

STATION 1- FACTORY LIFE

- 1. Group leader will read the short description of the video on the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire out loud to the group.**
- 2. Each group member should look at the images and read the descriptions about Sweatshops individually.**
- 3. Group leader will read the information on Unions out loud to the group.**
- 4. As a group, you will come up with ideas of what life was like during the late 1800s to early 1900s based on what you have read and seen. Compare this to what life it like today.**

(For example, Do you work? What laws affect workers? What safety regulations are in affect at school? In your home? Etc.)

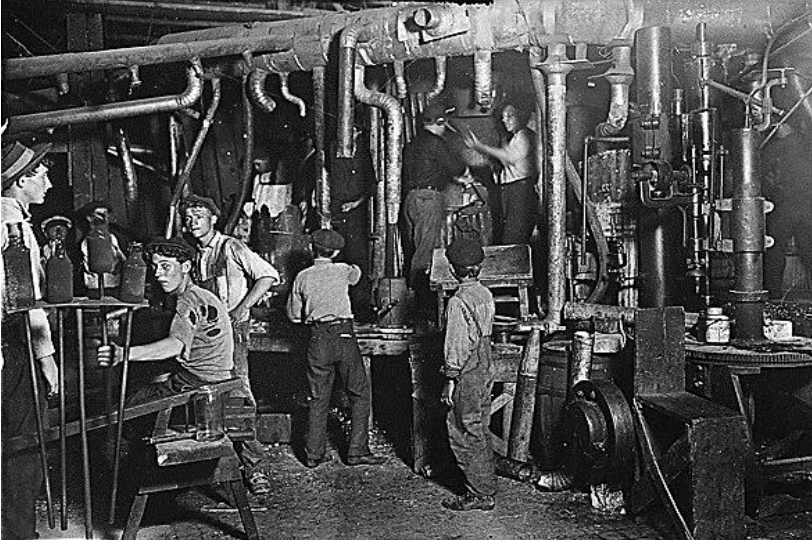
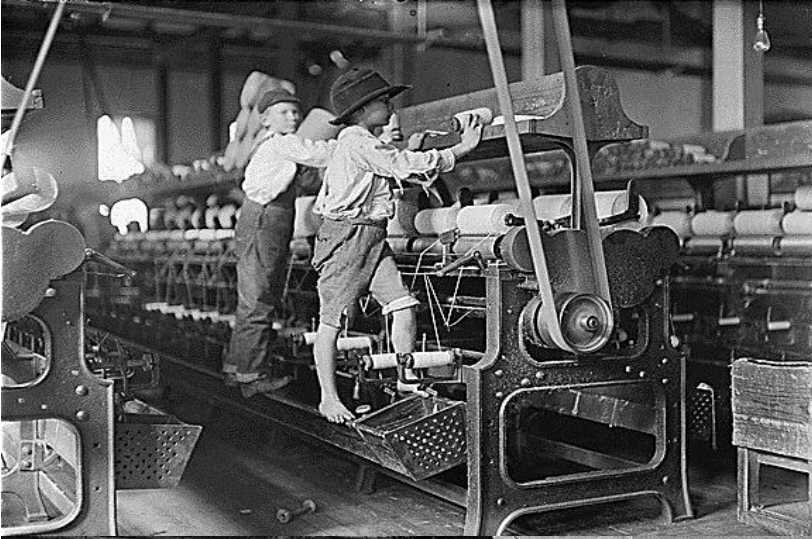
Group Recorder will copy at least 3 of the group's ideas into each column. (6 items in total)

- 5. Answer the questions on Labor Unions that follow the columns.**
- 6. Once you complete the columns and questions, add the activity to your group folder.**

SWEATSHOPS AND CHILD LABOR



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As industrialization expanded, standards of living generally improved. However, workers suffered from dangerous conditions in the factories, low wages, and long hours. Immigrants often took whatever jobs they could get.

Many found jobs in sweatshops—hot, crowded, dangerous factories—for about ten dollars a week.

This was the average weekly wage. To get by, whole families worked, including young children. If a worker missed a day of work due to illness, or had unexpected bills, the family usually went into debt.

TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FACTORY FIRE SUMMARY

Many business owners of the late 1800s ran their factories as cheaply as possible. Many left out safety equipment to save money. Some safety regulations had never been needed before, and therefore did not exist yet. One example showing the need for safety regulations like we have today is the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.

On the night of March 25, 1911, saddened and upset relatives walked through a gruesome line of dead bodies laid out on the Twenty-sixth street pier in New York City. Most of them were girls and young women of Jewish or Italian decent and all of them were victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire.

Triangles crowded workrooms, located on the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors of a building, had locked exit doors and no sprinklers to stop the girls from stealing any of the garments (clothes).

Smoke and flames were first visible from the ground shortly after 4:45 p.m., just when the workers had finished their shift that Saturday and were about to leave.

The tallest fire ladder in New York City only reached the 6th floor. Most of the girls had no way out.

Many of the victims died of smoke inhalation. Others jumped to their deaths with dresses and hair in flames. A man and a woman were seen kissing before their fall to an unforgiving sidewalk.



Police and onlookers standing by the bodies of women who leapt from the burning building.

UNIONS

Workers usually had no direct contact with the business owners. Workers began to feel that only other working people could understand their troubles. Unhappy workers began to form labor unions—groups of workers that negotiated (made agreements) with business owners to get better wages and safer working conditions.

Many early efforts to organize workers in the United States began in Pennsylvania. In 1869, the Knights of Labor were established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When it first began, the Knights of Labor were made up of just 9 tailors. The organization believed the unions that came before it failed because they limited their membership. So, the Knights of Labor decided to organize both skilled and unskilled workers in the same union and they opened their doors to blacks and women. By the early 1880s, the group became a national force, and dropped its initial secrecy.

The GOALS of the Knights of Labor included the following:

- An 8 hour work day
- The end of Child Labor
- Equal pay for equal work
- A graduated income tax
- And many others...

In its early years the Knights of Labor did not want to use strikes. However, eventually the organization began using strikes and they became an effective tool in the fight for labor rights.

Unfortunately, some strikes failed worse than others. For example, the Haymarket Affair (also known as the Haymarket Square Riot or Haymarket Massacre) left many dead. What started out as a rally in support of striking workers, led to an unknown person throwing a bomb at the police who had come to break up the rally. The bomb blast, and police gunfire that followed, left 8 police officers and an unknown number of civilians dead.



Engraving of the Haymarket Square Riot—May 4, 1886

Group # _____

As a group, use the 2 column chart to compare what you saw and read about, to your life today. You must have at least 3 examples in each column. Answer the questions that follow on Labor Unions

| What life was like in the Pictures, Movie, and Descriptions | My (Our) Life Today |
|--|---------------------|
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1. Explain what a labor union is in your own words.

2. List at least three (3) Goals of the Knights of Labor

3. Describe one example of when a strike became dangerous.