

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

**Social Justice:**

**Teaching about Social Justice in Milwaukee**

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

- Days of Our Lives (Writing Diary Entries)
- Women’s Wartime Contributions (Analyzing a Quote and Designing a Monument)
- Living in a City (Discussing City Living)
- From Poverty to Prosperity: Solving Two Mysteries
- The Mighty Migration (Mapping and Writing Diaries)
- American Black Holocaust Museum (Fieldtrip)

**DAYS OF OUR LIVES**

Between 1914 and 1945 Milwaukeeans witnessed a wide range of events, experiences and emotions as war, peace, economic depression and war once again shaped the city and its people. Consider the following true story about a man named Les Greget adapted from the accompanying book, *The Making of Milwaukee*, at the beginning of the chapter entitled, *Hard Times and Wartime*. (The teacher may want to read or print this adapted story for the class before doing this activity or summarize the story for students).

*Les Greget came to Milwaukee in 1922. He was good at working with his hands and with machinery. He was also looking for opportunities that he could not find in his hometown of Mayville, Wisconsin. He was able to get a good job at Falk Company in Milwaukee and began working on machines. After four years of hard work and studying, he advanced to working at a job where he drilled holes in gears that could be used on ships. “I thought I had it made,” he recalled. Les and his wife purchased a \$12,500 brick home on Milwaukee’s Northwest Side and proceeded to live in a comfortable lifestyle during the 1920’s.*

*The Great Depression rudely interrupted this good life for them. As the company did poorly, Les Greget lost his job, his savings, and finally his home. He and his wife were eventually forced to move into the top of a flat for \$45 a month. As the bad times got even worse, they asked their landlord to lower the rent to just \$20.*

*Then came World War II. Les Greget went back to his job even before the United States entered the war, turning out equipment for the Navy which was trying to build more ships. The Falk Company was swamped with orders for the rest of the war. As the fighting intensified, Les found himself working ten hours a day, seven days a week, for four-and-a half years, more than 1600 consecutive days without a single break!*

1. Have students create scenarios like this one between 1914 to 1945 and write a series of diary or journal entries from the perspective of a Milwaukeean describing the changes this person has experienced over the years. To create their

diary or journal entries, students should choose a gender, race / ethnicity, age, social class, job or role, and a few years between 1914 and 1945 that show changes in the person's life. (As an alternative, the teacher may also want to assign certain roles from these categories to students in order to have a wide range of experiences represented in the class. For example, a student could be assigned to be a white working class teenage female going to high school in 1927, then getting married, having a family struggling to survive the Depression in 1935, and then working in a war factory by 1943). Students can use any of the video clips from this unit to consider how individuals from different groups may have been affected by the rapid changes taking place during this period of time. It is up to the teacher's discretion to decide how many diary or journal entries each student should write. The following questions can assist students with thinking about what to write in their diary or journal entries:

- What might happen during a typical day in the life of this person?
  - What experiences might this person have that would be similar to the experiences of other Milwaukeeans during this period of time?
  - What experiences might this person have that would be different from the experiences of other Milwaukeeans during this period of time?
  - How might this person's race, class, gender, age, or work affect this person's experiences and the way he or she responded to those experiences during this period of time?
  - What might be the benefits and drawbacks to this individual for living in Milwaukee during this period of time?
  - How might this person's life impact the lives of other people during this time?
  - How did this person somehow affect the way Milwaukee is today?
2. After the students write their diary or journal entries the teacher could select students who chose differing scenarios and have them share their diary entries with the rest of the class. Or, the teacher might want to have students get into groups of 3 or 4 to share their diary entries with each other and report what they have learned to the rest of the class.
3. The following questions might serve as a good way to wrap up this activity:
- What were the most significant factors that affected the lives of individual Milwaukeeans during this time?
  - What were the various ways that Milwaukeeans responded to the challenges that they faced during this period of time?
  - How did people's race, class, gender, age, and work experiences affect the experiences that individuals had in Milwaukee during this period of time?
  - How were the experiences of Milwaukeeans similar and different during this period of time?
  - What impact did the experiences of these individuals as a whole have on the way Milwaukee is today?

## WOMEN'S WARTIME CONTRIBUTIONS

Throughout the nation women answered the call to work in factories during World War II. By the end of 1943 women filled more than one-fourth of Milwaukee County's industrial jobs. "Rosie the Riveter" was the nickname given nationally to women who served this role during the war and Milwaukee's women also made extremely significant contributions to the war effort. The following quote from John Gurda's *The Making of Milwaukee* book, originally printed in *Fortune* magazine, specifically described women working at a Milwaukee company called Cutler-Hammer, which produced electronic controls during this time.

*The company is up against the fact that women frequently make better assemblers than men, and there will be every reason to keep them on when the men return.... (from "The Making of Milwaukee", chapter entitled, "Hard Times and Wartime")*

1. After students read this quote have them answer the following questions:
  - How does this quote affect your understanding of women's contributions to the war effort during World War II?
  - Why do you think that in spite of observations of like this, women were still paid less than men for the same work during World War II?
  - Why do you think that in spite of observations like this, women were encouraged to leave the factories and return to lives in the home after World War II ended?
  - What might have caused this magazine to make this observation during the War?
  - Do you think the situation described in this quote only applied to this particular company or do you think there were other companies or jobs where this might have also been the case during World War II?
  - What might have motivated women to work so hard and make so many sacrifices during World War II in spite of not being treated fully equal to men at this time?
  - If women made such important contributions during World War II as described in this quote, why do you think Milwaukee has no public memorials or monuments to these women who worked in factories during World War II?

### Follow-up Learning Activity:

The teacher might want to have students discuss or actually draw up design ideas for a possible memorial or monument to women like the ones described in the quote, and talk

about where this memorial should be placed in Milwaukee. If students want an idea for a monument they might access the following:

*Go to the photograph of the woman factory worker from the accompanying book, “The Making of Milwaukee” by John Gurda, in the chapter entitled, “Hard Times and Wartime”.*

*Or, go to the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section of The Making of Milwaukee website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com) and choose “Lesson Activity Images” from the pull down menu. Use the “search” tool to find photos of the “woman factory worker”.*

## **LIVING IN A CITY**

1. Invite individual students to reflect on their experiences of living in a city. Have students compile a list of things that they like and dislike about living in a city.
2. In triads, have students share their city experiences with their classmates. Tell students to circle or highlight the commonalities for their likes and dislikes of city life.
3. Select one representative to share with the class the groups’ common likes and dislikes.
4. Using students’ responses as a “springboard”, discuss with students the many challenges involved with city living. Explain to them that cities across America have faced and are currently dealing with similar concerns and successes that they have identified throughout this activity. Inform them that like other cities, Milwaukee has faced numerous challenges in different eras but those challenges are very similar to the challenges faced by its citizens today. Help students understand that challenges such as poverty, loss of jobs, affordable housing, schooling, and maintaining our parks have always been a part of city life. Cities will continue to face problems that are unique to a particular period of time, but learning from the lessons of these situations can lead to healing, progress and a sense of accomplishment and success.

## **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*”.

## THE MIGHTY MIGRATION

### 1. Migration Map

*(Note: Teachers and/or students may want to visit the following sites to gather background information for this activity):*

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>

<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/>

[http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/frameset\\_reset.html?http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/stories/0701\\_0131.html](http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/frameset_reset.html?http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0700/stories/0701_0131.html)  
<http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm>

- a. On a blank map of the United States, have students show the migration of African Americans from the South to northern cities such as Chicago and Milwaukee.
- b. Students should use a variety of colors, lines and arrows to show the various routes taken from southern states.
- c. Discuss with students the following questions concerning the migration of blacks to northern cities:
  - Why did blacks leave the South?
  - What did blacks leave behind as they migrated north (traditions, family, jobs, homes, culture, etc)?
  - What types of challenges did blacks face as they migrated (segregated facilities, safety risks, uncharted territories, long trips, etc.)?

## 2. Dear Diary...

*Photos of the following topics are available in the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section on The Making of Milwaukee website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com). Choose “Lesson Activities Photos” from the pull down menu and use the “search” tool to locate the photos related to the topics below:*

- a. Have students consider the movement of African Americans from the South to the North. They should reflect on the challenges blacks faced once they settled in Milwaukee. Briefly discuss the following issues with students:
  - North Side blight
  - Hillside housing project/low income housing
  - Hostility with whites
  - Resistance to diversity in neighborhoods/communities
  - Poverty and prejudice
  - Acquiring jobs in a new city
  - Milwaukeeans United for School Integration Committee (MUSIC)
  - Protests
  - Father Groppi marches
  - The riot of July 30, 1967
- b. Students will take on the perspective of an African American who has migrated to Milwaukee during this time period. Using the topics of the reflective activity, students will write 1-3 diary entries explaining their experiences in Milwaukee. They should bring to light the difficulties that were explained Video Chapter 16, *City Under Siege*.

- c. Students may also consider interviewing someone who lived in Milwaukee during these difficult times. They should use the information in the interview to create a journal or diary for that particular person based on the information they gathered. These diary or journal entries can cover several days or weeks in which these events took place. Students should draw on the interviewee's experiences to bring about a passionate, realistic account of what it was like to live in Milwaukee during this era.

#### Follow-up Learning Activities:

- Students may exchange diaries with a partner, read a day's entry to a small group or select a passage to read to the class.
- Have students respond to the following questions in written form or group discussion:
  - What were the experiences of new blacks arriving in Milwaukee from the South?
  - What fears did whites have about an increasing black population in Milwaukee?
  - How does the "inner core" (North Side of Milwaukee) in the 1960s compare with the "inner core" of 2006?

### **3. Rising Above Racism...A Message for Milwaukee**

- a. Allow students to reflect on the events surrounding the racial tensions in Milwaukee.
- b. Encourage students to write a persuasive speech that will be presented in a local Milwaukee church. The speech's message should focus on the following:
  - The racial tensions of Milwaukee in the 1960s
  - How blacks have faced and struggled through racial animosity
  - What needs to be done in Milwaukee to make it a great place for ALL people to live, regardless of color, race, religion and socio-economic status?
- c. Speeches should be written in the context of the 1960s. Limit speeches to 1-2 minutes to ensure that all students will be afforded the opportunity to present and promote their ideas.
- d. After listening to speeches, discuss the following questions with students or have students discuss them in small groups:
  - What are the benefits and consequences of a diverse city?
  - How can racial equality be obtained in cities that contain an assortment of ethnic groups?

- Does violent behavior lead to progress towards racial equality? Why or why not?
  - Have race relations improved today in comparison to what Milwaukee experienced throughout the 1960s? Explain by incorporating specific examples.
- e. Students may also contact local churches to present their speeches. Assist students in making contacts and organizing a visit to local churches and their congregations to deliver their powerful messages. Encourage community leaders to work with students in delivering informative and passionate speeches that help uplift individuals during difficult times.

## **AMERICA'S BLACK HOLOCAUST MUSEUM**

1. Organize a trip to America's Black Holocaust Museum in downtown Milwaukee. Prepare students by covering content about the African culture, the African Slave Trade, the Middle Passage, Colonization, Plantation Life and the Underground Railroad.
2. Show portions of the critically acclaimed television miniseries, "Roots", to give students a different perspective on African traditions and customs.
3. Have students develop at least five questions that they would like to ask tour guides on the trip.
4. As a follow-up, have students participate in an open forum where they discuss their experiences at the museum, the artifacts and documents displayed and the information delivered by tour guides. Teacher may develop a series of questions pertaining to the content delivered at the museum as an additional assessment.  
For further information contact:

### **America's Black Holocaust Museum, Inc.**

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