

Labor unions during the Industrial Revolution

Directions: Read through the informational text below, highlighting or underlining key words or very small phrases in the text. Then, complete the 2 activities below.

During the 2nd Industrial Revolution, there were jobs that opened up in factories. There were many people, including many new immigrants to the United States that began to work there. Much wealth was generated through these businesses and the United States was becoming stronger because of their industry.

However, many workers were faced with many struggles such as the following: 10-12 hour work days, no sick days (if they were sick and did not show up to work, their boss might give their job to someone else), unsafe work conditions, low pay, and repetitive work (doing the same task over and over again which could lead to boredom). Workers were frustrated with these conditions, but what could they do to change them? If they complained, bosses would not listen. Or would they?

These negative events were what led to the creation of labor unions. A labor union is a group of workers in an industry which join together to seek better work conditions. One of the major labor unions begun was the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1886. They preferred to use collective bargaining to negotiate with employers about their demands. Nevertheless, if bosses were not willing to negotiate with workers about better pay or less work hours, the AFL could resort to strikes or boycotts. A strike is when the workers of an industry refuse to work until their demands are met by the boss whereas a boycott is when mass amounts of people refuse to buy products from a company and encourage others to stop buying as well.

There were many strikes in the last few years of the 1800's. Sometimes they could be very successful, but sometimes they could turn violent. For example, the Homestead Strike (1892) began when workers at a steel company (owned by Andrew Carnegie) were upset with their difficult work conditions. When the management of the company refused to work with them, the workers then refused to work and occupied the factory. When security agents were sent into the factory to seek to get work moving again, gunfire broke out and some people were killed. This event put a stain on the reputation of Andrew Carnegie.

Labor unions still exist today and have had an important place in the history of the United States.

Activities:

1. Since work conditions have improved in the United States since the 1800's, are labor unions still needed in our country today? Why or why not? (2 sentences)

2. Use the word LABOR to create an acrostic which would use different phrases to describe a labor union. An example is below (please do not use my example for your letter L.) You can **use the back side of this paper.**

L- Long working hours made many workers upset since they were exhausted by the time they got home.