

## **Life in Lowell – One Woman’s Memory**

### **Priscilla Kron Boston Lesson 2009**

**Abstract:** In order for students to gain a more personal feeling of what life was like for the “Lowell girls”, this jigsaw-style lesson has the students read short passages from “Harriet Robinson’s Account of Lowell Mills” as she remembered it in 1898. Students then analyze, put in chronological order, and illustrate the passages.

**Enduring Understanding:** Life in the cotton mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, a site of early mass manufacturing, exposed the women workers to many new experiences.

**Assessment:** Students will complete a document analysis worksheet of the reading passage and create a “story board” to accompany the combined texts.

**Setting the Purpose:** Prior to this lesson, students will examine a drawing of a mill showing the various “stations” (Section 1). They also will examine various primary sources related to rules and expectations of life in the mills (Section 2).

**Analysis of Primary Sources:** At each of the 3 sections of this mini-unit, students will examine and discuss primary documents – a line drawing of a mill, a chart of the mill workers’ schedule, rules for the women workers, a petition for better health care, and the memoir of Harriet Robinson.

**Ties to National Sources:** After studying these primary sources, students will put the Lowell experience into the broader scope of industrialization that was beginning throughout the country, especially in the north.

**Lesson Plan for Section 3:**

- Divide the class into 5 expert groups (A-E) of equal numbers. Each group will read one passage of Harriet Robinson’s account. (See the 5 passages in Appendix A) After reading the passage, each of the group members will complete a Document Analysis Worksheet (See the modified worksheet in Appendix B)
- The class will regroup with one member from each expert group A-E. Each student will then share the information from the Analysis Worksheet until all 5 passages have been described (Jigsaw)
- After all 5 students have given their information, the group as a whole will put the passages into chronological order as best they can. Finally each group member will illustrate one of the passages and combine the illustrations to make a “story board” of the account.
- Student comprehension of the enduring understanding will be evaluated based on the document analysis worksheet completed for the passage and the final storyboard completed by the group.

➤ Finally, each student will write a paragraph in response to this prompt, “Explain why a young woman might want to leave the family farm to work in one of the cotton mills. Include 3 reasons in your paragraph based on the information in the passages from Harriet Robinson.”

Annotated List of Materials:

- ❖ Excerpts from “Harriet Robinson’s Account of Lowell Mills” in Robinson, Harriet. Loom and Spindle. New York: Crowell & Company, 1898. 6 May 2009, <http://library.uml.edu/clh/All/han.pdf>
- ❖ Document Analysis Worksheet modified from: Document Analysis Worksheet. Bringing History Home. Copyright ©2005.