



Race, Class, and Unions: Local 8 and the International Workers of the World

Component	Description
<p>Title of Lesson</p> <p>Content/Subject Area</p>	<p>Race, Class, and Unions: Local 8 and the International Workers of the World</p> <p>US History, African American History</p>
<p>Context</p> <p>Duration</p>	<p>As a center of industrialization in United States history, Philadelphia has also contributed to the development of worker’s unions. This lesson fits best in a unit that is already discussing the issues related to industrialization, Progressive Era and Jim Crow. In this lesson, students will learn about one of the earliest instances of successful interracial unionism.</p> <p>2-3 Class Periods</p>
<p>Objective</p>	<p>SWBAT determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text IOT evaluate the influence that Local 8 had on local, national and global development.</p> <p>SWBAT comprehend a complex secondary source using guiding questions IOT evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time, applying context of events.</p>
<p>Standards</p>	<p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10 By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.</p> <p>8.1.U.A. Evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time, applying context of events.</p> <p>8.2.U.A. Evaluate the role groups and individuals from Pennsylvania played in the social, political, cultural, and economic development of the U.S.</p> <p>8.2.U.D. Evaluate how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations in Pennsylvania have influenced the growth and development of the U.S. Ethnicity and race Working conditions,</p>

	<p>Immigration, Military conflict, Economic stability.</p> <p>8.3.U.D. Evaluate how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations have influenced the growth and development of the U.S. Ethnicity and race, Working conditions, Immigration, Military conflict, Economic stability.</p>
Anticipatory Set	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Warm-up: When is a time that you've joined forces with someone to accomplish a goal? What made you come together? Did you have a relationship before or after this situation? II. Discuss the warm-up as a class. III. Tell students that we're going to apply the ideas in the warm-up to our understanding of unions for this lesson. IV. Tap into student's prior knowledge by asking these questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. What is a worker's union? B. What do you think are the general goals of a union? C. Why do you think unions developed? D. What does it mean for a union to 'organize'? V. Ensure that students have an accurate understanding of unions.
Instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> VI. Set up background/contextual information for reading of secondary source <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Review contextual background related to the rise of industry, urbanization and immigration. Of the late 1800s and early 1900s. B. Explain to students that WWI built off industrialization and created more jobs which encouraged more people to move to US cities from rural areas and other countries, especially European. C. Leftist ideas (supporting social equality, opposition to social hierarchy) also gain support in the US and around the world. D. At the same time, racism continues to be entrenched in US institutions and systems and prejudice is not hidden. VII. Ask students, who has most in common: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. A black longshoreman in the 1920s B. An Irish longshoreman in the 1920s C. The white owner of the shipping company that employs the longshoremen in the 1920s
Instruction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> VIII. <u>Teacher note</u>: Use your own judgement about using the following document in your own context. It contains the N word. For guidance on addressing dehumanizing language

	<p>from history, see APPENDIX A for guidelines from Facing History and Ourselves.</p> <p>IX. Project the political cartoon or give students a copy (SEE APPENDIX B). Discuss the following questions with students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. (Description) What do you see? B. (Description) What is missing from this image? C. (Analysis) What patterns emerge from your descriptions? D. (Interpretation) What is the message? So what? Why is this important? E. What questions do you have about this image?
Independent Practice	<p>X. Students will read a secondary source article about the Local 8 branch of the International Workers of the World (IWW) union, which organized Philadelphia’s longshoremen. Give each student a copy of the reading which also contains guiding questions that students will answer. (SEE APPENDIX C)</p>
Closure	<p>XI. Closure: Four corners discussion based on the following statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Today, organizing around race is more of a priority than organizing around class. <p>XII. Students write a reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Based on the what they’ve learned about Local 8 and the four corners discussion, what is the relationship between race and class in our city? Country? World?
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Response to guiding questions on the secondary source about Local 8 ● Reflection on the question: what is the relationship between race and class in our city? Country? World?
Key Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Union ● Organize ● Local ● International Workers of the World ● Leftist ● Interracial ● Longshoremen ● Capitalism
Resources and Materials	<p><u>Materials</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political cartoon - Appendix B ● Secondary Source reading with guiding questions and reflection prompt - Appendix C



- Original Source:
<http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/industrial-workers-of-the-world/>
- Google Doc:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v8ncAWanKzvl4n1fz6UTmANymwCqYISYLYWPGlhWPCc/edit?usp=sharing>
-

Resources

- Addressing dehumanizing language from history - Appendix A
- Four corners strategy explanation:
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/four-corners>

APPENDIX A

Addressing Dehumanizing Language from History: Facing History and Ourselves

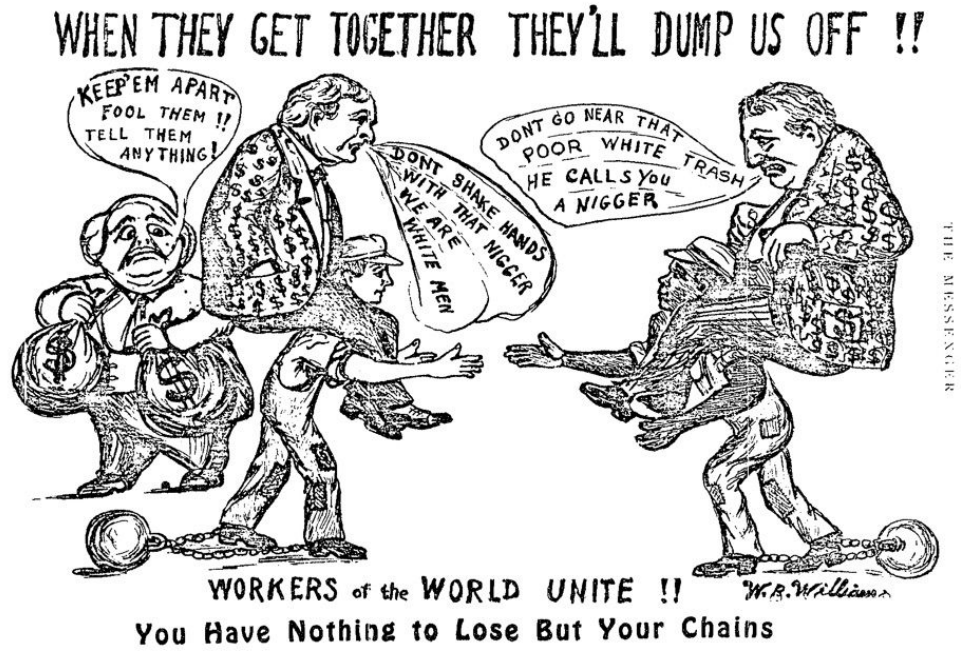
It is very difficult to use and discuss the term “nigger” in the classroom, but its use throughout history and its presence in this unit’s primary sources make it necessary to acknowledge it and set guidelines for students about whether or not to pronounce it when reading aloud or quoting from the text. Otherwise, this word’s presence might distract students from an open discussion of history and human behavior. We believe that the best way to prepare to encounter this language is to create a classroom contract outlining guidelines for respectful, reflective classroom discussion.

We also recommend the following articles to help you determine how to approach the term in your classroom:

- “Exploring the Controversy: The ‘N’ Word” from *“Huck Finn” in Context: A Teaching Guide* (PBS)
- “Straight Talk about the N-Word” from *Teaching Tolerance* (Southern Poverty Law Center)
- “In Defense of a Loaded Word” by Ta-Nehisi Coates (*New York Times*)

Link to source: <https://www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era/addressing-dehumanizing-language-history>

APPENDIX B



Cartoon from *The Messenger*, 2 (August 1919):4.

Source: <https://journals.psu.edu/phj/article/view/24112/23881>

APPENDIX C

Student Name:

Industrial Workers of the World

By Peter Cole

NOTE: Definitions added by teacher in parenthesis and italics.

Instructions: The guiding questions pertain to the paragraph before it.



Benjamin Harrison Fletcher (1890-1949)

Born in Philadelphia, Fletcher joined the IWW in 1912. It is unknown how he became radicalized but, presumably, he heard street speakers in his diverse, working class South Philadelphia neighborhood. Fletcher became the most prominent leader in Local 8 and the most influential African American in the entire IWW. During World War I, the federal government targeted the IWW, and Fletcher was the sole African American among the hundred Wobblies convicted of treason in 1918. Although no evidence was brought against him specifically, Fletcher received a ten-year prison sentence and an astronomical \$30,000 fine. Fletcher served about three years before his sentence was commuted in 1922. He remained firmly committed to the Wobblies although never again played a major role. Fletcher's health failed while still young, and he died after living in Brooklyn for fifteen years. (Woodcut by Carlos Cortez, published with permission of Charles H. Kerr Press)



IWW Membership Button, 1917

For most of a decade, anyone who wanted to work on the Philadelphia waterfront had to be a member of Local 8. In order to ensure that only fully paid-up members worked, Local 8 distributed a new button monthly. When an employer hired someone not wearing the proper button, Local 8 members were known to stop work until that person paid his dues—demonstrating the Wobblies' commitment to direct action on the job.

In the early 1900s thousands in greater Philadelphia belonged to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)—a militant, leftist labor union. Local (*short for local union branch*) 8, which organized the city's longshoremen (*person employed to load and unload ships*), was the largest and most powerful IWW branch in the Mid-Atlantic and the IWW's most racially inclusive branch. Indeed, there might not have been a more egalitarian union anywhere in the nation in the early twentieth century. Known as Wobblies, these early union activists also organized Philadelphians in other industries, especially textiles and metal making.

Question #1: What does it mean to be militant and leftist?

Question # 2: Why is the significance of an egalitarian union at this time?

Founded in 1905, the IWW believed that capitalism (*system where there is private ownership of resources for profit*) was inherently unjust, resulting in the oppression of the great majority (workers) by a tiny, wealthy elite (employers). According to the IWW preamble, these groups “shared nothing in common.” Hence, the Wobblies called for revolutionary changes to create a more just society where everyone could enjoy the fruits of industrialization.

Question # 3: Describe capitalism in your own words.

Question # 4: Do you agree with the IWW preamble, that workers share nothing in common with employers? Explain.

Shortly after its founding, workers in Philadelphia’s largest industry, textiles, started joining the IWW, as did those in textile centers across southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, especially Paterson. Similarly, Philadelphia Wobblies maintained ties to Chester, Camden, and Wilmington. Many renowned Wobblies spoke in Philadelphia, including Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Big Bill” Haywood, John Reed, Arturo Giovannitti, and Carlo Tresca. However, the most important leader and greatest speaker was the locally-born African American dockworker, Ben Fletcher (1890-1949).

Thousands of Longshoremen

As one of America's busiest ports, thousands of longshoremen toiled on both sides of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, loading everything from Baldwin locomotives to Stetson hats and unloading unrefined sugar from Cuba and coal from nearby mines.

Reflecting the city's diversity, the city's roughly five thousand longshoremen in 1913 were about one-third African American, a third Irish and Irish American, and a third Europeans, especially Lithuanians and Poles. Employers counted on racism and xenophobia (*intense dislike or fear of people from other countries*) to keep workers from unionizing. However, thousands struck that year and quickly joined Local 8 because it practiced equality by insuring, among other things that a member of every major ethnic group was represented on the negotiating committee.

Question # 5: How did Local 8 succeed in creating an interracial union? Why is this significant?

The IWW's militant tactics worked. Over the next decade, Local 8 dominated area labor relations because its members proved willing to fight for better conditions. Predictably, the empowered longshoremen experienced intense opposition from employers and the government (including the wartime arrests of Fletcher and other leaders on bogus charges of "espionage and sedition"). Beyond winning raises and improving work conditions, Local 8 also integrated work gangs, gatherings, and leadership posts—all unprecedented.

Employers Resort to Lockout

In 1922 employers taking advantage of postwar America's worsening labor and race relations, "locked out" Local 8 members and broke their hold. This pushback was part of the first, national "Red Scare," (*promotion of fear of communism and leftists*) also signaling a backlash against the growing number of African Americans in the area. Locally and nationally, the IWW went into decline, but its ideals persisted. When the more conservative International Longshoremen's Association returned unionism along the Delaware River, it had to acknowledge the power of African Americans. Further, the Wobbly commitment to ethnic, gender, and racial inclusion regardless of craft or skill was championed in the 1930s by the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Question # 6: What factors contributed to the division of Local 8?

Although the IWW never was as strong or large in Philadelphia, or elsewhere, after the 1920s, the organization and its ideals lived on, revived by activists across the country in the 1960s and, in Philadelphia, in the 1980s. Indeed, in the last few decades, Wobblies continued to demonstrate impressive passion: to its still-radical commitment to equality across all lines; use of direct action tactics (on the job and in the streets); and brilliant use of language to skewer the status quo in song, posters, and later on the Internet.

In the 1980s, a small but impressively organized community of Wobblies, anarchists, and other leftist radicals established beachheads (*defended position*) in West Philadelphia, including squatting in abandoned row-houses, later taking ownership of some and turning them into collectively-owned properties. Local Wobblies also set up a bookstore in West Philadelphia and were active in the Occupy Philly encampment at City Hall in 2011. As in numerous other cities in the US and beyond, Philadelphia's IWW persisted, still deeply committed to charting a path to a post-capitalist, post-racist world.

Question # 7: What is the legacy of Local 8 and IWW?

Question # 8: What connections can you make between this history and other aspects of the past or present?

