NAME DATE

Handout 1:
Worker Portrayal in Media

Answer the questions below as you watch each video clip shown by your teacher.

Clip 1:

- What is the dramatic action? Describe it in a sentence or two.

- What is the workplace environment where the action takes place? How is it portrayed? (For example, *fair*, *safe*, *dangerous*, *relaxed*, *tense*)

- What workplace roles can you identify? (For example, *blue collar* or *white collar worker*, *manager*, *boss*, *owner*, *police*)

- Is there a particular issue or issues related to the workplace that is being confronted in the clip? If so, what is it?

Clip 2:

- What is the dramatic action? Describe it in a sentence or two.

- What is the workplace environment where the action takes place? How is it portrayed? (For example, *fair*, *safe*, *dangerous*, *relaxed*, *tense*)

- What workplace roles can you identify? (For example, *blue collar* or *white collar worker*, *manager*, *boss*, *owner*, *police*)

- Is there a particular issue or issues related to the workplace that is being confronted in the clip? If so, what is it?

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Handout 2:
Unit Overview

Animating Labor History

Throughout most of U.S. history, workers had no guaranteed rights. People had to fight for fair wages, limits on the number of work hours, time off, and safe working conditions. When industrialization swept the country in the nineteenth century, workers in some industries began to organize and exercise power, using methods such as strikes and boycotts. Eventually, large labor groups emerged and became powerful and influential forces in society. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the federal government took on a greater role in the lives of American workers. Today, the government continues to remain involved in the workplace and the economy.

In this unit, you will work as part of a team to develop characters for an animated movie set during an important event in labor history. You will research the challenges that workers faced and the tools and institutions workers used to achieve their goals. You will learn about the roles of unions, contracts, and regulations, as well as the courageous actions of individuals. The knowledge you gain about the history of labor will be a valuable tool as you enter the world of work to begin your own career.

Your work in this unit will revolve around the following questions:

- *What is labor history?*
- *How do the actions and decisions of everyday people shape history?*
- *How has government's role in economic policy changed since the beginning of the Great Depression?*

What You Will Do in This Unit

Examine portrayals of workers and the workplace in media. Analyze how working people are portrayed in movies and TV.

Simulate conflicts of interest between workers, employers, and the unemployed. Participate in a role-playing game that parallels working conditions in an early twentieth-century factory.

Explore the case history of the autoworkers' strike in Flint, Michigan. Take the parts of characters in a pivotal strike case and argue your point of view in court.

Develop character biographies for an animated movie. Choose a significant event in labor history and explore the attitudes and actions of the individuals who were involved.

Present your character research. Present character biographies and an event timeline to your classmates.

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Unit Project Description: Developing Character Biographies

You are a member of a research team for an animated movie based on an event in labor history. Your movie is aimed at young people. Your team will follow the steps below:

Step 1. As a team, choose an event in labor history as the basis for your movie.
Step 2. Research your event, identifying all major roles, including both historical characters and character types who represent key stakeholders in the event.
Step 3. Create character biographies to inform character designers about the appearance, dress, actions, and daily lives of the main characters.

Each character biography should include:

- Primary source documents, including first person narratives
- Annotated photos of events and people in everyday life
- An information sheet summarizing the character's background, traits, and role in the event
- A letter or diary entry written in the voice of the character

In addition, your team will:

- Create an annotated timeline of your chosen event
- Present your annotated timeline and character biographies to the class

Vocabulary Used in This Unit

AFL (American Federation of Labor): One of the first federations of unions, founded in 1886 to organize workers by craft or trade. Samuel Gompers was its first president. A rivalry between the AFL and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which organized workers by industry, ended in their joining together as the AFL-CIO in 1955.

Blue collar workers: A term used to refer to a class of workers whose duties often require manual labor and the wearing of a uniform or protective clothing. The term originated from the fact that the color of many workers' shirts and coveralls was blue.

Boycott: To refuse to have dealings with a person, business, or organization, usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions.

Braceros: Mexican workers who were brought into the U.S. to fulfill a demand for manual labor under a 1942 agreement between the U.S. and Mexico. This sometimes controversial program continued until the 1960s. Labor unions saw the Bracero program as an obstacle to improving wages for domestic farm workers.

CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations): A federation of unions founded in 1935 by John L. Lewis to organize workers in mass production by industry rather than by trade. For example, the entire auto industry was organized, rather than separately organizing specific crafts, such as welders and machinists. CIO supporters believed industry-wide organization would give workers more leverage. Originally composed of eight industrial unions within the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the CIO became independent of the AFL in 1938, then rejoined to form the AFL-CIO in 1955.

Collective bargaining: The negotiations between an employer and a labor union, usually regarding wages, hours, or other aspects of work conditions. The term refers to the fact that when unions negotiate or *bargain* for all of the workers collectively, workers have more power—and thus a greater chance of achieving their goals—than when workers negotiate individually.

Contract: A legally binding agreement between two people or groups. A contract between an employee and an employer specifies the work to be performed and the compensation that is provided.

Gilded Age: The period of rapid economic and industrial growth in the U.S. during the late nineteenth century. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner first used the term in their 1873 book, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*. The term refers to the class of people who accumulated such wealth as to appear to be living lives that were "gilded," or coated with gold.

Great Depression: A decade-long period of extreme economic hardship and poverty following the 1929 stock market crash. At the height of the Depression, unemployment rose to 25 percent, and the government started to regulate and provide poverty relief to a greater extent than at any previous time in U.S. history.

Laissez-faire: The practice of allowing business to operate free from government regulation or control. The term comes from the French verbs, *laisser* and *faire*, meaning "to leave" and "to do," respectively.

Longshoreman: A person who loads and unloads ships in port.

Migrant worker: An agricultural worker who makes a living picking seasonal crops so that he or she must move with the harvest to pick produce.

New Deal: A series of federal laws and programs started by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the economic collapse and poverty of the Great Depression.

Oral history: Spoken memories or personal recollections of historical significance, usually obtained through recorded interviews.

Organize: To get together with other workers in order to attain common workplace goals, such as better pay, shorter hours, or safer working conditions. Organized workers form what is known as a union.

Picket line: A group of striking workers who form a line around the outside of a workplace or place of business. The purpose of a picket line is to keep people from working at the workplace or from patronizing the business.

Primary sources: Original materials from a time period or event which have not been compiled or interpreted. Examples of primary sources include letters, diaries, newspaper articles, original objects or artifacts from a place or time, songs, photographs, and live video recordings.

Progressive Era: The decades from 1890 to 1920, in which social reformers, including President Theodore Roosevelt, worked to respond to the economic and social problems brought on by unchecked industrialization and corporate growth.

Reform: An improvement to a previous situation, often brought about by making laws.

Scab: A derogatory term for a strikebreaker, someone who continues to work or who replaces regular workers during a strike.

Secondary sources: Compilations or interpretations of primary sources written after the fact. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, journal articles, Web sites, and biographies. Historians often use secondary sources for an overview of a topic and to find references to primary sources or people to interview.

Sit-down strike: A strike tactic in which employees stop work but stay at their jobs and occupy the place of business. Sit-down strikes are more difficult to end because the business is reluctant to use force that might damage its own equipment or property.

Stakeholder: A person, group, or organization that is affected by an action or situation.

Strike: A form of workplace protest in which employees stop work in order to express grievances and bargain for better working conditions.

Strikebreaker: A person who continues to work after a strike has been called. An employer may hire temporary or replacement strikebreakers if the number of regular employees on strike interferes with the ability to continue business.

Teamster: A person who drives a truck as an occupation. The term derives from its original use for a person who drove a *team* of horses or other livestock to haul loads.

Union: An organization formed by workers to advance the goals of its members with respect to working conditions such as safety, wages, hours, or other benefits.

Wages: Money paid in return for work.

White collar workers: A term used to refer to a class of workers who perform office jobs rather than manual labor and whose duties do not require specialized work clothes. The term originated from the fact that office workers traditionally dressed more formally, wearing white shirts as well as ties.

Wildcat strike: A strike conducted independently of the authority of the union.

NAME DATE

Assessment Checklist:
Character Biographies

Use this assessment to help you develop the character biographies for your animated movie. Make sure to include all the requirements. Your teacher will use this assessment to evaluate your work.

Requirements	Percentage of Total Grade	Comments	
Character Biographies (Individual)		**Student Comments**	**Teacher Comments**
Includes at least one excerpt from primary source documents or one oral history audio clip with explanatory paragraph.	**15%**		
Includes two annotated photos of events and people in everyday life.	**15%**		
Includes character information sheet with background, traits, and the character's role in the event.	**30%**		
Includes a letter or diary entry written in the character's voice.	**10%**		
Individual subtotal	**70%**		
Character Biographies (Team)		**Student Comments**	**Teacher Comments**
Annotated timeline includes significant occurrences for the chosen event.	**20%**		
Team presentation clearly explains the annotated timeline and all character biographies related to the event.	**10%**		
Team subtotal	**30%**		
Total	**100%**		

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Handout 3:
Journal Assignments

Journal 1

Choose a TV show that you regularly watch or a movie (different from the clips seen in class) that shows characters in a dramatic situation involving workplace issues.

Respond to the following questions:

- What workplace conflict or controversy do the characters face?
- Who are the major characters or groups affected by this conflict or controversy? List them.
- How and why do their perspectives on this issue differ? Write a sentence or two describing the situation from the point of view of each character or group and why you think each feels that way.
- How do the actions of each of these major characters or groups reflect their perspectives and interests as employers or employees?

Journal 2

Consider the workplace simulation you just completed. Answer the questions below.

- What power did the employees have? What rights did they have?
- What power/rights did the Employer have?
- What power or rights do you think each group should have?
- What, if anything, do you think this simulation has in common with real work situations?

Read the quotation below. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your views.

> "It seems to me to be equally plain that no business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By 'business' I mean the whole of commerce as well as the whole of industry; by workers I mean all workers, the white collar class as well as the men in overalls; and by living wages I mean more than a bare subsistence level—I mean the wages of decent living."
>
> Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Journal 3

You have learned about some of the laws governing employers and employees and how the laws were established. Think about how labor laws might apply to a job that you or a family member have worked or are working now.

- Which aspects of the job, if any, are regulated? Consider such issues as pay, age requirements, safety, hours, time off, or other benefits.
- How do you think the job conditions might be different if there were no laws regulating the workplace?
- If you think that no aspects of the job are regulated, explain why that is so.
- Is there anything about the job that you think should be regulated, but, as far as you know, isn't? Explain.

NAME DATE

Journal 4

Think about the voice of Phil Stallings in "The Maker" from *Working* by Studs Terkel, as he told about a specific incident at his factory and what he thought about it.

Now write in the voice of your own character. Choose a date along your team's event timeline. Write a diary entry or a letter to a family member or friend on that date. Write from your character's perspective. Before you write, think about the following questions:

- How do you feel about your situation at this point in time?
- What do you hope for?
- What do you fear?
- Who might take advantage of you and whom do you trust?

Include appropriate and accurate historical details, such as where you live, where you work and what you do (if applicable), what you wear, what you eat, what you read, and what was actually happening at the time.

NAME DATE

Handout 4A:
Workplace Simulation: Introduction

Part 1

By the beginning of the twentieth century, industrialization had become a major force in the U.S. economy. Many people who had previously worked for themselves on family farms began to work for owners or managers of factories or businesses.

Few workplace regulations existed at that time. The income gap between owners and managers and people they hired as workers began to widen. Author Mark Twain called this period the Gilded Age, referring to the immense wealth of the newly rich businessmen.

The quotations in the chart below represent two views of workers' rights during the Gilded Age. Read each quotation. Then write your response to the question in the chart.

Quotation	**What assumptions are made by the quotation's author?**
"The rights of the laboring man will be protected, and cared for, not by the labor agitator but by the Christian men to whom God has given control of the property in this country, and upon the successful management of which so much depends." —George Frederick Baer, President of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and spokesman for Anthracite Coal, 1902 letter	
"We want a better America, an America that will give its citizens, first of all, a higher and higher standard of living so that no child will cry for food in the midst of plenty." —Sidney Hillman, union leader and first president of Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (1914–1946)	

NAME DATE

Part 2

You and your classmates will participate in a simulation about employment practices during the Gilded Age. Your teacher will explain the simulation. The chart below summarizes the information you will use during the simulation.

Economics of the Workplace Simulation

	Employee	Unemployed	Employer
Wages	$6 per week	No wages	No wages
Taxes/Welfare payments	– $1 tax per week	+ $2 welfare payment per week	– $1 tax multiplied by number of employees
Amount of Product Made	10 blodgets per week (Each blodget sells for $1)	None	None
Consumption (Food and Housing)	– $5 per week	– $2 per week	– $6 per week
Surplus (Wages or Product left over)	None (Wages *minus* taxes *minus* consumption = $6 – $1 – $5 = $0)	None (Wages *plus* welfare payments *minus* consumption = $0 + $2 – $2 = $0)	$10 (selling price of 10 blodgets) multiplied by number of employees *minus* employee wages ($6 multiplied by number of employees) *minus* taxes ($1 multiplied by number of employees) *minus* personal consumption ($6)

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Handout 4B:
Workplace Simulation: Employer

Your role as the Employer is to decrease employee wages as much as possible in order to increase your profits. Follow the steps below to begin the simulation.

Step 1: Gather potential employees.

Ask your classmates who would like to work at the blodget factory and why. Listen to their responses and reasoning.

Step 2: Hire employees.

Select half the students in the class as employees. Congratulate them on getting the job. Tell the remaining students that they are unemployed.

Step 3: Explain wages and welfare payments.

- Wages are $6 per week minus $1 for tax, so take-home wages are $5 per week.
- Employees make 10 blodgets per week.
- Company housing and food is provided to employees at a cost of $5 per week.

Tell the unemployed that they receive welfare payments of $2 per week. Explain that this is enough money to buy food, but not housing, so it's important for them to get a job as soon as possible.

Step 4: Distribute wages for the first week.

Your teacher will announce that a week has passed. Pay each employee $5 and each unemployed person $2.

Step 5: Work to increase profits.

Try to lower your employees' wages by $1 each week. Offer reasons such as your competitors are pressuring you, you need to invest more money in the factory, or blodget prices have fallen. Here are some strategies you can use:

- Offer an unemployed worker wages of $5 a week (take-home pay of $4).
- If the unemployed worker agrees, see if an employee is willing to take a pay cut.
- Fire anyone who argues with you about decreased wages.
- Pay one of the employees $1 more each week to be a Manager. Have the Manager report any troublemakers to you so that you can fire them.
- Secretly hire an employee as a police officer to guard the machine in case employees try to take over the machine.

NAME DATE

Handout 5:
Labor History Milestones

1827: Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations formed, first U.S. labor organization that encompassed several trades.

1836: Female mill workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, organized with public support.

1866: National Labor Union founded.

1881: Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions formed.

1886: American Federation of Labor (AFL) founded.

1890: Photographer Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* published.

1903: Women's Trade Union League founded.

1905: Industrial Workers of the World founded.

1906: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* published.

1915: Child labor laws passed.

1925: Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters created.

1929: Stock market crashed, beginning of the Great Depression.

1933: President Franklin Roosevelt proposes New Deal programs to Congress.

1934: The National Industrial Recovery Act passed.

1935: National Labor Relations Act (or Wagner Act) passed.

1935: Social Security Act passed.

1935: Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) formed within AFL.

1938: Fair Labor Standards Act passed.

1938: CIO forms as an independent entity.

1955: AFL and CIO merge.

1966: United Farm Workers union formed.

1970: Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA) passed.

NAME DATE

Handout 6:
Milestone Data

In the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries, workers began to achieve more power and rights in response to certain events and to their own organizing abilities.

With your partner, research your milestone event using the questions below.

When did the milestone occur?

Describe the milestone in one or two sentences.

What was the significance of the milestone?

What circumstances contributed to the milestone's occurrence?

Who gained and who lost as a result of the milestone, if anyone? Briefly explain.

NAME DATE

Handout 7:
Images of the Great Depression

Many people attributed the Great Depression to the collapse of stock market prices on October 29, 1929, a day that came to be known as Black Tuesday. The loss of confidence in the market caused people to decrease borrowing, spending, and investing. All these factors contributed to the continuing downward spiral, leading to tremendous job losses and poverty.

Other factors, however, also contributed to the economic downturn, including a severe drought in 1930 that crippled U.S. agriculture. The Great Depression affected almost everyone, but it hit the working poor and the middle class the hardest.

The photograph below was taken on October 25, 1935, at the height of the Great Depression.

- What structures do you see in the picture? What are they made of?
- What are the people in the photograph doing?
- What does the photograph suggest about living conditions during the Great Depression?

Changing New York, Berenice Abbott. In the collection of the New York Public Library.

NAME DATE

The photograph below was taken in February 1939. It shows migrant vegetable pickers waiting to be paid.

- What do you notice about the people in the photograph?
- What does the situation shown in the photograph tell you about economic conditions in the Great Depression?

Farm Security Administration Collection, photography by Marion Post Walcott.
In the collection of the New York Public Library.

NAME DATE

Handout 8:
Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal

Introduction

Herbert Hoover, U.S. president at the time of the stock market crash in 1929, felt the government should play a laissez-faire role in the economy. The phrase comes from the French verbs *laisser*, meaning "to leave alone," and *faire*, meaning "to do." Hoover believed in leaving banks and large corporations alone, to operate as they thought best. He believed that, without interference, businesses would do what was right for their employees and the economy.

The benefits of corporate success would eventually "trickle down" to all citizens. Rather than provide government assistance to the needy, Hoover encouraged businesses and wealthy citizens to voluntarily adopt fair practices and donate to the poor.

When things did not improve by the time of the next presidential election, however, citizens demanded change. They were ready for government to step in and help solve some of their problems. They elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who promised a "new deal" for the American people.

Soon after Roosevelt took office on March 4, 1933, he began to implement the "New Deal" reforms that would improve the lives of working people. In his first 100 days, he introduced 15 new laws that established government agencies and programs.

In the summer of 1935, Roosevelt enacted another series of reforms, sometimes called "the Second New Deal." To communicate his activities, Roosevelt began a series of weekly radio addresses to the nation, called Fireside Chats.

In Part 1 below are excerpts from the Fireside Chat in which Roosevelt first outlined his ambitious government program. Part 2 contains a table describing the New Deal laws that were enacted.

Read Parts 1 and 2. Work with a partner to match the reform described in each numbered paragraph in Part 1 with the New Deal legislation described in Part 2.

NAME DATE

Part 1

Fireside Chat, July 24, 1933

The legislation which has been passed or is in the process of enactment can properly be considered as part of a well-grounded plan.

1.

First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially the young men who have **dependents**, to go into the forestry and flood prevention work. This is a big task because it means feeding, clothing and caring for nearly twice as many men as we have in the regular army itself. In creating this civilian conservation corps we are killing two birds with one stone. We are clearly enhancing the value of our natural resources and second, we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress. This great group of men have entered upon their work on a purely voluntary basis, no military training is involved and we are conserving not only our natural resources but our human resources. . . .

2.

Second, I have requested the Congress and have secured action upon a proposal to put the great properties owned by our Government at **Muscle Shoals** to work after long years of wasteful inaction, and with this a broad plan for the improvement of a vast area in the Tennessee Valley. It will add to the comfort and happiness of hundreds of thousands of people and the incident benefits will reach the entire nation.

3.
Next, the Congress is about to pass legislation that will greatly ease the **mortgage** distress among the farmers and the home owners of the nation, by providing for the easing of the burden of debt now bearing so heavily upon millions of our people.

4.

Our next step in seeking immediate relief is a grant of half a billion dollars to help the states, counties and **municipalities** in their duty to care for those who need direct and immediate relief.

5.

In addition to all this, the Congress also passed legislation authorizing the sale of beer in such states as desired. This has already resulted in considerable reemployment and, incidentally, has provided much needed tax revenue.

Now as to the future.

6.

We are planning to ask the Congress for legislation to enable the Government to undertake **public works**, thus stimulating directly and indirectly the employment of many others in well-considered projects.

7.

Further legislation has been taken up which goes much more fundamentally into our economic problems. The Farm Relief Bill seeks by the use of several methods, alone or together, to bring about an increased **return** to farmers for their major farm products, seeking at the same time to prevent in the days to come disastrous over-production which so often in the past has kept farm **commodity** prices far below a reasonable return. This measure provides wide powers for emergencies. The extent of its use will depend entirely upon what the future has in store.

8.

Well-considered and conservative measures will likewise be proposed which will attempt to give to the industrial workers of the country a more fair wage return, prevent cut-throat competition and unduly long hours for labor, and at the same time to encourage each industry to prevent over-production.

9.

One of our bills falls into the same class, the Railroad Bill. It seeks to provide and make certain definite planning by the railroads themselves, with the assistance of the Government, to eliminate the duplication and waste that now results in railroad **receiverships** and in continuing operating **deficits**.

I feel very certain that the people of this country understand and approve the broad purposes behind these new governmental policies relating to agriculture and industry and transportation. . . .

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Vocabulary

Commodity: A good or material that can be bought and sold freely.

Deficit: A lack; spending more than one earns.

Dependents: Family members who depend on a wage earner for their living.

Enactment: Passage, as of a law.

Mortgage: A loan to enable the purchase of a house or other property.

Municipalities: Cities, towns, or villages, under self-government.

NAME DATE

Muscle Shoals: A region in Alabama owned by the government and developed by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Public works: Construction projects, such as roads and bridges, that benefit the general population.

Receivership: Authority given to a person to take over a property or business that is bankrupt.

Return: Income or profit.

Part 2

New Deal Legislation

Civilian Conservation Corps Act **March 1933**	Established the Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided work for 3 million men, ages 18 to 25, in federal work projects that included road building, flood control measures, and forestry.
Beer-Wine Revenue Act **March 1933**	Legalized wine and beer, ending Prohibition. Taxed wine and beer to provide additional government revenue.
Federal Emergency Relief Act **May 1933**	Established the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which distributed $500 million to state and local governments to pay wages for public employees and maintain government operations.
Agricultural Adjustment Act **May 1933**	Established the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which paid farmers to voluntarily reduce production to cut down on crop surpluses.
Tennessee Valley Authority Act **May 1933**	Authorized federal government involvement in the industrial and agricultural development of the Tennessee Valley, including the construction of dams for power generation.
Farm Credit Act **June 1933**	Helped farmers refinance farm mortgages.
Emergency Railroad Transportation Act **June 1933**	Increased federal regulation of railroads.
National Industrial Recovery Act **June 1933**	Provided for federal powers to regulate industry and stimulate economic recovery. Established the Public Works Administration, which funded public works projects.
Fair Labor Standards Act **June 1938**	Established a minimum wage, 40-hour work week, overtime pay rates, and regulations for employing minors.

NAME DATE

Handout 9:
The Flint Sit-Down Strike

Introduction

It is 1936, and General Motors (GM) is one of the wealthiest corporations in the world. It controls nearly half of the automotive market in the United States and more than a third of the world market.

In GM's Flint, Michigan, auto body plants, Fisher 1 and 2, both skilled and unskilled workers had been relatively well paid. But pressure from plant owners has resulted in a series of wage cuts and increased work demands, eroding many of the gains that workers had won through the United Auto Workers (UAW) union.

On December 28, wages are cut again, and a rumor spreads that some of the auto-making equipment is being shipped to another plant where the union is weaker. On December 30, union organizer Bob Travis confirms the rumor and calls an emergency meeting. Some workers leave the plant to collect food or to picket, but a number of workers remain inside.

Instead of using the traditional strike tactic of walking off the job, the autoworkers stop work but stay by their machines, effectively shutting down the plant. This tactic, called a *sit-down strike*, had recently been successful at auto plants in other cities. Thousands of workers in both Fisher plants join the strike.

On January 11, police surround the Fisher 2 plant in riot gear and fire tear gas at the workers. Striking workers resist by spraying police with fire hoses and hurling 2-pound car door hinges.

Role-Play Instructions

The January 11 confrontation between police and striking autoworkers came to be known as the Battle of Bulls' Run. Imagine that participants on both sides have been asked to present their cases to the National Labor Board at a Labor Review Hearing. (This did not happen in real life.)

Your teacher will assign you and your teammates to be members of one of the stakeholder groups below:

- Assembly line worker
- Law enforcement (local police and National Guard)
- Women's Emergency Brigade
- Union of Auto Workers (UAW) representative
- GM President Alfred Sloan and other top GM managers
- Unemployed immigrant workers

Your teacher will also assign someone the role of Judge.

Follow the steps below to prepare for the Labor Review Hearing. The goal of the hearing is to have all parties agree on how to end the strike.

NAME DATE

Step 1: Read about stakeholder groups.

Read the character biography for your assigned group on **Handout 10: Flint Stakeholders**. Then read the character biographies for the other groups so that you are familiar with each group's point of view.

Step 2: Prepare your case.

Focus on the best interests of your own group. What would you like to achieve: Dignity on the job? An orderly worker population? Job security for your husband? Higher profits to benefit all?

Use the questions below to help you organize and support your arguments:

- What are your grievances?
- What is the most important thing you want to achieve?
- Who opposes you and why?
- What common ground do you share with your opposition?
- What ideas do you have for compromise?
- What will you do if compromise cannot be achieved?

Step 3: Present your argument.

Present your group's argument at the Labor Review Hearing.

Step 4: Challenge your opponents.

Challenge the positions of the other stakeholder groups. Defend your group's position using details from your group's character biography on Handout 10.

Step 5: Work out an agreement.

Come to a consensus with the other groups, either with the Judge's help or by deciding on a course of action among yourselves. Your agreement should bring an end to the strike.

NAME DATE

Handout 10:
Flint Stakeholders

Assembly Line Worker

Role

You are married with children and are the primary wage earner in your family. You have a job as a line worker at the Fisher 2 plant, which employs several thousand workers. You also consider yourself lucky to be relatively well paid by the standards of the day—you earn $1,500 a year.

Background

Your job, however, is far from secure. Last year, several of your friends were laid off over the summer when work slowed down. The only reason you kept your job was because you helped the foreman out of a scrape or two. Your friends were rehired in the fall, but several workers with strong union ties were let go and replaced by new immigrants who don't speak English.

Another thing that bothers you is the constant "speed ups." In order to raise productivity and profits, the foreman increases the speed of the assembly line machines. You have to perform your work at faster and faster rates. The rapid motions strain your muscles, and the concentration it takes to avoid injury has given you headaches.

A fellow worker recently jammed a thumb that had to be amputated because he was working too fast. You've heard of other serious injuries as well.

Attitude

You have always been a good worker but are getting tired of being treated like part of a machine. If the plant was struggling financially, you might have a different attitude, but you know the plant is very profitable. In fact, you have heard rumors that the company president, Alfred Sloan, earns about 90 times what you do.

In the past, you were suspicious of union organizers, but now you realize the union offers you the only hope of improving your situation. You enthusiastically joined the strike and are shocked at the willingness of the plant owners to use police force and violence against you.

NAME DATE

Law Enforcement (Local Police and National Guard)

Role

You don't like taking sides but strikers are clearly breaking the law. Picketing is a safety hazard because it causes fights and blocks traffic, and work stoppages cause hardship for all by disrupting the economy and the life of the city. You have seen strikers preventing replacement workers from entering the plant and even physically harming them. This clearly violates the rights of poor people who are just trying to earn a living.

Background

Traditional strike methods are bad enough, but when strikers refuse to leave the plant during a sit-down strike, it is even worse. A sit-down strike violates the private property rights of the factory owners and is, literally, trespassing. It also makes it extremely difficult to stop the strike, as you have to be careful not to destroy company property or equipment.

You would never want to actually shoot anyone or resort to violence—but you feel that strike organizers can be desperate men. There are rumors that some organizers have come from Russia to try to start a Communist takeover here. They want to change the very nature of our economic system. You cannot condone such un-American activity.

Besides, the factory owners have always been upright citizens of Flint. They employ thousands of people.

Attitude

If the strikers would just negotiate with their employers one on one, problems would be solved. Unions stir up trouble with their demands. You feel bad that it is often the poorest and weakest workers who are taken advantage of by the union.

In the latest instance of violence at the Fisher 2 plant, you had no choice but to enforce the court order to shut down the strike. You were shocked when the workers refused to leave the plant and forced you back with fire hoses. One of your fellow officers was hit with a car door hinge and had to go to the hospital. You wish the president would order the whole lot of them rounded up and thrown in jail.

NAME DATE

Women's Emergency Brigade

Role

You are married to an assembly line worker at the plant and are very concerned for your husband's health and welfare. Ever since the speed-ups began, he has been coming home so exhausted that he can barely make it up the stairs to the apartment. All he has the energy to do each night is eat his dinner and fall into bed.

Background

You have to admit, your husband's pay is higher than that of workers in other plants and, at least in the past, it has been enough to support your family. But last summer he was laid off for three months. In order to make ends meet, he renovated a plant manager's home, while you sold vegetables from your backyard garden.

There have been several wage cuts recently, and your husband fears another cut is coming. And now the factory owners want to ship out the equipment for manufacturing car bodies to another plant where there's no threat of union action.

Attitude

You support your husband one hundred percent in his decision to join the sit-down strike. The workers have to show that they need to be treated like human beings. Not only your husband's life, but also yours and your children's are at stake.

Sometimes you join the picket line, even bringing your two young children along at times. You are grateful to Genora Dollinger Johnson, who organized the Women's Emergency Brigade. She has given you the task of baking bread to distribute to men in the picket line and to sneak in to the workers inside the plant.

When the guards sealed off the plant to prevent workers from receiving food, you were enraged. You couldn't help cheering on the workers as they fought off the police's tear-gas attacks with the fire hose.

Still, you worry where it will all end. What if your husband loses his job permanently, or worse, gets hurt or even killed in the escalating violence?

NAME DATE

Union of Auto Workers (UAW) Representative

Role

You have been looking for an opportunity to rein in the power of auto companies for years. Companies like General Motors are extremely hostile to trade unions because they want to control wages, work procedures, and hiring and firing. Companies want to maximize profits and don't care a bit about the health and dignity of their workers. But the companies are so afraid of union power that they have hired people to spy on labor organizers.

Background

During the fall of 1936, along with head labor organizers Victor and Roy Reuther and Bob Travis, you have been planning your strategy. Autoworkers in several cities have already staged strikes. Using the tactic of the "sit-down" strike, workers took over plants in Atlanta, Detroit, Kansas City, and South Bend, Indiana, by staying at their machines and refusing to leave the factories.

The GM plants in Flint, Michigan, are particularly important because they have the *dies*—equipment that stamps out the auto body parts—for most of GM's automobile models. So if workers strike in Flint, they can pretty much shut down the company's auto production. You'd like to take advantage of the strike wave sweeping the country. If you can establish union authority with GM, it will be a key victory.

Recent events in Flint, including a series of pay cuts and speed-ups, have helped gain union support among the workers. The company also disciplined several workers suspected of having union ties, which angered workers further.

Your biggest problem became holding the workers back; that is, keeping them from going on strike until the New Year, which is when you believed conditions would be optimum for a strike.

Attitude

When Bob Travis realized that GM was actually going to ship the dies out to a nonunion plant, however, you all realized you had to act immediately. If the dies were moved to a plant with no union influence, your best chance of shutting down GM production would be lost!

The recent battle with law enforcement in the Fisher 2 plant has confirmed how committed the workers are to the change that only union recognition can bring. You're in this to win!

NAME DATE

GM President Alfred Sloan and Other Top Managers

Role

You have worked hard to make General Motors the country's biggest company and are proud to be the employer of a quarter of a million people in 110 manufacturing and assembly plants. You have set your wages high for the industry standard, $1,500 a year.

You feel your employees have little to complain about. If they think they can do a better job of running an industry, they're welcome to try it. In the meantime, you're the one who is handing out the jobs.

Background

You believe that some of Roosevelt's New Deal policies, such as regulating industry, are unconstitutional and counterproductive to business. In order to remain profitable, you need the flexibility to reduce your work force when demand goes down and hire the best people for the job when business picks up again. How are you supposed to continue to pay employees if there isn't enough work?

Unions don't know anything about running a business. All they know is how to dig into other people's pockets for their dues. In your opinion, strikers prevent people from working who want to earn a wage to support their families. When the police try to break up picket lines, they are only enforcing people's constitutional right to work.

This new tactic—the sit-down strike—is infuriating. Judge Black has already declared it illegal, and ruled that the strikers are trespassing unlawfully on your property. That's why law enforcement was sent to drive them out on January 11. Unfortunately, that confrontation ended disastrously. The problem is that it's difficult to use force to get rid of the strikers without risking damage to your own buildings and equipment.

Attitude

You have no intention of recognizing the union. If you do, there will be no end to their demands. The workers will believe they own the place!

You plan to continue to try to wait out the strike and find a way to shift production to nonunion plants in other parts of the country.

NAME DATE

Unemployed Immigrant Worker

Role

You moved from Poland with your family after World War II because there was so little work there. You were told jobs in America were unlimited, but that has not been your experience. There is little work for someone like you who has not been educated in the United States.

You believe the reason you didn't get a job at the General Motors plant is because you don't speak English well. There is almost no other work in Flint. You have been surviving doing odd jobs, such as painting, construction, or cleaning streets.

Background

A month or two ago, you heard that some men in your community did get hired to work at a GM auto body plant, after some assembly line workers quit over wage cuts.

Personally, you don't care what the wages are. Whatever they're paying has to be more than what you've been able to earn. Your family—a wife and three young children—are practically starving.

Attitude

You hope that more workers at the plant quit. You feel sorry for anyone losing their job in these hard times, but you have to think of your family first. Until recently, you firmly believed that you would cross any picket line in order to improve your own life.

You're not sure what to make of the current strike, however. Yes, there are picket lines, but the workers are also staying by their machines in the plant. It's difficult to get close to the factory.

You have also heard rumors of violence—police using tear gas on workers, and workers fighting back. Now you're not sure what to do. You don't want to anger the workers at the plant because they might hurt you. But you also want to take advantage of any opportunity to get a job. Your wife is afraid for your life and wants you to stay far away from the factory until things calm down.

NAME DATE

Handout 11:
Flint Sit-Down Strike Timeline

June 1936

United Auto Workers (UAW) Vice President Wyndham Mortimer comes to Flint to organize workers, after seeing the effects of successful sit-down strikes in other parts of the country and in Europe.

October 1936

UAW representative Bob Travis arrives in Flint to continue Mortimer's efforts.

December 30, 1936

General Motors (GM) plant managers attempt to send auto-making equipment to a nonunion plant. An emergency meeting is called and the sit-down strike begins in Fisher plants 1 and 2, involving thousands of workers.

January 2, 1937

Judge Black rules that the sit-down strike is illegal and orders a halt. It is disclosed that he owns stock in General Motors.

January 11, 1937

Battle of Bulls' Run. Police in riot gear storm Fisher plant 2 and shoot tear gas into the plant. Strikers repel the police by spraying fire hoses and hurling car door hinges.

February 1, 1937

Workers take over Chevrolet plant 4. This largest group of strikers ultimately has the greatest impact on shutting down production.

February 9, 1937

Governor Frank Murphy tells CIO President John L. Lewis that he has decided to issue an order to evict the strikers. Lewis reminds the governor that his own grandfather had been a striking miner. Governor Murphy doesn't issue the order.

February 11, 1937

The strike is settled. Workers win the right to organize and to be represented by the UAW union. GM agrees to recognize UAW, to negotiate with UAW leaders, and not to discriminate against strikers who return to work.

NAME DATE

Handout 12:
Events in Labor History

The Great Depression and the New Deal were pivotal points in labor history. Many other events before and after the stock market crash and initial New Deal legislation, however, had, and continue to have, significance for American workers.

Choose one of the labor events below on which to base your animated movie.

Date	Event	Description
1877	Great Railroad Strike	Railroad workers protested a series of wage cuts and increased work demands in a national uprising. First national strike in the nation's history.
1876–1977	Trial of the Molly Maguires	Coal miners in Pennsylvania were tried for acts of violent protest. Dangerous conditions had resulted in the deaths of over 500 miners.
1892	Homestead Lockout	Iron and steel workers at a plant owned by Andrew Carnegie fought slashed wages by staging a strike. Carnegie responded by closing the plant and locking workers out.
1894	Pullman Boycott	Trains with cars made by the Pullman company were boycotted. American Railway Union workers struck but the ARU excluded African American workers, a fact believed to be a reason for the strike's failure.
1909	Shirtwaist Strike	Approximately 20,000 shirtwaist factory workers throughout New York City, primarily Jewish women, struck for shorter hours and better working conditions.
1911	Triangle Shirtwaist Fire	A fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City kills 150 workers, mostly women.
1912	Bread and Roses Strike	In Lawrence, Massachusetts, 23,000 textile workers (men, women, and children of all nationalities) struck together against low wages and unsafe working conditions.
1914	Ludlow Massacre	Workers at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company owned by John D. Rockefeller struck for better wages, improved conditions, and union recognition. Tens of workers, including children, were killed.
1934	Waterfront Workers' Strike	Waterfront workers across the West Coast struck for control over the hiring process and union recognition. The strike closed West Coast ports.

NAME DATE

1968	Sanitation Workers' Demonstration	In Memphis, sanitation workers organized a strike and demonstration to protest unfair conditions. Martin Luther King supported them and was assassinated as he prepared to join the march.
1968–1970	Delano Grape Boycott	The United Farm Workers, representing California agricultural workers, organized a national boycott of grapes to protest unfair wages and hiring, resulting in contracts between growers and UFW.
1981	Air Traffic Controllers' Strike	13,000 workers struck after unsuccessful contract negotiations. President Reagan ordered the controllers back to work.
1990	Pittston Coal Worker Strike	Pittston Coal Company workers in West Virginia, Virginia, and Kentucky used civil disobedience tactics and won pension and health benefit concessions.

Union leader Bill Haywood leads a strike parade in Lowell, Massachusetts.
Library of Congress. George Grantham Bain Collection.

NAME DATE

Handout 13:
A Summary View

Work with your teammates to research the labor history event your team chose.

Step 1: Conduct research.

- Summarize your event in three or four sentences. What kind of event was it? (strike, boycott, negotiation, other?) What happened?

- Refer to the list of Workplace Issues posted in the classroom. Which workplace issues did your event attempt to address? Did it address any issues that are not on the list? If so, what are the issues?

- What things happened leading up to your event that helped bring it about, and when did they happen?

- What were the highlights or notable occurrences during your event, and when did they happen?

- What was the result or significance of your event? (Were reforms achieved? Was there a setback for workers? Did your event pave the way for later achievements?)

Step 2: Create a timeline.

As a team, discuss what is most important about your event. Then create a timeline, including all essential information, to place alongside your class's master timeline.

Step 3: Identify stakeholders.

List the key stakeholder groups who were involved in your event. Be sure to include the names of any important movement leaders.

NAME DATE

Handout 14:
Character Biographies

Now it's time to develop a character biography that designers can use to create your animated film character.

Your character might be an individual, such as a company president or union leader, or a representative of a group, such as a striking assembly line worker or an unemployed worker hired to take a striker's place.

Follow the steps below to build your character biography.

Step 1: Review criteria.

Your character biography should consist of:

- At least one annotated primary source document or oral history audio clip
- At least two annotated photographic images
- Completed **Handout 15: Character Information Sheet**
- Your response to Journal 4, a letter or diary entry in the voice of your character

Step 2: Identify three primary sources.

Your teacher will provide you with suggestions for resources that you can use to find primary sources. Locate at least three primary sources that you will use.

Complete the table below with information about your primary sources.

Type of Primary Source (for example, oral history transcription, audio recording, photograph)	**Bibliographic Information**	**Description**

Have your teacher review the primary sources you've chosen.

NAME DATE

Step 3: Prepare an annotated primary source document or audio clip.

Review your primary source materials and locate at least one original document (such as a diary entry or a letter) or audiotaped interview that offers insight into your character.

Prepare an excerpt from your primary source. If your character is based on a real person, your excerpt can be something the person said or wrote. If your character represents a group, such as women working in a shirtwaist factory, your excerpt can be from a real person in that group.

Write a short paragraph describing what the primary source reveals about your character and his or her role in your team's event.

Prepare your annotated document or audio clip for presentation.

Step 4: Prepare annotated historical images.

Review your primary sources and choose at least two photographic images:

- One image of your character or someone in your representative character group
- One image about how your character lives—the exterior or interior of a home, workplace, or other environment

Write one or two sentences describing what each photographic image reveals about your character. Prepare the annotated images for presentation.

Step 5: Complete Handout 15: Character Information Sheet.

Research your character's background or the background of the group your character belongs to, as well as the role that individual or group played in the event.

Write your findings on **Handout 15**. Try to collect as much information as possible. You can use the back of the handout and/or additional sheets of paper if you need to. Include (and reference) source materials where relevant.

Step 6: Include your response to Journal 4.

Now that you have researched your character in depth, you should have a good sense of his or her attitudes and motivations. Use this insight as you write your response to Journal 4.

Step 7: Assemble the materials for your character biography.

Review and revise **Handout 15: Character Information Sheet**. Gather your primary source document excerpt or audio clip, your annotated photographic images, and your letter or diary entry.

Meet with your team and make sure all biography materials are complete.

NAME DATE

Handout 15:
Character Information Sheet

Short Description of Event (one or two sentences):

Character Role (name and short description):

Economic Status:

Gender:

Approximate age:

Clothing:

Background, including national origin, if known:

Home life (if applicable):

NAME DATE

Attitude toward unions (or attitude toward other characters):

Description of role in the event (three- to five-sentence paragraph):

NAME DATE

Handout 16:
A Voice from the Line

Excerpts from "The Maker" by Phil Stallings, Spot-Welder

From *Working* by Studs Terkel, pp. 160–163

. . . You really begin to wonder. What price do they put on me? Look at the price they put on the machine. If that machine breaks down, there's somebody out there to fix it right away. If I break down, I'm just pushed over to the other side till another man takes my place. The only thing they have on their mind is to keep that line running. . . .

. . . The only way I get involved is when it affects me or it affects a man on the line in a condition that could be me. I don't believe in lost causes, but when it all happened . . . (He pauses, appears bewildered.)

The foreman was riding the guy. The guy told him to go away or pushed him, grabbed him . . . You can't blame the guy—Jim Grayson. I don't want nobody stickin' their finger in my face. I'd've probably hit him beside the head. The whole thing was: Damn it, it's about time we took a stand. Let's stick up for the guy. We stopped the line . . . (He pauses, grins.) Ford lost about twenty units. I'd figure about five grand a unit—whattya got. (Laughs.)

I said, "Let's all go home." When the line's down like that, you can go up to one man and say, "You gonna work?" If he says no, they can fire him. See what I mean? But if nobody was there, who the hell were they gonna walk up to and say, "Are you gonna work?" Man, there woulda been nobody there! If it were up to me, we'd gone home.

Jim Grayson, the guy I work next to, he's colored. Absolutely. That's the first time I've seen unity on that line. Now it's happened once, it'll happen again. Because everybody just sat down. Believe you me. (Laughs.) It stopped at eight and it didn't start till twenty after eight. Everybody and his brother were down there. It was really nice to see, it really was.

NAME DATE

Appendix C: Who's Right?

Read each scenario below about today's workplace. Work with your partner to decide who is right in each scenario.

1. James is scheduled to work an 8-hour shift at the drugstore. Just as he is getting ready to leave, his supervisor tells him he needs to stay until closing. James has already made a date with a friend, so he tells his supervisor he can't stay. The supervisor tells James that if he doesn't stay for the extra shift, he shouldn't plan on showing up in the morning—or ever again. Does the supervisor have the right to fire James?

2. Serena works as a cashier at a local supermarket, which has a summer opening for a bagger. Serena's 13-year-old sister isn't doing anything for the summer, so Serena mentions to her boss that her sister is available. The boss tells Serena to have her sister start work the following Monday, but unlike Serena, who gets a weekly paycheck, her sister will be paid in cash. That sounds odd to Serena, but she doesn't say anything to her boss. Should she question the arrangement?

3. Micah works at a big chain department store that employs hundreds of workers. One day while lifting heavy boxes he injures himself so severely that he has to go home. The company tells him to take the week off without pay, but to return to work the following Monday. After a week, however, Micah's back isn't any better, and he is still unable to work. The company tells Micah they're very sorry, but they're going to have to lay him off. Does the company owe Micah anything or did they do all they could be expected to do?

4. Darien's desk has recently been moved to a room where chemicals are stored. There is a strong smell in the room. No one has ever had to work in this room before, but since the company is expanding, every bit of space is being utilized. The first day in his new room, Darien has a headache that makes it difficult for him to work. He sees a symbol for toxicity on one of the storage containers, but when he voices his concerns to his boss, she says the symbol is just protocol and the chemicals are perfectly safe. Darien is afraid that he might lose his job if he complains any further. Does he have the right to insist on moving his desk?

5. Taylor works picking vegetables at a farm that pays her below minimum wage. When she complains, her supervisor raises her pay to the minimum. But when she talks to other workers, many of whom are adults raising families, she finds out that their wages have not been raised. She confronts her supervisor again, who tells her that the other workers are not U.S. citizens and the minimum wage doesn't apply to them. Is the supervisor right?

6. Jayne notices that her assistant is using her office computer for his personal use. When Jayne speaks to him, he responds that he works more than his scheduled hours and always gets his work done. Jayne has to agree, but she still doesn't like him using office time and equipment for his personal correspondence. Can Jayne force him to stop or is it his right to do so as long as he meets his deadlines?

7. Marc works at a construction company and until recently has ignored local union organizers. This year, however, his manager lowered his hourly wages, justifying the pay cut by saying the market for construction is down. Marc, however, has not seen any slowdown. What he has seen is the company hiring more workers, whom Marc suspects are accepting lower wages. In response, Marc has started attending union meetings. This morning, Marc's manager told him that if he joined the union, he would be fired. Can Marc's manager legally fire him?