



Driving Question: What are the ongoing concerns that affect the lives of factory workers and what push factors make migrant labor a viable option in their

Project Description:

Students read and examined the novel *Lyddie* and learned about the cultural context of similar protagonists from the 1840s United States and post-2000 China and its surrounding countries. Utilizing the backdrop of the textile industry, students examined the roles of females in society as child labor and adults in the workforce. Students read materials from other neighboring countries that demonstrated similar economic progressions. Students drew evidence from *Lyddie* and *Spilled Water* to highlight six common conditions. In addition to the books and outside readings, students watched *China Blue*, a documentary about the textile industry, and a took trip to a textile mill. They wrote essays and made presentations to a panel with their recommendations to improve working conditions.



Student Products

- ▶ Write a compare/ contrast essay
- ▶ Make a presentation to a panel with recommendations to improve working conditions

Teacher Reflection

"This is the first iteration of this unit combining historical fiction from two disparate times and places. The similar structures in the novels and by carefully selecting outside materials that highlighted similar issues, students were not neutrals. I was impressed with the way that treatment of women took center stage in our class discussions. In addition, our students showed moral outrage and some of the most egregious examples really helped solidify their taking a stand. I purposely tried to present both sides and emphasize the important economic ladder that factory work can offer for workers that might not have as many options in their lives. A side benefit for many was a greater understanding about how business works. Finally, many expressed a belief that if they were ever in a position to be in charge, they would have greater empathy for those who worked with them in similar settings. It lends itself to updating every year by its use of the most up-to-date outside readings and the inclusion of *Last Train Home* if one wants to even more greatly emphasize the migrant aspect." - Andy Lewis

Student Reflection

"We should be aware of the different kinds of people, some even our age, who live in harsh, brutal conditions striving to earn money to support their family. This unit has certainly made us grow into individuals with broader views toward the world." - Student

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