

**Name:** Elise Barkemeyer  
**Title:** Homestead Steel Strike: Owners vs. Labor  
**Subject Area:** US History  
**State:** Louisiana

**Abstract:** This lesson will have students discuss the challenges faced during industrialization as the United States developed economically and socially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Students will evaluate roles based on the events of the Homestead Steel Strike that took place in 1892 involving perspectives of Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and steel factory workers.

### Lesson Plan

1. **Introduction:** Using primary sources and the events of the Homestead Steel Strike, students will examine the struggles between owners and workers, workers' rights and conditions, and labor unions during America's economic and social expansion during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
2. **Unit Goals:** Through the events of the Homestead Steel Strike, students will evaluate the roles and decisions of Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, Pinkerton Detectives, and steel mill workers to show the struggles between the owners and workers during the Gilded Age.
3. **State Standards:** Louisiana US History (11<sup>th</sup> Grade)
  - US.17 Describe the economic and social development of the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and its emergence as a major world power.
    - d. Analyze the challenges that accompanied industrialization, including pollution, poor working conditions, child labor, and food safety, as well as proposed solutions of the Progressive Era.

#### 4. Lesson Plan Description

- Students will have prior knowledge about the role of industrialization in the United States during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The teacher will introduce the topic of the Homestead Steel Strike by explaining the necessity of steel to further the expansion of the United States and continued challenges faced by workers. This strike was one of many that exemplified these struggles during this era.
  - The teacher will show primary source photos to show the conditions of working in a steel mill from the William J. Gaughan Collection (<https://digital.library.pitt.edu/collection/william-j-gaughan-collection>). While many of the pictures are from decades later, much of the steel making process was the same during the time of the Homestead Steel Strike.
  - The class can brainstorm what it was like to work in a factory.
- The class will watch the video *Homestead Strike of 1892* on YouTube by the PA Labor History Society (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1ZOqiRAIH4>).
  - While watching the video, have students take notes on the role/actions of the following people: Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, Pinkerton Detectives, Hugh O'Donnell, labor workers/union, Alexander Berkman.
  - Have students share out their observations and notes about the role of each person. While discussing, evaluate the decisions of each person. In addition,

discuss the following questions or any others that come up from the discussion.

- Why did they make the choices that they did?
  - Who is to blame for how the events played out?
  - What could have been done to prevent the escalation of events?
  - What rights should be guaranteed to workers?
  - How do we balance the rights of workers and the rights of businesses?
- Students will then create an interview for either Andrew Carnegie or Henry Clay Frick based on the primary sources below:
    - Frick and Carnegie Correspondence
      - <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735066205083>
      - <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735061570549>
      - <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735061570580>
      - <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735061570614>
    - Eyewitness Testimony
      - <https://digital.library.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735066257183/viewer#page/1/mode/1up>
    - Congressional Investigation of the Employment of the Pinkerton Detectives in Connection with Labor Troubles at Homestead, PA
      - <https://books.google.com/books?id=yywJ3Lbov8QC> (p.30-34)
  - Students can work through, annotate, or summarize each of the sources or give them the option to read through each source as they create their interview.
  - Directions for the interview:
    - Students may take whatever tone they would like for their interview with Andrew Carnegie or Henry Clay Frick. This assignment can be completed with a partner.
    - Have students create 7-10 questions to ask their person about the events of the Homestead Steel Strike, reasons for their actions, consequences, etc. Based on the video and primary sources, students will then create meaningful responses for the questions that reflect how they think Carnegie or Frick would have responded. Responses should be written in a first-person narrative.
    - You can establish a minimum sentence response (typically 3-5 sentences per question) and require them to incorporate quotes from the primary sources.

## 5. Formal and Informal Assessment

- *Informal*- After watching the video, the teacher will lead the class in a discussion to assess the events and ethics of the decisions of the people involved in the Homestead Steel Strike. Teachers will ask guiding questions as students work on their individual or partnered interview assignments.
- *Formal*- Interview assignment to be turned in or presented to the class. Students should be assessed for historical accuracy, creativity, and following set expectations (length requirements, quotation requirements, etc.).

## 6. Technological Needs

- Projector/Smartboard

- Teacher Computer
- Student Computer (if permitted/access available)

#### **7. Materials Needed**

- Copies of selected primary sources or student computer access to links.

#### **8. Other Sources to Consider**

- *The River Ran Red, Homestead, PA 1982* Documentary (1993)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKIbyGZms6g>
- *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* by Margaret F. Byington (1910)