

## **Triangle Fire and Labor Movement**

An Online Exhibit

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### *Ohio Social Studies Standards Correlation:*

History	Grade 10	Point 1
History	Grade 10	Point 2
History	Grade 10	Point 3

### **Introduction**

By 1897 sixty (60) percent of employed New York Jews made a living in garment making and they comprised approximately 75 percent of all garment workers. Jews dominated the garment industry as manufacturers, owners, and laborers. They also dominated the union activists bent on organizing the workers. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company was a factory in which Jewish owners hired Jewish workers. On March 26, 1911, the Triangle Factory fire killed over 140 young women and girls. The fire gave a powerful impetus to the growth of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union [ILGWU].

In this unit learners explore some of the happenings in the garment industry before, during, and after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire to learn about the Labor Movement, unions, and some of the people who impacted working conditions for both adults and children workers in America. The lesson is divided into three sections. Each section is designed so that learners can discover and use new knowledge while collaborating with group members.

### **Objectives:**

<http://www.infohio.org>

- Work in groups to analyze different perspectives on a topic obtained from a variety of sources, evaluate the reliability and credibility of the sources, and to make a decision.
- Critique data and information to determine the adequacy of support for conclusions.
- Utilize multiple sources pertaining to a singular topic to critique the various ways authors develop their ideas (e.g., treatment, scope and organization).
- Communicate findings, reporting on the substance and processes orally, visually and in writing, or through multimedia.
- Organize information from various resources and select appropriate sources to support central ideas, concepts and themes.

### **Themes:**

- **Pre-Exhibit:**
  - Pre-Responses
  - Unit Terms to Know
  - Guided Electronic Research
- **Exhibit:**
  - The Labor Movement Timeline Race
  - Bonus Questions
  - Evaluation of Pre-Responses
- **Post-Exhibit:**
  - Evaluation of Pre-Responses
  - Large Group Analytical Discussion and Review Session

## Procedures

There are three parts to this lesson plan.

### PART A:

- Hand out a sheet of paper with the following statements and questions on it. Have learners take the next 25 minutes to give a response to the statements. **Assure learners that their responses will not be graded. Also, assure them that there are no wrong answers to the questions unless - of course - they leave blank spaces.**
  1. How have working conditions improved for adults in America over the years? Why do you answer the way you do?
  2. What are your thoughts about the limits placed on the number of hours that children can work in one day?
  3. Do you believe it is necessary for workers to have unions? Why or why not?
  4. Should working conditions and pay for service be the same for all groups [ex. men, women, children, different racial groups, and socioeconomic classes]? Why or why not?
  5. Scenario: Julia and her husband Lonnie are expecting a child. They have agreed that Julia will take off from work for six weeks so that she can bond with their new child. Do you believe that Julia's job will be waiting for her when she returns to work? Why or why not?
- When 25 minutes are up tell students to keep their responses in their class binder until later when you ask them to use it for another activity.
- Place students into **odd** numbered teams. Then divide the unit terms below up among the groups and give members 5 - 10 minutes to review / look up the meaning of words assigned to their group. A designated speaker from each group should share responses with everyone.
- **Unit Terms:**

Courage	Sweatshops	Labor Laws
Women Labor	Protest	Labor Union
Suffrage	Health and safety	Clothing Union
Protest	Garment Factory	

## Triangle Shirtwaist Fire International Ladies Garment Workers' Union

- Make sure that learners understand how studying themes can be beneficial to workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Explain that what was happening in the garment industry before, during, and after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York was typical of what was happening to workers at the time throughout the country.
- Tell students that if they only work on their assignments in class they may not get finished.
- Students can earn bonus points for coming up with additional references from the library and journals.

### PART B

Guided Online Research Questions [see websites after the questions].

Give each team in-class and/or homework time to research the following questions online:

1. What helped bring public attention to conditions in the garment industry in 1911?
2. What were labor conditions like for women and children in New York before the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire? How long had conditions been that way?
3. What impact did the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire have on the labor movement in the United States? Why do you believe the fire had such an enormous impact on working conditions in America?
4. What popular songs are Louis Gilrod, D. Meyrowitz, and Jack Kammen known for? Why did they write and sing the song?
5. List at least two organizations that helped to shape America's labor movement. Who was the person who got at least one organization going?
6. What were common working conditions like in New York after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire?
7. For what is Sydney Hillman best known for?
8. Locate the print called "Eastside New York" by the artist Albert Potter. What does the print tell you about what was happening in Lower Eastside New York everyday?
9. Who came up with Labor Day? Why?
10. Why do some refer to the women's movement as the off spring of the civil rights movement?
11. Who was the Cornell University graduate, teacher, and social reformer who was denied entry into graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania because of her sex? She went on to graduate school in Switzerland and later returned to the United States to make major contributions to the labor movement such as gaining minimum wages for children, helping to form the NAACP, and being instrumental in organizing the International League for Peace and Freedom.
12. What are some of the reasons that people join unions?
13. For what contributions to the labor movement is Leonora O'Reilly best known?
14. Briefly write about some of the contributions Sarah G. Bagley made to the labor movement.

15. Who wrote "Some Ethical Gains through Legislation?"
16. What is Florence Kelley best known for?
17. List at least 4 national historical landmarks that are associated with the labor movement and/or social reform movement in New York.
18. In the photograph called "Waiting for the *Forward*" at the Library of Congress website what exactly is the *Forward* and why are so many children waiting for it?
19. What brought the New York State Factory Investigative Committee [FIC] into existence during the 1900s?
20. What impact did the Factory Investigative Commission have on working conditions in America?

**See the following websites to locate answers to the guided research questions:**

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html>

[http://www.jewishmuseummd.org/html/cr\\_timeline4.html](http://www.jewishmuseummd.org/html/cr_timeline4.html)

<http://www.historybuff.com/library/refshirtwaist.html>

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

<http://web.mit.edu/gtmarx/www/ironies.html>

<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutaflcio/history/history/bios.cfm>

<http://www.csun.edu/~ghy7463/mw2.html>

[http://www.galegroup.com/free\\_resources/whm/trials/triangle.htm](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/whm/trials/triangle.htm)

<http://www.aflcio.org/>

<http://www.dol.gov/>

<http://www.biography.com>

<http://www.aflcio.org/aboutaflcio/history/history/bios.cfm>

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawshome.html>

ALSO: Use the Triangle Waistshirt Fire and Labor Protest images on this (American Jewish Archives) website.

### PART C:

- Let learners know that their assignment is to evaluate their responses to the questions that they answered on the first day of the lesson using the information they have from their completed website research.
- The personal assessment should be no longer than two (2) double spaced and one-sided pages in length.
- Post-exhibit personal evaluations are due one week from today (\_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_).
- Make sure that you read the papers and then bring the class back together to review and discuss those topics that need additional attention. You will know from students' evaluations what areas need to be addressed again.
- Allow students to ask questions and to engage in analytical class discussion. Make sure, however, that you give the correct answer when the correct answer does not come out in the learners' analytical discussion of the topic.
- Allow learners to give a team oral report on what they learned from studying about the Triangle Shirtwaist fire and labor movement.

## Questions

**Directions:** Within the next 25 minutes write your response to the five [5] questions below. The only way to get an answer wrong is to leave it blank. Your responses **ARE NOT** going to be graded!

1. How have working conditions improved for adults in America over the years? Why do you answer the way you do?
2. What are your thoughts about the limits placed on the number of hours that children can work in one day?
3. Do you believe it is necessary for workers to have unions? Why or why not?
4. Should working conditions and pay for service be the same for all groups [ex. men, women, children, different racial groups, and socioeconomic classes]? Why or why not?
5. Scenario: Julia and her husband Lonnie are expecting a child. They have agreed that Julia will take off from work for six weeks so that she can bond with their new child. Do you believe that Julia's job will be waiting for her when she returns to work? Why or why not?

**REMINDER:** Keep this sheet in a safe place and bring it to class while we are studying about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and labor movement because we will use it for another activity in the future.