

The 1913 Paterson Silk Strike

A Social Studies Lesson Plan

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As many as 20,000 striking silk mil workers met at the home of immigrants Pietro and Maria Botto during the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike.

- I. Subject Area: Social Studies
- II. Topic/Theme: Paterson Silk Strike of 1913 (Social Studies 6.1A: Relate the Strike to the importance of Human Rights)(NJCCS, 3.4,6.1,6.2,6.5,6.6)
- III. Essential question: What occurred during the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike?
- IV. Objectives:
 - A. Low Level
 - i Recall: What were the causes of the Paterson Silk Strike?
 - ii Describe: Why was the silk strike so important to the workers?
 - B. High level
 - i Compare and Evaluate: compare working conditions before and after the strike.
 - ii Write
 - 1. K-8: Write a journal entry from a striker's point of view. How do you feel about the events going on around you?
 - 2. 9-12: Write a letter to a member of Congress addressing the working conditions and grievances in the silk mills. Consider why it is important to pass legislation protecting workers' rights?
- V. Teacher Actions:
 - A. Planning: The students should understand how the silk strikers cleared the path for labor unions and workers' rights in the United States.
 - B. Motivate: Use the photo of the 20,000+ workers in front of the Botto House as a discussion tool to demonstrate the enormous social impact of the strike.
 - i Use the photo to provide background information about the strike and the Botto House. "Why couldn't the workers hold meetings in Paterson? How did the Botto House become a meeting place for the strikers?"
 - ii In the students' opinions was it right for the strikers to be treated as they were treated in Paterson? Discuss.
 - C. Teach:

- i Review the information about the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike, and go over the fact that the strikers' meetings were held in Haledon after the closure of meeting halls in Paterson and the actions of Paterson's authorities.
- ii Have the students do an interactive lecture with you about the causes and impacts of the strike. Allow the students to come up to the white board/smart board and write down what they think.
 - 1. What was the four loom system and how did it contribute to the strike?
 - 2. What were the four main reasons for the strike?
 - a. Job loss caused by four loom system
 - b. Poor wages
 - c. Dangerous working conditions
 - d. Long working hours
 - 3. What were the main goals of the workers during the strike? They were fighting against the four loom system. They were fighting for an eight hour work day, higher wages and improved working conditions.

D. Ask lower and higher order question:

i Low level questions

- 1. Knowledge: What are the causes of the strike?
- 2. Comprehension: Why and how did the strike transform Paterson?

ii High level questions

- 1. Application: If you were a silk mill owner at the time of the strike what would you do to get the workers to come back to the mills to work again?
- 2. Analysis: How are the workers' demands similar or different from those of labor unions today?
- 3. Synthesis: Do you think that a situation like the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike could happen today in New Jersey?
- 4. Evaluation: Do you think that the meetings that were held in Haledon by the strikers bring them their desired result?

E. Practice (Skills)

- i 3-8: Have the students design picket signs for the strikers.
- ii 9-12: Have students visit njvid.net/showvideo.php?pid=njcore:16561 and view the video "The House on the Green", a short film about the history of the Botto House and the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike.

F. Create (Performance Task)

- i Pretend that you are one of the silk mill workers that went on strike in 1913. You are now out of work for several months because you and other workers are fighting for workplace rights. Write a persuasive essay/letter to the owners of the silk mills explaining your demands and the conditions that need to be met if you and the other workers are to return to work. Explain why these demands are crucial and important to you as a silk mill worker.

G. Presentation/Closure:

- i Students may volunteer to read their essay/letters to the class. The teacher should highlight the main viewpoints that are touched on in the letters read in class.

H. Evaluation: Rubric on performance task

i Understanding of Content:

1. Needs Work
2. Emerging
3. Satisfactory
4. Proficient

ii Mechanics:

1. Needs Work
2. Emerging
3. Satisfactory
4. Proficient

I. Accommodations:

- i If some of the students find the performance task difficult they will be given extra time and will be allowed to complete the assignment at home. During the

next class, talk with the students to see that they understand the assignment and are able to write a working essay/letter.

J. Summary of Assessment Data:

- i Teacher should keep track of how many of the students in the class were able to complete the performance task. Also the teacher needs to know which of the students struggled with the task so that they can work on that specific area.