

## THE U.S. LABOR MOVEMENT MIXER

### Teacher Overview

**STEP ONE:** Introduce the basic concept of the labor movement—that throughout U.S. history and contemporary times, workers in the United States have had to organize and fight for recognition, better pay, fair hiring practices, and safe working conditions. This can be done in a variety of ways, and no doubt depends on the context of your individual classroom. You may also want to ask students what preconceived notions they have about unions, strikes, and the labor movement.

**STEP TWO:** Hand out the Student Activity Sheet and direct students' attention to the questions they should ask as they are mingling. There is also space for them to write down the names of at least six characters with whom they talk during the mixer. The 2nd page has reflection questions that they can fill out individually or in pairs after the mixer or as homework. Review the instructions for the mixer and field any questions.

**STEP THREE:** Hand out the Student Role Play Cards (there are 32) and allow enough time for students to read about their event and character. Field questions. This step could be expanded as a homework assignment if you want students to have a more robust understanding of the event they are to represent in the mixer (obviously, these events are much more complex than these brief overviews can detail). Students may also want to come in costume or with a prop to represent their historical figure. Another option is to ask students to line up in chronological order and introduce themselves (their character and their event) so other students can decide who they want to learn more about. NOTE: First and last names on a role play card indicate a real historical figure. First name only indicates historical fiction.

**STEP FOUR:** Allow at least 20 minutes for the mixer. Encourage students to talk to as many people as possible.

**STEP FIVE:** After the mixer, have students complete the Reflection Questions on the back of the Student Activity Sheet. This could also be assigned as homework or introduced as a "Think/Pair/Share" activity. Students could respond to all of them, or select one or two to answer before the whole group discussion.

**STEP SIX:** As a large group, allow for at least 30 minutes to review the Reflection Questions.

These discussions can take many different directions. Have an idea of what issues you want to raise with your students (e.g., race and gender, nonviolent or violent protest strategies, different philosophies of profit sharing), but be sure to leave time for students' questions and curiosity. You may want to return to students' preconceived notions, for example.

Check out the *Zinn Education Project* ([zinnedproject.org/teaching-materials/#themes-labor](http://zinnedproject.org/teaching-materials/#themes-labor)) for a searchable database of lesson plans, films, books, and other resources related to labor.





## U.S. LABOR HISTORY TIMELINE

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1619: Jamestown Polish Workers' Strike | 1931: Bloody Harlan                   |
| 1783: Pennsylvania Mutiny              | 1932: The Bonus Army                  |
| 1806: Journeymen Strike                | 1936: Flint Sit-down Strike           |
| 1834, 1836: Lowell Mill Strike         | 1946: Hawai'i Sugar Strike            |
| 1874: Tompkins Square Riot             | 1968: United Farm Workers Strike      |
| 1877: Great Railroad Strike            | 1968: Memphis Sanitation Strike       |
| 1886: Haymarket Riot                   | 1970: Postal Workers Strike           |
| 1886: Bay View Massacre                | 1981: Air Traffic Controllers' Strike |
| 1887: Thibodaux Massacre               | 1990: Justice for Janitors Campaign   |
| 1892: Homestead Strike                 | 1997: UPS Strike                      |
| 1894: Pullman Strike                   | 2001: Taco Bell Boycott               |
| 1894: Cripple Creek Miners Strike      | 2007-08: Writers Guild Strike         |
| 1899: Newsboys Strike                  | 2011: Wisconsin Teacher Sick-outs     |
| 1909: The Uprising of 20,000           | 2011: NFL Lockout                     |
| 1912: Bread and Roses Strike           | 2011: Verizon Strike                  |
| 1913: Paterson Silk Strike             |                                       |
| 1914: Ludlow Massacre                  |                                       |

**U.S. LABOR MOVEMENT MIXER**  
**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (ELEMENTARY)**

*Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin

When Father Brown refuses to comply with their demands, the cows take action. Farmer Brown finds a note on the barn door: "Sorry. We're closed. No milk today." Soon the striking cows and Farmer Brown reach a mutually agreeable compromise with the help of an impartial party—the duck. Video: [youtube.com/watch?v=nMayGIVmfgA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMayGIVmfgA). Ages 5+.

*Counting on Grace* by Elizabeth Winthrop

In this work of historical fiction, Grace and her friend Arthur, both 12, are forced to quit school to doff bobbins in the mill. Both are desperate to escape the stuffy, sweaty, noisy factory but face a dilemma: if the children don't work, the families won't have enough money to survive. Their teacher helps them write a letter to the National Child Labor Committee, which gets the attention of Lewis Hine, who comes and photographs the "mill rats." Ages 10+.

*Fire! The Beginnings of the Labor Movement* by Barbara Diamond Goldin

A fictional account of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City, as seen by Rosie, a young Jewish girl whose older sister escapes but whose cousin does not. In the aftermath of the fire, Rosie accompanies her sister to an International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union meeting and shares her hope that the union will secure better conditions for the garment workers. Ages 8+.

*Growing Up in Coal Country* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Using compelling black-and-white photographs of children at work in the coal mines of northeastern Pennsylvania about 100 years ago, this photo essay will draw younger children as well as upper elementary students into learning about labor and immigrant history. Ages 8+.

*Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull

The historic 1965 strike against grape growers and the subsequent march for "La Causa" are vividly recounted, and Chavez's victory is palpable. While sufficient background information is provided to support the story and encourage further research, focusing on one event makes the story appealing to younger readers. Ages 8+.

*Kids on Strike!* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

This well-researched and well-illustrated account creates a vivid portrait of the working conditions of many children in United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many black and white photos of both children at work and on strike help to make their plight real and personalize their stories. Ages 10+.

*Lyddie* by Katherine Paterson

In 1843, three years after her father abandons his failing Vermont farm, 10-year-old Lyddie is employed in a cloth factory in Lowell, Massachusetts. Paterson clearly depicts the effects of poverty during the 19th century, focusing on the plight of factory workers oppressed by their dismal jobs. Ages 10+.

*Sí, se puede!/Yes We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.* by Diana Cohn

This bright picture book story is told in the first person by Carlitos, a Mexican immigrant

child, whose widowed mother cleans offices nights and weekends, but still can't manage to support her family. After Mama tells Carlitos that she is helping to organize a janitors' strike for a union, Carlitos gets support at school from his teacher and classmates. Ages 3+.

*Side by Side/Lado a lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez/La Historia de Dolores Huerta y Cesar Chavez* by Monica Brown and Joe Cepeda

This picture book pairs the stories of powerful activists Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Each double-page spread features text in both Spanish and English, with Huerta's story on the left, and Chavez's on the right. Ages 4+.

*Which Side Are You On? The Story of a Song* by George Ella Lyon

This story of the classic union song, written in 1931 by Florence Reece and sung by people fighting for their rights all over the world, is told through the eyes of one of Florence's daughters, a dry-witted, pigtailed girl. From her vantage point—under the bed with her six brothers and sisters, she watches as the company thugs' bullets hit the thin doors and windows of the company house, and her mother begins to sing. Ages 4+.

**U.S. LABOR MOVEMENT MIXER**  
**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL)**

*The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S. Racial Wealth Divide*

By Meizhu Lui, Barbara Robles, Betsy Leondar-Wright, Rose Brewer, and Rebecca Adamson.

An age-appropriate text outlining the ways in which African Americans, Latina/os, Native Americans, and Asian Americans have experienced U.S. capitalism differently than most white people.

“The Gilded Age, Past and Present,” by Steve Fraser, *Salon*, 2008.

[salon.com/2008/04/28/gilded\\_age](http://salon.com/2008/04/28/gilded_age).

A provocative and detailed article outlining the similarities and differences between the first and second “gilded ages,” with prognostications on what the future may hold.

*Inequality.org*

[inequality.org](http://inequality.org)

A portal for data, analysis, and commentary on wealth and income disparity, sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies.

*Labor History Timeline*

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_labor\\_issues\\_and\\_events](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_labor_issues_and_events)

A hyperlinked list of hundreds of national and international labor events.

“Milestones in Labor History” *The Nation*

[thenation.com/slideshow/159414/slide-show-nation-marks-may-day#](http://thenation.com/slideshow/159414/slide-show-nation-marks-may-day#)

*Extreme Inequality: A Nation Guide*

[thenation.com/article/extreme-inequality-nation-guide](http://thenation.com/article/extreme-inequality-nation-guide)

An annotated set of websites, data, and graphs addressing contemporary inequality in the United States.

*Planet Money Podcasts*

[npr.org/blogs/money](http://npr.org/blogs/money)

A wealth of resources, written and audio, produced by NPR’s *Planet Money* program that help to explain the causes and consequences of the recession.

*The Story of Broke*

By Annie Leonard and the Story of Stuff Project

[youtube.com/watch?v=G49q6uPcwY8](http://youtube.com/watch?v=G49q6uPcwY8)

A video op-ed claiming that the United States is not as broke as some politicians and business leaders would have us believe, and suggestions for how to address the issue.

*The State of Working America*. The Economic Policy Institute.

[stateofworkingamerica.org/pages/interactive#/?start=1917&end=2008](http://stateofworkingamerica.org/pages/interactive#/?start=1917&end=2008)

Interactive graphics related to the income gap.

*Teaching Economics As If People Mattered*. United for a Fair Economy

[teachingeconomics.org](http://teachingeconomics.org)

A compilation of lesson plans and teaching resources produced by United for a Fair Economy, a group advocating the idea that disproportionately concentrated wealth and power undermine the economy, corrupt democracy, deepen the racial divide, and erode communities.



## **Jamestown Polish Workers' Strike**

**(1619)**

### **Background:**

In the early 1600s, John Smith recruited workers from Poland to Virginia to produce glassware, turpentine, and tar in Jamestown. When the colony held its first elections, the governor refused to let Polish workers vote. The colonial workers responded by refusing to work unless they were given the right to vote. Under this pressure, the General Assembly of Virginia reversed the governor's decision. The colonial leaders feared the loss of income and labor and worried that the colony might gain a reputation for not welcoming other non-English settlers, especially skilled craftsmen. This strike is the first recorded strike in U.S. history.

### **Role:**

You are Tomasz, a middle-aged man who was born in Poland but moved to Virginia in 1608 after John Smith recruited you to join the second ship of colonists to land in Jamestown. You have been working as a highly skilled glassblower and are proud of the glassware being exported back to Europe for sale to support the colony. You were furious that the governor proclaimed that non-English workers could not vote. You helped to organize the strike that changed the governor's mind.

## **Pennsylvania Mutiny**

**(1783)**

### **Background:**

Starting in 1781, the Congress of the Confederation (what Congress was called before independence in 1783) held their meetings at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. After the war ended, Congress received a message from soldiers in the Continental Army stationed in Philadelphia. They demanded payment for their services during the Revolutionary War and threatened to take action if their complaints were not addressed. Congress ignored their message. Two days later, a group of about 80 soldiers left their post at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to join soldiers stationed at the city barracks. The group of approximately 500 men had control over the weapons and ammunitions depot. The next morning, as many as 400 soldiers marched on Independence Hall with demands for payment. They blocked the door and initially refused to allow the delegates to leave. Alexander Hamilton, then a delegate from New York, persuaded the soldiers to allow Congress to meet later to address their concerns, which the soldiers approved. That evening, a small Congressional committee headed by Hamilton met in secret to draft a message to the Pennsylvania Council, asking them to protect Congress from the mutineers. The council said they would not be willing to protect Congress, so Hamilton and the other members left Philadelphia that day for Princeton, New Jersey. Ultimately, the new Congress would decide to build the nation's capital city in a "federal district" that would not have to rely on any state for protection. This led to the construction of Washington, D.C.

### **Role:**

You are Samuel, a 19-year-old soldier from a German immigrant family in Pennsylvania who fought in the Revolutionary War. You were motivated to join the army somewhat by boredom and somewhat by a belief that the colonies should be independent from British rule. You fought bravely in several skirmishes and battles and put up with poor rations throughout the war. You can't believe the government won't pay your wages. What had you been fighting for? Marching on Philadelphia and barring those men in Independence Hall may be extreme, but they were not going to listen otherwise. Instead of facing you and paying you, however, they just fled to another city.

## **Journeyman Strike/*Commonwealth vs. Pullis***

**(1806)**

### **Background:**

In 1794, Philadelphia shoemakers organized the “Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers” (the name came from the cordovan leather they worked with) in an effort to secure stable wages. Through 1804, the journeymen received moderate wage increases for their shoemaking labor. In 1805, the union struck for higher wages but the strike collapsed after the union leaders were indicted for the crime of conspiracy. Eight of them went to trial, accused of conspiring to increase their pay rates after leading an unsuccessful strike for higher wages (*Commonwealth vs. Pullis*). The prosecution argued that the workers were “transitory, irresponsible, and dangerous” and brought witnesses who testified that the defendants had used violent tactics to intimidate them into joining the union. After a three-day trial, the jury found the defendants guilty of conspiring to impose membership. The union went bankrupt. The defendants were fined \$8 each (one week's wages) and made to pay the costs of the lawsuit. Because of this court case, unions and strikes were declared illegal until another court case in 1842, which permitted unionization if there was no coercion or violence as a result of the strikes. Full legalization for unions would not come until the 1930s.

### **Role:**

You are John, a shoemaker from a poor, white family in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—the young nation’s capital city while Washington, D.C. was being built. You are a fan of Thomas Jefferson and have read many of his writings about liberty and dignity. You believe that pursuit of happiness includes the ability to participate in the economy as much as wealthier people do. The only way for you to have equal power is to organize with your fellow shoemakers to demand better wages. You resent that your employers called you “transitory, irresponsible, and dangerous” during the trial and are incredibly frustrated that unions and strikes are illegal. How will you ever have an equal voice if you cannot band together with other workers?

## Lowell Mill Strikes

(1834, 1836)

### **Background:**

To find workers for their textile mills, the textile companies recruited young women from New England towns and farms. This was often the women's first chance to have some economic and social independence. Once they started their job, they moved into company-sponsored boardinghouses with strict rules and curfews. In response to a severe economic depression and higher costs of living, the board of directors of the textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, proposed a 15 percent reduction in wages—\$2/week for 17-hour workdays. The workers "turned out" (went on strike) and withdrew their savings from the company bank in protest. Within days, the girls either had left town or returned to work and the strike failed. Two years later, however, the factory owners proposed several rent hikes to be paid by the textile workers living in the boardinghouses. The women immediately organized another strike. This time, more than 1,500 workers participated. Unlike the first strike, there was enormous community support for the textile workers. In addition, the workers' actions inspired similar strikes in Boston and Philadelphia. The "turn-out" persisted for weeks and the company eventually retracted the rent hike. Speeches that the workers made during the strike mark the first time that women had spoken publicly in Lowell.

### **Role:**

You are Harriet Hanson Robinson, an 11-year old white girl who got a job in the mills to help support your family. You participated in the 1836 strike. Your mother was fired from her job as an act of revenge against you for your actions. When you were older, you became a writer and an activist for women's right to vote. In your later years, you wrote about your experiences in the mills: "When the day came on which the girls were to turn out, those in the upper rooms started first, and so many of them left that our mill was at once shut down. Then, when the girls in my room stood irresolute, uncertain what to do, asking each other, 'Would you?' or 'Shall we turn out?' and not one of them having the courage to lead off, I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead, saying, with childish bravado, 'I don't care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether any one else does or not'; and I marched out, and was followed by the others."

## **Tompkins Square Riot**

**(1874)**

### **Background:**

In 1873, a severe economic depression began that lasted for several years. Workers' movements throughout the United States made demands of the government to help ease the strain of the depression. They rejected offers of charity and instead asked for government-funded public works programs that would provide jobs for the thousands of unemployed. City officials in New York City refused to meet with one group made up mostly of German immigrants. In response, the group organized. More than 7,000 workers gathered at one of the demonstrations—the largest New York City had ever seen. They did not know their permit to assemble had been revoked until 1,600 policemen surrounded them. Mounted police charged the crowd, beating men, women, and children with clubs and arresting hundreds. Some of the protesters fought back. The unemployed movement lost much momentum after the riot. Efforts to organize another march did not work. In the years that followed, police harassed political groups labeled as “radical” or “communist” in New York City and evicted them from their meeting places for many years to come.

### **Role:**

You are Gustav. You immigrated from Germany to the United States five years ago, after the revolutions of 1848 in Europe. Although you are a poor worker in the United States, in Germany you worked as a newspaper journalist. To learn English, you had been working at a printing press, setting type for a local newspaper in New York City. You were laid off by the paper over a year ago and have struggled to find work. You participated in the Tompkins Square protests and were severely beaten by the police. Now you are unemployed and injured with no money to seek medical help. You are so angry that you decided to join a political group with ideas for organizing stronger workers' unions—that group has been harassed by the police, too. You wonder if it was worth it to come to this country.

## Great Railroad Strike

(1877)

### **Background:**

In the early 1870s, the United States entered into a deep recession. The booming investment bubble in railroad construction burst with the collapse of the banks—the New York Stock Exchange closed for 10 days, credit dried up, foreclosures were rampant, and unemployment was 14 percent. A bitter presidential election and a contentious federal bailout for the large banks fueled antagonism between workers and the leaders of industry. The Great Railroad Strike started on July 14 in Martinsburg, West Virginia, in response to the cutting of wages and hours for the second time in a year by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The strike spread to Baltimore, Chicago, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and San Francisco, where workers took over the railroad switches to stop passenger and freight traffic. In Baltimore, the militia fired into an angry crowd, killing 10 people. This sparked outrage among the workers, who began to riot. President Hayes sent federal troops and the U.S. Marines to Baltimore to restore order. In Pittsburgh, the National Guard bayoneted and fired on rock-throwing strikers, killing 20 people (including women and children). This infuriated the strikers, who set fires that razed 39 buildings and destroyed 104 locomotives and more than 1,200 freight and passenger cars. After over a month of constant rioting and bloodshed, President Hayes sent in federal troops to end the strikes. These troops suppressed strike after strike until, approximately 45 days after it had started, the strike ended. The president and much of the national press blamed communists and German immigrants for inciting the riots. As a result, states formed new militia units and constructed National Guard armories in a number of cities. Unions, however, also became better organized, which would lead to an increased number of strikes in the late 19th century.

### **Role:**

You are Frederick, the son of German immigrants and a coal miner supplying the B&O railroad. After having your pay cut twice in one year, you decided to join the strikes. You were shot and injured in Pittsburgh—militiamen killed two of your friends. You could not believe that the president supported this and that your own country's soldiers were firing on you. They may have stopped this round of strikes, but you have sworn to become a dedicated member of the union.

## Haymarket Riot

(1877)

### **Background:**

On Sat., May 1, 1877, rallies were held throughout the United States in support of an eight-hour workday. There were more than 10,000 demonstrators in New York City, Detroit, and Milwaukee, with estimates of between 300,000 and 500,000 people protesting nationwide. The movement's center was in Chicago, where an estimated 80,000 people marched in support of local McCormick reaper factory workers who had gone on strike. Some of the protestors surged the gates of the factory to confront strikebreakers; police shot into the crowd and killed two workers. At the end of an otherwise peaceful rally a few days later, an unknown person threw dynamite at police. The bomb blast and ensuing gunfire resulted in the deaths of eight police officers, mostly from friendly fire, and an unknown number of civilians. In the internationally publicized legal proceedings that followed, eight anarchists were tried for murder. Four men were convicted and executed, and one committed suicide in prison, although the prosecution conceded that none of the defendants had thrown the bomb. The trial is considered one of the worst miscarriages of justice in U.S. history. The Haymarket Affair is cited as the origin of May Day celebrations around the world in support of labor. Despite initial setbacks, it also helped spark legislation protecting the eight-hour workday for many industries in later decades.

Source: [illinoislaborhistory.org/haymarket/the-story-of-the-haymarket-affair.html](http://illinoislaborhistory.org/haymarket/the-story-of-the-haymarket-affair.html)

### **Role:**

You are Lucy Parsons, a politically active anarchist and the wife of one of the men accused of murder during the Haymarket Riot. You were born into slavery in Texas; your parents are of Mexican, African American, and Native American ancestry. After moving to Chicago, you and your husband became active organizers on behalf of the labor movement as well as for women's rights and the homeless—you were one of the great orators participating in the Chicago protests. Your husband's arrest and execution only strengthened your resolve to speak out for workers. You went on to help found the International Workers of the World, continued to give speeches, and worked tirelessly for equality throughout the rest of your life.

## **Bay View Massacre**

**(1886)**

### **Background:**

The Bay View Massacre began on Sat., May 1, 1886. Nearly 7,000 building trades workers had joined with 5,000 Polish laborers organizing at St. Stanislaus Catholic Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to strike against their employers. They were demanding an eight-hour workday. By Monday, these numbers had increased to more than 14,000 workers, who gathered at the Milwaukee Iron Company rolling mill in Bay View. Under order from Republican Gov. Jeremiah Rusk to "shoot to kill" any strikers who attempted to enter, 250 National Guard soldiers met the protesters. Workers camped in the nearby fields. The Kosciuszko Militia arrived by May 4. Early the next day, the crowd (including women and children) approached the mill and the soldiers opened fire. More than 15 people died as a result, including a 13-year-old boy. Several more sustained injuries during the protest. An inquiry into the incident praised the guards' actions and sentenced several Polish workers to months of hard labor as punishment for their participation. After the city newspaper reported that the businesses had paid the militia for their actions, an outpouring of public sympathy for the strikers helped to elect several Socialist Party members to county and city government, including the mayor of Milwaukee. The Knights of Labor, the Catholic group that supported the protests, lost its official affiliation with the Catholic Church and joined with other unions to form the American Federation of Labor.

Source: [wisconsinlaborhistory.org/resources/bay-view](http://wisconsinlaborhistory.org/resources/bay-view)

### **Role:**

You are Paul Grottkau, a Prussian immigrant to the Midwest who was the editor of a socialist German language newspaper in Chicago. You moved to Milwaukee and ran a radical newspaper there, participating in the leadership of several strikes, including the Bay View Massacre. You supported militant labor organizations as the best way to fight back against the power of the wealthy elite. Because of your involvement in the strike, you were arrested, convicted, and spent six weeks in prison.



## Thibodaux Massacre

(1887)

### Background:

On Nov. 1, 1887, workers began a three-week sugar strike against sugar cane plantations in Louisiana. The national Knights of Labor organization, which had established a local unit in Shreveport the preceding year, helped lead the strike. Every harvest season since 1880, there had been some labor action against the statewide Louisiana Sugar Planters Association (LSPA). The 1887 strike was the largest, with a force numbering about 10,000 workers, most of whom were African American. In October, the strikers delivered demands to the LSPA that included an increase in wages to \$1.25 a day, biweekly payments, and payment in actual money instead of the "pasteboard tickets" redeemable only at company stores. The LSPA ignored the workers' demands, and the strike began. The workers planned the strike to coincide with the critical "rolling period" of the crop, which threatened the entire sugar cane harvest for the year. The planters appealed to Louisiana Gov. McEnery, a planter and former slaveholder. McEnery declared the strike a race riot and called out 10 infantry companies and an artillery company of the state militia to end it. He declared martial law and forbade African Americans from leaving or entering the city without a pass. The displaced workers and their families found shelter among supportive community members within Thibodaux, triggering three days of violence in which anywhere from 35 to 300 of the unresisting strikers and their families were executed in town and in the surroundings woods and swamps (reports varied widely in the white and African American presses). Another attempt to organize sugar workers would not happen until the 1950s.

### Source:

[books.google.com/books?id=zEWSZ81Bd3YC&pg=PA825&lpg=PA825&dq=Thibodaux+Massacre+1887+encyclopedia&source=bl&ots=zBS4\\_4r0DS&sig=hHkdOCZ-LvHa894s3l61ZuCHumI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=dehgVJSNE4H9yQT01oG4DQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Thibodaux%20Massacre%201887%20encyclopedia&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=zEWSZ81Bd3YC&pg=PA825&lpg=PA825&dq=Thibodaux+Massacre+1887+encyclopedia&source=bl&ots=zBS4_4r0DS&sig=hHkdOCZ-LvHa894s3l61ZuCHumI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=dehgVJSNE4H9yQT01oG4DQ&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Thibodaux%20Massacre%201887%20encyclopedia&f=false)

### Role:

You are Henry, an African American sugar plantation worker who participated in the protests with your fellow workers—both black and white. It seemed that the movement had momentum and that changes could finally be made, but you are in shock at what has happened. Instead of improving the working conditions, the governor has drummed up rumors of a race riot and incited local whites to round up the protestors and shoot them. You managed to escape through the swamp and met up with a few other survivors, but have not heard from any of your family in days.

## **The Homestead Strike**

**(1892)**

### **Background:**

This strike of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers against the Carnegie Steel Company erupted over the company's attempts to break the union. Henry Frick, who Andrew Carnegie hired to be in charge of his Pennsylvania steel mills, was determined to intimidate workers by cutting wages by 18 percent, hiring private security guards, and building a 12-foot high fence around the factory with holes for rifles. The union went on strike. Carnegie Steel used his Pinkerton security guards to escort "scabs" (strikebreakers) into the mill. An armed battle erupted between 300 guards and nearly 10,000 workers in which several guards and strikers were killed. Federal troops eventually quelled the violence and 160 workers were arrested on charges of murder and assault. Although they were acquitted, the strike ended in defeat for the union members. Homestead is remembered as an example of organized armed violence between strikers and strikebreakers.

Source: [pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/peopleevents/pande04.html](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carnegie/peopleevents/pande04.html)

### **Role:**

You are Hugh, a white man who had been out of work for almost a year when the strike started. When you heard about what was going on in Carnegie's steel mills, you opposed the intimidation tactics Frick was using. When you read an advertisement for workers to replace the strikers, however, you applied for the job. You knew it might get violent and you knew your friends who were on strike would never forgive you for becoming a "scab," but you needed the money for your family. One of your neighbors was killed in the strike, but you did not go to the funeral because you knew you would not be welcome. You are frustrated about the situation, but think that the employers are just too powerful and that the union cannot win. You would rather have some pay than no pay at all.

## **The Pullman Strike**

**(1893-1894)**

### **Background:**

In the late 1800s, the Pullman Palace Car Company manufactured exclusive luxury train cars—the private jets of their era. A recession led to decreased demand for Pullman luxury cars and lowered wages for its workers, many of whom lived in Pullman Town, where the company controlled the rent—and raised it as they cut wages. As a result, a strike erupted among Pullman workers and quickly spread to other railroad workers through the American Railway Union, headed by Eugene V. Debs. The strikers refused to run trains containing Pullman cars. Within days, 125,000 railroad workers quit their jobs, so the company hired strikebreakers to replace them—mostly African American men who were not confident that a union known for being racist would protect them. Some of the strikers burned and looted railroad cars and buildings. With the escalation of violence, President Grover Cleveland called in 12,000 federal troops, along with United States Marshals, to quell the strike, under the pretense of reinstating the delivery of federal mail. Soldiers killed 13 strikers and wounded an additional 57 before the strike was ended. The workers lost (although they would have a stronger union, led by A. Philip Randolph, in the 1930s). In the years that followed, a national commission forced the Pullman Company to give up ownership of Pullman Town and President Cleveland signed Labor Day into law in an attempt to appease workers.

Source: [encyclopedia.com/topic/Pullman\\_strike.aspx](http://encyclopedia.com/topic/Pullman_strike.aspx)

### **Role:**

You are Eugene Debs, the son of French immigrants, born in Indiana. As a Democratic member of the Indiana General Assembly, you had worked closely with unions and helped to form the American Railway Union. You helped to organize the Pullman strike and were arrested and imprisoned for six months for failing to obey an order to stop striking, although your lawyer (famed civil rights activist Clarence Darrow) tried to get you acquitted. While in prison, you read the works of Karl Marx and became a socialist who went on to help found the International Workers of the World and presided over the strongest Socialist Party the United States has ever seen. You would run for president five times and were a noted anti-war and labor activist.

## **Cripple Creek Miners Strike**

**(1894)**

### **Background:**

In 1893, a panic caused the price of silver to crash. Former silver miners flooded gold mines to find work. As a result, mine owners demanded longer hours for less pay and assigned miners to riskier work. In response, many of the miners in the Cripple Creek, Colorado, area joined a miners' union, the Western Federation of Miners, and went on strike in 1894. The mine owners hired strikebreakers and a private police force to protect them. The miners found out, started to arm themselves, and tried to recruit strikebreakers to their side (and harassed them if they declined). The strikers blew up one of the mines and some of the railroad cars when the police escorted strikebreakers to the site. Some drunken strikers got into fights with the militia. In a move rare in U.S. history, Gov. Davis Waite sent the National Guard to protect the miners from anti-union violence and declared the mine owners' police force to be illegal. He then brokered a deal in which the mine owners agreed not to retaliate against any miner who had taken part in the strike, and the miners agreed not to harass any nonunion worker who remained employed in the mines. The mine owners' police force remained intact, however. They arrested and imprisoned hundreds of citizens without cause, seized many Cripple Creek residents on the street, and pulled them from their homes to beat them. Waite threatened to declare martial law against the private militia, which was then disbanded. Although hundreds of union workers were arrested, only a few were convicted of any charges and they were pardoned by the governor. Dozens of unions in other industries were organized as a result of the successful strike. Future strikes were less successful and lost support because of violence by the workers in what would be called the "Colorado Labor Wars." The next governor called out the state militia against the union and broke the union's power in Colorado.

Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cripple\\_Creek\\_miners'\\_strike\\_of\\_1894](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cripple_Creek_miners'_strike_of_1894)

### **Role:**

You are Junius J. Johnson, a leader of the strike. A former West Point cadet who became a miner in Colorado, you organized the workers as if they were troops and defended the strike against the armed militias sent by the mine owners. You punished the drunken miners who started trouble and kept order among the men so that the strike did not become more violent. Without your help, Gov. Waite could not have send troops to defend the strikers.

## The Newsboys Strike

(1899)

### **Background:**

Newspaper boys, or “newsies,” were the main distributors of newspapers to the general public from the mid-19th to the early 20th century in the United States. They were young kids from very poor families and were often orphaned or homeless. The newsies were not employees of the papers—they would buy bundles of the newspapers early in the morning from the publishers and then sell them on the streets for more money to make a profit. In July 1899, a large number of New York City newsboys refused to distribute the papers of Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the *World*, and William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the *Journal*, after they refused to abolish a price increase of newsie bundles. The strikers demonstrated across the Brooklyn Bridge for several days, effectively bringing traffic to a standstill, along with news distribution for most New England cities. Several rallies drew more than 5,000 newsboys, complete with charismatic speeches by strike leader Kid Blink. The strike lasted two weeks and was successful in increasing the amount of money the newsboys received for their work. Although Hearst refused to lower prices, he did agree to buy back unsold papers and the strike was ended.

Source: [nypl.org/blog/2012/05/25/extra-extra-read-all-about-newsboys-strike-1899](http://nypl.org/blog/2012/05/25/extra-extra-read-all-about-newsboys-strike-1899)

### **Role:**

You are Antonio, a 12-year old orphan living on the streets after your parents died. They had moved you to the United States for a new life from Italy when you were just a baby. There are more than 10,000 other homeless kids like you who make money by selling newspapers on street corners. You are one of the best—you’ve got a lot a charm and can yell “Extra! Extra!” louder than anybody. You joined up with your friend Kid to stop the papers from being sold and are proud that, even though you are just street kids, you were able to get the infamous Hearst to agree to your demands.

## **The Uprising of 20,000**

**(1909-1910)**

### **Background:**

The New York shirtwaist strike of 1909, also known as the Uprising of the 20,000, was a labor strike involving Jewish women (many immigrants from Europe) working in New York shirtwaist (blouse) factories. It was the largest strike of women at that point in U.S. history. With support from the National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL), the strike began in November 1909. In collusion with the police, thugs were hired to harass the picketers. Men from related factories joined the strike in order to completely shut down work in the garment industry. In February 1910, the NWTUL settled with the factory owners with small gains in improved wages, working conditions, hours, and some protections against sexual harassment. Throughout the strike, the union saw increased membership and proved to male union leaders that women were highly organized and capable activists. The strike, however, was followed a year later by the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, which exposed the continued plight of immigrant women working in dangerous and difficult conditions. It was the deadliest disaster in the history of the city of New York until 9/11 and resulted in the fourth highest loss of life from an industrial accident in U.S. history. Most of the victims were recent immigrant women aged 16 to 23. Many of the workers could not escape the burning building because the managers had locked the doors to the stairwells and exits. People jumped from the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors. The fire led to legislation requiring improved factory safety standards and helped spur the growth of the International Ladies' Garment Union, which fought for better working conditions for sweatshop workers.

Source: [jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/uprising-of-20000-1909](http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/uprising-of-20000-1909)

### **Role:**

You are Clara Lemlich, a young émigré from Russia who worked in a garment factory. You were the leader of several strikes of shirtwaist makers and challenged the mostly male leadership of the union to organize women garment workers. You combined boldness with great charm and personal bravery (for example, you kept picketing in 1909 with several broken ribs when gangsters hired by the owners attacked the strikers). You spent the rest of your life fighting for women's suffrage and supporting unions as a member of the Communist Party: "I have listened to all the speakers, and I have no further patience for talk. I am a working girl, one of those striking against intolerable conditions. I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in generalities. What we are here for is to decide whether or not to strike. I make a motion that we go out in a general strike."

## **Bread and Roses Strike**

**(1912)**

### **Background:**

The Lawrence Textile Strike was a strike of immigrant workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts led by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). By 1900, the mechanization and deskilling of labor in the textile industry enabled factory owners to eliminate skilled workers and employ large numbers of unskilled immigrant workers, the majority of whom were women and children. Work was tedious and dangerous, and workers lived in crowded and dangerous apartment buildings, often with many families sharing each apartment. The mortality rate for children under age 6 was 50 percent. The mills and the community were divided along ethnic lines: most of the skilled jobs were held by U.S.-born workers of English, Irish, and German descent; French-Canadian, Italian, Slavic, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Syrian immigrants made up most of the unskilled workforce. Prompted by one mill owner's decision to lower wages when a new law shortening the work week went into effect, the strike spread rapidly through the town, growing to more than 20,000 workers at nearly every mill within a week. The organizing committee, led by Polish women and socialists, arranged for its strike meetings to be translated into 25 different languages and put forward a set of demands: a 15 percent increase in wages for a 54-hour work week, double pay for overtime work, and no discrimination against workers for their strike activity. The authorities declared martial law, banned all public meetings and called out 22 more militia companies to patrol the streets. In one demonstration, police began clubbing both children and their mothers. The strike, which lasted more than two months, defied the assumptions of conservative trade unions that immigrant, largely female, and ethnically divided workers could not be organized. Initially, the strike was successful; a year later, however, the union had largely collapsed and most of the gains achieved by the workers had disappeared. The Lawrence strike is often referred to as the "Bread and Roses Strike" based on a poem written in the strikers' honor.

Source: [breadandrosescentennial.org/node/77](http://breadandrosescentennial.org/node/77)

### **Role:**

You are Lillith, a Syrian woman in her early 30s who worked in the mills doing unskilled labor because you do not speak much English. Your work is incredibly dangerous and you joined the union to fight for a better life for your family. You and your children were beaten severely, however, during the protests and you have little hope for your future.

## Paterson Silk Strike

(1913)

### **Background:**

Even after the Industrial Revolution made weaving easier with the invention of power looms, weaving silk still required highly skilled workers. Paterson, New Jersey was famous as the “Silk City” with large numbers of silk weavers who fought to maintain control over their rates of production as manufacturers demanded greater output. The silk weavers called the strike as a way of blocking an increase in loom assignments from two to four. In solidarity, the ribbon weavers and unskilled dyers’ helpers joined the 1913 strike, making it the biggest in Paterson history. Many of the silk workers had brought militant traditions of struggle with them from European textile centers and refused to accept that improved technology inevitably meant cheaper labor. With help from the International Workers of the World (IWW), Italian and Jewish women joined the traditional local leadership of male weavers. Artists and intellectuals from Greenwich Village in New York City also joined the strikers in solidarity. This included Margaret Sanger, who helped send the workers’ children to live with families in New York and New Jersey so that the strike could focus on its demands. Sanger was known for her efforts to make birth control more widely available, especially to working class people. As a result of a collaboration among artists, intellectuals, and workers, the strikers put on the “Pageant of the Paterson Strike,” a performance at Madison Square Garden to raise awareness of the strike and to raise money for the strikers. More than a thousand workers participated for an audience of over 15,000, acting out scenes from their struggles. Despite their efforts, the strikers were defeated as the companies simply outlasted the workers. Although they had shut down Paterson, kept the American Federation of Labor from undercutting the strike, and nonviolently overcame a police offensive against them, they had been unable to extend the strike to other mills in Pennsylvania. The manufacturers, victorious but frightened, held back the four-loom system for another decade. Strike supporters were torn apart as a result of the defeat, and the IWW never fully recovered.

Source: [patersongreatfalls.org/silkstrike.html](http://patersongreatfalls.org/silkstrike.html)

### **Role:**

You are Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the daughter of Irish immigrants, who was expelled from high school for giving a speech about socialism. You were a founder of the Industrial Workers of the World and of the American Civil Liberties Union, and helped to organize strikes all over the country. You were a tireless activist for women’s rights and served as chair of the American Communist Party. You said:

What is a labour victory? I maintain that it is a twofold thing. Workers must gain economic advantage, but they must also gain revolutionary spirit, in order to achieve a complete victory. For workers to gain a few cents more a day, a few minutes less a day, and go back to work with the same psychology, the same attitude toward society, is to achieve a temporary gain and not a lasting victory. For workers to go back with a class-conscious spirit, with an organized and determined attitude toward society means that, even if they have made no economic gain, they have the possibility of gaining in the future.



## **Ludlow Massacre**

**(1914)**

### **Background:**

Eleven thousand miners who worked for the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel & Iron Corporation went on strike after the murder of one of their organizers. Their union, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), demanded the end of paying by the amount of material mined rather than the work involved in the construction of the mines. This practice led to hastily constructed mines with few precautions taken to ensure the miners' safety—many died of suffocation, shaft wall collapses, and mine explosions. When the strike began, strikers and their families were evicted from company housing, so the union set up tent camps to house them through the cold winter, often with pits underneath where their families could sleep to avoid sniper fire from anti-union thugs sent by the company. The company hired strikebreakers from immigrant groups with different languages to prevent communication. The National Guard, initially welcomed by the strikers, turned against them. Mining companies were allowed to form their own militia out of company guards in National Guard uniforms. On April 20, the guards began a firefight that ended with the burning of the tent camp and armed conflict that left 32 women and children dead and 13 strikers killed. Violence escalated to an all out guerrilla war between strikers and guards, which finally ended when President Wilson called in federal troops. It was one of the deadliest strikes in U.S. history. The strike ended when the union ran out of funds to support the striking workers. The strikers received none of their demands. In later years, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the owner of many of the mines, agreed to safety reforms and better conditions in the company towns.

Source: [zinnedproject.org/materials/ludlow-massacre/](http://zinnedproject.org/materials/ludlow-massacre/)

### **Role:**

You are Louis Tikas, a Greek immigrant who was the main labor organizer at the Ludlow camp. You were shot at during a walk-out in 1910, but managed to escape the company detectives. You were not so lucky in 1914: you were shot and killed during the Ludlow Massacre after meeting with the militia major in response to allegations that the camp was holding a man against his will. You hope that your life was not lost in vain.

## **“Bloody Harlan” or Harlan County War**

**(1931)**

### **Background:**

In 1931, a makeshift union of Kentucky coal miners hurt by the Great Depression and a decreased demand for coal started marching on the courthouse in Harlan County. Fifteen hundred miners went on strike protesting low wages, dangerous working conditions, and poor living conditions in the company towns. The mine owners blacklisted members of the union from working in the mines and hired local deputies and private security guards to attack organizers' homes. On the other side, union members attacked strikebreakers. There was so much violence, the area became known as “Bloody Harlan County.” Strikes and marches continued off and on for years without many victories for the unions, although they became the inspiration for future strikes in the 1970s.

Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlan\\_County\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlan_County_War)

### **Role:**

You are Florence Reece, the wife of one of the strikers and union organizers, Sam Reece. In an attempt to intimidate your family, the sheriff and company guards shot at your house while you and your children were inside (Sam had been warned they were coming and escaped). During the attack, you wrote the lyrics to “Which Side Are You On?” which became a popular ballad of the labor movement.

### **Which Side Are You On?**

CHORUS: Which side are you on? (4x)

My daddy was a miner/And I'm a miner's son/And I'll stick with the union/"Til every battle's won [Chorus]

They say in Harlan County/There are no neutrals there/You'll either be a union man/Or a thug for J.H. Blair [Chorus]

Oh workers can you stand it?/Oh tell me how you can/Will you be a lousy scab/Or will you be a man? [Chorus]

Don't scab for the bosses/Don't listen to their lies/Us poor folks haven't got a chance/Unless we organize [Chorus]

## **The Bonus Army**

**(1931)**

### **Background:**

For their service in World War I, returning soldiers were promised a cash bonus that would not be paid until 1945. When the Great Depression struck, a group of veterans from Portland, Oregon, decided to march on Washington to demand their payment early. In the spring of 1932, the group moved eastward, generating interest along the way so that almost 20,000 vets and their families joined them. They set up a tent camp near present-day Anacostia and were visited by many supportive military figures. This camp was elaborate with streets, a library, barbershops, and a post office. They enacted rules: no alcohol, no fighting, no panhandling, and no communists. The House of Representatives voted to pay them, but the Senate rejected the bill. President Hoover's attorney general ordered them removed and sent Washington, D.C., police. The policemen shot and killed two camp members. The campers resisted removal, but were soon forced out by Douglas MacArthur, using tanks and cavalry units. Because MacArthur believed the protest was a communist attempt to overthrow the government, he ordered his men to burn the tents and use tear gas on the veterans to evict them even after the president ordered him to stop. Hoover lost the 1932 election to Franklin Roosevelt, who set up a camp in Virginia for the protestors and oversaw the payment of bonuses by 1936. This also helped lead to the G.I. Bill, passed in 1944 to help veterans transition to civilian life.

Source: [npr.org/2011/11/11/142224795/the-bonus-army-how-a-protest-led-to-the-gi-bill](http://npr.org/2011/11/11/142224795/the-bonus-army-how-a-protest-led-to-the-gi-bill)

### **Role:**

You are William, a man from Illinois who fought in the trenches during World War I. You lost your butcher shop in the Great Depression and could find no work anywhere else. With nothing to lose, you joined the marches to Washington, D.C., to demand your bonus. Living in the camps actually was better than living on the streets in Chicago—you enjoyed the camaraderie of being with your fellow veterans and their families, and appreciated the generosity of everyone living in the camp. You never thought you'd see the day when your own army would attack you. You became even more determined to get your bonus. You would also work hard to make sure that Franklin Delano Roosevelt would get elected president.

## **Flint Sit-down Strike**

**(1936-1937)**

### **Background:**

The United Auto Workers (UAW) held its first convention in 1936. Shortly thereafter, the union decided it could organize the automobile industry only by going after its biggest and most powerful employer, General Motors Corporation (GM). They focused on GM's production facility in Flint, Michigan. Although organizing was difficult due to a network of spies reporting to management, the strike to make the union the official bargaining agent for the workers began in late December. In a conventional strike, union members leave the factory to prevent the employer from operating it and discourage other employees (or hired strikebreakers called "scabs") from entering. In a "sit-down" strike, however, the workers physically occupy the plant, keeping management and others out. The Flint sit-down strikers did just that, electing their own "mayor" and other civic officials to maintain the plant throughout the strike. The union kept up a regular supply of food to the strikers inside while sympathizers marched in support out front. When police attempted to enter the plant on January 11, the strikers turned the fire hoses on the police while pelting them with car parts. Meanwhile, members of the women's branch of the union broke windows in the plant to give strikers some relief from the tear gas the police used against them. The police made several charges, but withdrew after six hours. Gov. Murphy sent in the U.S. National Guard, not to evict the strikers, but to protect them from the police and corporate strikebreakers. GM management agreed to acknowledge the UAW as the authorized negotiating agent for the workers. In the next year, the UAW saw its membership grow from 30,000 to 500,000 members. The Flint Sit-Down Striker is nicknamed the "strike heard 'round the world."

### **Role:**

You are John L. Lewis, born in Iowa and the son of Welsh immigrants. You are the president of the United Mine Workers of America, who helped to found the Congress of Industrial Organizations (the CIO), which brought together workers in the auto, electrical equipment, glass, rubber, meat, and steel industries, and was racially integrated. The other large U.S. union federation, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was segregated. You led negotiations on behalf of the Flint strikers and won collective bargaining contracts for them in negotiations with President Roosevelt, the governor of Michigan, and GM executives. You were a powerful labor leader in the 1930s, but you lost a lot of public support by encouraging strikes during WWII, arguing with the AFL, and hiring your friends and family for high-paying jobs in union leadership.

## Hawai'i Sugar Strike

(1946)

### **Background:**

For decades, the islands of Hawai'i had been dominated by a privately owned plantation system where more than 100,000 people, one-fifth of the population, lived and worked. Five elite corporations controlled the plantations and nearly every other major economic activity in Hawai'i, which meant that a few wealthy families through a network of intermarriages and stock ownership had incredible power. While the plantation owners grew wealthy from the \$160 million annual sugar and pineapple crop, workers earned only \$.24/hour. The owners prevented unionization by recruiting different nationalities (Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Portuguese) and pitting them against each other by housing them in separate plantation camps. They created workers' dependency by forcing employees to use plantation-controlled stores, housing, medical clinics, and social facilities. On Sept. 1, 1946, a multi-ethnic group of 28,000 sugar workers from 33 plantations and 47,000 of their family members went on strike with the support of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. A year later, the struggle spread to involve 20,000 pineapple workers and their family members. The success of the strike built upon the support of workers and their families, who organized soup kitchens, morale committees with talent nights and dances, community gardens, hunting and fishing parties, and "bumming committees" to solicit donations from stores and other supporters. Despite intense efforts on behalf of the "Big Five" to break the strike and accuse the strikers of communism, the strike helped end paternalistic labor relations dating back to the 19th century and won successive victories for medical care, wage increases, and shorter hours through other strikes in the 1950s.

Source: [hawaii.edu/uhwo/clear/home/1946.html](http://hawaii.edu/uhwo/clear/home/1946.html)

### **Role:**

You are Leilani, a 16-year old Hawaiian whose family has lived in Oahu as far back as anyone can remember. For generations, your family members have tried to organize against the plantation owners' exploitation of labor. You are incredibly proud of your parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who have gone on strike and are happy to be able to help them by preparing food and picketing.

## United Farm Workers Strike

(1968)

### **Background:**

On Sept. 8, 1965, Filipino American grape workers went on strike in California's Central Valley to protest low pay and poor working conditions. They were joined by the National Farm Workers Association, whose leaders, Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, were developing an organizing model influenced by the nonviolent, direct action, multiracial approach of Martin Luther King Jr. In 1965, the group successfully fought for better pay and conditions for grape pickers. Chavez then led a more than 300 mile march to the California state capital to encourage a U.S. grape boycott. He went on a 25-day hunger strike. In the early 1970s, the United Farm Workers organized strikes and boycotts—including the Salad Bowl strike, the largest farm worker strike in U.S. history—for higher wages, better working conditions, and the right to organize for farm workers working for grape and lettuce growers. Millions of Americans across the country participated in the boycott by refusing to buy grapes until conditions and wages improved for the workers. The union won passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act, which gave collective bargaining rights to farm workers.

Source: [ufw.org/\\_board.php?mode=view&b\\_code=cc\\_his\\_research&b\\_no=10482](http://ufw.org/_board.php?mode=view&b_code=cc_his_research&b_no=10482)

### **Role:**

You are Cesar Chavez, a Mexican-American labor leader and civil rights activist. You have been a farmworker since you were a young child. You co-founded the United Farm Workers with Dolores Huerta and led the successful fight against Delano, California, grape farm owners. You enlisted the help of people across the United States to boycott grapes and other fruits and vegetables to support the farmworkers. You also fasted for weeks at a time to draw attention to the cause and to model civil disobedience. Although some people criticize you for your opposition to undocumented workers and rifts between the Filipino and Mexican-American community, you are remembered as a great grassroots organizer whose slogan "*Sí, se puede!*" ("Yes, it can be done!") is still used today.

## **Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike**

**(1968)**

### **Background:**

On Feb. 12, 1968, citing years of poor treatment, discrimination, dangerous working conditions, work-related deaths, and no recognition of their union, nearly 1,000 African American sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, walked off the job, with the support of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. Over the next two months, the strike grew into a major civil rights struggle, attracting the attention of the national news media. Local clergy members and community leaders organized boycotts and civil disobedience—they even invited Martin Luther King Jr. to lead a nonviolent demonstration in Memphis. On March 29, over 5,000 demonstrators marched with signs that said “I Am A Man.” Some protesters began breaking storefront windows and looting, and police killed a black teenager as they moved in to enforce a curfew. The National Guard moved in. King returned two months later to take part in mass meetings and peaceful action. He gave his last public speech before being assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968. President Johnson helped to end strike ended a week later, with a settlement that included union recognition and wage increases, although additional strikes had to be threatened to force the city of Memphis to honor its agreements.

Source: [crdl.usg.edu/events/memphis\\_sanitation\\_strike/](http://crdl.usg.edu/events/memphis_sanitation_strike/)

### **Role:**

You are Bayard Rustin, an African American born in Pennsylvania and raised by his grandparents, who were active members of the NAACP. After observing Gandhi’s nonviolent movement in India, you were an early proponent of non-violence to end segregation in the United States. You helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Martin Luther King Jr. and helped organize the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 with African American labor leader A. Philip Randolph. You believe strongly that the Civil Rights Movement must join the labor movement in order to move from “protest to politics” and helped the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations to integrate, which is what led to your involvement in the Memphis sanitation workers strike. In the 1970s, you became more vocal about gay rights due to your mistreatment as a gay man in the Civil Rights Movement and labor movement communities, and were an outspoken anti-war activist.

## **Postal Workers Strike**

**(1970)**

### **Background:**

The first strike against the federal government and the first postal stoppage in the United States began in New York with a walkout of letter carriers on March 18, 1970. This was a “wildcat” strike—one that was not endorsed by the workers’ official national union leadership. Many of the letter carriers were African American because the postal service had been one of the first civil services to stop asking for a photograph as part of the job application; the mandatory photograph was a way of enforcing racial discrimination. Striking postal workers said that wages were very low, benefits poor, working conditions unhealthy and unsafe, and they had no right to collective bargaining. Although members of Congress gave themselves a 41 percent raise, many postal workers were eligible for welfare. Informal attempts by workers to obtain higher pay and better working conditions had proven fruitless. At its height, more than 200,000 out of 750,000 postal employees joined the strike in more than 100 cities, stopping mail service entirely in New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit. President Richard Nixon declared a state of emergency and assigned the National Guard to take over work at city post offices. Politicians and mainstream media framed the strike as “urban lawlessness,” but public opinion generally favored the strikers. The strike ended after two weeks when newspaper accounts showed confused soldiers overwhelmed by the workload. The postal workers received most of the concessions they sought, including the right to collectively bargain with the passage of the Postal Reorganization Act.

### **Role:**

You are Bernice, a 28-year-old African American letter carrier born and raised in New York City. You work hard and are good at what you do—you know you provide an important service to your community and are frustrated that your pay is so low that you qualify for food stamps. You were willing to walk out and disobey the union’s decision not to strike because you do not believe that official negotiations will get anything done. You are disappointed in your national leadership for not having the courage to declare a strike.



## **Air Traffic Controllers Strike**

**(1981)**

### **Background:**

Although it was illegal for government workers to do so, 13,000 federal air traffic controllers across the United States went on strike in 1981 to reduce their work week from 40 to 32 hours, to increase pay, and to improve working conditions. They believed their working conditions were leading to unsafe flying conditions. Despite the fact that the Professional Air Traffic Controllers' Organization (PATCO) had endorsed President Ronald Reagan during his election campaign, he issued a back-to-work order declaring that the strike was illegal. The vast majority of the strikers refused to return to work. Reagan fired the striking workers rather than meet their demands and banned them from federal service for life. The Federal Aviation Administration had initially claimed that staffing levels would be restored within two years; however, it would take closer to 10 years before the overall staffing levels returned to normal because it was difficult to find qualified people with the full three years of training. PATCO was decertified as the official agent representing federal air traffic controllers. The defeat of PATCO is considered one of the defining events in 20th century U.S. labor history.

Source:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional\\_Air\\_Traffic\\_Controllers\\_Organization\\_\(1968\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_Air_Traffic_Controllers_Organization_(1968))

### **Role:**

You are Jeff, a middle-aged white man who initially went on strike but decided to go back to work after the president threatened to fire everyone. You believe in PATCO's cause, but you have a family to think of and two kids you are trying to put through college. You want to support your colleagues and feel torn about your decision.

## **Justice for Janitors Campaign**

**(1990)**

### **Background:**

In 1983, an average janitor working in Los Angeles, California had an hourly wage of over \$7.00/hour and full health insurance for the janitor and his/her family. By 1986, the janitorial wages had been cut to a mere \$4.50, with health care benefits eliminated. By the late 1980s, janitors began to fight against these changes. Janitors that were members of the Service Employees International Union joined together in the Justice for Janitors campaign using militant and direct action tactics. The janitors marched and held demonstrations during the daytime for several weeks. To help their cause, many religious leaders, community leaders, and politicians joined the action of the janitors and supported their protests. During one peaceful march, 400 workers linked arms to cross street and were beaten back by 50 police officers. By the end of the strike, they had reached a contract that guaranteed at least a 22 percent raise over the next three years and full health care coverage.

### **Role:**

You are Joseph, a Catholic priest. You decided to march with the janitors and to advocate for their cause in your church because you believe that their cause is a just one. You think it is important that the church do what it can to support those who struggle against greed and who are experiencing poverty—to help the poor is one of the fundamental tenets of your faith. This may be controversial, but you are willing to use your position in the community to do what you can for these men and women who are fighting for better pay and working conditions.

## **UPS Strike**

**(1997)**

### **Background:**

UPS (a private company, as opposed to the U.S. postal service) workers were part of the Teamsters' union, which led a strike on behalf of part-time workers in 1997. About 57 percent of UPS' 185,000 employees worked part-time. These part-timers, who were less expensive for the company, made up 80 percent of new hires after 1993. At the strike's start, the company offered to advance 10,000 part-time workers into full-time jobs as other full-timers retired or quit, but would only agree to create 1,000 new full-time jobs. In the final agreement, 10,000 new full-time jobs were created over five years. The company also agreed that they would fill the majority of full-time openings with part-time UPS workers instead of hiring outside the company. The union also won a wage increase for the remaining part-time workers, improved safety measures, and increased contributions to union pension funds. The strike was successful because they nearly halted the company's profits in the two weeks they stopped working, generated public and political support, and had years to plan their negotiations and prepare a strike fund. The Teamsters' president, however, was ousted shortly afterwards because of charges of corruption. The Teamsters has a long history of rumored connections with organized crime.

Source: [pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/july-dec97/ups\\_8-19a.html](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/july-dec97/ups_8-19a.html)

### **Role:**

You are Eric. You are Native American and grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota. You started working part-time for UPS the summer after high school. You've been taking classes at the community college and want to move up in the company by getting more hours, but it seems to be taking forever. You think the company wants you to stay part-time because then they don't have to pay you as much or give you benefits. You support the union's efforts to push the company to do more for their part-time employees and are grateful to the organization for winning these victories.

## **Taco Bell Boycott**

**(2001-2005)**

### **Background:**

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) represents thousands of members, mostly of Mexican, Guatemalan, and Haitian descent, who work in Southwest Florida for large agricultural corporations. Many of these workers are migrant—they travel along the East Coast following the harvest (tomato and citrus crops)—and experience near-slavery conditions (forced labor for some and low pay for others), company town extortion, and no protection from chemicals. In 2001, the group launched the first-ever national farm worker boycott of a major fast-food company, Taco Bell, and held the company accountable for the wages and working conditions of farm workers in its tomato supply chain. The CIW argued that when major buyers such as Taco Bell leverage their volume purchasing power to demand discounts from their suppliers, they create strong downward pressure on wages and working conditions in these suppliers' operations. Over its four years, the Taco Bell boycott gained broad student, religious, labor, and community support, including the establishment of boycott committees in nearly all 50 states and a fast-growing movement to "boot the Bell" from college and high school campuses across the country. Through their "penny per pound" campaign, the CIW was able to get buyers to agree to pay one penny more per pound for tomatoes, although the farm owners refused to pass the extra money onto workers. In the years that followed, McDonald's, Burger King, Chipotle, Subway, Aramark, Sodexo, Trader Joe's, and Whole Foods signed on. Other actions include an anti-slavery campaign that fights against human trafficking in the United States.

Source: [sfalliance.org/our-history/?rq=taco%20bell](http://sfalliance.org/our-history/?rq=taco%20bell)

### **Role:**

You are Lucas Benitez, a 35-year old man who started working in the Florida fields when you were 17 after immigrating to the U.S. from Mexico to support your younger brothers and sisters. In 1996, you helped to found the CIW after one of your co-workers was beaten severely by an overseer in the field. As president of the CIW, you have drawn international attention to the plight of the workers and helped to stop two slavery rings. You have led marches, including a 200-mile march across Florida and a 10-day hunger strike in front of Taco Bell's headquarters.

## Writers Guild of America Strike

(2007-08)

### Background:

The 2007–08 Writers Strike involved several unions of film, television, and radio writers working in the United States. More than 12,000 writers joined the strike, which started on Nov. 5, 2007, and concluded on Feb. 12, 2008, and included dozens of rallies in Los Angeles and New York. The strike's goal was to address the greatly diminished monetary compensation the writers earned in comparison with the profits of the larger studios, most notably for DVD residuals and compensation for "new media" (content written for or distributed through digital technologies and the internet). They also fought for union coverage to include writers on reality TV show programming. The unions won pay hikes and the inclusion of residual profit sharing in their contracts. However, during the strike, many TV shows were cancelled and replaced with reality programming that requires less work from writers or money for pilots.

Source:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007%E2%80%9308\\_Writers\\_Guild\\_of\\_America\\_strike](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007%E2%80%9308_Writers_Guild_of_America_strike)

### Role:

You are Julie, a young Asian-American woman who got a job working for *America's Next Top Model* after graduating with a degree in communications and a couple of jobs working behind the scenes at other TV shows. Your job is Story Producer and, although people believe your show is "reality" TV, you do a lot of work to craft a narrative that will tell a story to viewers—you are basically a writer. You want to be included in the WGA union and think this fight is important as more and more TV gets labeled as reality television. Because it's much cheaper to produce than shows with highly paid actors, the company is making a lot more profit. You believe that you should have a piece of that, including content on the web and money from the never-ending reruns on cable. This is the direction that television is headed and, if you don't fight for this now, there will be no money left in it for your colleagues in the future. The executives of the production companies will reap all the benefits and you won't get your fair share.

## **NFL Lockout (2011)**

### **Background:**

In 2011, NFL team owners asked players to take an 18 percent pay cut and to play more games. They believed the players received too great a share of their profits under the old agreement. The owners also wanted to pay off debts and mortgage payments from capital improvements like new stadium construction projects before paying players. Stadiums used to be partly or wholly subsidized by taxpayers, but owners had recently been pouring much of their own money into state-of-the-art facilities. Players argued that this was not fair because they were the reason why a franchise made money in the first place and that they risked their personal health to play the game. They were also skeptical that owners were losing any money on their investments. The NFL Players Association refused to sign a contract without negotiations. This resulting lockout was the longest in the NFL's history; however, because most the lockout occurred during the off-season, it had much less effect than it would have during the regular season. Eventually the owners approved a new contract and the players returned to work.

Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011\\_NFL\\_lockout](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_NFL_lockout) and [nfllockout.com/what-is-this-lockout-about/](http://nfllockout.com/what-is-this-lockout-about/)

### **Role:**

You are Kevin, an African American player recruited to play center in the NFL from a small town in Kansas. You know you won't make as much money as the big stars, but you want to make sure that you get your piece of the pie while you are able to play. The average length of time that an athlete plays in the NFL is less than three years—that means you don't have a lot of time to make money and you aren't sure what you'll do afterwards. You left college early to get drafted, which may not have been the best decision, but you were worried about getting injured playing college ball in the NCAA. And what if you get injured now? You think the owners are just being greedy and need to share profits that you and the other players are making for the teams.

## Wisconsin Teacher Sick-Outs

(2011)

### **Background:**

In February 2011, newly elected Wisconsin governor Scott Walker passed a “budget repair” bill which included, among many other things, provisions that would increase the amount public employees paid towards their insurance, cut their pay, eliminate collective bargaining rights for public sector unions, and require them to recertify their union every year. So many protestors began testifying against the bill that the capitol was kept open 24 hours a day for several weeks to hear all of their testimony. The public sector union leadership, including the teacher union, offered to accept the pay cut and insurance rate hikes in order to maintain their right to collectively bargain. For several days during the first week, enough teachers called in sick or took personal days that schools were closed in more than two-dozen districts. Although technically not a strike, these “sick outs” were designed to draw the general public’s attention to the issues and force the government’s hand. Critics, including the governor, accused the teachers of neglecting their public duty to educate children to serve their self-interest. In addition to the teachers’ actions, thousands of workers rallied on the capitol square each weekend and in other sites across the state, culminating in an event with more than 100,000 people in attendance. Eventually, the bill passed and the unions were no longer permitted to collectively bargain their contract.

Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011\\_Wisconsin\\_protests](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Wisconsin_protests)

### **Role:**

You are Janelle, a white woman who has taught high school in a small Wisconsin town for 11 years. You participated in the sick-outs, but you understand why some of your colleagues did not. You were worried about your students who would not have anywhere to go with school canceled and felt bad for inconveniencing those families, but you wanted to stand up for those kids’ education. Along with many other teachers in your district, you took that day to meet with your representative and to explain to them why the bill was such a bad idea. With the cut in pay and increase in insurance, you are not sure if you will be able to pay the mortgage on your home. You also worry what will happen now that teachers have no say in their contract, which includes stipulations about class sizes, teaching assignments, and the number of duties that can be assigned to you during your planning period. Although you love teaching, you are thinking about leaving the field or finding a job at an international school overseas.

## **Verizon Strike (2011)**

### **Background:**

This strike was one of the largest in recent decades. After contract negotiations broke down with Verizon, 45,000 members of the Communications Workers of America and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers took to the picket lines from Massachusetts to Virginia in solidarity with the workers in the unionized landline division of Verizon. Despite record profits in their wireless division, overall company profits of \$6 billion halfway through the year, and giving more than \$250 million in compensation to their top five executives, the company asked for unionized workers in the landline division to take pay cuts, pay more towards their insurance, and lose time off. According to Verizon, the landline division was losing money and costs needed to be cut. The strike turned ugly, with each side charging that the other was not negotiating in good faith. Verizon said there was a spike in vandalism and damage to its systems after the strike began; picketers said that Verizon management and replacement workers struck picketers with their vehicles. After two weeks of picketing, the strike ended when labor leaders and executives agreed to a process for renegotiating contracts.

Source:[nytimes.com/2011/08/21/technology/verizon-workers-end-strike-though-without-new-contract.html](http://nytimes.com/2011/08/21/technology/verizon-workers-end-strike-though-without-new-contract.html)

### **Role:**

You are David, a middle-aged Latino man who has worked with Verizon for the past 10 years. You are incredibly frustrated that the union called off the strike. You know the strike fund was running low and you weren't sure how you were going to cover expenses with only your wife collecting a paycheck, but you were determined to ride the momentum from the public's support and force Verizon to negotiate. You think it's a huge mistake to go back to work before an agreement is made. You don't trust the executives at all.