

WASAH Proposal: Extending American Freedom
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Looking at the “Hine” Side of Child Labor at the Turn of the Century

Description/Rationale:

Last year my WASAH project was a study of the leisure activities of people at the turn of the century and how it helped define freedom for the working classes. This year, inspired by many of the fine presenters we have had this week, I have decided to pursue a topic somewhat related to my last year’s topic, as it deals with the same period of history (1880-1930), but looking at one of the darker issues of the time: child labor. After touring the American Photography Masters exhibit at the Paine, I learned that one of the premier photojournalists exposing the human side of child labor, Lewis Hine, was actually an Oshkosh native. I hope to connect the study of how photography had a social effect on American history (and played a vital role in extending freedom to the workers through the labor movement) as well as the complexities of the issues of child labor. For example, did the movement to limit child labor (led by many of the labor organizations and women’s organizations of the time) actually hurt immigrant groups dependent on the income? This is just one of the many issues I hope to explore in this unit.

Being that many of my students have jobs or are looking for jobs, this should be a way for students to naturally be hooked into this topic. Students today also tend to be visual learners; thus, teaching them to be able to analyze visual images is a vital skill. I was intrigued by Ed O’Donnell’s SIGHT method for visual analysis and hope to teach it to the students. I also plan to take students to the photography exhibit this fall (before it leaves in October) and will have them use this method with some of the images in the exhibit.. Another connection with the topic with my AP American Studies students is their reading of *The Jungle* (Sinclair) and the short story, “The Rebel” (London), both of which deal with the issue of child labor. The connection to Hine will be easily integrated into our literary discussions, as well as our discussion of the Gilded Age and beyond, in terms of the issue of child labor (as well as progressive activism and immigration).

Collaboration:

I found out that one of my Appleton WASAH cohorts, Dan Shimek, is doing a similar topic with this at-risk alternative students, so we hope to collaborate somewhat in terms of research materials. Joshua Ranger will be helping me find some primary sources related to the topic of child labor in Wisconsin through the archives, and I know that I can tap the vast historical knowledge of the UW-Oshkosh dynamic duo, Michelle Kuhl (especially for gilded age and progressive era issues) and Jeff Pickron (labor history and twenties/thirties issues).

In-Service:

As in the past, I will be sharing this with my US History colleagues at the four high schools in the district at an in-service in the spring, as well as through e-mail sharing.

Lesson Plan:

The topic of child labor clearly connects to concept of extending American freedom, the focus for our academy this year. Students will begin to appreciate the need for extending protection of child laborers, but also that extending such necessary protections perhaps limited the economic freedom of many families (this paradox will be somewhat central to the unit). At this point, the finished student product(s) are not entirely clear, although I imagine that they will be doing some research of Hine's photography using the vast on-line sources available. I also will be having them do some writing of some sort, hopefully combining the historical ideas with the visual and literary ones (Sinclair and London). I will also be creating a few power points highlighting some of the major photographic works (or have students put together slides for them perhaps). I also hope to bring in some modern child labor issues for students to explore, as a means for making the issue more relevant to them.

Target Audience:

11th grade US History – both regular level and AP levels

Standards:

B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches

B.12.2 Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion

B.12.3 Recall, select, and analyze significant historical periods and the relationships among them

B.12.4 Assess the validity of different interpretations of significant historical events

B.12.5 Gather various types of historical evidence, including visual and quantitative data, to analyze issues of freedom and equality, liberty and order, region and nation, individual and community, law and conscience, diversity and civic duty; form a reasoned conclusion in the light of other possible conclusions; and develop a coherent argument in the light of other possible arguments

B.12.7 Identify major works of art and literature produced in the United States and elsewhere in the world and explain how they reflect the era in which they were created

B.12.8 Recall, select, and explain the significance of important people, their work, and their ideas in the areas of political and intellectual leadership, inventions, discoveries, and the arts, within each major era of Wisconsin, United States, and world history

B.12.9 Select significant changes caused by technology, industrialization, urbanization, and population growth, and analyze the effects of these changes in the United States and the world

B.12.11 Compare examples and analyze why governments of various countries have sometimes sought peaceful resolution to conflicts and sometimes gone to war

B.12.15 Identify a historical or contemporary event in which a person was forced to take an ethical position, such as a decision to go to war, the impeachment of a president, or a presidential pardon, and explain the issues involved

B.12.18 Explain the history of slavery, racial and ethnic discrimination, and efforts to eliminate discrimination in the United States and elsewhere in the world

Relevant research:

Besides many excellent web sites dedicated to the work of Lewis Hine, as well as the archival primary sources I hope to find with the help of Joshua Ranger, I hope to read at least parts of the following books (some of which I hope to purchase through the WASAH grant):

Child Labor: An American History (Hugh Hindman, 2002) – this was a book recommended by one of the presenters, Jim Schmidt

Huck's Raft (Stephen Hintz) – *A History of American Childhood* (I already have this book)

Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor (Russell Freedman and Lewis Hine)

Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography (Robert Hirsch, 2008)

Small Strangers: The Experiences of Immigrant Children in America (Melissa Klapper, 2007)