Focus/Summary
The purpose of this lesson is to personalize the concept and purpose of a labor union for the students. Over the past few decades, unions have borne the brunt of much criticism in the popular media. To avoid relegating unions to historical obsolescence, I wish to have them see how working class unity may bring social benefit. In this simulation, students must draw up their own labor contract. Parameters limit student workers in one “learning company” from making a collective contract with their supervisors. Another group will be allowed to work together during negotiations. At the end, students will be able to discuss the role and possible social, economic, and even political value of unions as they experienced or imagine them to be.

This lesson could be used within the first week or days of a unit on labor or early 20th century American history. It could also be used in the middle or end of such a unit, but it’d be more interesting then to have students utilize more complex vocabulary or have a more complex set or bargaining rules.

Vital Theme and Narrative
Values, Beliefs, Political Ideas, and Institutions
Conflict and Cooperation

Habits of Mind
• Perceive past events and issues as they were experienced by people at the time, to develop historical empathy as opposed to present-mindedness.
• Appreciate the often tentative nature of judgments about the past, and thereby avoid the temptation to seize upon particular lessons of history as cures for present ills.

Objective
Students will be able to:
1. Generate three reasons for the benefit of working together as
2. Name three difficulties of contract negotiations as experienced.
3. Discuss

Procedures (100 minute class period. Lesson could be spread over two 45 minute classes, or condensed into one class.)
Opening the lesson, 25 minutes (10min warm up, 15 min intro/set up)
A. (5 min) Powerpoint/agenda on board advises students to have their journals/blank sheet of paper ready.
   Students spend first four minutes of class free-responding to the question, “In your experience, what is it like to be a worker?” If they lack work experience as them to respond as they believe their father, mother or another adult might respond. Alternatively, give the students a choice of the question they’d like to answer. Two other questions could be, “Think about a time you worked and got paid. What did you like about it? What would you change?” and “What do you think about unions?”

B. (5 -10 min) Teacher asks students to briefly share and discuss ideas they generated during their writing time. Possibly create a list on the board if it seems relevant.

C. (5- 10 minutes) Teacher outlines the day’s agenda and introduces simulation (READ INTRO BELOW). If necessary, the teacher should remind students how schools are organized -- the school operates within a district with a board of education, which is responsible to the community (e.g., city or county). Maybe also cover any vocabulary that might be new.

D. (5 minutes) Teacher assigns student roles, has students reconfigure desks to have two separate learning companies, hands out specific information for each role. Students read the information and teacher answers any random questions. Teacher will serve as the mediator.
All individuals start with the same contract specs. But… each group of student workers gets a different set of instructions depending on their learning company. Students in the Solid Scholars Learning Company can collectively bargain when negotiating their contract. Students in the Lone Wolf Learning Company are not allowed to work together - - they must agree individually with the student supervisors. [TEACHER CAN OBVIOUSLY RENAME THESE COMPANIES OR ALLOW STUDENTS TO NAME.] See attached student info sheets.

Developing the Lesson – 30-40 minutes
E. Students will be instructed that they can get a maximum of three tries to get a contract. Students will get a few minutes to collect their thoughts, and then they can negotiate. Since each learning company will be slightly different in their negotiations, they’ll be given a slightly different way to approach the

Concluding the Lesson – 20-30 minutes
F. Teacher will debrief the activity, collecting information on the best and worst contracts. Teacher can write things on the board if it seems relevant. Ask them how they felt, what issues were hard to negotiate and what weren’t. Did anyone get bonuses? Do you think you would feel differently if you were on the other side?

G. Students will write a brief reflection on the activity (time permitting). For homework, students will read about a labor confrontation and will be asked to compare it to the activity in class. If we’re done early, students can start homework in class.

Assessing Student Learning
H. Before/after comparison of the journal entries. This isn’t an activity that has a formal assessment, because it is setting the tone for the unit. However, the beginning journal activity could serve as a pre-test of student knowledge or understanding. The post-activity reflection and homework assignment will allow me to connect the activity to “real” historical examples. Teacher could start with the meatpacking industry at the turn of the 20th century, the Salt of the Earth movie and actual strike in New Mexico, or the Hormel strike in 1985.

**Teacher’s Intro to Scenario:**
The City of Chicago (INSERT YOUR CITY HERE), in an effort to improve educational standards, has decided to pay students for the work they perform at school. Each school can decide how to set up the new arrangement with their students. Today, as a class we’re going to determine what that working arrangement will be.

Each student will be paid for the work that they do. Most students will fall into the category of student worker. Student workers will work for groups called learning companies. Each learning company will have approximately 15 students. But because the teacher can’t supervise all of the individual workers, some students will need to be supervisors. Therefore, of the 15 students per company, 3 will be student supervisors and 12 will be student workers. That means we’ll have 2 companies in this class. (TEACHER CAN MODIFY LEARNING COMPANY, SUPERVISOR NUMBERS BASED ON CLASSROOM. WOULD RECOMMEND EVEN NUMBERS OF GROUPS.)

Student supervisors have some extra responsibilities to make sure the classroom runs well. Remember, the city is counting on us to ensure we’re producing good education here! For example, they must cooperate with the teacher to be sure students are learning and getting good grades. But supervisors also have to keep their workers content and willing to study hard. So they have to have to balance their relationship with student workers. So what’s the benefit? Because of all this extra work, supervisors get paid better and have a say in the pay and working conditions of the student worker. Individuals interested in being a supervisor can volunteer; otherwise, supervisors will be chosen at random.

So today we’re going to negotiate the working arrangement. You know we’re starting a unit on labor movements [OR INSERT UNIT TITLE HERE], so we’re later going to see how workers and their employers have negotiated wages and working conditions throughout history.
Lone Wolf Learning Company
Student Worker’s Guide to Negotiating Your Contract

As you’ve heard, the school is finally going to compensate you for your work! You’ve been given the opportunity to negotiate your wage and working conditions.

If you agree to the offer, please sign with the supervisor below. If you would like to discuss it further with your supervisor, note any changes, like additions or subtractions, before signing the document. Do not speak with anyone else regarding your contract (except the teacher mediator if needed).

The initial offer from the school district is below. You think it’s okay, but you’ve heard workers at other companies have a better contract.

Item 1: You will get paid $5 per full day of school.

Item 2: Passing periods are fixed at 4 minutes.

Item 3: You are allowed one bathroom pass per class per semester.

Item 4: Late work will not be accepted and will receive a zero.

Item 5: The school may set and/or change classroom rules at any time.

Modifications:

Signed: __________________________ (worker)

__________________________ (supervisor)
As you’ve heard, the school is finally going to compensate you for your work! You’ve been given the opportunity to negotiate your wage and working conditions.

If you agree to the offer, please sign with the supervisor below. If you would like to discuss it further with your supervisor, note any changes, like additions or subtractions, before signing the document.

You may work together with other student workers in your learning company to negotiate with the supervisors. If you decide to work together, you should use a single contract.

The initial offer from the school district is below. You think it’s okay, but you’ve heard workers at other companies have a better contract.

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Item 3: You are allowed one bathroom pass per class per semester.

Item 4: Late work will not be accepted and will receive a zero.

Item 5: The school may set and/or change classroom rules at any time.

Modifications:

Signed: __________________________ (worker)

__________________________ (supervisor)
Lone Wolf Learning Company
Supervisor’s Guide to Negotiating Worker Contracts

Your goal is to get your students working under a contract that is as close to the original offer as possible (see below). Your pay is not negotiable, but you have the opportunity to get more money and perks if you minimize the cost of the contracts.

The school actually has a bigger budget than they’ve let on. They can actually pay up to $100 per day for each learning company. With 12 workers at $5 per day, the initial offer is $60 of that $100.

You gain a bonus payment for keeping the daily cost low:
If you keep daily cost less than… you get...
$61-75/day monthly bonus of $50
$76-85/day monthly bonus of $30
$86-95/day monthly bonus of $10

Besides pay, you’ll also negotiate working conditions with your students. That means you’ll have to make sure there’s law and order in the classroom. If the class grades drop, you’re going to be fired! However, you can give a little bit on the working conditions as long as the teacher mediator agrees.

But beware! You lose $1.00 per day for each student that won’t sign the contract, and it costs the company money to involve the student mediator.

You will be paid $10 per day and receive two bathroom passes per class per semester. Late rules don’t apply to you. You may have your choice of seat in the classroom, and you receive 75 free copies per semester in the library.

Good luck! You’ll negotiate with each student individually, so you and the other supervisors might want to divide and conquer.

Offer to Student Workers:

Item 1: You will get paid $5 per full day of school.

Item 2: Passing periods are fixed at 4 minutes.

Item 3: You are allowed one bathroom pass per class per semester.

Item 4: Late arrivals and late work will not be tolerated, and you will lose up to 100% of your pay for lateness.

Item 5: The school may set and/or change classroom rules at any time.
Your goal is to get your students working under a contract that is as close to the original offer as possible (see below). Your pay is not negotiable, but you have the opportunity to get more money and perks if you minimize the cost of the contracts.

The school actually has a bigger budget than they've let on. They can actually pay up to $100 per day for each learning company. With 12 workers at $5 per day, the initial offer is $60 of that $100.

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Besides pay, you’ll also negotiate working conditions with your students. That means you’ll have to make sure there’s law and order in the classroom. If the class grades drop, you’re going to be fired! However, you can give a little bit on the working conditions as long as the teacher mediator agrees.

But beware! You lose $1.00 per day for each student that won’t sign the contract, and it costs the company money to involve the student mediator.

You will be paid $10 per day and receive two bathroom passes per class per semester. Late rules don’t apply to you. You may have your choice of seat in the classroom, and you receive 75 free copies per semester in the library.

Good luck! Be careful, though... you may have to negotiate with the students as a group or as individuals.

Offer to Student Workers:

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