



Letter to Henry Ford Primary Source Guided Analysis Grades 6-12

Objectives: Students will analyze and interpret primary source material. Students should be able to determine the audience, bias, and cause of a primary source and subsequently answer critical thinking questions to determine feeling and importance of the piece and its broader context within the era.

Illinois State Social Studies Standards:

SS.6-8.IS.2.MdC: Determine the credibility of sources based upon their origin, authority, and context.

SS.9-12.H.5: Analyze the factors and historical context, including overarching movements, that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

SS.9-12.H.7: Identify and analyze the role of individuals, groups, and institutions in people's struggle for safety, freedom, equality, and justice.

SS.9-12.H.11: Analyze primary and secondary historical sources from multiple vantage points and perspectives to identify and explain dominant narratives and counternarratives of historical events.

Materials:

- The ABC's of Primary Source Analysis document (posted on our website)
- Access to this document or notebook paper to document answers

Directions:

- Review the document "The ABC's of Primary Source Analysis" with students
- Students should read the primary source independently
- Once students have finished reading, they should answer the guided analysis questions either independently or with partners. This can be done by typing directly in the document or on notebook paper. Encourage students to use evidence from the source to substantiate each answer.



Letter to Henry Ford from the Wife of an Assembly Line Worker
January 23, 1914

S. 8840

FM Co
Personal
Complaints

January 23, 1914

My Dear Mr. Ford

Please pardon the means
I am taking of asking you for humanity's
sake to investigate and to action my seeming
complaints but Mr. Ford I am the wife of one of
the final assemblers in your institution and
neither one of us want to be agitators and
thus do not want to say anything to make anyone
else more aggravated but Mr. Ford you do not
know the conditions in your factory we are all
sure or you would not allow it -
Are you aware that a man cannot "Buck Rattine"
he has to go to the toilet and yet he is not allowed
to go at his work - He has to go before he gets
there or after work. The chain system you have
is a slave driver! My god! Mr. Ford - My husband
has come home + after some times doesn't want
eat his supper - So done out! Can't it be
remedied? Couldn't there be a man ready
to step in + relieve a man when nature calls -
All it needs is a personal investigation on
your part Mr. Ford of a couple of hours
kind I'm sure you wouldn't allow it.
Also where you are working - working - working
+ how to keep at it + get your feet well - Work
the grip - as my husband has + instead of being
kind place he should be, is working enough
you stand for a foreman! God damn you
the hurry - slave driving you - God I have
should be used in reference instead of cursing
these poor men - That's today is a blessing - a
bigger one than you know but oh they earn it - How
much luckier you are that God has given
you that he has instead of putting you in one
of these men's places - Please investigate
and thank you Mr. Ford -

O.S. - Could you please investigate
this also. My husband is furnished
with tools of special + that it's deduct-
ed from their wages - Then the tools
with his overalls are repeatedly
stolen because they have no lockers
they have to just throw their overalls
+ overalls anywhere - Not even a
place to hang them + his lunch
in consequence has been stolen
time and time again.

Please

64.167.1.94



Transcript:

January 23, 1914

My dear Mr. Ford,

Please pardon the means I am taking of asking you for humanity's sake to investigate and to pardon my seeming rudeness but Mr. Ford I am the wife of one of the final assemblers in your institution and neither one of us want to be aggitators and thus do not want to say anything to make anyone else more aggravated but Mr Ford you do not know the conditions in your factory. We are all sure or you would not allow it—

Are you aware that a man cannot 'Buck Nature' he has to go to the toilet and yet he is not allowed to go at his work-- He has to go before he gets there or after work. The chain system you have is a slave driver! My god! Mr. Ford-- My husband has come home and thrown himself down and won't eat his supper--so done out--can't it be remedied? Couldn't there be a man ready to step in and relieve a man when Nature calls-- All it needs is a personal investigation on your part Mr. Ford of a couple of hours and I'm sure you wouldn't allow it.

Also when you are working-- working-- working & have to keep a it & yet don't feel well-- Have the grip-- as my husband has & instead of being home where he should be he is working would you stand for a foreman 'God daming' you to hurry-- slave driving you-- God's name should be used in reverence instead of curing these poor men. That \$5 a day is a blessing-- a bigger one than you know but oh they earn it-- How much luckier you are that God has given you what he has instead of putting you in one of these men's places-- Please investigate and thank you Mr. Ford—

P.S. Could you please investigate this also. My husband is furnished with tools (special) & then its deducted from his wages--Then the tools with his overhauls are repeatedly stolen because they have no lockers. They have to just throw their overcoats & overhauls anyplace. Not even a place to hang them & his lunch in consequence has been stolen time and time again.

Please



Guided Analysis Questions:

1. ABC's: Who is the audience? What is the bias? What is the cause?
2. Describe the emotions with which this wife writes to Henry Ford. What do you think this shows about how this wife, and the broader working class, feels about their employers? Explain what you think this shows about the dynamics between labor and employers at the time. Use evidence from the letter to support your answers.
3. Explain what you imagine the conditions of factories to be at the time, based on the descriptions in this letter. Use evidence from the letter to support your interpretation.
4. Based on your response to the previous questions, how might these conditions and relationships between labor and employers have contributed to the massive labor strikes across the U.S. during this era? Explain your thinking.



Bring this lesson to the museum!

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

- 1913 Ford Model T Depo Hack
- 1914 Ford Model T Touring