



## **History and Activities on Labor Union Strikes: The United Auto Workers Sit-Down Strike, Flint, Michigan, 1936-1937 Grades 6-8**

**Objectives:** Students will be able to define terms such as labor union, strike, picketing, collective bargaining, etc. Students will be able to apply these terms to the events of the United Auto Workers sit-down strike of 1936-1937 in Flint, Michigan.

Students will analyze recruitment tactics and group membership of labor unions.

Students will design their own materials for recruitment and remembrance of organizations or historical events that are important to them.

### **Illinois State History Standards:**

**SS.6-8.H.2.MdC.** Analyze and compare multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of multiple groups of people in different historical eras relevant to the cultural groups.

**SS.6-8.H.4.LC** Describe the differences between correlation and causation in historical events and explain multiple causes and effects of historical events.

### **Illinois State Visual Arts Standards:**

**6th VA:Re7.1.6** Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.

**7th VA:Re7.1.7** Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued.

**8th VA:Re7.1.8** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.

**6th VA:Re7.2.6** Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

**8th VA:Re7.2.8** Compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

**5th VA:Cn11.1.5** Identify how art is used to inform or change beliefs, values, or behaviors of an individual or society.

**7th VA:Cn11.1.7** Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.

### **Materials:**

- Background article
- White copy paper
- Writing utensils
- Coloring utensils
- Notebook paper
- Optional: a device that connects to the internet for additional research

**Directions:**

- Begin with the pre-activity discussion to assess what students already know or don't know about the topic.
- Students should then read the background article independently.
- When students are done reading, teachers should present the questions for discussion. Students should informally document their answers on paper. This can be done independently or with a partner.
- Students can then move on to the activity portion. This activity is designed to get students thinking about causes and issues that are important to them, and practice social activism in terms of actionable ways to spread awareness about their cause and encourage others to participate. Students will design and color a recruitment material for their cause, using the UAW examples if necessary. Students should write a follow-up paragraph to explain their choice of cause, design choices, and their relevance to their specific cause.
- Taking inspiration from White Shirt Day, students will create a holiday or day of remembrance for their cause of choice. In another paragraph, they will explain their choice of day, title, and method of celebrating their holiday.

**Pre-activity discussion:**

Teachers should begin by assessing what students know and don't know about the topic. Ask what they already know about labor unions and strikes. Assess whether or not they can define and/or apply these terms.

If they don't have any prior knowledge, that's okay! This activity will provide all the information they need in order to successfully complete the objectives.

**Background article link:**

[Background article](#)

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Define the following terms. Explain how each relates to the United Auto Workers Strike of 1936-1937.
  - a. Labor union
  - b. Strike
  - c. Picketing
2. Summarize why the auto workers went on strike.
3. Summarize what happened during the strike.
4. Explain why the United Auto Workers Strike of 1936-1937 was so important.

**Activity:**



- Think of a specific issue, cause, or organization that you care about. Discuss with a partner how you might get others to care about the cause, whether it be them joining an organization, donating money, or something else.
- Think about what the union leaders of the UAW did to recruit people to join and care about their cause. On a sheet of paper, design a recruitment material to get others involved in your cause. This can be anything—a sign, a button, a shirt, etc. On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph explaining what cause you chose and why it's important to you. Also explain what you designed, why you chose to design it the way you did (why did you choose the colors, icons, words, or characters you did?), and how it will be successful in recruiting others.
- Think about how the UAW still remembers and celebrates the strike of 1936-1937. Come up with a holiday or celebration that highlights your cause. Choose a day to celebrate, a title for your holiday, and explain how people will celebrate. Make sure your choices are meaningful—for example, don't just choose any day, do some research to choose a day that has some connection to your cause, etc. Write a paragraph explaining how the day, title, and methods of celebrating are relevant to your cause specifically.

## **Bring this lesson to the museum!**

Help students connect their learning to real-world contexts by exploring these related vehicles on display at Klairmont Collections:

- 1936 Buick Series 80 Towncar