

Connecticut Explored Curriculum Lesson Plan

Topic: Progressive Solutions for Connecticut

Article: “Had Too Much,” Scott L. Wands, *Hog River Journal*, Spring 2004, Vol. 2, No. 2 (attached in separate document)

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Description: In this lesson, students utilize the photo essay “Had Too Much,” along with excerpts and photos from Jacob Riis’ *How the Other Half Lives*, to examine the problems of America’s cities at the end of the 19th century. Students evaluate the problems from the point of view of a Progressive reformer, and create either a reform proposal for a city council of the era or a photo essay evaluating the state of the same issues today.

State Standards Addressed:

Content Standard 1: Historical Thinking – Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time; contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature; researching historical sources; understanding the concept of historical causation; understanding competing narratives and interpretation; and constructing narratives and interpretation.

St.3: Historical Themes – Students will apply their understanding of historical periods, issues and trends to examine such historical themes as ideals, beliefs and institutions; conflict and conflict resolution; human movement and interaction; and science and technology in order to understand how the world came to be the way it is.

Essential Questions: What potential did Progressivism have to alter American society? How successful was Progressivism in achieving its reform goals?

Objectives: Students will develop an understanding of: the problems facing American cities and citizens at the turn of the 20th century; the various schools of thought held by reformers, and the strengths and weaknesses of such thinking; and the concepts of social reform and social control in the Progressive movement.

Students will be able to: assess written and visual primary sources and utilize them to gather historical information; apply the point of view of a Progressive reformer; and argue persuasively.

Historical Background: The Progressive movement in America was a response to the nation’s rapid urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, and the problems that accompanied such dramatic change—poverty, crime, illness, and vice. Connecticut was not immune to such problems. For example, in 1861, New Haven’s population was 40,000; by 1900, it totaled 108,000, of which 28% was foreign born, mostly from Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe (“History of New Haven,” City of New Haven, Office of the Mayor, 12/12/2008.

http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/Mayor/History_New_Haven.asp). Progressive reformers sought to tackle new problems with strategies ranging from public programming, to rehabilitation, to using the press.

Reformers differed in their assessment of the root cause of the problems. Some pointed to greedy corporations or unfit living conditions, while others blamed the suffering themselves.

Connecticut reformers had modest success. Unions like the Knights of Labor and Connecticut Federation of Labor had large membership, and in 1885, the Knights saw 37 of their members elected to the General Assembly. But when involved in strikes or attempts to pass legislation, progressives and unions often lost. Some laws improved working conditions, but they were generally poorly enforced. In 1912, the Progressive party entered Connecticut politics, but again, its successes were minimal. (“Connecticut 1865-1929: An Industrial Society,” Connecticut’s Heritage Gateway, CT Heritage, 2003.

http://www.ctheritage.org/encyclopedia/ct1865_1929/overviewct1865_1929.htm).

In addition to sitting on the faculty of Trinity College and serving as a volunteer rector of St. John’s Episcopal Church in East Hartford, Reverend John James McCook of Hartford (1843-1927) was a Progressive reformer who sought to understand and aid the “tramps” of Hartford. This group, mostly men, were homeless, vagrant, or alcoholics and often ill. McCook researched and photographed the tramps, attempted to solve their problems and create solutions by gaining a deeper understanding of their background, health, work history, and life experience. By studying his work, students can connect the trends of urbanization, immigration, industrialization, and Progressive reform to local communities.

Strategies: This lesson is best utilized during a unit on Progressivism, or in a broader unit on industrialization in America. Students would be well prepared to engage in this lesson after studying industrial production and urbanization, particularly their impact on social conditions. Concepts to discuss include: progressivism, muckraking, social Darwinism, Prohibition, initiative, referendum, recall, American Federation of Labor, International Workers of the World, Knights of Labor, NAACP, Sherman Antitrust Act, suffrage, and the Food and Drug Act. In addition, students will need background knowledge of the reformers selected for the assignment (e.g. Lillian Wald, Jacob Riis). Students might read this in their text, or the teacher might supplement their knowledge with an outside reading or provide time to research a particular reformer. Teachers might also choose to adjust the list of reformers and concepts as desired.

The lesson is designed for use in two 60-minute periods. Students read the two primary sources for homework and the following day in class work in pairs to prepare their city council proposals or their photo essays. The second class period, students should complete their activity and have an opportunity to share their work. For a 45-minute period, students could be asked to complete the proposal/photo essay over two full class periods and share on a third day, or to work on the assignment for homework. A 90-minute block might allow students to prepare their proposals/ photo essays and share them in the same period.

To prepare the students for what is expected in each assessment, several methods might be used. For the proposal to the city council, teachers might discuss the aspects of persuasive writing, and the type of tone a piece might have when directed to government officials. Remind students that the more specific evidence they can provide to prove there are problems, the more convincing they will be. Also, the more specific and focused their proposed reforms, the more likely a city council might approve them. For the photo essay, teachers could discuss the format of Riis’ work. What types of photos did he include? Why? Brainstorm what areas or topics students might photograph in the modern day (e.g. a recent public building renovation, a community center, their own school, their own home). What type of stories or information did he include? Why do you think he chose them? Also, teachers might discuss the way in which a

popular documentary film (e.g. “Supersize Me” or “Bowling for Columbine”) utilizes images to make a point.

Students tend to struggle most with using the point of view of a particular reformer. Emphasis on using point of view and writing persuasively throughout the activity will make it more successful.

Authentic Assessment Activities:

Students may pick one of the following activities to complete:

1. After reading “Had too Much” and excerpts from Jacob Riis’s How the Other Half Lives for homework, students will respond to the articles from the point of view of one Progressive reformer. Students will use the articles and images to write a reform proposal for the city council from the point of view of their reformer. The proposal will assess the problems facing the urban poor, explain the root cause of these problems, and propose a specific plan to alleviate the problems.

Students will present their proposals to the class, and then turn in their proposals, which will be assessed for the use of primary sources, the use of the reformer’s point of view, persuasiveness, and thoughtfulness of the proposed reforms.

2. After reading “Had too Much” and excerpts Jacob Riis’ How the Other Half Lives for homework, students will respond to the articles in their own modern day photo essay. Students will imagine they are a specific Progressive reformer (e.g. Lillian Wald, Jacob Riis) who has come to visit America today. They will use modern day images to illustrate whether or not the problems this reformer was working on in the 19th century have been fixed today, and identify new 21st-century problems about which they might be concerned.

Students will present their photo essays to the class, and then turn in their photo essays, which will be assessed for the use of primary sources, use of the reformer’s point of view, persuasiveness, and thoughtfulness of the comparisons to the modern day.

Materials: Packet [LINK] labeled “Progressive Solutions for Connecticut”. This packet incorporates all of the materials needed for both assignment options. Pages one and two provide directions, and are followed by excerpts from How the Other Half Lives, Chapter 15, “The Problem of Children.” Also included are the full text and images of the *Hog River Journal* photo essay “Had too Much.”

Field Trip Option: A field trip to the Connecticut state capital building would be very appropriate for a unit on Progressivism, particularly if it might be arranged while the General Assembly is in session. Students will be able to tour the capital, meet their local legislators, and see the General Assembly in action, perhaps even debating a bill. Based on their experience, students might participate in an activity in which they debate the reforms they proposed in assignment choice one, or have to debate a bill to reform the problems of today discovered in the photo essays of assignment two. In addition, teachers might consult with their local historical societies regarding progressivism in their particular town.

Annotated Bibliography

"Learn About the Progressive Era." Digital History: Using New Technologies to Enhance Teaching and Research. 27 March 2009. University of Houston, et.al.. 27 Mar 2009
<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/modules/progressivism/index.cfm>.

A broad overview of Progressivism, suitable for both students and teachers looking for a basic understanding of the movement. Also includes "Fact Sheets" on related topics like immigration and political machines. A bonus is the wonderful links to maps, images, films, and primary sources.

"Teaching With Documents: Political Cartoons Illustrating Progressivism and the Election of 1912." The National Archives Digital Classroom. The National Archives. 27 Mar 2009
<<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/election-cartoons/>>.

Includes a very thorough background of the Progressive era to provide context for four political cartoons. Also provides teachers with suggested activities and a cartoon analysis worksheet.

Williams, Mark. "Connecticut Progressives." Connecticut History on the Web. Connecticut History on the Web. 27 Mar 2009
<http://www.connhistory.org/progressives_guide.htm>.

A complete lesson plan in which students reenact a press conference before the election of 1912. Students investigate the beliefs and activities of the Progressive Party and how they impacted the state of Connecticut. Extremely teacher friendly, as it was created by Mark Williams, a teacher at the Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, CT

See Rubrics, next page

Rubric

City Council Proposal

	Superior	Very Good	Proficient	Not Acceptable
Content	Responds to all elements of the questions thoroughly and with specific supporting examples; very persuasive	Responds to all elements of the questions and uses some specific supporting examples; persuasive	Responds to all of the questions but with few or very general examples; attempts to be persuasive	May omit one or more questions; may not utilize examples; may make no attempt at persuasion
Use of Sources	Many specific examples from both photo essays; used persuasively	Some specific examples from both photo essays; used persuasively	Utilizes both photo essays; attempts to be persuasive	May not reference one of the photo essays; may make no attempts at persuasion
Use of perspective	Utilizes the point of view of the chosen reformer accurately and creatively	Utilizes the point of view of the reformer accurately	Shows a basic understanding of the point of view of the reformer	May not respond from the point of view of the reformer
Use of concepts	Demonstrates a deep and insightful understanding of the values of Progressives	Demonstrates an understanding of the values of Progressives	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the values of the Progressives	May fail to demonstrate an understanding of the basic values of the Progressives
Organization	Very well written and clearly organized	Well written and organized	Writing may have minor errors or confusing element; somewhat organized	Writing may have major errors or unclear areas; may have major organization errors
Presentation	Proposal is delivered clearly and persuasively; utilizes eye contact; presentation is prepared and poised	Proposal is delivered clearly and with some persuasion; utilizes eye contact; presentation is prepared	Proposal may be delivered with some lack of clarity or may not be persuasive; minimal eye contact; presentation may demonstrate some lack of preparedness	Proposal may be delivered without clarity or persuasion; little to no eye contact; presentation may clearly show a lack of preparedness

Photo Essay

	Superior	Very Good	Proficient	Not Acceptable
Content	Responds to all elements of the questions thoroughly and with specific supporting examples; insightfully links modern and Progressive era issues	Responds to all elements of the questions and uses some specific supporting examples; links modern and Progressive era issues	Responds to all of the questions but with few or very general examples; attempts to link modern and Progressive era issues	May omit one or more questions; may not utilize examples; may make no attempt to link modern and Progressive era issues
Use of Sources	Many specific examples from both photo essays; selects or takes relevant and creative images	Some specific examples from both photo essays; selects or takes relevant images	Utilizes both photo essays; most images taken or selected are relevant	May not reference one of the photo essays; some images selected or taken may be irrelevant or may lack images
Use of perspective	Utilizes the point of view of the chosen reformer accurately and creatively	Utilizes the point of view of the reformer accurately	Shows a basic understanding of the point of view of the reformer	May not respond from the point of view of the reformer
Use of concepts	Demonstrates a deep and insightful understanding of the values of Progressives	Demonstrates an understanding of the values of Progressives	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the values of the Progressives	May fail to demonstrate an understanding of the basic values of the Progressives
Organization	Very well written and clearly organized; images clearly and creatively illustrate responses	Well written and organized; images clearly illustrate responses	Writing may have minor errors or confusing element; somewhat organized; images mostly illustrate responses	Writing may have major errors or unclear areas; may have major organization errors; images may be irrelevant or entirely missing
Presentation	Proposal is delivered clearly; utilizes eye contact; presentation is prepared and poised	Proposal is delivered clearly; utilizes eye contact; presentation is prepared	Proposal may be delivered with some lack of clarity; minimal eye contact; presentation may demonstrate some lack of preparedness	Proposal may be delivered without clarity; little to no eye contact; presentation may clearly show a lack of preparedness