

**Teaching and Learning Strategies for Middle/High School**  
**From**  
***“The Making of Milwaukee” Curriculum***

**Historiography:**  
**Teaching and Learning about Milwaukee**

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

- **Trying on Perspectives (Examining Sources as an Historian)**
- **Were They Really the Good Old Days? (Collecting Interview Data as an Historian)**

**TRYING ON PERSPECTIVES**

1. After watching the video clip on the Bay View strike in Video Chapter 8, *Machine Shop of the World*, ask students the following questions:
  - What kinds of sources do you think were used to re-create this incident in Milwaukee’s history?
  - How do historians know what happened at an event like this?
2. After discussing the way a historian might use sources like newspaper articles, interviews with people who were there, photographs, company records, and hospital records to retell the event, ask students to think about and discuss the following:
  - According to the newspaper *The Sunday Telegraph* the workers who marched to the mill were “a vicious, lawless mob, bent on blood, robbery and destruction.”
  - According to Robert Schilling head of the union representing the strikers, the actions of the guards were “cowardly, premeditated murder.”

*\*\* Both of the above quotes were taken from John Gurda’s 1995 book, The Making of Milwaukee, published by the Milwaukee County Historical Society. The quotes are found on the last two pages of the chapter entitled, “Wheat, Iron, Beer, and Bloodshed”*
3. After helping students understand the meaning of the word “premeditated,” discuss the following questions with them:
  - What challenges might a historian face if he or she had to explain what happened at the Bay View strike from these two sources?
  - How do both of these sources show bias?
  - Why might the newspaper present such a negative view of the strikers?
  - Why might the union leader present such a negative view of the guards?

- What does this suggest about the importance for historians to examine multiple pieces of evidence before they describe an event?
  - What perspectives might be missing from the video’s retelling of the strike and how might this add to or possibly change the way the event was described?
4. Add missing perspectives by having students choose or assign one of the following perspectives that wasn’t discussed in the video’s description of the Bay View strike:
    - A close relative (e.g. parent, spouse, child) of one of the strikers killed
    - A close relative (e.g. parent, spouse, child) of one of the strikers who was not killed
    - The owner of the Iron Mill
    - A close relative (e.g. parent, spouse, child) of one of the guardsmen
    - The mayor of Milwaukee, Emil Wallber
  5. Then have students create an imaginary primary source (e.g. letter, diary entry, interview) that discusses their view of the strike and the events surrounding the strike. Let students be creative with deciding where this person was when the shots were fired and how this person might react to the event but hold them accountable for defending their reasoning behind the ideas expressed in the primary source.
  6. Have students share the missing perspectives with the class. Debate and discuss if their sources might accurately represent the missing perspectives and how these missing perspectives add to or even change the description of the strike from the video. A number of actual primary sources representing different points of view from the Bay View strike can be found on the Wisconsin State Historical Society’s webpage at: [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org)
  7. End the discussion by explaining to students that history is very challenging to write because it can never take into account every perspective involved in an event. However, good historians do their best to describe an event from multiple perspectives.

## **WERE THEY REALLY “THE GOOD OLD DAYS”?**

1. This optional learning activity relates to Video Chapters 9, 10, & 11 in which both the good old days and the troubled days of early Milwaukee are depicted. In this activity, students will explore the often-used phrase: “The Good Old Days”. What does it mean? What does it mean to different people? Has this phrase been used for a long time? Were “The Good Old Days” always good?

2. Before watching Video Chapters 9, 10, & 11 direct students to take notes on the positive and negative aspects of living in Milwaukee at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century while viewing the chapters.
3. After watching these Video Chapters, have students look over their notes and then write summary statements regarding the positive and negative aspects.
4. Reflect with students about why people often describe their personal past with glowing and enthusiastic terms and at times use the phrase, “The Good Old Days” even when there were hard times and many setbacks and challenges.
5. As a teacher, retell a “Good Old Days” story of your own childhood that describes something you loved about your childhood and something that you miss. And/or tell a brief story of your adult life that depicts something you remember with great fondness.

Follow-up Learning Activities:

- Students are encouraged to tell or write their own stories about some thing or some event from their past that they fondly remember. The speech/story telling event or written essay could be introduced to students in this manner: *“Many people talk glowingly about “The Good Old Days” in Milwaukee. Based on your own experiences so far, talk about or write a story or speech that richly describes a part of your life that was very happy or exciting and tell why you have fond memories of it.”*
- Prepare students to write a newspaper article in a section devoted to the “Good Old Days”. Have students interview an older member of their family or a close family friend regarding what his/her life was like when they were the student’s age. In general, the students’ interviews should focus on what was good and what was difficult during that time. As part of their interview questions, students should ask their interviewee if they would describe that time in their life as “The Good Old Days” and why or why not. *(Depending on how many components of this activity you choose to incorporate into your instructional calendar, this learning activity could take several days, so plan accordingly.)*
  - a. To begin, students construct a set of interview questions. This may be completed individually or as a whole class.
  - b. Students brainstorm and then work with their family to choose an appropriate person to interview.
  - c. Students contact their interviewee and set a time for the interview. (Set a reasonable deadline for this activity.)

d. During the interview, students take notes (collect data) on the answers to each question they pose. Work with students ahead of time on how to take notes during an interview. Stress that they should not try to write every word at the time of the interview but just enough information that immediately following the interview the details of the conversation can be filled in. Of course, students could use a tape recorder or even videotape the interview, but this is a teacher, family, and/or interviewer/interviewee decision.

e. Have students write an article and compose a title for a proposed section of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, entitled, “The Good Old Days”. Use a newspaper article framework: the who, what, where, why, and when.

*Teachers and students are encouraged to use the interactive “Newspaper Exercise” within The Making of Milwaukee website, [www.themakingofmilwaukee.com](http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com). Go to the “In the Classroom” section of the website and click on “Interactive Lessons” or, to go directly to the on-line activity click here now:*

*<http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/classroom/newspaper>*

f. Consider sending finished articles to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for publication in a Milwaukee History Section.