

## CHOOSING WORK UNIT: An Industrial Revolution Simulation

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### MA CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS:

#### 4. Expansion, Reform and Economic Growth (1800-1861)

b. Industrialization in New England: Invention and Enterprise

c. The Northern Economic System: Capital, Industry, Labor, Trade

History Strand: Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 6

Geography Strand: Standards 9, 10

Economic Strand: Standards 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

**Simulation goal** is to personalize an understanding of:

- concepts of personal work ethic and pay for quality work
- career choices before high school registration
- school Career Day

Students view "Growing Up in New England" (available from Old Sturbridge Village, 508.347.3362, ext. 259 or [www.osv.org](http://www.osv.org)). They note the types of work available to boys and girls in an **agrarian** village similar to their town. After contemplating what type of work most appeals to them, they are offered the opportunity to try one of three types of **factory** work to explore an **industrialized** community. The advertisements (attached) are tied to the specific field trip workshops (Power to Production, Bale to Bolt, Workers on the Line) at the Lowell National History Park (978.970.5000 or [www.nps.org](http://www.nps.org) or Tsongas Industrial History Center at 978.970.5080 or [www.uml.edu/tsongas](http://www.uml.edu/tsongas)).

Students write a letter of application for their choice of work as part of a lesson on business letter writing in English class. When hired, they are given a vocabulary sheet pertinent to that workshop to study. The following day they are given an **apprentice** vocabulary test. Their classroom earning power is based on whether they are hired as **skilled** or **unskilled labor**. During the field trip, their **overseers** (chaperones) may promote or demote them based on the knowledge they share and their work ethic.

Upon returning to the classroom, students share and reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of their work experiences. Donning a green St. Patrick's Day cap with a dollar sign on it to represent a **capitalist** employer and reinforce the meaning of **capitalist** (individual with control of the money), skilled laborers are paid \$100 and unskilled laborers receive half pay. Donning another hat to represent male power in antebellum America, all female students must turn their money over to "their father or husband." Needless to say, discrimination hits home immediately.

The next day, is D-Day for **debit** or **deficit** day. These are often confusing terms until the cost of living is listed on the board and students determine what amount of **capital** they will retain as their **profit**. A math activity could be a family discussion of the current cost of living.

#### **Antebellum cost of living scale:**

25% housing (tenement rent or **mortgage**)

50% food for family (consider how many might be in your household)

10% clothing for family

10% religion, fuel, newspapers, etc.

What expenses did we forget?

What is your profit or fun money?

Teacher collects individual debts and makes change as necessary. Females are given \$1 allowance for contributing to their family's income because their father or husband is feeling generous.

As class continues onto the study of southern economy (4d.), students are periodically reminded of the small profit they have in their possession. During our study of reform movements, the females offer insight into their brush with 19<sup>th</sup> century discrimination. The teacher will find a multitude of connections to this unit.

Extensions: Have students find a contemporary ad they would like to answer.  
Have students research 19<sup>th</sup> century businesses in their town.

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## CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORK

Young people answered ads in the local papers 200 years ago as they do today. Not everyone wanted to be a farmer or stay in the town where they were born. The Industrial Revolution opened doors (portals) to more opportunities just as the Technological Revolution has today.

Write a NEAT letter of application for one of the following jobs offered on our Lowell Field Trip on January 27. Since the number of openings is limited, you must show your potential employer your strengths and specific skills. Be sure to tell why you are interested in this particular job. Include at least one character reference from people who know you today and how they may contact both your reference and yourself. Remember: most jobs are launch pads to higher paying jobs in the field you choose because you gain skills and knowledge.

**WANTED** immediately, weavers at the Boott Cotton Mill. Good wages, sure pay, not very hard work, comfortable food and lodgings with unparalleled opportunities for intellectual cultivation in the city of Lowell. One that can come well recommended will meet with good encouragement.  
John Oliver, Agent

**WANTED** immediately, mechanics interested in water power. Must be willing to *work well with others* and get wet in all types of weather. Good wages and sure pay for hard worker.  
Francis Cabot Lowell, Boston Associates

**WANTED** immediately, faithful workers for the textile printing production line at the Merrimack Manufacturing Company. Must be *temperate* and *industrious*. To such, constant employment will be given and liberal wages paid.  
Henry Lawrence, Agent

## REMEMBER

- USE YOUR BEST LETTER WRITING SKILLS TO SHOW YOUR POTENTIAL EMPLOYER YOU ARE EDUCATED
- SPELLING COUNTS
- RELATIVES AND PEOPLE UNDER 18 ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE REFERENCES