Immigrant Experience and the Labor Movement

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Objectives
Students will be able to identify the challenges faced by immigrants working in factories during the early 20th century. After reading and watching a short film, students will have a picture of the home and working conditions of factory workers, especially immigrants.

Opening the Lesson—
Journal Prompt: What motivates people to move to an unknown place? What feelings did you have when coming to Dublin School for the first time? or if you have moved before?
Film: “The Immigrant Experience: The Long, Long Journey”
Students will view the film from The Shaping of the American Nation Series (28 minutes).
What is Janek’s experience at Ellis Island like?
What do you notice about Janek’s home life in the United States? (Who lives with him? How might his home be different than in Poland? Who else lives in the same building as Janek?)
What happens to Janek at school? How might he overcome these challenges?
What does Janek’s father do? What happens to his father? How does this effect the family?
Is Janek’s family better off in New York City or in Poland and why?

Developing the Lesson—Discuss the film and read excerpts from Upton Sinclair’s “The Jungle”
Students will complete analysis guide (From Lynn Nelson) for any excerpt chosen by the teacher from “The Jungle”. I intend to use Chapter IV (See Oncourse for reprinting)
Reading can be the homework assignment the night after the showing of the film.
Have the students chose 3-5 passages or examples of how the reading supports/portrays the film to help stimulate a conversation.
Use a map (similar to Carl’s that includes the stock yard in Chicago) as a visual to address other concerns immigrants had living so close to each other, as well as the stock yard.
How might living in close proximities be a cause of concern? (Use text reading and student’s prior knowledge)

Concluding the Lesson—Writing a letter home
Have the students imagine that they are a teenager living in a big city (have them pick one) at the turn of the century. Their family has just come from Poland (or any other European country of their choice) for a better life. They still have family back in their home country. Have them write a 1-2 page letter addressing the following areas: Living Conditions at Home, Working Conditions at Factory, School Experience, Religious or Cultural differences.

Assessing Student Learning
By participating in class discussions following the film and their analysis, students will demonstrate a greater amount of knowledge by looking at this period of time through the lenses of a young teenager. After reading an excerpt from Sinclair, students will identify similarities from the film and make connections. They could even ask or write questions that they still don’t know and would like to know about the immigrant experience and the labor movement. Finally, the letter is a creative outlet for students to demonstrate their understanding by their ability to put themselves in Janek or Jurgus’s shoes.