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Title: History of labor unions in the US

Subject: Intro to Economics

State: Massachusetts

Abstract:

- Students will use the city of Pittsburgh, the steel industry, and the history of the Homestead Steel Strike as an anchoring point for learning about the history of labor unions in the past and in the present.

1. Introduction, overview, and unit rationale

- a. As part of a broader macro economics unit, students will spend a few days exploring the relationship between labor and capital in the US. This means a quick understanding of how the industrial revolution changed the employment landscape, and the context within which unions formed.
- b. From there, students will explore the specific history of the Homestead Steel Strike as a case study for how contentious and ambiguous labor relations can be.
- c. Finally, students will compare labor advocacy in the past to a few examples from the present day.

2. Unit goals

- a. Students will:
 - i. Have a working understanding of labor history, vocabulary, and general relationship structure is a typical business/industry.
 - ii. Learn more about the Homestead Steel Strike
 - iii. Make connections to the present day

3. Connections to state standards

- a. History standards:
 - i. USI.T6 & T7
- b. Writing standards
 - i. RCA-H
 - ii. WCA

4. Detailed description

- a. This group of lessons will be part of a broader macro economics unit. Students will have covered the basic tenets of micro economics and will begin to explore new ideas like tax structures, gov't policies, and, with this unit, the relationship

they have with labor.

The series of lessons will start with a brief breakdown of the industrial revolution, and how that changed expectations for an ordinary person and their employment options and status. This will also include a set of vocabulary terms. The purpose here is to make sure students have the same basic groundwork for terminology and players, but also to create the understanding that within a generation or two, millions of people joined new systems that didn't have definitive solutions and standards. This will be discussed as an exit activity.

Students will then explore the Homestead Steel Strike. Using the documentary *River Ran Red*, students will get a quick intro to the context of Homestead in the 1880s and 90s. From there, we will pause to discuss what may happen next and why. Studying the specific history of Homestead is a little bit of a departure from the usual Econ coursework, but serves as an interesting case study into how changing economic ideas, conditions, and expectations played out in the real world. This will be made clear and explicit to the students.

Students will explore primary and secondary source documents in groups to understand the specific events of the summer of 1892. As a class, they'll piece together what exactly happened, and why.

Next, the students will learn about the history and decline of the labor movement in the 20th century before exploring some of the present day issues between labor and capital. This will include the recent baseball negotiations, Amazon, and Starbucks. Students will be asked to compare and contrast the experiences of workers in Homestead and today and their asks, needs, and desires.

5. Formal and informal assessment

- a. Formal assessments
 - i. Vocabulary homework assignment
 - ii. Document comparing Homestead to current labor issues
- b. Informal assessment
 - i. Participation in group discussion
 - ii. Participation in group activity exploring Homestead documents

6. Technological needs

- a. Students will use personal devices to access docs and resources

7. Material needed to complete the unit

- a. University of Pittsburgh Archives primary and secondary source docs:
 - i. <https://pitt.libguides.com/homestead>
- b. *The River Ran Red* documentary
 - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6KVqIFTKh8>
- c. History of labor in the US
 - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtxITyIE73U>
- d. From teacher
 - i. List of vocabulary terms and worksheet
 - ii. Doc for organizing notes on primary source documents on Homestead
 - iii. Worksheet for comparing/contrasting current labor to Homestead

8. Other sources to consider

- a. N/A