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Poetry of Defiance-From the Progressive Era to Today

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by Eun Jung Kim

Introduction

Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Trevyon Martin. These names have become both a rallying cry and a roll call for the public outcry over minorities dying at the hands of someone in authority. According to the F.B.I.'s account, numbers of death by police officers have increased only slightly.[1] But technologies like camera phones, social media, YouTube, and news media reporting have shed light on these tragedies more continuously to the general public. My students can't go a week without seeing something in their social media feed or local and national news about violence in their own community or violence towards minorities elsewhere. My students also saw the acquittal of police officers in these deaths as well as the subsequent protests and riots that occurred throughout the country. My students said they wished they could be at these protests to vent their frustration. But what will that accomplish? Dozens of people hurt or arrested for vandalism, millions of dollars in repairs and in some cases, death of innocent bystanders. As students of color, they feel the pains and injustices of what happened to these young men. But acting out rashly really doesn't solve any problem; it only perpetuates negative stereotypes of youths and minorities. In a time of such social and political disparity, it is important for my students to find a medium to express their emotions in a meaningful way. I want to give them hope that they, and their voice, matter and that one of the strongest weapons that they can use to combat injustice and inequality is education. And written work, specifically poetry, is one way for disenfranchised groups to gain credibility with a white audience and advance their agenda.

The Progressive Era isn't merely an event that happened in the past, but a contemporary topic. The goals set during the Progressive Era still apply today. Yes, racism and racial violence still exist. That doesn't mean that those who fought for equality in the 19th and 20th century failed. They succeeded in highlighting inequality and injustice despite all the insurmountable obstacles that these marginalized groups faced, and their poets often contributed to this success. The goals of the Progressive poets are nowhere near accomplished, but their fight continues on through contemporary artists. This unit deals with the contributions of African-Americans, women, and the urban poor in leading the fight for social and political equality and how their fight continues on today, influencing future generations, and hopefully my students.

This unit will cover the core curriculum areas of Social Studies, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. Students will be required to read literature, analyze primary sources, complete writing assignments, and create an original

poem. Throughout this unit, students will also be engaged in dialogue and discussion to help further develop their analytical skills. Their culminating assignment, besides the formal assessment, will involve the creation of an original poem responding to a current social or political issue.

Demographics

William C. Overfelt High School in San Jose, California has a very predominant Latino population with almost 80% of our students identifying as Hispanic/Latino. In addition, over 80% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The struggles of the disenfranchised during the 1900s closely mirrors the struggles of my students currently face. My students face significant economic and social hardships, which impact their day-to-day lives. We are currently living in a very Progressive time, yet my students feel that they have no voice in their own community and the world they live in. They feel disenfranchised and marginalized because they are minorities. By examining poets of the Progressive Era, students will understand the power of the written word and the lasting impact it can have, especially among contemporary artists. And they will understand also that the struggles expressed in these poems are not confined to just one Era, but persist through time. In addition, the music of the rappers and the hip-hop artists my students are so fond of listening to isn't just music critiquing their current society, it is a critique of hundreds of years of systematic oppression. The goal of this unit is to help my students develop their voice in a creative way so that they can become the instrument of change, protesting in a productive manner for their home, community, and our society. This statement of purpose cannot be overemphasized.

Course Level Question

To what extent did the United States realize the ideas and principles presented in its founding documents?

This is the overarching question that will serve as the foundation for my 11th grade U.S. History course. Every unit we cover will always tie back to this main course level question. So did the Progressive Era achieve the ideas and principles presented in the Nation's founding documents? The Declaration of Independence is one of America's most famous founding documents, and one of the most famous quotes from this document reads: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." If America claims to live up to its ideas, then why isn't everyone free and equal? Progressives worked to improve the lives of many ordinary citizens, but not all Americans were included in this group. Another tenet of the Progressives was that the government must be actively involved in these reforms. There was a demand by the people to hold government more accountable and to create a more democratic system. With the passage of the 17th amendment, the country was headed in that direction. Yet it falls short of upholding the principles presented in the Declaration of Independence.

This part of my course is divided into four sub-units, each having a focused question:

1. How and why did the Progressive reform movement emerge and how did it reshape American society

from 1890s to 1920s?

2. Who was involved in the Progressive Era and how did they contribute to American reforms?
3. What does it mean to be “Progressive” and was the Progressive Era really “Progressive”?
4. What issues might Progressives have been concerned about during the Progressive Era? Today?

These four focus questions will help guide the teaching and learning of this unit.

Content Objective

The goal of this unit will be to empower my 11th grade students to develop their voice through reading poetry by those that came before them. Through the stories of struggle, failure, and success, I hope to inspire my students to recognize their voice as a powerful tool for change. The students will read a variety of poems by marginalized groups and, through deep analysis of their works, be able to make connections between the Progressive Era and their own contemporary world. Upon completion of this unit, students will have a strong understanding of the problems that existed during the Progressive Era, and see how those problems continue to exist in present day. Students will also understand that there was no single Progressive movement, but rather a collection of stories and voices from many different groups that led to this movement.

Students will be able to gain an appreciation for poetry and understand that poetry reflects the social consciousness of a nation. They will be able to identify the central idea, tone, and purpose of a given poem. Students will investigate the goals and struggles of minority groups in America, namely African-Americans, women, and immigrants and make a connection by comparing and contrasting the works of the Progressive Era poets to that of contemporary artists. By the end of the unit, students will be able to express themselves by creating and reciting their own original poetry.

There are many striking parallels between our age and the Progressive Era. In both periods we have witnessed the rise of modern technologies that have changed the way we travel, communicate, produce, and do our everyday activities like cooking and washing. The Industrial Revolution ushered in a period of technological advancement that transformed the political, economical, and geographical structure of America. Technologies brought machines, factories, cities, and new modes of transportation but, with that, there also came the rise of big corporations and political machines which helped increase the government’s abuse of power. Similarly today, improvements in digital technology have brought devices like mobile devices and the rise of tech industries, the World Wide Web, and even exploration into deep space. In addition to the rise of the Internet, we see the rise of tech industries like Google and Facebook, which have [contributed to the] rise of the knowledge economy. Like today, the gap between the middle class and the wealthy was widening during that period. Also, like that period, monopolistic corporations are currently accumulating vast wealth. At the same time, like the Progressive Era, we see a rising educated middle class, which has become dissatisfied with the government and is demanding sweeping changes. In response to the industrial revolution, the 1890s to the 1920s was a period of widespread social and political reforms known as the Progressive Era. The Progressives were successful in reforming local and federal government, education, and major industries. The rise of labor unions helped establish safer working conditions. Activists like Horace Mann advocated for the need for primary education, which led to the construction of more public schools. Other reformers fought to eliminate the power of political machines, which were a product of the Industrial Revolution, during which authoritarian bosses influenced local elections through bribes. Although the Progressives championed the improvement of

the lives of many ordinary citizens, however, not all Americans were included in this group. African-Americans, women, immigrants and the urban poor did not share in the success of the time. Many leading Progressives held contradictory views. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, is a bit of a contradiction, as he had a reputation for being a Progressive president and pursued a Progressive agenda, yet when it came to helping advance the agendas of African-Americans, he was hesitant. His promotion of art cannot be understated, but in that too there is a contradiction. Roosevelt believed literature played an important role in the progress of American culture and took active steps to promote poetry and poets when he could, yet he never promoted colored poets.[2] Labor Union leader Samuel Gompers saw African-Americans, immigrants, and women as competition for jobs and barred their admission into labor unions. As a result, black communities, as well as other minority groups, had to fight for a share of the federal and state budgets and develop their own reform projects such as artistic endeavors. Marginalized groups speaking out against the status quo have had a long-lasting impact by approaching these problems in a creative way.

To supplement their understanding of this Era, students will also look at selected readings from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*, originally written during the industrial revolution. *Song of Myself* illustrates the tensions that existed during Whitman's time and exposes the hypocrisies of American democracy and supposed equality, seeking to shape public opinion.[3] Langston Hughes wrote in 1946 that Whitman's poem promoted racial equality because it appealed to all genders, races, creeds, and socio-economic groups.[4] Through Whitman's poem, students will gain an understanding that even during a time of progress for whites, a fight for civil rights raged on for disenfranchised groups. It was Whitman, a white man, who recognized this inequality in his society and exposed it through his poem, which went on to influence President Theodore Roosevelt.

This unit will look at the struggles of these disenfranchised groups through selected works of Progressive Era poets. Through these works, students will gain an understanding of the struggle the marginalized faced and learn that, despite the existence of systematic oppression and discrimination, many found a way to express their disillusionment with and protest the status quo, and still be hopeful of making a meaningful change.

My major tool for teaching comes from the district issued textbook. And textbooks are typically "white-washed"--depicting history from the white perspective. They tend to leave out the voices of people of color. This is unfortunate for students of color because it minimizes their roles in history. This is where I would bring in poetry to supplement the history of any Era. Before I came to Yale, I must confess, poetry scared me. There is so much imagery, so many metaphors, allegories, rules, and structures that I don't get. Even after delving deeper into poetry, I have to admit, it still scares me, but I have a much more profound respect for it.

As a history major, I am aware of how instrumental poetry has been in the storytelling of our nation. Poetry is an important medium for many disenfranchised groups, especially African-Americans. Poetry is an ancient art form--one that preceded lit[e]racy. Poetry was often sung by slaves as a way to retain their history, pass the time while working in the field, and to relay secret messages of hope and escape. As students read the poems of the Progressive Era, I want them to be able to place the context of the poem in its historical time. As a counterpoint, unbeknownst to them, students will also be given lyrics from a contemporary song to compare and contrast with the Progressive poems. Students will have to analyze how a contemporary lyric fits into the context of the Progressive Era and vice versa.

To my students, history is something that happened in the past, and should stay in the past. They see no relevance or value in learning about history. It is merely a course needed to graduate. So when I tell the students we are going to analyze some poetry from the past, I am anticipating the sounds of groans, sighs,

heads banging on their desk, and maybe the occasional “this isn’t English class!” These same students who will claim to hate poetry are avid music listeners. What many of them don’t realize is that most [vocal] music is simply poetry with a tune. I believe that understanding this connection between music and poetry will increase student engagement and interest, while making history more fun and memorable for them. This unit will tap into students’ love of music not only to make poetry accessible, but also to teach them about the Progressive Era through poetry.

The main component of this unit will have students analyze an excerpt from a poem from the Progressive Era juxtaposed with an excerpt of some lyrics from contemporary artists. As my students typically enter my class at a fourth or fifth grade reading level, I need to keep the length of the [excerpt] short and manageable so as not to overwhelm them. I will be pulling out only three to six lines from each piece, but may use the full text of the poem and lyrics based on individual class needs and skills. During this activity, students will not be given the title, author, or any historical context of the written words. This will allow students to focus on the written words only. Because I temporarily conceal the names of the authors of the two pieces, students will not be able to apply their own preconceptions, especially in the case of Kendrick Lamar. They will analyze the two pieces to compare and contrast what each is telling us about the historical context of its time as well as drive home the points that what happens in the past is relevant to today, and contemporary events are effects of the past. The introduction of poetry will be presented in three groups: African-Americans, Women, and the Urban Poor/Immigrants.

Part I: Poems about African-Americans

During the Progressive Era, progress for many African Americans was elusive at best. White Progressives generally overlooked the African American community. While new schools and houses were being built for some, African Americans were not even able to live in the same neighborhoods as the whites because of their skin color. Post-Reconstruction Era Jim Crow laws particularly affected ways of life, especially in the South. The 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized segregation in all public spaces. African Americans were excluded from voting through various means such as grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and poll taxes. In addition to this institutionalized discrimination, African Americans had to deal with violent acts such as lynching. With racial tensions swelling in the South, many moved to the North to seek better economic opportunities. But making this move brought a new set of difficulties. Many Northern whites perceived their arrival as a threat to job security and worked to bar African-Americans from joining labor unions. Because of this, African-American workers were not protected from abusive labor practices. In response to the rise of intense racism and discrimination, African American reformers emerged to fight for equal rights. Many African Americans took to various means of protest, publishing articles to increase awareness of the horrific acts of lynching and to gain political momentum to pass an anti-lynching law. One of the mediums used to express their disillusionment and anger, and to expose the wrongdoings against African Americans, was poetry.

I decided to use an excerpt of a piece by Paul Laurence Dunbar, who was among the first African-American poets to gain international fame during the Progressive Era. Paul Laurence Dunbar’s “The Haunted Oak” was written and published in 1900 and was inspired by the lynching that occurred against blacks during a time of high racial tension. Depending on the course and the skill level of students, the entirety of the poem can be used. But for the purpose of this unit, I will introduce the first four lines of “The Haunted Oak”:

I feel the rope against my bark

And the weight of him in my grain,

I feel in the throes of my final woe

The touch of my own last pain

The poem tells the story of a young boy in Alabama who was falsely accused of rape and the bloodthirsty mob which drags him out of jail to hang him from an oak tree. The poem is told from the point of view of the oak tree that feels the suffering of the man being victimized. It is a poem of protest and outrage that cries out against the unjust practice of lynching.

Students will be given another excerpt of a “poem” to analyze in conjunction with the Dunbar poem. This time, students will be given the lyrics of Kendrick Lamar’s “The Blacker the Berry.” However, they will not experience these lyrics in the usual context of a song set to instrumentation. The lyrics will not be set in sequential order, but rather, certain lines will be pulled from different parts. For these reasons, students will likely assume it’s “another poem.”

And man a say they put me in chain, cah we black

How you no see the whip, left scars pon’ me back

All them say we doomed from the start, cah’ we black.

My students listen to music by Kendrick Lamar, but I wonder how many truly realize the meaning behind the lyrics. They know there is anger behind the lyrics, and find that appealing. When Kendrick Lamar wrote “The Blacker the Berry” in 2015, he was grieving over the death of Trayvon Martin, and he is internalizing the negative effects of stereotyping blacks. (Using the entirety of the song is not recommended for this lesson, as the lyrics contain explicit language.) In an interview shortly after the release of “The Blacker the Berry,” Kendrick Lamar stated, “There are issues that if you come from that environment it’s inevitable to speak on...I am Trayvon Martin, you know?”[5] There are a lot of similarities between Lamar’s “Blacker the Berry” and Dunbar’s “Haunted Oak”. Both pieces respond to the unjustified murder of a young boy—in Dunbar’s case, a young black boy accused of rape, and in Lamar’s case, the death of a young black boy accused of robbing a store, and looking suspicious.

Part II: Poems about Women

Women had been actively fighting for suffrage for over fifty years before the passage of the nineteenth amendment. Since the early 19th century, women had led grass-root efforts advocating for social reforms such as Prohibition, an early abolition movement, women’s suffrage, child-labor laws, and public health reforms. It wasn’t until they proved their economic worth in support of World War I that the government finally granted women the right to vote, with the passage of the nineteenth amendment. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 produced the Declaration of Sentiment, which advocated for the inclusion of women, urging custodians of the Declaration of Independence to change the famous line to “All men and women are created equal.” It is sadly ironic that women were among the first to initiate reform movements in America, yet they were among the last to see their efforts bear fruit. Women were excluded from the public sphere, such as participating in politics, taking control of their own finances, or receiving education equal to that of the men. Women’s confinement to fashion, etiquette, and arranging social events indicated the restrictive nature of the female world. Because of their exclusion from the public sphere, they used literature to protest for their rights.

Through fiction and poetry, they began to become more vocal and challenge the patriarchal society in America.

In this category, we will examine the work of Alice Dunbar Nelson, who was one of a few prominent African-American female poets, and also a journalist and political activist of the Progressive Era. "I Sit and Sew" was written to protest the submissive role that women were forced into. The act of sewing is considered a domestic task reserved for women. It also symbolizes the delicate and fragile nature of women, who modestly remain on the outskirts of society. In the midst of World War I, Alice Dunbar Nelson was expressing her desire to join the men and take up arms for her country, but alas, society had dictated that she must metaphorically sit and sew and wait for the men.

I sit and sew—a useless task it seems,
My hands grown tired, my head weighed down with dreams—
The panoply of war, the martial tread of men,
Grim-faced, stern-eyed, gazing beyond the ken
Of lesser souls, whose eyes have not seen Death
Nor learned to hold their lives but as a breath—
But—I must sit and sew.

In comparison, Lily Allen wrote the song "The Fear" in 2009, criticizing the materialistic behavior of women. She was inspired to write this music when she saw a little girl about eight or nine years old wearing a crop top and hot pants. She is criticizing the females who buy into this unrealistic expectation that they need to own and conform to the latest fashion.[6] This music isn't simply about materialism, but the pressure to conform to society's expectation of women. Like Alice Dunbar Nelson, Lily Allen is trying to protest stereotypical images of women.

I am a weapon of massive consumption
And it's not my fault it's how I'm programmed to function
I don't know what's right and what's real anymore
I don't know how I'm meant to feel anymore

Both artists are frustrated with the patriarchal society they live in. Alice Dunbar Nelson is frustrated with the strict societal role that confines women to domestic tasks. Lily Allen is frustrated with labels being placed on women as merely consumers of fads. Both point to the typecasting of women's roles in society. Over a hundred years separate today from the Progressive Era. Much has been accomplished since the Women's Suffrage Movement of the early 20th century, yet women still only earn 83% of what men earn.[7]6 There is still a disproportionate number of males in high-level corporate and political positions, compared to females.

The objectification of women continues in the media. And in certain parts of the world, women still live in a very patriarchal society where they have no legal rights. But through the works of Alice Dunbar and Lily Allen, women are making headway in acknowledging gender equality issues.

Part III: Urban Poor

The American Industrial Revolution created an appealing pull factor for many immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Latin America. From 1850 to 1930, the foreign-born population of the United States increased from 2.2 million to 14.2 million.[8] As a result of this large-scale immigration, nativist sentiment arose among native-born Americans who feared competition for factory jobs, as well as the watering down of cultural values. In the Eastern United States, Nativists were primarily fearful of Eastern European immigrants who were Catholics, and might reject the American ideal of republicanism since their loyalty would be to the Pope. Meanwhile, in the Western United States, Nativists feared mostly Asian immigrants, who became competition for jobs in the railroad and agricultural industries. As part of the Progressive reform, Nativists successfully passed laws prohibiting immigration, primarily from Asia. The Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentlemen's Agreement helped to curtail immigration from Asia. In a Progressive time when Labor Unions were successful in fighting for better wages, reasonable hours, and safer working conditions, many immigrant groups were barred from joining these unions. The immigrant population remained one of the poorest groups in America as they lacked access to social and political agencies, and, like African-Americans, were barred from joining Labor Unions and their children prevented from attending public schools with the whites. Because of their dire economic circumstances, immigrant children worked alongside their parents instead of attending school, which was a continuation of conditions in the Industrial Revolution. Because of these factors, the immigrant population was defined as the urban poor. For this unit, finding poems that truly illustrated the voice of the poor and the immigrants was extremely difficult because most working poor were illiterate. While the African-American community was able to organize and had the resources to get their works published, immigrant communities were not unified. Edwin Markham is the closest to representing the voice of the working class because he himself was a farmer who was affected by the Industrial Revolution. At the time, he was called "the first real poet of Labor." Markham's "The Man with the Hoe," published in 1899, glorifies the contribution of the farmers, the backbone of America. He is protesting the changing nature of labor in rural and urban areas as a result of the technological revolution and the abusive working conditions of the industrial Era.

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans

Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,

The emptiness of ages in his face,

And on his back the burden of the world.

The painting by French artist Jean-Francois Millet, also titled *The Man with the Hoe* (1862), inspired Markham's poem. It is a protest poem against the abusive working conditions and labor struggle of the Era. "The Man with a Hoe" was written in response to the various labor movements of the 19th and early 20th century, most notably the coal and railroad strikes of the 1860s-1890s, the Haymarket massacre of 1886, and the Steelworkers strike in the 1890s.[9] He wanted the poem to be "a poem of hope. A cry for justice." In an unconventional comparison, Dolly Parton's 1980's single "9 to 5" became somewhat of an anthem for office workers in America. Even though the song was a feminist song aimed at bringing about equality of women in

the workplace, it is also applicable to the working poor who work every day hoping to move up in the world, but are constantly kept down by the bosses. During the late 20th and early 21st century, the income gap between the wealthy and the middle class has only widened further. Income hasn't grown at the same rate as living conditions. Just as in the late 19th century, many professions struggle to make ends meet.

Barely getting' by, it's all takin' and no givin'

Want to move ahead but the boss won't seem to let me

They let you dream just to watch 'em shatter

You're just a step on the boss-man's ladder

Poverty affects particularly people of color and other minority groups. That was true during the Progressive Era, and it is true in today. During the Progressive Era, the plight of the urban poor and immigrants often went unnoticed and as a result got left out in the agendas of the Progressives. There were a few community-wide efforts to help, such as establishing Hull Houses to help acclimate Immigrants to America and providing resources, yet such efforts failed to end poverty. Labor Unions were more successful in bargaining for skilled laborers. With the large influx of immigration, unskilled laborers were at risk of being replaced if they were part of a union.

Strategies

H.I.P.P.O

In addition to utilizing the word association strategy to help understand the meaning of the poems and lyrics, they will also analyze the primary sources. My students begin engaging with a variety of primary and secondary sources from the very first day of school. They will be familiar with the H.I.P.P.O. model. This is used primarily for analyzing primary and secondary sources. Poetry and musical lyrics are no different.

H - What is the Historical Context of the time when this source was written?

I - Who is the Intended Audience?

P - What is the Purpose of this source?

P - What is the author's Point of View?

O - What Other Outside information is needed?

Students will be given worksheets for each of the three pairs of poetic texts as illustrated in appendix A. The two pieces will be placed side by side and students will have to H.I.P.P.O the two poems. They will then have a space to compare and contrast the two pieces through pair-share.

Class Discussion

When we finish discussing each pair of poems, I will reveal to the students who the artists are—one will represent a marginalized group from the Progressive Era and the other one will be a contemporary artist my students are familiar with. I want my students to then examine both pieces and find out how both pieces fit in the context of the Progressive Era. Students will cite specific evidence from the two poems that highlights the plight of the specific marginalized groups (African-Americans, Women, and Urban poor) in their respective Eras. Through this inquiry process, students will gain a foundation for developing skills to evaluate and interpret primary sources that will help them become better critical thinkers. By comparing voices from two different Eras, students will see that issues of the Progressive Era are still prevalent today, and that the struggles of the disenfranchised have existed throughout our history. In a world where they feel they have no voice, I want the students to see the power of the written word. Some of the most powerful and successful protests throughout history have been non-violent marches and demonstration, such as Gandhi's Salt March and Martin Luther King Jr.'s peaceful demonstrations throughout the South. Both were mesmerizing speakers who used words to enact reforms. Gandhi's reputation as an inspirational speaker is exemplified in his famous "Quit India" speech. Through his soft-spoken voice, his sincerity was felt by an entire nation. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous 'I have a dream' speech is made that much more powerful because of its poetic and rhythmic repetitions. His repetition of 'We can not be satisfied,' and "Let freedom ring,' and 'I have a dream' helps to rally the crowd and unify the people to build a social and political movement. By the end of this unit, my hope is that students will be exposed to poetry from marginalized groups that express social and political criticism of their times. Through the voice of the marginalized, I hope my students find connections with these figures. Through the comparison of the poems of the Progressive Era to popular contemporary artists my students listen to and admire, there will be a "buy in" to this unit. Moreover, I hope that in our study of the Progressive Era and protest poems, students will find personal significance in the texts and feel empowered to develop their own voices, and to become agents of change for good.

Classroom Activities

This curriculum unit will be used in my 11th grade United States History course. Depending on the skill level of students, it may span four to five weeks in the first semester.

Week One and Two: To introduce the unit, I will show my students a short video clip of a modern day meat packing industry. The video will highlight the cruel and inhumane treatments of animals in the meat packing industry. I will follow up this video with a series of questions: How did you feel about watching how these animals were treated? Did your taste and attitude towards meat change as a result of the video? Do you think it is okay for these industries to continue treating animals this way?[10] After this attention grabber to start this unit,

I will start with a review of the Industrial Revolution to recap the problems that arose out of this era, to be learned through note taking. Students will read an excerpt from *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, exposing the working conditions of the factory workers and the unsanitary conditions of the meatpacking industry. His book led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act as a result of public outrage that factories were abusing the capitalist system. *The Jungle* is an example of the powerful impact the written word can have on a nation. As students read *The Jungle*, they will answer guided questions and discuss the answers as a class. Teacher will lead class discussion on how students felt about the passage and if they lived in late 19th century America and read *The Jungle*, how they would react. Students will also look at images by Jacob Riis and see the growing problems of immigration, urbanization, and tenement living. These powerful photographs depict the condition

of tenements, child laborers, and the poverty-stricken cities; they led many people to demand that their government do something to improve these situations, which led to the Progressive Era. Over the next few days, students will then be guided into a graphic organizer detailing Theodore Roosevelt and the reforms he enacted on a federal level, with their impact on the state level. As students become more familiar with the reforms enacted during the Progressive Era, I will then lead the discussion about who was unable to benefit from these reforms. Through teacher-guided, student-generated discussions, they will reach the conclusion that the Progressive Era reforms did not benefit the African-Americans, women, and the urban poor. In the end, students will have a general overview of the Progressive Era as a reference point for the rest of the unit.

Week Three: Students will begin reading poetry of the Progressive Era. It will provide students with a perspective on the Progressive Era from the views of disenfranchised groups. In conjunction, students will also compare the poems of the Progressive Era to contemporary music to illustrate that issues of that era are still prevalent in today's society. Students will annotate the poems and songs as well as analyze the primary sources using the H.I.P.P.O method. We will examine the messages the authors are conveying to their audiences.

Week Four (and, if needed, Week Five): In their culminating activity, students will apply what they have learned by creating their own original poetry. Students will work on writing a poem that highlights a social injustice in their world, whether it is within their own immediate surroundings, or globally. Students will have the option of adding a music component to their poetry. The completed project will be printed, bound, and made into a book of poetry by my students. The instructional worksheet and rubric for this project is described in appendix B. This is a new endeavor for my school, and every year poems from future students will be added on. The volume will become a collected works of student voices. The greatest importance of the collected poetry in this book is the evidence it will give that students have an understanding of the historical contexts and significance of those artists who came before them. This project is intended for students to find power in the written word.

Word Association

After students have a basic understanding of the Progressive Era, the next phase of the unit will be devoted to examining protest poetry of the Progressive Era and comparing it to contemporary music. Because the language of poetry will be fairly new to my students, we will read the first excerpted poems, Paul Dunbar's "The Haunted Oak", together as a class. We will look at particular words and use word association to guess what the writer might mean. I will model how to annotate using word association with the first piece of poetry they will encounter in this unit. When we look at the first line of Paul Dunbar's "The Haunted Oak"--

I feel the rope against my bark

--I would have students circle the word bark and try to come up with associated words. When I think of the word 'bark', I think of tree. Knowing that we are studying the Progressive Era, where might I see a rope hanging on "bark"? That would bring me to an association with tree. They would have seen Thomas Nast's cartoon of African-Americans being hanged from a tree as prior knowledge to help reach this answer. Following the Gradual Release of Responsibility model, I do, we do, and you do, I would model the practice of word association with the first set of poems, then we would do the second set of poems together as a class, and then I would have the students do the word association on their own for the third set of poems.

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Notes

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2. Ferlazzo 47
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8. Historical Census Statistics compiled by Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon. US Bureau of the Census February 1999
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9. Reprinted from Cary Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*. Copyright 2001 by Routledge.
10. Ethical Choices Program-nonprofit organization that provide educators with resources to encourage students to make ethical food choices. Video of modern day animal meat-packing industry is provided through their online presentation.
ethicalchoiceprogram.org

Appendix A

Piece 1

I felt the rope against my bark,
And the weight of him in my grain,
I feel in the throe of his final woe
The touch of my own last pain.

Piece 2

And man a say they put me in chain, cah' we black
How you no see the whip, left scars pon' me back
All them say we doomed from the start, cah' we black

Piece 1 Piece 2

H
I
P
P
O

What are some similarities and/or differences [between these] pieces?

Appendix B: Standards Implemented with this Unit

California State Standards in Social Studies

11.2.1. Know the effects of industrialization on living and working conditions, including the portrayal of working conditions and food safety in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*.

11.2.4 Analyze the effect of urban political machines and responses to them by immigrants and middle-class reformers.

11.2.8 Examine the effect of political programs and activities of populists

11.2.9 Understand the effect of political programs and activities of the Progressives (e.g., federal regulation of railroad transport, Children's Bureau, the Sixteenth Amendment, Theodore Roosevelt, Hiram Johnson).

11.3.5 Describe the Harlem Renaissance and new trends in literature, music, and art, with special attention to work of writers.

Common Core RL.11-12.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text,

including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

Common Core RL.11-12.7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem; how each version interprets the source text. Students will focus on poems that deal with historical events or trends.

Common Core W.11-12.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Common Core W.11-12.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. Students will perform historical research correlative to the poems covered and make inferences about the connection between the two.

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