Growth of Labor Unions
Unit: Gilded Age, Topic: Labor Unions

Duration: ½ Day

Objective/Learning Target: Analyze the growth of labor unions during the Gilded Age.

TEKS
(3) History. The student understands the political, economic, and social changes in the United States from 1877 to 1898. The student is expected to:

(B) - analyze economic issues such as industrialization, the growth of railroads, the growth of labor unions, farm issues, the cattle industry boom, and the rise of entrepreneurship, free enterprise and the pros and cons of big business
(C) - analyze social issues affecting women, minorities, children, immigrants, urbanization, the Social Gospel and philanthropy of industrialists of big business

Materials Needed –
Labor and Business Documents Activity (one per student)
Development of Labor Unions Lesson (one per student)
PowerPoint – Discussion Questions

Teaching Strategy
Engage -
1. Have students view the following 6 minute clip looking at today’s unions. It introduces the background of the formation of unions and asks the question – are unions still relevant today?
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZa_E94mWM&feature=autoplay&list=PL0FD30411A6053271&playnext=2

2. Provide students with a copy of Labor and Business Document Activity and have students analyze the documents. Questions have been provided to help guide students.

3. Once students have completed their analysis of the documents, place them in small groups and have them answer the following discussion questions:

   What was the response (or action) of the people to the problems with big business and working conditions?

   Why did laborers feel the need to form unions based on the problems they faces with big business and working conditions?

   As a worker in a labor union, your supervisor’s response might have been, “So you’re in a union… so what...” What are your options to fight against unfair labor practices and what would be the possible positive and negative effects of your different actions?
4. Have students share their responses with the class.

5. Once you have completed the discussion on the need for labor unions, provide students with the Development of Labor Unions Handout and have them complete.

**Formative Assessment** - Individual responses to the rise of labor unions in the Gilded Age.

**Summative Assessment**

Gilded Age Test Bank

# 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45,
Labor and Business Document Activity

Source: David A. Wells, engineer and economist, *Recent Economic Changes and Their Effect on the Production and Distribution of Wealth and the Well-Being of Society*, 1889.

The modern manufacturing system has been brought into a condition analogous to that of a military organization, in which the individual no longer works as independently as formerly, but as a private in the ranks, obeying orders, keeping step, as it were, to the tap of the drum, and having nothing to say as to the plan of his work, of its final completion, or of its ultimate use and distribution. In short, the people who work in the modern factory are, as a rule, taught to do one thing—to perform one and generally a simple operation; and when there is no more of that kind of work to do, they are in a measure helpless. The result has been that the individualism or independence of the producer in manufacturing has been in a great degree destroyed, and with it has also in a great degree been destroyed the pride which the workman formerly took in his work—that fertility of resource which formerly was a special characteristic of American workmen, and that element of skill that comes from long and varied practice and reflection and responsibility.

What is main idea of this document?

How does it describe the working conditions of laborers?


The organized working men and women, the producers of the wealth of the world, declare that men, women and children, with human brains and hearts, should have a better consideration than inanimate and dormant things, usually known under the euphonious title of “Property.”…

We demand a reduction of the hours of labor, which would give a due share of work and wages to the reserve army of labor and eliminate many of the worst abuses of the industrial system now filling our poor houses and jails. …

Labor … insists upon the exercise of the right to organize for self and mutual protection. … That the lives and limbs of the wage-workers shall be regarded as sacred as those of all others of our fellow human beings; that an injury or destruction of either by reason of negligence or maliciousness of another, shall not leave him without redress simply because he is a wage-worker. …

And by no means the least demand of the Trade Unions is for adequate wages.

What is main idea of this document?

How does this describe the need for labor unions?
What is the main idea of this document?

How does this document describe government and big business?
Subject: Breaker Boys

What is the main idea of this document?

What can you tell about labor conditions for children?
Subject: Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire

What is the main idea of this document?

How does this cartoon show the problems with labor conditions and the need for labor unions?
Development of Labor Unions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Federation of Labor (AFL)</th>
<th>Knights of Labor</th>
<th>International Workers of the World (IWW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founder &amp; Date started</strong></td>
<td>1886 Samuel Gompers</td>
<td>1869 Uriah Stephens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of workers that could be members</strong></td>
<td>Skilled Workers</td>
<td>Open to all workers – regardless of race, gender, or skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals – what they wanted to accomplish</strong></td>
<td>Collective bargaining, negotiations between representatives of labor &amp; management focused on wages, hours, &amp; working conditions</td>
<td>Equal pay for equal work, advocated arbitration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Successes or Accomplishments</strong></td>
<td>Successful strikes led to higher wages and workweek went from 54 hours to 49 hours</td>
<td>No big successes – membership declined after series of strike failures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tactics of Labor Unions

**Collective Bargaining** – Negotiations between representatives of the workers and the management of companies dealing with issues such as wages and working conditions. The idea behind this is to reach a solution regarding the worker’s complaints.

**Boycotts** – A form of protest that involves refusing to have dealings with an organization or to refusing to buy a product from a certain organization in hopes that they will listen to what the workers want. The idea behind this is that if everyone boycotts a company they would have an economic reason to listen to the workers.

**Strikes** – When workers stop working in order to force an employer to listen to their demands. This is a form of protest that can involve picketing (when workers are stationed outside a factory or mine in order to prevent other workers or persons from entering.)
A. **Great Strike of 1877**
- Workers from B&O RR protested 2nd wage cut
- Over 50,000 mi of track was stopped for over a week
- President Hayes intervened with federal troops to stop strike because it interfered with interstate commerce

B. **Haymarket Riot**
- At the McCormick Harvester Plant a striker had been killed and several others wounded by the police
- The next day 3,000 people gathered at Chicago’s Haymarket Square to protest police brutality
- As people started dispersing when police arrived; someone threw a bomb into the police line, police fired on workers, seven police officers and several workers died
- No one knew who threw the bomb but 8 people tied to the protest were charged and convicted for inciting a riot
- 4 were hanged and one committed suicide in prison
- The public began to turn against labor after Haymarket

C. **Homestead Strike**
- Steelworkers at Carnegie’s Steel Company’s Homestead plant in Pennsylvania went on strike after company president cut wages
- Company hired Pinkerton Detective Agency so plant could hire scabs to cross the picket line
- This led to a clash between workers and detectives in which 9 people died
- National Guard arrived in July but the strike continued through November
- The union lost support and eventually gave into the company (would be 45 years for steelworkers to mobilize once again)
To Join or Not to Join - Using the documents above answer the following questions.

1. What would be the benefit of joining a labor union?

2. What would be the potential drawbacks?

3. Using the chart above, which union was most successful? Support your answer.

4. How did management and the government react to union activity?

5. Based on the information above do you believe labor unions were successful during the Gilded Age? Support your answer with facts.

6. Why would management be opposed to labor unions?
Labor Discussion Questions

What was the response (or action) of the people to the problems with big business and working conditions?

Why did laborers feel the need to form unions based on the problems they face with big business and working conditions?

As a worker in a labor union, your supervisor’s response might have been, “So you’re in a union... so what...” What are your options to fight against unfair labor practices and what would be the possible positive and negative effects of your different actions?