similar unit), and focuses on the ideas and activities promoted by Eugene V. Debs, who had been a laborer, president of the American Railway Union, and a five-time Socialist Party presidential candidate. Students will have prior knowledge of several key labor strikes of the late 19th century, with special attention having been directed to the Homestead strike of 1892. Having learned most strikes had not been successful, that many unions had been broken, and that public opinion was often negative, students are introduced to the ensuing reaction: a growing socialist movement. In the current era of uneasiness and political unrest, students often hear the term "socialism" used in a pejorative manner when applied to the U.S. in any way and assume the socialist movement is a new phenomenon, but by engaging in this lesson, students should learn this also was a significant movement for over one-hundred years.

Unit Goals:

- Students should be able to trace the cause-effect relationships among several actions or movements in history.
- Students will become familiar with Eugene V. Debs, an important figure in labor and political history in the U.S.
- Students will analyze primary and secondary sources, and then development and argument using historical evidence.

Indiana State Standards:

Indiana - Industrialization and Immigration 1865 - 1900: 15.1.11; 15.1.14

Indiana - Economics: 15.4.7; 15.4.10

USH - Develop of Industrialization 1870 -1900: 2.5; 2.6

USH - Historical Thinking: 10.1; 10.2; 10.3; 10.5

Daily Activities:

Day 1:

A. The class period will begin with a quick review of major labor strikes of the late 19th century (10 min). (Graphic organizer students completed during the earlier Industrialization unit: Long Coal Strike 1874, Great Railway Strike of 1877, Haymarket 1886, Homestead 1892, Railway/Pulman Strike 1894.).

B. Handout of an overview of industrial workers and unions, and the diverging beliefs and strategies they had. The class will read through the article and, under teacher direction, make note of items to annotate: the I.W.W.; its two branches, socialism and anarchism; sabotage and how its two meanings developed and end result. (25-30 min)

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/goldman-industrial-workers-world/>

C. Short Eugene V. Debs handout distributed for homework reading (2-3 min)

<https://debsfoundation.org/index.php/landing/debs-biography/>

Day 2:

A. Class begins with a short discussion about Day 1's annotated items. Such points should be noted: socialism and anarchism are not necessarily symbiotic, and that the term "sabotage" took on two meanings and that socialists and anarchists viewed the action differently. The International Workers of the World is briefly explained, with forewarning that this union will also play a role in the World War I / post-war era. (10 minutes)

B. Next, the focus is switched to labor leader Eugene Debs and his oratory / leadership skills. Discussion centers on why he left a union with traditional bargaining tactics, why he became an avowed socialist, etc. Students' attention is directed to the classroom document camera and screen where sections from two primary sources that make Debs' views apparent are projected. They also will receive copies of the sources. Students are encouraged to take note that the "socialism" Debs endorses strives to make a productive life for the working class, one where they find dignity in their work, are paid a living wage AND have a real say-so in the governments' laws and actions. Referring back to the Homestead strike often, Debs is critical of a "ruling" class such as Carnegie, who profit at the cost of most other citizens. (20 minutes)

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1905/industrial.htm>

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1892/921200-debs-endofhomesteadstrike.pdf>

C. A writing prompt is distributed as a take-home assignment with the following cause-effect explanation of why a significant segment of laborers in that era turned to socialism.

The instructions explain it may be typed, double-spaced, 12 TNR or handwritten in ink, every-other line. The usual title and heading conventions are to be followed, and a 300 word minimum response is required. The assignment is due in two days.

The turn of many Americans toward socialism was part of a larger transformation going on in American liberalism. According to nineteenth century liberal doctrine, Americans could trust individual liberty and free competition in the market to secure the public good. The corollary to this public faith was that government should remain severely limited and relegated to protecting and extending the market and providing individuals with the resources—usually land and education—necessary for property ownership. But, the advent of industrial capitalism turned the majority of Americans working outside the household into non-propertied wageworkers. At the same time, individually-owned businesses gave way to trusts and large, consolidated business corporations.

<https://digital.li.niu.edu/illinois/gildedage/pullman>

Prompt: After reading through the presented sources, about the Age of Industrialization and the emerging socialist movement led by Eugene Debs, what is your opinion of his beliefs? Was he a criminal some thought him to be or a labor savior as thought by others?

Be sure to fully explain your rationale using textual evidence.

Assessment:

- Informal - circulate the room to check for student participation in annotating, reading, and verbal discussion.
- Formal - the essay response to the writing prompt; evaluated as specified in the rubric (which includes following the specified conventions above and developing a well thought out response).

Technological needs:

Classroom document camera, projector, and screen.

Materials needed to complete the lesson:

The technology listed above, and students need pen, paper, and Chromebook (required daily).

Other sources to consider?