Labour History Project Working People: A History of Labour in BC



**Where the Fraser River Flows**

**Film Summary:** Named after the famous song written by IWW singer and activist, Joe Hill, this film is inspired by his words and IWW organizing efforts amongst railway workers in the interior of BC.

**Curriculum Application**

Social Studies 10

**The Essential Question:** What values, if any, do you or our society share with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)?

What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provide a short lesson option. (15 minutes)
2. Small group activity.
3. Mini-conference on the early days of the IWW.
4. Using songs as historical sources of information.

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate skills of collaboration and co-operation
2. Compare mechanisms whereby public policy can be changed (e.g., elections, petitions, strikes, protests, lobbyists, special interest groups, court actions, media campaigns)
3. Analyze how workers have expressed their concerns through music
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the history of labour struggles
5. Assess the contributions of particular individuals and groups who are identified with the struggles for social justice.

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[“Bows and Arrows” Episode 2-Working People- A History of Labour in British Columbia](https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/list?q=first+Economies&p=1&ps=25)

[History of the IWW- History Link](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=2016)

[The Labour Movement in British Columbia 1840-1914](https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/list?q=1840-1914&p=1&ps=25&topic_facet=Labour+History)

**Materials and Resources Provided**

[“Where the Fraser River Flows” Episode 2- Working People – a History of Labour in British Columbia](https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1454421/uiconf_id/26824312/entry_id/0_e0vhpuxq/embed/dynamic)

Appendix 1- Historical Background Reading on the IWW.

Lesson Activity 1- mini conference backgrounders

Appendix 2- Conference Data retrieval sheet

1. Why did the workers walk off the job?
2. How were workers in other North American cities able to help the striking workers?
3. How was the strike broken?
4. Where there any positive outcomes from the strike?
5. Can you name contemporary music that has a social justice message? ( fairness and /or equality)

**Vignette Questions**

1. Read and discuss the historical backgrounder on the IWW as a class. Follow the reading with a viewing of the vignette, *“Where the Fraser River Flows”.* Assign the vignette questions above for the students to complete while viewing the film.
2. If the teacher decides to only show the short vignette, and does not assign the six readings mini/conference-unit, a brief discussion using the vignette discussion questions should follow the reading on the historical background and the viewing of the vignette, *Where the Fraser River Flows*.
3. Prepare the class for the mini-conference activity by dividing the class into six small groups of 4-5 students. Each group should be given one of the readings and a data retrieval sheet. Students will read their articles giving their opinions (on the five most important or interesting facts/information, with special focus on what values they share or do not share, with the person or event. (If these six readings are handed out for homework and the students arrive the next period ready to share information (their opinions) the conference seems to work better).
4. Students will then move into their small/expert groups and attempt to come to a consensus on what they found the most interesting about the event or person, and/or what values they share, or do not share ,with the IWW. Their five point consensus should then be put on chart paper or the board for the whole class to view. All groups should report/summarize their reading to the class as they would in a conference setting. (Panel discussion or presentation.)

Playing of each group’s assigned song is recommended in the presentation, or perform it!

1. When students have completed the group activity the teacher will facilitate a discussion on the values, of the IWW, and the legacy that the Wobblies have, or have not, contributed to the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of our society.

**Lesson Activities**

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Scott Parker