

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – Immigration Investigation **From Kristen Blore**

Grade – 8th grade

Length of class period – one 60 minutes class period

Inquiry – How did immigrants in NY City live at the turn of the 20th century?

Objectives –

Students will investigate primary source accounts of immigrants living in NY City

Students will analyze diagrams and photographs of tenements

Students will analyze immigrant pay stubs

Students will attempt to solve some of the problems immigrants faced in the city

Materials –

Excerpt from Fordham University report on Tenements

3 pay stubs from immigrants in 1913

2 interviews from immigrants in 1913 in NY City

Photographs and diagrams of dumbbell tenement

Worksheet – The Life of An Immigrant

Activities –

Prior to this class, students should develop a basic understanding of life of immigrants at the turn of the century. In class, we will already have looked at stories of immigrants coming to America, reasons why they came, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, working conditions in the factories, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, etc. Students will also have already analyzed photos of tenements. This lesson will be an opportunity to look at several different primary sources and work to solve the problems faced by immigrants.

Warm Up – As a two to three minute warm up activity, ask students to list the challenges immigrants faced coming to America and discuss them as a class. Possible answers would include leaving their families, language, passing examinations at Ellis Island, establishing a life for themselves, working conditions, etc. Discuss with students that today they will be able to hear from immigrants themselves through interviews, analyze the set up of the tenements and look at pay stubs from the time period to better understand the life of an immigrant in NY City.

Group Activity – Divide the class into groups. Provide for each group the following sources and worksheet to analyze.

Excerpt from Fordham University report on Tenements

3 pays stubs from immigrants in 1913
2 interviews from immigrants in 1913 in NY City
Photographs and diagrams of dumbbell tenement
Worksheet – The Life of An Immigrant

Students will need to use information from multiple sources at the same time to answer all the questions.

I also suggest that you use the dimensions offered on the Fordham University report to tape off “rooms” for students to sit in and experience the reality of living in a tenement. Groups can rotate through the rooms while completing the activity.

Finally students should work on drawing conclusions or inferences from all the information they learned regarding the life of an immigrant. They should use facts from their learning to support their conclusions.

Class Discussion – Get together and discuss findings. Ask for students to share their reactions to the size of the tenements, the pay, etc. Point out the overtime worked and how some pay stubs show no pay for the over time. Discuss the hours worked in comparison to the hours students go to school. Make connections to students’ homes and tenements.

Finally discuss the conclusions that students have drawn from their analysis.

Homework

Students should complete the reform section of the worksheet for homework. Their job is to draft a piece of legislation that could possibly help address the struggles immigrants faced in the city. This will lead into a look at progressives and reforms.

How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?

- In class discussion
- Worksheet – can be collected and graded for analysis of primary sources and reform ideas
- Quiz later on
- Benchmark – end of unit common assessment (unit test)

CT Framework Performance Standards

- **access and gather information from a variety of primary and secondary sources**
- **interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources**
- **demonstrate the ability to participate in social studies discourse through informed discussion, debate and effective oral presentation**

Excerpt from Tenement Houses and Progressive Solutions - Fordham University

According to the Tenement House Report of 1900, out of 3,437,202 people living in New York City, 2,372,079 lived in tenement housing. The report gives further figures of the housing conditions of New York. As of 1900 there were 82,652 tenement buildings in the city, 42,700 which were located in Manhattan. The Tenement House Commission identified the inadequacies of the tenement house as follows: poor air and light, danger from fire, lack of separate water-closet and baths, overcrowding, and foul cellars and courts. The typical New York City tenement house was known as the “dumb-bell” tenement. The land-plot for the building was 25 feet wide by 100 feet deep and the building it-self was 25 feet wide and 90 feet deep. Ten feet was left bare in the back of the building so that the back rooms would receive some light. Composed of five to seven floors, the first floor of the tenement house usually had one or two stores and a few living rooms towards the back. The main corridor of the first floor was 8 feet wide by 60 feet deep and was usually dark. On the floors above, there were seven rooms on each side of the corridor with four families living on each floor. Only four of the fourteen rooms in total receive direct light from the front and back of the building. Surrounding the entire building were extremely narrow air-shafts and therefore, the other ten rooms on each floor were plagued by foul air and semi-darkness^[1].

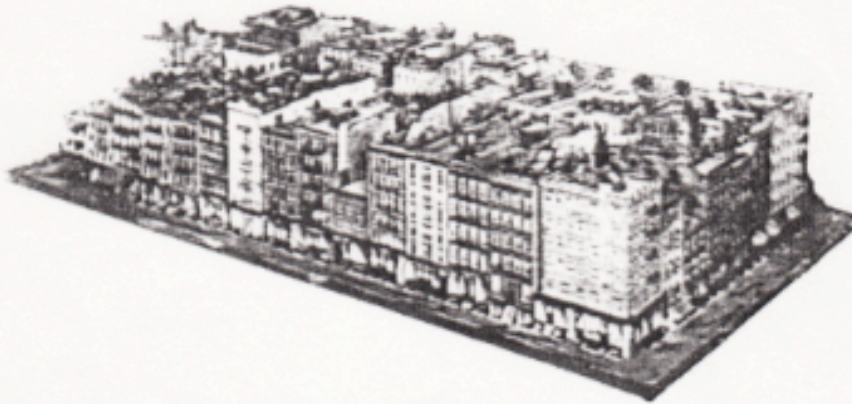
Families living in the tenement houses usually paid twelve to eighteen dollars a month for four “rooms” in the front of the building. Only two of the four rooms were large enough to be considered a room. The two larger rooms were 10 feet 6 inches wide by 11 feet 8 inches deep and were used as a kitchen and a living room. The other two rooms were used as bedrooms and were extremely small (7 feet wide and 8 feet 6 inches deep) and in the summer months, these rooms became so stifling that many tenement dwellers would sleep in the living room or even on the roof of the tenement building. Similar to the front four rooms, two families lived in the six rear rooms and each family paid ten to fifteen dollars for three rooms^[2].

http://www.fordham.edu/academics/colleges_graduate_s/undergraduate_colleg/fordham_college_at_l/special_programs/honors_program/hudsonfulton_celebra/homepage/progressive_movement/tenements_32232.asp

TENEMENT		EMPLOYEE'S		INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS				N35FIC-Em2	
105		No 60							
Name <i>H Rover</i>				Mib	Mib-Fib+	Fib-	M	F	
Address <i>45 Ryerson St - Coney</i>				Payroll Period <i>7</i> DAYS					
Occupation <i>Watchman</i>				<i>9/13</i> to <i>9/19</i>		1913			
RATE OF PAY	PIECE	HOUR	DAY	WEEK	1/2 MONTH	MONTH			
		\$0	\$	\$13.-	\$	\$	0		
DAYS WORKED	REGULAR WORKING HOURS	ACTUAL WORKING HOURS	OVERTIME HOURS	UNDERTIME HOURS	EARNINGS				
7	60	88			\$13.-	\$			
ADDITIONS TO REGULAR RATE OF EARNINGS									
DEDUCTIONS FROM REGULAR RATE OF EARNINGS									

TENEMENT		EMPLOYEE'S		INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS				N35FIC-Em2	
18		No 50						<i>Eng. & Mech</i>	
Name <i>Alvin G.</i>				Mib	Mib-Fib+	Fib-	M	F	
Address <i>127 W. 15 St. N.Y.C.</i>				Payroll Period <i>6</i> DAYS					
Occupation <i>Oiler & Assistant Eng.</i>				<i>9.20</i> to <i>26</i>		1913			
RATE OF PAY	PIECE	HOUR	DAY	WEEK	1/2 MONTH	MONTH			
		\$0	\$	\$15.-	\$	\$	2		
DAYS WORKED	REGULAR WORKING HOURS	ACTUAL WORKING HOURS	OVERTIME HOURS	UNDERTIME HOURS	EARNINGS				
7	84				\$15.-	\$			
ADDITIONS TO REGULAR RATE OF EARNINGS									
DEDUCTIONS FROM REGULAR RATE OF EARNINGS									

<http://thehistorybox.com/ny-city/tenement-life-visual-tour-nycity.htm>

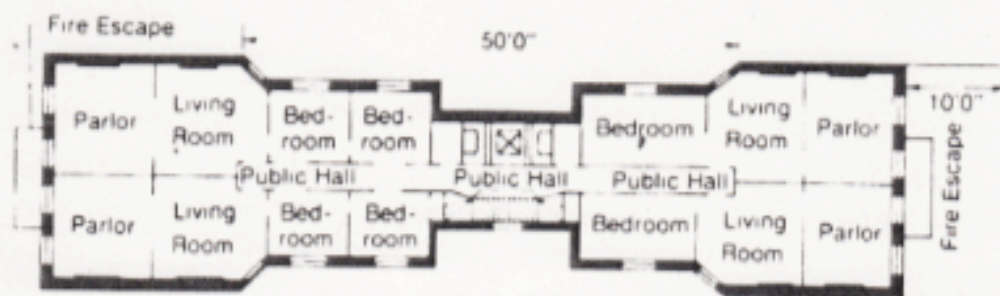
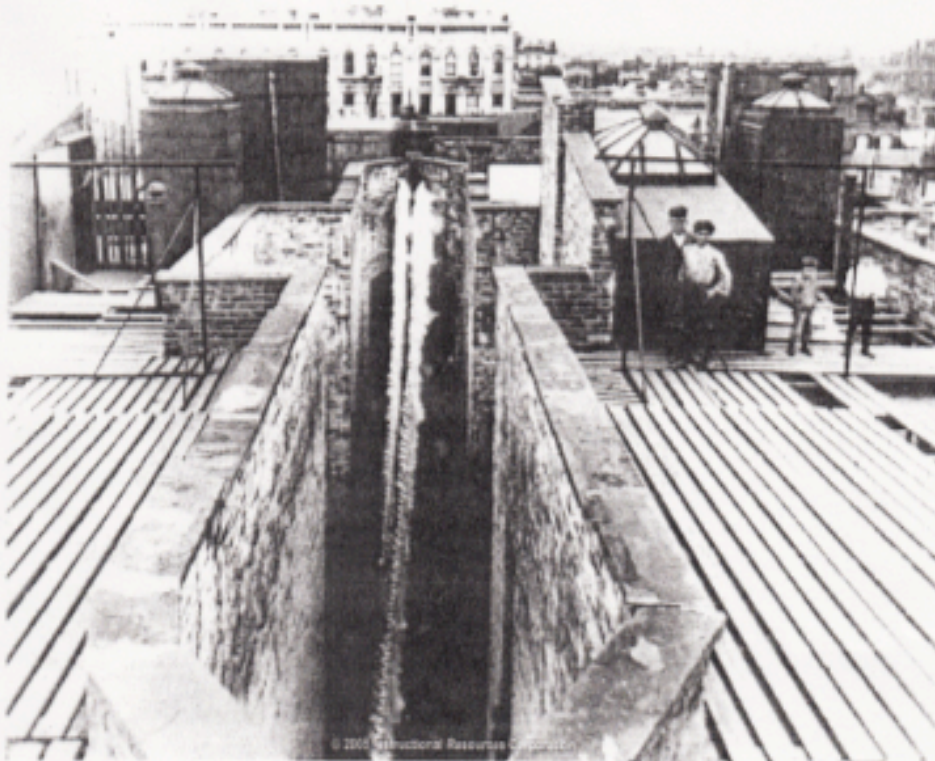


AN EXISTING BLOCK OF TENEMENTS IN 1900 ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE OF NEW YORK

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ENT		EMPLOYEE'S		INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS				WESTIC-Form 2	
14		No. 116							
Name <i>Paul Cosinsky</i>				M10+	M10-	F10+	F10-	M	F
Address <i>408 W. 29 St.</i>				Payroll Period <i>7</i> DAYS					
Occupation <i>Tending machine (sugar pulverizer)</i>				Sept. 11 to Sept. 18 1913					
RATE OF PAY	PERCENT	HOURS	DAY	WEEK	1/2 MONTH	MONTH	<i>9a</i>		
		\$0	\$	\$13.	\$	\$			
DAYS WORKED	REGULAR HOURS	ACTUAL HOURS	CRITICAL HOURS	UNOVERTIME HOURS	EARNINGS				
<i>7</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>86</i>			PER PERIOD	COMPUTED ANNUAL TOTAL			
					<i>418.63</i>	\$			
ADDITIONS TO REGULAR RATE OR EARNINGS									
DEDUCTIONS FROM REGULAR RATE OR EARNINGS									

<http://thehistorybox.com/ny-city/tenement-life-visual-tour-nycity.htm>



DUMBBELL TENEMENT

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Mrs. Marie Beriola is a young beautiful married woman of nineteen. She and her husband came to this country three months ago, having sold out a saloon business in Italy. They expected to be able to make a good living in the new land. As a matter of fact, Beriola has not worked since he has been here. In spite of the fact that Marie expects a child within a month, she is operating a sewing machine. With the landlord's threat of being dispossessed for three months arrears in rent, Marie asked a friend of hers to take her to her shop. For one week she worked with no compensation; second week her friend paid her ^{2.00} \$2.00, and now she is on piece basis and does not know what her wages amount to. Neither she nor her husband have relatives in this country, and friends are such as they have acquired.

<http://thehistorybox.com/ny-city/tenement-life-visual-tour-nycity.htm>

CYMROT & COHEN.

October 27th, 1913. Mrs. Orenstein.

ANTONETTE MORRELLA. Antonette is a handsome, pale faced, vivacious Italian girl. The big ^{social} colored earrings contrast strongly with her jet black hair. Her pessimism is a bit startling. "Believe me I earn these \$10. I won't get them if I did not. I do not see any use of it all, anyhow. Never rest until you die. A week ago the girl who sat at the stripping machine next to me took gas. She was so dead tired of work for ^{a week} \$7.50/these many years. She was a German, and the only child. Her mother went to work too. She got up one morning last week, and found Jenny's hat and coat on the table. She must have

#2. Antonett Morrella.

over-slept, thought her mother. Then she went into the bath-room. The place was full of gas. Her daughter was seated with her knees crossed. They say that they had to break her knees before they buried her. Well, I guess she did not lose much." "You do not expect to do anything as foolish as that?" I said, "No I guess not. I will get out of this by marrying somebody. My mother won't marry me off yet. I had a chance last week, but you see I got to work until my sixteen year old brother begins to earn some money. He is only getting \$4. a week. How can my mother and father support five children on that money?. I spend a lot of money for lunch, but you got to have good food when you work hard. It is no use saving on that".

<http://thehistorybox.com/ny-city/tenement-life-visual-tour-ny-city.htm>

