

Turn of the 20th Century Labor Simulation

Christopher Martell, Ed.D.

This simulation is meant to help students experience the social and political system that immigrants faced around the turn of the 20th century. It was created by myself and former colleagues at Framingham High in Framingham, Massachusetts.

DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHER:

1. Have Students go into the hallway, except for political boss, political boss' assistant, industrial factory owner, factory owner's assistant, union organizer.
2. Brief the political boss, boss assistant, factory owner, factory owner's assistant, and union organizer. See brief cards below.
3. Let the rest of the students in. Greet them and welcome them to the United States.
4. Have Students start work by drawing shirts on pieces of scrap paper (consider having two shifts of 5 minutes each). Factory owner will pay them with money (historically accurate money below).
5. Some students will get fired (because of the factory owner's card)
6. Have Political Boss "take care" of those students (Political boss will also have some money to support immigrants)
7. Union organizer will follow her or his instructions. They will attempt to organize a union and you should encourage them to get the workers to go on strike. See if the union organizer is able to create a union and make demands to the boss after there is a strike.
8. After the strike, hold a citywide election, political boss vs. factory owner
9. Political Boss will most likely win, be he or she can supply new immigrants with access to the system
10. Debrief

ROLES

Political Boss

Political Boss' Assistant

Industrial Factory Owner

Factory Owner's Assistant

Union Organizer

Immigrant Factory Workers

Immigration Simulation (IMMIGRANT)

Congratulations! You are the **New Immigrant in the US.**

Your responsibilities:

- Find a job at the local factory and work hard making shirts
- DO NOT GET FIRED
- Make money to eat and live somewhere
- Vote in the election for city council (perhaps two or three times if you are paid by the political boss)

Like a Horatio Alger book, your hard work should make you a boss someday too... Or maybe not?

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Immigration Simulation (POLITICAL BOSS)

Congratulations! You are the **Political Boss**.

Your responsibilities:

- Greet Immigrants as they come in and introduce yourself as the Boss
- Let them know if they need anything they can come see you
- Let people who are fired from the factory come work for you
- Give you assistant \$\$\$ to give to people so they vote for you when you have an election
- Sit in the front of the class and BE RICH!!

You will have a Political Boss assistant

Her or his responsibilities:

- Greet Immigrants
- Let them know if they need anything they can come see you
- Give them money to vote for your boss
- Make sure your boss wins the election at all cost (even if you have to make extra ballots)

Immigration Simulation
(INDUSTRIAL FACTORY OWNER)

Congratulations! You are the **Industrial Factory Owner**.

You are industrial factory owner.

Your responsibility:

- Greet immigrants when they come in, and give them a job
- Tell them to sit down and start making shirts as soon as possible (have them draw shirts on scarp paper)
- Make sure they make shirts fast, if they do give them just a little cash
- If they do not work up your standards FIRE them!
- Remember: You are not nice, you just want to make \$\$\$

You will have an assistant

Her or his responsibilities:

- Help boss make sure employees are doing their jobs. Yell at them if they are not making shirts fast enough or shirts are being draw messily
- Give them money for their work at the end of the shift (make sure to be a real cheapskate about it – You want your boss (and you) to get rich.

Immigration Simulation (UNION ORGANIZER)

Congratulations! You are the **Union Organizer**.

You are a former factory worker, who is now trying to organize the factory employees into unions.

Your responsibility:

- **Talk to the immigrant factory workers** when they are off from work (You should always be **whispering** to the factory workers, unions are the enemy of industrial factory owners and political bosses. If they find out they will do anything to stop you.)
- Ask the factory workers if they will join your union. If they say no, try to convince them why it is a good idea to join the union (higher wages, better work conditions, etc.). If you get all factory workers to say they will join your union, then tell them to meet secretly after work to organize the union (you can do this in two shifts).
- After you have spoken with everyone, you should hold a secret ballot vote (writing yes or no on paper). If you can get the majority of employees to vote to be in union, then you can bring your demands to the industrial boss.
- If you form a union, then write up a list of demands to make pay higher, overtime pay, and better factory conditions.
- Remember: Your only goal is to convince all the workers to form a union to protect their workers' rights

