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Part 1: A History of Work (4 sessions)

Students consider the roles that individuals and groups play in historical events. They learn about labor history in the United States and are introduced to the unit project—creating character biographies for an animated movie focused on an event in labor history.

Activity 1A: Whose Work Is This, Anyway?

1A.1: <i>Actors in the Labor Drama</i>	Students view clips from two feature films and/or television shows with labor themes to gain an appreciation of the dramatic stories and struggles of working people in their everyday lives. Students are introduced to the unit project.
1A.2: <i>Workplace Simulation</i>	Students participate in a simulation that pits a “Gilded Age” factory owner against assembly workers and the unemployed. As they role-play, students become familiar with the terms used in discussing labor issues.
1A.3: <i>(Optional) All in a Day’s Work?</i>	Students work in pairs to examine the rights of employers and employees in workplace situations.

Activity 1B: There Ought to Be a Law

1B.1: <i>Labor History Overview</i>	Student pairs research a milestone in U.S. labor history, locate it on a timeline, and present their research to the class.
1B.2: <i>The Great Depression and the New Deal</i>	Students view images of the Great Depression, read an excerpt from one of Roosevelt’s Fireside speeches, and relate New Deal provisions to their timeline.

Part 2: Working for Their Lives (6 sessions)

Students role-play characters and events based on the 1936–1937 autoworkers’ strike in Flint, Michigan—an example of a Depression-era labor movement with diverse players and concerns. Student teams choose and research their own event, create an annotated timeline, create character biographies, and present to the class.

Activity 2A: The Scope of a Movement

2A.1: <i>Sitting Down in Flint: A Case Study</i>	Students form teams to take on the role of an individual or group in the 1936–1937 autoworkers’ strike. They stage a Labor Review Hearing in which students representing each role argue for or against labor demands.
2A.2: <i>Choosing a Labor Event</i>	Teams choose the event that forms the basis for their unit projects. Drawing on what they’ve learned during their role-playing of the Flint, Michigan strike, teams research their event, create a timeline, and identify stakeholders.

Activity 2B: Creating Historical Characters

2B.1: <i>Assembling Character Biographies</i>	Team members create their character biographies, identifying and annotating related historical images and primary source materials. Students research and document their characters’ background, traits, and role in their team’s chosen event.
2B.2: <i>Presenting Characters for Animation</i>	Using their timelines and character biographies, teams present their characters and events to the class.