

Mining and Union Songs in the Early 20th Century

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do Nimrod Workman's songs and stories about his life as a coal miner illustrate the struggles of working class people during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era?

OVERVIEW

By the turn of the 20th century, technology had radically reshaped the American economy and the lives of those who worked within it—some for good, some for worse. In American cities, the Edison Electric Company's ever creeping power grid provided factories with cheaper, more reliable power, and electric lights allowed factories—many of which embraced the “assembly line” pioneered by Henry Ford—to produce goods twenty-four hours a day. Railroads, empowered by the recent switch from timber fuel to the more efficient coal, also continued to expand, driving both the mineral extraction industries and the iron furnaces that produced the essential components of train tracks. The industries powered one another, and the need for labor surged.



Photo: Peirce and Jones

One might imagine that such a period in American history would have been a “Golden Age,” a time when the overall quality of life dramatically improved thanks to new technologies, a wider availability of goods, and the heightened flow of capital. Sadly, this was not the case. Whatever “gold” there was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries belonged mostly to the few. As such, the period was better described by Mark Twain as the “Gilded Age,” a time when a thin veneer of gold plating barely covered a tarnished core. The luster was only surface deep.

The increased production capacity and technological advances of the Gilded Age could have reduced the stress on workers of all types, and the larger profit margins on the goods produced could have been dispersed in a way that rewarded all parties involved. However, for the most part, none of this occurred. Whether in factories or coal mines, most laborers found themselves working long hours for wages that left them in poverty. Workers in major metropolitan areas like New York and Chicago, most of whom came from rural America or foreign countries, ended up in overcrowded, dilapidated tenement buildings. Outside of major cities, railroad tracks that carried goods and people operated thanks to workers and miners who toiled long hours, often under the surveillance of armed guards. Meanwhile, industry magnates like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and financiers such as J.P. Morgan accumulated unprecedented amounts of wealth and power, ensuring their heirs an enduring aristocratic-like status for generations to come.

The failed promises of the industrial age were perhaps most pronounced in the Appalachian region in the United States, an area that stretches along the Appalachian Mountains from Southern New York to Northern Mississippi. Rich in materials and culture but economically poor, this region became home to “company towns,” small settlements of miners and their families who worked for a single company. Miners were often treated as dispensable. They were expected to labor long hours underground in potentially lethal conditions. There were no child labor laws and boys started work as young as 10. And there was no illusion of working for upward mobility: miners were often paid not in wages, but “scrips,” credit statements for goods and food valid only at stores owned by the mining company. There was nothing to save, and no way out. Hopeless, and living by the whim of company owners, Appalachian miners became vocal, sometimes violent proponents of unionization and working class solidarity.

By the turn of the 20th century, the wealth inequality and political corruption characteristic of the Gilded Age had become untenable. Various activist groups, soon collectively known as The Progressives, began demanding a democracy beholden to all, including workers, and a fair balance between the rights of business owners, workers, and consumers. Regularly led by women, the Progressive movement fought for child labor laws, fair working hours, public health regulations, consumer protections, and women’s suffrage. Other groups demanded anti-monopoly legislation, environmental regulation, and governmental policy informed by analysis and expertise. The Progressives found an ally in president Theodore Roosevelt, who advocated for a “New Nationalism” that placed both economic development and public interest as areas of concern, but it was only later, through Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, that much of the progressive’s demands were brought to fruition.

In this lesson, created in partnership with The Association for Cultural Equity, students gain a deeper understanding of what life might have been like for a working class person during this period of American history by examining the songs and stories of Nimrod Workman. Born in 1895, Workman began working in the West Virginia coal mines at fourteen years old, and continued for 42 years. By analyzing Workman’s songs and personal stories, which were recorded by Alan Lomax in 1983, students gain a first-hand account of one of the most dangerous, violent, and least regulated industries in American history, and discover the relationships between labor, industry, and the government from the 1890s to the end of World War II.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The socio-political environment during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era
- The mining industry in West Virginia and the West Virginia Mine Wars
- The development of unions in America (including the UMWA, the AFL, the IWW, and the CIO)
- Historic labor legislation and policy in the early 20th century (including Theodore Roosevelt's "Square Deal," The Clayton Antitrust Act, The "Business Decade" under Coolidge and Harding, and Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal," and the Taft-Hartley Act)
- Important moments in US labor history in the early 20th century (The Haymarket Riot, the Ludlow Massacre, the 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike, The Pullman Strike, and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire)

- Important labor leaders (Mother Jones, Eugene V. Debs, Clara Lemlich), and industrialists (John D. Rockefeller Jr., Henry Ford) in US history

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to articulate the relationships between workers, businesses owners, and the federal government from the late 1800s to the 1940s by watching and discussing the work of musician Nimrod Workman.

ACTIVITIES

ENTRY TICKET ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

1. Have students read the overview of this lesson before class and arrive ready to articulate what they think the differences might be between a "golden" and "gilded" age.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Show students **Image 1, "The Bosses of the Senate,"** a cartoon by Joseph Keppler, 1889, and ask:
 - What do you see in this image? What point do you think Keppler wished to make about life in the Gilded Age?
 - What do you think a monopolist is? Why do you think they're represented so much larger than the senators?
 - What do you notice about the "People's Entrance"? Why do you think it's presented this way?

2. Tell students that they will explore life in the Gilded Age more closely by assuming the role of ethnographers--social scientists who study people in their own environments. Their subject, who they'll observe via video recordings, is Nimrod Workman, a musician who spent 42 years as a coal miner. As ethnographers, students should practice a type of detailed description that anthropologist Clifford Geertz called "thick description." They should observe the subject's behavior, but also the context behind that behavior (the surrounding environment, the subject's personal background, etc.). Ask students to take notes that detail the setting of the performance, the performer's age, attire, body, body language, and anything else they notice. Play **Clip 1, "Nimrod Workman, 42 Years,"** and ask:
 - What general observations did you have while watching the video?
 - Where does it seem like the video was shot?
 - How would you describe the house seen in the video? (*Students should consider the quality of the house, or the items surrounding Workman on the porch.*)
 - How might you describe the way in which Workman and his wife are dressed?
 - What was Workman doing with his hands as he performed? (*Encourage students to consider what he was enacting as he sang.*)
 - What do you think Workman might have been singing about?
3. Give each student **Handout 1 - Nimrod Workman Lyrics**. Have the students read the lyrics to "42 Years" to themselves, and then watch the video a second time with the goal of noticing things they might not have noticed before. Ask students:
 - What do you think Workman is singing about?
 - Did you observe anything different about the video on the second viewing?
 - Based upon the observations the class has made, what preliminary conclusions might we draw about Nimrod Workman's life? Do you think he felt represented by the "Bosses of the Senate"? (*Encourage students to consider his socioeconomic class, his quality of life, his level of education, and what his life history might have been like.*)

PROCEDURE

1. Tell students that they will be further investigating Nimrod Workman in order to better understand what life might have been like for coal miners in and after the Gilded Age. Post the **Gallery Walk Images** throughout the classroom. Tell students that they will be examining photographs documenting the daily lives of coal miners, and that under each photograph is a quote by Workman about his life as a miner. Encourage students to again practice “thick description,” taking notes about the photographs and quotes.

2. After the gallery walk activity, ask students:

- What were some of the observations you made about Workman’s life based on your gallery walk?
- Based on the pictures, how would you describe the typical coal miner? (*Encourage students to think about the relatively young age of coal miners, and that they were primarily male.*)
- What did the work of a coal miner seem to entail? Was it dangerous? (*Remind students of Workman’s description of operating explosives [“shots”], and his medical issues resulting from mining.*)
- How do you think miners got the equipment they needed? (*Students should know that oftentimes miners had to rent or buy their own equipment.*)
- How were coal miners paid? Do you think the pay was fair for a coal miner, given the type of work it entailed? (*Students should know coal miners were often not paid by the hour, but how many pounds of coal they produced.*)
- What do you think “scrip” and “company store” refer to? (*Students should know*

that a “scrip” was a type of currency given to miners in lieu of money, which could only be used at general stores owned by the company.)

- How did Workman describe his relationship with the mine owners and foreman? Would you say he had a good or bad relationship with them? Why?
 - Why wasn’t Workman able to fix his house? (*Remind students that he wasn’t paid money, but scrips, and, moreover, the mining company owned his house.*)
 - When Workman was hurt, why do you think the doctor declared that his injury wasn’t mine related? Who do you think the doctor worked for?
 - What option might have miners had to improve their job?
3. Show **Clip 2, “Mother Jones’ Will,”** and refer students to **Handout 1 - Nimrod Workman Lyrics** for the words to the song. Draw students attention to the words that are presented in bold in the lyrics.
 4. Split students into groups of four, and pass out to each group **Handout 2 - The Coal Wars Document Set**. Tell students that each member of the group will read one document, and then present their document to the rest of the group. Using the documents as a guide, students will then discuss as a group what the bolded words in the “Mother Jones’ Will” lyrics might refer to.
 5. As a class, discuss:
 - What might Workman meant when he says he is going to “fight for the union” in the song? (*Students should gather that he is referring to the United Mine Workers of America.*)

- What was the union fighting for? Do you think the “fight” was metaphorical, like “fighting for rights,” or physical, or both? Why?
- Who is Mother Jones? What does her role in mining history seem to be? What do you think “Mother Jones’ Will” might refer to in Document 3? (*In the speech, Mother Jones advocates fighting for the union, building solidarity with the railroad workers, and voting.*)
- Who might the “Thugs” be that miners and others refer to in the documents? (*Encourage students to look back at Documents 2 and 3 in the packet. There the mine owners and the “Baldwins,” employees of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency who acted as hired guns for the mine companies, are referred to as the enemies.*)
- What is Workman referring to when he sings about “Blair Mountain Hill”? (*Encourage students to review document 4 in the packet.*)
- Thinking back to the “Bosses of the Senate” image, where do you think the coal mine owners for whom Workman labored might fit? How do you see the power of such “monopolists” playing out in Document 4?

6. Tell students they will now examine how the West Virginia Mine Wars fits into a larger historical context. Pass out **Handout 3 - American Labor and Working-Class History, 1886-1944** and “whip around” the room, having each student read one event in the timeline in chronological order.

7. Ask students:

- How would you characterize the relationship between workers and business owners during this time? Where does the federal government fit into this relationship?
- Was the government’s treatment of labor issues consistent during this period, or did it change? Which presidents seemed more in favor of workers, and which seemed more in favor of business owners?
- What industries at this period seemed most likely to go on strike? Why might this be?
- What sort of external factors influenced the relationship between the government, business owners, and workers? (*Examples might include economic booms and busts or the world wars.*)
- Do you think the labor legislation enacted during this era benefited all workers? From what you know about American history, do you think black workers benefited equally under these laws as white workers? (*Often, African American workers did not benefit from this legislation to the extent that white workers did.*)

8. Tell students that they will now be looking at some of Nimrod Workman’s stories to better understand how these historical relationships might have affected everyday working class people.

9. Show **Image 2, “Woodrow Wilson’s War,”** and ask students:
 - What war is Workman referring to in this story? (*World War I*)
 - What does he mean when he says “I was ready to go up in the next call”? (*He was ready to be drafted [the draft was initiated by Wilson through the Selective Service Act of 1917].*)
10. Show **Image 3, “Those Hoover Days.”** Ask students:
 - What era is Workman referring to? (*Point students to the reference of “those Hoover Days,” revealing that Workman was likely discussing the Great Depression under Hoover.*)
- Why might someone during this period of time be desperate for a job and living on “a cracker a day?”
- In this case, how did “Mr. Morrison” use the effects of the Great Depression to the benefit of the mine company?
11. Show **Image 4, “Old Roosevelt Said,”**
 - What is Workman referring to by the “big war”? (*World War II*)
 - Is he speaking of Theodore or Franklin D. Roosevelt in this story? (*FDR*)
 - According to Workman, how did President Roosevelt negotiate between the miners and the mine owners?
 - What might Workman’s impression of Roosevelt been? Do you think he agreed with Roosevelt’s policies?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Show **Image 5, “Writing Prompt,”** and have students follow the prompt given. Collect responses, or have students present their responses to the class.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Visit the West Virginia Mine Wars website (<https://wvminewars.org/>) to further investigate the history of mining and labor in the state of West Virginia.
2. Writing Prompt: Compare and contrast the economic and political issues characteristic of the Gilded Age with the economic and political issues you see as prevalent today. Are they similar or different?
3. Investigate one of the events provided in **Handout 3** in more detail. Include the principal actors involved, a rough timeline of important events, the result, and the legacy the event may have attained.
4. Compare the life of a miner in Appalachia with the life of a sharecropper in the South. What

was similar, and what was different?

5. Nimrod Workman was one of many musicians that wrote and performed songs about mining. Research the life and career of one of the following musicians, focusing on their career as a musician and their affiliation with the coal mining profession.

- Aunt Molly Jackson
- Woody Guthrie
- Hazel Dickins
- Dock Boggs
- Sarah Ogan Gunning
- Jean Ritchie
- Merle Travis
- Jim Ringer
- Carter Stanley
- Randall Hylton



EXPLORE FURTHER

Books:

- Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (Penguin Classics)
- Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace: A Novel of Immigrant Labor in America* (University of Pittsburgh Press)
- Mary Harris Jones, *Autobiography of Mother Jones* (Dover)

Films:

- Scott Faulkner and Anthony Slone, *Nimrod Workman: To Fit My Own Category* (Appalshop)
- John Sayles, *Matewan* (Cinecom Pictures)
- Barbara Kopple, *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (Cinema 5)

Records:

- Nimrod Workman, *I Want to Go Where Things are Beautiful* (Drag City)
- Pete Seeger, *American Industrial Ballads* (Smithsonian Folkways)
- Various Artists, *Music of Coal: Mining Songs from the Appalachian Coalfields* (Full Lights)



STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Reading 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Reading 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. College and Career Readiness

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12)

Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Writing 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Writing 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)

Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Speaking and Listening 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Speaking and Listening 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change



Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Responding

Anchor Standard #7-Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard #8-Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #9- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Core Music Standard: Responding

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

Core Music Standard: Connecting

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.



RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- *The Association for Cultural Equity* - "Nimrod Workman: '42 Years'"
- *The Association for Cultural Equity* - "Nimrod Workman: 'Mother Jones' Will'"

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1 - "The Lyrics of Nimrod Workman"
- Handout 2 - "The Coal Wars Document Set:"
- Handout 3 - "American Labor and Working Class History, 1886-1944"
- Gallery Walk

Lesson Materials



Image 1, “The Bosses of the Senate,”

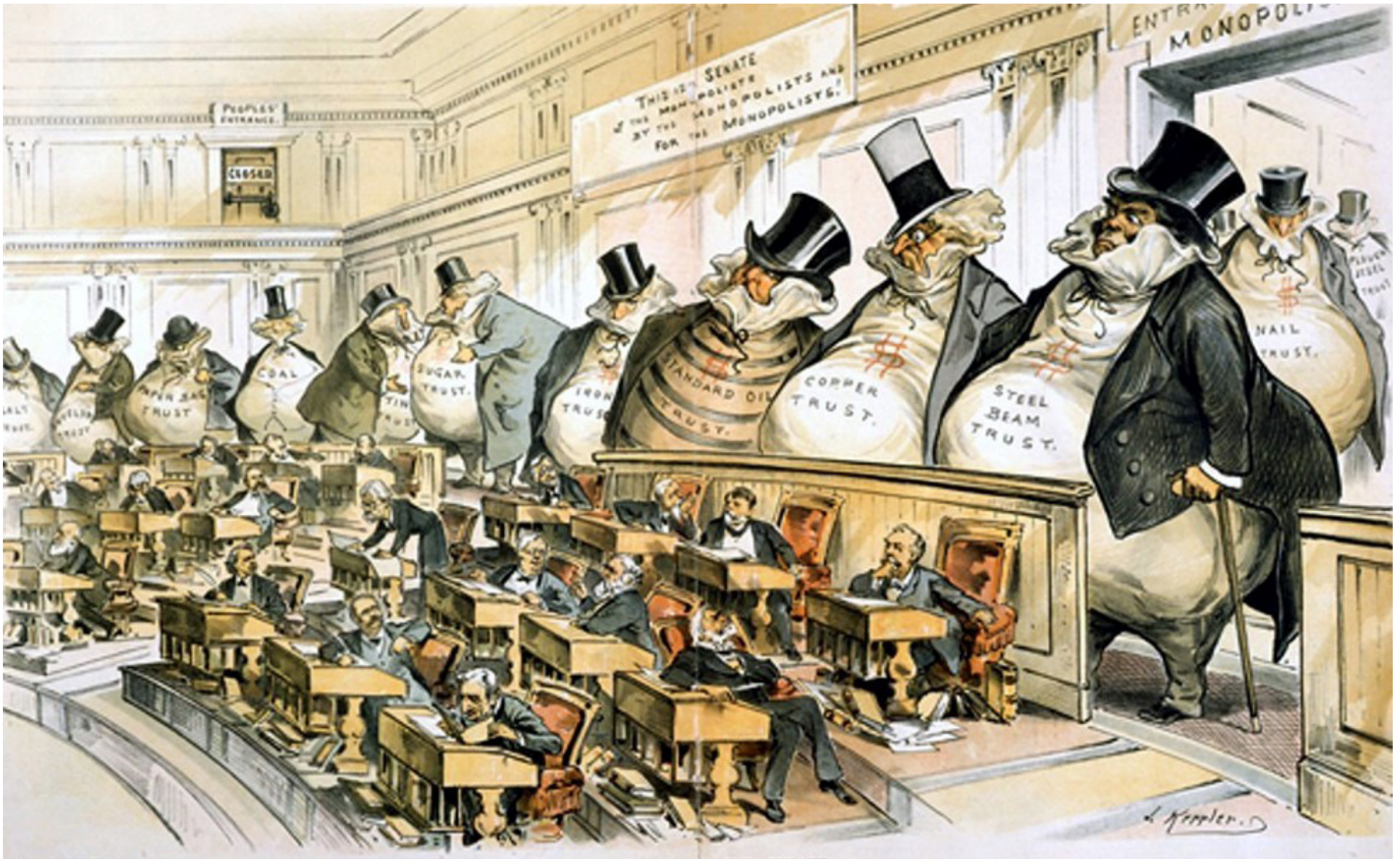


Image 2-4, Nimrod Workman Quotes

“That was back in the time of old Woodrow Wilson’s War. I had been exempted because I was taking care of my dad and family, but I was ready to go up in the next call. Well, I was working in the cornfield one day with my daddy when I heard all the whistles a-blowing up at the mines, and on all these freight trains running up and down the river. And the people out on their farms over on the Kentucky side started ringing on their plows. “There’s peace,” they said. “We’ve run old King Kaiser in the vault.” And that was the last I ever heard about him.”

“Then when we got into the big war, the money men didn’t want to give us a raise or anything else we asked for, so they contacted the Federal government. Old Roosevelt said, ‘Boys, we’re in a war and need the coal, so go back to work and I’ll see that you get the raise. If you don’t, I’ll set an embargo against the mines and the Federal government’ll run her.’

When we went back to work, the superintendent said, all friendly-like, ‘I’m going to give you all a raise, being’s how you’ve decided to come back to work.’ I said, ‘Yeah, you’re going to give us our raise because President Roosevelt said he’d run it himself if we didn’t get that raise!’ Well, that superintendent looked like a dog that had killed a sheep; he didn’t know what to say.”

“About then I asked the old man for a raise. ‘Mr Morrison, you’re working us sixteen and eighteen hours a day,’ I said. ‘But eight hours constitutes a day’s work.’ He told me, ‘We don’t count no eight hours up here. You’ll work until the cars are dumped and fixed up for the night shift, regardless of what time it is.’ And then he said, ‘Workman, do you see that road down yonder?’

‘Sure. I’m not blind, I guess I can see it.’ ‘Well there’s a miner walking up and down that road wearing pawpaw galluses and living on a cracker a day, just waiting for your job if you’re not satisfied with it.’ And it was like that all through those Hoover days.”

Image 5, “Writing Prompt”

Provide a short response to the following prompt:

How were mine uprisings in the early 1900s representative of the labor issues that characterized the Progressive Era? Cite specific events, accounting for the working conditions in the mines, the role of unions, and interventions from the Federal Government.



Lewis Wickes Hine, 1908

“I went into the mines when I was fourteen years old. I was working as a backhand, cleaning up for old Jesse Winchester in a place which was running eight and nine cars of coal. I was doing all that for fifty cents and a supper of cornbread and sweet milk, so I says to myself, ‘Why should you be loading eight and nine cars of coal for him, with him getting three dollars out of it and you only getting fifty cents?’ Finally I buckled up to the mine foreman and explained the thing to him. He says to me, ‘But you’re too young to work in the mines; I can’t give you any checks.’”



Lewis Wickes Hine, 1911

“I worked there at Brockton for several years. I was laying track, driving mules and hauling coal. And we made our own shots back then, too. You’d roll your paper, tuck it in, and pour it full of powder. You’d run this copper needle to the back of the coal where you’d drill in with a breast auger. They used a squib in those days, with a little thing like a fire cracker at the end of it. You’d light that and it’d burn blue like sulfur and run that hole back into your powder and shoot your coal.”



Marion Post Wolcott, 1938

“Maybe you’d work about three days of the week in the mines. They paid you \$2.80 a day for sixteen to eighteen hours of work with no overtime. And you’d get paid in a brass scrip dollar, if you were lucky enough to get that far ahead. Me and Molly had a couple of children by then and rent was three dollars for two weeks, your coal was a dollar and so was your doctor bill. If you loaded coal, you had to buy your own powder and supplies. Your wife would go to the store to ask for a dollar scrip and the book-keeper would ring up to the top of the hill where the coal dump was, to ask ‘How many cars has so-and-so dumped?’ Maybe the word was, ‘He ain’t got it in here yet. He can’t get no scrip until we get the rent and stuff first.’”



Marion Post Wolcott, 1938

“When it rained, the water leaked into the house and you’d have to set pans on the floor to catch it with. The company wouldn’t fix the roof and you couldn’t buy any paper to do it yourself because you never drew any money to buy it with - just traded all your scrip right there at the company store. “



Lewis Wickes Hine, 1909

“After the war, my health went bad. I was crawling around in twenty-two inch coal and it cut my hands up so bad, I had to go to the hospital to have them worked on. After that I went on the roll for the Crystal Block people and worked there for two years, but in 1948 I got hurt pulling a pan. I got a slipped disc in my back - it’s there yet - and I couldn’t even stoop over to go in the mines. I went to the hospital but the doctor was bought off and said he couldn’t find any mine-related injuries. I’d been in the mines for forty-two years but the Board said I had to have five years after 1946 to be eligible for a miner’s pension.”



Handout 1 - The Lyrics of Nimrod Workman

42 Years

For 42 years, is a mighty long time
For to labor and toil down in that coal mine
But down in that dark hole where the bright lights did go
Back in a dark room, I were spadin' up coal
My bones they did ache me and my kneecaps got bad
Down on that hard rock on a set of knee pads
The motors were shiftin', I got sand in my hair
Both lungs were broke down from breathin' bad air

Now went to Columbus for to find a new job
They sent me to my boss man and I heard him say
"The company don't want you, compensation won't pay
For the doctors they told us, coal dust didn't get you this way."

Mother Jones' Will

Well I'm goin' to that Hart's Creek Mountain,
Goin' back to old **Blair Mountain Hill**
I'm goin' to fight for the **Union**,
'Cause I know it's **Mother Jones' Will**
Yes I know it's Mother Jones' Will

Well, our children were laying in the tents
They were laying upon the quilts
While the **thugs** were a-rambling through their tents
Pouring kerosene in their milk
Pouring kerosene in their milk

Handout 2 - The Coal Wars Document Set

Document 1 - United Mine Workers of America Preamble, 1899

There is no fact more generally known, nor more widely believed than that without coal there would not have been any such grand achievements, privileges and blessings as those which characterize the nineteenth century civilization, and believing, as we do, that those whose lot it is to daily toil in the recesses of the earth, are entitled to a fair and equitable share of the same. Therefore we have formed the United Mine Workers of America for the purpose of the more readily securing the object sought, by educating all mine workers in America to realize the necessity of unity of action and purpose, in demanding and securing, by lawful means, the just fruits of our toil. And we hereby declare to the world that our objects are :

1. To secure an earning fully compatible with the dangers of our calling and the labor performed.
2. To establish as speedily as possible, and forever, our right to receive pay, for labor performed, in lawful money, and to rid ourselves from the iniquitous system of spending our money wherever our employers see fit to designate.
3. To secure the introduction of any and all well-defined and established appliances for the preservation of life, health and limbs of all mine employees.
4. To reduce to the lowest possible minimum the awful catastrophes which have been sweeping our fellow-craftsmen to untimely graves by the thousands, by securing legislation looking to the most perfect system of ventilation, drainage, etc.
5. To enforce existing laws; and where none exist, enact and enforce them; calling for a plentiful supply of suitable timber for supporting the roof, pillars, etc., and to have all working places rendered as



United Mine workers of America Poster, 1899



free from water and impure air and poisonous gases as possible.

6. To uncompromisingly demand that 8 hours shall constitute a day's work, and that not more than 8 hours shall be worked in any one day by any mine worker. The very nature of our employment, shut out from the sunlight and the pure air, working by the aid of artificial light (in no instance to exceed one candle-power), would, in itself, strongly indicate that of all men a coal-miner has the most righteous claim to an 8-hour day.

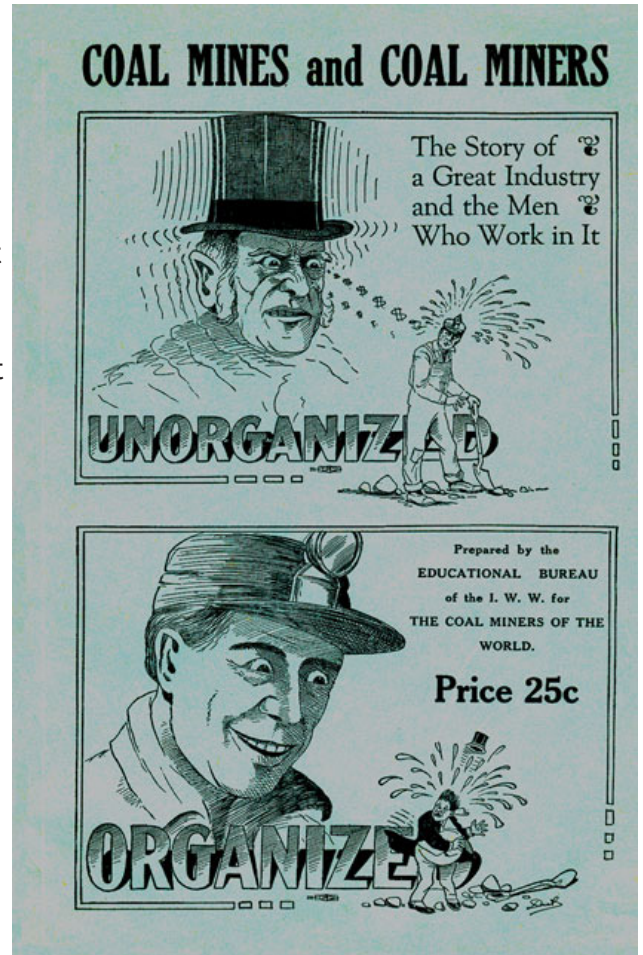
7. To provide for the education of our children by lawfully prohibiting their employment until they have attained a reasonably satisfactory education, and in every case until they have attained 14 years of age.

8. To abrogate all laws which enable coal operators to cheat the miners, and to substitute laws which will enable the miner, under the protection and majesty of the State, to have his coal properly weighed or measured, as the case may be.

9. To secure, by legislation, weekly payments in lawful money.

10. To render it impossible, by legislative enactment in every state (as is now the case in the state of Ohio) for coal operators or corporations to employ Pinkerton detectives or guards, or other forces (except the ordinary forces of the State), to take armed possession of the mines in cases of strikes or lock-outs.

11. To use all honorable means to maintain peace between ourselves and employers; adjusting all differences, as far as possible, by arbitration or conciliation, that strikes may become unnecessary.

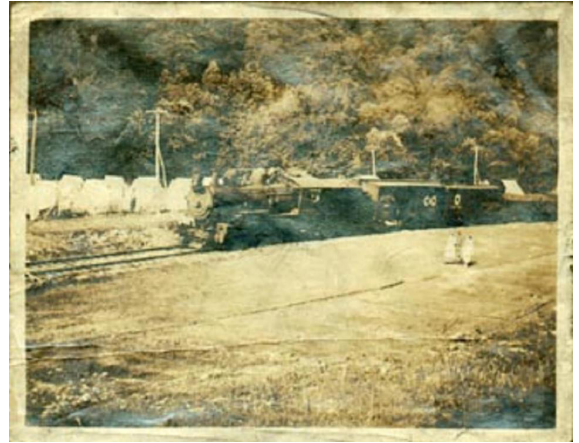




Document 2 - Interview with Price Williams, Teacher, Cabin Creek, West Virginia, 1972

Interviewer: Well now in Paint Creek during 1912 I understand there was quite a bit a violence. I know that you didn't see this first hand, but could you tell us what you heard about violence during the strike?

Price Williams: Well, I remember the night after the Bull Moose train had shot up the tents in Holly Grove seeing men walking up the track through East Bank with rifles on their shoulders. And their jaws kind of set sour expressions on their face. They weren't talking to anybody, just marching along in groups of twos and three, and supposed to be going up to Paint Creek to take care of things.



Bull Moose Special at Cabin Creek

I: What was this Bull Moose train, sir, can you describe that for us?

PW: Oh, it was a train with an armored baggage car lined with steel plate, and slits where the doors were – there were slits in the steel plate where the machine gun nose could be poked out through it. And it made trips from the head of Paint Creek down the main line of the C&O up to Cabin Creek, because the trouble was on Paint Creek and Cabin Creek.

I: Who directed the building of this train, do you have any idea? A coal company, or someone like this?

PW: Let me see, wasn't it the Baldwin-Felts men, weren't they in charge of that? Employed by the coal operators? And the sheriff of Kanawha county undoubtedly in with them. Oh, the C and O Railroad. The baggage car was armored, it was fixed up in the C and O shops in Huntington, so the railroad built it, but who directed it, I wouldn't know.

I: Do you know how many men were shot when they fired into the tents at Holly Grove?

PW: Oh, I don't remember that. Although I've heard some who were in the tents telling their big tales, that seemed to be exaggerated at the time. But just how many or what, I don't remember, that's in the records.

Interviewer: These men that you saw marching silently and grimly, as you say, up the hollow, did they really take revenge for the deaths at Holly Grove?

PW: Let me see. . .yes, they must have, because there were bodies being brought in to the prior undertaking establishment there at East Bank, and whereas all fall and winter that had been kind of a loafing place, we could come and go freely, there were so many bodies brought in there that we just weren't free to come and go anymore. And the talk was that they were mine guards, them bodies brought in shot up in the hills.



Document 3 - Excerpts from "Speech to Striking Coal Miners," Mother Jones, 1912

A dynamic public speaker, Mother Jones diligently traveled the country in support of the labor movement in the early 20th century. She delivered this speech to a large audience in the courthouse square of Charleston, West Virginia in 1912.

This great gathering that is here tonight signals there is a disease in the State that must be wiped out. The people have suffered from that disease patiently; they have borne insults, oppression, outrages; they appealed to their chief executive, they appealed to the courts, they appealed to the attorney general, and in every case they were turned down. They were ignored. The people must not be listened to, the corporations must get a hearing.



Mother Jones with strikers in Philadelphia

I want to put it up to the citizens, up to every honest man in this audience—let me ask you here, have your public officials any thought for the citizens of this State, or their condition?

Now, then, go with me up those creeks, and see the blood-hounds of the mine owners, approved of by your public officials. See them insulting women, see them coming up the track. I went up there and they followed me like hounds. But some day I will follow them. When I see them go to Hell, I will get the coal and pile it up on them.

I can do it if you men and women will stand together, find out the seat of the disease and pull it up by the roots.

Take possession of that state house, that ground is yours. (*Someone interrupted, and the speaker said "Shut your mouth."*)

You built that state house, didn't you? You pay the public officials, don't you? You paid for that ground, didn't you? (*Cries of: "Yes," "yes."*)

And you are a lot of dirty cowards, I want to tell you the truth about it. You are a lot of cowards and you haven't got enough marrow in your backbone to grease two black cats' tails. If you were men with a bit of revolutionary blood in you, you wouldn't stand for the Baldwin guards, would you? (*Cries of: "No." "No." "No."*)

Very good, then. They will come to you on election day. I will tell you when you can carry a bayonet and they can't meddle with you. You can carry a bayonet on November 5th, and you can go to the



ballot box and put a bayonet in there and stick it to their very heart. (*Loud applause*)

They will not steal it [the ballot] if you do your duty. I would like to see the corporation blood-hounds steal my ballot if I had one. I would clean them up. He would go to the machine shop for repairs and he wouldn't come out in a hurry when I got through with him.

They made you load coal for any price they wanted. We brought on a fight and got twice that for loading coal. We reduced the hours to nine. Up there on Paint Creek and Cabin Creek you obeyed the laws at that time. You had a good union at that time, but you have done in industrial unions as they do elsewhere, you elect the man that wants the glory instead of the man that will work for you. I am going to put a stop to that. I want to tell you we are going to organize West Virginia. I am going to stay in here until you have good officers. And you will have no officer that will get a detective from the sheriff to go up Paint Creek with him. By the gods you won't.

I will be in here until the next officers are elected. I am going through the whole district and I will pick the men and I will openly advocate them. If they are not the fellows I want I will throw them down just the same as I would a Baldwin guard.

I am going to say to the police, the militia, the Adjutant General, and to every one in this audience, that we will carry on this fight, we will make war in the State until the Baldwins are removed.

I want you to guard the C. & O. tracks and trains everywhere. The young men on the C. & O. are our men, and they are working to help us, and I want you to protect their lives. Don't meddle with the track, take care of it, and if you catch sight of a Baldwin blood-hound put a bullet through his rotten carcass.

Boys, this fight is going on. I may have to call on you inside of two weeks again to make another move. Then I will get the police with me, and I will have them all educated by that time. Now, I want to say, my friends, I have only one journey to go through this life; you have only one journey to go through this life; let us all do the best we can for humanity, for mankind, while we are here.



Document 4 - Matewan Historic Landmark Application, 1997

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION		OMB No. 1024-0018
NPS Form 10-900	USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)	Page 1
MATEWAN HISTORIC DISTRICT		National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service		

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: MATEWAN HISTORIC DISTRICT

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Roughly bounded by McCoy Alley, Mate Creek RR Bridge, Railroad Street, and Warm Hollow

City/Town: Matewan Vicinity:___

State: West Virginia County: Mingo Code: 059 Zip Code: 25678

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

SUMMARY

The Matewan Historic District in Matewan, West Virginia is exceptionally significant in the history of labor organization in America. The district was the scene of the "Matewan Battle" of May 19, 1920, during which local police chief Sid Hatfield emerged as a local hero after he stood up to coal company agents attempting to remove Union workers from coal company housing. Hatfield was later assassinated because of his role in the battle. The conflict was precipitated by a strike in 1920 by coal miners who demanded the company recognize the legitimacy of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The coal companies retaliated by bringing in armed guards to evict miners from several of the local mines and their families from company housing. Police chief Sid Hatfield threatened detectives with arrest, on the grounds that they had no warrant for eviction of the miners. Word of Hatfield's threat spread and tension in the town increased. When the detectives returned to Matewan, Hatfield informed them he had a warrant for their arrest. The mayor of Matewan, C.C. Testerman, appeared on the scene in support of Hatfield, and a shot was fired. The ensuing conflict left seven detectives, two miners, and Mayor Testerman dead.

The dispute arose from the struggle of Mingo County coal miners to unionize. The Battle of Matewan was a pivotal event in the eventual end of coal company control in West Virginia. The Battle of Matewan and the later killing of Sid Hatfield precipitated the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia--the largest and most violent labor uprising in American history. These two events eventually led to union organization of miners in West Virginia. Both Matewan and Blair Mountain have been recognized in the Labor History theme study as nationally significant for their historical role in the unionization of miners in West Virginia, an important chapter in the American labor history.



Handout 3 - American Labor and Working-Class History, 1886-1944

1880s-1890s	1900s	1910s
<p><u>1886</u>: Industrial workers rally in Chicago's Haymarket Square to protest dangerous working conditions. During the rally, someone throws a bomb at police officers, who respond by opening fire on the crowd. Known as the Haymarket Riot, the protest divided Americans: some saw the striking workers as oppressed, others as agitators.</p> <p><u>1886</u>: The American Federation of Labor (AFL) forms from a loose organization of craft unions, with the goal of representing skilled laborers.</p> <p><u>1890</u>: The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) forms.</p> <p><u>1894</u>: Factory workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago go on strike after their wages are cut and activists in the company are fired. The American Railway Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, supports the strike by announcing its members would no longer work on trains that had Pullman cars. The strikers get increasingly violent, and the Railroad industry is crippled, driving President Grover Cleveland to send in troops, who fired upon rioting railway workers. After the Pullman Strike, a series of laws are enacted that privilege the rights of employers over laborers.</p>	<p><u>1901</u>: With a platform of representing workers, the Socialist Party of America (SP) forms and grows in popularity, reaching over three thousand local branches and 42 states.</p> <p><u>1902</u>: After having their demands ignored, miners in Pennsylvania go on strike, initiating a national coal crisis. President Theodore Roosevelt intervenes, and 5 months later the strike is resolved, with miners receiving a better salary and a shorter workday. After the 1902 Coal Strike, the president develops his "Square Deal" policy, which emphasizes the government's role in mediating between industry and labor so both are treated fairly.</p> <p><u>1904</u>: The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is founded through the efforts of Eugene V. Debs. Its members, known as "The Wobblies," fought for a union that represents all workers, regardless of race or gender. The formation of the IWW upset company owners as well as more conservative unions such as the AFL.</p> <p><u>1905</u>: In Lochner v. New York, the Supreme Court overrules a New York law that set maximum work hours for bakers.</p> <p><u>1908</u>: Seeing them as the "weaker" sex, Muller v. Oregon allowed laws limiting the amount of hours women could work.</p>	<p><u>1911</u>: In New York City, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire kills 146 garment workers, mostly women. Afterwards, immigrant Clara Lemlich surprises union leaders by initiating a strike of around 20,000 garment workers. The striker's demands for higher pay, shorter working hours, and better working conditions were eventually met.</p> <p><u>1914</u>: The Colorado National Guard fires upon a striking miner camp in Ludlow, killing eleven children and two women. As news of the Ludlow Massacre spread, miners took up arms against the mining companies, while many criticized mine owner John D. Rockefeller, Jr. President Woodrow Wilson sent in federal troops to end the strike. The miner's demands were not met.</p> <p><u>1914</u>: The Clayton Anti-Trust Act excludes labor unions from commercial regulation, making it easier to pursue peaceful strikes and boycotts.</p> <p><u>1914-1918</u>: During World War I, the Woodrow Wilson administration plays a more hands-on role with industry to avoid strikes during the wartime economy, giving unions more political power.</p> <p><u>1915-1918</u>: The Great Migration begins as African Americans in the South move to the North for better employment.</p>



1920s	1930s	1940s
<p><u>1919-1929:</u> A booming post-war economy creates The Roaring Twenties, a period of relative prosperity for employers and workers alike. New consumer goods and a faith in persistent economic growth leads to a large credit economy, precipitating the stock market crash that would occur at the end of the decade.</p> <p><u>1919:</u> Henry Ford's Assembly Line automates the production of automobiles, making cars more affordable to average Americans, but also threatening the jobs of auto plant workers.</p> <p><u>1919-1921:</u> Union membership falls due to pro-business policies enacted under the presidencies of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. While over 4 million workers strike in this period, few had their demands met. The policies of Harding and Coolidge lead the 1920s to become known as "The Business Decade."</p> <p><u>1926:</u> The Railway Labor Act requires Railway companies to enter into collective bargaining agreements with unions, and outlaws hiring discrimination against union members.</p> <p><u>1929:</u> On October 24, "Black Tuesday," The New York Stock Exchange crashes, leading to the failure of around 5 thousand banks from 1929-1933. The Great Depression begins, effecting every social class.</p>	<p><u>1929-1933:</u> Shantytowns called "Hoovervilles" for the poor and unemployed are erected throughout the country.</p> <p><u>1932:</u> A group of 22,000 World War I veterans create a Hooverville within sight of the Capitol to demand the government pay them the bonuses promised for their service. The Hoover administration responds by sending US soldiers and tanks to destroy the camp. Public support for President Herbert Hoover falls, and he loses the presidential election to Franklin D. Roosevelt.</p> <p><u>1933:</u> Roosevelt signs the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), creating a framework in which the government, businesses, and workers cooperate in a difficult economy. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) is created to oversee the process.</p> <p><u>1934:</u> The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) forms as a conglomeration of mining and garment working unions.</p> <p><u>1935:</u> The National Labor Relations Act is passed, protecting worker's rights to collective bargaining. The act was a cornerstone to Roosevelt's New Deal platform, which also included the establishment of Social Security and relief to poor families.</p>	<p><u>1941:</u> As America enters World War II after the Attack on Pearl Harbor, manufacturing surges, effectively ending the great depression. Labor leaders gain political power by promising not to initiate strikes during the war.</p> <p><u>1941-1945:</u> While men are at war, women enter the workforce in record numbers. While women were asked to return to the home after the war, their experiences working and earning a wage, perhaps best expressed by the "Rosie the Riveter" image, helps form the modern feminist movement.</p> <p><u>1942:</u> In need of labor, the federal government creates the Bracero Program, a guest worker program that brought close to 5 million agricultural laborers from Mexico.</p> <p><u>1944:</u> The G.I. Bill is signed into law, providing a variety of economic and educational benefits to veterans. An economic boom after the war led to higher wages, greater job security, and an improved standard of living to many Americans.</p> <p><u>1947:</u> The Taft-Hartley Act, which weakened the power of unions, overcame a veto by President Harry Truman to become law.</p>