

Teaching Guide: Loray Strike

Note for Teachers:

This is the Teaching Guide for the Loray Strike Case Study:
museumofthenewsouth.org/schools/loray-strike/

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Background Information

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the North Carolina Piedmont continued to be a large cotton growing region. Wealthy business owners saw an opportunity to build factories near the source of the raw material needed to make textiles, which are items made out of cotton cloth. The Piedmont region began to experience what would be an explosive growth in cotton manufacturing starting in the 1880s with the city of Charlotte being the center of the industry. The nearby town of Gastonia profited from this boom of cotton mills, employing many local workers. Many families left farms to find work in the cotton mills, or factories. Often all able bodied members of a family went to work in a mill just as they had on the farm, including children. Although the average worker still struggled against low wages, long hours, and dangerous conditions, many people took advantage of the steadier income a factory job could provide over farming.

The next great wave of mill building was during the World War I era from 1914 to 1918 due to demand for war materials. After the increased demand of wartime lessened, mill owners depended on cutting costs and increasing production in order to compete and make a profit. One way this could be achieved was through the “stretch-out” system where work was increased and wages were decreased, sometimes by as much as fifty percent. Mill owners created a high pressure work environment as well, going as far as installing “hank clocks” to time workers’ pace on the looms and weaving machines. Not only did workers struggle more financially, but they also had less time to care for their own families at home. Women bore a large part of this burden because they made up a substantial portion of the mill workforce while at the same time taking on the majority of responsibilities around the home.

When Fred Erwin Beal, an organizer in a Communist labor union, the National Textile Workers Union, heard of the stretch-out happening at Loray Mill in Gastonia, he decided to take his efforts there. Beal led willing workers in declaring a strike, while other workers chose not to strike. The demands of the strikers included a forty-hour work week, at least twenty dollars per week in pay, and union acknowledgement. Suspicions and accusations were rampant regarding Beal and the union’s Communist connection. The Manville-Jenckes Company, which owned Loray Mill, also owned the village where many workers resided. So the strikers were evicted. and forced to build a tent colony to have somewhere to live. Over the course of the strike, situations became hostile, violent, and even fatal for some, including worker Ella May Wiggins and Police Chief Orville Aderholt. While a group of strikers was found guilty of Chief Aderholt’s murder, the five people accused of murdering Wiggins were acquitted. The strike lost steam shortly after Wiggins’ death. Although the strike was not immediately successful in improving Loray Mill’s conditions, it did influence future efforts in other locations and helped inspire the formation of the United Textile Workers labor organization, which had some success in the typically anti-union South.

Activity Instructions and Rubrics

Mock Trial

Students will put the Loray Mill owners on trial to determine if they are to blame for the strike and its violence. Use the search terms “classroom law mock trial activity guide” to find an excellent template to help you set up a mock trial. Students can use the case study sources as well as additional research in order to find trial witnesses to what took place before, during, and after the strike. A rubric is also included.

Modification: Assign students to either the defense or prosecution side in a trial of the Loray Mill owners and have them write a paragraph supporting their stance.

Extension: Once the trial is over, have students write up a statement, declaring if they agree or disagree with the judgment that was made. They need to include facts from the trial as well as facts from the actual event when writing their statement.

Activity Steps from Classroom Law guide:

1. Discuss with the class what they know about trials and how they work. This might be a good time to introduce trial/legal vocabulary (such as defendant, prosecutor, judge, bailiff, witness, jury, etc.)
2. Talk about why we have trials to solve conflicts and the difference between criminal law (breaking a rule) and civil law (a conflict between people).
3. Give a quick summary of the case to the students and either ask for volunteers to fill the roles, or assign the roles.
4. Describe the steps of a trial for the students - it can be drawn out or demonstrated physically (see “Steps in a Trial” in this packet).
5. For purposes of this mini mock trial, depending on the age and experience of your students, you can either employ the use of objections or not. A guide to objections is also included.
6. Students should be given enough lead time to read and prepare so that they understand their roles and the stories that go with them.

Steps in a Trial from Classroom Law guide:

1. Opening Statements The attorneys from both sides present their perspectives to the judge and/or jury. This is their opportunity to start right off with their version of the story foremost in the minds of the people who will decide the verdict.
 - a. The Prosecution/Plaintiff attorney introduces themselves to the court (“Your honor, members of the jury, I am... and I represent...”) and states what their side intends to prove and what their version of the story is (how will you get the judge and jury to decide your way?)
 - b. The Defense attorney introduces themselves to the court (“Your honor, members of the jury, I am... and I represent...”) and states what their side intends to prove and what their version of the story is (how will you get the judge and jury to decide your way?) Be sure to ask for a verdict of not guilty (in a criminal case)
2. Direct Examination
 - a. Prosecution/plaintiff calls their first witness
 - b. Ask clear and simple questions that allow the witness to tell their story in their own words
 - c. Witnesses should not try to make up facts that aren’t in the witness statements. • Witnesses can answer “I don’t know”
 - d. Some suggested questions for direct examination:
 - i. How do you know the defendant?
 - ii. In your own words, what happened on the day of this event?
 - iii. What do you remember about your experience?
3. Cross Examination
 - a. Defense attorney questions each witness from the other side to try to prove that they are either lying or not telling the whole story
 - b. For example, they might ask “isn’t it true that it was very stormy that day and hard to see through the forest?”
 - c. Try to ask questions that have “yes” or “no” answers so you can limit what the witnesses for the other side might say that could impact your own version of the story
4. Defense’s Case: After all the prosecution/plaintiff witnesses have had direct and cross-examination, then the process starts again with each of the defense witnesses. The Defense attorney does the direct examination and the prosecution or plaintiff attorney does the cross examination.
5. Closing Arguments: Each side gets to summarize their version of the events and the facts. They should try to present their story in a way that shows the witnesses’ testimony agrees with them. The prosecution should ask for a verdict of guilty (in a criminal trial), and the defense attorney should ask for a verdict of not guilty.
6. Judge/Jury Deliberation: After hearing all the arguments and closing statements, the judge(s) and/or jury will meet to decide guilty or not guilty. They make the announcement to the courtroom.

The Classroom Law activity guide includes graphic organizers that can be used to help with the collection of information and note-taking during the trial.

Possible witnesses for mock trial:

- Fred Beal
- Ella May Wiggins (students/teacher may want to suspend disbelief of her death, have her give testimony in death, or have her give testimony prior to being killed)
- Chief Orville Alderholt (students/teacher may want to suspend disbelief of his death, have him give testimony in death, or have him give testimony prior to being killed)
- Police officers
- Anti strike workers
- Strikers
- NTWU headquarters organizers
- Driver heading to Bessemer City with Ella May Wiggins
- Horace Wheelus
- Callie McGinnis
- Richard H. Edmonds
- James Myers
- Rev. W. A. Newell

Loray Strike: Mock Trial Rubric

	5 - Exemplary	4 – Proficient	3 –Developing	2 – Beginning (let team down)	Student	Teacher
Teamwork, cooperation & attitude: all for the team	<p>Offers leadership, constructive assistance, adaptability, and a helpful vibe. 100% effort throughout.</p> <p>Teamwork: Collaborates well; constructively shares understanding as needed; encourages focus; a leader</p> <p>Attitude: Consistently positive, helpful and flexible - adapts well</p>	<p>Offers constructive assistance, flexibility, open attitude; shares understanding as needed. 80-90% effort throughout.</p> <p>Teamwork: Collaborates well; offers constructive assistance; shares understanding as needed</p> <p>Attitude: Generally positive; flexible</p>	<p>Limited assistance, poor attitude, little flexibility. 60-70% effort throughout.</p> <p>Teamwork: Limited assistance</p> <p>Attitude: attitude negative over 30% of the time. Little flexibility.</p>	<p>Provides no assistance, exhibits detrimental attitude, and inflexibility. Doesn't care. Less than 50% effort</p> <p>Teamwork: Provides no assistance to team; unhelpful</p> <p>Attitude: attitude detrimental to team; inflexible.</p>	<p>____/20</p>	<p>____/20</p>

<p>Preparation & focus</p>	<p>Over prepared and always on task; can compensate for others.</p> <p>Always has all mock trial materials and other team-agreed materials.</p> <p>Consistently arrives with revised and improved work.</p> <p>Always on task.</p>	<p>Prepared and knows what's going on; mostly focused (90%).</p> <p>Has all mock trial materials, and other team-agreed materials.</p> <p>Often arrives with revised and improved work.</p> <p>Almost always on task.</p>	<p>Often unprepared; focus often wavers</p> <p>Mock Trial materials often missing.</p> <p>Occasionally arrives with revised work.</p> <p>More on task than not.</p> <p>Occasionally pulls others off task.</p>	<p>Unprepared; others do your work for you; rarely focused.</p> <p>Rarely brings materials.</p> <p>Relies on others to revise your work or rally you to action.</p> <p>Mostly off task.</p> <p>You pull others off task</p>	<p>___/20</p>	<p>___/20</p>
<p>Mock Trial Performance</p>	<p>My performance in the Mock Trial helped my team succeed.</p>	<p>My performance in the mock trial helped my team.</p>	<p>My performance didn't help my team, but it also didn't harm my team.</p>	<p>My performance harmed my team.</p>	<p>___/10</p>	<p>___/10</p>
<p>Total out of 50</p>						

Primary Source Analysis

Some of the most effective depictions of the Loray Mill Strike were captured in photos and even song lyrics. These artistic mediums conveyed feelings, messages, and perspectives connected to both sides of the strike. Have students research and find another photo, song, poster, cartoon, etc. about the Loray Strike that has not already been included in the previous sources. Use the Library of Congress website to find a general primary source analysis worksheet students can use to unpack their source by searching “library of congress primary sources teachers guides” or use your own preferred tool.

Modification: Assign students their primary source and give them modified analysis worksheets that are partially filled out to help guide them in completing the rest.

Extension: Have students pick a current topic or issue important to them that they would be compelled to strike or protest over and create their own poster, brochure, cartoon, song, etc. about it.

Social Media Profile

Students will reflect on the individuals they encountered through the case study and select one who played a significant role in the strike to create a social media profile for. Students may mimic any social media platform that allows users to create profiles, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc. The profile should describe who they were and how they contributed to the Loray Mill Strike. Students should include the type of information or content typically included on one’s social media profile such as name, brief biography, catchy tagline or motto, and even photos and videos. They may complete this activity on a poster or digitally.

Modification: Have students create a social media profile on someone from the Loray Strike case study using a one-pager format. Instructions and templates for one-pagers can be found online if you are unfamiliar with them.

Extension: Have students participate in a gallery walk to review their peers’ projects and discuss key takeaways.

Suggested timeline:

Day One - Introduce project: students identify their characters and sketch their profiles.

Days Two to Three - Students find and select images and/or create videos and build or make their profiles.

Day Four, optional extension - Students participate in a gallery walk to review their peers’ projects and discuss key takeaways.

- Fred Beal
- Ella May Wiggins
- Chief Orville Aderholt
- Anti strike workers
- Strikers
- NTWU headquarters organizers
- Loray Mill workers

Loray Strike: Social Media Profile Rubric

Assignment + Criteria	Points	Comments
Content 10 pts each <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Images chosen are school-appropriate and clearly align with the chosen person's character and persona. All images and text help to convey the intended message. 	_____ / 20	
Communication 10 pts each <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Project successfully communicates the intended message about the chosen person's character and persona. Intended message reflects an understanding of the chosen person's motivations and beliefs about himself/herself 	_____ / 20	
Written Work 10 pts each <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a short (2-4 paragraph) summary about the project Summary explains how the profile created conveys intended message about the chosen person 	_____ / 20	
Work Ethic/Effort 5 pts each <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Used time class effectively and came to class prepared. Actively participated in class. Demonstrated perseverance and problem solving throughout the project. All work handed in on time 	_____ / 15	
Works Cited <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A Works Cited page has been submitted and includes citations for all images. 	_____ / 10	
Technical Skills <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Finished profile delivered in the proper file format. Photos are sharp (not pixelated/blurry) If hand created, writing and images are neat. 	_____ / 15	
Total	_____ / 100	

Student Objectives

1. Students will be able to explain the cause of the conflict between mill owners, workers, and the union at Loray Mill.
2. Students will be able to explain the ways mill workers resisted the unjust policies of the owners of Loray Mill.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate the impact of individuals involved in the Loray Strike.
4. Students will be able to argue whether the Loray Strike was successful or not.

Relevant NC 8th Grade Social Studies Standards

8.H.1.4 Explain how recovery, resistance, and resilience to inequities, injustices, discrimination, prejudice, and bias have shaped the history of North Carolina and the nation

8.H.1.1 Explain the causes and effects of conflict in North Carolina and the nation.

8.H.2.3 Explain how the experiences and achievements of women, minorities, indigenous, and marginalized groups have contributed to the development of North Carolina and the nation over time.