



#3655

THE ROUGE

Grade Levels: 9-13+

45 minutes

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DESCRIPTION

In the early 1920s, Henry Ford built the largest industrial complex in the world, a factory that took raw material and produced a finished car. The River Rouge plant in Detroit attracted thousands of immigrants looking for work and a better way of life. Presents the history of the Rouge, its impact on America's industrialization, and the workers' struggle to unionize. Archival footage and recollections of former workers and their families add insights.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: U.S. History

- ◆ Standard: Understands the rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes
 - Benchmark: Understands the conditions affecting employment and labor in the late 19th century (e.g., the change from workshop to factory in different regions; how working conditions changed and how workers responded to new industrial conditions) (See Instructional Goal #1)
 - Benchmark: Understands reactions to developments in labor in late 19th-century America (e.g., how management and industry responded to efforts to organize workers, the response of management and government to labor strife in different regions of the country) (See Instructional Goals #2, #3)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To examine the historical impact and significance of Ford Motor Company's Rouge Plant.
2. To depict the significance of the struggle to establish trade unions in the Rouge Plant.
3. To emphasize the role of Henry Ford's personality and ingenuity on the automobile industry, the city of Detroit, and the workers of the Rouge.
4. To introduce the murals of the Rouge painted by Diego Rivera, and review how they are a social commentary.

VOCABULARY

1. immigrants
2. industry
3. assembly line
4. mass production
5. Depression
6. foundry
7. Communist
8. Czar
9. Socialists
10. Hispanic
11. mural
12. union
13. strike

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Construct a time line and use it as a catalyst to discuss United States events during the first two decades of the 20th century (mass immigration, change in cost of goods, fashion, and other).
2. Define trade unions and summarize their history.
3. Describe the technology of an assembly line and explain why it contributed to the more efficient production of goods.
4. Discuss the events that led to the stock market crash of 1929.

DURING SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause before the discussion of the church's role at the Rouge.
 - a. Discuss what kinds of people came to the Ford Motor Company for jobs.
 - b. Discuss why immigrants were especially welcomed to work at Ford.
3. Pause after the massacre at Miller Street.
 - a. Summarize the Black Church's role in the Ford Motor Company.
 - b. Discuss why there was so much opposition to the organization of workers.
4. Pause after the presentation of Diego Rivera's murals.
 - a. Solicit reactions to his art.
 - b. Discuss working conditions inside the Rouge.



AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Describe the Rouge and the reasons it has historical significance.
2. Obtaining a job at Ford was a high honor.
 - a. What was the normal method of obtaining a job?

- b. After the stock market crash, what kind of scams surfaced to prey on job seekers?
 - c. What special help was available to African American workers?
 - d. What was the nature of competition for jobs?
3. Describe Henry Ford.
 - a. How did the public view him?
 - b. How did the workers view him during the early days of the Rouge? How did this view change during the struggle to unionize?
 - c. Use occurrences in the film to support both the positive and negative aspects of Ford.
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4. Explain the treatment of African Americans by the Ford Motor Company and how this treatment compared to that of other automobile manufacturers.
 5. Describe the workers and the work that they did at the foundry.
 6. Describe the impact of the stock market crash in 1929 on the Rouge and its workers.
 - a. What was Ford's opinion of causes of the Depression?
 - b. How did the Communists and Socialists take advantage of the situation?
 7. Explain how the union was finally organized at the Rouge Plant.
 - a. What was the goal of the unions?
 - b. Why was it difficult for the union to become established?
 - c. Why was the management so afraid of unions?
 - d. What finally persuaded Ford to change his mind?
 8. What was the symbolic impact of the massacre at Miller Street?
 9. Explain the purpose of the servicemen employed by Ford. What prompted Ford to start using African Americans in this position?
 10. Discuss the significance of the Battle of the Overpass.
 11. Describe Diego Rivera's purpose in creation of the murals and the controversy that surrounded them.
 12. What effect did Ford's acceptance of an award from Hitler have on his company?
 13. Why does the Rouge only employ 15,000 workers in present day compared to 100,000 in the booming 1920s?
 14. Describe the working conditions inside the Ford plant.
 15. How did the workers feel about working for the Ford Motor Company in 1910-1929? In the 1930s? In the 1940s?

Applications and Activities

1. Analyze the following statement and explain how it applies to the present day: "If we don't know the history, if we don't know where we've been, we don't know where we're going."
2. Perform a craft project or bake cookies utilizing the assembly line technique. Discuss the benefits to production rate.
3. Tour a factory in the local area. Compare and contrast that factory with the Rouge.

4. Structure a mock debate between Ford and his workers regarding the establishment of a union. Use the information in the video to formulate arguments for and against a union.
5. Research the following topics:
 - a. Great Depression--the effect on the people of the United States
 - b. Unions-their impact on business and the workers
 - c. The Wagner Act
 - d. The history of the Ford Motor Company
 - e. Current statistical information about the Rouge Plant
6. Draw your own depiction of workers at the Rouge.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Henry Ford: Tin Lizzy Tycoon #8272
- Organizing America: A History of Trade Unions in the U.S. #3278

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **THE REARVIEW MIRROR: THE ROUGE PLANT --THE ART OF INDUSTRY**

<http://detnews.com/history/rouge/rouge.htm>

An account of the Rouge Plant from "The Detroit News." Provides summary information and a link to a photograph gallery of the plant.

- **HENRY FORD MUSEUM AND GREENFIELD VILLAGE: THE LIFE OF HENRY FORD**

www.hfmgv.org/histories/hf/henry.html

Facts on the man, his vision, his company and the Rouge Plant.

- **UNION HISTORY--FORD: THUGS THREATEN WORKERS**

www.uaw.com/History/wh_ford2.html

Sponsored by the United Autoworkers Union and contains another account of the Battle of the Overpass.

- **FREEP--1914: FORD'S \$5 WORKDAY SPARKED DETROIT'S INDUSTRIAL HEYDAY**

www.freep.com/century/cent29_19991129.htm

Sponsored by the Detroit Free Press to relate the significance of Ford's \$5 workday. Provides links to other important events of the time period.