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



**Wilmer Gold**

Film Summary: The images of talented logging and working life photographer Wilmer Gold provide a powerful record of the lives of Vancouver Island’s loggers and fallers. This film captures the challenges he faced in documenting their lives.

**Curriculum Application:**

Social Studies 11

**The Essential Question:** How effective is photography in capturing moments of history; in particular the social/economic role of lumber and forest workers in British Columbian society?

What historical factors

**Summary of the Lesson Activities**

1. Focus questions for the vignette provides a short lesson option. ( 15 Minutes )
2. Learning activity on the key vocabulary of the logging and lumber industry.
3. Small group activity that leads into a class discussion on the vignette.
4. Small group activity to explore and analyze photographs of the depression era Logging Industry in British Columbia.

Learning Objectives

1. To examine the portrayals of ordinary working peoples in British Columbia’s coastal logging industry and to explore aspects of their work and camp lives.
2. To explore the community and social meanings of these portrayals.
3. To examine the nature of working lives as defined by, and captured within, the photographs of Wilmer Gold.
4. To examine the working life of photographer Wilmer Gold, and the challenges he faced alongside the loggers he photographed.

**Materials and Resources Provided**

* [“Wilmer Gold” Episode 2-](https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1454421/uiconf_id/26824312/entry_id/0_b6huixwk/embed/dynamic)

[Working People – A History of](https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1454421/uiconf_id/26824312/entry_id/0_b6huixwk/embed/dynamic)

[Labour in British Columbia](https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1454421/uiconf_id/26824312/entry_id/0_b6huixwk/embed/dynamic)

Lesson Activity 1: Discussion Questions

Appendix 1: Wilmer Gold Biography

Extension Activity 1-Photograpghic Analysis

**Additional Suggested Materials**

[“These were the reasons….” Chapter 6 BC Lumber Workers Story](https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/list?q=these+were+the+reasons&p=1&ps=25)

[Edge of the World: B.C.’s Early Years- Felling Giants](https://cdnapisec.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/1454421/uiconf_id/26824312/entry_id/0_s4pjdgox/embed/dynamic)

[“Ocean Falls” Episode 3- 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_jmftj80h/embed/dynamic)

[“Mayo Singh” 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_qkhod12v/embed/dynamic)

Check out the Ocean Falls and Mayo Singh Lesson plans on [Teach BC](https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/list?p=1&topic_facet=Labour+History)

**Vignette Questions**

1. In which part of British Columbia did Wilmer Gold capture his images of life in the forestry industry?
2. What economic crisis was occurring during the time Wilmer Gold was setting up his photography business?
3. Who were his primary customers? Who else did he sell his photographs to?
4. What innovation did Wilmer Gold create to help him produce his photographs? Why would this be helpful to both Wilmer Gold and his customers?
5. Why do you think his photographs were popular in this time period? What did photography bring to the “story” of logging that words could not effectively match?

**Lesson Activities**

1. Students should have some previous teaching on the subject of working during the Great Depression, and the dangers of working in the woods. They should have had some previous teaching about the extraction of lumber from the forests, including: Scouting – finding suitable trees & valuable trees, Scaling – climbing the tree (inspection & preparation for felling), Topping – removing the unprofitable top of the tree, Felling – sawing the tree down, Skidding—chaining up, and pulling the trunk out to prepare delivery to the mill.
2. Brainstorm a list of common themes, words, and images under headings such as:
   1. “Seasonal Work in the Woods”“Forest Worker’s Tasks On the Job”;“Dangers On the Job”, “Individual & Team Work”, “Life in the Logging Camp”, “Life and Employment in the Off-Season”
3. Show the Vignette Working People: A History of Labour in British Columbia-“Wilmer Gold”.
4. Distribute the Handout “Wilmer Gold: Biography” and read it to the class, or have them read it individually, or in groups. Follow-up with Lesson Activity 2 “Discussion Questions”
5. Distribute Extension Activity 1: Photographic Analysis and questions to consider and the companion set of 10 Historic photographs.

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Gavin Hainsworth