



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 5, WEBISODE 10

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

The muckrakers had a good friend in Sam McClure. He founded *McClure's Magazine*, which set a new standard for activist journalism and created a new field, investigative journalism. Most important, he hired the best writers he could find: Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Jack London, Booth Tarkington, Rudyard Kipling, Stephen Crane, and Willa Cather.

Ida Tarbell broke new ground not only in showing what a woman could do in a traditionally male occupation but also in setting a standard for scholarship, fairness, and integrity in the new field of investigative journalism. Her painstakingly researched *The History of the Standard Oil Company* detailed the illegal tactics used by John D. Rockefeller and led to the 1911 Supreme Court decision to break up the Standard Oil trust.

Another female muckraker, Elizabeth Jane Cochrane, got her first job at a newspaper at age nineteen; by twenty-five, she was the most famous woman in the world, known as the daring round-the-world reporter Nellie Bly.

Editor Sam McClure and energetic journalists exercised their First Amendment right and used the pen to expose the excesses of the Gilded Age. They gave birth to the field of investigative journalism.

Teacher Directions

1. Ask students to predict.
 - From what you know about the last half of the nineteenth century, what problems might newspaper writers expose?
2. Allow time for student response.
3. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the question.

In the Gilded Age, industry boomed and large corporations grew. Unfortunately, the wealth went to the few businessmen at the top. The laborers, often immigrants, women, and children, worked and lived in terrible conditions from which they could not escape. The government did not regulate business practices, or health care, or child labor, or the quality of products sold to the public. It was an “anything goes” society, and unscrupulous people took advantage of the freedom to make fortunes.



Let's Discuss



History Sleuth

Teacher Directions

1. Share the following information about two muckrakers who published in *McClure's Magazine*.

Muckraker, Elizabeth Jane Cochrane, got her first job at a newspaper at age nineteen. By age twenty-five, she was the most famous woman in the world, known as the daring round-the-world reporter Nellie Bly. Bly made a name for herself in a time when the few women hired by newspapers wrote only the home-and-hearth pages. The fearless Bly went undercover: as a domestic employee, a chorus girl, an unwed mother, and in one of her most famous guises, as a madwoman. Her series of articles "Inside the Madhouse" earned national acclaim and led to much-needed reforms at the Blackwell's Island asylum. She circled the world and broke the "record" of eighty days set by Jules Verne's fictional Phineas T. Fogg, becoming an international celebrity and a symbol of American derring-do.

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* is one of the most famous examples of muckraking journalism. Like other muckraking journalists, Sinclair exhaustively researched his topic. He described a bleak worker's underworld of unbridled capitalism and survival of the fittest where workingmen and women were pitted against each other in a frantic effort to survive. Sinclair's nauseating portrayal of the filth and corruption of the meatpacking industry hit America in the stomach, and the public outcry led to greater federal meat inspection and regulation.

2. Distribute the Student Sheets: *Classic Muck: Excerpts from The Jungle and "Inside the Madhouse."* Tell the students that they will read with a partner some muckraking journalism from these two authors.
3. Allow time for students to read and discuss the excerpts.

Teacher Directions

1. Edmund Burke, a British novelist and politician, said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." Students discuss with teammates what this statement means and come up with specific examples of pens (authors) that changed the world. (Examples: Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*; Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*; Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Thomas Nast's editorial cartoons; Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*.)
2. Students share mighty pens with the class.



What do you Think?



Moving Toward Freedom

Teacher Directions

1. Tell students that Samuel McClure did some things that were new and different. He formed a syndicate. A syndicate sells articles to many publications to be printed at the same time. He also hired writers to do investigative journalism, and he gave them the time and the money to do an accurate and complete job.
2. Ask the students.
 - How would a syndicate benefit both a writer and a newspaper? (A syndicate gives a writer a much larger audience for his/her articles and an opportunity to earn more money for each piece. It benefits newspapers by making available materials from talented writers whom they may not have the funds to hire.)
 - How did Sam McClure's policy towards writers benefit them? (His willingness to give them the time and the money to do accurate and complete work was unusual in the newspaper business in which deadlines caused a constant rush.)
 - What did Sam McClure and his writers have in common? (They all believed in the power of the pen to make changes. They were all hard workers, committed to the truth, and willing to take risks to improve society.)
 - How did Sam McClure and the muckrakers move the country toward freedom? (They informed the public and brought about changes for the better.)
3. Students design a postage stamp commemorating the life of Sam McClure, Ida Tarbell, or one of the other muckrakers they have studied about.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Library/Research — Students visit the Food and Drug Administration Kid's page @ <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/kids/default.htm>. This government agency safeguards the public against the conditions that Sinclair Lewis exposed in *The Jungle*.

Math — Students solve problems based on the concept of newspaper syndication. For example: If a writer is paid \$50 for an article that appears in 50 newspapers, how much will he or she earn? If a daily comic strip is carried in 300 papers, and the cartoonist earns one dollar per day for each newspaper, how much does he earn daily? Weekly? Monthly? Yearly?



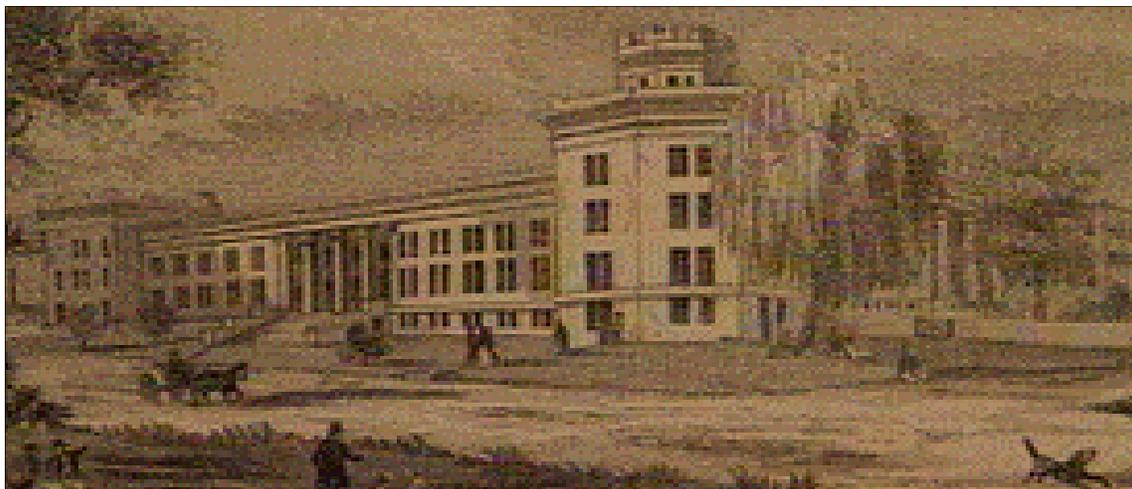
Connections

Classic Muck: Excerpts from “Inside the Madhouse” by Nellie Bly

Locked in for life: *"...As the wagon was rapidly driven through the beautiful lawns up to the asylum, my feelings of satisfaction at having attained the object of my work were greatly dampened by the look of distress on the faces of my companions. Poor women, they had no hopes of a speedy delivery. They were being driven to a prison, through no fault of their own, in all probability for life..."*

A sham exam: *"...Then he [the doctor, who spent about one minute "examining" Nellie] wrote my fate in the book before him. I said, 'I am not sick and I do not want to stay here. No one has the right to shut me up in this manner.' He took no notice of my remarks, and having completed his writings, as well as his talk with the nurse for the moment, he said that would do, and with my companions, I went back to the sitting room."*

At mealtime: *"The table reached the length of the room and was uncovered and uninviting. Long benches without backs were put for the patients to sit on, and over these they had to crawl in order to face the table. Placed close together all along the table were large dressing-bowls fixed with a pinkish looking stuff which the patients called tea. By each bowl was laid a piece of bread, cut thick and buttered. A small saucer containing five prunes accompanied the bread. (One fat patient grabs and gobbles up several other bowls. This distracts Nellie, and another woman grabs her slice of bread.)"*



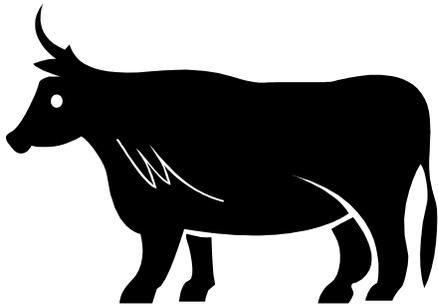


Another patient, seeing this, kindly offered me hers, but I declined with thanks and turned to the nurse and asked for more. As she flung a thick piece down on the table she made some remark about the fact that if I forgot where my home was I had not forgotten how to eat. I tried the bread, but the butter was so horrible that I could not eat it."

Mad forever? "...I always made a point of telling the doctors I was sane, and asking to be released, but the more I endeavored to assure them of my sanity, the more they doubted it. 'What are you doctors here for?' I asked one, whose name I cannot recall. 'To take care of the patients and test their sanity,' he replied. 'Very well,' I said. 'There are sixteen doctors on this island, and, excepting two, I have never seen them pay any attention to the patients. How can a doctor judge a woman's sanity by merely bidding her good morning and refusing to hear her pleas for release? Even the sick ones know it is useless to say anything, for the answer will be that it is their imagination.' 'Try every test on me,' I have urged others, 'and tell me am I sane or insane? Try my pulse, my heart, my eyes; ask me to stretch out my arm, to work my fingers, as Dr. Field did at Bellevue, and then tell me if I am sane.' They would not heed me, for they thought I raved."



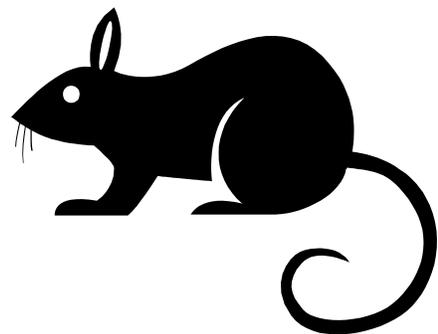
Classic Muck: Excerpts from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

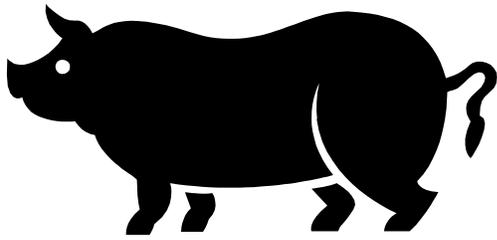


...It was only when the whole ham was spoiled that it came into the department of Elzbieta. Cut up by the two-thousand-revolutions-a-minute flyers [knives], and mixed with half a ton of other meat, no odor that ever was in a ham could make any difference. There was never the least attention paid to what was cut

up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white—it would be dosed with borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then the rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit.

There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be





dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water—and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast.

...Later came midsummer, with the stifling heat, when the dingy killing beds of Durham's became a very purgatory; one time, in a single day, three men fell dead from sunstroke. All day long the rivers of hot blood poured forth, until, with the sun beating down, and the air motionless, the stench was enough to knock a man over; all the old smells of a generation would be drawn out by this heat - for there was never any washing of the walls and rafters and pillars, and they were caked with the filth of a lifetime. The men who worked on the killing beds would come to reek with foulness, so that you could smell one of them feet away; there was simply no such thing as keeping decent, the most careful man gave it up in the end, and wallowed in uncleanness. There was not even a place where a man could wash his hands, and the men ate as much raw blood as food at dinnertime. When they were at work they could not even wipe off their faces - they were as helpless as newly born babes in that respect; and it may seem like a small matter, but when the sweat began to run down their necks and tickle them, or a fly to bother them, it was a torture like being burned alive. Whether it was responsible, one could not say, but with the hot weather there descended upon Packingtown a veritable Egyptian plague of flies; there could be no describing this - the houses would be black with them.

