

**Social Studies Content Themes for Elementary/Middle School**  
**From**  
***“The Making of Milwaukee Curriculum”***

**Post-World War II:**

**Teaching about the Post-World War II Era in Milwaukee**

The following activities are from “The Making of Milwaukee” on-line curriculum.

- **From Poverty to Prosperity: Solving Two Mysteries**
- **Boom Boom and Lifestyle Changes (Discussing The Impact of Inventions)**
- **What a Difference a Century Makes: The Corner of Third Street and Juneau Avenue or The Corner of Third St. and State St. (Comparing Photographs Over Time)**
- **Crisis in Milwaukee (Creating a Pictorial Collage)**

**FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY: SOLVING TWO MYSTERIES**

The following learning activity, mystery story, and two leading questions can be used before viewing Video Chapter 15, *The Exploding Metropolis*.

1. First, the teacher reads aloud the passage that follows with two built-in mysteries. The teacher should use an overhead to project the mystery passage so that students can both hear and see various clues.
2. After reading the story, the teacher poses one of the mystery questions at a time which helps direct students as they attempt to solve each mystery by posing questions to the teacher that can only be answered with a “yes” or “no” answer.
3. Give the students “think time” to think about the first question and to create questions that can be answered “yes” or “no”. (The forming of questions can be done individually or in small groups with students taking turns as they pose questions.)
4. Let the student questioning begin. The teacher records a “yes” or “no” answer to each question as well as the nature of each question on the board or overhead so students can keep track of the clues or data collected. (During the Q and A session it is essential that the teacher consistently ask students: “*What clues did you see or hear that prompted you to ask that question?*” Give as much positive feedback for logical questions as you do for questions that can be answered with a “yes”).
5. After a few questions have been posed, instruct students to regroup so they can think about the clues and collected data thus far and construct new questions.
6. After a few minutes, begin the Q and A session again and continue until students believe they have an answer. (If a student believes they have the correct answer, they must tell the teacher before speaking it aloud in order to provide the teacher with the option of having

the student wait for a few more questions to be posed by other students before stating what they think.)

7. The Q and A session is over when the right answer is determined, when either the teacher or students believe they are stumped, or if students have gotten as close as possible. (This latter option is definitely acceptable, especially if students have little background knowledge on the topic).

### **The Mystery Passage (with mystery questions 1 and 2):**

For 15 years most Milwaukee citizens struggled and sacrificed in order to make ends meet and keep their families together. They went without many of life's small pleasures when even gas, flour, and sugar were very difficult to get even if they were able to scrape together enough money to buy them. Big families lived together in very small houses in order to help take care of each other as well as save money. Men, women, and young adults worked long hours every day, seven days a week in order to help themselves, their families, and their country. They saved small items like string, rags, paper, and tin. They used every vacant piece of land for community gardens in order to conserve their food supply. And, while Milwaukeeans dreamed for a better, more prosperous life for themselves, their families, and their country, they did not waiver in their efforts to keep working.

And then, suddenly, the 15 years of hard times, the scrimping, the struggling, the sacrifice, and the saving came to an end. The dreams and hopes that had been postponed were realized in just a few short years as prosperity swept Milwaukee like no other time in history. People were determined to build a new and better world. New businesses and industry and the jobs that followed helped families earn a better living. Many babies were born to families who had put off having children because previous times were just too hard. Thousands purchased modern conveniences such as cars, televisions, and refrigerator-freezers. New houses were built and people moved to new neighborhoods. All these new babies and houses in new neighborhoods caused a need for many new schools in Milwaukee. Shopping centers and freeways emerged to get Milwaukee citizens on the move as never before. The people of Milwaukee pursued the good life with zeal.

**Mystery Question #1:** *What happened to move Milwaukee from very hard and desperate times, from times of poverty to times of prosperity? Be sure to let students completely explore question one before introducing question two. Use question two as an added mystery.*

**Question #2:** Before reading question two, add to the mystery by reading and showing this additional, brief passage to students before the yes and no questioning strategy resumes:

But, wait a minute, the mystery is not complete and, therefore, misleading. While these prosperous times allowed many Milwaukee people access to the “good and prosperous life”, other Milwaukee citizens were left behind and even denied access to the “good and prosperous life”. Many people flocked to Milwaukee as its booming economy offered jobs, decent housing, and entertaining city features on a great lake. However, some newcomers met with resistance and resentment. And while many of them did find jobs, few escaped poverty, and most lived in very old houses with very little or no income to pursue the “good life”.

**Mystery Question #2:** *Why was the prosperous life, the “good life”, true for some and not others?*

\*\*\*Regardless of whether the students come up with the exact answers, these puzzlers can be used to introduce Video Chapter 15 and set the stage for discovering, through the video, specific answers to questions they may have raised during the Q and A sessions. If students want to pursue why African American citizens of Milwaukee were left behind, encourage them to listen for reasons within Video Chapter 15 and assure them that you will investigate these issues further as you engage in the film response activity to follow, “*Resistance, Resentment, and Racism*”.

## **BOOM BOOM & LIFESTYLE CHANGES**

Go to the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section on *The Making of Milwaukee* website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com) and use the “search” tool to find the following two images: “*Woman with New Television Set in the late 1940s*” and “*Woman and Automobile.*” to use for this lesson.

1. Allow students to discuss the following questions:
  - How did these inventions change society?
  - How did families change their lifestyles as they purchased these two items?
  - What do you think were the pros and cons of introducing these new items in American homes?
  - Compare today’s televisions and automobiles with those of the 1950s. What do you think contributed to the different designs over the past 50 years?
  - Have the use and functions of today’s televisions and automobiles changed over the past five decades? Explain.

## **WHAT A DIFFERENCE A CENTURY MAKES: THE CORNER OF THIRD STREET AND JUNEAU AVENUE OR THE CORNER OF THIRD ST. AND STATE ST.**

**(1890 & 1990)**

*\*\*Note to Teachers: In this learning activity you may use one of two picture sets. Either one will work for this activity.*

Option #1: These two photos may be found in “*The Making of Milwaukee*” book by John Gurda, chapter entitled, “*Shifting Currents*”.

1890 photo of the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and Juneau Ave.  
1990 photo of the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and Juneau Ave.

OR

Option #2: On-line photos of 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and State St.

Go to the “Milwaukee’s History” section of *The Making of Milwaukee* website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com). Select the “Then and Now Photos” category for this option.

Discuss the following questions in small groups or as a class with either picture set:

- Describe what you see in the first picture (1890).
- Describe what you see in the second picture (1990).
- According to the pictures, how did things change in Milwaukee within a time span of 100 years? Be specific by using the images in the photos.
- What do you think contributed to these changes in Milwaukee?
- What societal and cultural changes took place in Milwaukee within 100 years? Provide examples from the two photos?
- What similarities can you identify within the two photographs?
- What types of changes (technological, societal, cultural, economic, etc) needed to occur in order for the picture in 1890 to progress into the image provided in 1990? Be specific.
- How might Milwaukee look in the year 2090? Can you predict specific changes that will occur on the corner of Third Street and State Street or Third Street and Juneau? What are your reasons for these changes?

Follow-up Learning Activity:

### **Venn Diagram**

- a. Have students compare the two photographs of the corner of Third Street and State Street using a Venn Diagram.
- b. Students should look for the commonalities within both photos as well as the differences.
- c. These ideas should be placed in the proper areas of the Venn Diagram.
- d. Have students share/present their Venn Diagrams in a pair, small groups or as a class.

### **CRISIS IN MILWAUKEE**

In the Video Chapter 16, *City Under Siege*, the many challenges and struggles Milwaukee faced during the 1960s are identified.

1. Organize students in groups and have them create a pictorial collage that depicts these struggles.
2. Students should locate pictures on the Internet, in encyclopedias, textbooks, magazines, create their own photos, or a combination of all these to create the collage. (Refer to [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org) for a variety of photographs.)

*A variety of photos related to the following topics are also available by going to the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section of The Making of Milwaukee website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com), and selecting “Lesson Activity Images”.*

3. Collages should contain photographs that depict the following events/occurrences:
  - The extinction of the streetcar
  - The loss of neighborhood shopping districts
  - The dingy, dirty look of Milwaukee
  - Redevelopment claiming old neighborhoods
  - Freeway system claim land in the heart of the town
  - The destruction of landmarks (Our Lady of Pompeii)
  - Dutch elm disease
  - Loss of Alewives (ocean fish)
  - Relocation of the Milwaukee Braves to Atlanta
4. Have groups present their collages to the rest of the class, emphasizing and describing the images and how they symbolize the challenges in Milwaukee during the 1960s.
5. Discuss with students the struggles of today that have occurred in Milwaukee over the past 5-10 years. Address the following questions with students:
  - What losses has Milwaukee experienced over the past 10 years?
  - Why did these losses take place?
  - What effect did these losses have on Milwaukee’s economy, communities, culture, relationships, etc.?
  - What could have been done to prevent these losses from occurring in Milwaukee?
  - Do you think Milwaukee’s struggles are over? Explain.