

Activities to Pre-teach Vocabulary in the Muckrakers Case Study

The following vocabulary activities are based on words used in the Muckraker case study. There are two vocabulary activities focused on the big ideas of (1) social and economic justice and injustices and (2) living and factory conditions.

Social and Economic Justice and Injustices

Activity Outcome

Students recognize two major types of injustices (economic and social) and consider ways that investigative journalists (Muckrakers) can help to improve conditions and address injustice.

Instructions for Activity

1. Distribute the partially blank table to students.
2. Introduce or remind students what an *injustice* is and explain there are two major types of injustices in society that will be described in the forthcoming case study (shown on table).
3. Discuss what the varied types mean and have students record a student-friendly explanation. Then, elicit from students at least one example for each type. There are blank rows on the table in case students think of other types of injustices, which can be recorded on their table.
4. Words used in this activity that appear in the case study: *social injustice*, *economic injustice*, *monopolistic practices*, *extrajudicial*, *civic discourse*
5. After the table is complete, then connect the vocabulary activity to the case study portion of the assignment with the following discussion questions:
 - When children or adults can't go to school because of where they live, their income, or their background, this is another example of an injustice. Would lack of access to education be an **economic** or **social injustice**?
 - How can investigative journalists (Muckrakers) help improve **economic** and **social justice**?
 - What role does **civic discourse** play in improving people's lives?

Resources for Activity

- Partially blank table with types, explanations, and examples of economic and social injustices (for students)
- Completed table (draft for teacher)

Completed Teacher Draft

Injustice: situations where people are treated unfairly or denied equal rights and opportunities		
Economic Injustices: when some people don't have the same chances to earn money, get jobs, or afford basic needs like food, housing, or healthcare because of unfair systems or rules		
Type	Explanation	Example(s)
monopolistic practices	certain businesses controlling the market or forces smaller businesses out of the market	one large company selling a product for such a low price that other business cannot compete and once those businesses shut down, the company raises their prices
poverty	when some people don't have enough money for basic needs while others have much more than they need	families living in unsafe housing or without access to healthcare
Social Injustices: when people are treated unfairly or unequally just because of who they are, such as their race, gender, or where they live		
Type	Explanation	Example(s)
racial discrimination	when people are treated unfairly based on their race or ethnicity	being denied a job or treated poorly because of skin color lynching (murdering a person) was "extrajudicial", which meant punishing people without using the legal system and was a form of intimidation
gender inequality	when people are treated differently based on their gender	women being paid less than men for the same work

Partially Blank Table for Students

Injustice: situations where people are treated unfairly or denied equal rights and opportunities		
Economic Injustices: when some people don't have the same chances to earn money, get jobs, or afford basic needs like food, housing, or healthcare because of unfair systems or rules		
Type	Explanation	Example(s)
monopolistic practices		

poverty		
Social Injustices: when people are treated unfairly or unequally just because of who they are, such as their race, gender, or where they live		
Type	Explanation	Example(s)
racial discrimination		
gender inequality		

Living and Factory Conditions

Activity Outcome

Students think critically about the relationships among words used to describe tenement living and factory working conditions in the 1890's to 1920's as reported by investigative journalists: the Muckrakers.

Instructions for Activity

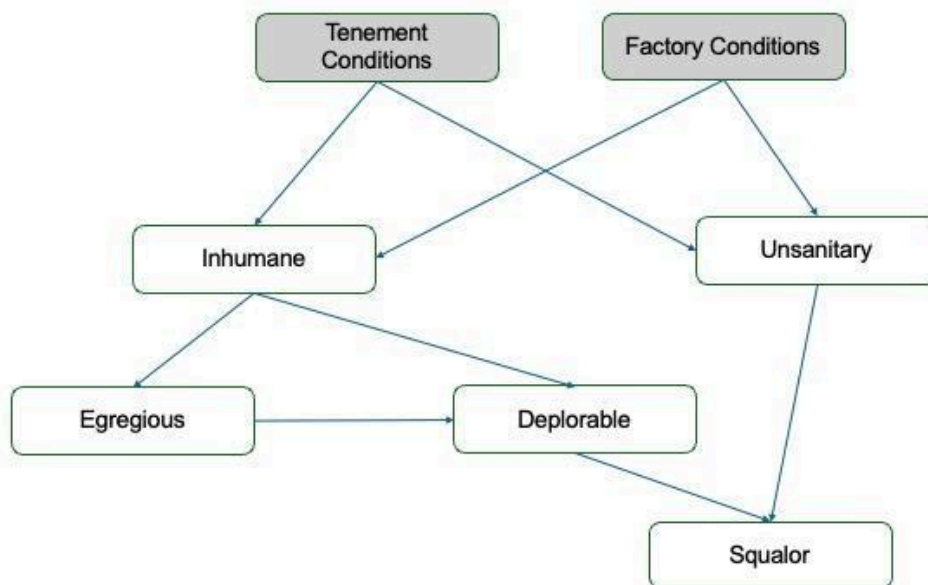
1. Display the word relationship map. Handout the definitions of the words.

2. Ask students to trace a path from "Tenement Conditions" or "Factory Conditions" down to "Squalor." The directional arrows show how these concepts are interrelated, helping visualize the systemic nature of these conditions.
3. In small groups, have students discuss or write sentences that show how each word leads to the next. For example, students would ask themselves, "How does 'inhumane' treatment lead to 'egregious' conditions?" or "How does an 'unsanitary' building lead to 'squalor'?"
4. Each group presents their chain of reasoning to the class.

Resources for Activity

- Word Relationship Map
- Words and Definitions

Word Relationship Map



Words and Definitions

Tenement: A small, crowded apartment building where many poor families live, often in bad conditions

Factory: A large building where people use machines to make things, often working long hours

Inhumane: Very cruel or unkind; not treating people with care or respect

Unsanitary: Not clean or safe; can easily spread germs or make people sick

Egregious: Really, really bad or shocking in a way that stands out

Deplorable: Terrible and upsetting; something that should not happen

Squalor: A very dirty and messy place, usually because of poverty or neglect

Example sentences using select vocabulary words that demonstrate their relationship to each other:

1. **Tenement** and **factory** buildings were often overcrowded and **unsanitary**, leading to people living and working in **squalor**.
2. The **inhumane** treatment of factory workers was **egregious** and widely condemned by reformers.
3. Living in **squalor**, many families had no access to clean water or proper waste disposal, a direct result of the **deplorable** housing policies of the time.
4. The **egregious** neglect by landlords and factory owners led to **deplorable** conditions that shocked city inspectors.
5. Reformers documented the **unsanitary** state of **tenements** and the inhumane labor practices in **factories** to push for legislative change.
6. The connection between **tenement** life and **factory** conditions was clear: both environments subjected people to **squalor** and **inhumane** treatment, perpetuating cycles of poverty and illness.

Words and Their Meaning in Context

Words Included in the Vocabulary Activities		
Word	Meaning	Case Study Context
civic discourse	Having respectful and thoughtful conversations about important issues that affect a community or society; includes listening and working together to solve problems	"And while yellow journalism deservedly got a bad name for its tactics, wrongdoing was often exposed alongside the sensationalism, enraging the public, leading to <u>civic discourse</u> , and, in certain cases, policy change."
deplorable	terrible and upsetting; something that should not happen	"Jacob Riis's <i>How the Other Half Lives</i> documented the <u>deplorable</u> living conditions in New York City's slums in the 1880s."
economic injustice	when some people don't have the same chances to earn money, get jobs, or afford basic needs like food, housing, or healthcare because of unfair systems or rules	"muckrakers, a group of journalists at the turn of the twentieth century who were among the first to expose <u>social</u> and economic <u>injustices</u> through investigative reporting and photojournalism"
egregious	really, really bad or shocking in a way that stands out	"Upton Sinclair chose to expose the <u>egregious</u> conditions of the

		Chicago meatpacking industry in the form of a novel, <i>The Jungle</i> , in 1905.”
extrajudicial	a punishment that occurs outside of or without the authorization of the judicial system	“lynching, or <u>extrajudicial</u> murder, was used by white individuals and communities to terrorize Black families...”
factory	a large building where people use machines to make things, often working long hours	“Newspapers published stirring and stunning photographs of child labor and inhumane <u>factory</u> conditions.”
inhumane	very cruel or unkind; not treating people with care or respect	“Newspapers published stirring and stunning photographs of child labor and <u>inhumane</u> factory conditions.”
monopolistic practices	when a large company uses its power to force smaller companies out of the market or controls the market	“Ida Tarbell wrote about the <u>monopolistic practices</u> of John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company, which destroyed small businesses, including her father’s.”
social injustice	when people are treated unfairly or unequally just because of who they are, such as their race, gender, or where they live	“muckrakers, a group of journalists at the turn of the twentieth century who were among the first to expose <u>social</u> and economic <u>injustices</u> through investigative reporting and photojournalism”
squalor	a very dirty and messy place, usually because of poverty or neglect	“Some Americans felt that the actions of Standard Oil, the meatpacking industry, and the squalor of the tenement housing were merely minor consequences of a capitalist economy and that more people benefited than lost.”
tenement	a small, crowded apartment building where many poor families live, often in bad conditions	Some Americans felt that the actions of Standard Oil, the meatpacking industry, and the squalor of the <u>tenement</u> housing were merely minor consequences of a capitalist economy and that more people benefited than lost.
unsanitary	not clean or safe; can easily spread germs or make people sick	“Upton Sinclair wrote <i>The Jungle</i> , revealing the unsafe and <u>unsanitary</u> conditions in the meatpacking industry.”
Other Potential Challenging Words Used in this Case Study		
Word	Meaning	Case Study Context
imperiled	in danger or at risk of being hurt, harmed, or lost	“her own life became <u>imperiled</u> when she was forced to move”

wharves	a flat area next to the water where ships and boats can stop to load or unload things, like boxes or supplies	“Jacob Riis photographed immigrant children who lived among the garbage dumps underneath the <u>wharves</u> in New York City.”
---------	---	--