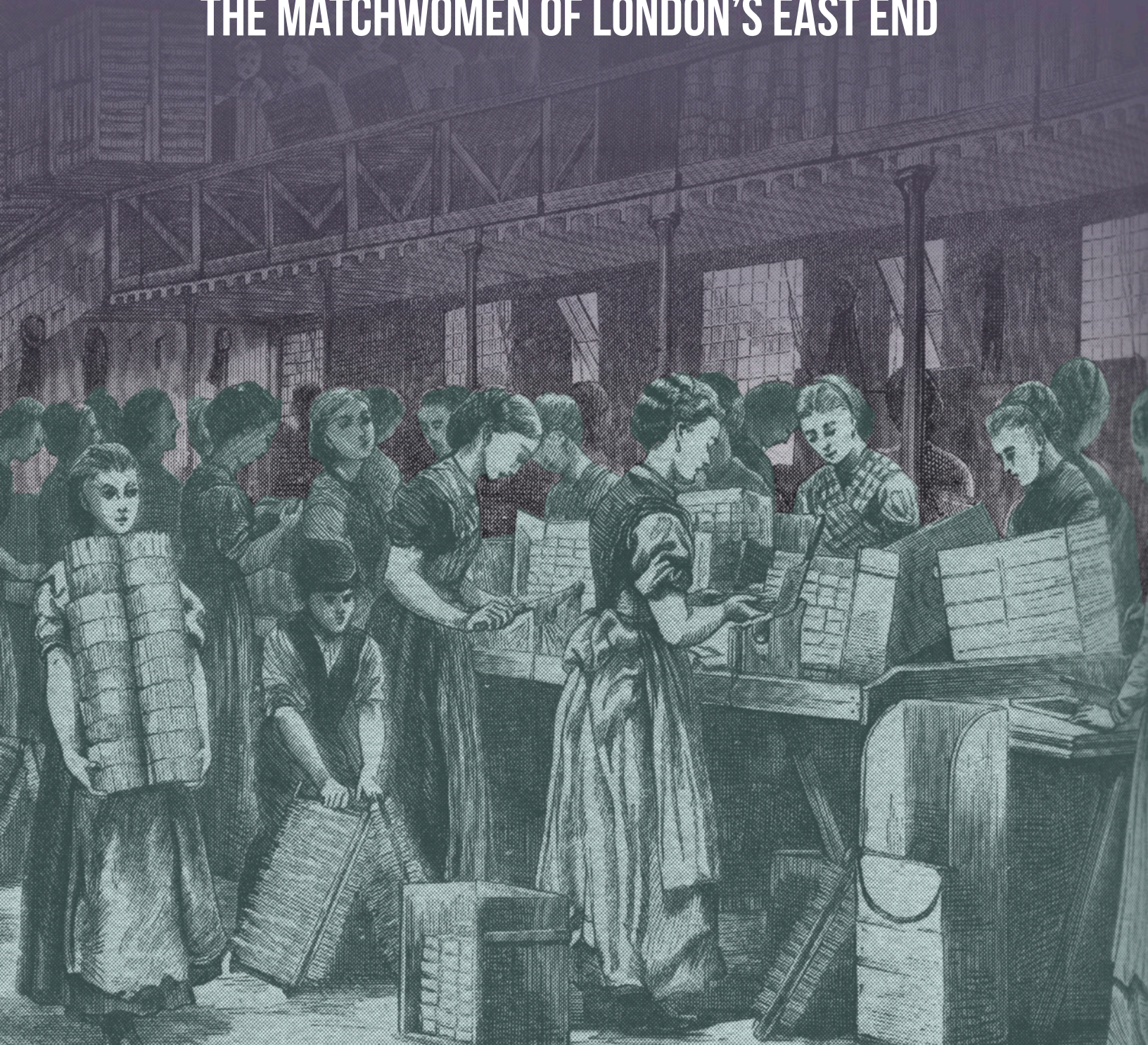


STRIKE!

WORKERS' RIGHTS & THE MATCHWOMEN OF LONDON'S EAST END



WHO WE ARE

Woven Teaching is the human rights education practice of Woven Foundation. Through a combination of original programming and grantmaking, Woven Teaching advances the foundation's focus on long-term change towards a widespread acceptance of basic human rights for all.

Our programmatic work is dedicated to supporting classroom teachers with practical help for ethical and effective instruction. We believe that by weaving human rights education into the curriculum, educators can create socially responsible global citizens.

Woven Teaching envisions a world in which every student's education includes:

- A sense of historical perspective;
- The development of critical thinking skills;
- A feeling of global citizenship;
- The ability to identify bigotry—understanding its negative effects on both individuals and society—and the analytical tools to combat it.

CONTACT



woventeaching.org



info@woventeaching.org



1600 Bush Street, Ste 300, San Francisco, CA 94109



Do you have feedback on this lesson or want to share how you implemented it in your classroom? We'd love to hear from you!

Please take our short evaluation at surveymonkey.com/r/wt-eval or scan the QR code to the left.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Considerations for Teaching Ethically and Effectively.....	5
Activity 1: Rights in the Workplace	6
Activity 2: You Have the Right to Work.....	8
Activity 3: The Matchwomen of London’s East End	10
Activity 4: Worker Power.....	12
Activity 5: The Struggle for Unionization	15
Activity 6: Solidarity!.....	17
Activity 7: Closing.....	19
Student Handouts	
Key Terms	22
Rights in the Workplace	23
Annie Besant’s Article (“White Slavery in London”)	24
Worker Power	25
Solidarity!	29
Appendix	
Resources.....	32
Other Noteworthy Labor Actions.....	33
Transcript: <i>The Deadly Affliction of the Matchgirls</i>	34
Transcript: <i>How to Start a Union: Step By Step</i>	38
Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Student Version	43

IMAGE CREDITS

Cover, pp. 30-31: Women working in a match factory, 1871 (Wikimedia Commons)

P. 10: Strike committee of the Matchmakers’ Union, 1888 (TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University)

P. 21: Match workers at Bryant & May factory, 1888 (TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University)

CONTENT LEVEL

Ages 14-18 (Grades 9-12)

TIME

5 Hours

DESCRIPTION

Students will...

- Test their knowledge of U.S. labor laws by evaluating true/false statements
- Discuss workers' rights as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Analyze a primary source from an historical workers' strike
- Use the jigsaw method to learn about strategies for making change in the workplace
- Write about the difficulties of unionizing a workplace
- Demonstrate solidarity by creating a campaign in support of workers' rights

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What rights do workers have in the United States?
- What actions can workers take to promote and protect their rights?
- What is solidarity? What does solidarity look like?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

- Understand their rights as workers in the United States
- Make connections between historical and contemporary labor organizing
- Understand how workers can organize and create a labor union
- Express solidarity with workers fighting for their rights

MATERIALS

- Google Slides
- Notecards
- Student Handouts (Google Docs)
 - » Key Terms (Handout A)
 - » Rights in the Workplace (Handout B)
 - » Annie Besant's article "White Slavery in London" (Handout C)
 - » Worker Power (Handout D1-4)
 - » Solidarity! (Handout E)
- Videos:
 - » "The Deadly Affliction of the Match Girls" (Buzzfeed Unsolved Network)
 - » "How to Start a Union: Step By Step" (More Perfect Union)
- Website: Union Busting Playbook (Communications Workers of America)

INTRODUCTION

The tension between labor and management has a long history in the United States. Throughout the country's history, conditions for workers have usually only improved when workers came together to demand change. Workers—including teachers—have formed unions to protect their rights, fight for higher wages, job security, and benefits (including sick time, vacation, and pensions and retirement plans). All of this work has been important: it brought eight hour workdays, the weekend, and an end to legal child labor. But workers continue to be treated poorly, and the gap between the CEO pay and worker earnings has been widening since the 1970s. A 2022 study from Institute for Policy Studies examined the salaries in 300 American companies and found that on average, CEOs earned \$10.6 million, while the median worker received less than \$24,000. This wage gap is 670 to 1.

In Europe and the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries, workers in coal, steel, lumber and other industries—mostly men, and mostly white—came together to demand better wages and working conditions. Unions have never been a given; they are created by and voted on by the workers themselves, not by management or the employer. In recent years, workers at large American corporations like Amazon and Starbucks have attempted to unionize, asserting that joining a union will help them negotiate for better working conditions and higher wages. Furthermore, in this changing world, unions have continued to express the needs and dignity of these workers, from humane working conditions for UPS workers to protection for actors and screenwriters being replaced by artificial intelligence (AI).

In many cases, these workers have alleged that their employers have violated their rights. But what rights do we have in the workplace? And why is it important for workers to know these rights? In *Strike!: Workers Rights & the Matchwomen of London's East End*, students have the opportunity to learn about their rights as workers, and using the historical struggle by women in Victorian London as a case study, explain the different strategies workers can use to assert their rights. Students will also apply the principle of solidarity by arguing for workers' rights that continue to be challenged.



FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Woven Teaching believes that human rights education is essential for students to understand and assert their own rights and to protect the rights of others. As a result, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) lies at the core of Woven Teaching's materials. The document's 30 articles outline fundamental human rights: basic rights and freedoms which every human being is entitled to, regardless of the person's race, religion, birthplace, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristic. Although its articles are not legally binding, the UDHR serves as the moral compass for the international community.

The activities in *Strike!* connect directly to several UDHR articles, including:

- Article 3: Right to life, freedom, and safety
- Article 20: Right to participate in and organize peaceful protests and meetings
- Article 23: Right to work, to receive a fair wage, and to join a union
- Article 24: Right to rest and relaxation
- Article 25: Right to an adequate standard of living, including food, housing, and medical care

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING ETHICALLY AND EFFECTIVELY

- Center learning on students.
- Integrate human rights and history.
- Remind students to be sensitive about employment and financial situations. Many families struggle with job insecurity, and some children, including students in the class, have to work to help support their families.
- Complicate thinking and avoid oversimplification by avoiding stereotypes and asking students to be precise with their language.
- Nurture an environment of non-judgment, openness, and understanding.
- Support students in making connections between historical events and contemporary issues, as well as local and international contexts.
- Remind students of the ground rules for discussion, including:
 - » Using “I” statements and speaking from their own experience
 - » Listening actively and respectfully
- Emphasize personal agency and responsibility.
- Promote student activism and action.

ACTIVITY 1: RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE

30 MINUTES

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of rights in U.S. workplaces through a series of true/false statements and explain their reasoning.

MATERIALS

- Handout: Key Terms (p. 22 / Google Doc)
- Handout: Rights in the Workplace (p. 23 / Google Doc)
- Google Slideshow (Slides 2-6)

PROCEDURE

- Begin by explaining that in the United States, many laws now exist to protect employees in the workplace. This is different from the U.S. historically and is different from many parts of the world today.
- Distribute one copy of Key Terms (Handout A) and Rights in the Workplace (Handout B) to each student. Explain that the worksheet will ask them to make a series of decisions about whether a statement about workers' rights in the U.S. is true or false. After they have marked their answers, students should explain their reasoning in the third column.
- After all students have finished, go over the correct answers (see below).
- Lead a brief discussion using some of these questions:
 - Which answer surprises you the most? Which answer concerns you or do you find is not enough to protect employees?
 - Why do you think these laws exist?
 - Why is it important for people to know about these laws?
 - What other questions come up for you when you read these laws?

Optional Extension Activity: Students pick or are assigned one of these laws to research what prompted the passage of the law and critique its effectiveness, fairness, or relevance to today's workers.

RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE — ANSWER KEY

All statements align with laws and regulations enshrined in the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938), the National Labor Relations Act (1935), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and others.

- If you are an hourly worker, you are entitled to overtime pay if you work 50 hours during a regular work week. Salaried workers are not entitled to overtime pay.
TRUE: All hourly workers are entitled to 1.5x their regular hourly rate for any time worked over 40 hours per week.
- Your employer does not need to pay you for working through your lunch break if they did not ask you to do so.

FALSE: Although there is no federal law that requires employers to give employees a meal break, the Fair Labor Standards Act states that an employee must be totally relieved of their duties during meal periods. Otherwise, this counts as time worked and employees must be paid for it.

3. The federal minimum wage is \$9 per hour.

FALSE: Although cities, states, and other localities may have higher minimum wages, the federal minimum wage is \$7.25 (as of 2023). This means that employees must be paid at least \$7.25 per hour everywhere in the United States. This would be approximately \$15,000 annually. A salary of \$15,000 is below the poverty level as determined by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

4. Employers are allowed to not hire you for a job because of your race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or age.

FALSE: Several U.S. laws prohibit discrimination, including the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990).

5. Employers are allowed to pay you and your coworker different amounts for doing the same job.

TRUE: Under the Equal Pay Act (1963), employers cannot pay someone less as a result of their sex; however, employers are able to pay employees with the same title or responsibilities different amounts based on other factors (such as experience).

6. Your employer must provide access to a restroom, but can make you wait a long time to use it (e.g. wait a couple hours until your scheduled 10-minute break).

FALSE: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that all employees have access to a clean restroom and that employees are permitted to leave their work area to use the restroom as needed.

7. You are allowed to take unpaid time off to take care of a sick family member without risking the loss of your job.

TRUE: Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (1993), employees may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period for family or medical reasons (without risk of losing their job or their health insurance). The FMLA has restrictions that make employees ineligible, however, so it is important to check with your employer about your eligibility.

8. If you are under 20 years old, your employer can pay you less than minimum wage for the first few months of your employment.

TRUE: The Fair Labor Standards Act allows employers to pay employees age 19 and younger \$4.25 per hour for the first 90 consecutive days of employment.

9. Employers can fire you for reporting an injury or unsafe conditions.

FALSE: It is illegal for an employer to fire or demote an employee for reporting unsafe conditions. Employees may file complaints with the Occupational and Health Safety Administration.

10. You are allowed to discuss your pay with coworkers while at work.

TRUE: Under the National Labor Relations Act (1935), employees have the right to discuss their wages while at work or in their free time.

ACTIVITY 2: YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO WORK

30 MINUTES

Students will reflect on the importance of Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the right to work, to receive a fair wage, and to join a union).

MATERIALS

- Google Slideshow (Slide 7)
- Handout: UDHR – Student Version (Appendix, p. 43) – For optional extension activity

PROCEDURE

- Begin by taking a quick poll of students: Who has a job? Do they feel like they are treated fairly by their employer? Why or why not?
- Explain that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document created by the United Nations in 1948, includes rights that protect workers. Ask for a volunteer to read Article 23:

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration [pay] ensuring for [themselves] and [their] family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of [their] interests.

- Ask students to discuss the following questions in pairs or work through question 1 with the class, and have pairs discuss questions 2-4.
 - What does this article mean? What are the specific rights included in this article? Answers may include:
 - the right to work (the right to earn a livelihood)*
 - the right to free choice of employment (you choose your job; the government can't force you to work a particular job)*
 - the right to just and favorable conditions of work (the jobs you have to choose from have acceptable/safe working conditions)*
 - the right to protection against unemployment (you can't be fired without a good reason)*
 - the right to equal pay for equal work (i.e. you can't pay women less than men for the same work)*
 - the right to a just and favorable remuneration [payment] (a fair wage which can support a dignified life for you and your family, plus assistance from the government when this is not possible)*
 - the right to join a union (join together with other workers to protect your interests)*

2. Which laws from the True/False activity are reflected in Article 23?
Answers may include: right to just and favorable conditions of work; right to equal pay for equal work
 3. Which of these rights is most important to you? Why?
 4. Do you think it is important for all people to have these rights? Why or why not?
- D. Debrief as a class by asking some students to share their responses. Then, explain that the class will look at an historical example of the negative impacts when these rights are not upheld, and how a group of people worked together to change the course of history for workers.

Optional Extension Activity: If the class is familiar with the other articles of the UDHR, share or ask about how this article connects to some of the other articles, namely:

- Article 3: Right to life, freedom, and safety
- Article 20: Right to participate in and organize peaceful protests and meetings
- Article 24: Right to rest and relaxation
- Article 25: Right to an adequate standard of living



ACTIVITY 3: THE MATCHWOMEN OF LONDON'S EAST END

60 MINUTES

Students will work in pairs to analyze a primary source about organized workers in Victorian England.

MATERIALS

- Video: "The Deadly Affliction of the Match Girls" (14:26) – BuzzFeed Unsolved Network
- Handout: Annie Besant's article (p. 24 / Google Docs)
- Google Slideshow (Slides 8-10)

PROCEDURE

- A. Provide context for the 1888 Matchwomen's Strike by viewing "The Deadly Affliction of the Match Girls" (to 10:03). Pause at the following intervals to ask comprehension questions:
- Part I (0:00 - 2:42): What were living conditions like in London's East End?
Answers may include: overpopulated, unsanitary, high poverty levels
 - Part II (2:42 - 4:21): What were some of the conditions that many workers faced in Victorian London?
Answers may include: Crowded, unsafe environments, long hours
 - Part III (4:21 - 5:52): What was a specific risk of working at Bryant and May?
Answer: Working with white phosphorus (also known as yellow phosphorus), a dangerous substance, was a specific risk of working at Bryant and May.
 - Part IV (5:52 - 7:49): What conditions did the workers endure by working at Bryant and May?
Answers may include: long hours; workers had to remain standing for their entire shift; no break room (had to eat near toxic substances); fines for talking, using the restroom, etc.
 - Part V (7:49 - 10:03): How did Annie Besant get information about the working conditions at Bryant and May?
Answer: Annie Besant interviewed Bryant and May employees to get firsthand information about working conditions.

Note: If technology is unavailable, a transcript of the video is available in the Appendix (see p. 32). Section 1 should be read before engaging with the primary source by Annie Besant. Section 2 should be read after.

- B. Distribute one copy of Annie Besant's 1888 newspaper article "White Slavery in London" (Handout C) to each student. Working with a partner, ask students to read the 1888 newspaper article about the poor working conditions in London's Bryant and May matchmaking factory. Explain to students that the title's reference to slavery was meant to elicit a negative reaction from the British public, as slavery had been abolished in the British Empire decades earlier.
- C. After students have read the article, engage the class with the following questions:
- Under what circumstances could an employee be fined (have their pay reduced) at the Bryant and May factory?
 - Which issue described by Besant is most problematic for you? What concerns you about it?
 - What action did Besant recommend that people take to support the Bryant and May workers? (*Boycott*)
 - » What does boycott mean?
 - » Who is involved in boycotting?
 - » How do you think boycotting can help?
- D. Resume the video, explaining that students will now learn what took place after the article was published. As they continue to watch the video, ask them to listen for other ways that workers and their supporters expressed their disagreement with the company's treatment of their workers. When the video has finished, ask students to share what other strategies the workers used during the strike. Answers may include:
- *Appeal to the public:*
 - » *Workers walking to The Link for more press coverage and sharing their stories with the public*
 - » *50 workers appeared at Parliament to appeal for their case*
 - *Collective Bargaining: Establishment of the Union of Women Matchmakers which served to advocate on behalf of the workers.*
- E. Ask the following questions:
1. How did Bryant and May respond to these strategies? Answers may include:
 - » *Initially fired workers suspected of talking to Besant for her article*
 - » *Tried to force workers to sign a statement which claimed the article was false and that they were happy with their working conditions.*
 - » *Conceded with some of the workers' demands after about 3 weeks (July 2-21)*
 2. How do the events at Bryant and May speak to "strength in numbers?"
- F. Share that the strike of the Matchwomen was the first time a union of unskilled workers succeeded in striking for higher pay and improved conditions in London. Their campaign used several effective strategies that collectively worked towards achieving basic worker rights. Finally, tell the students that they will learn about these strategies with current examples.

ACTIVITY 4: WORKER POWER

75 MINUTES

Students will use the jigsaw method to learn about different strategies people can use to push for change in the workplace. They will also determine the best course of action for workers faced with challenges.

MATERIALS

- Handout: Strategy
 - » Strike (p. 25 / Google Doc)
 - » Boycott (p. 26 / Google Doc)
 - » Collective Bargaining (p. 27 / Google Doc)
 - » Appeal to the Public (p. 28 / Google Doc)
- Google Slideshow (Slides 11-13)

PROCEDURE

- A. Ask students to spend a few minutes writing about the following prompt: “There is strength in numbers.” Remind students to be specific in their responses.
- Do you agree or disagree with the phrase “there is strength in numbers”? Why or why not?
 - What are some examples of strength in numbers?
 - Has there been a time in your life where you have done something as a group that you could not have done on your own? What was the situation and what did you do to respond? Why did you involve others?

Ask a few students to share what they have written.

- B. Explain that organizing collectively—of having strength in numbers—is a way for workers to express and to attain power in the workplace. Oftentimes, this is done through the work of unions. A union is a group of workers, usually in the same industry or profession, who join together to negotiate better working conditions. This includes things like higher wages, more time off, and better benefits such as healthcare, paid sick leave, etc. Workers are required to pay dues in order to be a union member, and these funds are used for negotiating contracts, paying union leaders’ salaries, strike funds, and more.

Labor organizing has a long history in the United States. In 1794, shoemakers in Philadelphia created the country’s first union. Since then, workers have been coming together in unions to improve their working conditions, wages, and benefits.

- C. Explain that students will be learning about different collective strategies that people can use to fight for their rights at work. Divide students into jigsaw groups of equal size. Distribute a Worker Power handout (one of the four strategies; Handout D) to each student in the group. All members of one group should have the same strategy.

Note: This lesson includes four strategies, so depending on the size of the class, strategies may be repeated.

- D. Instruct students to read the handout, circling words or phrases they do not understand and



TEACHING TIP

Should students be interested in learning more about strikes in the United States, you can direct them to [Labor Wars in the U.S.](#) (PBS) – a comprehensive list of major strikes in U.S. history and the [Labor Action Tracker](#) (AFL-CIO and Cornell University) – an up-to-date list of strikes currently happening in the U.S.

highlighting important details. Ask the group to discuss their assigned strategy, ensuring that all members of the group understand.

- E. After 5 minutes, ask students to form new groups, finding three different students to work with. Each new group should include a student with a different strategy. Instruct the groups to take turns explaining and sharing their strategies with each other.
- F. After 10 minutes, bring the class together and explain that the students will take on the role of workers who must decide what collective action to take at their workplace. Students have the option of joining a group that favors striking, boycotting, collective bargaining, or appealing to the public.
- G. Show the scenario on the screen (see Google Slideshow or p. 14). Ask for volunteers to read the scenario aloud.
- H. Explain that students should imagine that they are the fast food workers in this scenario, and that they must decide (individually) what strategy to take first to try to make change in their workplace. Designate one corner of the classroom for each strategy. Give students a minute to make their decision, then instruct them to move to the corner associated with the strategy they most support.
- I. Instruct each group (which may be very different sizes) to put together a proposal to the rest of the class about why their strategy is the best one to pursue in this scenario. Students may write their persuasive proposal in a variety of ways—on the white board, on large pieces of paper, in a shared Google Doc, etc.
- J. Each group presents to the rest of the class. Allow time after each presentation for students to ask questions.
- K. After all groups have reported, debrief with the following questions:
 - What are the strengths of each strategy?
 - What are the weaknesses or challenges?
 - Did anyone change their mind from their original position? Why?

SCENARIO

Imagine that you are a fast food worker. You have been working at a well-known fast food restaurant for three years. Although you want to work full-time hours (typically 35-40 hours per week), the manager at the restaurant only schedules you to work 24 hours per week. You are not alone; most of the other workers at the restaurant are not scheduled for the hours that they have requested. This means that none of you earn enough money at this restaurant and have to work additional jobs to pay your bills and make ends meet.

There are many other problems at the restaurant. Employees are frequently burned when using the old cooking equipment. Although many of you have complained that the equipment often malfunctions and causes burns and other injuries, the fast food company has not replaced it. Although California law requires a lunch break of at least 30 minutes during a 5+ hour shift, you and your coworkers are often asked to take short lunch breaks when the restaurant gets busy. "You can only take a 20 minute lunch break today," your manager says. "We're slammed."

You and your coworkers are not alone in having these problems. On social media, you have seen employees at other locations complain about similar conditions. The issues that you and your coworkers face seem to be common in this fast food restaurant chain and others.

According to the Center for American Progress:

"California's fast-food workers earn some of the lowest wages in the state [...]. Of occupations in California with more than 100,000 workers, only farm workers earn less [...]. Benefits [health insurance, sick pay, etc.] in the fast food industry are also low, with estimates suggesting that just 13 percent of core front-line fast-food workers receive health benefits through their employer. Most fast-food workers work between 16 and 34 hours a week, with a third working full time. Although many fast-food workers have multiple jobs, most do not work enough hours with any one employer to qualify for benefits. Employers often provide work hours and schedules with little notice, with workers sometimes receiving their schedules only a few days in advance and their hours varying greatly from week to week."¹

¹ Center for American Progress, "Raising Standards for Fast-Food Workers in California," 20 April 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/raising-standards-fast-food-workers-california>.

ACTIVITY 5: THE STRUGGLE FOR UNIONIZATION

Students should now be familiar with some of the reasons why workers might want to join a union, as well as some strategies for collectively making change in the workplace. But how do employees unionize their workplaces, and what do some employers do to try to prevent this? In this activity, students will learn the steps workers must take to form a union and the challenges they face.

MATERIALS

- Video: “How to Start a Union: Step By Step” (More Perfect Union)
- Website: Union Busting Handbook (Communications Workers of America)
- Google Slideshow (Slides 14-15)

PROCEDURE

- A. Explain that labor unions are formed by workers to protect their rights. By joining together and pushing for improved benefits and working conditions, workers have a better chance at success than if they were trying to get these changes on their own. But forming a union is not easy. It requires a lot of courage and determination on the part of the workers.
- B. To illustrate the work needed to start a union, show “How to Start a Union: Step By Step” (12:39), asking students to take notes about anything they find interesting or that seems important.

Note: If technology is unavailable, a transcript of the video is available in the Appendix (see p. 36).

Pause at the following intervals to check for understanding and to answer the following questions:

- Part I (0:00 - 3:46): Why is talking to your coworkers an important first step toward unionizing?
Answers may include: to see who supports unionizing, to convince people that forming/joining a union is a good idea, to learn about what improvements people would like to see in the workplace
- Part II (3:47 - 7:31): The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is the U.S. federal agency responsible for protecting workers’ right to organize. Do workers need to hold a NLRB-monitored election in order to form a union?
*Answer: No. If the employer voluntarily recognizes the union, an election is not required.**
- Part III (7:32 - 8:52): What types of union busting activities might an employer use during a campaign to unionize?
Answers may include: force employees into captive audience meetings, convince workers that they would have changed policies if they knew people didn’t like them, try to convince workers that a union will be bad for them
- Part IV (8:53 - 12:39): According to the video, what are some of the benefits for unionized workers (vs. those who are not in a union)?
Answers may include: Higher wages, access to more benefits, better job security, better training, better work-life balances, safe working environments, personal empowerment, connection with fellow workers

**Note: As a result of an NLRB decision in August 2023, a new process has been put in place to establish union representation at a workplace. If a union demands employer recognition and has proof that a majority of employees wish to designate the union as their representative, the employer can no longer decline the request. The employer now must either recognize the union or file its own petition with the NLRB within two weeks of receiving the unionization request from employees. If they fail to do either, the workplace will be unionized without holding an NLRB election.*

- C. The video references union busting tactics that employers use to try to stop employees from forming a union. As a class, have students dig deeper and read through “the Plays” section of the Union Busting Handbook, a web page created by the Communications Workers of America. As you review each of the eight tactics, ask one or two students to reflect on whether or not they think the tactic would be effective in stopping them from organizing at their workplace and why.
- D. Instruct students to spend a few minutes writing a response to the following questions:
- Why do you think an employer might not support unionization?
 - If employees are attempting to form a union, do you think employers should be allowed to engage in union busting activities? Why or why not?
 - Given what you’ve learned about the steps that need to be taken to form a union, do you think it is worth it for employees to stick with their unionization campaign if their employer will use union busting tactics against them? Why or why not?
- E. To conclude the activity, ask a few students to share what they have written.

ACTIVITY 6: SOLIDARITY!

45 MINUTES

Students will learn about workers advocating for their rights and create a project to show their solidarity.

MATERIALS

- Solidarity Case Studies (Google Slides – *Note: This is a separate Google Slides document from the main lesson slideshow*)
- Handout: Solidarity! (p. 29 / Google Doc)
- Google Slideshow (Slide 16)

PROCEDURE

A. Remind students that the workers of Bryant and May formed a union over the course of the 1888 strike. Annie Besant helped form the union. Although she was not a worker at Bryant and May, she was nonetheless invested in their rights. She acted in solidarity with the workers.

B. Share the definition of solidarity with students:

solidarity: a feeling of unity that is based on shared interests, goals, or responsibilities. Solidarity is more than just being supportive of a group of people or a cause; solidarity means taking action to change oppressive systems.

C. Ask: Who else showed solidarity with the workers of Bryant and May?

Answers may include: Those who donated to the strike fund or boycotted the company

D. Divide students into small groups and assign one case study to each group:

- **UPS workers authorize a strike:** Unionized UPS workers threatened to strike in summer 2023 if their demands for higher wages and safer working conditions were not met.
- **Factory workers attempt to unionize over poor working conditions:** When workers at Amy's Kitchen (a producer of organic vegetarian food) tried to unionize, the factory was closed. Now, employees of the food producer are calling for a consumer boycott of Amy's products.
- **Hollywood writers and actors go on strike:** In 2023, members of the Hollywood writers and actors unions went on strike in demand of stronger protections against artificial intelligence (AI) and higher payments for their work
- **Starbucks employees attempt to unionize:** In December 2021, a Starbucks store in Buffalo, NY became the first unionized Starbucks store in the U.S. Since then, more than 350 Starbucks stores have unionized, despite much pushback and delay from the company.

E. In their groups, students should complete the following actions:

1. Watch the informational video about their case study
2. Review each of the four sources on the subsequent slides
3. Answer the question: "How is this person/group/organization acting in solidarity with workers?" for each of the four sources

Note: Each group should make a copy of the slideshow so that they can write their answers directly on the slides. If you would prefer handwritten responses, distribute Handout E to each student.

- F. After 20 minutes, bring the class together, asking for volunteers to share brief summaries of each case study. Then, open discussion to the whole class: how did people show solidarity in each of these cases?
- G. For homework or during the next class period, ask students to choose one of the aforementioned groups of workers to be in solidarity with. How would they show solidarity with these workers?

Instruct students to create a project to show their solidarity with the workers' struggle. Ideas include:

- Create a post on social media
- Design a poster to hold at a picket/demonstration
- Write a letter to the company
- Create a presentation to educate classmates about the issue
- Create a mock web page soliciting donations for a strike fund (or similar)
- Write a letter to post online or send to a newspaper for publishing

Students are not limited to this list. Encourage them to be creative in their displays of solidarity!

Each project should include responses to the following prompts:

1. I am in solidarity with these workers because...
(Why do they support this cause? What are the problems with this workplace/situation?)
2. To be in solidarity with these workers, people can...
(What actions can people take?)

At a future session, students will present their solidarity projects to the class.



ACTIVITY 7: CLOSING

5 MINUTES

Students will complete an exit ticket sharing what they have learned or how they can take action in the future.

MATERIALS

- Notecards
- Google Slideshow (Slide 17)

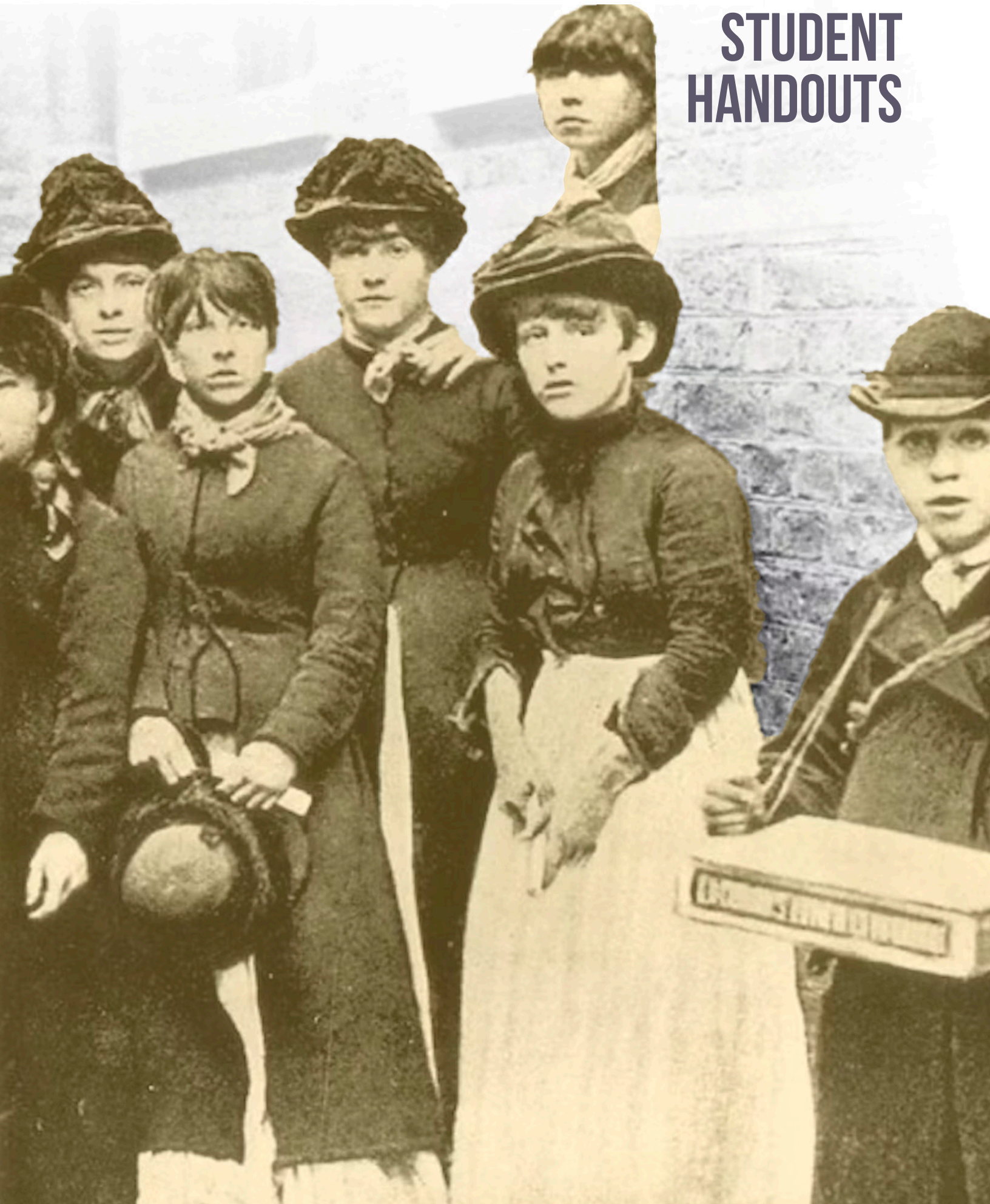
PROCEDURE

Provide each participant with an “exit card” and ask them to reflect on the following question:

Now that you are aware of the Matchwomen of Bryant and May, contemporary labor movements, and the strategies that are available to workers:

- How has your understanding of Article 23 of the UDHR changed?
- What have you learned?
- How can you use this information to protect your rights and the rights of others?

STUDENT HANDOUTS



KEY TERMS

benefit: a service (e.g. health insurance) or privilege (e.g. time off to take a vacation) provided by an employer in addition to wages or salary

boycott: a collective refusal to purchase goods or use services from a business/organization

collective: something done together as a group

collective bargaining: process through which a group of workers (such as a union) negotiate with their employer, usually for things like higher wages, better benefits, or better working conditions

commodity: an economic good; a product

hourly worker: a worker whose pay varies according to the number of hours they work (i.e. the amount on the worker's paycheck may be different each time, depending on how many hours they worked during the pay period)

labor: work; a term to refer to workers collectively as a group or movement

minimum wage: the lowest amount of payment per hour that is legally allowed

organizing: bringing people together for a common purpose (also known as political organizing, community organizing, or labor organizing, depending on its purpose)

overtime pay: wages paid to an employee for working more than 40 hours in a regular 7-day work-week. Overtime pay must be at least 1.5x the worker's regular hourly rate.

salaried worker: a worker whose pay is predetermined, usually based on an agreed-upon yearly amount (i.e. the amount on the worker's paycheck will be the same each time, regardless of how many hours they work)

solidarity: a feeling of unity that is based on shared interests, goals, or responsibilities. Solidarity is more than just being supportive of a group of people or a cause; solidarity means taking action to change oppressive systems (even if those systems do not affect you personally in the same way).

strike: a collective refusal to work by a group of workers

sweated industries: industries with long hours, poor working conditions, and low pay. Today these workplaces are known as "sweatshops".

union: a group of workers that join together to protect their rights or make improvements to their working conditions, wages, etc. Union members negotiate with their employer as a group rather than as individuals.

union busting: actions taken by an employer to stop the formation of a union

RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE

<i>Statement</i>	<i>True or false?</i>	<i>Explain your reasoning</i>
If you are an hourly worker, you are entitled to overtime pay if you work 50 hours during a regular work week. Salaried workers are not entitled to overtime pay.	T F	
Your employer does not need to pay you for working through your lunch break if they did not ask you to do so.	T F	
The federal minimum wage is \$9 per hour.	T F	
Employers are allowed to not hire you for a job because of your race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or age.	T F	
Employers are allowed to pay you and your coworker different amounts for doing the same job.	T F	
Your employer must provide access to a restroom, but can make you wait a long time to use it (e.g. wait a couple hours until your scheduled 10-minute break).	T F	
You are allowed to take unpaid time off to take care of a sick family member without risking the loss of your job.	T F	
If you are under 20 years old, your employer can pay you less than minimum wage for the first few months of your employment.	T F	
Employers can fire you for reporting an injury or unsafe conditions.	T F	
You are allowed to discuss your pay with coworkers while at work.	T F	

ANNIE BESANT'S ARTICLE ("WHITE SLAVERY IN LONDON")

BACKGROUND

"White Slavery in London" was an article written and published by Annie Besant, in her newspaper, *The Link*. Besant was a British social reformer and a campaigner for women's rights and other social causes. The article was published in June 1888 and condemns the poor working conditions many Londoners experienced. In the article, Besant focuses on the conditions and challenges at Bryant and May, a match factory in one of London's working class neighborhoods, the East End.

Besant describes the working conditions at Bryant and May, a matchstick company which employed mostly women and girls at its factory. Like many other companies, they did this because it was cheaper to employ women and children than it was to employ men.

The matchmakers at the Bryant and May factory experienced poor working conditions and potential health risks, including phossy jaw, a potentially deadly condition caused by exposure to a toxic chemical used in matchmaking.

Note: The article below has been edited for clarity and length. Edits are indicated by [brackets]. [...] indicates that content has been removed or language has been modernized.

ARTICLE

[...] being aware that the shareholders of Bryant and May are [making large profits] and at the same time are paying their workers only [a tiny amount] for making match-boxes, [we pledge to boycott] matches made by this firm." [...]

Bryant and May [...makes larger profits every year.] Let us see how the money is made with which these monstrous dividends are paid. [...]

The hour for [starting] work is 6:30 in summer and 8:00 in winter; work concludes at 6 p.m. Half-an-hour is allowed for breakfast and an hour for dinner. This long day of work is performed by young girls, who have to stand the whole of the time.

A typical case is that of a girl of 16 [who] earns 4 [shillings] a week [...] Out of the earnings 2 [shil-

lings] is paid for the rent of one room; the child lives on only bread-and-butter and tea, alike for breakfast and dinner, but [excitedly says] that once a month she went to a meal where "you get coffee, and bread and butter, and jam, and marmalade, and lots of it"; now and then she goes to the [theater...], and that appeared to be the solitary bit of [fun] in her life.

The [low wages of the workers are] subject to deductions [...]; if the feet are dirty, or the ground under the bench is left untidy, a fine [...] is inflicted; for putting "burnts" - matches that have caught fire during the work - on the bench [workers are fined.] In some departments a fine [...] is inflicted for talking.

If a girl is late she is shut out for "half the day", that is for the morning six hours, and [money] is deducted out of her day's [pay]. One girl was fined [...] for letting the web twist round a machine [when she tried] to save her fingers from being cut, and was sharply told to take care of the machine, "never mind your fingers". Another, who carried out the instructions and lost a finger thereby, was left unsupported while she was helpless. [Workers are occasionally beaten by the foreman as well.]

One [part] of the work consists in taking matches out of a frame and putting them into boxes; [...] only one frame is given out at a time, and the girls have to run downstairs and upstairs each time to fetch the frame, thus much increasing their fatigue. One of the [dangers] of the frame work is the accidental firing of the matches: when this happens the worker loses the work, and if the frame is injured she is fined or [fired...]

Born in slums, driven to work while still children, undersized because underfed, oppressed because helpless, flung aside as soon as worked out, who cares if [the matchmakers] die or go on the streets, provided only that the Bryant and May shareholders get their [large profits...]?

Let us strive to touch [the consciences of the owners of Bryant and May], i.e. their pockets, and let us at least avoid being "partakers of their sins", by [boycotting the company].

Source: Annie Besant, "White Slavery in London," *The Link*, 23 June 1888, <http://www.unionhistory.info/brit-ainatwork/display.php?irn=2000050>.

WORKER POWER

STRATEGY 1: STRIKE

A strike is a collective refusal to work by a group of workers. The goal of a strike is to stop work and therefore stop the employer from making profits until they give in to worker demands. Types of strikes include:

- Slowdown: Workers work slower on purpose, resulting in less output
- Sit-down: Workers take control of the workplace and refuse to do work
- Walkout: Workers leave their place of work during the workday
- Sick-out: Workers all call out sick on the same day

Another type of strike, a general strike, is when workers across different industries collectively refuse to work. This can shut down most economic and government activities in a country and is usually done to make a statement or achieve a political goal.

There are a number of tactics that employers use to break strikes. Employers will sometimes hire temporary workers to replace those on strike. These strikebreakers are often called “scabs”. Historically, military, the police, or private security officers have been called in to stop strikes by force.

Workers usually put a lot of consideration into the decision to strike. While some workers receive pay from their union while on strike (called ‘strike pay’), many workers lose out on all income while on strike. Although there are laws that protect workers’ jobs while they are on strike, these laws do not apply to every type of worker or situation. For example, while there is a union for employees of the federal government, they are not allowed to strike. When railroad unions threatened a strike in December 2022, President Biden signed a law to block a national rail strike because of the “economic catastrophe” that could have followed.

NOTES

[illegible]

WORKER POWER

STRATEGY 2: BOYCOTT

A boycott is a collective refusal to purchase goods or services from an employer. The goal of a boycott is to stop consumption—to put economic pressure on the employer so that it is persuaded to give in to the workers' demands. There are two types of boycotts:

- Primary boycott: Workers discourage consumers from purchasing goods and services from their employer
 - » Example: Farmworkers start a campaign asking people to stop buying strawberries grown by their employer
- Secondary boycott: Workers discourage other companies from doing business with their employer
 - » Example: Farmworkers start a campaign asking a large supermarket chain to stop stocking strawberries grown by their employer

In the United States, primary boycotts by unions are legally allowed. Secondary boycotts by unions are illegal because they may have a negative effect on the larger economy.

Boycotts are also used for political purposes. For example, during the Civil Rights Movement, Black people in Montgomery, Alabama boycotted the city's public transit system as a way of protesting the system's policy of racial segregation.

Research indicates that companies only respond to boycotts around 25% of the time. Companies have responded to boycotts (or not) in various ways:

- In 2019, left-wing fitness enthusiasts boycotted SoulCycle after learning that one of the company's major investors was hosting a fundraiser for then-President Donald Trump. The company posted a brief statement on Instagram, but did not make any changes.
- In December 1965, Cesar Chavez's National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) began a boycott of Schenley Industries, a large grower and nationally-known brand in the liquor industry. By April 1966, the company was hurt so much financially by the boycott that it met the NFWA at the bargaining table and signed a labor agreement.
- Following the 2018 Parkland shooting in Florida, outdoor retailer Dick's Sporting Goods stopped selling semi-automatic firearms and high-capacity magazines. Many gun owners were not pleased and announced a boycott of the store. The company lost a quarter of a billion dollars the following year, but they did not reverse their policy changes.

NOTES

Another way that workers can make change by appealing to the public is to ask the government for help. In the United States, workers can file complaints with the government's various labor departments—the National Labor Review Board, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and more. In some cases, these complaints lead to federal legislation that not only improves conditions for workers at one company, but across entire industries.

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SOLIDARITY!

CASE STUDY: _____

Source	What did the person/people/organization do? How is this an example of solidarity?





APPENDIX

RESOURCES

British Women Trade Unionists on Strike at Bryant & May, 1888

British Online Archives

microform.digital/boa/collections/53/british-women-trade-unionists-on-strike-at-bryant-may-1888

Archival documents related to Bryant & May before, during, and after the Matchwomen's Strike of 1888

What was the significance of the Match Girls' Strike in 1888?

The National Archives

nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/what-was-the-significance-of-the-match-girls-strike-in-1888

Classroom resource about the Matchwomen's Strike that includes image and primary source analysis activities

What We Do

National Labor Review Board

nlrb.gov/about-nlrb/what-we-do

Informational site about the National Labor Review Board, the independent federal agency responsible for protecting employees' right to organize in the United States

Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in Labour History

Louise Raw, London: Continuum Books, 2009

Labor historian Louise Raw provides an in-depth analysis of the Matchwomen's Strike, including a critical look at the role that Annie Besant played in the initiation and continuation of the strike.

The True Story of the Matchstick Girls

Still Watching Netflix

youtu.be/gKjHADyli7Y

Millie Bobby Brown details the story of the Matchstick Women and the 1888 strike, as fictionalized in the Netflix film, *Enola Holmes 2*

The Match Workers Strike Fund Register

TUC History Online

unionhistory.info/matchworkers/matchworkers.php

Archival documents related to the Matchwomen's Strike of 1888, available through the online archive of the Trades Union Congress

Summary of the Major Laws of the Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor

dol.gov/general/aboutdol/majorlaws

Informational site that includes information about labor law in the United States, including the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Occupational and Health Administration, and the Family and Medical Leave Act

OTHER NOTEWORTHY LABOR ACTIONS

1965 – Delano Grape Strike

nps.gov/articles/000/workers-united-the-delano-grape-strike-and-boycott.htm

In September 1965, hundreds of Filipino farm workers of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) voted to strike against ten vineyards in Delano, California in hopes of securing a wage increase. The mostly Mexican workers of the National Farm Workers Association voted to join the strike a week later in solidarity with the workers from AWOC. The strike and associated boycotts lasted for five years, resulting in victory for the workers.

1982 – Garment workers strike in Chinatown

aaww.org/chinatown-garment-strike-1982

In 1982, garment workers in New York City—mostly Chinese immigrants led by the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union’s (ILGWU)—were bargaining for a new contract that included higher wages, holiday pay, and better working conditions. On June 24, 1982, 20,000 garment workers rallied and called a strike. Within days, most contractors caved to pressure and signed the new union contract.

1991 – Hotel workers strike in Las Vegas

blackpast.org/african-american-history/organized-labor-21st-century-las-vegas-hotel-and-culinary-workers-union-local-226/

Beginning in 1991, Las Vegas hotel workers (a majority of whom were people of color) went on strike for more than six years. Their target was the Frontier, a hotel that tried to shut out the union and hired non-union laborers. For the duration of the strike, not a single unionized worker crossed the picket line. As a result of the strike, the casino lost approximately \$1 billion in profits.

2019 – Graduate students strike at UC Santa Cruz

nytimes.com/2020/02/11/us/ucsc-strike.html

In December 2019, graduate student teaching assistants at UC Santa Cruz went on strike by refusing to submit grades. The strike—in which the students demanded a cost-of-living wage increase—was a “wildcat” strike, as it was not officially sanctioned by the students’ union. At least 50 teaching assistants were fired as a result of their participation in the strike.

2022 – Employees form first Amazon union in New York

motherjones.com/politics/2022/04/amazon-labor-first-union-win-warehouse-staten-island-historic-smalls-jfk8/

In April 2022, employees at Amazon’s JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island, New York voted to form a union. The Amazon Labor Union is the first successful attempt at unionization for Amazon employees in the United States. As of 2023, JFK8 is the only Amazon warehouse that have successfully unionized.

SECTION 1

There is no greater power than the power of people working together.

Through the ages, many significant reforms and lifesaving regulations have been gained for the working class people through unionizing, organizing, and worker solidarity. Looking back at one of the first times common laborers came together in a strike, the stakes were higher than just low pay. Along with horrendous working conditions, these particular factory workers were forced to fight for their lives as a terrifying ailment began making its way through their workplace.

When an activist arrived at this 19th century East London matchstick factory, the story she recounted from these factory workers would ignite a metaphorical spark of defiance that would spread into a blazing outcry across the UK and empower future generations of workers to do the same.

London's East End neighborhood became a hub for immigration and a variety of cultures through the centuries. In the 17th century, French Protestants began to settle in the neighborhood, followed by Ashkenazi Jews in the early 18th century. In the 19th century, the East End was home to growing populations of Africans, Asians, Irish, Afro-Caribbean, and Eastern European Jewish people. There's no question that life was notoriously difficult for these marginalized populations, and the neighborhood became known for extreme poverty, overpopulation, disease, and starvation.

The infamous Jack the Ripper began victimizing this very neighborhood towards the end of the century. But the stigmatization of the East End by the rest of London was likely the cause for much of its bad reputation, along with its socioeconomic troubles. Much of mainstream English society held xenophobic views, and some Londoners viewed the East End as though it were a foreign country rather than a neighborhood in their own city.

A great deal of the written history of the East End was penned from an outsider's perspective and the conditions were often exaggerated and sensationalized. The East End was sometimes literally referred to as "Outcast London", and individuals from around Britain would travel to the neighborhood to gawk at its residents, an activity known as "slumming".

Comprehension check: What were living conditions like in London's East End?

As a result of this prejudice, those from the East End who were lucky enough to find a steady job as unskilled laborers were often forced to settle for low pay, long hours, and poor working conditions.

Many immigrant workers from the East End ended up in factories. These workers were made up of all demographics: men, women, and children. The population of immigrant women were especially impacted by this line of work. And despite the dimly-lit, crowded, and unsafe conditions, children were considered acceptable and capable for the duties required.

In 1833, Parliament enacted legislation that was supposed to limit the amount of time children could spend working in factories. The Factory Act of 1833 disallowed children under the age of nine to work at all, and it called for children ages nine through 13 to work no more than 48 hours a week, eight hours a day. But due to the small size of the inspection team that was meant to enforce the Act, most factories were able to evade the restrictions. And the fact that very few labor unions existed at the time allowed many factories to be dangerously unregulated. The deplorable wages and crushing economic struggles of these immigrant families forced a steady stream of women laborers into London's sweated industries.

Comprehension check: What were some of the conditions that many workers faced in Victorian London?

One of these many industries was the Bryant & May match factory, established in 1861. The first friction matches were sold in 1827, after chemist John Walker invented them by accident. He called them Friction Lights, and used a potassium chloride-antimony sulfide paste at the end of each matchstick that would ignite when struck against sandpaper. By 1831, white phosphorus, then known as yellow phosphorus, was added to the matches. This increased their popularity since it made them easier to light. But even then, white phosphorus was known to be a potentially dangerous substance.

In previous centuries, it was used as a deadly poison, although its glow-in-the-dark properties made it easy to detect the cause of death. Despite this, the demand for matches grew, and they became one of the largest products to use white phosphorus. During the 1840s, red phosphorus was discovered to be an effective, non-toxic replacement, but many match factories didn't bother to make the switch. In fact, by the late 1800s, only two of the 25 match factories across England used red phosphorus instead of white. The Bryant & May factory was among these 23 establishments, and their indifference to employee safety would have dire consequences.

Comprehension check: What was a specific risk working at Bryant & May?

Most of the workers at Bryant & May were made up of the immigrant women and girls of the East End neighborhood. Many of these workers were new or early generation Irish immigrants, some as young as 13 years old. These young women and girls were faced with atrocious conditions at work. For 14 hours a day, workers would work in various stages of production, including dipping small pieces of poplar or pine wood into the toxic white phosphorous chemical mixture to form the head of the match, placing each of them out to dry, and boxing them up for retail. They were expected to remain standing for the duration of their shift, not permitted to leave their workstation for lunch, and were scheduled only two

bathroom breaks. They were responsible for keeping their workstation clean and well stocked, and had to purchase their own tools and brushes.

Additionally, workers faced a number of fines for ridiculous and humiliating stipulations, such as talking or using the bathroom outside of scheduled breaks. Fines would also be issued for having a messy workstation, dropping a match, arriving late, and dirty feet, which singled out the workers who couldn't afford shoes and were forced to work barefoot. Workers were even subject to physical abuse by the foremen in charge, and were told, "Never mind your fingers!" when working with machinery. This degrading treatment alone was enough to make life miserable, but the exposure to hazardous chemicals in the match heads brought on injuries so horrific the women had no choice but to risk their meager wages and organize to save their lives.

Comprehension check: What conditions did the workers endure by working at Bryant and May?

The fumes from the white phosphorus that were inhaled at the match factories could cause a terrible condition known as phossy jaw, occurring usually between three and five years of continued exposure. The first symptom would come in the form of pain and swelling in the jawbone or toothaches. As the condition progressed, a pus with a foul odor would develop inside the victim's mouth, which quickly led to necrosis, the advanced stage of the condition in which the victim's jawbone would decay and rot away. The condition would be potentially fatal if the infection spread to the brain, so doctors would often need to surgically remove the jawbone completely. It became such a common occurrence that the factory would have the affected teeth of the worker removed at the first complaint of pain. If the worker refused to have their teeth pulled, they were fired.

While their workers continued to suffer under these oppressive and dangerous conditions, the shareholders of Bryant & May enjoyed dividends of over 20%, and the factory management continued to extract as much labor from their workers as they could in order to keep these shareholders happy. The factory expanded to approximately 1400 workers and continued to push them to the breaking point, until a woman's rights campaigner came to visit them in 1888.

Annie Besant was an important figure of social reform in 19th century London, and she hoped to expose the terrible aspects of factory work and initiate a push to improve the lives of working women. She began interviewing the factory workers directly to get firsthand information about their working conditions. She took down lengthy descriptions of the many ridiculous fines they faced, their poor pay, and the terrible conditions they faced daily, and published it all as an expose in a newspaper called *The Link*.

Comprehension check: How did Annie Besant get information about the working conditions at Bryant and May?

SECTION 2

As the story circulated, it horrified and informed readers, leading to public awareness, sympathy, and most importantly, support. Factory management was furious about the story and soon retaliated, firing the women they believed had spoken to Besant. They pushed back harder by trying to force workers to sign a statement which contradicted the article, stating that it was false and that they were happy with their working conditions. This further angered workers, and when one worker was fired for refusing to sign the document, a strike was finally set in motion.

On July 5th, 200 of the workers left the factory and marched to *The Link's* offices on Fleet Street to further air their grievances to the press. Soon after, all 1400 workers would follow suit and walk out from Bryant & May. They marched through the streets and told their stories, which gripped the media and the public. 50 of these women even appeared at Parliament to plead their cases. This visit left a lasting impression of the extreme poverty of the workers, which starkly contrasted with the wealthy members of Parliament and some of the upper-class Londoners observing from the outside. The support for these young women and girls grew, and donations were pooled together for a much needed strike fund. Besant continued to provide support, helping to organize the Union of Women Matchmakers labor union, one of the first of its kind. The women continued to support each other through the strike and their solidarity grew.

Finally, a few weeks later on July 21st, 1888, Bryant & May gave in to the striking workers, ending their oppressive fines altogether and allowing back the workers who had been fired. Management also agreed to give the workers a breakfast room so they no longer had to be confined to their workspace during their allotted meal, allowing them to eat away from the dangerous white phosphorous. While this was a small victory, it was significant to workers' rights overall as it brought important awareness of deplorable factory conditions for the first time and demonstrated that even the unskilled workers of the East End could flex collective bargaining power on powerful factory bosses.

The strike inspired many other working class people to follow in their footsteps in the months and years that followed, and resulted in a labor movement known as New Unionism. More than anything, the match girls' strike proved the power of worker solidarity and resilience to many for the first time.

Unfortunately, Bryant & May continued using white phosphorus in their matchsticks for another 13 years although there was continued pushback. In 1891, the Salvation Army opened their own match factory that provided fair wages and made matchsticks without the toxic element. But the Salvation Army wasn't able to compete with the sweat industry factories for long with the added cost of better and safer practices.

Finally, in 1901, as the tide continued to turn, Bryant & May finally omitted white phosphorus from their matchstick production process and the element was banned from use in factories soon after. The factory remained in operation until 1979, when the company moved to Liverpool. The factory building was eventually transformed into flats and still stands today. The front of the building exhibits a blue plaque that commemorates Annie Besant's work and the brave and resilient matchgirls of the East End.

More Perfect Union has covered a lot of union drives, and we know that the process can be both rewarding and extremely difficult. So where do you even start? We're gonna break it down for you step by step.

Hi, I'm Sohla. And I'm Ham. And today, we're gonna give you a recipe for how to form a union at your workplace. We're also gonna make a cake. Don't worry. It'll make sense. Welcome to the classroom from More Perfect Union.

You might have heard about some of the high profile union drives taking place across the country right now. Over the last couple of years, a record number of American workers have walked off the job.

A recent survey found that 63% of workers who quit their jobs in 2021 did so because their pay was simply too low. And 57% said it was because they felt disrespected at work. Does this sound familiar? Is there something happening in your workplace that you want to change? We talked to some workers who felt the same way.

They live all over the country and have very different types of jobs, but they all have one thing in common. They were fed up at work and they decided to do something to improve their workplace.

What a union is, is just a structure of workers. It's really important to have a union, but a union doesn't do anything by itself, any more than an empty school educates people by itself.

We all come together around one decision and we go to the bargaining table and we get to make our demands known.

It's such an amazing feeling, knowing that they have to actually take the time and listen to us. It's not some quiz that you fill out every once in a while at work. Like, they actually have to hear this feedback.

There's no one size fits all way to start this process, but there's some key steps that most successful union organizers would recommend you take.

You need to have one-on-one conversations. Sometimes you might be the best messenger to talk to a co-worker. Sometimes you might need to identify someone who might be more effective. It's useful to think of an issue or two that people care about, like that crazy increase in healthcare premiums we have to pay or the loss of paid time off.

When I first started talking with my coworkers, we weren't talking about unionizing. We were talking about the problems that we all had to deal with at work every day.

It's a little bit of talking and a whole lot of listening.

You need to talk to your coworkers about the real issues that are driving you to organize and what you want the union to help you win.

We distributed surveys to get an idea of what the working climate was in our different campuses. More than 90% of UC workers are rent burdened. More than half of us have experienced or have seen discrimination or harassment in the job.

You should map out your workplace. Who works at the company? What are the different types of jobs

they do? How much are they paid? As you have those conversations, you'll need to keep track of who definitely wants to organize a union, who might need some more convincing, or who has concerns.

Once you develop this relationship with people, you can kind of drop in there, like, "Hey, what do you think of the Starbucks workers unionizing? Hey, what do you think of this similar job to ours that is union? Do you know other people that are in unions?" And then you can kind of feel out from there who's going to be on your side, who's passionate and fighting for you, who's going to probably vote for you, but isn't going to work with you the whole way to make it happen. And unfortunately, you will find a few people that are anti-union.

I did hear people telling me things that this is not something that science students do. Kind of like this idea of us versus them, but we have the same goals. We're trying to improve people's lives.

Knowing where you stand with your coworkers is key to a successful organizing campaign.

Comprehension check: Why is talking to your coworkers an important first step toward unionizing?

When enough of your coworkers are on the same page, you can reach out to a union and decide how you want to organize. If you work for a big employer, like Amazon, there might be other workers already organizing in your workplace or in your industry at large. Like most autoworkers, already organized with the UAW, or many hospitality workers organized with UNITE HERE. Try reaching out to the relevant union and see if you can get plugged in.

I previously, like in October, had reached out to Starbucks Workers United from a fake email account that I made up. "Hey, like, we're watching you, and we want to support you. How do we do this?" And they actually responded back, and they were like, the best way to support is, let's talk about unionizing.

So when it came time to the point of, you know, oh, let's talk to Michelle. She's the one that knows about the unions. I pulled that email back up. "I'm from the store in Mesa, like, can we talk?" and that's how it started and you know—two days later we filed.

The UAW, the United Auto Workers, historically has represented auto workers. However, it also represents many other industries including aerospace, agricultural implements, and now more than 100,000 academic workers across the nation. I think it's great to be part of so many people coming from so many different industries because academia is not alone in the world.

However you choose to affiliate, with a big union or independently, you will work to develop an organizing plan for your workplace.

To demonstrate to your employer that you want a union, you'll have other workers sign union cards to show support and present those to management and ask them to recognize the union.

What that card says is that you want to bargain collectively with the company.

It's not something that you can do if you're impatient. It's a lot of just walking up to people, on my break of course, who I don't know, and ask them if they've signed a card, if not, why?

I'm asking them to put their faith and their trust into an organization that they may not know anything about.

Not every employer will resist you forming a union. Your boss can voluntarily recognize your union. And some employers do! Yeah! Voluntary recognition just means that they see that there is enough interest in forming a union and they say, "Great".

But what happens when they don't voluntarily recognize the union? Well, one option is to keep pushing. It is after all, your choice, and if there's clear evidence, you and a majority of your coworkers support unionizing, your employer should respect that choice. Otherwise, you'll need to file for an election with the National Labor Relations Board. I know this is getting technical, but stay with us.

Once you know that a majority of your coworkers are ready to vote yes for a union, you'll file for what's called a Representation Petition, or RC. This process will also involve determining who will be part of your bargaining unit. A bargaining unit just means the group of employees who will be represented by the union and by the contract with the employer. Then, the NLRB will set a date for the election. Up until the election, you will keep campaigning.

And your employer will probably keep pushing back. Workers will submit their ballots, and then it's time to actually count the votes. Traditionally, this election would happen in person, at the workplace, with in-person observers sent by the NLRB to make sure that the rules are followed and everything is fair. The NLRB board agent counts them and reports out the results.

Comprehension check: The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is the U.S. federal agency responsible for protecting workers' right to organize. Do workers need to hold a NLRB-monitored election in order to form a union?

When your employer hears that you or coworkers are talking about organizing and forming a union, they're probably going to fight back. One 2020 study noted that employers spent \$340 million per year on union avoidance consultants. That means they might make you attend anti-union meetings so you can "learn all the facts". Or they might have supervisors try to convince you that the union will be bad for you and your coworkers. But they're counting on the fact that you don't know your rights.

When you're in an organizing drive, the company has home court advantage. They can do all the union busting they want on the clock. They can put you in what's called captive audience meetings. The union busters, they're going to come in and they're going to say, "Oh, we're so sorry you're so unhappy. We didn't know. If you only would have told us, we could have fixed this. You don't need a third party to come in and help you." Those are direct quotes from the union busters, essentially.

I wish I could sit here and tell you that it never happens because it's illegal, but I got fired from Verizon

for unionizing, so it does happen. But the upside is that because it's illegal, there are consequences to the company doing that. If you're scared, that just means that there is someone that's making you scared. And the reason that the company is making you scared of unionizing is really that they're scared of you unionizing.

Comprehension check: What types of union busting activities might an employer use during a campaign to unionize?

Once you get recognition or win your election, you and your coworkers will engage in collective bargaining with management. Collective bargaining is the term for the process of workers as a group negotiating with their bosses—things like pay, benefits, hours and other working conditions.

Right now we currently are in the collective bargaining process and I would say that this is probably my favorite part. We're sitting across from the company and we're actually getting to say, "hey, this is... this is what we want."

Then you come to an agreement or contract, which is the legal and binding result of that negotiation.

What we're fighting for is a strong contract, a contract that guarantees that SRs [Student Researchers] are protected at the workplace, that no SR faces housing insecurity or food insecurity.

Once you have a contract, you're going to pay a very small amount of your paycheck in dues. What does that pay for? Well, it pays for the organizing of the next stores that are going to go union.

Don't get us wrong. Because of the way our labor laws are set up and because workers have to be ready and willing to take a stand to form a union, it can be very difficult to win. This process is fundamentally tilted in favor of employers. But that's not a reason to give up. That's even more of a reason to unionize.

The facts are clear. Workers represented by unions have higher wages than non-unionized workers, more access to on the job benefits, better job security, better training and professional development opportunities, and more.

The future's gonna look great.

I am optimistic that big changes will happen and they will happen because of our solidarity.

But other than the specific financial gains that unionizing can have for individual groups of workers, it can also provide an important voice to make our society more democratic and more fair.

People could actually have happier work-life balances, they could make livable wages, they'd have safe working environments.

Forming a union can also be an empowering and even fun experience for you, connecting you more with your fellow workers.

All this is fun. I like speaking now. I like talking to people at work. I like getting people excited. Organizing this union, it's meant the world to me. I think I found my new calling in life.

It's hard to work together to make change. Unions provide an opportunity to put that into action on the scale of your workplace.

It's pretty obvious to me that the force in American life that is truly controlling us are these big corporations that have swollen in size, swollen in profits, while we get less and less benefit. And what I've learned is that I can channel this urge to do something, this urge to fight back, in a productive direction. By not doing it alone, I can form alliances with everyone at work, with people that are workers all across the country, and together we can fight back.

I mean, I guess what I wish I could have told my past self before we started this organizing drive was just to get it started sooner. Especially right now, it's in the zeitgeist.

So if you're ready, think about what you want at work. Think about which of your coworkers you're ready to talk to. And if you think you'd like to take another step, contact a union organizer to find out more.

You are not alone. There is power in a union.

There is power in a union.

There is power in a union.

There is power in a union.

There's power in a union.

There is power in a union.

There is power in a union.

Thank you for joining us in The Class Room, a series by More Perfect Union. Don't forget to like and subscribe and check out our previous videos.

Comprehension check: According to the video, what are some of the benefits for unionized workers (vs. those who are not in a union)?

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

STUDENT VERSION

1 All human beings are born equal in dignity and in rights.	2 These rights belong to everyone. You should never be discriminated against.	3 You have the right to life, liberty, and safety.
4 No one can hold you in slavery.	5 No one can torture you or treat you in a cruel or degrading way.	6 Everyone has rights, no matter where they are.
7 Laws should be applied the same way for everyone.	8 You have the right to seek justice and remedy (repair) if your rights are not respected.	9 You cannot be imprisoned or thrown out of a country without a good reason.
10 You have the right to a public trial.	11 You should be presumed innocent until proven guilty.	12 You have a right to privacy. No one can enter your home, read your mail, or bother you without good reason.
13 You have the right to move and travel within your country and internationally.	14 You have the right to seek protection from another country (asylum) if your country treats you poorly.	15 You have the right to be a citizen of a country (have a nationality).
16 Every adult has the right to get married and have a family.	17 You have the right to own property.	18 You have the right to practice any religion.
19 You have the right to express your opinion.	20 You have the right to gather with others and protest publicly.	21 You have the right to participate in the government of your country (e.g., vote).
22 You have the right to have your basic needs met (e.g., through social security programs).	23 You have the right to work, to receive equal pay for equal work, and to join a union.	24 You have the right to rest from work.
25 You have the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, food, and medical care.	26 You have the right to an education.	27 You have the right to participate in your community's cultural life.
28 Everyone must respect the social order that allows these rights to exist.	29 Everyone must respect the rights of others.	30 No one can take any of the rights in this declaration away from you.