

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in United States History

Hidden Voices: Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Grades 7-8 | Mini Unit



Photos Courtesy of Museum of Chinese in America

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Funded by the New York City Council
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Left: Paul Calhoun, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The Importance of Teaching AAPI History3

Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: Who is a Garment Worker? New York City and the Garment Industry6

Lesson 2: Piecing it Together25

Lesson 3: Noisy, Dusty, and Hot52

Lesson 4: Unions: Stitching Garment Workers Together 98

Lesson 5: Spirit of Resistance139

Lesson 6: In Unity, There Is Strength!170

Lesson 7: The Legacy They Left207

Introduction

Including AAPI Histories in the Curriculum

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have played significant roles in shaping the United States. Built on stolen land inhabited by Indigenous peoples, the United States has a complex and nuanced history. Its founding is connected to the larger colonial history of the Americas. As such, it was predicated on the infusion of labor (enslaved, indentured, and free) from around the globe, and trade and commerce with nations around the world, including in Asia. It is within this context that brought Asians to the Americas.

AAPIs – including Asian immigrants and U.S.-born, and Pacific Islanders living on their indigenous lands – have contributed to major historical achievements including the institutionalization of birthright citizenship, school desegregation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Title IX, and much more. AAPIs have also fought against exploitative and unjust policies, practices, and institutions, through building coalitions with other minoritized groups. Today, as one of the fastest-growing populations, AAPIs continue to work toward building a better future for all in the United States.

As such, AAPI history is American history, intertwined with Black history, Latine history, and Native American history. Yet, it is often forgotten or ignored in classrooms and public discourse. Learning about AAPI histories and narratives benefits everyone. All students deserve to have a robust and accurate account of history.

A Note on Terminology

We use the term “Asian American” to refer to people in the United States who can trace their ancestry to East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This terminology is constantly evolving and debated, and as such, can be imperfect and limiting. “Asian American” encompasses people from dozens of ethnicities. While there is no monolithic experience of being Asian American, we recognize that “Asian American” is often used when referring to East Asian Americans, thus contributing to the erasure of other Asian Americans. Thus, we aim to use precise terminology (i.e., Chinese Americans, South Asian Americans) to avoid erasure or overgeneralization. In addition, we use “American” to refer to all people in the United States, regardless of immigration status.

Coined by student activists inspired by the Black Power movement, the term “Asian American” emerged in the 1960s as a political strategy. It was used to unify people from the Asian diaspora and build political power. It was also meant to push back on Eurocentric labels like “Oriental” that were common at the time but considered offensive today. By unifying as a pan-Asian collective, Asian Americans could also build coalitions with Black and other communities of color. We use the term “Asian American” with this history in mind while also recognizing how discourse has evolved over time. For example, we use “AAPI” when referring to Asian Americans

and Pacific Islanders. This term gained prominence in the 1980s and was meant to broaden the umbrella of “Asian American” by including Pacific Islanders to show unity and increase political power. However, it can be limiting and lead to erasure of Pacific Islander communities. While the term is meant to be inclusive, it can lead to conflating these communities and assuming a monolithic identity for everyone under the AAPI label. We intentionally use “Asian American” over “AAPI” when referring to histories that do not specifically include the experiences of Pacific Islanders. In general, it is important to use identifiers preferred by individuals and/or communities.

Mini Unit

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 1: New York City and the Garment Industry

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 1 - New York City and the Garment Industry

Focus Questions:

- How are our clothes made?
- What is garment work?
- Who was making clothes in the 1880s? Who was making them in the 1980s?
- Why did garment shops become so common in Chinatown in the 1970s - 1980s?
- Why has garment work in NYC historically been done by immigrant women?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point

- Students will begin to develop a vocabulary around garment work, learning words like garment, garment work, and garment factory.
- Students will be introduced to the history of garment work in New York City and identify populations who have historically done that work.
- Students will understand factors that contributed to changes in the demographics of garment workers in the 20th century.
- Students will be able to explain factors which contributed to the rise of garment factories in Chinatown in the 1970s and 1980s.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- UNIT 2: A Changing Society and The Progressive Era
 - 8.2 A CHANGING SOCIETY: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America.
 - Industrialization 8.2a; Immigration 8.2b; Effects of Industrialization and Immigration 8.2c
- UNIT 6: From World War II to the Present
 - 8.8 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE: After World War II, the population of the United States rose sharply as a result of both natural increases and immigration. Population movements have resulted in changes to the American landscape and shifting political power.
 - Postwar Years 8.8a; Immigration and increasing diversity 8.8b

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States that can be answered by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning

- 1. Identify how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade-level content, and historical events.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States and answer them by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Describe, compare, and evaluate multiple historical developments (within societies; across and between societies; in various chronological and geographical contexts).
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2b Population density, diversity, technologies, and industry in urban areas shaped the social, cultural, and economic lives of people.
 - Students will examine the population growth of New York City and other New York cities and the technologies and industries which encouraged this growth.

- 8.8 Demographic Change
 - 8.8b. The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.
 - Students will examine migration and immigration trends in New York State and New York City such as the increase in Spanish-speaking, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African populations and the contributions of these groups.
 - Students will examine the effects of immigration legislation and policy, including recent debates over immigration policy.

Resources/Materials

- “Where do Clothes Come From? A Garment Supply Chain” Infographic
- “Garment Work in the Lower East Side & Chinatown: 1880s & 1980s” Text
 - Image 1
 - Image 2
 - Population Table
- Immigration Timeline Puzzle Activity

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students: Garment Guessing Game (5 minutes)

- As students arrive, display the following prompt on the board/screen: “Take a look around the classroom. Based on the number of people in the room, estimate the following: 1. How many shirts are in the room? 2. How many skirts are in the room? 3. How many dresses are in the room? 4. How many pairs of pants are in the room?”
 - Give students a few minutes to make their estimates.
 - Ask a few students to share their estimates with the class.
 - Following the share-out, ask students a few of the following questions:
 - Have you ever tried sewing something?
 - If yes, what was it like? What parts of sewing did you enjoy? What parts did you find challenging?
 - If not, imagine what it might be like to sew something. What materials would you need? What steps would you have to complete? Do you think it would be easy or challenging? Explain why.
 - Do you think sewing is something people can do intuitively, or is it something that would require a lot of practice to get good at?

- **Optional extension (additional 5 minutes):** Form small groups to debate which of the 4 articles of clothing they estimated would be the easiest and which the hardest to make. Have each group explain their reasoning.
- Connect student responses to the topic of today’s lesson:
 - Today we’ll be learning about how we get our clothes—where they come from, how they’re made, and who makes them. We’ll talk about how clothes get to the stores where we shop for them, and what it’s like to be a person who makes clothes for a living.

Model/Teach (10-15 minutes)

Garment Work and the Lower East Side/Chinatown

- **Ask students:** Let’s brainstorm places where we can get clothes. (Make a short list on the board.)
- Based on the clothing sources the students come up with, ask students:
 - What are all the steps it takes to make a piece of clothing and deliver it to you, the consumer?
 - Some possible responses: grow and harvest the cotton; spin the cotton into yarn; weave the yarn into cotton cloth/fabric; dye the fabric; design the garment and make a sample; ship the fabric, zippers, buttons, etc. to the factory; create the garment pattern; cut the fabric; sew the garment; ship the garment to a store or retailer.
 - Students will likely be able to come up with some of these organically but other steps might be unfamiliar to them.
 - Display the infographic entitled “Where do Clothes Come From? A Garment Supply Chain” on the board. Share that a garment is another word for a piece of clothing. Together, the class will use the infographic to consider the many steps and forms of labor it takes to bring clothes to them.
 - Ask students to spend a moment looking at the images and reading through the captions on the infographic.
 - Go through the steps in the garment supply chain together, reading each one aloud and using the following questions as a guide, when desired.
 - **Step 1- Raw Materials**
 - **Q:** Which raw material do you see here?
A: Cotton! Cotton comes from plants and is used as a raw material in making clothes. Other raw materials might be wool from sheep, or polyester which is made from plastics.

■ Step 2- Raw Material Processing

- **Q: How does the cotton that is picked off the plant become fabric for clothes?**

A: Cotton from the cotton plant has to be cleaned, de-seeded, and straightened so that it can be spun into yarn. The yarn is then woven into a fabric on a loom. Typically, this starting fabric is gray. *Optional: If you have these items available, pass around samples of cotton, yarn, and fabric as touch objects for students.*

■ Step 3- Dyeing

- **Q: How do you make that gray fabric into the color you want?**

A: The gray fabric can be dyed. A dye is a substance that is used to color or change the color of the fabric. This is usually done by soaking the fabric in the dye. Dyes can come from minerals or plant sources such as berries, roots, bark, leaves, etc. These are natural dyes. Dyes can also be synthetic, meaning they are chemicals that are human-made.

■ Step 4- Design

- **Q: How do you make a garment, or piece of clothing, out of fabric?**

A: A designer comes up with an idea for a garment, i.e., a T-shirt, a pair of pants, skirt, dress, or coat. The designer will draw or sketch the design, usually many times until it's just how they want it. Then they'll often work with someone to create a sample of the garment. Each design will get turned into a pattern for the garment. The pattern consists of flat templates or pieces of paper that show garment workers how to cut, assemble, and sew the fabric to make a specific garment. (Often more than one set of patterns is used because there may be different sets for different sizes of the same garment design, i.e., small, medium, large.)

■ Step 5- Making

- **Q: How do garment workers make clothes?**

A: Using patterns specific to each piece of clothing, garment workers cut the fabric and gather all the same pieces for a group of workers to sew, i.e., all the right sleeves will go to a group while all the left sleeves will go to another group. (The idea is that it will be more efficient if workers are concentrating on doing the same step over and over again.) Garment workers are organized into an

assembly line format so that finishing touches such as zippers, buttons, or trims are typically at the latter part of the process.

■ Step 6- **Shipping**

- **Q: How do the garments get to you?**

A: After being finished in the garment factories, shipments of clothes are sent to wholesalers and retailers. A wholesaler sells large quantities of garments at a lower price to others, who will typically sell them to stores and others. A retailer sells the garments directly to the people who will use them i.e., a store in the mall.

- In this unit, our focus will be on garment workers, the people whose job it is to make clothes, or garments. The infographic gave us a preview of the kinds of tasks garment workers did. We'll be learning more about them in the rest of the unit.
- Share with students that by 1900, garment workers in New York City made around 40% of the ready-to-wear clothes produced in the United States. In 1910, New York City garment workers made even more, about 70% of women's clothing. However, that didn't last. By the end of the 20th century, many garment factories moved to other countries, so the amount of clothing made in New York City declined.
- Tell students that many of the factories making these clothes were around the same part of New York City — the Lower East Side and Chinatown. ***Optional:** Show a map of the area and let students share whether they've been to either neighborhood before.*
- Ask students: "What kinds of people do you think worked in these factories?" Tell students that we'll explore that topic next.

Group/Independent Work: Garment Work in the Lower East Side & Chinatown: 1880s & 1980s (10 minutes, including share out)

- Share that garment work has long been done by immigrant women and that we'll be exploring some images, data, and text that help us learn about who exactly did this work.
- Display "Image 1" and "Image 2" side by side.
 - **Image 1:** Necktie workshop in a Division Street tenement c. 1889. Photograph by Jacob A. Riis. Source: Library of Congress.
 - **Image 2:** A woman sitting behind a Singer sewing machine at a garment factory, 1984. Photography by Paul Calhoun. Source: Museum of Chinese in America.
- Ask a couple of students to share their immediate observations about the two photos.

- Distribute “Garment Work in Chinatown/Lower East Side: Then and Now” handout, which includes a short introductory text and a chart about the demographics of garment workers in both the late 19th century and late 20th century.
- Allow students time to read the text and look at the table. Option to read the text aloud as a class.
- Display the population tables shared in the handout. Ask a few students to share their observations and answer the following question:
 - What differences do you notice between 1880 and 1980?
- Finish reading the text, either silently or aloud. If time permits, ask students to share something new they learned from the text.

Model/Teach: Neighborhood Changes (2 minutes)

- **Ask students:**
 - Why do you think the people who did garment work changed? Why might new people have moved in and others out?
- If the topic of immigration patterns or immigration law came up, confirm for students that this had a major impact. If it didn’t come up organically, add “immigration laws” to the list and emphasize that this was a big factor in why the neighborhood changed.
- Tell students: The next activity will be a timeline challenge to introduce some immigration laws that impacted the populations of Chinatown and the Lower East Side.

Group/Independent Work: Immigration Timeline Puzzle (10-15 minutes, including share out)

- Have students work in pairs or groups of three. Distribute a set of puzzle pieces to each pair or small group. Each piece contains information on an immigration policy that affected the demographics of Lower Manhattan.
- Students have 5 minutes to cut out and arrange their puzzles in chronological order. You can save time by pre-cutting pieces.

NOTE TO TEACHER: All the pieces all have dates on them, but they are out of order. Re-ordering them will allow students time to read each timeline event and consider connections between them.

- Laws will include the following-
 - Page Act of 1875 (restricted immigration of Chinese women, making it difficult for families to form)

- Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (severe restriction of all Chinese immigration, especially laborers)
- Opening of Ellis Island in 1892
- Opening of Angel Island in 1910
- Immigration Act of 1917 (creates the Asiatic Barred Zone expanding restrictions on immigration from Asia)
- Immigration Act of 1924 (established national quotas, Chinese still excluded)
- Repeal of Chinese Exclusion in 1943 (quota of 105 based on 1890 census population, when there was a miniscule Chinese population due to exclusion)
- Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 (removal of quotas, priority to family reunification and skilled workers)

- Show students a completed timeline and ask them to double check the order of their timelines.
- In their pairs/groups, while looking at their completed timelines, prompt students to consider the following question:
 - We read a bit about how the groups of people, or demographic, making garments changed over time. Which policies might have caused changes in the demographics of garment workers?
- Have 2 or 3 groups share which policies they think might have caused some of the demographic changes among garment workers.
- Emphasize for students that these laws restricted immigration from China and East Asia until the mid-1960s, so it's not until then that we start to see large numbers of Chinese American garment workers.

Wrap Up (3 minutes)

Exit Slip Option 1: Use the following sentence starter as an exit slip for students:

- One thing I learned is... and now I'm wondering...

Exit Slip Option 2 (STEM Connection): Answer the following question:

- If 25,000 Chinese Americans worked in the garment industry in the 1980s, and 80% of them were women, how many Chinese American women worked in the garment industry at that time?

Optional Homework Assignment:

Have students go home and look at the tags on their clothes to see where things have been made. Students can make charts or graphs of their results as a STEM connection.

Sample prompt:

Where were your clothes made? Look, count, and tally up the locations!

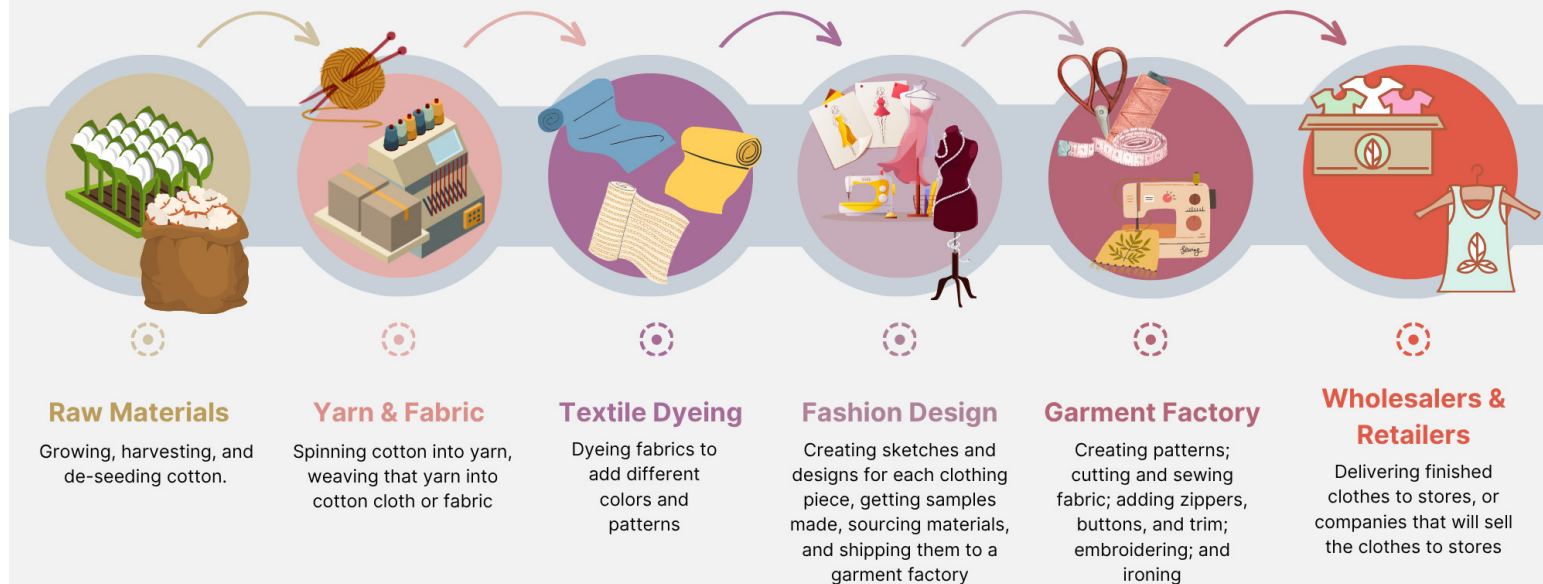
Hidden Voices Mini Unit
Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 1 - NYC and the Garment Industry

Where do Clothes Come From?

A Garment Supply Chain



Created by Museum of Chinese in America

Transcription of infographic:¹

Where Do Clothes Come From?: A Garment Supply Chain.

- 1) **Raw Materials** - Growing, harvesting, and de-seeding cotton.
- 2) **Yarn & Fabric** - Spinning cotton into yarn, weaving that yarn into cotton cloth or fabric.
- 3) **Textile Dyeing** - Dyeing fabrics to add different colors and patterns.
- 4) **Fashion Design** - Creating sketches and designs for each clothing piece, getting samples made, sourcing materials, and shipping them to a garment factory.
- 5) **Garment Factory** - Creating patterns; cutting and sewing fabric; adding zippers, buttons, and trim; embroidering; and ironing.
- 6) **Wholesalers & Retailers** - Delivering finished clothes to stores, or companies that will sell the clothes to stores.

¹ Oleksandra Baukh, "The Ultimate Guide to Fashion Supply Chain," Techpacker Blog, January 4, 2024, <https://techpacker.com/blog/design/ultimate-guide-to-fashion-supply-chain/>.

Lynne Sampson, "Fashion Supply Chain: Everything You Need to Know," Oracle, May 9, 2023, <https://www.oracle.com/retail/fashion/fashion-supply-chain/>.

Garment Work in the Lower East Side and Chinatown: 1880s & 1980s



People running through the streets with racks of clothing, women bent over buzzing machines, and mounds of fabric piled high. These were the sights and sounds of New York City's garment industry, which began nearly 200 years ago!

From the very beginning, garment work was often done by immigrant women. German and Irish women were some of the earliest immigrants to work in this budding industry. By the late 19th century, or the late 1800s, New York City had become a major hub of clothing production for the entire United States. In fact, over 60% of the country's clothing was made right here in NYC.

In the 1880s and years to follow, Jewish and Italian women from across Eastern and Southern Europe flocked to U.S. cities in large numbers, in search of work and fleeing persecution. They made clothing and accessories, often at home or in small shops. They worked long hours, and didn't get paid much.

² Jacob A. Riis, Necktie Workshop in a Division Street Tenement, ca. 1889, gelatin silver print, 21 x 26 cm, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002710291/>.

³ Paul Calhoun, A Woman at a Garment Factory, 1984, photographic print, 11" x 14", Paul Calhoun Collection, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, catalog no. 2004.102.132, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/F058E328-29CA-41AF-926E-862392948410>.

As time went on, the population of New York City changed. Take a look at the information below. What differences do you notice between 1880 and 1980?

1880	1980
New York City population- 1,206,299 people	New York City population- 7,071,639 people
Percent of New York City population born outside the U.S.- 40%	Percent of New York City population born outside the U.S.- 24%
Almost 50% of the people born outside of the U.S. were from Great Britain and Ireland.	Over 20% of the people born outside of the U.S. came from places in the Caribbean, like Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.
Another 35% of the people born outside of the U.S. were from Germany.	A little over 9% of the people born outside of the U.S. came from different countries in South America.
About 2.5% of the people born outside of the U.S. were born in Italy.	9.3% of the people born outside of the U.S. were from Italy.
Only 747 people living in New York City were from China. That's 0.16%!	60,824 people living in New York City were born in China. That's 3.6%!

A little more than 40 years ago, Chinatown had many, many garment factories, which are the places where garment workers would work. At the peak of the garment industry in the early 1980s, there were at least 600 garment factories in New York City's Chinatown! At that time, 25,000 Chinese Americans worked in the garment industry across New York City. Chinese American women made up more than 80% of this number. There was also a significant Black and Puerto Rican workforce in garment factories.

Many garment workers at this time were moms, aunties, and grandmas. They would go to work early and leave work very late, where they would spend all day working very hard to make pieces of clothing. The work was difficult, but having a job in a garment factory helped these women make money to take care of their families.

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Immigration Timeline Puzzle

Directions:

1. Split into groups of two or three.
2. Cut out each timeline piece, following the dotted lines.
3. As a group, read through each event, U.S. law, or moment in history.
4. Place them in chronological order.
5. Take another look at them.

Consider:

- Do you notice any connections between these events or pieces of legislation?
- We read a bit about how the groups of people making garments changed over time. Which policies might have caused changes in the demographics of garment workers?

1875 - The Page Act

The Page Act made it extremely difficult for women from China to come to the United States.

Most Chinese immigrants were not allowed to bring their wives or families to the United States. This meant that it was very hard for Chinese communities in the United States to grow.

1965 - Hart-Cellar Act

The Hart-Cellar Act removed the quotas set in 1924 for all countries. This meant that many more people from China could move to the United States.

This act prioritized immigrants with family in the United States, as well as people who had special jobs or skills.

1892 - Ellis Island opens

Ellis Island opened in New York Harbor on January 1, 1892. New immigrants arrived there between 1892 - 1924.

Nearly 12 million people came through Ellis Island. Most of them were from countries in Europe.

1917 - Immigration Act/Literacy Act

The 1917 Immigration Act created a “barred zone” in Asia. People from countries like China, India, Thailand, and others were not allowed to come to the United States.

It also tried to restrict immigration by requiring immigrants to be literate, or to be able to read.

1882 - The Chinese Exclusion Act

The Chinese Exclusion Act meant that most people from China could not move to the United States.

The people who were allowed to come from China to the U.S. were mostly wealthy or educated people, like professors and business owners.

1924 - Johnson-Reed Act

The Johnson-Reed Act set immigration quotas, or the maximum number of immigrants allowed from each country.

The quota for each country was set at 2% of the number of people from that country living in the United States in 1890. Because the Exclusion Act was still in effect, the quota for Chinese immigrants was practically nothing.

1943 - Chinese Exclusion Act repealed

In 1943 Congress repealed, or removed, the Chinese Exclusion Act. China and the United States were fighting on the same side in World War II, so it was very important for this law to be removed.

After 1943, only 105 people from China could immigrate to the United States each year.

1910 - Angel Island opens

Angel Island opened in San Francisco Bay on January 21, 1910. New immigrants arrived there from 1910 - 1940.

About 500,000 people arrived through Angel Island. Most of them were from countries in East Asia.

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Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 2: Piecing It Together

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 2 - Piecing it Together

Focus Questions:

- What was garment work like in 1980s Chinatown?
- How were Chinatown garment workers paid?
- What is piecework? What are the pros and cons to piecework?
- What can a community-made quilt tell us about garment work and garment workers in 1980s Chinatown?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point:

- Students will be able to define and describe the nature of “piecework.”
- Students will understand how the piecework system affected workers’ pay, hours, and lives outside of work.
- Students will begin to investigate the specific tasks involved in garment work and consider what it might have been like to do this work.
- Students will start to learn the names of specific Chinatown garment workers and begin to learn about their lives.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.10
By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- UNIT 2: A Changing Society and The Progressive Era
 - 8.2 A CHANGING SOCIETY: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America.
 - Industrialization 8.2a; Immigration 8.2b; Effects of Industrialization and Immigration 8.2c
- UNIT 6: From World War II to the Present
 - 8.8 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE: After World War II, the population of the United States rose sharply as a result of both natural increases and immigration. Population movements have resulted in changes to the American landscape and shifting political power.
 - Postwar Years 8.8a; Immigration and increasing diversity 8.8b

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States that can be answered by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.

- 6. Recognize an argument and identify supporting evidence related to a specific social studies topic. Examine arguments related to a specific social studies topic from multiple perspectives. Recognize that the perspective of the argument’s author shapes the selection of evidence used to support it.
 - E. Economic and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.
 - 3. Describe the role that competition has in the determination of prices and wages; identify other factors that help to determine prices.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States and answer them by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - 6. Recognize an argument and identify evidence that supports the argument; examine arguments related to a specific social studies topic from multiple perspectives; deconstruct arguments, recognizing the perspective of the argument and identifying evidence used to support that perspective.
 - E. Economic and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.
 - 3. Describe the role of competition in the determination of prices and wages in a market economy.

Mathematics, Science, and Technology: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will use mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering design, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.

- Standard 3: Students will understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically, by applying mathematics in real-world settings, and by solving problems through the integrated study of number systems, geometry, algebra, data analysis, probability, and trigonometry.

Social Studies: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.
- Standard 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

The Arts: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 3: Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

English Language Arts: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
- Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.
- Standard 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2b Population density, diversity, technologies, and industry in urban areas shaped the social, cultural, and economic lives of people.
 - Students will examine the population growth of New York City and other New York cities and the technologies and industries which encouraged this growth.
 - 8.8 Demographic Change
 - 8.8b. The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.

- Students will examine migration and immigration trends in New York State and New York City such as the increase in Spanish-speaking, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African populations and the contributions of these groups.

Resources/Materials

- Garment Workers in Chinatown (Background Information)
 - Community Quilt Making Projects (Background Information)
 - Excerpt of 1983 New York Times Article “After Years of Decline, Sweatshops are Back” (Printable)
 - Garment Workers Quilt (Image)
 - Garment Workers Quilt Squares Reference Guide (Printable)
 - Garment Workers Quilt Investigation Worksheet (Printable, optional)
 - Piecework Jacket Materials
 - Piecework Jacket Instructions
 - Piecework Jacket Template (Printable) (at least 5 copies per group)
 - Scissors
 - Tape or glue
 - Hole puncher
 - Colored pencils, markers, crayons, etc. (something to decorate with)
 - Cut-Out \$MOCABUCKS\$ (printable)
 - Piecework Exit Slip (Printable)
- Content-Specific Reference Photos:
- Skirt with a dart (Image)
 - Jeans with top stitching (Image)
 - Sewing machine stitches (Image)

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students: What is Piecework? (7 minutes)

- Display the following math problem on the board:
 - In 1983, if Ms. Chen made 3 jackets, she earned \$1.50. If she made 10 jackets, she earned \$5. How much money did she earn for making 1 jacket?
- Ask students to work individually to solve the problem, then confirm the answer.
 - **Answer:** She makes \$0.50 for each jacket.
- Ask if anyone has ever heard of the term “piecework” – “Does anyone know what the term ‘piecework’ means?” If not, encourage students to take an educated guess. Then, display the vocabulary word “piecework.”

- **Piecework:** a system in which workers are paid for each piece they complete, instead of the time they spend working.
 - Chinese American garment workers worked for piecework rates of pay, which meant they were paid by the piece of clothing they finished.
 - For example, a garment worker might have been paid five cents for sewing a button onto a shirt, seven cents for sewing the hem on a dress, or two cents for each loose thread they cut. It wouldn't matter how many hours they spent sewing, but rather how much they were able to sew.
- Confirm for students that the math problem just solved is an example of piecework. Ms. Chen doesn't get paid for how many hours she works, she gets paid for how many shirts she makes.
- Show the following quote on the board, which is directly quoted from the 1983 New York Times Article "After Years of Decline, Sweatshops are Back."¹ Hand out the "Glossary of Sewing Terms" at the end which includes definitions and pictures used in this quote.
 - "Wages in a Chinatown shop are 50 cents for a skirt and 50 cents for a jacket, two workers said. For this, the workers said, they must, on a skirt, sew two darts, a waistband and a zipper, and make a slit; on a jacket, they must sew a pocket and do top stitching. They expect that their income will rise as styles change and they are given garments that are faster to sew — the more garments they can sew, the more they will earn."

NOTE TO TEACHER:

- Students may not be familiar with the term "dart" or "top stitching" as used in sewing. "Darts" are folds sewn into fabric that provide shape. An example of a dart on a skirt can be seen at the top of the skirt in the image in the "Glossary of Sewing Terms" handout. Students may notice other items of clothing with darts in the classroom.
- "Top stitching" refers to a row of stitches on the outside of a garment, especially near a seam. Jean pockets usually have decorative top stitching. An example can be seen in the image of the jeans in the "Glossary of Sewing Terms."

- Ask students what this quote adds to their understanding of piecework.
 - Clarify for students that piecework sometimes involves just doing one part of a job, like just sewing the hems on sleeves and not finishing the whole shirt or only attaching zippers. This is an example of assembly line

¹ William Serrin, "After Years of Decline, Sweatshops Are Back," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/12/nyregion/after-years-of-decline-sweatshops-are-back.html>.

production, in which only part of the process is assigned to one person or one team in a factory.

- Point out that the article was written in 1983, so 50 cents at that time is equal to about \$1.66 in 2026, taking into account inflation.
- Tell students that this quote offers just a snapshot of the many tasks involved in doing garment work in the piecework style.

Model/Teach: Both Sides of the Cloth Quilt Exploration (15 minutes)

- Display image of the Garment Workers Quilt, available at the end of the lesson. Explain that we'll use this object to learn about the different tasks involved in garment work. It will also provide us insight about the people who made it and the story they wanted to share.
- Explain that we'll be working together to investigate and unpack this object as a class. The first few questions will help us warm up our close looking skills.
- Invite students to look closely and carefully.
- Initiate the investigation by asking students a selection of the following questions:
 - **Can you tell what this object is?**
 - **Answer:** A quilt. According to the American Folk Art Museum, "a quilt is defined as having three layers stitched, or quilted, together: a top layer of fabric, a layer of cotton or wool batting for warmth, and a bottom layer of fabric."²
 - **How many squares are there?**
 - **Answer:** 9
 - **What are some of the things you see or notice?**
 - i.e., busy people, machines, clothes
 - **What words would you use to describe this object?**
 - i.e., bright, colorful, multi-colored, full of activity, people-focused, busy
 - **What colors, shapes, patterns, and textures can you see?**
 - **Shapes:** i.e., squares, trapezoids, circles, organic shapes, curvy shapes, straight lines, long thin rectangles
 - **Patterns:** i.e., polka dots, flowers, mix of solid colors and patterns to create a design that pops, symmetrical border with trapezoids of the same shape and colors/patterns on each side, smaller white squares within a patterned blue dotted square within a bigger red square, rainbow color gradients
 - **Textures:** i.e., crinkly, creased, bumpy but soft, smooth, uneven, raised layers, crisp, medium weight

² American Folk Art Museum, Quilts: Exploration Guide (New York: American Folk Art Museum, 2013), 12, https://folkartmuseum.org/content/uploads/2014/09/ExplorationGuide_Quilts.pdf.

- Use the next series of questions to build onto students' initial observations. Layer in small pieces of information about the quilt to aid students in making inferences and constructing a more complete picture of the quilt.
- Refer to the Quilt Squares Reference Guide for detailed information about what is happening in each quilt square. Refer to the Community Quilt-Making Projects blog post for background information on the making of the quilt.

NOTE TO TEACHER: Option to hand out the Quilt Investigation Worksheet, if you'd like students to follow along with the whole class object inquiry by jotting down their answers individually.

- Now that your eyes are warmed up, take a minute to look at each square on the quilt. Start from the top left and end at the bottom right. Are there any squares showing activities you recognize? List at least 3 actions you notice.
- Every square on this quilt shows one of the steps of making a shirt. Knowing this, are there any other steps you can see? What is each person doing?
- Quilts are made for many reasons, including to keep people warm and to display as art. Why do you think this particular quilt was made? What do you see that makes you say that?
- This quilt shows a visual narrative or story of what garment work looked like for Chinese American women in the 1980s. It was designed by quiltmaker Debbie Lee. What creative choices did Debbie make?

■ **Follow-up questions:**

- What can you share about the quilt's color palette?
What about its composition?
 - Color palette refers to a set of colors that are used in a design or work of art.
 - Composition refers to the way different elements are arranged or put together.
- Show photos of the creation of the quilt. Ask students to share their observations and thoughts about the quilt creation.
 - Here are some photographs that show how the quilt was made. Do you see any activities in these photos that are also shown on the quilt? What are they? What else do you notice?
 - The quilt was designed by Debbie Lee and co-sewn by garment workers Ng Mui Leung, Sheung Ngor Leung, Cecilia Lo, Yan Chai Mak, So Fong Lee Ng, Sun Ng, and Heng Yu Yan. It was made in 1989, especially for a museum exhibition called "Both Sides of the Cloth: Chinese American Women in the New York City Garment Industry."

- The people in these photos were all professional garment workers. They spent all day, six days a week, sewing clothes for pay. They also volunteered to make this quilt during their free time. Why do you think they might have done that?

- **Follow-up question:**

- Can you think of any type of work that you would like so much you'd do it during your free time?

- Share the photograph of all the quilters displaying their work.
- What do you think it might have been like to work together to make this quilt?

- **Follow-up questions:**

- Is there anything in the photograph that provides a clue?
- Have you ever made something collaboratively with someone else? What was it like? How is it different from working alone?
- What questions do you still have about this quilt or the women who made it?
- Looking closely at this quilt gave us some insight on Chinese American garment workers and some of their jobs at the factory. It also left us with some questions.

Group Work: Piece by Piece Simulation (20 minutes, including reflection)

- **PIECEWORK JACKET:** This activity sheds lights on the brisk pace of assembly line piecework in an efficient, effective way.
 - Explain that in the next activity students will get a sense of what it might have felt like for Chinese American women to actually do piecework.
 - While they won't be doing any actual garment work, explain that students will be divided into groups for an activity that gives them a taste of the pace and experience of doing piecework.

NOTE TO TEACHERS: Print copies of the Piecework Jacket Template. You'll need at least 5 copies for each group. Prepare Piecework Jacket Materials (refer to Resources/Materials section) in advance.

- Tell students that the classroom is temporarily a garment factory, and you are the boss. Explain that students are going to get one **\$MOCABUCK\$** (available at the end of the lesson) for each garment-making task they complete.

NOTE TO TEACHER: If desired, \$MOCABUCK\$ can be integrated into your own classroom incentives system i.e., free reading time, computer time, stickers, prize wheel, etc.

- However, as the boss, you will be doing something bosses in garment factories often do — quality control! If you think that students didn't do a good enough job on their task, they will not get "paid" for it unless they re-do it to the satisfaction of the boss.
- Remind students that garment workers get paid for each completed task, not for how long they spend doing the task. (If needed, reassure students that they are not being graded for this activity!)
- **PIECEWORK JACKET INSTRUCTIONS**
 - Separate the class into groups of 5 students each.
 - Hand out Piecework Jacket Instructions, at least 5 copies of the Piecework Jacket Template, and **Piecework Jacket Materials** to each group.
 - Each group will be responsible for creating as many as possible completed paper jackets in a small group assembly line format.
 - Each student will have one task that they repeat for 5 minutes straight. Give students 1-2 minutes to assign tasks and familiarize themselves with their specific task.
 - Show students the image of a completed jacket so they know what they are working towards.
 - During the activity, the teacher will walk around and inspect as the factory boss. If there is a step that they do not deem acceptable, they will send the jacket back to be fixed.
 - Once 5 minutes are up, count how many correctly completed jackets each group made. Distribute one **\$MOCABUCK\$** to each student per completed jacket. If any jackets are not fully completed, but certain tasks were done, give students who completed additional tasks the appropriate number of additional **\$MOCABUCKS\$**. Remind students that garment workers got paid by the number of tasks they completed, rather than for each complete garment.
- Lead a whole class activity reflection, using the following questions as a guide:
 - For students to think about as workers:
 - How did it feel doing the same task over and over again? What was going through your mind?
 - Did you make any mistakes? If so, how did you feel when you made them? How were you able to fix them?
 - How quickly did you complete your task? Did you get faster or slower over time? Imagine doing the task all day. Do you think you'd get faster or slower as the day went on? Why?
 - Did some tasks take longer than others? Require more skill or practice? (Explain that those tasks would have a higher piecework rate in a garment factory.)

- Do you think it would have taken more or less time to make the jacket on your own? Explain.
- Do you think the skills you use doing garment piecework are transferable, meaning could you use it if you got a job in another kind of business?
- What do you think about the pay rate? Should everyone get paid the same, or should some tasks be paid more than others? (If needed, remind students that the garment workers from the opening quote got about 50 cents for doing several steps to complete a garment.)
- For students to think about garment factory production and environment:
 - Who benefits from a piecework rate system? Explain your thinking.
 - What are the incentives of piecework for workers? For owners?
 - **Workers:** The system made it convenient to bring extra work home, or to take care of their children and do household tasks during the day.
 - **Owners:** It was useful because of the rate at which fashion could change. A factory could easily work in a new style or trend by having the women change their garment patterns while still doing the same tasks i.e., sewing hems, adding zippers, and snipping threads.
 - What kind of working environment might a piecework assembly system create in a garment factory? What makes you say that?
 - Think back to the quilt we saw earlier. Compare and contrast the environment in which the quilt was created and the environment in which the jacket might have been created.

Wrap Up: Piecework Pros & Cons (3 minutes)

- Hand out pre-made exit slips (see end of lesson) with sentence starters (or write them on the board). Give students a few minutes to reflect on what they've learned and experienced through one of the following writing prompts.
 - **Sentence Starter Options:**
 - "One thing that could be attractive about doing piecework is..."
 - "One thing that could be frustrating about doing piecework is..."
 - "I'm curious about..." or "One question I still have about piecework is..."
 - "One thing about piecework that's still confusing to me is..."
- Share that the next lesson will expand on the realities of garment work and allow students more time to reflect on the conditions of the job.
- Collect exit slips as students leave.

Hidden Voices Mini Unit
Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

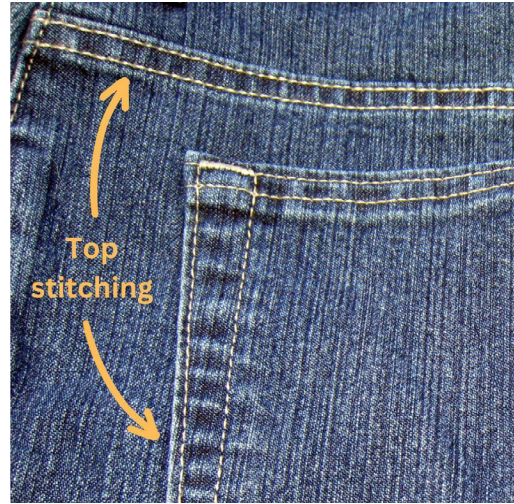
Lesson 2 - Piecing It Together

Glossary of Sewing Terms



Dart

Darts are folds sewn into fabric that provide shape.



Top Stitching

Top stitching refers to a row of stitches on the outside of a garment, especially near a seam. Jean pockets usually have decorative top stitching.

Image Citations: (Left) Auckland Museum, *Skirt, Formal*, 2017, photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skirt,_formal_\(AM_2017.66.15-1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skirt,_formal_(AM_2017.66.15-1).jpg). Collection of Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, 2017.66.15. CC BY 4.0. Image cropped and edited to illustrate definition of “dart.”

(Right) Dvortygirl, *Jeans_pocket_back*, 2008, photograph, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jeans_pocket_back.jpg. CC BY 4.0, Image cropped and edited to illustrate definition of “top stitching.”

Garment Workers Quilt



This quilt was created for the Museum's 1989 exhibition, "Both Sides of the Cloth: Chinese American Women in the New York City Garment Industry." It was designed by Debbie Lee and sewn by garment workers Ng Mui Leung, Sheung Ngor Leung, Cecilia Lo, Yan Chai Mak, So Fong Lee Ng, Sun Ng, and Heng Yu Yan. Accession Number: 2014.018.001. W-68.5 L-69.2 inches. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Citation: Debbie Lee et al., Quilt depicting garment work tasks, 1989, quilt, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/9B1F72EC-8FC6-4180-8279-136407820176>.

Quilt Squares Reference Guide

Quilt Square Descriptions:

- **Top Left:**
 - Garment worker using a serger machine, also known as an overlock machine, that can trim excess fabric and creates an overcast stitch to prevent unraveling of the fabric. The serger uses multiple threads, typically three to four, to create the overcast stitch.
- **Top Center:**
 - Garment worker folding a garment.
- **Top Right:**
 - Garment worker using an industrial sewing machine.
 - Industrial sewing machines stitch much faster and can last longer than home sewing machines, so industrial sewing machines are ideal for completing large quantities under a short time period.
- **Middle Left:**
 - Garment worker sewing at an industrial sewing machine with exaggerated stitch on the fabric. There are many different kinds of stitches used, but most garments will use the straight stitch shown in this quilt square.
- **Middle Center:**
 - Row of garment workers hunched over their industrial sewing machines and a pile of fabrics in the foreground. This would be a typical scene if you were to enter a 1980s Manhattan Chinatown garment factory.
- **Middle Right:**
 - Garment worker trimming excess threads from the garments.
- **Lower Left Corner Square:**
 - Garment worker putting buttons on a garment. Button size is exaggerated in the quilt.
- **Lower Center Square:**
 - Garment worker hanging up completed garments.
- **Lower Right Corner Square:**
 - Garment worker pressing a garment.
 - Typically, the presses in the garment factory were heavy and very hot so workers had to be careful not to burn themselves.
- **Border:**
 - The colorful trapezoidal shapes that make up the border reference the large spools of colorful thread typically found in the garment factories.



Community Quilt-Making Projects

Quilt maker Debbie S. Lee (top right) collaboratively created the Garment Workers Quilt with Yan Chai Mak, Cecilia Lo, Ng Mui Leung, Sheung Ngor Leung, So Fong Lee Ng, Sun Ng, and Heng Yu Yan, all garment workers in New York Chinatown. Here they are posed on either side of a display of their quilt at MOCA's 1989 exhibit, "Both Sides of the Cloth." Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.³

The Garment Workers Quilt and Chinese American Immigrants Quilt were collaboratively created as part of community projects that quilt maker Debbie S. Lee conducted in Chinatown. In her work, Lee uses fabric which she has hand woven, hand dyed or hand painted to tell visual narratives of Chinese American lives and themes. She was inspired by and first learned to sew from the women in her family at an early age. As a child, she emulated the neat stitches of her

³ Debbie Lee et. al. Garment Workers Quilt creators posing with their quilt, 1989, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America, <https://www.mocanyc.org/collections/stories/community-quilt-making-projects/>.

grandmother, who sewed all her own clothes, and her mother, who began teaching her basic sewing, embroidery and knitting when she was eight.

The Garment Workers Quilt was designed by Lee and co-sewn by garment workers Yan Chai Mak, Cecilia Lo, Ng Mui Leung, Sheung Ngor Leung, So Fong Lee Ng, Sun Ng, and Heng Yu Yan for the exhibition “Both Sides of the Cloth” at MOCA (then the Chinatown History Museum) in 1989. The group photographs show Lee and her co-quilters stitching quilt panels at a group sewing session and proudly displaying the finished piece at the exhibition’s opening. The quilt depicts garment workers completing various tasks along a clothing production assembly line. As represented in the highlighted panels, in a garment factory, sewing machine operators typically received a bundle of cut fabric and repeatedly sewed the same portion of a garment, such as the collar, passing the completed portion to the next operator, who sewed another component, completing the garment as it progressed down the assembly line.

The second quilt is an “album quilt” preserving memories drawn from shared experiences of immigration and transplanting roots in New York Chinatown. It was created by community members learning basic quilting techniques at a weekly workshop Lee conducted while an artist-in-residence at the museum in 1990-1991. Each hand stitched quilt panel illustrates a personal memory, such as the ones highlighted here of an encounter between two mothers, one, Rose Luke, carrying her baby in a beautifully patterned wrap sling on her back, the other, pushing her baby in a stroller, and of a grandmother holding the grandchild she is babysitting in one arm while reading an issue of the Chinese-language newspaper 世界日报 (World Journal), a view of the Brooklyn Bridge and East River from the neighborhood of Two Bridges in the background.

In the last photograph, Lee and quilting workshop participants are captured in a candid shot, likely after having taken a group photo at the February 1992 exhibition of their Chinese American Immigrants Quilt, completed after nine months of collective effort. Workshop participants who signed the quilt include: Christine Fan, Barbara Luu, Kenneth Chiu, Grace Hou, Jenny Chan, Eulalia Chan, Maggie Tang, Rose Luke, and Fay and Patrick Eng.

Quilt Investigation Worksheet



1. Take a minute to look at each square on the quilt, starting from the top left and ending at the bottom right.
2. Are there any squares showing activities you recognize? List at least 3 actions you notice.

⁴ Debbie Lee et al., Quilt depicting garment work tasks, 1989, quilt, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/9B1F72EC-8FC6-4180-8279-136407820176>.

3. Every square on this quilt shows one of the steps of making a shirt. Knowing this, are there any other steps you can see?

4. Quilts are made for many reasons, including to keep people warm and to display as art. Why do you think this particular quilt was made? What do you see that makes you say that?

5. This quilt shows a visual narrative or story of what garment work looked like for Chinese American women in the 1980s. It was designed by quiltmaker Debbie Lee. What creative choices did Debbie make?

6. Here are some photographs of how the quilt was made.



Close up of garment workers sewing their quilt squares. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).⁵



Bird's-eye view of garment workers making their quilt squares. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).⁶

⁵ Close up of garment workers sewing their quilt squares, 1989, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.

⁶ Bird's-eye view of garment workers making their quilt squares, 1989, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.

Garment workers sewing their quilt squares. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA)⁷



Do you see any activities in these photos that are also shown on the quilt? What are they? What else do you notice?

7. The people in these photos were all professional garment workers. They spent all day, six days a week, sewing clothes for pay. They also volunteered to make this quilt during their free time. Why do you think they might have done that?

⁷ Garment workers sewing their quilt squares, 1989, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.

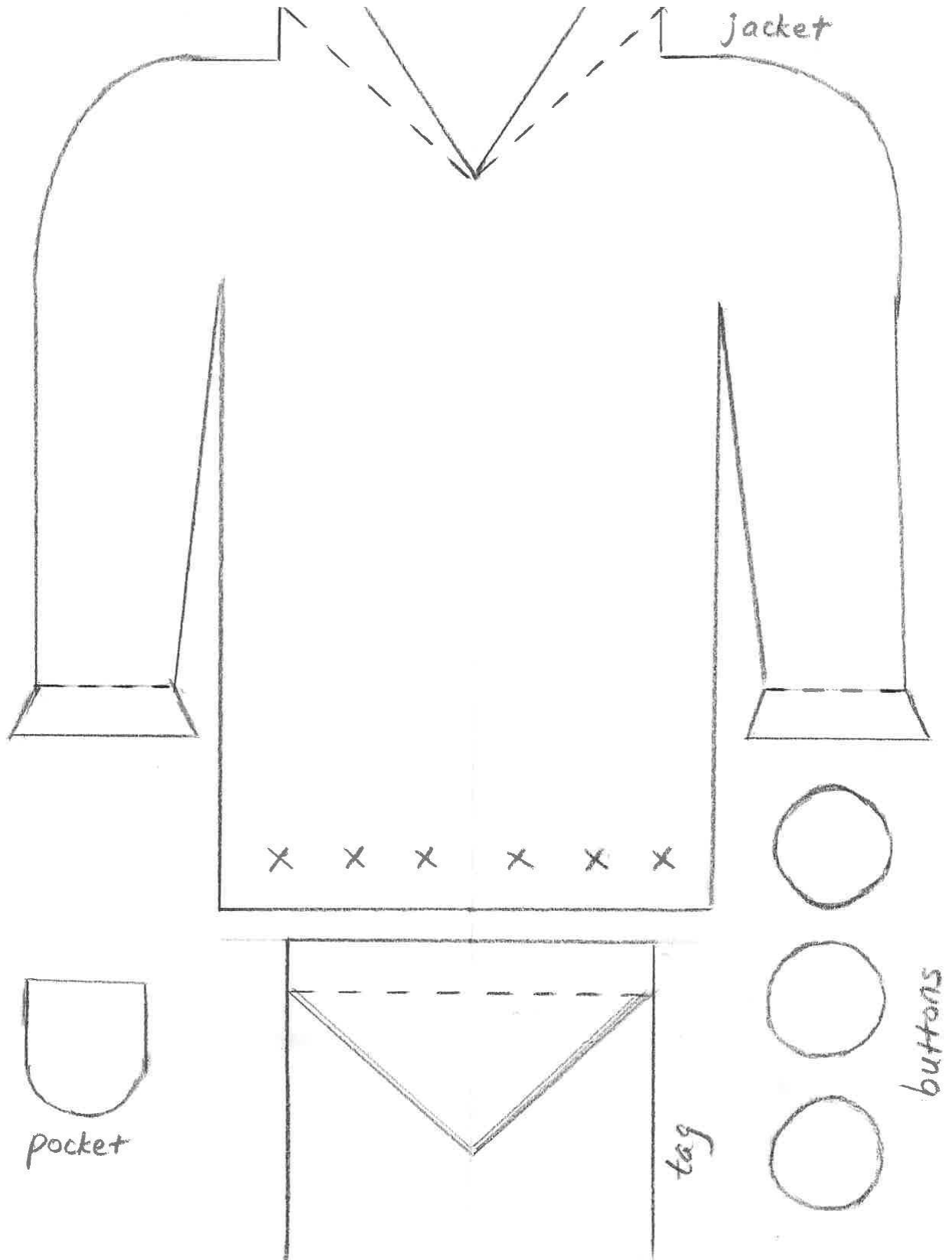


Quilt maker Debbie S. Lee (top right) collaboratively created the Garment Workers Quilt with Yan Chai Mak, Cecilia Lo, Ng Mui Leung, Sheung Ngor Leung, So Fong Lee Ng, Sun Ng, and Heng Yu Yan, all garment workers in New York Chinatown. Here they are posed on either side of a display of their quilt at MOCA's 1989 exhibit, "Both Sides of the Cloth." Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

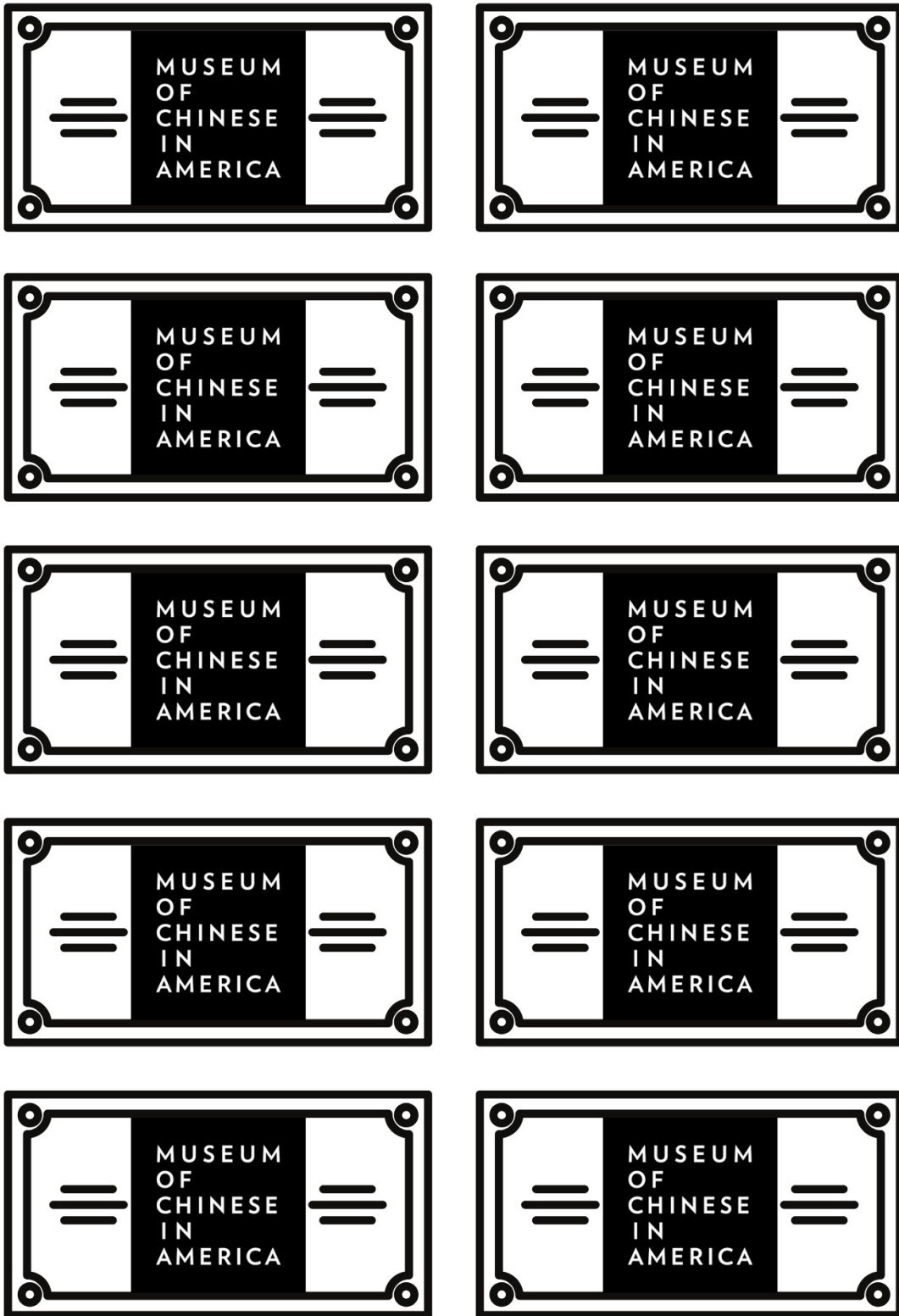
8. What do you think it might have been like to work together to make this quilt? Is there anything in the photograph above that provides a clue?

9. What questions do you still have about this quilt or the women who made it?

Piecework Jacket Template



\$MOCABUCK\$



Piecework Exit Slip

Directions: Pick one of the following prompts to respond to. Hand it in before you leave.

“One thing that could be attractive about doing piecework is...”

“One thing that could be frustrating about doing piecework is...”

“One question I still have about piecework is...”

“One thing about piecework that’s still confusing to me is...”

Make a Piecework Jacket!

Follow these instructions to make a jacket together.

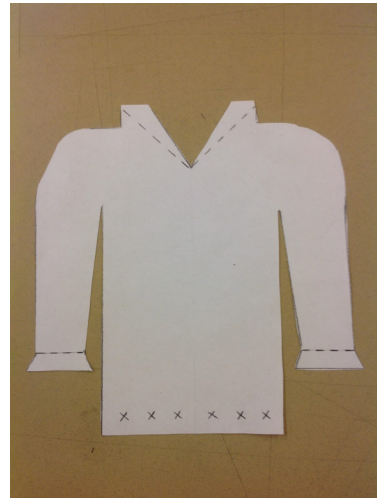
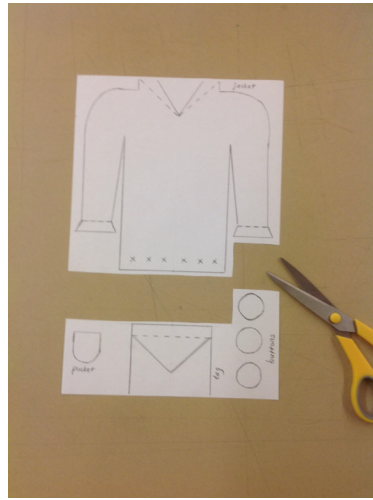
Remember, each person in your group has *just one job*, that they do over and over again.

Job 1

Take a template page. Use scissors to cut out the shape of the jacket along the solid black lines.

Put the cut out jacket and the rest of the page back in the center of the table for the next student to take.

Then start again with a new page!



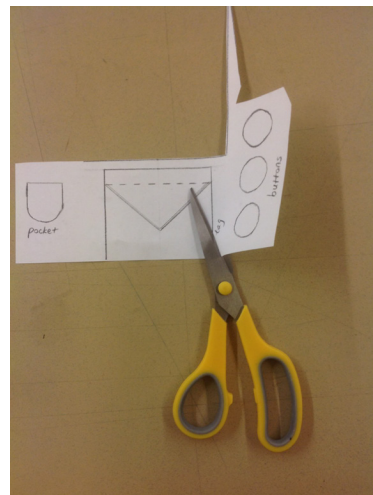
Job 2

Take a template page. Use scissors to cut out the tag along the solid black lines.

Use markers or colored pencils to write “Made in the USA” on the tag.

Put the tag and the rest of the page at the center of the table for the next student to take.

Then start again with a new page!

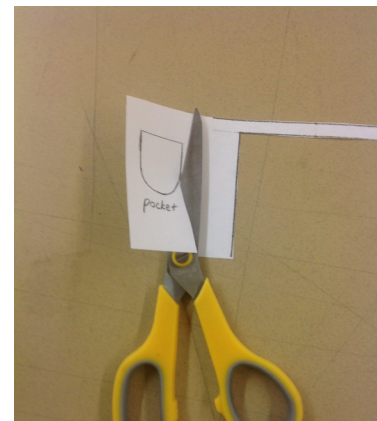
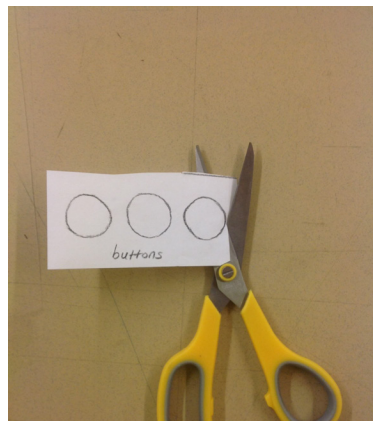


Job 3

Take a template page. Use scissors to cut out 3 buttons and 1 pocket along the solid black lines.

Put the buttons, pocket, and the rest of the page at the center of the table for the next student to take.

Then start again with a new page.



Job 4

Take a cut-out jacket piece and fold along the black dotted lines to make a collar and cuff.

Use tape or glue to attach the tag to the back collar of the jacket. Make sure the triangle on the tag lines up with the triangle on the jacket.

Use tape or glue to attach the buttons down the middle of the jacket.

Use tape or glue to attach the pocket to the top right side of the jacket.

Pass the jacket to the person who is doing Job 5.

Start again!



Job 5

Take a cut-out jacket piece. Use a hole puncher to punch 6 holes, one through each of the small Xs along the bottom of the jacket.

Use colored pencils or markers to draw 3 horizontal stripes across the jacket.

Put your finished jackets in a pile, and keep going!



Congratulations, your jacket is ready to ship!

Lesson Bibliography:

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U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "CPI Inflation Calculator." Accessed March 2, 2026.

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Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 3: Noisy, Dusty, and Hot

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 3 - Noisy, Dusty, and Hot

Focus Questions:

- What was it like to work in a garment factory?
- What attracted so many Chinese immigrant women (and some men) to garment work (versus other types of work)?
- What were the common obstacles that garment workers faced?
- What were some benefits garment workers received?
- How did garment workers balance and navigate work life with family life?
- In what ways were garment workers' personal identities and culture incorporated into the work day?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point

- Students will explore the environment and working conditions in 1970s and 1980s Chinatown garment factories.
- Students will contemplate and reflect on the realities of garment work.
- Students will be able to explain the challenges and benefits of garment work, and understand why many people participated in it.
- Students will investigate how garment workers balanced and navigated work life with family life.
- Students will learn how to use and analyze oral histories as primary sources.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
- E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.
- UNIT 2: A Changing Society and The Progressive Era
 - 8.2 A Changing Society: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America.
 - Industrialization; Immigration; Effects of Industrialization and Immigration 8.2b
- UNIT 5: The United States Assumes Worldwide Responsibilities
 - 8.7 Foreign Policy:
 - Globalization 8.7e
- UNIT 6: From World War II to the Present

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view, stance, or purpose (e.g. rhetorical language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts, images, visuals, etc.).

- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- RH9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States that can be answered by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States and answer them by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2b Population density, diversity, technologies, and industry in urban areas shaped the social, cultural, and economic lives of people.
 - Students will examine the population growth of New York City and other New York cities and the technologies and industries which encouraged this growth.
 - 8.8 Demographic Change
 - 8.8b. The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.
 - Students will examine migration and immigration trends in New York State and New York City such as the increase in Spanish-speaking, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African populations and the contributions of these groups.
 - 8.9d Economic recession during the 1970s and concerns about the growth and size of the federal government encouraged fiscal conservatives to push for changes in regulation and policy.

Resources/Materials

- Unpacking Visual Information in Photographs
 - Interior of a Garment Factory
 - Image 1
 - Image 2
 - Image 3
 - Image 4
 - Image 5
 - Multi-Sensory Photo Analysis Chart
- Packet 1: Life in a Garment Factory (same topic as packet 4, but different sources)
 - Source 1
 - Source 2
 - Source 3 Video: [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 1](#), [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 2](#), [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 3](#)
 - Source 4
 - Source 5 Video: [Excerpt Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen](#), [Full Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen](#)
 - Source 6 Audio Clip Link: [Oral History Interview with Amy, Geolan Sportswear Clip](#)
 - Graphic Organizer 1

- Packet 2: Finances & Making a Living
 - Source 1
 - Source 2
 - Source 3
 - Source 4 [Chinatown Immigrants in America Clip 1](#),
[Chinatown Immigrants in America Clip 2](#)
 - Source 5
 - Graphic Organizer 2
- Packet 3: Kid in the Factory
 - Source 1
 - Source 2 [June Jee from MOCA TALKS Clip 1](#)
 - Source 3 [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 4](#)
 - Source 4 [May Ying Chen from MOCA TALKS](#)
 - Source 5
 - Source 6 [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 5](#)
 - Graphic Organizer 3
- Packet 4: Life in a Garment Factory (same topic as packet 1, but different sources)
 - Source 1
 - Source 2
 - Source 3
 - Source 4
 - Source 5 [Oral History Interview with Katie Quan Clip 1](#),
[Oral History Interview with Katie Quan Clip 2](#)
 - Source 6 [June Jee from MOCA TALKS Clip 2](#)
 - Graphic Organizer 4

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students: Pros and Cons! (5 minutes)

- Display the following prompt on the board:
 - Write down three things about working in a garment factory that could be advantageous.
 - Write down three things about garment factory work that could be frustrating or dangerous.
 - Compare your answers with a partner. Highlight the answers that are the same or similar. Circle the answers that are different.
- Give students about 3 minutes to jot down their answers and share with at least one partner. If time allows, students can share with multiple classmates.
- Ask a few pairs of students to share their answers with the class.
- **(Optional)** Display a slide giving an overview of the most common responses to the previous lesson's exit tickets. Ask students if they have the same answers, and if they

added to their answers or changed their answers today. Take a few student responses as time allows.

NOTE TO TEACHER: Review the student exit tickets from Lesson 2 and use those to prompt student exploration of garment factory work. If possible, create a slide showing the most common responses from those exit tickets.

- **Transition:** Tell students that today’s lesson will focus on the working conditions in Chinatown garment factories and the reasons that workers still took those jobs, despite the conditions.

Look, Look Again: Unpacking Visual Information in Photographs (10 minutes)

- **Look, Look Again!**
 - “Look, Look Again!” is a great introduction to close looking. It guides students in thinking about the composition of a photograph and its impact on the viewer.
 - Display the photograph “Interior of a Garment Factory” on the board.
 - Ask students to look at the image quietly for at least 30 seconds, letting their eyes wander to all 4 corners. Ask them to list up to 10 visual details they see in the photograph. After 30 seconds, everyone should look away or close their eyes.
 - Without looking at the image again, have students list or draw as many things as they can remember.
 - Ask students to look at the image again. What catches your eye now? List any additional details you notice upon second glance.
 - **(Optional)** Ask the class the following question and hear from a few students:
 - Is the photographer trying to draw your attention to something in particular? Explain.
- **Multisensory Photo Investigation**
 - Now that we’ve warmed up our close looking skills, we’re going to split into pairs to continue making observations about life in 1980s Chinatown garment factories.
 - In this activity, students will use visual clues to imagine qualities that go beyond the visual. They will be tasked with extending a scene from a photograph using their senses.
 - Break into pairs for photo investigation. **(Optional:** Have students work individually. They will be working in groups later in the lesson.)
 - Distribute images 1-5 (located in the document “Unpacking Visual Information in Photographs.”)

- Share the following prompt on the board:
 - Add your senses into the image. Describe what the smells, feels, textures, sounds, and atmosphere of this garment factory might have been like.
- Have students jot down their answers in chart form using the “Multi- Sensory Photo Analysis Chart”
- Have students take a minute or two to jot down notes in their chart and then turn and talk to compare their charts with a partner. Ask them to consider the below:
 - What things did you both imagine the same?
 - What did you imagine differently?
 - What were you noticing in the image that made you think that?
- **(Optional)** Lead a quick share-out. Ask a few pairs to share what they imagined for the different senses.

Group Work (20 minutes)

Primary Source Investigation: The Realities of Garment Work

NOTE TO TEACHER: There are 4 different primary source packets. Each of the packets has 5-6 primary sources. You may omit sources at your discretion. We have provided written transcripts of all audio and video clips. You may choose whether to use simply the written transcripts, simply the video/audio clips, or both together. Packets are as follows:

- **Packet 1: Life in a Garment Factory**
 - **Packet 2: Finances & Making a Living**
 - **Packet 3: Kids in the Factory**
 - **Packet 4: Life in a Garment Factory**
(same topic, but different sources than Packet 1)
- Divide the class into small groups, 3-4 students each.
 - Give each group a packet of primary source materials. These will include quotes from news articles about garment factories, memories from former garment workers and their children, and images or videos of work in garment factories. There are four packets of materials on different topics; if class size requires, multiple groups can be assigned to the same topic.
 - Each packet will also contain a graphic organizer to help students make observations and analyze their sources.
 - Have students investigate primary sources and share key points as guided by their graphic organizers.

○ Packet 1 Graphic Organizer	○ Packet 3 Graphic Organizer
○ Packet 2 Graphic Organizer	○ Packet 4 Graphic Organizer

Primary Source Investigation: The Realities of Garment Work

- **Option 1:** Using a jigsaw format, have students rotate groups to form new groups, where each student is an expert on a different packet. Have students share bite-sized summaries of their packets to other students in their group who haven't explored their packets. Students can use their notes from the last question on the graphic organizer to do so.
 - If you had to describe this packet to someone while you were waiting to cross the street, what would you say? (Keep it short, the light is about to change!)
- **Option 2:** Have a representative from each group share a bite-sized summary of their packets to the class. Students can use their notes from the last question on the graphic organizer to do so.
 - If you had to describe this packet to someone while you were waiting to cross the street, what would you say? (Keep it short, the light is about to change!)

Hidden Voices Mini Unit

Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 3 - Noisy, Dusty, and Hot

Look, Look Again!

Interior of a Garment Factory



**Geolan Sportswear Garment Factory, 202 Centre St., 3rd Floor, New York, 1983.
The Factory was shut down in the 1990s.**

Photograph © Bud Glick. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Citation: Robert Glick, *Garment Shop*, 1979-1984, photographic print, Robert Glick Collection (2004.045.067), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY,
<https://moca-nyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/BBBE01F9-4E39-4436-8A6C-733727336443>.

Look, Look Again!

Image 1



Workers in Smart Pants garment factory.

Photograph by Paul Calhoun. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Citation: Paul Calhoun, Workers in a Smart Parts Garment Factory, 1979–1982, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection (2004.102.022), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/E7306B86-4E10-4553-9FBC-208916292237>.

Look, Look Again!

Image 2



Woman at work in a garment factory.

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection. Photograph © Bud Glick.

Citation: Bud Glick, Woman at work in a Garment Factory, 1982–1983, photography, Bud Glick Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, NY.

Look, Look Again!

Image 3



Workers hanging and pressing clothes in a garment factory.

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection. Photograph by Paul Calhoun.

Citation: Paul Calhoun, Workers Hanging and Pressing Clothes in a Garment Factory, 1979-1984, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection. Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY.

Look, Look Again!

Image 4



Woman standing next to piles of clothes in a garment factory.

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection. Photograph by Paul Calhoun.

Citation: Paul Calhoun, Woman Standing next to Piles of Clothes in a Garment Factory, 1979-1984, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection. Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY.

Look, Look Again!

Image 5



Eddie Lum working at a shirt press in a garment factory.

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection. Photograph by Paul Calhoun

Citation: Paul Calhoun, Eddie Lum at a Shirt Press, 1979–1982, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection (2004.102.035), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY.

<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/EB6BD353-CA51-453B-8A35-167231903430>.

Name _____ Date _____

Multi-Sensory Photo Analysis Chart

See 	Touch (Feel) 	Taste 	Smell 	Hear (Listen) 

Source 1

Take a moment to look closely at this image.



Garment factory interior, 1984.

Photo by Paul Calhoun. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Citation: Paul Calhoun, An Old Woman in a Garment Factory, 1984, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection (2004.102.027), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY.
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/Photo/33A61753-BD9B-49AE-8511-772229781738>.

Source 2

Read the two quotes below from a New York Times article entitled, "After Years of Decline, Sweatshops are Back," published in 1983.¹

"The (garment) shops generally operate in shabby one- or two-story buildings. They are often hot, cluttered, airless places, sometimes with half a sheet strung over the doorway to let in some air but to keep out the sun."

"The (garment) factories hum with the noise of machines - electric cutting knives, sewing machines, pressing machines. Radios play loudly...Floors often are littered with cloth remnants and stacked with cut goods or rolled goods. The factories are hot or cold, depending on the season."

While You're Reading: Are there any words or phrases that you're not sure what they mean? Circle them.

¹ William Serrin, "After Years of Decline, Sweatshops Are Back," The New York Times, October 12, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/12/nyregion/after-years-of-decline-sweatshops-are-back.html>.

Source 3

Read or listen to these excerpts from a conversation with Anne Ho, longtime Chinatown resident and daughter of a garment worker:²

“The factory life wasn’t that much fun, you know, because the factory, it’s dusty with the fiber. It’s hot, it’s cold; it’s hot in the summers, it’s cold in the winter.”

Clip Link:

[Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 1](#)

“We spoke Mandarin...and there were no Mandarin speaking people, it was all Cantonese or Toisanese.”

Clip Link:

[Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 2](#)

“We didn’t speak the language, so it was very difficult for her the first year because she couldn’t communicate, so they would take advantage of that. She would go into the bathroom and cry, whenever she was having a hard time. As a new seamstress, she didn’t sew very fast; she had to learn...and they switched patterns all the time, but if you make a mistake, you know, there will be people checking the garments once they’re made. If you make a mistake, if it’s not up to standard, they would give it back to you and you would have to tear it apart and remake it.”

Clip Link:

[Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 3](#)

² Anne Ho, “Oral History Interview with Anne Ho,” interview by the Museum of Chinese in America, January 22, 2013, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, https://ohms.mocanyc.org/viewer/viewer.php?cachefile=2013_022_001_1679928260.xml.

Source 4

Read the following excerpt from a conversation with former garment workers and union representatives, Connie Ling and Alice Ip, as well as union organizer May Ying Chen, which was taken from the Article “How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History.”:³

“‘My mother-in-law’s job was to cut the thread. Mine was to sew the garments,’ Connie said, convivially.

‘She got a needle pricked in her finger once and she had a bandage that was like a big ice cream,’ May chimed in, laughing.

‘The work was really hard for me,’ Connie chuckled. ‘Like so many other women, I didn’t have any experience sewing clothes.’

“‘We did it for our livelihoods,’ Alice added in Cantonese. ‘The garment shops were in such a high demand for workers that they gave us the opportunity to learn. So even if your hands shook and you were scared, you had to do it.’

‘The machines were so fast,’ May added.

‘I’ve been pricked countless times,’ Alice said.”

³ River 瑩瑩 Dandelion, “How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History,” The Margins, Asian American Writers' Workshop, May 1, 2019, <https://aaww.org/chinatown-garment-strike-1982/>.

Source 5

**Read or watch a video of a conversation with May Ying Chen,
a union organizer for Chinatown garment factories:⁴**

“It’s kind of hard for people to believe this now, but there were 500 or 600 factories, all along Canal Street, Lafayette, Broadway. There were hundreds of them. [...] The factories had a sewing machine section. It had a section for pressers. It had a section for the special machines and it had a finishing section, where they put the bags on the clothes and got ready to ship them out.

But what was really interesting in the factory is just all the socialization of the workers in the shop. Because there was also a section where people would stop at a certain time and have lunch together. It was kind of **primitive**, because these buildings are old... and people would put their boxes on the radiators to heat them up because in the early days they didn’t have microwave ovens—later they did. Or they would have a big rice cooker...the employer would provide rice, and so the hot rice would heat up the leftover food that they brought for lunch.

One thing that really impressed me in a couple of visits to the factory, not just the **union**, but all kinds of people would come into the shops to make different announcements. Like during Chinese New Year, I remember there was a guy who was selling chickens and he brought a big box of whole chickens into the shop to sell to the ladies because of course at Chinese New Year, every family has to have one chicken, at least. And so, they were bargaining with him and they were buying food from this vendor in the factory.”

*edited for clarity

GLOSSARY

Primitive: basic; doesn’t use modern technology

Union: an organization of workers whose main goals are to maintain and improve employee working conditions. **We’ll learn more about unions in the next lesson!**

Video Clip Link: [Excerpt Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen](#)

Full Video Clip Link: [Full Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen](#)

⁴ May Ying Chen, “Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen, Excerpt on Garment Factory Socialization,” interview by Alina Shen, January 18, 2018, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Source 6

Read or listen to the following excerpt from a 2018 conversation with interviewer Yuet-fung Ho and Amy, the daughter of the owner of Geolan Sportswear Garment Factory:⁵

“Yuet-fung: What was your memory of all these ladies in the factory? What was your most impressive memory?”

“Amy: I think I am more impressed now because they stayed together throughout all these years. Looking at the photos, I can close my eyes and just envision being there, hearing all the machinery, because that factory had a very distinct sound between the pressing machines, the buttonholing machine going, the noise of the sewing machine, the fans going... I could just hear it by looking at these photos right now. I could just close my eyes and envision 1982, 1983 being there. [Laugh] It’s so strange that I never thought of the sounds until I saw Bud’s photos there. If I close my eyes, I could hear all the sounds of the machinery in the factory.”

Note: Amy mentions some photos in this conversation. She’s talking about the black and white photo below, which we explored at the beginning of the lesson.



Photograph © Bud Glick.

Citation: Robert Glick, Garment Shop, 1979-1984, 1979-1984, photographic print, Robert Glick Collection (2004.045.067), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/BBBF01F9-4E39-4436-8A6C-733727336443>.

Audio Clip Link: [Oral History Interview with Amy, Geolan Sportswear Clip](#)

⁵ Amy”, "Oral History Interview with Amy, Daughter of Geolan Sports Garment Factory Owners," interview by Yuet-fung Ho, August 7, 2018, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Source 1

Read this quote from an article from Amerasia Journal entitled, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown” by former garment worker and union organizer, Katie Quan:⁶

“Hours were long and pay was low. Wages were calculated by piece rate, where each sewing operation was assigned a price, and the more you sewed, the more you earned. Each time a new style was introduced, which might be twice or more a day, the employers tried to set prices as low as they could. If the price was too low, workers would complain, and sometimes fierce shouting matches would take place. Life was a battle, as piece rate workers negotiated real earnings on a daily basis.”

Source 2

Read the following excerpt from a conversation with former garment workers and union representatives, Connie Ling and Alice Ip from “How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History” by Huiying B. Chan:⁷

“The good bundles that were easy to make were called ‘sih yauh gai, soy sauce chicken’ — they were the styles quicker to make and learn, that could earn you more money,” Connie said, switching between English and Cantonese. “At first, I thought they were talking about a dish.”

The laughter of the three women rose to the plant-lined sunlit windows to their left. “You’d say ‘sew a soy sauce chicken.’ When the styles were changed and it was hard to make, we’d call it ‘zyu gwat, pork bone’” Alice continued.

While You’re Reading: Are there any words or phrases that you’re not sure what they mean? Circle them.

⁶ Katie Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown,” Amerasia Journal 35, no. 1 (2009): 78, https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2009/quan_amerasia09.pdf.

⁷ River 瑩瑩 Dandelion, “How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History,” The Margins, Asian American Writers’ Workshop, May 1, 2019, <https://aaww.org/chinatown-garment-strike-1982/>.

Source 3

Read the following excerpt of an article featuring an interview of garment worker Alice Tse by Shiree Teng in an East Wind Magazine Spring/Summer 1983 issue titled *Women, Community and Equality*.⁸

“Alice in responding to the question about what are the vital issues facing Chinese workers today, said, ‘I think the current problems facing Chinese women workers are basically two. One is the overall worsening of the economic situation and the rate of **inflation**. So in the garment industry, this translates into the slow season that we are in right now. The unemployment rate is quite high. Workers' incomes are constantly on the decrease.

‘The second problem I see is with the children. The mothers who have to work long hours worry about their children's safety and what they are learning everyday. This is a real problem for women who don't have a lot of time to spend with their children.’”

GLOSSARY

Inflation: an increase in the average level of prices of goods and services

⁸ Shiree Teng, “Women, Community, and Equality,” East Wind Magazine 2, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1983): 20–23, <https://unityarchiveproject.org/issue/vol-2-no-1-spring-summer-1983/east-wind-vol-2-no-1-spring-summer-1983rd>.

Source 4

Read or watch the following excerpts from the 1976 documentary, *Chinatown: Immigrants in America*, a DCTV and WNET/Thirteen production, co-produced by Jon Alpert, Keiko Tsuno and Yoko Maruyama.⁹

Video Clip Link 1: [Chinatown Immigrants in America Clip 1](#)

Garment Worker 1: [in Chinese] “I get up at 7 AM. I work until 7 at night. I go home. Eat. Take a bath and go to bed at 10. That’s my life. Every day is the same.”

Garment Worker 2: “I came here with my father and my mother. And my father came down with heart disease; he can’t work. And I work here with my sister, for a living. I do this for only 12 cents, but I saw this in uptown, it sells for about 13 dollars, and I think it’s unfair because we have made these pants...they only give us for 12 cents.”

Video Clip Link 2: [Chinatown Immigrants in America Clip 2](#)

Narrator: Everyday Chinese factory managers armed with boxes of samples hustle the garment district for new orders. But with so much competition, they’re at the mercy of the clothing manufacturers.

Clothing Manufacturer: “This is what I have right now, is a denim jacket”

Factory Manager: “One piece?”

Clothing Manufacturer: “A one piece jacket.”

Factory Manager: “May I know about the price?”

Clothing Manufacturer: “The price on this is \$2.60.”

Factory Manager: “What?”

Clothing Manufacturer: “That’s all I can pay.”

Factory Manager: “\$2.60?”

Clothing Manufacturer: “That’s it.”

Factory Manager: “Come on, Jimmy, I see there are..all **Merrow**” [pointing to the jacket]

⁹ Jon Alpert, Keiko Tsuno, and Yoko Maruyama, dirs., *Chinatown: Immigrants in America* (New York: DCTV and WNET/Thirteen, 1976), video, 29:00, <https://vimeo.com/527442451>.

Factory Manager: “Come on, Jimmy, I see there are..all **Merrow**” [pointing to the jacket]

Clothing Manufacturer: [interrupting] “I can’t give you anymore. That’s it.”

Factory Manager: [inaudible] “All Merrow”

Clothing Manufacturer: “If you can’t make it, don’t take the lot. I’ll give it to someone else.

Factory Manager: “You know, this [pointing] ...costs me a quarter more, you know... all merrow work... [inaudible]

Clothing Manufacturer: [interrupting] “I understand. This is all I have. This is all I can pay.”

Factory Manager: “And this scheduled...”

Clothing Manufacturer 2: “...double stitching, the way you...”

Factory Manager: “Come on, Jimmy.”

Clothing Manufacturer: “I can’t, William. The rock bottom price I could go on this is \$2.60. If you can’t make it, don’t take the lot. I’ll give it to someone else. That’s about it.”

GLOSSARY

Factory manager: The person who is responsible for getting new orders for clothes, for supervising garment workers in the factory, and for preparing the finished clothes for the order.

Merrow machine: An industrial machine from the Merrow brand that sews overlocking stitches. Overlocking stitches are used to join two pieces of fabric, to prevent stitches from unraveling, and to create decorative designs along the edge of a garment.

Source 5

Read the following quotes from a January 4, 1971 New York Times article entitled, “For Garment Industry’s Workers, It’s Belt-Tightening Time” by Bernadine Morris.¹⁰ They share experiences from Wing Fong Chin, who worked in a garment factory on Elizabeth Street in Chinatown for 15 years.

“So she went into a factory, learning first how to put zippers in, then how to make sleeves and collars. Today, she works on an entire garment, preferring skirts, for which she is paid 17 cents each, to dresses, for which she gets 50 cents.”

““They are so simple, I can make 25 skirts in an hour,’ she explained. ‘I can make only about four dresses.’

Last year Mrs. Chin earned \$7,500, but this year it will be considerably less. ‘There is not always enough work,’ she explained.”

NOTE TO TEACHER: \$7,500 in 1970 is equivalent to about \$64,534 in 2026.¹¹

“Sometimes Mrs. Chin recognizes the styles she has worked on in the stores. Once she saw a dress she particularly liked in Goodwin’s, a department store in her neighborhood. ‘It had my number on it, number 5,’ she said. ‘I bought it for my daughter.’ It cost her \$7.99.”

Note: Every garment worker was assigned a number. In this way, factory bosses could keep track of the work done by each individual worker. This number would also be used to contact specific garment workers during the workday. A central line was called and then a specific worker’s number would be announced over the loudspeaker so they could answer their call i.e. if their children called them after school or if something was being dropped off for them.

NOTE TO TEACHER: \$7.99 in 1971 is equivalent to \$65.30 in 2026.¹²

¹⁰ Bernadine Morris, “For Garment Industry’s Workers, It’s a Belt-Tightening Time,” The New York Times, January 4, 1971, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/01/04/archives/for-garment-industrys-workers-its-a-belttightening-time.html>.

¹¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “CPI Inflation Calculator,” accessed March 2, 2026, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

¹² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “CPI Inflation Calculator.”

Source 1

Take a moment to look closely at this image.



**Woman sewing at a garment factory on Canal St.
Behind her is a child using an empty spool as a telescope.**

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection. Photograph by Paul Calhoun.

Citation: Paul Calhoun, Woman sewing at a garment factory on Canal St, 1984, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection (2004.102.101), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/375A9E90-AFD1-4ECF-90A7-402452939453>.

Source 2

Read or listen to the following quote from June Jee, the daughter of a former garment worker.¹³

“It cost money to put us in (Chinese) school, so it was an additional financial burden for them. So we ended up going up to the garment factory... My younger brother that I mentioned, he’s seven years younger than me. We remembered that there was a baby, in the bin, next to her sewing machine. So Mom must have brought him to the workplace, and she would care for him while she was doing her work... While we were in the factory, we just ran around. We had nothing really to do... we did our homework, we helped the old ladies cut threads.”

Clip Link: [June Jee from MOCA TALKS Clip 1](#)

Source 3

Read or listen to the following excerpt of a conversation with Anne Ho, a longtime Chinatown resident and daughter of a garment worker.¹⁴

“I have another friend, I think I mentioned to you, Alex, he was, he grew up in the factory. I mean, you know, his mom would tell me stories where, you know, cuz these machines, you would have these metal pans to lay out the parts that they assemble, so you have the deeper metal pans or you have the shallow ones. So, when he was an infant, you know, his mom would put him in the deeper pan to keep an eye on him...so he basically grew up in the factory, you know.”

Clip Link: [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 4](#)

¹³ Museum of Chinese in America, “MOCA TALKS: Reflections on the 1982 Garment Workers Strike,” featuring May Ying Chen, Rachel Bernstein, June Jee, Mae M. Ngai, and Yue Ma, September 9, 2022, video, 1:35:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZxITkDSdCI>.

¹⁴ Anne Ho, “Oral History Interview with Anne Ho,” interview by the Museum of Chinese in America, January 22, 2013, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, https://ohms.mocanyc.org/viewer/viewer.php?cachefile=2013_022_001_1679928260.xml.

Source 4

Read or listen to the next quote. It's from May Ying Chen, a union organizer.¹⁵

"The piece rate system ... gave workers a little bit of flexibility in the sense that when they finished a bundle or they did a certain amount of work, some of the workers would go and pick their kids up after school and either bring them back to the factory or take them home ... There was always a payphone in the factory, and most of the kids were expected to call their mom when they got home from school."

Clip Link: [May Ying Chen from MOCA TALKS](#)

Source 5

Read this quote from Winnifred Lee, the daughter of a garment worker:¹⁶

"My mom was raising 3 kids under 5 and she had a sewing machine at home so she could care for us and do piecework. I remember a guy would pull up in a minivan and bring bags of fabric to her and take finished pieces away. I think she got paid at the end of the week. My brother got his finger caught in the spinning wheel on the side once and it was not pretty."

¹⁵ Museum of Chinese in America, "MOCA TALKS."

¹⁶ Museum of Chinese in America, "MOCA TALKS."

Source 6

Read or listen to this excerpt with Anne Ho, a longtime Chinatown resident and daughter of a garment worker.¹⁷

“But we didn’t go home after school directly, we went to the factory to work. Because that was one way for my mom to keep an eye on the kids, while my dad’s at work and also we could do our homework, under her eyes... After school, we would go to the factory and thread belts through pants. At that time, you know, cuz we were kids, we, you know, what could we do? We couldn’t do anything, we couldn’t sew, we couldn’t do our own... After the pants are pressed, they would be hung on the rack but there were no belts...yet, right? So they hired us, well they got us to, I think maybe at that time it was a nickel per pair. So we have to take the pants off the rack—it’s on a hanger— off the rack, put them on the table and thread the belts, you know, tie them up, and then put them back on the racks, so then they would bag them individually. That was our job.”

**Edited for clarity.*

Clip Link: [Oral History Interview with Anne Ho Clip 5](#)

¹⁷ Ho, “Oral History Interview.”

Source 1

Take a moment to look closely at this image.



A woman at a steamer in a garment factory.

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Citation: A woman at a steamer, ca. 1992, photographic print, Museum of Chinese in America - Collected by Staff (2009.031.001), Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/C86A0CCC-BA10-4044-B7AB-474685893603>.

Source 2

Read the quotes below. They are from a New York Times article entitled, “After Years of Decline, Sweatshops are Back,” published in 1983.¹⁸

“The (garment) shops generally operate in shabby one- or two-story buildings. They are often hot, cluttered, airless places, sometimes with half a sheet strung over the doorway to let in some air but to keep out the sun.”

“Often garment industry workers must walk three or four flights to their factories, up dark, dingy, littered hallways. Elevators, when they exist, are often old and small and overburdened; it would take too long to wait for them.”

Source 3

Read this excerpt from a conversation with interviewer Lan Trinh and Agnes Wong, a former seamstress and union worker who worked in Chinatown’s garment industry for 30 years.¹⁹

Agnes: “At that time I had thought about doing some job for [non-Chinese] Americans, but they didn’t want to accept my diploma. They insisted on a college diploma. Or else they asked if I was a citizen, and how long I had been in America. I went to a number of American jobs and didn’t succeed. But it wasn’t an option to sit around and not work.”

Lan: “How did you start work in the factory?”

Agnes: “A relative of mine on East Broadway opened a garment factory. It’s a little past today’s 888 Restaurant, and he had started the garment factory on the second floor. He said: ‘If you have free time, how about coming to work at my garment factory?’ I said, ‘But I don’t know sewing, and I have never sewed before in my life!’ He said, ‘You’re this smart, you’ll learn quickly.’ I said, ‘How can I count on sewing to make a living when I don’t even know how to hold a needle! How can I sew?’ He said, ‘You’re fine, you’re fine, you’ll learn quickly.’ Later on, I tried it. At that time the working hours were very good. We started at nine and left at six, and if we worked on Saturdays, we earned overtime pay, there were long vacation times, and there was special holiday money on top of it. At the time the standard of living was very low.”

Note: Agnes is referring to the mid-1970s.

While You’re Reading: Are there any words or phrases that you’re not sure what they mean? Circle them.

¹⁸ William Serrin, "After Years of Decline, Sweatshops Are Back," The New York Times, October 12, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/12/nyregion/after-years-of-decline-sweatshops-are-back.html>.

¹⁹ Agnes Wong (seamstress), interview by Lan Trinh, 2003–2004, transcript, Ground One: Voices from Post-9/11 Chinatown, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY. <https://911chinatown.mocanyc.org/oralhistory.html>.

Source 4

Read this quote from an article from *Amerasia Journal* entitled, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown” by former garment worker and union organizer, Katie Quan:²⁰

“It was surreal, like watching in a **Truffaut** movie, except I was in the middle of it. My co-workers were cackling and pointing at me, while I sat traumatized and speechless after sewing right into my own finger. I tried to pull the needle out with my fingers, but to my horror the muscles surrounding the needle sucked it in even deeper. ‘Use your teeth!’ my co-workers called out to me. I was doubtful, but since they were all watching and waiting, I went ahead and bit the needle with my front teeth, held on tightly, and slowly pulled the needle out. The boss checked for needle fragments in my finger, saw that it was clear, gave me iodine and a band-aid, and announced that I had ‘graduated.’ Actually...it left me an emotional wreck.”

**edited for clarity*

GLOSSARY

Truffaut: A well-known French film director, writer, and critic. He often made movies about the struggles that people go through in life.

²⁰ Katie Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown,” *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009): 78, https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2009/quan_amerasia09.pdf.

Source 5

Read the following excerpts of a conversation with researcher Kaitlin Hao and Katie Quan, a former garment worker and union organizer:²¹

Katie: “So, there was the noise of the machines that you’d notice...the noise of the radio, the noise of the workers talking, the noise of the supervisors shouting on top of that.”

“The industrial machines are louder than your regular home sewing machine. Certain machines are louder than other types. There’s a regular sewing machine, but then there are machines that put buttons on, for example, and those use a lot of pressure...the needle comes down hard and so they make more noise than the average machine.

And then there are other machines that are kind of in-between, so there’s the sewing machines and the really loud machines that use a lot of pressure, but then there’s in-between kind of machines. The machines that make the overlocking of the seams—those are merrow machines, they’re a type of sewing machine—but the way that that noise happens is that instead of relatively short bursts... there was no stopping, there was much less stopping. And so it would be more continuous, rather than sort of short bursts of noises.

And then there were other types of noise like... so the pressing would be done with steam presses, right? And so every time you’d clamp the top of a press down onto a garment and it exudes steam and so you hear the noise of the steam coming out.”

Audio Clip Link: [Oral History Interview with Katie Quan Clip 1](#)

Katie: “And then talking, the workers talking. People would just talk while they’re sewing. It could be just like regular conversation, ‘oh, we had this for dinner last night’ or ‘the kids came home with this’ and all this chatting. Sometimes fights would break out and people would be arguing. It was sort of different levels of noise going on depending on what was being talked about.”

*edited for clarity

Audio Clip Link: [Oral History Interview with Katie Quan Clip 2](#)

²¹ Katie Quan, “Oral History Interview with Katie Quan,” interview by Kaitlyn Hao, April 13, 2023, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

Source 6

Read this excerpt of a conversation with union organizer May Ying Chen and June Jee, the daughter of a former garment worker and union organizer:²²

June Jee: “There are many of us that grew up in this type of household, where the parents are working six days a week, usually 10 to 12 hours a day... I remember as I got older, I told my mother, I said, ‘You know, why are you working? You know, you can stop working. The condition here is so bad.’

...I found out that a lot of the women had **urinary tract infections** because many of them were not going to the bathroom. Everything was piecework. So they just sat at the machine constantly churning out...and I told my mother that this is not where I want you to be. And my mother’s answer, I still remember her answer. She said, ‘Look, if I don’t do it, somebody else will take the job.’”

GLOSSARY

Urinary tract infections: bacterial infections sometimes caused by not going to the bathroom enough.

Clip Link: [June Jee from MOCA TALKS Clip 2](#)

²² Museum of Chinese in America, “MOCA TALKS.”

Name: _____ Date: _____

Packet 1: Use your primary source packet to complete this chart about life in a garment factory.

Life in a Garment Factory		
	Source 1: Photo	Sources 2-6: Interviews
Describe what a garment factory might look like. Use the primary sources to help you. Write your answers in the boxes.		
Describe what a garment factory might sound like. Use the primary sources to help you.		
Describe what a garment factory might smell like. Use the primary sources to help you.		
Did any of the primary sources you explored show or mention anything that seemed dangerous or unhealthy? What was that? Why do you think it might be dangerous or unhealthy?		
What parts of the environment of a garment factory might bother or annoy you?		

Name: _____

Date: _____

	Source 1: Photo	Sources 2-6: Interviews
What parts of the environment of a garment factory might you like or enjoy?		
Some of the sources share how garment workers learned to sew, when they first started working in the factory. What were their experiences like? Describe them in one or two sentences.		
Was there anything that surprised you about working in a garment factory? What was it?		
Why did that surprise you? (If nothing surprised you, please explain why!)		
After reading the materials in this packet, what questions do you have?		
If you had to describe this packet to someone while you were waiting to cross the street, what would you say? (Keep it short, the light is about to change!)		

Name: _____ Date: _____

Packet 2: Use your primary source packet to complete this chart about finances and making a living as a garment worker.

Finances & Making a Life	
	Sources 1-5
In Lesson 2, you learned about piece work and piece rates. Some of these sources also talk about piece work. Explain piece work in your own words, using examples from the sources.	
Many of these primary sources share the perspectives of garment workers. How do they feel about their pay? Do you notice any change in their feelings from the early 1970s to the early 1980s? Use the sources to help you.	
Source 4 talks about a problem that the factory managers have. Use your own words to describe the problem.	
Between the garment workers and the factory managers, who do you sympathize with more? Why? (Or if you can understand both perspectives, why?)	
Some of the sources talk about garment workers seeing the clothes they made in stores. Look for comparisons between how much money workers were paid and the price of the clothes in stores. How much more were they in the store? How did that make them feel?	

Name: _____ Date: _____

Was there anything that surprised you about the pay for garment workers? What was it?	
Why did that surprise you? (If nothing surprised you, please explain why!)	
After reading the materials in this packet, what questions do you have?	
If you had to describe this packet to someone while you were waiting to cross the street, what would you say? (Keep it short, the light is about to change!)	

Name: _____ Date: _____

Packet 3: Use your primary source packet to complete this chart about kids in the factory.

Kids in the Factory		
	Source 1: Photo	Sources 2-6: Interviews
Many garment workers brought their children to work. Why? Use your primary sources to help you find out.		
Several sources in this packet share how children felt about spending time at the garment factory. Use your own words to describe how they felt, adding as many details as possible.		
What are the children in the different sources doing while at the factory? Use your own words to describe their activities.		
Some of the primary sources talk about the advantages of bringing children to the garment factory. What are those?		
Some of the primary sources talk about the disadvantages of bringing children to the garment factory. What are those?		

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Source 1: Photo	Sources 2-6: Interviews
If you stayed at a garment factory while your family worked, how might you feel? Would you feel the same as the children in the sources or would you feel different? Explain!		
These sources are from a time before people had smartphones and cell phones. According to the sources, how did parents make sure their children were home safe? What ways do people use now?		
Describe an experience when you have gone to work with a parent or family member. What happened? Why did you go (i.e. holiday, sick, snow day)? What did you learn about the workplace? What did you learn about your parent or family member?		
After reading the materials in this packet, what questions do you have?		
If you had to describe this packet to someone while you were waiting to cross the street, what would you say? (Keep it short, the light is about to change!)		

Name: _____ Date: _____

Packet 4: Use your primary source packet to complete this chart about life in a garment factory.

Life in a Garment Factory		
	Source 1: Photo	Sources 2-6: Interviews
Describe what a garment factory might look like. Use the primary sources to help you. Write your answers in the boxes.		
Describe what a garment factory might sound like. Use the primary sources to help you.		
Describe what a garment factory might smell like. Use the primary sources to help you.		
Did any of the primary sources you explored show or mention anything that seemed dangerous or unhealthy? What was that? Why do you think it might be dangerous or unhealthy?		
What parts of the environment of a garment factory might bother or annoy you?		

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Source 1: Photo	Sources 2-6: Interviews
What parts of the environment of a garment factory might you like or enjoy?		
Some of the sources share how garment workers learned to sew, when they first started working in the factory. What were their experiences like? Describe them in one or two sentences.		
Was there anything that surprised you about working in a garment factory? What was it?		
Why did that surprise you? (If nothing surprised you, please explain why!)		
After reading the materials in this packet, what questions do you have?		
If you had to describe this packet to someone while you were waiting to cross the street, what would you say? (Keep it short, the light is about to change!)		

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Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 4: Unions: Stitching Garment Workers Together

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 4 - Unions: Stitching Garment Workers Together

Focus Questions:

- What is a union and why do workers form them?
- How did labor unions impact the lives of workers and the garment industry as a whole?
- What are some reasons garment workers joined the union? Why might they not have?
- In what ways did the International Ladies' Garments Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 labor union improve the lives of Chinese American workers?
- What was the role of Chinese American women in the ILGWU Local 23-25 branch of the union?
- When working to create change, what is the impact of an individual voice? A group's collective voice?
- How can we better understand the complex desires and needs of Chinese American women garment workers?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point

- Students will be able to define the term *union* and understand why unions are formed.
- Students will be introduced to International Ladies' Garments Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25, the branch of the garment industry union for Chinatown workers.
- Students will learn about reasons why so many Chinatown garment workers and Chinatown garment shops joined the union, as well as what barriers they faced.
- Students will refine their skills in analyzing a variety of primary sources to learn about the many functions of the Local 23-25 union branch.
- Students will reflect on the basic rights they believe all workers should have.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5

Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence

- 1. Define and frame questions about the United States that can be answered by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
- 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
- 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.

- C. Comparison and Contextualization

- 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
- 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.

- UNIT 2: A Changing Society and The Progressive Era

- 8.2 A Changing Society: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America.
 - Industrialization; Immigration; Effects of Industrialization and Immigration; Societal impact of industrialization; Legislative reform. 8.2a, 8.2b, 8.2c. 8.2d, 8.2e.

- UNIT 5: The United States Assumes Worldwide Responsibilities

- 8.7 Foreign Policy: The period after World War II has been characterized by an ideological and political struggle, first between the United States and communism during the Cold War, then between the United States and forces of instability in the Middle East. Increased economic interdependence and competition, as well as environmental concerns, are challenges faced by the United States.

- Globalization 8.7e.

- UNIT 6: From World War II to the Present

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally, visually, and graphically).
- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- RH9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States that can be answered by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
 - E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.
 - F. Civic Participation

- 2. Participate in activities that focus on a classroom, school, community, state, or national issue or problem.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States and answer them by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
 - E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 1. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society; evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups of people.
 - F. Civic Participation
 - 2. Participate in activities that focus on a classroom, school, community, state, or national issue or problem.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2d In response to shifts in working conditions, laborers organized and employed a variety of strategies in an attempt to improve their conditions.
 - 8.7 Foreign Policy
 - 8.7e Increased globalization has led to increased economic interdependence and competition.
 - Students will examine the increased economic interdependence in terms of globalization and its impact on the United States and New York State economy, including the workforce.

Resources/Materials

- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Silent Conversation Primary Sources
 - Source 1: Back Wages Form in English & Chinese
 - Source 2: ILGWU 23-25 Chinese American Voters League Photos
 - Source 3: What is the Union? Cartoon in English & Chinese
 - Source 4: Local 23-25 News from October 1987 in English & Spanish
 - Source 5: Interview with Agnes Wong
 - Source 6: ILGWU Iron-On Union Label Patch
- **(Optional)** Silent Conversation Alternate Sources
 - Any of these sources can be swapped with the above sources!
 - Setting Piece Rates
 - Interview with Shi Yun Chin
 - UNITE musical score
 - Interview with May Ying Chen
- ILGWU Quilt Investigation Worksheet
- Garment Workers in Chinatown (Background Information)
- International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) (Background Information)

Additional Resources

- Labor Arts Quilt Information: <https://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/memory-in-cloth/20/>
- Kheel Center Union Label Timeline: <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/timeline/union-label-timeline.html>
- Union Label Commercial: <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/archives/filmVideo/index.html>
- Kheel Center ILGWU Timeline: <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/timeline/>
- Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Info: <https://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/union-square/fire/>

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students: Defining Union (5 minutes)

- In the last session, we explored primary sources that shed light on what it was like for workers in Chinatown's garment factories, from the environment in the factories to their lives outside of the factory. We read/listened to little pieces of interviews with garment workers and some of us, in doing so, stumbled across the word *union*.
- Show the word "union" and prompt students to take one minute to write down as many words as possible that they think are related to the idea of "union." You may want to prompt or give a few examples like "strong," "together," or "work."

- If most students are unfamiliar with the word, ask students if they can do the same with the word “unite” instead.
 - **Unite:** to come together (over a common goal or purpose)
- Once students finish writing, have them compare their word lists with a partner. If time allows, students can compare with more than one classmate.
- Ask a few pairs to share their most common words.
- Share the definition of union (also called a labor union) on the board:
 - **Labor Union/Union:** An organization of workers whose goal is to protect the rights and interests of its workers i.e., helping its workers by addressing issues such as wages, benefits, and working hours and conditions.
 - Labor = Work
- Explain that many garment workers in New York’s Chinatown were part of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, also known as the ILGWU. This national union’s local office in New York, Local 23-25, was the branch of the union made up of garment workers in Chinatown.
 - **(Optional):** If there’s time, share additional context about the ILGWU.
 - The ILGWU was founded in 1900 and has a long, impressive history. At the time of its founding, its members were mostly Jewish, Eastern European, and Southern European immigrant women. The name of the union itself actually referred to the fact that union members made ladies’ clothes, but it’s also true that the ILGWU was one of the first unions in the U.S. to have a membership of mostly women.
 - From 1971 to 1995, Chinatown branch Local 23-25 was the biggest branch of the ILGWU in the entire country. (In 1989, Local 23-25 had more than 22,000 members.) By this point, union members were mostly immigrant women from China.

Independent & Group Work: Union Primary Source Gallery Walk, Silent Discussion & Reflection (25 minutes)

NOTE TO TEACHER: Prepare chart paper by taping each primary source to the center of a sheet of chart paper. There should be ample blank space around it. In marker, write the following questions on the top of each sheet of chart paper:

- i. What does this source share about the union?
 - ii. What problems does it reveal or attempt to address?
- **Prepare cups of markers.** It’s helpful for each cup to have different colored markers, without repeats i.e., red, green, blue, orange and black in the same cup. This will help differentiate thoughts of each student in their silent conversation.

- Have students separate into groups.
 - This may mean rearranging tables so that there is enough space for the chart paper to lay flat and for students to gather around it.
 - If this is not possible, chart paper can be hung around the perimeter of the room and students can circulate from sheet to sheet.
 - **Option:** If you prefer not to use chart paper, students can write on individual post-its and stick replies next to each source.
- Explain to students that the next activity will help them explore what unions, specifically the ILGWU Local 23-25, did and the kinds of services they provided for their members.
- Place chart paper with primary sources at stations throughout the room. Each group should be looking at a different source. Make sure there is space for each group member to gather around. Hand out cups of markers. Each student should take one.
- Share with students that these primary sources will be the topic of a silent conversation. Each group will have 5 minutes to analyze their source and respond to it. Students can choose to: 1) answer one of the questions on the top of the chart paper or 2) respond to one of their classmates' answers. In both cases, they will write directly on the chart paper, so that others will be able to see their responses and continue the conversation. During this process, they can also circle, underline, or draw arrows to call attention to specific phrases or sentences or connect responses together.
- Once their time is up, they'll move as a group to the next station to analyze and comment on a new primary source. After 5 minutes, they'll rotate again.
 - Ideally, students will be able to rotate to at least 3 stations.
(**Optional:** Students can rotate to all stations.)

NOTE TO TEACHER: Rather than having students circulate to different tables, chart paper can rotate and students can stay in their groups.

- Remind students that this whole activity will be done silently. There will be time set aside to share their thoughts and debrief at the end. Ask students if they have any questions about the activity before beginning.
- After students circulate to several stations, have them return to their original station to read the thoughts of their classmates and see how their silent conversations evolved. Give them a few minutes to talk in their groups about their sources and their classmates' comments. You can use the following debrief questions to guide the conversation.
 - What comments or ideas stand out to you most? Why?
 - Is there anything that a classmate brought up that you hadn't considered? If so, share more.
 - How did your classmates build or add onto your ideas? Is there anything you want to add now that you've read the full conversation?

- What did you learn about the role of unions?
- Are you left with any questions?
- Have students come back together to share as a class.

NOTE TO TEACHER: You can take photos of the chart paper silent conversations for students to reference later.

- **Primary Source List:**
 - Source 1: Back Wages Hotline Flyer in English & Chinese
 - Source 2: ILGWU 23-25 Chinese American Voters League Photos
 - Source 3: What is the Union? Cartoon in English & Chinese
 - Source 4: Local 23-25 News from October 1987 in English & Spanish
 - Source 5: Interview with Agnes Wong
 - Source 6: ILGWU Iron-On Union Label Patch
- **Optional/Alternate Sources:**
 - a. Setting Piece Rates
 - b. Interview with Shi Yun Chin
 - c. UNITE musical score
 - d. Interview with May Ying Chen

Model/Teach: ILGWU Quilt Exploration: Stitching Garment Workers Together (12 minutes)

- Display the **ILGWU Quilt**. Ask students what they remember about the last quilt they explored together (Lesson 2).
- Share that this quilt was also made by garment workers. Each square represents an idea that the ILGWU stood for or a service they offered to their members.
- Lead students through visual observation and analysis of the quilt.
 - Students can work individually to complete the **ILGWU Quilt Analysis Worksheet** or you can work through it together as a whole class.
 - If students work individually, allow several minutes for them to turn and talk with a partner to share their findings and observations.
- Quilt squares description, for reference:
 - **Top left:** Immigrants arriving to New York harbor with the Statue of Liberty in sight
 - **Top center:** This square depicts the devastating Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of March 25, 1911 and a woman running from the building carrying a bundle of garments. A fire broke out in this multi-story building where garment workers —

mostly Jewish and Italian immigrant women — were busily working on the upper floors. Several exit doors were locked shut, so workers were trapped inside. (This was often done by employers to prevent workers from taking breaks or using the bathroom.) This deadly fire — which killed 146 people — led to increased activism amongst garment workers, who feared for their safety.

- If there's time, this is a great connection to earlier garment workers, the launch of the ILGWU, and the stories of early women labor leaders like Clara Lemlich and Rose Schneiderman.
- **Top right:** Protest signs in front of the Capitol Building in Washington D.C., where ILGWU members frequently attended demonstrations about immigrant and worker rights.
 - This square dives into issues of immigration, trade, voting, consumer choice, and job creation. You can dive into each as much or as little as you like.
- **2nd Row left:** A Fair Share for America
- **2nd Row center:** Register and Vote
- **2nd Row right:** Educational classes. This square was made by Shirley Lew, May Ying Chen, Sheung Ngor Leung, and Ng Mui Leung.
- **3rd Row left:** Social unionism activities including bowling, painting, theater, and music.
- **3rd Row center:** Coalition of Labor Union Women, Local 23-25 Chinese and Hispanic committees.
- **3rd Row right:** "Welcome immigrants" illustrates the ILGWU's leadership in the labor movement in fighting for rights of new immigrants. Union organizer May Ying Chen and union organizer/former garment worker Connie Ling worked on this square.
- **Bottom left:** "We Are One" — 1982 strike. Katie Quan, union organizer and former garment worker, made this square.
- **Bottom center:** This square references the Garment Industry Day Care Center, which opened in 1983 for the children of garment workers.
- **Bottom right:** ILGWU chorus
- **ILGWU Quilt Questions:**
 - Pick two squares that show a service or opportunity that the ILGWU provides for its members. Write down what your two squares are showing, providing as much detail as possible. How does each square illustrate how the union benefits its members?
 - Pick one square that shows how the ILGWU is teaching its members, who were largely immigrants, about the United States. Write about how the union encourages them to get involved in their communities.

- Pick one square that shows how the union is involved in the workers' social lives, not just their work. Explain how.
- Do you see something in the quilt squares that relates to a primary source you investigated in the last activity? Please explain.
- If you could add a square to this quilt, what would your square look like? Draw it. (Use what you have learned about unions to inform your drawing.)

Wrap Up (3 minutes)

- Round out the lesson by having students complete an exit ticket with the following prompt:
 - What basic rights should people expect in the workplace? What are some important workers' rights that unions should help people with today?
- Share that in the next lesson students will find out what happened in 1980s Chinatown when employers refused to listen to garment workers' demands.

Optional Activity

Homework: Design a Poster Challenge

- Using what they learned in this lesson, students can work individually or in small groups to design a workplace poster for a garment factory advertising the benefits for workers in joining their local union. Students should: 1) include both visuals and text to grab readers' attention and 2) include at least 2-3 benefits of joining the union. They can address topics like: workplace safety, minimum wage, healthcare benefits, paid time off, childcare benefits, social gatherings, retirement funds, etc.

Hidden Voices Mini Unit
Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 4 - Unions: Stitching Garment Workers Together

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 1

1-888-328-8585
Toll-free
LOCAL 23-25 BACK WAGE HOTLINE

We all know that the garment industry is facing difficult times. But that is no excuse for employers not to pay their workers on time. The union will not tolerate the failure to pay wages. We have set up a special project to fight the problem of back wages.

If you work, you must get paid!

That's the law. Every worker has a right to be paid for the work she or he does.

If your employer does not pay you, that's exploitation.

Don't stand for it!
Contact the union immediately.

IF THERE IS A BACK WAGE PROBLEM IN YOUR SHOP:

- ◆ CONTACT YOUR BUSINESS AGENT OR LOCAL 23-25 IMMEDIATELY
- ◆ IF WORKERS ARE UNITED, TOGETHER WE CAN FIGHT BACK AND WIN!

Remember:
You can't get back wages if you don't speak up!

1 - 888 - 328 - 8585
免費電話

23 - 25 工會 '欠薪熱線電話'

大家都知道車衣行業面臨一個困難時刻，但老板也不能藉此為理由拖欠工資，工會決不容忍這種情形，我們已設立一個處理欠薪問題的計劃。

假如你有做工，你一定要得回工資。

這是法例規定，工人有權獲得工作上的報酬。

老板不發放工資，是剝削工人的行為。

切勿容許這種情形！你應馬上聯絡工會。

如果你的衣廠有欠薪情形：

- ◆馬上聯絡 23 - 25 工會或工會經紀
- ◆只要工人團結一致，一定可以爭取勝利。

記着：

你不出聲便無法取回應得的欠薪！

LOCAL 23-25 Back Wage Hotline Flyer

UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: "Back Wage Hotline Flyer and Form," c. 1980s, Catalog Number 2007.014.008, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection, New York, accessed April 28, 2026, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/1F91E2B9-DE90-4879-A289-523376440900>.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription of Image in English:

1-888-328-8585

Toll-free

LOCAL 23-25 BACK WAGE HOTLINE

We all know that the garment industry is facing difficult times. But that is no excuse for employers not to pay their workers on time. The union will not tolerate the failure to pay wages. We have set up a special project to fight the problem of back wages.

If you work, you must get paid!

That's the law. Every worker has a right to be paid for the work she or he does.

If your employer does not pay you, that's exploitation.

Don't stand for it!

Contact the union immediately.

IF THERE IS A BACK WAGE PROBLEM IN YOUR SHOP:

- CONTACT YOUR BUSINESS AGENT OR LOCAL 23-25 IMMEDIATELY
- IF WORKERS ARE UNITED, TOGETHER WE CAN FIGHT BACK AND WIN!

Remember:

You can't get back wages if you don't speak up!

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription of Image in Chinese:

1-888-328-8585

免費電話

23-25 工會 '欠薪熱線電話'

大家都知道車衣行業面臨一個困難時刻, 但老板也不能藉此為理由拖欠工資, 工會決不容忍這種情形, 我們已設立一個處理欠薪問題的計劃。

假如你有做工, 你一定要得回工資。

這是法例規定, 工人有權獲得工作上的報酬。

老板不發放工資, 是剝削工人的行為。

切勿容許這種情形! 你應馬上聯絡工會。

如果你的衣廠有欠薪情形:

馬上聯絡 23-25 工會或工會經紀

只要工人團結一致, 一定可以爭取勝利。

記着:

你不出聲便無法取回應得的欠薪!

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 2



ILGWU 23-25 Chinese American Voters League

Photographs from April 1976 by Emile Bocian. Emile Bocian Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: (Top) Emile Bocian, "Local 23-25 ILGWU," April 1976, photograph 2014.029.526g, Emile Bocian Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection, New York,

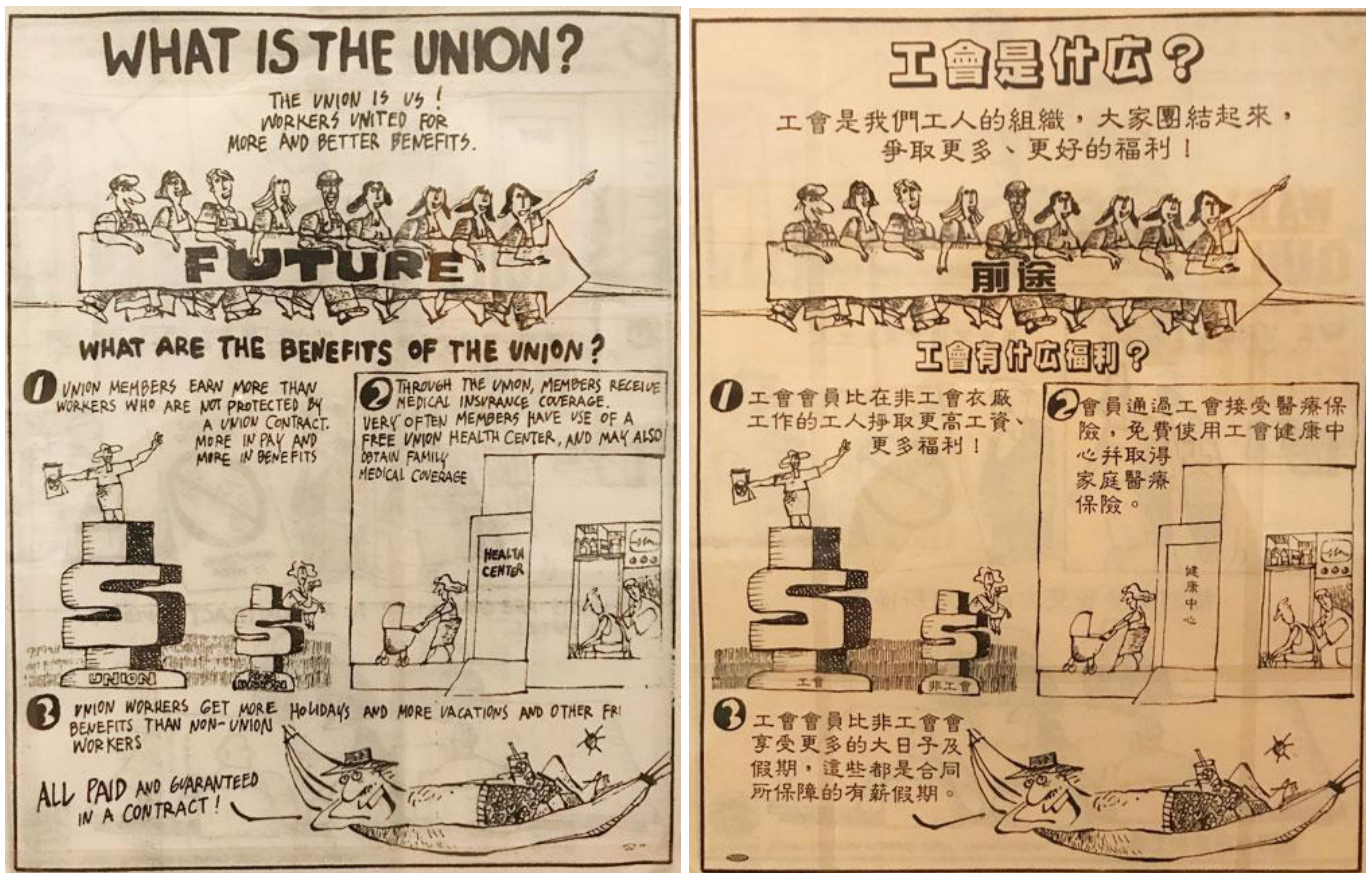
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/2AD8236C-20FA-4F0C-8532-253710075343>.

(Bottom) Emile Bocian, "Local 23-25 ILGWU," April 1976, photograph 2014.029.526f, Emile Bocian Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection, New York,

<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/2AD8236C-20FA-4F0C-8532-253710075343>.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 3



“What is the Union?” Cartoon in English & Chinese c. 1990.

Courtesy of the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University.

Citation: (Left) “What Is the Union? (English),” flyer, c. 1990, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University Library, Ithaca.
(Right) “What Is the Union? (Chinese),” flyer, c. 1990, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University Library, Ithaca.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription of “What is the Union” in English

WHAT IS THE UNION?

THE UNION IS US! WORKERS UNITED FOR MORE AND BETTER BENEFITS.

[Illustration of workers walking together in a large arrow labeled FUTURE]

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE UNION?

1. UNION MEMBERS EARN MORE THAN WORKERS WHO ARE NOT PROTECTED BY A UNION CONTRACT. MORE IN PAY AND MORE IN BENEFITS.

[Illustration comparing a large \$ UNION pedestal to a small NON-UNION pedestal]

2. THROUGH THE UNION, MEMBERS RECEIVE MEDICAL INSURANCE COVERAGE. VERY OFTEN MEMBERS HAVE USE OF A FREE UNION HEALTH CENTER, AND MAY ALSO OBTAIN FAMILY MEDICAL COVERAGE.

[Illustration of a HEALTH CENTER]

3. UNION WORKERS GET MORE HOLIDAYS AND MORE VACATIONS AND OTHER FR[I]NGE BENEFITS THAN NON-UNION WORKERS.

[Illustration of a worker relaxing in a hammock]

ALL PAID AND GUARANTEED IN A CONTRACT!

Transcription of “What is the Union” in Chinese

工會是什麼？

工會是我們工人的組織，大家團結起來，爭取更多、更好的福利！

[插圖：工人們一起走在標有「前途」的大箭頭中]

工會有什麼福利？

工會會員比在非工會工廠工作的工人爭取更高工資、更多福利！

[插圖：對比標有「工會」的大錢幣底座與標有「非工會」的小錢幣底座]

會員通過工會接受醫療保險，免費使用工會健康中心並取得家庭醫療保險。

[插圖：健康中心]

工會會員比非工會會享受更多的大日子及假期，這些都是合同所保障的有薪假期。

[插圖：一名工人在吊床上休息]

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 4



Local 23-25 News from October 1987 in English.

UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: *Local 23-25 News*, October 1987, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription of image:

Local 23-25 News

Over 1,000 Local 23-25 members, retirees, staffers and their families were among the tens of thousands of New York unionists who paraded up Fifth Avenue on Labor Day.

Members carried signs supporting jobs, justice, peace and an increase in the minimum wage. They protested imports, the School Board's decision to cut English classes, and President Reagan's nomination for the Supreme Court, Judge Robert Bork.

It was Labor's day to show New Yorkers and the American people that the Movement was alive and well and growing stronger every day!

Visible Signage in Photographs

LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL - INTERNATIONAL LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION

[I]LGWU - BOARD OF EDUCATION: LET'S CONTINUE THE PARTNERSHIP

國際女服車衣工會 23-25分會 耆英會 - CHINESE RETIREES CLUB LOCAL 23-25 ILGWU

BOARD OF EDUCATION: Don't cut ESL Classes - ILGWU

ILGWU: SOLIDARITY, SOLIDARIDAD, 團結, 단결, SOLIDARITÉ

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

October 1987 9

Más de 1,000 persons, miembros activos y jubilados de la Local 23-25, el personal de ésta y sus respectivas familias, fueron parte de las decenas de miles de miembros de uniones de Nueva York que desfilaron por la Quinta Avenida en el Día del Trabajo.

Los manifestantes llevarán carteles en apoyo de los empleos, de la justicia, de la paz y del aumento del salario mínimo, y en contra de las importaciones, y de la decisión de la Junta Escolar de limitar la enseñanza del inglés.

En el Día del Trabajo se demostró a los habitantes de Nueva York y al pueblo americano que el Movimiento está vivo y saludable y que cada día está más fuerte.



Local 23-25 News from October 1987 in Spanish.

UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: *Local 23-25 News*, October 1987, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, 9.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription of image:

October 1987

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Visible Signage in Photographs

STOP IMPORTS

NATURALIZED CITIZENS REGISTERED VOTERS - ILGWU

LIBERTY and UNION - 自由與工會

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 5

Interview with Agnes Wong, a former seamstress and union worker who worked in Chinatown's garment industry for 30 years.

9/11 Chinatown Oral History Project Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).¹

Q: Do most of the new immigrants join the union?

WONG: New immigrants go half and half. When they start work at a garment factory, about half join, and about half decide to think about it first, think about whether or not they should join. Because the economic situation is very difficult at first, and they feel they want to save everything they can, they don't want to pay the union dues. Or they might just want to think it over more clearly, understand whether it has a benefit for them, before making a decision about whether or not to join.

Q: Can anybody join, or do you need to have legal status before you can join?

WONG: Anybody can join, there are no restrictions, and you can join even if you don't have legal status, because the union protects not just the rights of those with status, but also protects the rights of those without it. A lot of workers nowadays, especially those without legal status, they don't understand that you can join even without status, and so they don't dare join the union. They're afraid of government connections, and they're afraid of creating trouble. That's a big mistake...To put it another way, just last week, the members of the union's political committee met with senators and we presented five demands. The first was a New York Health Plan. The second was a minimum wage, that is, to increase the minimum wage.

WONG: Actually, if someone without status joins the union, then the union will demand on their behalf that the government pass laws, that they should change the laws, saying that new immigrants to America are also living and spending here, and that we wish the government will pass a law that allows them to gain legal status, to gain a green card or temporary residency which they can later change to a green card. We are also constantly meeting with congressmen to discuss these issues. You know how it is with making laws -- you need many years of demands and battles before you can "reap the rewards." Like right now, the battle for children's health insurance, it's been a matter of going to representatives and senators many times, calling upon them and repeatedly making requests, before we finally got a result.

¹ Agnes Wong (seamstress), interview by Lan Trinh, 2003–2004, transcript, "Ground One: Voices from Post-9/11 Chinatown," Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY.
<https://911chinatown.mocanyc.org/oralhistory.html>.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 6



ILGWU iron-on union label patch with instructions.

UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: "Two ILGWU Iron-on Patches," UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Catalog Number 2007.014.004, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/D22832E1-EC5F-4106-A267-751839554781>.

The ILGWU union label, also called a union bug, was created to show consumers who made the clothing they were thinking of buying. Any garment with the ILGWU union label was created by workers in the union.

This meant that they were paid fairly and that the quality of the clothes was up to the union's high standards. It was also a way of giving consumers an opportunity to support unionized garment workers by buying clothes that were made in their shops. It had the dual effect of encouraging more employers to become union shops, since consumers now factored this into their decisions about what clothing they would buy.

Union labels like this one became popular in the mid-1950s. This iron-on label was in use from 1974 to 1995.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription of Images:

INT. LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION

UNION MADE

ILGWU

AFL-CIO

MADE IN U.S.A.

IMPORTANT IRON-ON INSTRUCTIONS

1. Use dry iron at cotton setting (approximately 375° to 400°).
2. Prewarm area where patch is to be applied.
3. Cover patch with pressing cloth.
4. Hold iron still on pressing cloth and PRESS HARD for 16 seconds.
5. Allow to cool.

LOOK FOR AND INSIST ON THE ILGWU LABEL BEFORE YOU BUY WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S APPAREL

IT STANDS FOR:

The Creativity of American Design

The Skill of American Workmanship

The Importance of American Jobs

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 1

100CT, 1702

Setting Piece Rates

The following pictures show how piece rates should be set when a new style comes into a shop. This is a broad outline of the actual procedure—specific prices, sections, etc. will vary from garment to garment and from shop to shop.

It's important to keep in mind that whenever there's a price dispute in your shop, the Union should be called immediately.

Shop
Notes



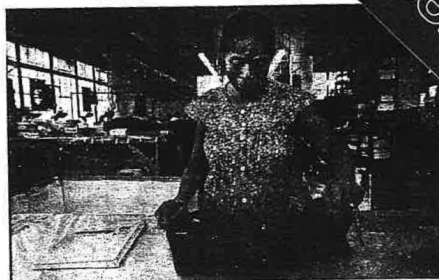
2 The shop's Price Committee examines the garment with the Shop Representative. They break it down into individual sections (for example: belt, seams, pockets, zippers, pleats, with or without top-stitching, with or without lining).



3 The Committee and Shop Representative set what they think the price should be for each section. This is **based on past practice**—What did workers in that shop get for zippers, seams, etc. on similar garments in the past? Is there more or less labor involved on this style than the past ones?

They do this by referring back to style records which are kept up-to-date by the Shop Representative and the Price Committee in a book in the shop. Those records include style numbers, sketches, descriptions and rates. The book is accessible to the Shop Representative and all members of the Price Committee.

Photos by Bob Gumpert



1 A new garment is brought to the shop. The Shop Representative looks it over.



4 The committee meets with a representative of the employer. They negotiate with him/her on each section, trying to reach agree-



5 If the committee and the employer's representative can't reach a settlement, the Union Business Agent is called in to "mediate" on any sections that remain in dispute. Workers in the shop may continue working with some section prices left "open" until the Business Agent comes to the shop.

"Setting Piece Rates," Local 23-25 News, October 1983.

UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: "Setting Piece Rates," *Local 23-25 News*, October 1983, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription

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The Procedure:

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Photos by Bob Gumpert.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 2

Interview with Shi Yun Chin, a former presser in Chinatown's garment industry for more than 20 years.

9/11 Chinatown Oral History Project Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).²

A: In '76, when I started work in the garment factory, I also joined the 23-25 Union.

Q: Why did you want to join the union?

A: Because it had security and benefits. They offered worker's protection, and they had benefits like health insurance, holiday time, lots of good things.

Q: Now, did your bosses give you any pressure about joining the union, did they tell you not to join the union?

A: No, because America is a free country, so they can't reject you [based on that].

² Shi Yun Chin, interview by Lan Trinh, May 24, 2004, transcript, Ground One: Voices from Post-9/11 Chinatown, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, NY. <https://911chinatown.mocanyc.org/oralhistory.html>.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 3

1=C ¼

永遠團結在一起

工會精神要是能發揚在工人血液裡，世上
When the u-nion's in-spi-ra-tion through the work-er's blood shall run, There car

再也沒有任何力量 比這更有力。 我們
be no pow-er great-er an-y - where be-neath the sun; yet what

單靠個人孤軍奮鬥 總是很不利，工會
force on earth is weak-er than the fee-ble strength of one, But the

2 3 4 5 6 7 | 1 - - - | 5. 4 3 2 1 | 3 - 1. 0
使我們強有力！ 永遠團結在一起，
union makes us strong. Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er,

6. 7 1. 2 1. 6 | 5. 3. 0 | 5. 4 3 2 1 | 3 - 1. 0 1. 1
永遠團結在一起， 永遠團結在一起，工會
Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, For ti

2 3 4 5 6 7 | 1 - - - ||
使我們強有力！
u-nion makes us strong.

～ 國際服裝工會華人合唱團專用 ～

UNITE musical score, circa 1987-1990.

UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).

Citation: "UNITE Musical Score," circa 1987–1990, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Transcription

Title: 永远团结在一起 (Solidarity Forever)

Main Verse & Chorus

The transcription follows the layout of the sheet music, combining the numbered notation with the corresponding lyrics.

Chinese: 工 会 精 神 要 是 能 够 潜 在 工 人 血 液 里 , 世 上

English: When the union's inspiration through the worker's blood shall run, There can

Chinese: 再 也 没 有 任 何 力 量 比 这 更 有 力 。 我 们

English: be no power greater any-where beneath the sun; yet what

Chinese: 单 靠 个 人 孤 单 奋 斗 , 总 是 很 不 利 , 工 会

English: force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one, But the

Chinese: 使 我 们 强 有 力 !

English: union makes us strong.

Chinese: 永 远 团 结 在 一 起 ,

English: Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er,

Chinese: 永 远 团 结 在 一 起 , 永 远 团 结 在 一 起 , 工 会

English: Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, For the

Chinese: 使 我 们 强 有 力 !

English: union makes us strong.

Footer Note

Chinese: ~ 團 結 (?) 服 工 會 華 人 合 唱 團 專 用 ~

English Translation: ~ For the exclusive use of the [Ineligible] Chinese Union Choir ~

Silent Conversation Primary Sources

Source 4

Interview with union organizer May Ying Chen,

Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.³

“Now some women who had children who got off from school at 3 o’clock, they would basically leave for a little while to pick up their kids and bring them wherever they were going to go or after school or whatnot. Or some of them, if they had made enough money, they would just take the kids home. But many of them, some of them, would actually bring them to the shop. And this became a big problem because when labor inspectors came it was perceived as child labor to see these children in the factory.

The labor laws are very strict about the presence of children in an industrial setting. And so, we have a lot of, you know, discussions and issues because often times it wasn’t really that the kids were working; many times they were just in a section of the factory that had machines that were not in use and they were doing their homework or they were playing with spools of thread or things in the shop. So the need for childcare was always a big issue for our members and for the union, because almost of all the women were moms, and with kids of different ages, and with different problems because there were problems of mothers of teenage kids whose kids were getting involved in the gangs and stuff like that. So the union tried to engage in different ways of working with the members on these issues or referring them to social services agencies and you know different types of help and support in the community.”

³ May Ying Chen, “Children in the Factory,” interview by Alina Shen, January 18, 2018, Oral History Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

ILGWU Quilt Investigation Worksheet



This quilt was made by members of Local 23-25 who belonged to the Chinese and the Hispanic committees of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). It was made under the guidance of organizer Kathy Andrade and presented to Jay Mazur, president of the ILGWU, in 1986. The twelve squares vividly show the role of the union in workers' daily lives including: efforts to help immigrants, improve workplace safety, limit imports, provide daycare, and support cultural activities like the ILGWU chorus.

Photographed in 2022 by Jack Miller for LaborArts. Photographs courtesy of LaborArts. Quilt courtesy of Jay Mazur and Muzaffar Christi.

Citation: Members of Local 23-25, Chinese and Hispanic Committees, Local 23-25 Quilt, 1986, fabric quilt, LaborArts, photographed by Jack Miller, 2022, <https://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/memory-in-cloth/20>.

ILGWU Quilt Investigation Worksheet



NOTES:



This square depicts the devastating Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of March 25, 1911. A fire broke out in this multi-story building where garment workers — mostly Jewish and Italian immigrant women — were busily working on the upper floors. Several exit doors were locked shut, so workers were trapped inside. (This was often done by employers to prevent workers from taking breaks or using the bathroom.) This deadly fire — which killed 146 people — led to increased activism amongst garment workers, who feared for their safety.



NOTES:

Name: _____ Date: _____

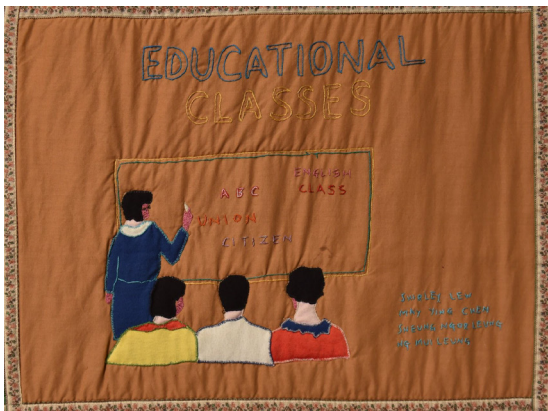
ILGWU Quilt Investigation Worksheet



NOTES:



NOTES:



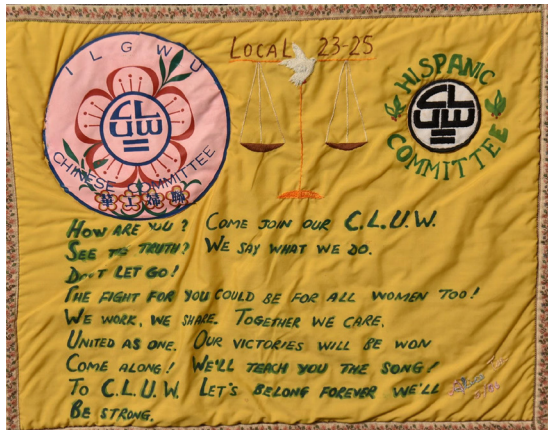
NOTES:

Name: _____ Date: _____

ILGWU Quilt Investigation Worksheet



NOTES:



NOTES:



NOTES:

Name: _____ Date: _____

ILGWU Quilt Investigation Worksheet



NOTES:



NOTES:



NOTES:

Garment Workers



Quilt made by garment workers depicting garment work tasks, 1989, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

The legacy of New York City’s prominent garment industry can be traced back to the mid-19th century when German and East European immigrants brought experienced manufacturing to Manhattan. After a century of rises and falls, the garment industry reached its peak in the 1980s in Chinatown. During this time, Chinese immigrant women fueled the industry, with an estimated 500 factories employing 20,000 workers. In 1982, these workers went on the largest strike in Chinatown’s history to protest their contractor’s attempt to skirt union regulations; after only a few days, every contractor folded to their demands. This quilt was designed by Debbie Lee and sewn by garment workers Ng Mui Leung, Sheung Ngor Leung, Cecilia Lo, Yan Chai Mak, So Fong Lee Ng, Sun Ng, and Heng Yu Yan for MOCA’s 1989 exhibition “Both Sides of the Cloth: Chinese American Women in the New York City Garment Industry.” Trades like sewing have often been demeaned as mere “women’s work,” but the impact of the 1982 strike and artworks such as this underscore the true power of women in the Chinese community, the vital role of garment production for Chinatown’s entire economy, and the highly skilled artistry of such a trade.

Citation: Debbie Lee et al., Quilt depicting garment work tasks, 1989, quilt, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, mocanyc.org.

International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU)

投訴的權利

如果你認為被不公平對待，或認為合約的任何條款有違例的情況，你有提出投訴的權利。你可透過工會經紀、廠代表，或處理糾紛工會辦事處投訴。你的僱主有責任而提供協助。就工會糾紛有關問題，在雙方協商調停和調解。如對調停結果不滿意，工會可以要求仲裁庭作出判決。一切決定由僱主、工會及工人遵守。

你的經紀及廠代表

廠代表是在你廠內與你共同工作的工人。他的職責是向僱主提出糾紛並解決問題。當僱主拒絕或延誤，你應請工會廠代表提出。他會接受過工會的特別訓練。

經紀是代表工會的職員。他的職責是定期與僱主、向僱主工會的活動和訊息、發覺合約的執行，和協助工人解決任何方面的問題。如廠代表不能解決你爭論的問題，你應打電話向工會經紀求助。

工廠待遇小冊

長久以來，車衣工人不斷奮鬥和爭取，為的是爭取公平合理的工資、福利、和權益。

我們所贏得的權利和權益，都寫在合約或法律上的條款。或稱之為合約。此合約代表了車衣工、工會及工人之間的協議。

這本小冊子包括工會合約的摘要。基本上，合約只是一紙條。至於你是否能獲得應得的工資和福利，你的廠是否提供了舒適的工作環境。你的僱主有沒有用人與人之間的尊嚴對待你，合約究竟有沒有執行，這都在乎你。

你必須懂得合約內所規定的權利和權益。至於合約，要完全地得以執行，你必須的工人們一定時時要求監督、謹慎、保持與工會聯絡。

工會是代表你的。如果你有任何問題，工會會支持和保護你。但，將問題提出來，却是你的責任。

如果你想獲取合約的更詳盡的資料，請與你的廠代表或經紀聯絡。或直接打電話：九二九-二六〇〇到工會。

我們的合約亦保障其他權利，如健康護理服務等。這裏不作討論。工會亦有刊物，可到辦事處索取。

非工會工廠、工會條件

倘若你工作的工廠是非工會工廠，或知道有非工會工廠存在，應立即通知工會。非工會工廠時較長，工資較低，缺少福利，降低了工廠待遇的標準。你提供的資料將有幫助。

確保工廠的衣廠是工會條件，也不要購買任何沒有國際女服車衣工會條件的女服或童裝。

雖然工會條件的意義，是讓我們工會的成員能提供更多工作，也是說，我們會有更多收入。

國際女服車衣工會 23·25 分會

LOCAL 23-25
HOUSE, SPORTSWEAR, CHILDREN'S WEAR
AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION
LOCAL 23-25
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, AFL-CIO
275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001 • (212) 624-2000
Children's Wear And Allied Workers' Division, Local 23-25

此小冊子是車衣工聯盟的合約，其中列出了合約所規定的各項權利和權益。但並非法律文件，如欲知詳細內容，或查詢了合約人的合約。

工廠待遇

工資
工時
福利
超時工資
假日
工作保障
工會合約的基本規定

工會會籍

所有工人可以在工作時加入工會，或為會員。為了你長期的利益，你必須隨時繳交會費，否則便會影響應得的權利和權益。

工作保障

你廠工作開始時有一段「試用期」。試用期過後，如你的僱主工作，但止是沒有權「在無充分理由下」開除你。試用期後，你將享有受到工會合約下的所有保障、解僱的情況則外。

工會會籍將任何未經證明解僱案件提交仲裁庭。倘若仲裁庭裁定為工廠無理解僱，他可以下令工友回廠工作，得回欠薪。

工資及最低工資

合約規定每種門類的工作都有工資，如最低工資標準。91-105分會合約規定，所有工資不能低於工作週後的星期二支付。23-25分會合約規定，所有工資不能低於工作週後的星期五支付。

如果你未能如期獲得工資，請立即通知工會。

分配工作

淡季時，衣廠不工作，工作便應該由原來的工人平均分配。若遇例外，23-25分會規定，按計劃，裁衣及縫紉工人被臨時解僱時，應根據其年資決定解僱及召回工作先後次序。

有薪大日子

23-25分會合約規定的大日子不一定相同。但每份合約都規定某些特定的有薪假日，包括新年、春節、聖誕節、開工日、開工日、農曆新年、五一節、週年紀念、感恩節及聖誕節。此外，三個不同的假日，視乎你屬於那一工作門類，你可以在這些日子獲得假期，無論那一個大日子，你都可以獲得大日子。

大日子假期及資格，亦根據你所屬的工作門類而有別。

無薪假期及守禮鐘

在合約下，你可以獲得無薪的假期。但必須預先向僱主申請，以確保你在假期後得以恢復工作。

每年，根據不同同意，你可以獲得三個星期的無薪假期。

此外，所有合格會員每年都可從免稅儲蓄福利基金會獲得無薪假期（守禮鐘）。

撫恤金

如果你已加入車衣行六個月或以上，在家庭喪葬時，你或資格會領取撫恤金。你必須能夠提出死亡及喪禮日期的證明。倘若你是在工作的日期內辦理喪葬事宜，否則你便不能獲得撫恤金。

健康、安全與衛生

你的僱主必須提供清潔的開水、廁所、洗手間及工作場地。必須清潔、衛生，光線充足及有足夠暖氣設備。

父母親產假

23-25分會、女會員，在有新生嬰兒或新添養嬰兒的情況下，最多可得到六個月的無薪假期。

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) was once one of the largest labor unions in the United States. Founded in 1900 by local union delegates, it represented about 2,000 members in cities in the Northeastern United States. The union grew in geographical scope, membership size, and political influence to become one of the most powerful forces in American organized labor by mid-century.

Representing workers in the women's garment industry, the ILGWU worked to improve working and living conditions of its members through collective bargaining agreements, training programs, health care facilities, cooperative housing, educational opportunities, and other efforts. The ILGWU merged with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union in 1995 to form the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). In 2004 UNITE merged with the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) to

form UNITE HERE, which today serves over 300,000 members in the United States and Canada.

On June 24, 1982, nearly 20,000 Chinatown garment workers belonging to the ILGWU went on the largest strike in the history of New York's Chinatown. Contractors employing the women had rejected the newest contract negotiated by the ILGWU, attempting to undercut rules regarding holiday and overtime pay as well as non-union manufacturing. Rallying in Columbus Park, the demonstration was unlike anything the neighborhood had ever seen, with thousands and thousands of Chinese immigrant women rallying together as one. Within a few days, all but a handful of Chinatown contractors pledge to sign the union contract; the union organized a second rally on June 29 as large as the first one with threats to strike against any contractor that did not sign. It only took hours for all contractors to pledge, ending in victory.

Transcription:⁴

當然可以。這份文件是 國際女服車衣工會 23-25 分會 (ILGWU Local 23-25) 專為華裔工人印製的權益手冊。

以下是圖片中主要標題與段落的繁體中文轉錄：

主標題 (封面與右上角)

工廠待遇

內容包含：工資、工時、「超時」工資、節日、福利保障、工會與您的關係。

工會資訊 (中央頂部)

國際女服車衣工會 23-25 分會

BLOUSE, SKIRT, SPORTSWEAR, CHILDREN'S WEAR AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION LOCAL 23-25

地址：275 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001.

各章節內容轉錄

1. 權益與福利

⁴ *ILGWU Local 23-25 Membership Booklet*, September 2, 2019, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, courtesy of May Chen, <https://www.mocanyc.org/collections/stories/international-ladies-garment-workers-union-ilgwu/>.

「和普通非工會工廠相比，與工會簽合約的任何工廠都更有利的條件。除非有提出有效的權利，否則這一切權利都屬紙上談兵。所以，工會不但要替會員爭取更好的利益、合約、福利……工會更替工人護守。」

2. 您的經紀及處罰代表

「車間代表是您在工廠的第一線代表，……工會亦有代表與您的經紀或僱主討論及解決關於您在工廠遇到的任何問題。」

3. 工會經濟小組

「我們的工作小組由僱主代表、工會代表及社會公證人組成。目的是確保工人在工資、福利、工時等各方面受到公平的對待。」

4. 工會會籍

「所有工人都可以在工作之餘加入工會。成為會員，不但可以獲得良好的保障，更能同時享有工會提供的多項福利。」

5. 工作保障

「當您在工作中遇到任何不公平對待、歧視、甚至解僱，……工會會根據合約保障您的職位，並調查是否存在不合理的行為。」

6. 工時及超時工資

「在合約的工作時間基礎上，額外的加班工作必須支付額外的『超時』工資。」

7. 工工資及最低工資

「合約規定最低工資。不論是計件或計時，工資都必須按照 23-25 分會的合約規定支付。」

8. 有薪大日子

「23-25 分會規定的大日子一定領薪。這包含每年合約規定的多個節日，例如：元旦、受難節、耶誕節……」

9. 無薪假期及守職權

「在特定情況下，您可以申請無薪假期，並保留返回原職位的權利。」

10. 健康、安全與衛生

「合約規定工廠必須提供通風、乾淨、光亮的環境，並確保所有安全設施符合標準。」

如果您需要對其中任何段落進行詳細解釋或歷史背景補充（如 1982 年的大罷工），請隨時告訴我。

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Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 5: Spirit of Resistance

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 5 - Spirit of Resistance

Focus Questions:

- What is social unionism?
- What is a union contract and how is it formed?
- What basic rights should all workers have?
- Why did factory owners resist garment workers' demands for better wages and safer working conditions?
- How did the garment workers place pressure on the factory owners to address their concerns?
- What is a labor strike?
- What factors motivated garment workers to hold a rally in 1982?
- What role did Chinese American women in the ILGWU Local 23-25 branch play in the 1982 rallies?
- How did union leaders plan and organize the 1982 rallies? What challenges did they face?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point

- Students will be able to define *social unionism*.
- Students will understand how a union contract is formed and the perspectives of the bargaining parties.
- Students will learn about the factors that led to the 1982 garment workers rallies.
- Students will examine what it took to carry out the 1982 garment workers rallies.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3
Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6
Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9
Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States and answer them by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 3. Analyze evidence in terms of historical context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.
 - 4. Describe and analyze arguments of others, considering historical context.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - 6. Recognize an argument and identify evidence that supports the argument; examine arguments related to a specific social studies topic from multiple perspectives; deconstruct arguments, recognizing the perspective of the argument and identifying evidence used to support that perspective.
- B. Chronological Reasoning and Causation
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade-level content, and historical events
 - 4. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationship between multiple causes and effects.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and compare multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.

- E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 4. Examine the roles of institutions such as corporations, non-profit organizations, and labor unions in a market economy in the United States.
- F. Civic Participation
 - 1. Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates; respectfully disagree with other viewpoints. Use techniques and strategies to be an active and engaged member of class discussions of fellow classmates' views and statements
 - 5. Participate in persuading, negotiating, and compromising in the resolution of conflicts and differences; introduce and examine the elements of debate.

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view, stance, or purpose (e.g. rhetorical language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts, images, visuals, etc.).
- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States that can be answered by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 3. Analyze evidence in terms of historical context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.
 - 4. Describe and analyze arguments of others, with support.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - 6. Recognize an argument and identify supporting evidence related to a specific social studies topic. Examine arguments related to a specific social studies topic from multiple perspectives. Recognize that the perspective of the argument's author shapes the selection of evidence used to support it.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning

- 1. Identify how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
- 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade-level content, and historical events.
- 4. Identify and analyze the relationship between multiple causes and multiple effects.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and categorize multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- F. Civic Participation
 - 1. Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates; respectfully disagree with other viewpoints. Use techniques and strategies to be an active and engaged member of class discussions of fellow classmates' views and statements, with teacher support.
 - 5. Participate in negotiating and compromising in the resolution of differences and conflict; introduce and examine the role of conflict resolution.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence
 - 1. Define and frame questions about the United States and answer them by gathering, interpreting, and using evidence.
 - 2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 3. Analyze evidence in terms of historical and/or social context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias, context and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.
 - 4. Describe and analyze arguments of others, considering historical context.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - 6. Recognize an argument and identify evidence that supports the argument; examine arguments related to a specific social studies topic from multiple perspectives; deconstruct arguments, recognizing the perspective of the argument and identifying evidence used to support that perspective.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning and Causation
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.

- 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade-level content, and historical events
- 4. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationship between multiple causes and effects.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 2. Identify and compare multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 4. Examine the roles of institutions such as corporations, non-profit organizations, and labor unions in a market economy in the United States.
- F. Civic Participation
 - 1. Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates; respectfully disagree with other viewpoints. Use techniques and strategies to be an active and engaged member of class discussions of fellow classmates' views and statements
 - 5. Participate in persuading, negotiating, and compromising in the resolution of conflicts and differences; introduce and examine the elements of debate.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2b Population density, diversity, technologies, and industry in urban areas shaped the social, cultural, and economic lives of people.
 - Students will examine the population growth of New York City and other New York cities and the technologies and industries which encouraged this growth.
 - 8.7 Foreign Policy:
 - 8.7e Increased globalization has led to increased economic interdependence and competition.
 - Students will examine the increased economic interdependence in terms of globalization and its impact on the United States and New York State economy, including the workforce.
 - Students will examine the roles of multinational corporations and their influence on the world economy.
 - 8.8 Demographic Change
 - 8.8b. The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.

- Students will examine migration and immigration trends in New York State and New York City such as the increase in Spanish-speaking, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African populations and the contributions of these groups.
- Students will examine the effects of immigration legislation and policy, including recent debates over immigration policy.

Resources/Materials

- Image of the ILGWU quilt square, “A Fair Share for America”
- Triangular Bargaining Flowchart
 - **Option 1:** without explanations
 - **Option 2:** with explanations
- Creating a Union Contract: Triangular Bargaining Handout
- Tableau Photograph List

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students:

Social Unionism & A Fair Share for America Quilt Recap (10 minutes)

- Tell students: Last class, we talked about the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 and the role it played in workers' lives. Read and respond to this quote from union organizer, May Ying Chen:
 - “I learned through the immigration and other work that we did with education and... social work, this tradition which the ILGWU had, which they called social unionism — which meant that the union didn’t only deal with wages and benefits, but also was engaged in the lives of the workers and their social life, in some way or another.”¹
- Gather verbal responses from a couple of students, by asking the following:
 - How does May Ying Chen define social unionism?
 - Why might social unionism be important in strengthening the union?
- Then display an image of the ILGWU quilt square, “**A Fair Share for America.**”
- Tell students: Remember the ILGWU quilt from Lesson 4? Let’s look more closely at this particular square. It says, “A Fair Share for America,” and has the image of a sewing machine on top of the outline of the (continental) United States.
- Tell students: Write your thoughts to complete the phrase: “A fair share for America means...”
 - Students can either complete the phrase in the context of the 1980s or what it might mean for them today.

¹ May Ying Chen, “Excerpt on Garment Factory Socialization,” interview by Alina Shen, January 18, 2018, Oral History Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

- After students have finished writing, lead a popcorn share out and write down key words, phrases, or thoughts on the board.
- Then prompt students to consider the following question:
 - How can workers in a union organize to get what they see as their fair share?
- Tell students: One of the ways a union ensures rights for its workers is by establishing a union contract. (Explain what a union contract is.)
 - Union Contract: A union contract is an agreement between the employer and the workers that promises workers' rights and safe working conditions. If the contract is broken, the union can ask the workers if they want to protest or strike. If one worker thinks that something is unfair, an employer can fire them. If all the workers believe something is unfair and stop working together, the employer has to consider and address their issues.
 - It's the union job to help bargain with the employers to help workers negotiate a union contract which prioritizes workplace rights and benefits.
 - Explain that labor unions usually have representatives who negotiate and help resolve disputes with management that concern contract violations on behalf of its members.
- Tell students: So how is a union contract formed? We're going to take a look at how the ILGWU union contract was formed.

Teach/Instruction: Creating a Union Contract: Triangular Bargaining (5 min)

- Display the Triangular Bargaining Flowchart.
 - **Option 1:** without explanations
 - **Option 2:** with explanations
- Hand out Creating a Union Contract: Triangular Bargaining.
 - Read through this one-pager as a class to help unpack the concept of triangular bargaining.
 - It breaks down step-by-step who exactly negotiated the ILGWU union contract and how.
 - Who:
 - The Union:
 - The International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) representing Manhattan Chinatown garment workers
 - Manufacturers:
 - The American Apparel Manufacturers Association (AAMA) representing manufacturers
 - A manufacturer is a person or company that makes goods for sale
 - Contractors:

- The Greater Blouse Skirt and Undergarments Association (GBSUA) representing factory owners, including Chinatown factory owners
 - A contractor is a person or company that produces goods for another person or company. Contractors do not determine the design of the goods they make, they simply make them. In this case, the products are garments, or clothes.
- How:
- First: Union negotiates with manufacturers
 - Second: Union negotiates with contractors
 - Third: Contractors negotiate with manufacturers
 - An agreement is settled on by all
 - Allow students to ask any questions they have about the concept of triangular bargaining. It will provide a necessary foundation for the next activity, an interactive role play.

Group Work: From Where I Stand Role Play (16 minutes)

NOTE TO TEACHER: For the purpose of time and ease in facilitating this role play, the full triangular bargaining process will not be simulated. Rather, stage 1 (Union and Manufacturers negotiate) will be done first, and then stages 2 (Union and Contractors negotiate) and 3 (Contractors and Manufacturers negotiate) will be combined.

- Explain that students will be broken up into groups to consider the perspective of each party at the union contract negotiating table.
- Divide the class into groups of three. Every group will have a student representing the following roles:
 - **Manufacturers (AAMA):** they decide where to send the work
 - **Contractors (GBSUA):** garment factory owners (management) who try to get work orders from the Manufacturers and also manage the workers to complete the work order
 - **The Union (ILGWU):** workers who complete the work order and have a written agreement between management and themselves
- Before handing out the role play instruction cards, set the scene by narrating the following:
 - The year is 1982 and a new union contract is being negotiated.²
 - The garment industry has changed a lot over the past 20 years.

² Cornell University ILR School, “Highlights—The Chinatown Struggle of 1982,” The Kheel Center ILGWU Collection, accessed April 16, 2026, <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/announcements/5.html>.

- In the 1960s, manufacturers started to look beyond New York City for their production needs. They expanded to the U.S. South, Puerto Rico, and even to South America and Asia.³
- In the 1970s, the garment industry became even more global. Because costs were lower abroad — places like Latin America and Asia, particularly China — manufacturers began producing less and less in the United States. This meant there was less work domestically and declining need for garment workers in the United States.
- Beginning in the 1980s, many large clothing chains applied the assembly line approach of making garments using piecework — already successful in domestic factories — on an even more global scale. They broke the manufacturing process down into pieces so that they could send work to whichever factories across the world offered the lowest prices. The 1980s brought even more pressure to lower production costs. This came with increased tensions between manufacturers, factory owners, and workers in the city.⁴
- Give out the **Role Play Instructions** to each group of three. Assign each student a role. (Students may select their role or can be randomly assigned.)
- Give students a few minutes to familiarize themselves with their roles. Explain that they'll be coming to the negotiating table to advocate for themselves as either union members, manufacturers, or contractors. They will be allowed to share their perspective and negotiate back-and-forth with each other following the order of the triangular bargaining system. For the purposes of this simulation, the order will be:
 - (1) Union (ILGWU) and Manufacturers (AAMA) talk and reach an agreement
 - (2) Union (ILGWU) and Contractors (GBSUA) talk and reach an agreement
- Set a timer for 3 minutes. During this time, in their separate groups, the student representing the Union (ILGWU) and the student representing the Manufacturers (AAMA) will negotiate with each other to try to reach an agreement. Each student should have a chance to share their perspective, using the information on their role play cards to make their case.
- When the time is up, share the following information with the whole class:
 - “For almost 2 months, the union and manufacturers went back-and-forth and still could not come to an agreement. On May 28th, they agreed to the following”:
 - A 6 month wage freeze now with increased pay and benefits later.
 - After 6 months— on November 29, 1982— pay would increase by .35 cents/hour. Then pay would increase again by .35 cents/hour on June 6, 1983 and again by .40 cents/hour on July 2, 1984. This makes for a total of \$1.10/hour increase across 3 years.
 - An increase in cost-of-living pay raises.
 - An increase in employer contributions to health care and retirement funds.

³ Katie Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown,” *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009), 76-91, https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2009/quant_amerasia09.pdf.

⁴ *We Are One*, directed by Melissa Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2018), 28 min., 40 sec., https://media.library.cornell.edu/media/We+Are+One/1_uvh69lck.

- “Now that an agreement was negotiated between the union and the manufacturers, it was time for the union to negotiate with the contractors. The ILGWU attempted to negotiate with the GBSUA, which represented factory owners, including Manhattan Chinatown factory owners, but negotiations did not go smoothly.”⁵
- Set the timer for another 3 minutes. During this time, in their separate groups, the student representing the Union (ILGWU) and the student representing the Contractors (GBSUA) will negotiate with each other to try to reach an agreement. Allow the Contractors to begin the negotiations.
- When the time is up, share the following information with the whole class:
 - “A divide formed between Chinese factory owners and white factory owners, both of whom were part of the GBSUA. On June 10th, the day when members of the GBSUA were supposed to vote on the new contract, all the Chinese factory owners voted against it. This is how garment workers in Chinatown found themselves at odds with their employers.”
- Teacher brings everyone back for brief check-in (4 minutes):
 - Were the groups able to agree or not?
- Teacher then opens discussion on the following questions:
 - What are the benefits and limits of having a written agreement for workers’ rights?
 - What actions can each group take if there is no satisfactory agreement?
- Unions have the power of numbers. They can organize worker strikes if their demands aren’t met. Ask students if they know what a strike is and gather some responses. Share that a strike is an action in which workers stop working for a period of time and refuse to continue until their demands are met. In this way, workers stop creating money for their boss, and have the power to make demands such as a safe and healthy workplace.
- Transition and tell students: The role play that we just did gave you a little insight into how union contracts were negotiated. But, what happened in the 1980s Chinatown when employers refused to listen to garment workers demands? Now we will look at some of the factors that lead up to the 1982 Chinatown garment workers rally.

Group Work: Rise Up: 1982 Garment Worker Rally Tableaus (12 minutes)

- Tell students:
 - In 1982, garment workers in Manhattan Chinatown found themselves in a situation where they were at odds with their employers. When Chinatown garment factory bosses refused to renew a union contract, which included health care for workers, the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union Local 23-25 organized a rally. To the surprise of the union management, on June 24th, 1982, nearly 20,000 Chinese American women garment workers walked out of their jobs to nearby Columbus Park, beginning, at the time, the largest rally in Chinatown’s history!

⁵ “Unity Wins Contract Fight,” *Local 23-25 News* 31, no. 3 (August 1982): 1, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

- When workers didn't get what they wanted, they vowed to go on strike and planned a second rally, which took place on July 15, 1982, also at Columbus Park. Just as many garment workers came out for this rally.
- We're going to look at a series of photos that provide a snapshot of what it might have been like to take part in these rallies. We're going to do this through an activity called tableau.
- Tableaus (also called living pictures) are a great way for students to consider the content and messages behind photographs through close looking, collaboration, and movement. They prompt students to move, pose, think, and take up the perspectives of the subjects portrayed, adding an element of empathy to the viewing experience. They are especially helpful in contextualizing a particular historical moment or time period, and encourage students to contemplate the question, "What story does this photograph tell?"
- Break students into small groups, handing out one photograph to each group. Feel free to select your favorites from the below list.

Tableau Photograph List:

- **Photograph 1:** Local 23-25 member smiling holding "Defend Our Rights" sign. (Photographer: unknown, 1982)
- **Photograph 2:** Local 23-25 Rally at Columbus Park with union members and 3 children. (Photographer: unknown, 1982)
- **Photograph 3:** Local 23-25 members at Rally looking up and clapping. (Photographer: Earl Dotter, 1982)
- **Photograph 4:** 1982 Chinatown Rally Local 23-25 members raising fists and cheering. (Photographer: Robert Gumpert, 1982)
- **Photograph 5:** Members of Local 23-25 looking into camera holding flyer and stick with no placard. (Photographer: unknown, 1982)
- **Photograph 6:** Local 23-25 members at Columbus Park Rally. (Photographer: Paul Calhoun, 1982)
- **Photograph 7:** Local 23-25 member with baby strapped on back wearing Local 23-25 cap. (Photographer: unknown, 1982)
- **Photograph 8:** Striking members of ILGWU Local 23-25, 1982. (Photographer: unknown, 1982)
- **Photograph 9:** Women garment workers of all ages fighting for a new union contract, June 1982. (Photographer: unknown, 1982)
- As a group, have students look at the photograph together and talk about what they see.
 - What's in the background? Foreground?
 - Who's the subject of the photo?
 - What can you tell about their body language, pose, facial expression, and gaze? What is the overall mood of the photo?
- **Tableau Time:** Without talking or using any words at all, have students present a frozen scene inspired by what they see in the photograph using poses and facial expressions. Ask them to collaboratively try to embody the ideas and feelings communicated in the

photograph. Give them a few minutes to rehearse before presenting to the class. (They can talk during this process, just not during their presentations.)

- During the presentations, unfreeze a character by tapping them on the shoulder. When unfrozen, you can prompt students to:
 - 1) reply with a sentence or phrase in character;
 - 2) speak to another subject in the photograph in character;
 - 3) speak to a viewer outside the photograph in character;
 - 4) or simply explain their pose and gestures.
- You can also designate yourself or a student as a journalist and ask one or more characters a short series of who, what, when, where, why, how questions, i.e., “What are you doing in the photo? What were you doing just before? Right after?”
- Have a conversation about how the characters’ poses, gestures, facial expression, and speech might share clues about their thoughts, feelings, and aspects of their personality.
- Once every group has presented, wrap up by sharing that: while these photos provide a snapshot into what it might have been like to attend one of the garment worker rallies of 1982, they don’t capture everything. In the next lesson, we’ll hear more from rally organizers and participants about what it was like on the ground and leading up to the rallies, as well as learn about the results of the rallies.

Wrap Up (2 minutes)

- Have students fill out an exit ticket with the following prompts:
 - “One new thing I learned today was...”
 - “Something that I’m still confused by is....”
- Collect exit tickets as students finish.

Hidden Voices Mini Unit
Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 5 - Spirit of Resistance

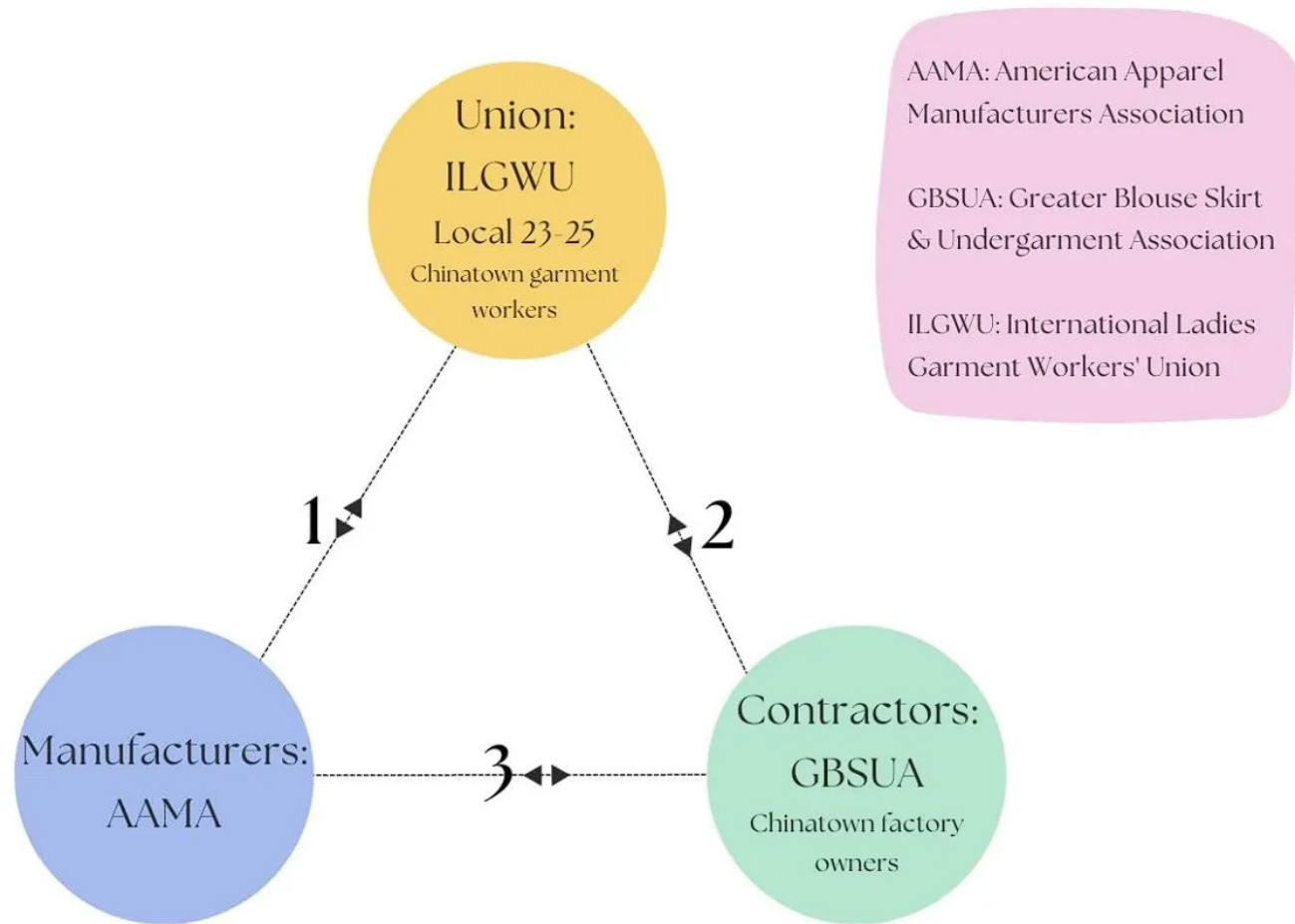
Image of the ILGWU quilt square, “A Fair Share for America”



Citation: Members of Local 23-25, Chinese and Hispanic Committees, *Local 23-25 Quilt*, 1986, fabric quilt, LaborArts, photographed by Jack Miller, 2022, <https://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/memory-in-cloth/20/>.

Triangular Bargaining - Chart Only

Triangular Bargaining



Triangular Bargaining - With Explanation

Triangular Bargaining

Every 3 years, the union negotiated a new contract for workers' pay and benefits.

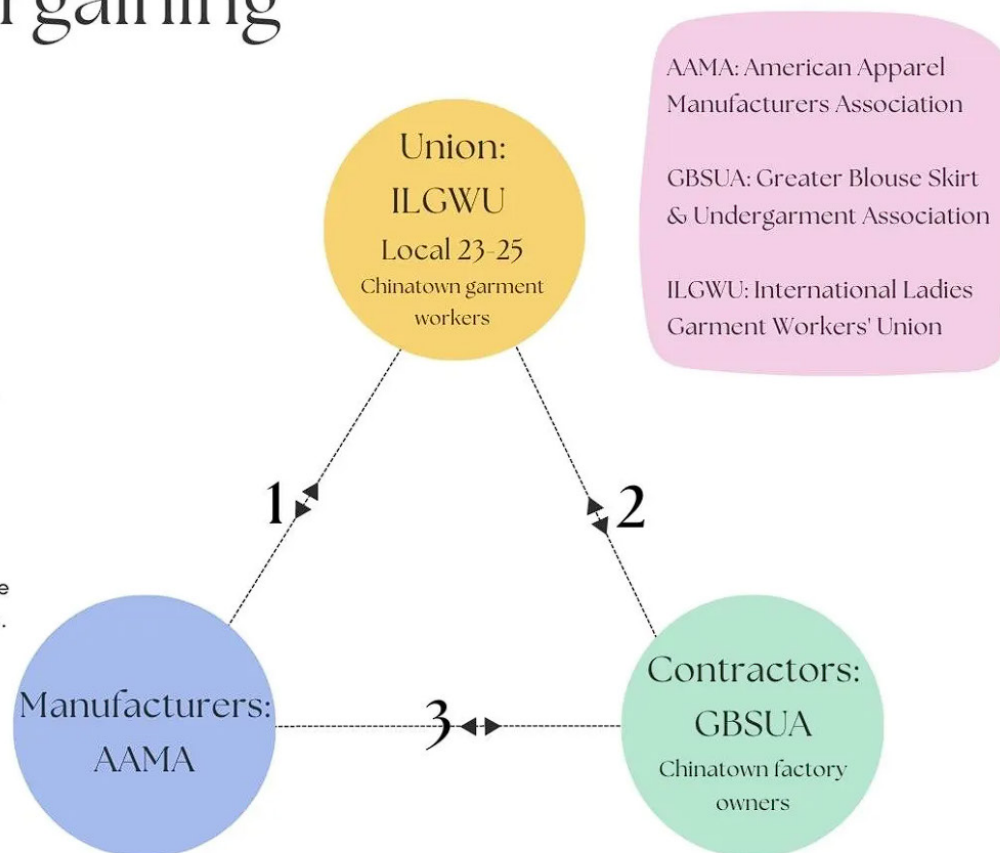
First, the union negotiated with the manufacturers. In this case, the ILGWU negotiated with the AAMA.

Then, the union bargained with the contractors. They had to convince them to agree to the same agreement as the manufacturers. In this case, the ILGWU negotiated with the GBSUA. Chinatown factory owners were part of the GBSUA.

Lastly, the contractors negotiated the same agreement directly with the manufacturers. In this case, the GBSUA (including Chinatown factory owners) negotiated with the AAMA.

Once everyone came to a shared agreement, a new contract was signed.

This system is called triangular bargaining. Pay raises and benefits were passed along from the manufacturers to the contractors and then from the contractors to the union workers.



Citation: Katie Quan, "Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown," *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009), 76-91, <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.35.1.l704mpj32652q227>.

Creating a Union Contract: Triangular Bargaining Handout

Every 3 years, the union negotiated a new contract for workers' pay and benefits.

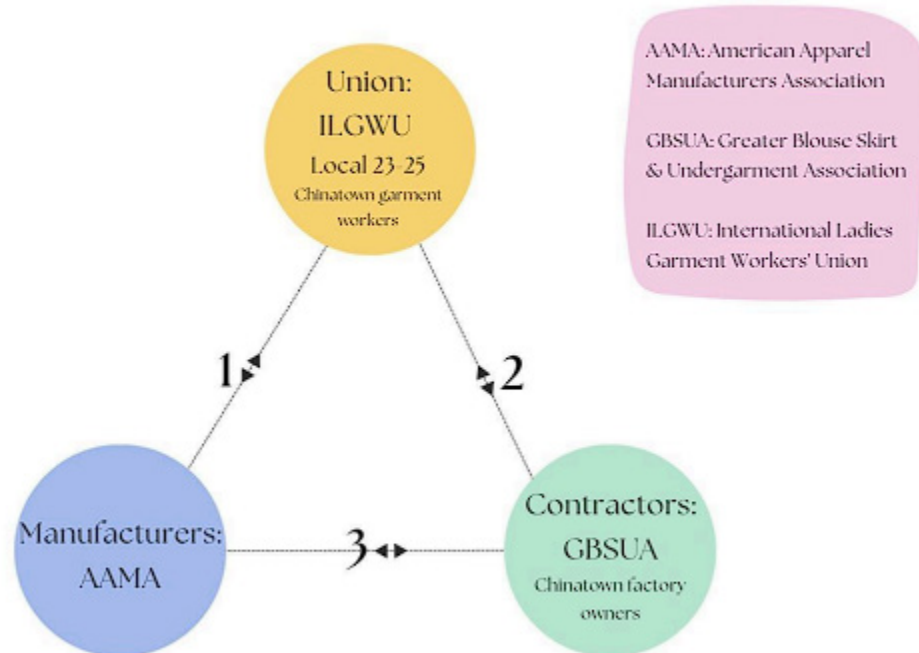
First, the union negotiated with the manufacturers. In this case, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) negotiated with the American Apparel Manufacturers Association (AAMA).

Then, the union bargained with the contractors. They had to convince them to agree to the same agreement as the manufacturers. In this case, the ILGWU negotiated with the Greater Blouse Skirt & Undergarment Association (GBSUA). Manhattan Chinatown factory owners were part of the GBSUA.

Lastly, the contractors negotiated the same agreement directly with the manufacturers. In this case, the GBSUA (including Chinatown factory owners) negotiated with the AAMA.

Once everyone came to a shared agreement, a new contract was signed. This system is called triangular bargaining. Pay raises and benefits were passed along from the manufacturers to the contractors, and then from the contractors to the union workers.

Triangular Bargaining



Source: Xiaolan Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948–92*, The Asian American Experience (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

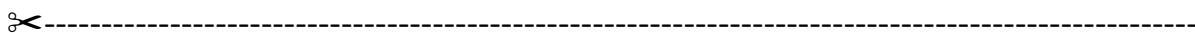
Instructions for Teacher:

- Print out the **Role Cards** sheets (below) and cut along dotted lines to separate each role. Print and cut enough for the number of students in each group. Distribute to each group.
 - Follow the instructions provided in the lesson plan to facilitate the role play.
-

Roles:

- Manufacturers (AAMA): they decide where to send the work
- Contractors (GBSUA): garment factory owners (management) who try to get work orders from the Manufacturers and also manage the workers to complete the work order
- The Union (ILGWU): workers who complete the work order and have a written agreement between management and themselves

Role Cards

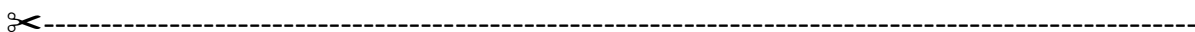


Role Card 1

Union: International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU)

Scenario: When it came time to negotiate the union contract on March 31 1982, the union followed the triangular bargaining system they had been using for years. The ILGWU, representing the Manhattan Chinatown garment workers, first negotiated with the AAMA, which represented manufacturers. The ILGWU tried to negotiate for the following:

- A raise from the existing \$4.40/hour
- Higher holiday pay
- A 12th personal day (or day off)
- Pay during jury duty
- Paid sick leave that was accrued according to how long workers had been with the company
- Increased employer contributions to health care and retirement funds

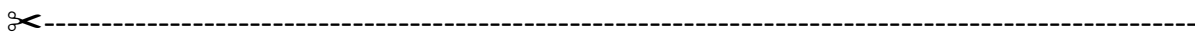


Role Card 2

Manufacturers: American Apparel Manufacturers Association (AAMA)

Scenario: After hearing the ILGWU's list of demands, the AAMA responded with their own:

- No cost-of-living pay raises
- No increased holiday pay
- Three (3) fewer holidays
- An increase from a 35 hour work week to a 40 hour work week
- Agreeing to hire new workers at the U.S. minimum wage of \$3.35/hour
- No increase in employer contributions to health care and retirement funds





Role Card 3

Contractors: Greater Blouse Skirt & Undergarment Association (GBSUA)

Scenario: Manhattan Chinatown factory owners were already displeased with the previous contract negotiated in 1979 and did not want to make further compromises. They were upset with both the union and other factory owners in the GBSUA, who were mostly white and didn't value their voices and opinions in the way they wanted. They came up with their own list of 15 demands, which included the following:

- Workers' holiday pay should be paid by the union, rather than the factory owners
- Workers' overtime should start only after they worked a full 35 hours/week
- Factory owners should be allowed to accept work from non-union manufacturers, if the union could not provide them with enough work
- Unions could only inspect a factory's financial records if they provided a sufficient reason



Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 1



Citation: “Local 23-25 Member Smiling Holding ‘Defend Our Rights’ Sign,” 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 2



Citation: “Local 23-25 Rally at Columbus Park with Union Members and 3 Children,” 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 3



Citation: Earl Dotter, "Local 23-25 Members at Rally Looking Up and Clapping," 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 4



Citation: Robert Gumpert, "1982 Chinatown Rally Local 23-25 Members Raising Fists and Cheering," 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 5



Citation: "Members of Local 23-25 Looking into Camera Holding Flyer and Stick with No Placard," 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 6



Citation: Paul Calhoun, "Local 23-25 Members at Columbus Park Rally," 1982, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America Collections, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 7



Citation: "Local 23-25 Member with Baby Strapped on Back Wearing Local 23-25 Cap," 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 8



Citation: "Striking Members of ILGWU Local 23-25," 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Tableau Photograph List

Photograph 9



Citation: “Women Garment Workers of All Ages Fighting for a New Union Contract,” 1982, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Lesson Bibliography:

- Bao, Xiaolan. *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948–92*. The Asian American Experience. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Calhoun, Paul. “Local 23-25 Members at Columbus Park Rally.” 1982. Photograph. Museum of Chinese in America Collections. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.
- Chen, May Ying. Interview by Alina Shen. January 18, 2018. Oral History Collection. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.
- Dotter, Earl. “Local 23-25 Members at Rally Looking Up and Clapping.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- Dowgiewicz, Kathryn. “Highlights—The Chinatown Struggle of 1982.” The Kheel Center ILGWU Collection. Cornell University ILR School. Accessed April 16, 2026. <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/announcements/5.html>.
- Gumpert, Robert. “1982 Chinatown Rally Local 23-25 Members Raising Fists and Cheering.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- “Local 23-25 Member Smiling Holding ‘Defend Our Rights’ Sign.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- “Local 23-25 Member with Baby Strapped on Back Wearing Local 23-25 Cap.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- “Local 23-25 Rally at Columbus Park with Union Members and 3 Children.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- Members of Local 23-25, Chinese and Hispanic Committees. *Local 23-25 Quilt*. 1986. Fabric quilt. Photographed by Jack Miller, 2022. LaborArts. <https://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/memory-in-cloth/20/>.
- “Members of Local 23-25 Looking into Camera Holding Flyer and Stick with No Placard.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- Quan, Katie. “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown.” *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009): 76–91. <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.35.1.l704mpj32652q227>.
- “Striking Members of ILGWU Local 23-25.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

“Unity Wins Contract Fight.” *Local 23-25 News* 31, no. 3 (August 1982). UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Wallace, Melissa, dir. *We Are One*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2018. Documentary, 28 min., 40 sec. https://media.library.cornell.edu/media/We+Are+One/1_uyh69lck.

“Women Garment Workers of All Ages Fighting for a New Union Contract.” 1982. Photograph. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Local 23-25 Records. Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 6: In Unity, There is Strength!

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 6 - In Unity, There Is Strength!

Focus Questions:

- What factors motivated garment workers to hold a rally?
- What happened during the 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers rallies?
- What role did Chinese American women in the ILGWU Local 23-25 branch play in the 1982 rallies?
- What tactics did organizers use to rally the workers? In particular, what phrases or mottos were used to appeal to Chinese immigrant women workers?
- What challenges did they face in organizing and carrying out the 1982 rallies?
- How were the issues they brought up resolved? Were the rallies considered a success?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point

- Students will learn about the motivations behind the 1982 garment workers rallies.
- Students will examine what it took to carry out the 1982 garment workers rallies and the end results.
- Students will examine how organizers tailored their approaches to reach their target population, Chinese immigrant women workers.
- Students will hear the perspectives of garment workers and union organizers.
- Students will consider tactics for getting the word out.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 3. Analyze evidence in terms of historical and/or social context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias, context and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
- B. Chronological Reasoning and Causation
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade level content, and historical events.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 4. Examine the roles of institutions such as corporations, non-profit organizations, and labor unions in a market economy in the United States.
- UNIT 2: A Changing Society and The Progressive Era
 - 8.2 A Changing Society: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America.
 - Industrialization; Immigration; Effects of Industrialization and Immigration
8.2b
- UNIT 5: The United States Assumes Worldwide Responsibilities
 - 8.7 Foreign Policy: Increased economic interdependence and competition, as well as environmental concerns, are challenges faced by the United States.

- Globalization 8.7e: Global Interdependence and competition; Economy and workforce
- 8.8 Demographic Change
 - Immigration and increasing diversity 8.8b.
 - The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.
- UNIT 6: From World War II to the Present

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view, stance, or purpose (e.g. rhetorical language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts, images, visuals, etc.).
- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- RH8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 3. Analyze evidence in terms of historical context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning
 - 1. Identify how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade-level content, and historical events.

- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 3. Analyze evidence in terms of historical and/or social context, content, authorship, point of view, purpose, and format; identify bias; explain the role of bias, context and audience in presenting arguments or evidence.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade level content, and historical events.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
 - E. Economics and Economic Systems
 - 4. Examine the roles of institutions such as corporations, non-profit organizations, and labor unions in a market economy in the United States.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2b Population density, diversity, technologies, and industry in urban areas shaped the social, cultural, and economic lives of people.
 - Students will examine the population growth of New York City and other New York cities and the technologies and industries which encouraged this growth.
 - 8.7 Foreign Policy:
 - 8.7e Increased globalization has led to increased economic interdependence and competition.
 - Students will examine the increased economic interdependence in terms of globalization and its impact on the United States and

New York State economy, including the workforce.

- 8.8 Demographic Change
 - 8.8b. The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.
 - Students will examine migration and immigration trends in New York State and New York City such as the increase in Spanish-speaking, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African populations and the contributions of these groups.
 - Students will examine the effects of immigration legislation and policy, including recent debates over immigration policy.

Resources/Materials

- July 15, 1982 ILGWU Garment Workers’ Rally Poster
- Clip 1: [Oral History with May Ying Chen about the June 24th Rally - Clip](#)
[Full Oral History with May Ying Chen about the June 24th Rally](#)
- Clip 2: [Oral History with May Ying Chen about the July 15th Rally - Clip](#)
[Full Oral History with May Ying Chen about the July 15th Rally](#)
- "In Unity There Is Strength" Graphic Organizer
- “In Unity There Is Strength” Speech
- Short clips of Shui Mak Ka and translator Shiree Teng speaking at the first rally (15:50 min - 16:21) min, and the second rally (18:16 min - 19:18 min), from the ILGWU’s [We Are One documentary](#), from the Kheel Center at Cornell University (*optional*)
- [Oral history with Shui Mak Ka Clip](#)
- “How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History” by huiying b. chan (who now goes by River 慧莹 Dandelion (Video, plus background information)
- Union Memorabilia Primary Sources
- Union Memorabilia Prompt Cards

Additional Resources

- Shui Mak Ka speech at ILGWU garment worker rallies in 1982, published in *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present*:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pppwn>
- “How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History” by River 莹莹 Dandelion, published in Asian American Writers’ Workshop’s *The Margins* publication:
<https://aaww.org/chinatown-garment-strike-1982/>
- Kheel Center *We are One* documentary (28:40 min) with a clip of Shui Mak Ka speaking at one of the rallies from 15:50 min - 16:21 min, and 18:16 min - 19:18 min:
<https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/archives/filmVideo/index.html?defaultVideoID=9>

- Kheel Center 1982 Struggle Resource Page:
<https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/announcements/5.html>
- *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948-92* by Xiaolan Bao, a book about Chinatown's garment industry with detailed information, statistics, and first hand accounts:
https://archive.org/details/holdingupmoretha00baox_0
- *Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown* by Katie Quan, in *Amerasia Journal*, a firsthand account of the 1982 Chinatown garment worker rallies from garment worker and labor organizer Katie Quan:
https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2009/quan_amerasia09.pdf

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students: Going on Strike - Pros and Cons! (3 minutes)

- Tell students:
 - Imagine you are a bus driver. You drive for many hours each day, but you don't make much money. Your boss is always angry with you, especially about delays when there is traffic beyond your control. You're very frustrated.
 - Other bus drivers are frustrated, too! Some drivers are talking about striking unless the company raises your pay, and the bosses stop getting angry about traffic delays or other problems that you cannot control.
 - Write down three reasons that you think why the bus drivers should strike. Write down three problems that might happen if the bus drivers strike. Then, share your ideas with a classmate. Do you have the same ideas?

Model/Teach: Spreading the Word - July Rally Poster Analysis (5 minutes)

- Display the **July 15, 1982 ILGWU Garment Workers' Rally Poster**.
- **Tell students:** In the last lesson, we got a sense of some of the issues facing garment workers and the ways in which they made their voices heard. After the momentous June 24, 1982 rally, there was still work to be done. Workers' demands had not been met and a new contract had not been signed. They planned a second rally, which took place on July 15, 1982, also at Columbus Park.
 - Let's take a look at the poster they created to spread the word about the second rally.
- Guide students through the following questions:
 - What first strikes you upon looking at the poster?
 - i.e., the powerful image from the last rally; it's bilingual; certain phrases like "We Are One" and "Our Unity is our Strength"; how certain words are underlined or in all caps; short, definitive sentences.
 - What is the main idea of the poster? What text and imagery from the poster supports this idea?

- What is the call to action? What does the Local 23-25 want workers to do upon seeing this poster? Why?
 - Would you be convinced to attend a second rally if you saw this poster?
- What emotions is this poster trying to elicit? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How does the poster try to connect directly with the viewer?

Model/Teach: (Class Discussion) Oral History Accounts of the 1982 Rallies (10 minutes)

- **Tell students:** We're going to keep exploring the rallies, but instead of looking at documents, we're going to hear from rally organizers.
- Introduce students to May Ying Chen. (Some might be familiar with her from their exploration of primary sources in Lesson 3.)
 - May Ying Chen is a labor organizer who has advocated for immigrant workers, including garment workers from the ILGWU Local 23-25, since the 1980s.
- Explain that the class will watch a few short clips of an interview the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) did with May Ying Chen, where she sets the scene for the 1982 rallies.
 - **Play Clip 1 (6:00 min - 7:04 min):** [Oral History with May Ying Chen about the June 24th Rally - Clip](#).¹ **Clip 1 Questions:**
 - May paints a picture of the atmosphere leading up to the initial rally in June, 1982. What details does she share? What strikes you most?
 - Describe the dynamics between Chinese factory owners and Chinese workers.
 - What feelings might union organizers have leading up to the strike? How about the garment workers themselves?
 - Full Oral History Link: [Full Oral History with May Ying Chen about the June 24th Rally](#)
 - **Play Clip 2:** [Oral History with May Ying Chen about the July 15th Rally - Clip](#)²
 - **Clip 2 Questions:**
 - What emotions and feelings does May mention as she describes the atmosphere of the rally?
 - What happened after the first rally? How did workers change their approach for the second rally?
 - What was the combined outcome of the rallies?

¹ May Ying Chen, "Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen, Setting the Scene for the June 24, 1982 Rally," interview by Alina Shen, January 18, 2018, audio, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

² May Ying Chen, "Oral History Interview with May Ying Chen, The July 15, 1982 Rally," interview by Alina Shen, January 18, 2018, audio, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection.

- Full Oral History Link: [Full Oral History with May Ying Chen about the July 15th Rally](#)

Independent Work: “In Unity There Is Strength” Text Analysis & Think-Pair-Share (14 minutes)

- **Tell students:** May Ying Chen mentions the fiery speeches workers gave at the rallies, including one by Shui Mak Ka. She was a garment worker and lead organizer of the 1982 Garment Workers' rallies. We're going to take a look at excerpts from Shui Mak Ka's speeches at both rallies.
- Hand out the **"In Unity There Is Strength" Graphic Organizer**.
 - Have students read included excerpts from Shui Mak Ka's rally speeches and answer the questions on the graphic organizer.
 - There are three columns: one for text, another for a summary, and another for a student response. The text column has a quote from Shui Mak Ka. The summary column asks students to answer a question about the text in their own words. The response column allows students to more deeply consider the text through their own perspectives.
 - **Optional:** *Students can complete the summary column in class and the response column for homework.*
- **Optional:** Hand out **"In Unity There Is Strength" Speech** too. This provides a fuller picture of the speech and its messages, but at a much higher comprehension level. If not using the speech with students, it still provides great context for you as the teacher.
- **Optional (with additional time):** Play short clips of live footage from Shui Mak Ka and translator Shiree Teng speaking at the first rally (15:50 min - 16:21) min, and the second rally (18:16 min - 19:18 min), from the ILGWU's ["We Are One" documentary](#).³ This offers a sense of the atmosphere at the rallies and shows the big crowds in attendance.
- Debrief with a Think-Pair-Share:
 - Have students share their answers to the summary column with a partner.
 - Have a few pairs share what they discussed with the full class.
- Play [Oral history with Shui Mak Ka Clip](#),⁴ a one-minute video featuring Shui Mak Ka speaking about the 1982 Chinatown garment workers rally. This video is an excerpt from a 2019 interview with River 慧莹 Dandelion. Note that Shui Mak Ka is speaking in Cantonese Chinese. There are English subtitles on the bottom of the screen.
- Return to the questions from the graphic organizer, which Shui Mak Ka touches on in the video clip:

³ Melissa Wallace, dir, *We Are One*, 2018. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. Documentary, 28 min., 40 sec. https://media.library.cornell.edu/media/We+Are+One/1_uyh69lck.

⁴ River 慧莹 Dandelion, "Shui Mak Ka on the 1982 Garment Workers' Strike (2019)," May 1, 2019, video, 0:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAI1leA8y8>.

- What is Shui Mak Ka trying to say about garment workers when she talks about flowers and springtime? What bigger message is she trying to communicate?
- Why does Shui Mak Ka say that if you were to rely on one worker to fight, it would not work?
- *Optional: If you have additional time, have students contemplate the following and share with the class:*
 - *Who is Shui Mak Ka? What does she believe?*
 - *What did you learn about her from the speeches she gave at the 1982 rallies and the video we watched?*

Group Work: Get Out The Word! Design Challenge & Wrap Up (13 minutes)

- Separate students into small groups.
- First, students are going to investigate some union-produced materials and swag from around the time of the strike and shortly after. These are all items that have been made and distributed by the union to members and sometimes the general public too.
- Then, students are going to use images of actual union gear as inspiration to create their own!
- Each group will get 2-3 images of union gear to investigate from the **Union Memorabilia Primary Sources** compilation. Students should discuss the following:
 - What is this object?
 - How could it have been used?
 - Who is meant to use it? To see it?
 - Does it have a slogan, images, or both?
 - What is its message?
- Circulate between the groups and help to facilitate conversation as needed.
- After students have had about 5 minutes to discuss their objects, hand out the **Union Memorabilia Prompt Cards** to each group. These will include prompts for groups to make different types of objects, including but not limited to: posters, banners for parades or marches, pins, wearable objects, songs, and pamphlets. They can select any object from the list or one that's not included. The prompt cards are simply a guide.
- Give students blank paper and materials to sketch out their designs. Students should also note the following aspects of their design, similar to their investigations:
 - What is this object?
 - How is this object supposed to be used?
 - Who is meant to use it? To see it?
 - What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?

- After finalizing their designs, have groups popcorn share the objects they designed with the rest of the class. They should share the object they designed and any slogan/motto they created. If there is additional time, students can also share the thought process behind their creations. Groups can tape up their designs to the board so that students can take a look at them on their way out for the day.
- **Optional:** *Students can take time at home to more fully flesh out their designs or even prototype them.*

Hidden Voices Mini Unit
Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 6 - In Unity, There is Strength!

July 15, 1982 ILGWU Garment Workers' Rally Poster

車衣工友

第二次示威大集會

維護我們的工會合約
衣廠不能再關門 立刻簽訂工會合約！

日期：七月十五日 星期四
時間：早上八時四十五分
地點：華埠哥倫布公園
(和富街夾茂比利街)

工友們來參加示威大會，我們的團結就是最大的力量，維護工會合約，
要求所有的僱主立刻簽約！每間工廠的每一位工友返工之前一定要去公園。
讓我們站在一起！

國際女服車衣公會23 25分會



GARMENT WORKERS RALLY II TO DEFEND OUR CONTRACT

No More Lock-out!—Sign the Contract

PLACE: COLUMBUS PARK (WORTH & MULBERRY STS.)
Date: Thursday, July 15, 1982
TIME: 8:45 A.M.

- Attend the Rally to defend our New Contract and show our Unity.
- Demand EVERY EMPLOYER sign.
- Protect our Rights and our Benefits.

Our Unity is our Strength.

Don't go to Work - Go directly to the Rally.
**ALL Workers from EVERY Shop
MUST Attend This Rally.**

LOCAL 23-25 **WE ARE ONE** **WE ARE ONE**



Citation: "Garment Workers Rally Poster for Thursday, July 15, 1982," 1982, poster, Chinese Sportswear Workers Social Association Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, accession no. 2010.040.027, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/23558534-7D69-40F6-895C-352776943415>.

"In Unity There is Strength" Speech⁵

Shui Mak Ka was a garment worker and also one of the major organizers of the 1982 garment workers rallies. She gave several speeches to encourage her fellow workers to join the fight.

The following speeches were translated from Cantonese Chinese into English by Shiree Teng, who did live translation at the rallies.

June 24, 1982 speech at the 1st garment workers rally:

Dear brothers and sisters of Local 23-25, greetings to all of you!

On behalf of all sewing factory workers, first please allow me to convey our thanks to our union representatives. The union has been fighting hard for our rights as expressed in the three-year contract. Many of them have been busy working day and night, putting aside their own need to eat and sleep; please give them a big round of applause to express our highest sense of gratitude and respect.

The three-year contract is something we absolutely must have. We work very hard, and deserve every bit of the wages and benefits contained in the contract. The bosses depend on our sweat and labor, and have profited quite a bit of money to buy their houses and cars. But capitalists are never short on desire and wants. They oppose the three-year contract. We must clear our eyes, and not allow them to substitute a fish eye for a pearl or let them fish in muddy waters. We must unite around the union's banner, because in unity there is strength. The grasshopper cannot stop the car in its tracks!

It is not spring when one flower blooms; only when a hundred thousand flowers bloom is it spring. If we close up ranks, work in unity, and move forward with one heart, no matter how tumultuous the coming waves, no matter what kind of difficulties stand before us, we will remain steadfast and strong. In unity there is strength. In unity there will be victory. Our struggle for the three-year contract will be victorious.

That's all I have to say. Thank you!

July 15, 1982 speech at the 2nd garment workers rally:

We are very angry about the actions of a small handful of employers in the recent days. Enough is enough! They have faced their desire to negotiate, and in the end they rejected the contract for the second time. The action is totally irresponsible. The worst thing is that this small bunch of employers also has been using all kinds of threats and intimidations to force other employers to close shop. The way that these people are behaving is like a blind bat trying to knock down the tree. It's like a grasshopper's attempt to stop the car in its tracks. They are daydreaming and we tell them, you are nuts. They are trying to substitute a fish eye for a pearl, and they're trying to fish in muddy waters. And we tell them, you are wrong.

⁵ Shui Mak Ka, "'In Unity There Is Strength': Garment Worker Speaks Out at Union Rally (1982)," in *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, ed. Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and Him Mark Lai (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

"In Unity There Is Strength" Graphic Organizer



Shui Mak Ka, pictured on the left and right, was one of the major organizers of the 1982 garment workers rallies. She gave several speeches to encourage her fellow workers to join the fight.

Photos: LEFT - Speakers, including Shui Mak Ka (left) at the ILGWU Chinatown Rally, to support the signing of the new union contract, in Columbus Park, New York. Rallies took place on June 24 and July 15, 1982. Courtesy of the Kheel Center ILGWU Collection at Cornell University.⁶

RIGHT - Shui Mak Ka in 2019 holds up her shirt to represent the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Photo by River 慧莹 Dandelion⁷

⁶ "Speakers, Including Shui Mak Ka at the ILGWU Chinatown Rally," 1982, photograph, 6000/024 P, Box 5, Folder 1, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Photographs, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University Library, <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/photos/79.html>.

⁷ River 慧莹 Dandelion, *Shui Mak Ka Holds up Her Shirt to Represent the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU)*, photograph, May 1, 2019, in "How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History," *The Margins*, May 1, 2019, <https://aaww.org/chinatown-garment-strike-1982/>.

Read these excerpts from her speeches and use the information to complete the graphic organizer.⁸

Text	Summary	Response
“We work very hard, and deserve every bit of the wages and benefits contained in the contract. The bosses depend on our sweat and labor, and have profited quite a bit of money to buy their houses and cars.” - Shui Mak Ka, speech made at the June 24, 1982 rally	What do the Chinatown garment workers want? Use your own words to describe it. What part of the text makes you think that? <u>Underline</u> the key sentence or phrase.	Do you agree or disagree with Shui Mak Ka? Why or why not?

⁸ Shui Mak Ka, "In Unity There Is Strength."

"In Unity There Is Strength" Graphic Organizer

Text	Summary	Response
“(The bosses) oppose the three-year contract. We must clear our eyes, and not allow them to substitute a fish eye for a pearl.... We must unite around the union’s banner, because in unity, there is strength.” Shui Mak Ka, speech made at the June 24, 1982 rally	What do you think it means to “substitute a fish eye for a pearl”? Explain why you think that. Use your own words.	Can you think of any other expressions that mean the same thing as “substitute a fish eye for a pearl”? (If not, make one up!)
“The worst thing is that (some bosses have) been using all kinds of threats and intimidations to force other employers to close shop.” Shui Mak Ka, speech made at the July 15, 1982 rally	What is stopping the Chinatown garment workers from getting what they want? Use your own words to describe it. What part of the text makes you think that? <u>Underline</u> the key sentence or phrase.	How does this text make you feel about the garment factory bosses? Why?

“It is not spring when one flower blossoms; only when a hundred thousand flowers bloom is it spring. If we close up ranks, work in unity, and move forward with one heart... we will remain steadfast and strong. In unity there is strength. In unity there will be victory.” • Shui Mak Ka, speech made at the June 24, 1982 rally	What is Shui Mak Ka trying to say about garment workers when she talks about flowers and springtime? What is Shui Mak Ka asking the garment workers to do? Use your own words to describe it. What part of the text makes you say that? <u>Underline</u> the important phrases.	Would this speech inspire you to join the union and the strike? Why or why not?
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Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 1



ILGWU union label iron-on patch.

The back of the patch contains instructions on how to apply the patch to clothing.

The ILGWU union label, also called a union bug, was created to show consumers who made the clothing they were thinking of buying. Any garment with the ILGWU union label was created by union workers.

This meant that workers were paid fairly and that the quality of the clothes was up to the union's high standards. It was also a way of giving consumers an opportunity to support unionized garment workers by buying clothes that were made in their shops. It had the dual effect of encouraging more employers to become union shops, since consumers now factored this into their decisions about what clothing they would buy.

Union labels like this one became popular in the mid-1950s. This iron-on label was in use from 1974 to 1995.

Citation: "Two ILGWU Iron-on Patches," n.d., patch, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Catalog Number 2007.014.004, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/D22832E1-EC5F-4106-A267-751839554781>.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Transcription:

Image 1:

- Outer Circle: INT. LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION
- Top Red Section: UNION MADE
- Center Blue Text: ILGWU
- Bottom Red Section: AFL-CIO
- Bottom Label Text: MADE IN U.S.A.

Image 2:

- Header: IMPORTANT IRON-ON INSTRUCTIONS
- Numbered List:
 - Use dry iron at cotton setting (approximately 375° to 400°).
 - Prewarm area where patch is to be applied.
 - Cover patch with pressing cloth.
 - Hold iron still on pressing cloth and PRESS HARD for 15 seconds.
 - Allow to cool.
- Middle Text: LOOK FOR AND INSIST ON THE ILGWU LABEL BEFORE YOU BUY WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S APPAREL
- Footer Header: IT STANDS FOR:
- Bullet Points:
 - The Creativity of American Design
 - The Skill of American Workmanship
 - The Importance of American Jobs

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 2



ILGWU ruler. Items like these were made to remind people to buy clothing with the ILGWU's label on it, which meant that it was created by unionized garment workers.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "ILGWU Ruler/Bookmark," n.d., ruler/bookmark, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, accession no. 2007.014.018, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/6003C5B0-48D8-46A1-9CAE-547435540750>.

Transcription of Image 1:

- **Top Edge:** Ruler markings from 0 to 6 inches.
- **Left Box:** (ILGWU Logo) "INT. LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION", "AFL-CIO", "UNION MADE", "MADE IN U.S.A."
- **Next to Left Box:** "SYMBOL OF PROGRESS MADE AND MORE TO COME"
- **Center Text:** "This Label Stands For:"
 - The Creativity of American Design
 - The Skill of American Workmanship
 - The Importance of American Jobs"
- **Right Box:** (ILGWU Logo) "INT. LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION", "AFL-CIO", "UNION MADE", "MADE IN U.S.A."

Transcription of Image 2:

Metric to U.S. Chart

Clip Text: Book Mark

Main Message: Before you buy, insist on the ILGWU Label in all women's and children's apparel. It is the symbol of Decency, Fair Labor Standards, and the American Way of Life.

Bottom Edge: Ruler markings from 0 to 15 CM.

Small Logo: A tiny union bug for the "Allied Printing Trades Council" on the bottom right

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 3



Top: May Ying Chen in 2018 holding a chef's hat from the 1982 rallies with a Local 23-25 sticker attached.

Bottom: Local 23-25 members at the Columbus Park Rally, 1982. Photography by Paul Calhoun.

Source: Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: (Top) Edward Cheng, "May Ying Chen Holding a Chef's Hat from the 1982 Rallies with a Local 23-25 Sticker Attached," January 18, 2018, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, NY. (Bottom) Paul Calhoun, "Garment workers' rally," 1982, photographic print, Paul Calhoun Collection Catalog Number 2005.009.002,. Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/B7EC1B8C-3838-43A6-AF90-058653037686>.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 4



UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Hand Fan.

On the back, there are 3 Chinese characters which mean "United."

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "Local 23-25 Unite! 100 Years Sign," ca. 2000, sign, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.002, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/C5A8259E-AA20-4832-8A7E-474670248450>.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 5



Top: Handkerchief/scarf with ILGWU “Made in the U.S.A” patches. Rolls of this fabric were produced and garment workers made all sorts of clothing and accessories from them to wear at union events, rallies, and strikes.

Bottom: A panel discussion of former garment workers at the Museum of Chinese in America. Shui Mak Ka, second from the left, is wearing a shirt she made with the ILGWU fabric.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: (Top) “ILGWU Handkerchief/Scarf,” n.d., handkerchief, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.034, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, NY, accession no. 2007.014.034, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/6028E984-EDCE-4DFF-8BB0-703005432951>.

(Bottom) Museum of Chinese in America,. “We Are One: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Strike, 30 Years Later (Chinese Panel),” June 28, 2012, photograph, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, NY.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 6



"ILGWU IS FAMILY" Hat.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "ILGWU Is Family Hat," 1970–1995, styrofoam hat, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) Collection, New York, NY.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 7



ILGWU Chinese Committee Flag

The ILGWU's Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) had several committees to organize women workers, including the Hispanic Committee, and the Chinese Committee. These committees focused their efforts on the specific needs of Latine and Chinese garment workers like immigration, the needs of elders in the community, and international events that affected their members.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "Chinese Committee Flag," 1970–2007, fabric pennant, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.012.122, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/121A1A9C-49B8-4145-B090-404491526970>.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 8



"Local 23-25 UNITE! 100 Years" red balloon.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "'Local 23-25 UNITE! 100 Years' Balloon," 1995–2004, balloon, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.019, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY, <https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/AA24BB1C-46B3-4850-A13D-003650679566>.

Transcription:

Top arc: LOCAL 23-25

Center image: Silhouette of a sewing machine

Below machine: UNITE!

Bottom arc: 100 YEARS

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 8



Top: “We Are One In '91” pins in English & Chinese. **Middle:** Multilingual UNITE pins. **Bottom:** 1994 ILGWU pin with Chinese characters, which mean: “Millions of people, one heart.”

Citation: (Top) “ILGWU ‘We Are One’ Pin,” 1991, pin, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, accession no. 2007.014.036, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/894B1176-2AA4-4BCC-AD5A-073618092439>.

(Middle) “UNITE! For a Fair Contract” Pin, n.d., pin, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.026, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/D0936E2A-DC19-413A-82A8-555181508441>.
“UNITE! Chinese Pin,” n.d., pin, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.015, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/FCF5448C-3C5C-471E-9828-291163867430>.

(Bottom) “Wan Zhong Yi Xin” Pin, n.d., pin, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.030, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/233B119B-7204-44E7-9AB2-705111751068>.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 10



**"UNITE"! cone used to project one's voice.
Members of the union probably used it while they were engaged in picket lines.**

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "UNITE!" Cone, n.d., megaphone, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Accession no. 2007.014.035, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/DF3FA99E-B494-4214-A428-264100699501>.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 11

1=C 4/4

永遠團結在一起

工會精神要是能夠溶在工人血液裡，世上
When the u-nion's in-spi-ra-tion through the work-er's blood shall run, There can

再也沒有任何力量 比這更有力。 我們
be no power great-er an-y - where be-neath the sun; yet what

單靠個人孤軍奮鬥 總是很不利， 工會
force on earth is weak-er than the fee-ble strength of one, But the

2 2 2 i 7 | i - - - | 5. 4 3 5 i 2 | 3 - i. 0
使我們強有力！ 永 遠 團 結 在 一 起，
union makes us strong. Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er,

6. 7 i. 7 i. 6 | 5 - 3. 0 | 5. 4 3 5 i 2 | 3 - i. 0 i.
永 遠 團 結 在 一 起 永 遠 團 結 在 一 起， 工 會
Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er', For ti

2 2 2 i 7 | i - - :||
使我們強有力！
U-nion makes us strong.

～ 國際工服工會華人合唱團專用 ～

UNITE Music Score.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "UNITE Musical Score," ca. 1987–1990, musical score, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Transcription for UNITE Music Score

Title: 永远团结在一起 (Solidarity Forever)

Main Verse & Chorus

The transcription follows the layout of the sheet music, combining the numbered notation with the corresponding lyrics.

Chinese: 工 会 精 神 要 是 能 够 潜 在 工 人 血 液 里 , 世 上

English: When the union's inspiration through the worker's blood shall run, There can

Chinese: 再 也 没 有 任 何 力 量 比 这 更 有 力 。 我 们

English: be no power greater any-where beneath the sun; yet what

Chinese: 单 靠 个 人 孤 单 奋 斗 , 总 是 很 不 利 , 工 会

English: force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one, But the

Chinese: 使 我 们 强 有 力 !

English: union makes us strong.

Chinese: 永 远 团 结 在 一 起 ,

English: Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er,

Chinese: 永 远 团 结 在 一 起 , 永 远 团 结 在 一 起 , 工 会

English: Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, Sol-i-dar-i-ty for-ev-er, For the

Chinese: 使 我 们 强 有 力 !

English: union makes us strong.

Footer Note

Chinese: ~ 團 結 (?) 服 工 會 華 人 合 唱 團 專 用 ~

English Translation: ~ For the exclusive use of the [Ineligible] Chinese Union Choir ~

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Object 12



Poster commemorating the 1982 ILGWU victory in defending the union contract through collective action.

Source: UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America Collection.

Citation: "Poster Commemorating 1982 ILGWU Victory in Defending Their Union Contract," 1982, poster, UNITE HERE, Local 23-25 Collection, Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), New York, NY.

Union Memorabilia Primary Sources

Transcription for Poster commemorating the 1982 ILGWU Victory

Top Left (Script): "Unity is Strength. In memory of winning the union contracts after the rallies on June 24 and July 15, 1982 at Columbus Park Chinatown. 23-25 union member, Kong Tung Wong."

Center Logo: "INT. LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION / UNION MADE / ILGWU / AFL-CIO"

Center Graphic: The word "Victory" in stylized golden script.

Top Right (Chinese): Multiple columns of calligraphy including "團結有力量" (Unity has power) and "眾志可以成城" (Unity is strength).

Bottom Section:

- **Title:** VICTORY by Kong Tung Wong
- **Poem:** "There is strength in unity; A city can be built with the determination of many, With a common heart and a common goal, Our victory is assured." - *translated from the painting*
- **Footer:** Local 23-25, International Ladies Garment Workers Union, AFL-CIO

Union Memorabilia Prompt Cards

Your group is going to make something that people can wear to show that they support the union. Work with your group to design something wearable. When you share your design, remember to answer the following questions: • What is this object? • How is this object supposed to be used? • Who is meant to use it? To see it? • What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?	Your group is going to make a poster or a flyer that union members can display to encourage other people to join their union's efforts. Work with your group to design a poster or flyer. When you share your design, remember to answer the following questions: • What is this object? • How is this object supposed to be used? • Who is meant to use it? To see it? • What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?
Your group is going to make a banner or flag that union members can carry in a parade. Work with your group to design a banner or flag . When you share your design, remember to answer the following questions: • What is this object? • How is this object supposed to be used? • Who is meant to use it? To see it? • What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?	Your group is going to make a sticker, pin, or patch that people can use to show their support for the union. Work with your group to design a sticker, pin, or patch. When you share your design, remember to answer the following questions: • What is this object? • How is this object supposed to be used? • Who is meant to use it? To see it? • What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?

Your group is going to make a _____. <i>Fill in the blank with an item you decide together.</i> Work with your group to design a _____. When you share your design, remember to answer the following questions: • What is this object? • How is this object supposed to be used? • Who is meant to use it? To see it? • What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?	Your group is going to make something that people can hold to show that they support the union. Work with your group to design something holdable. When you share your design, remember to answer the following questions: • What is this object? • How is this object supposed to be used? • Who is meant to use it? To see it? • What is the message of this object? Can you create a slogan, motto, or another creative way to get your message across?
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Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 7: The Legacy They Left

Title/Subtitle:

Lesson 7 - The Legacy They Left

Focus Questions:

- What were the “wins” from the 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers’ rallies?
- What were the limitations of the “wins” from the 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers’ rallies?
- What factors contributed to the decline of Manhattan Chinatown’s garment industry before 9/11, between 1982 and 2001?
- How did 9/11 impact Manhattan Chinatown’s garment industry?
- What happened to most of the Chinatown garment factories after 9/11? How about Chinese American women garment workers?
- What about the manufacturers?
- How did union leaders respond to workers’ needs after 9/11?

Lesson Objective/Teaching Point

- Students will examine the legacy of the 1982 Chinatown garment workers rallies.
- Students will examine the impact of 9/11 on the Chinatown garment industry.
- Students will consider factors that contributed to the decline of the Chinatown garment industry.

Common Core:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9
Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

NYC Social Studies Scope & Sequence

- A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 4. Describe and analyze arguments of others, considering historical context.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
- B. Chronological Reasoning and Causation
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade level content, and historical events.
 - 4. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationship between multiple causes and effects.
 - 5. Distinguish between long term and immediate causes and effects of an event from current events or history.
 - 6. Recognize, analyze, and evaluate dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time.
 - 8. Relate patterns of continuity and change to larger historical processes and themes.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- F. Civic Participation
 - 6. Identify situations in which social actions are required and determine an appropriate course of action.
- UNIT 2: A Changing Society and The Progressive Era
 - 8.2 A Changing Society: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America.
 - Industrialization; Immigration; Effects of Industrialization and Immigration
8.2b

- UNIT 5: The United States Assumes Worldwide Responsibilities
 - 8.7 Foreign Policy: Increased economic interdependence and competition, as well as environmental concerns, are challenges faced by the United States.
 - Changing United States Foreign Relationships: Western Hemisphere (NAFTA, Cuba, Mexico) 8.7c; Global military and political alliances and conflicts: September 11, 2001 8.7d; Globalization: Global Interdependence and competition, Economy and workforce 8.7e
- UNIT 6: From World War II to the Present

Next Generation Learning Standards

- RH1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the source as a whole.
- RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate, objective summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including content-specific vocabulary related to history/social studies.
- RH6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view, stance, or purpose (e.g. rhetorical language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts, images, visuals, etc.).
- RH7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Social Studies Practices and Historical Thinking Skills

- Grade 7 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 4. Describe and analyze arguments of others, with support.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning
 - 1. Identify how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade-level content, and historical events.

- 4. Identify and analyze the relationship between multiple causes and multiple effects.
 - 5. Distinguish between long term and immediate causes and effects of an event from current events or history.
 - 6. Recognize, analyze, and evaluate dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time.
 - 8. Identify patterns of continuity and change as they relate to larger historical process and themes.
- C. Comparison and Contextualization
 - 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- F. Civic Participation
 - 6. Identify situations in which social actions are required and determine an appropriate course of action.
- Grade 8 Social Studies Practices:
 - A. Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence
 - 2. Identify, select, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).
 - 4. Describe and analyze arguments of others, considering historical context.
 - 5. Make inferences and draw general conclusions from evidence.
 - B. Chronological Reasoning and Causation
 - 1. Articulate how events are related chronologically to one another in time, and explain the ways in which earlier ideas and events may influence subsequent ideas and events.
 - 3. Identify causes and effects, using examples from current events, grade level content, and historical events.
 - 4. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationship between multiple causes and effects.
 - 5. Distinguish between long term and immediate causes and effects of an event from current events or history.
 - 6. Recognize, analyze, and evaluate dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time.
 - 8. Relate patterns of continuity and change to larger historical processes and themes.
 - C. Comparison and Contextualization

- 5. Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- F. Civic Participation
 - 6. Identify situations in which social actions are required and determine an appropriate course of action.

Curriculum Connections

- 8th Grade:
 - 8.2 A Changing Society
 - 8.2b Population density, diversity, technologies, and industry in urban areas shaped the social, cultural, and economic lives of people.
 - Students will examine the population growth of New York City and other New York cities and the technologies and industries which encouraged this growth.
 - 8.7. Foreign Policy
 - 8.7e Increased globalization has led to increased economic interdependence and competition.
 - Students will examine the increased economic interdependence in terms of globalization and its impact on the United States and New York State economy, including the workforce.
 - 8.8 Demographic Change
 - 8.8b. The postwar United States experienced increasing immigration, debates over immigration policy, and an increase in cultural diversity.
 - Students will examine migration and immigration trends in New York State and New York City such as the increase in Spanish-speaking, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and African populations and the contributions of these groups.
 - Students will examine the effects of immigration legislation and policy, including recent debates over immigration policy.

Resources/Materials

- The Legacy of the 1982 Rallies
- The Garment Industry After the Rally - Chart Analysis
- [Oral History with May Ying Chen on Decline of Garment Industry Clip 1](#)
- [Oral History with May Ying Chen on Decline of Garment Industry Clip 2](#)
- May Ying Chen on the Decline of the Garment Industry: Viewer Guide
- [Oral History with May Ying Chen on Decline of Garment Industry Clip 3](#)

Introduction to the Lesson/Motivate Students (3 minutes)

- Put the following prompt on the board:
 - “What is something you have done recently that you are proud of? Why do you feel proud? What is something that someone else has done that you think they should be proud of? Why?”
- Students should briefly note their answers to this prompt.
- Once most students have noted answers, prompt them to share their answers with at least three classmates.
- Ask a few classmates to share their answers with the whole group.

Group Work: Memories of the 1982 Rallies from Katie Quan (7 minutes)

- In the last lesson, we explored the 1982 garment worker rallies through a variety of primary sources. We also learned about the immediate results of the rallies. Today, we are going to consider some of the long term impacts of the rallies and the larger legacy of women garment workers in Chinatown.
- Read the following excerpt from garment worker and activist Katie Quan and answer the following questions in small groups or as a class. (*Optional: Have one student read the quote aloud.*)
 - “It was an exhilarating moment. Thousands upon thousands of Chinese immigrant women garment workers had come together to stand up for themselves. This was a day I had dreamed for, and this rally proved that it could be done. We showed that we could do it not just to union officials, but to our community, our families, and ourselves. I was extremely proud to be a New York Chinatown garment worker that day, and that pride not only justified the many years of sacrifice and difficulties while organizing, but also carried me through many later years as a garment worker advocate.”¹
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - What emotions do you think Quan was feeling when she said this? Cite specific words and phrases.
 - Katie Quan emphasized the success of the rallies was important because: “We showed that we could do it not just to union officials, but to our community, our families, and ourselves.” How might these groups (union officials, Chinese immigrant community and families, and Chinese garment workers themselves) have viewed Chinese garment workers before the rallies? How did their views change after the rallies?
 - What impact did the rallies have on Quan?

¹ Katie Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown,” *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009), https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2009/quant_amerasia09.pdf.

Model/Teach: The Legacy of the 1982 Rallies (10 minutes)

- **Transition:** Toward the end of this lesson, we'll learn about the eventual decline of Chinatown's garment industry. However, despite this, the garment industry's workers and their activism have left a lasting legacy on the community. For the next 15 minutes, we'll explore just a few of the accomplishments garment workers achieved and lasting impacts they made on their community.
- To do this, we're going to use a technique called the Pyramid Discussion.
- Hand out the **The Legacy of the 1982 Rallies** packet.
- **Pyramid Discussion Instructions:**
 - Ask students to pair up, responding to the discussion questions for *just one* of the topics (Child Care, Leadership, ILGWU Chorus & Social Events, or Activism & Civic Duty) with a single partner. After each partner has had a chance to share their ideas, ask the pair to join another pair who discussed a different topic, creating a group of four. Pairs share their ideas with the pair they just joined. Next, groups of four join together to form groups of eight, and so on, until the whole class is joined up in one large discussion.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - According to this source, what changed after the 1982 rallies?
 - What are some of the things Chinatown garment workers accomplished with the help of the union?
 - Does this source deepen your understanding of Chinatown garment workers? How so?
 - In your opinion, what is the legacy of Chinatown garment workers?

Model/Teach & Individual Work: The Garment Industry After the Rally (15 minutes)

- After the 1980s, there were many local and even global factors that changed Chinatown's garment industry.
- We're going to take a look at the garment industry through the lens of numbers to see if we can find any patterns. Specifically, we'll be focusing on the number of women in the ILGWU over time, as well as the number of Chinese women in the Chinatown's Local 23-25 branch over time.
- Hand out **The Garment Industry After the Rally - Chart Analysis**.
- Have students take a couple minutes to look at both charts. They can make notes in the margins and also write down any questions that come up at first glance.
- Students can work individually or in pairs to answer the chart analysis questions to unpack the trends they see and try to explain them historically. It's okay to take educated guesses!
- Go through students' findings as a class.

- Then recap by sharing the following:
 - In 1967, the ILGWU had a record-breaking 455,164 members. In contrast, by 1980, ILGWU membership dropped to 322,505 members and by 1984 to 247,570. By 1988, ILGWU membership plummeted to 165,710.
 - The chart shows that the highest membership count was in 1967 with 455,164 members, and it steadily declined over the years.
 - In contrast, from 1971 to 1995, Chinatown branch Local 23-25 was the biggest branch of the ILGWU in the entire country. In 1989, Local 23-25 had more than 22,000 members. By this point, union members were mostly immigrant women from China. Remember that the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act paved the way for increased immigration from countries around the world, including China.²
 - The chart shows a consistent growth in membership over the years, with significant jumps observed in certain years.
 - So while the ILGWU experienced a decline in membership from 1967 to 1992, the Local 23-25 Chinese membership showed a consistent and significant increase from 1959 to 1989. This meant that Chinese members were a bigger and bigger percentage of ILGWU union members over time. Their voices could not be ignored.
- Share with students that while the 1982 strike was successful and Chinatown garment workers overcame many feats, in the 1990s the whole garment industry started to suffer because of changes in United States law that allowed more clothing to be made in other countries and imported to the U.S. This meant that a lot of companies didn't want to pay as much money to have workers in the U.S. make clothes, when they could pay less money for workers in other countries to make clothes. Because of this, in the late 1990s a lot of garment factories started to have financial problems and shut down.
- Even worse, when the September 11th attacks happened, much of Chinatown was closed off due to its proximity to the World Trade Center. Workers couldn't get in, and clothing delivery trucks couldn't get in or out. The garment industry relied on quick production and quick turnarounds, which was not possible during this time. Many companies stopped using Chinatown garment factories completely because of this, so most of the factories didn't get any orders and had to shut down. It was a big shift from just 20 years before.³
- We're going to watch two short clips from a conversation with May Ying Chen, who we heard from in the last lesson.

² "ILGWU Timeline," Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University. <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/timeline/index.html>.

³ Shi Yun Chin, interview by Lan Trinh, May 24, 2004. Museum of Chinese in America, Ground One: Voices from Post-9/11 Chinatown. New York, NY. <https://911chinatown.mocanyc.org/oralhistory.html>.

- As a reminder, May Ying Chen is a labor organizer who has advocated for immigrant workers, including garment workers from the ILGWU Local 23-25, since the 1980s.
- Hand out **May Ying Chen on the Decline of the Garment Industry: Viewer Guide** for students to take notes as they watch.
- Play [Oral History with May Ying Chen on Decline of Garment Industry Clip 1](#) (2:31 min - 3:43 min).
 - What factors contributed to the decline of Manhattan Chinatown’s garment industry?
 - How did this impact employers and factory owners in Chinatown?
 - What happened to most of the Chinatown garment factories after 9/11?
- Play [Oral History with May Ying Chen on Decline of Garment Industry Clip 2](#) (7:00 min - 9:04 min).
 - What happened to most of the Chinatown garment factories after 9/11?
 - What happened to Chinese American women garment workers?
- Give students a few minutes to answer the viewer guide questions. Question by question, ask a few classmates to share their answers with the whole group.

Wrap Up: The Power of Workers (5 minutes)

- **Closing Thoughts:** We’ve spent all unit talking about Chinatown’s garment industry and the pivotal role of Chinese women garment workers in coming together to fight for change, even as the industry was in decline.
- We’re going to watch one last video clip of May Ying Chen, where she shares her thoughts on workers, not just garment workers, but all workers.
- Play [Oral History with May Ying Chen on Decline of Garment Industry Clip 3](#)
- **Transcript:**
 - “And so somebody who’s just an ordinary worker is viewed as being somehow, doesn’t have much to contribute. But what I learned working in the union and meeting so many workers in my work life was that really workers are the ones who make things happen. I mean oftentimes you have a very brilliant boss or inventor or something that invents something, but the one who actually puts it together and makes it into something that functions is the worker. And so I think it’s very important that that contribution is not ignored.”⁴
- After watching the clip, have students complete the following journaling prompt:
 - After working in the union, what did May learn about the role of workers in society? What do you think the role of workers in society is?
 - How is being an “ordinary worker” actually something that can be extraordinary?

⁴ May Ying Chen, “May Ying Chen Video Clip — The Decline of the Garment Industry & Job Training,” interview, Museum of Chinese in America, New York, video.

- How would you describe garment workers? Jot down three descriptive words.
- **Optional:** *Instead of journaling, students can jot down their thoughts to the three questions on three post-its, which they can leave on board or around the room. They can then walk around the room to read the thoughts of their fellow classmates on a gallery walk. Afterwards, the teacher can lead a short whole class reflection.*

Extension Activity

Group Work: We Can Do It Together! (20 minutes)

- Tell students that neighborhoods, groups of people, and industries often have different challenges at different times. The garment workers union was able to do a lot of great things for Chinatown garment workers in the 1980s, and we are going to be inspired by them to think about what challenges we face today and how we can work together to try to solve them!
- Have students start by brainstorming different problems that they see happening around them or to them. Students can write each problem on a post-it note. Encourage students to think broadly! These can be problems they have, their families have, other people have, the city has, whatever comes to mind.
- As students come up with problems, they should stick the post-it notes on the wall of the classroom.
- Divide students into small groups. Have students from each group take turns choosing post-its off the wall. Each group should have at least 3-4 different problem post-its to work with.
- Students should work in their small groups to come up with possible solutions for these problems. As they come up with solutions, they should create illustrations of the solutions with captions describing what can be done.

Hidden Voices Mini Unit
Worksheets and Resources

Behind the Seams: Garment Workers in 1980s Chinatown

Lesson 7 - The Legacy They Left

The Legacy of the 1982 Rallies

Child Care

Quote:

“The most obvious lesson [from the strike] was that Chinese immigrant women do fight, and their support for the union cannot be taken for granted. After the strike, Local 23-25’s leaders devoted significant resources to improving its relationship with the Chinese membership. Bilingual staff was hired... Communication methods were strengthened, with every meeting and piece of correspondence translated into Chinese and Spanish, and Chinese newspaper articles on labor translated into English daily... Services were greatly expanded, with more English classes, immigration paralegal work, and health services. An internationally-recognized model child care center for Chinatown members was set up a year later...”⁵

Photo:



Children at the Garment Industry Day Care Center of Chinatown, 1998.

Kheel Center, Cornell University.

Citation: Children at the Garment Industry Day Care Center of Chinatown, 1998, photograph, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Records, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Cornell University Library.

⁵ Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike,” 85-86.

Leadership

Quote:

“The 1982 strike was also transformative on a personal level for the women workers who became leaders in it. It had brought forward incredible women warriors like Shui Mak Ka and Alice Ip, firebrands whose speeches about worker justice would make any person quake in their shoes...If we ever had any doubts about ourselves as women, as fighters and as leaders, such stereotypes were now totally dispelled. Struggle had taught us that we were strong and capable, and that together we could do great things... Now the main challenge was to find a way to keep us together to build the voice of Chinese workers in the union.”⁶

Photo:



Speakers, including Shui Mak Ka at the ILGWU Chinatown Rally

Citation: “Speakers, including Shui Mak Ka at the ILGWU Chinatown Rally,” photograph, 1982, 6000/024 P, Box 5, Folder 1, International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union Photographs, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives, Cornell University Library, <https://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/photos/79.html>.

⁶ Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike,” 87.

ILGWU Chorus & Social Events

Quote:

“One way that the activists stayed together was through the Local 23-25 Chinese Chorus. The ILGWU Chorus was famous for singing the Union Labor Song (Look for the union label....) on TV commercials in the 1960s, and we sometimes sang with them, but the Chinese Chorus became the ambassador group for Local 23-25, singing labor songs like Which Side Are You On? And Solidarity Forever in Chinese at Labor Day parades and various conventions.”⁷

Photo:



Labor Day Parade, ca. 1989.

Left to right: Katie Quan, Wai Chun Ng, three children of members, Mei Yung Liew, Cindy Sai Leung, Yuk Ling Tang, Mary Chin, Yuk Lin Sun, Mei Yin Tsang, Lana Cheung, and Anna Ng.

Photograph by George Colon. Courtesy of George Colon and Kathy Andrade, LaborArts.

Citation: George Colon, *Labor Day Parade, ca. 1989*, photograph, courtesy of George Colon and Kathy Andrade, LaborArts, <https://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/social-unionism/immigrants/p16/>.

⁷ Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike,” 87.

Activism & Civic Duty

Quote:

“So to consolidate the leaders of the strike and develop them to new levels of leadership, we formed the Chinese Committee of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), which was modeled after the Hispanic Committee of CLUW. We started with around 400 members and quickly became a pipeline for union leadership. Women who had never before led organizations, and would not get a chance to practice leadership in a union that was already full of leaders-in-waiting, now learned how to set agendas and have meetings, organize programs, raise funds, and manage relations among members. We participated in general union and CLUW activities, but also carried out our own community activities, such as getting petitions signed against police brutality, testifying for low income housing, and sponsoring clothing drives. Many CLUW leaders became union staffers and members of the local union’s executive board. We called ourselves CLUW sisters, and we actually acted and felt like a sisterhood.”⁸

Photo:



Local 23-25 ILGWU members at a protest against racial discrimination in Chinatown, June 21, 1992.

*From the 1992 Campaign for Economic Justice at Foley Square.
Courtesy of Museum of Chinese in America.*

Citation: Museum of Chinese in America, *Local 23-25 ILGWU*, June 21, 1992, color photograph, 1992.005.272, Museum of Chinese in America Institutional Archives, New York,
<https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/photo/618A364F-5E67-4F31-B12A-493839371418>.

⁸ Quan, “Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike,” 88.

The Garment Industry After the Rally: Chart Analysis

**ILGWU Membership
by Year**

Year	ILGWU Membership
1967	455,164
1975	376,750
1978	348,380
1980	322,505
1982	282,559
1984	247,570
1986	196,445
1988	164,710
1990	145,506
1992	130,473

**ILGWU Local 23-25
Chinese Membership by Year**

Year	ILGWU Local 23-25 Chinese Membership
1959	900*
1968	1,500
1974	6,000
1989	almost 22,000**

* Membership only reflects Local 23 as Local 23-25 had not merged yet. The two branches merged at the end of 1963.

** Membership reflects the whole Local 23-25 branch, not just Chinese garment workers.

1. What do you notice about overall ILGWU membership numbers from 1967-1992? Can you spot a pattern or trend?
2. Based on your prior knowledge from this case study, make an educated guess — what factors contributed to this noticeable change in ILGWU membership over the years?

The Garment Industry After the Rally: Chart Analysis

3. What do you notice about the membership of Chinese workers in Local 23-25 from 1959-1989? Can you spot a pattern or trend?

4. Are there any years where there is a significant increase in membership? Based on your prior knowledge from this case study, make an educated guess — what factors contributed to this noticeable change in the number of Chinese workers in Local 23-25 over the years?

5. How do both of these charts together help us understand changes in the garment industry from the 1960s to the 1990s?

Sources:

- Bao, Xiaolan. Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948–92. University of Illinois Press, 2001. https://archive.org/details/holdingupmoretha00baox_0.
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May Ying Chen on the Decline of the Garment Industry: Viewer Guide

Clip 1 (2:31 min – 3:43 min)⁹

“Well, I mean, we did some different congressional hearings and studies and things like this. And some of the employers who came with us would say, ‘a pair of pants that they used to pay me five or six dollars for that one pair would now be paid three dollars or less.’ And then when you break that into the waistband, the zipper, you know some of the seams it’s just a few cents each. And you know, how many can a worker produce in one hour? It probably wasn’t even the minimum wage. But that’s not how these work sources are looking at it. They’re just saying, I can have these made in China for this much, so if you want to do them, you can do them...but you have to match the price. And it was really pretty hard. So by 9/11, a lot of the factories had really begun to go downhill. And still there were 10,000 to 15,000 workers left in Chinatown. Once the towers were hit, the whole downtown was in lockdown south of Houston Street. And so this whole area that had five or six hundred factories had to close.”

- What factors contributed to the decline of Manhattan Chinatown’s garment industry?
- How did this impact employers and factory owners in Chinatown?
- What happened to most of the Chinatown garment factories after 9/11?

⁹ Chen, “May Ying Chen Video Clip,” 2:31 – 3:43 min.

Clip 2 (7:00 min – 9:04 min)¹⁰

“And then we helped, and we worked together with a lot of welfare agencies to do job training. So people went to classes for home attendant, for food preparation—like making dumplings, making bread—jobs like that. And then after, I would say, three to six months, we had these big fights with the employers when some of them reopened their shops, a lot of the workers preferred to be in the job training classes—which they gave them a stipend—than go back to work. Many of them didn’t want to go back to the factory. I remember having meetings with the employer associations and they were screaming at me, and it’s like well, we try to talk to people, but the whole world had changed and so it just became really hard. It’s very tough because it really did end the garment industry...it’s our efforts to get relief for the industry from the 9/11 fund. The response was, your industry’s finished anyway, and it didn’t have anything to do with 9/11. You were already downhill, so we don’t want to spend our money saving an industry that’s going to go out anyway. And it was very hard to hear that, although there’s an element of truth to it. And even the Chinese representatives who worked on the 9/11 fund were just very emphatic and scolding about them. So then, to me, to help the workers, we did have to help them find other jobs, because even if they went back when their employer had a lot of work to do for a month or two, eventually the shop was going to close and they’d have to find something else. So it was a big displacement. And Chinatown today has changed as a result because these buildings all have boutique hotels and lofts...and things that replaced what used to be factories.”

- What happened to most of the Chinatown garment factories after 9/11?
- What happened to Chinese American women garment workers?

¹⁰ Chen, “May Ying Chen Video Clip,” 7:00 – 9:04.

Lesson Bibliography:

Bao, Xiaolan. *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948–92*. University of Illinois Press, 2001.

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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in United States History



Hidden Voices:
**Behind the Seams: Garment
Workers in 1980s Chinatown**
Mini Unit
Grades 7-8 | Social Studies