

Case Study #1: *The Jungle*

The Jungle is a 1906 novel written by the American journalist and novelist Upton Sinclair. Sinclair wrote the novel to portray the harsh conditions and exploited lives of immigrants in the United States in Chicago and similar industrialized cities. In response, President Theodore Roosevelt pushed for the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act, which established the FDA.

Source 1: Excerpt from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, 1906

“There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white – it would be dosed with borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one – there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit. There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage.”



A NAUSEATING JOB, BUT IT MUST BE DONE

(President Roosevelt takes hold of the investigating muck-rake himself in the packing-house scandal.)

From the *Saturday Globe* (Utica)

Above: President Roosevelt takes on the meatpacking scandal

Source 2: The Neill-Reynolds Report, 1906

In response to Sinclair's book, Congress launched an investigation into meatpacking factories. Below is an excerpt from their findings as well as a picture taken from a Chicago factory, showing men without sanitary equipment, using mostly their bare hands, to butcher and slaughter the meat. Many times these laborers worked long hours, and made costly mistakes that resulted in the loss of limbs.

"Abominable as the [factory] conditions are, the one that affects most directly and seriously the cleanliness of the food products in the frequent absence of any bathroom provisions. Washing sinks are not furnished or are small and dirty. Neither are towels, soap, or toilet paper provided. Men and women return directly from the unsuitable bathrooms to plunge their unwashed hands into the meat to be converted into such food products as sausages, dried beef, and other compounds...In some of the largest establishments, slabs of meat that are sent to the boning room are thrown in a heap on the floor. The workers climb over these haps, select the pieces they wish, and frequently throw them down upon the dirty floor next to their bench..."



Case Study #2: *How the Other Half Lives*

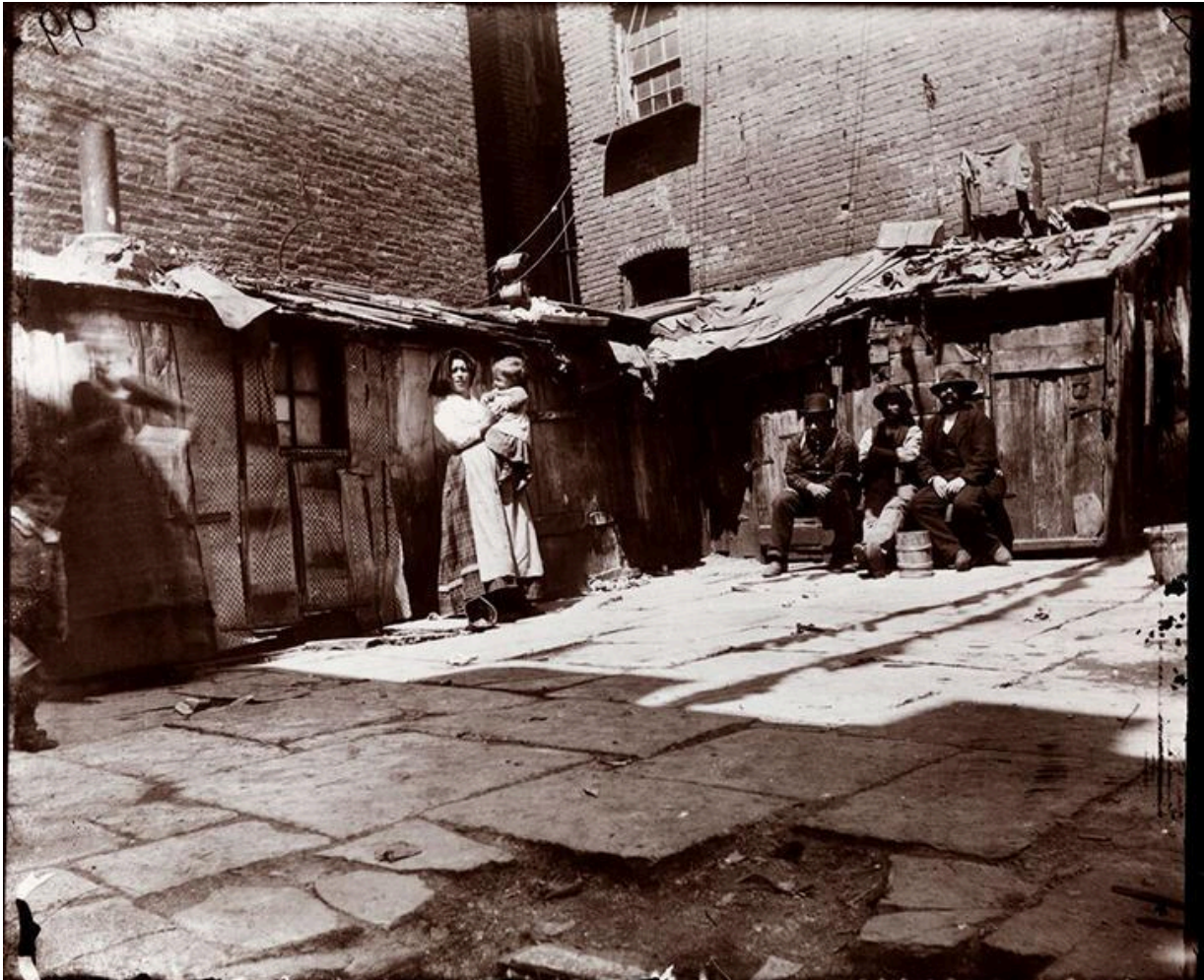
Jacob Riis immigrated to the United States in 1870. After experiencing a firsthand look at the tenements of the Lower East Side of Manhattan where most of the newly arriving immigrants lived, Riis was inspired to document the unsafe living conditions in tenements. Jacob Riis published his photographs in a book called "How the Other Half Lives". The Tenement House Acts of 1895 and 1901 required improvements to tenements, including safety regulations and increased space.

Source 1: [Lodgers in a crowded Bayard Street tenement - "Five cents a spot."](#) Jacob Riis 1890



Source 2: [Yard in Jersey Street \(now gone\) Where Italians Live in the Worst Slums](#) Jacob Riis
(before 1898)

Image caption: It costs a dollar a month to sleep in these sheds



Case Study #3: The Hull House

Source 1: Immigrants and Their Children from Jane Addams' book *Twenty Years at Hull House*, 1910

"An Italian girl who has had lessons in cooking will help her mother to connect the entire family with American food and household habits. That the mother has never baked bread in Italy—only mixed it in her own house and then taken it out to the village oven—makes all the more valuable her daughter's understanding of the complicated cooking stove. The same thing is true of the girl who learns to sew, and more than anything else, perhaps, of the girl who receives the first simple instruction in the care of little children—that skillful care which every tenement-house baby requires if he is to live through his second summer. . . . Through civic instruction in the public schools, the Italian woman slowly becomes urbanized . . . and the habits of her entire family were modified. The public schools in the immigrant neighborhoods deserve all the praise as Americanizing agencies."

Source 2: Hull House Community Flyers



Case Study #4: The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

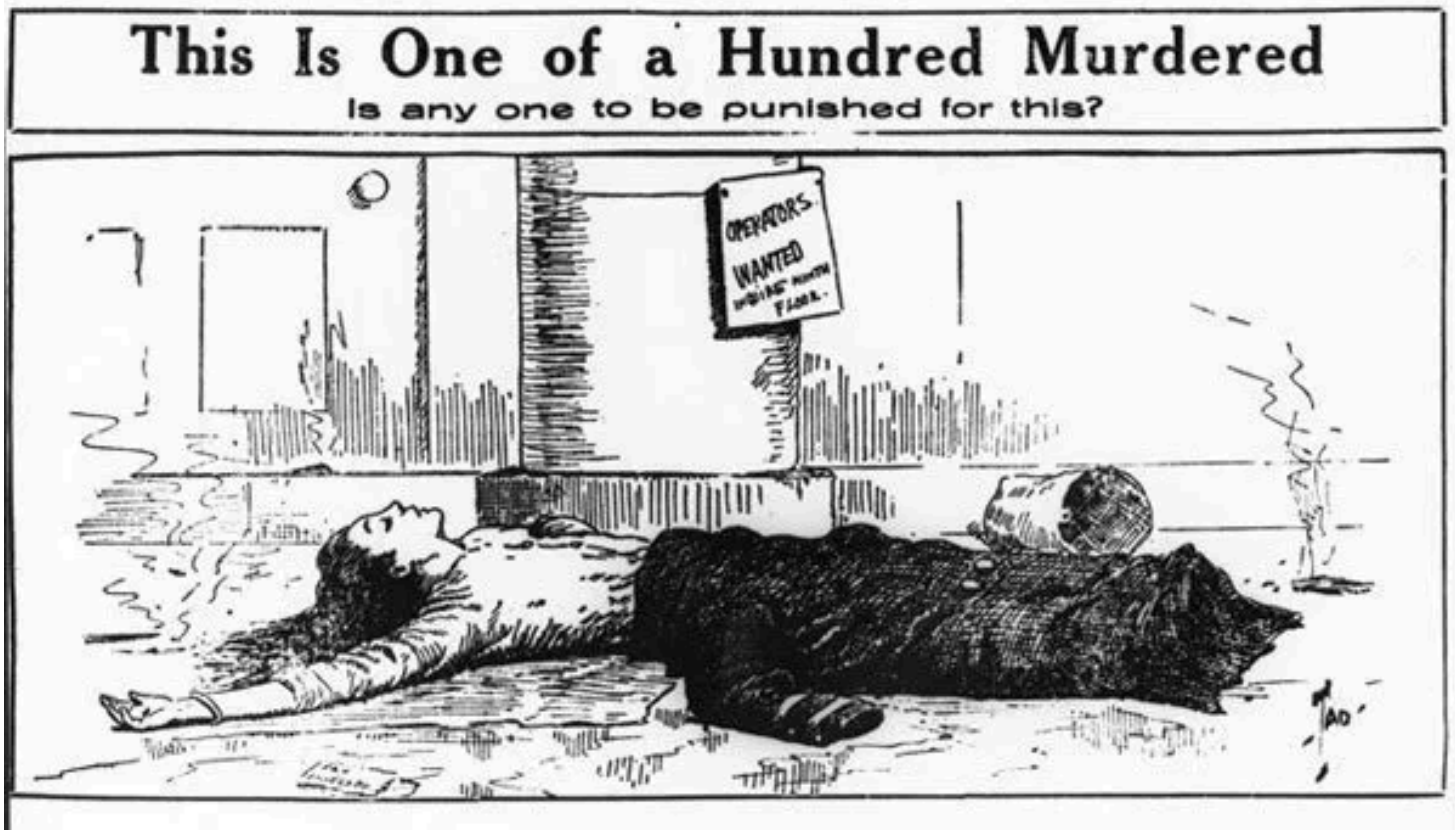
*The **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire** in New York City on March 25, 1911 was the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of the city, and one of the deadliest in U.S. history. The fire caused the deaths of 146 garment workers – 123 women and 23 men– who died from the fire, smoke inhalation, or falling or jumping to their deaths. Most of the victims were recent Italian and Jewish immigrant women aged 14 to 23. Because the owners had locked the doors to the stairwells and exits – a then-common practice to prevent workers from taking unauthorized breaks and to reduce theft – many of the workers who could not escape from the burning building jumped from the high windows. The fire led to legislation requiring improved factory safety standards and helped spur the growth of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), which fought for better working conditions for sweatshop workers.*

Source 1: 62 people jumped or fell from windows. When fire crews arrived, they found their ladders could not reach the higher floors.



Source #2: "This is One of a Hundred Murdered" *New York Journal* 1911

The public was shocked and appalled by the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. Many called for reforms in the safety and work conditions. The cartoon below was published in William Randolph Hearst's sensational newspaper after the fire. The sign reads "Operators wanted: Inquire 9th Floor," a reference to the 9th floor garment factory.



Source 3: Headlines after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire



Case Study #5: Big Business & Politics

Corrupt politics and corrupt business practices often went hand in hand, as politicians and Big Business relied on one another for support. Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens were two muckrakers willing to take on political and corporate giants and expose their corruption.

Source #1: Excerpt from *The Shame of Cities*, by Lincoln Steffens, 1904.

Steffens exposed the corruption of political machines like the Tweed Ring and Tammany Hall in New York. His work helped lead to the adoption of democratic reforms like the Australian ballot (voting privately rather than out loud) and recalls of elected officials.

“The spirit of business is profit, not patriotism; individual gain, not national prosperity. “My business is sacred,” says the business man in his heart. “Whatever helps my business, is good; it must be. Whatever hurts it, is wrong; it must be. A bribe is bad, that is, it is a bad thing to take; but it is not so bad to give one, not if it is necessary to my business.” And it’s all a moral weakness. Oh, we are good—on Sunday, and we are “fearfully patriotic” on the Fourth of July. But the bribe we pay to the janitor is the little brother of the bribe passed to the councilman to sell a city street, and the father of the deal made by the president of the railroad, who agrees to use air-brakes only if he is given stock in the air-brake company. We are responsible, not our leaders, since we follow them. We let them divert our loyalty from the United States to some “party”; we let them boss the party and turn our democracies into autocracies (rule by one person). We cheat our government and we let our leaders loot it, and we let them bribe our sovereignty from us. We are content to let them pass bad laws, giving away public property in exchange for money.”

Source #2: *The History of Standard Oil*, by Ida Tarbell, 1904

Motivated in part by her father’s negative experiences working for Standard Oil, Tarbell wrote a series of articles for McClure’s Magazine, exposing the corruption of Rockefeller’s company. In 1911, the Supreme Court ruled that Standard Oil violated the Sherman Antitrust Act, and the company was ordered to be broken up into separate companies.

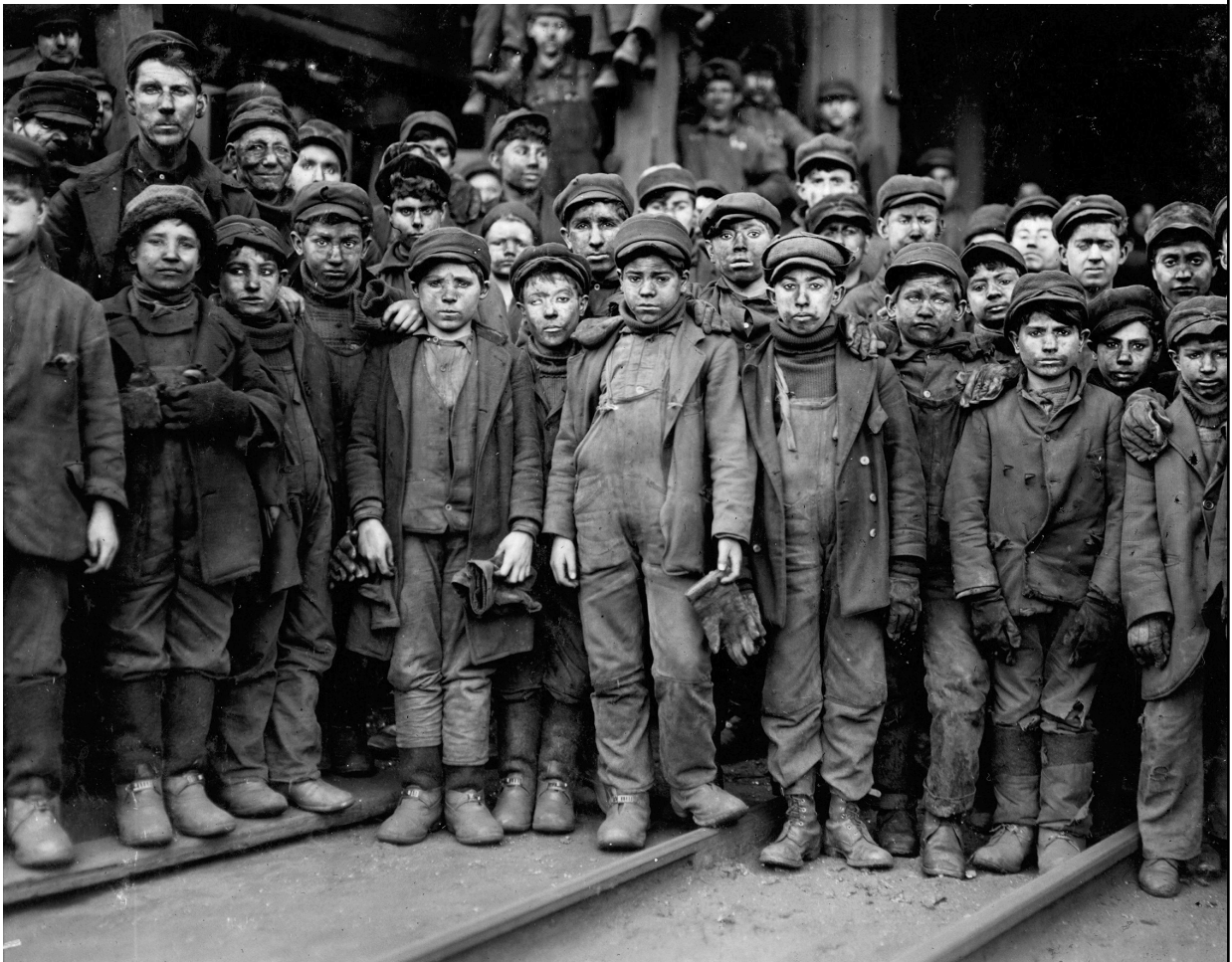
““Mr. Rockefeller has employed force and fraud to secure his ends, justify him by declaring, “It’s business.” That is, “it’s business” has come to be a legitimate excuse for hard dealing, sly tricks, special privileges. It is a common enough thing to hear men arguing that the ordinary laws of morality do not apply in business...”

Case Study #6: A Voice for the Voiceless--Trees & Child Labor

Some victims of the Gilded Age lacked voices of their own and therefore needed reformers to advocate for them. Child labor was rampant and unregulated, and children often worked long hours in dangerous conditions in the textile, mining and agricultural industries. Without any way to advocate for themselves, reformers like Lewis Hines worked to expose the dangers child workers faced. Nature proved to be another voiceless victim. The more the country grew and expanded, the more its natural resources were exhausted. Some realized that the nation's natural resources were not inexhaustible and needed to be protected and conserved.

Source #1: Breaker Boys

Lewis Hines used his photography to expose the dangers of child labor. The following photograph shows a group of “breaker boys” who were employed at a coal mine in northeastern Pennsylvania. The job of a breaker boy was to separate rocks and minerals from coal that had just been mined from the ground. They would typically use their bare hands to pick rocks from the coal. States began passing child labor laws in 1908, and in 1916 the Keating-Owen Act federally limited child labor.



Source #2: "Treasures of the Yosemite," John Muir, 1890

John Muir was an avid outdoors enthusiast who argued that the conservation movement did not go far enough in protecting the nation's natural resources. Instead of simply conserving resources (saving/limiting them for future use), he argued that nature must be preserved--set aside to be enjoyed but not used. Muir detailed both the beauty and the destruction of the environment. In 1903, the Antiquities Act allowed the federal government to set aside public lands for preservation. The US Forest Service was also created and national parks and monuments such as the Grand Canyon were established.



Above: Destructive work in Yosemite Valley: the "Leidig Meadows" plowed up in October, 1888, to raise hay.



Above: Destructive work in Yosemite Valley: stump forest, mostly of young pine, in "State Pasture,"

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