READ IOWA HISTORY

EDUCATOR MATERIALS



People at Work

LESSON PLAN FOR SUPPORTING QUESTION

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

1ST GRADE

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

Introduction to Read Iowa History

About Read Iowa History

Through the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources grant, the State Historical Society of Iowa developed Read Iowa History — free, downloadable K-5 lesson plans to build and develop reading and critical thinking skills with primary sources in the classroom.

Primary sources (from the digital **Primary Source Sets collection**) are used to help students learn from multiple perspectives, develop primary source-based claims and evidence, and to interpret documents and images of the past. These lessons were developed with the Iowa Core Social Studies and Literacy Standards. Each unit includes ready-to-use source material, worksheets, educator lesson plans and assessment tools and activities. You, the educator, are encouraged to explore the unit, and use materials as you see fit for your students. You are welcome to alter lesson plans, worksheets and assessments to best align with their curriculum.

Please check out the **Primary Source Sets toolkit** to learn more about using primary sources in the classroom.

What's Included

Educator Materials

Sources are accompanied by an educator lesson plan. This plan includes: the unit compelling question, unit supporting question, objectives, background information, vocabulary lists or cards, a materials list and instructions. There also is a "formative assessment" to wrap up each part of the unit and to check for comprehension. You are welcome to use the activities that are suggested or create their own with the primary sources.

Student Materials

Many of the unit instructions are accompanied by a worksheet that can be copied and distributed to students as they analyze the primary source(s) to assist in their application and comprehension. These worksheets are optional but may provide a structure for students to think critically about the primary sources they are analyzing. These reproduceable student worksheets are available in the Student Materials PDF (on website, below "Educator Materials") for this topic.



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Johnston, Frances B. "Thanksgiving Day Lesson at Whittier," ca. 1899

Formative Assessments, Lesson Summative Assessment and Scoring Options

The formative assessments, lesson summative assessment and possible scoring options allow you to evaluate how students comprehend and apply the knowledge they learned from the individual primary source activities. Assessment instructions, example worksheet(s) and possible scoring options are located at the end of this Read Iowa History section. Reproduceable assessment worksheet(s) also are available in this topic's Student Materials PDF.

People at Work

1st Grade

Overview

The jobs Iowans have done have changed over the past 120 years. From farming to factories to domestic service, the top occupations people have drastically changed. This unit uses primary source of people at work to allow students the ability to compare and contrast what life was like for the workforce of America in 1900 compared to present-day

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

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Compelling and Supporting Questions

1st Grade

How to Apply Read Iowa History Lessons to Other Primary Sources

The origin of Read Iowa History lessons stem from the **Primary Source Sets**, which are a collection of primary sources that focus on a topic and are structured under a compelling question and multiple supporting questions (typically three). Five or six primary sources are used to address and help students answer a single supporting question. Read Iowa History takes one supporting question, the primary sources addressing that question and instructions (divided into parts) to integrate these primary sources in the classroom through different activities.

These lessons, instructions, worksheets, tools and assessment suggestions can be applied to all of the K-5 **Primary Source Sets**.

Unit Compelling Question

The compelling question drives students to discuss, inquire and investigate the topic of a unit of understanding.

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Questions

Supporting questions scaffold instruction to help students answer the compelling question. Their aim is to stimulate thought, to provoke inquiry and spark more questions. The supporting question that is highlighted above is the question that was used in this Read Iowa History. The **bolded** question below is the supporting question for this Read Iowa History unit.

1) How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?
2) How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1950 according to census records?
3) How do people make a living to support their family and community in the 2000s that is different than previous eras?

Read Iowa History: People at Work

This Read Iowa History lesson addresses “How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?” and “How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?” and includes lesson plans, worksheets, suggested assessments and other tools.

Standards and Objectives

Iowa Core Social Studies Standards	
No.	**Standard**
SS.1.11.	Compare the goods and services that people in the local community produce with those that are produced in other communities.
SS.1.13.	Explain why people have different jobs in the community.
SS.1.19.	Compare how people in different types of communities use goods from local and distant places to meet their daily needs.

Iowa Core Literacy Standards	
No.	**Standard**
RI.1.4	Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.
W.1.2	Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Iowa Core Mathematics Standards	
No.	**Standard**
1.MD.C.4	Organize, represent, and interpret data with up to three categories; ask and answer questions about the total number of data points, how many in each category, and how many more or less are in one category than in another.

Objectives

- I can ask and answer questions to clarify meaning.
- I can explain why people have different jobs in a community.
- I can explain why people need goods from local and distant places to meet their needs.
- I can use a bar graph to compare numbers.
- I can describe how life was different long ago from life today.

Background Essay

Utilize this background essay, in whole or in parts, with students to provide further context and understanding about people at work in 1900. You can read it aloud to students, utilize excerpts and introduce the vocabulary words. The essay is also referenced in parts of this Read Iowa History to assist students in their interpretation and analysis of primary sources.

Every family needs a source of income to pay for essentials **goods** like food, clothing and housing. Most Iowans earn a salary or the profits from their business or services. Certain groups receive support from retirement funds or government programs in health care or public assistance. But it is safe to say that most Iowans work for a living. Recent government figures shows that some 1.6 million Iowans are currently in the work force.

The jobs Iowans have done have changed over the past 120 years. In 1900, a majority of Iowans lived on farms. Without the large-scale machinery we have today, farmers rarely managed over a half acre (320 acres) because it took too much time to plant, cultivate and harvest the crops. Most farm families, however, raised livestock for sale, milked cows for butter and their home use, and kept flocks of chickens for the eggs and meat. They also planted large gardens and canned vegetables for the winter. The husband and wife worked together on the farm as a team, each responsible for his or her own parts of the operation. Children learned farming and housekeeping from their parents and became an important part of the successful operation.

Cities and towns offered many manufacturing jobs in agricultural equipment and meat packing. There were many small coal mines that attracted immigrants from countries Italy, Croatia, Sweden and Wales. However, as railroads began shifting away from coal to diesel fuel and coal sources became depleted, the coal industry had all but disappeared by the 1940s.

World War II brought a surge of industrial jobs to the state as the government needed supplies to fight the war. Farm machinery plants shifted to war equipment and smaller factories turned out ammunition. Meat packing continued to be an important source of **factory** work.

As farm machinery became bigger and more powerful, farmers could manage larger and larger operations. This, of course, meant that there were fewer farms and fewer farm families. Iowa cities began growing with the rise of manufacturing and financial occupations like insurance. Des Moines is one of the two largest centers for insurance in the nation. Education and health care are two more important sectors in the Iowa employment picture. Colleges and universities saw rapid growth after World War II with the GI Bill, making it possible for many more young people to afford college and Baby Boomers swelling the ranks of college-age youth.

The late 20th century saw a revolution in communication with the introduction of computers and cell phones. The first computer was invented by John Atanasoff at Iowa State University. Robert Noyes, a graduate of Grinnell College, did pioneering work in the development of microchips which did much to make the computer revolution possible. While there was a decline in some areas of manufacturing toward the end of the century and a continued decline in farm employment, computers sparked the growth of new industries. Wind and solar energy also began needing workers to build, install and maintain clean energy equipment. Government saw an expansion at all levels with the growth of regulation and support programs.

To provide Iowan with the training they need to fill positions in today's job market, the state created a system of community colleges geared to job training programs. The state also began investing in work placement programs to match workers with job openings. Today, Iowa has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. Unfortunately, many jobs in the service and health care areas pay wages so low that workers struggle to meet their expenses even if they work full time.

Background Essay continued

Education is a critical factor in the employment picture. Many high schools offer job-training classes and coordinate curriculum with nearby universities and community colleges. The state itself is critically invested in producing and supporting a skilled labor force that allows Iowans to work and support families here.

Vocabulary Words

- Goods
- Factory

Iowa Population and Top Occupations in 1900

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

Overview

Students will use four bar graphs to compare statistical information about the Iowa population and workforce in 1900.

Since 1900, the United States Census Bureau has been tracking occupational (job) statistics. This collection of graphs show some of the basic occupational information from that year: population of Iowa in 1900 compared to 1919, the number of men in the workforce compared to the number of women in the workforce, the percentage of females in top occupations and the percentage of males in top occupations. Students will put the year 1900 into historical context of "long ago" by locating that year on a classroom timeline.

Instructions

1. Gather the class together and display the **Iowa Population and Occupation graphs** for all students to see. You could also hand out individual copies of the graphs.
2. Explain to students that bar graphs help people compare the size of different groups. In these graphs, each is comparing different groups of people. We use words like "more, less, larger, smaller, the same, different" to describe the meanings.
3. Begin with the "Population of Iowa" graph. Model how to make a sentence out of the information in the graph. An example is, "This bar (point to appropriate bar on the graph) shows us the population of Iowa in 1900. This bar (pointing to the next bar on the graph) shows us the population of Iowa in 2019. Because the bar on the right is larger than the bar on the left, we can say that the population of Iowa is bigger in 2019 than in 1900."
4. Students will create statements of comparison for the other three bar graphs. Try scaffolding the questions to help them understand each part and then making a generalization about the graph as a whole.
5. Create a classroom timeline if you do not have one already. This could be on a board, a piece of paper, whatever is available to you. Locate 1900 on the timeline, and discuss it in terms of "long ago" compared to "today." Add context by explaining to students how people used horses as main modes of transportation, few homes had electricity and many kids in Iowa attended one room schools in 1900. But homes were made of metal and steel, not sod or logs.

Instructions continued on next page

Materials

- **Iowa Population and Occupation graphs**
- **Classroom timeline**

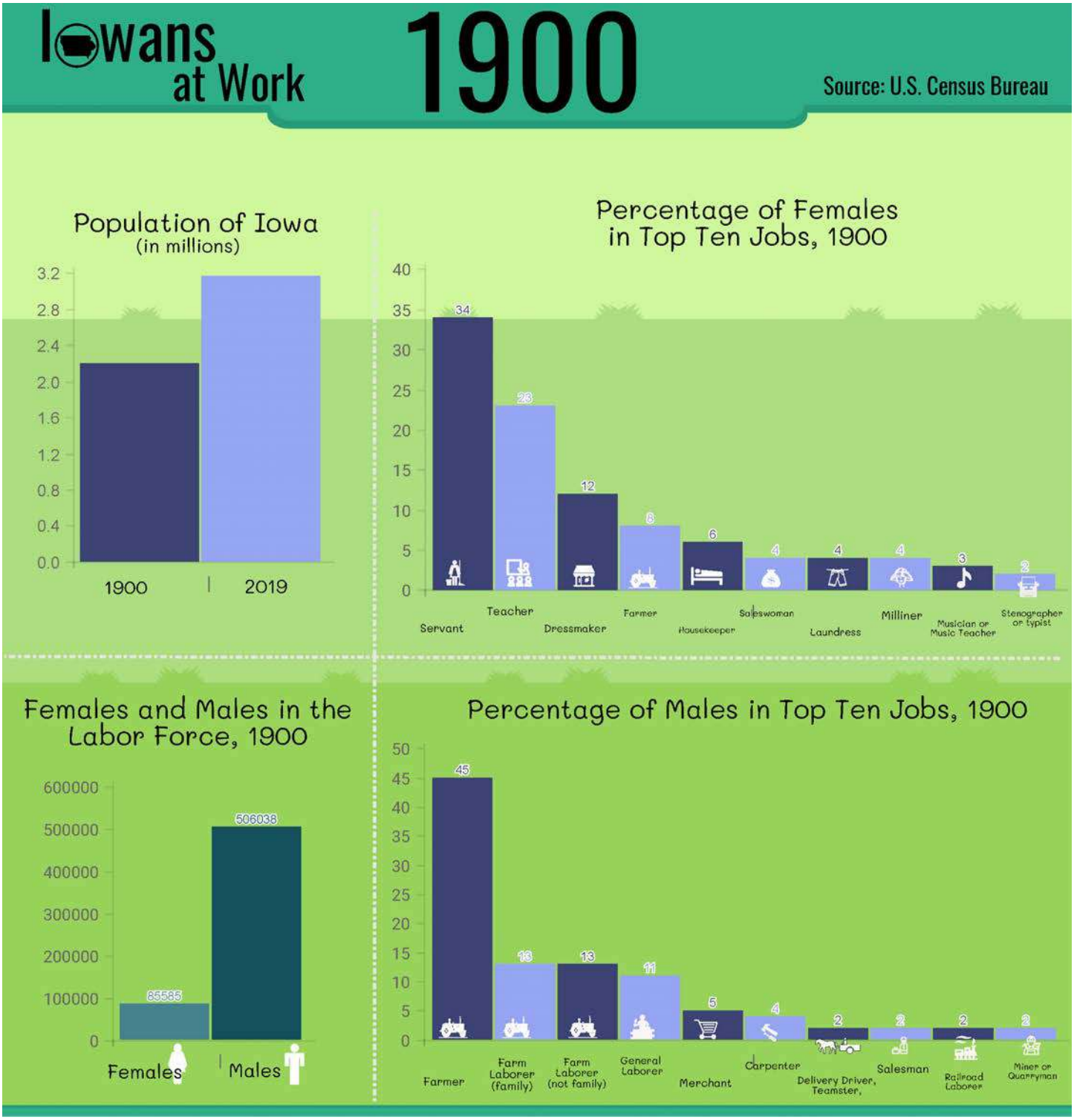
Iowa Population and Top Occupations in 1900

Instructions continued

6. **Suggested Step**: Write these generalization statements from Step 4 on sticky notes and put them on the graph. Use this math standard (1.MD.C.4) to complete this task. Organize, represent and interpret data with up to three categories: ask and answer questions about the total number of data points, how many in each category and how many more or less are in one category than in another.

7. **Formative Assessment:** Observe students as they compare information in the graphs. Are they understanding how two number sets compare? Listen to students as they answer and talk through any important misconceptions.

Iowa Population and Occupation Graphs



Courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau

People at Work on the Farm

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

Overview

In 1900, many Iowans worked on a farm to support their family and community. Analyze the primary sources to describe what life was like in 1900 for farm families in Iowa.

Source Backgrounds

Source 1: In 1900, most people in Iowa lived and worked on farms. From about 1850 to 1880, many people moved to the new state of Iowa and either bought land at a very good price ($1.25 an acre) or signed up for 160 acres for free through the Homestead Act. Andrew Orm Larson took this photograph of an Iowa farmer out plowing in preparation for planting the next crop in 1900.

Source 2: Farming was a very big job around 1900, requiring lots of hours and a great deal of hard work. Farmers typically raised crops such as corn, soybeans, and oats, and livestock such as cows, horses, hogs, and chickens. Often many people were needed to finish all of the jobs on a farm, and many times several family members all worked together to make the farm a success. This farmer, photographed in 1895, is seen with an empty bushel basket that likely carried the corn he brought to feed the hogs.

Source 3: Part of women's work on a frontier farm was taking care of livestock that provided food for her family. Milking was done twice a day, and then the milk had to be separated from the cream. Some farms used an icebox to keep milk and cream cold, but others used a cold spot in a nearby stream or a root cellar to keep the dairy products longer. The cow in this 1900 photo is tied to the log fence with a rope. Often it was the kids' job to bring the cow from the pasture when it was time for milking.

Instructions

1. Display and read aloud ***The Goldfinch* essay, "Farm Women."** Pause to discuss, as necessary. Ask students to retell what parts of the essay help them visualize what farm life was like in 1900. You will circle information from the essay related to students' observations.
2. Repeat Step 1 with ***The Goldfinch* essay, "Hired Girls and Boys."**
3. Now, you will introduce the primary sources to the class. Begin by displaying source 1, **"Man Plowing With Two-Horse Team, 1900."** Read the source background (above) to students. One at a time, ask them to make observations about what they see and how it relates to farming. Circle these observations on the image with a marker or highlighter.

Instructions continued on next page

Materials

- Three primary source images
- **"Farm Women" essay from *The Goldfinch***
- **"Hired Girls and Boys" essay from *The Goldfinch***
- Markers or highlighters

People at Work on the Farm

Instructions continued

4. Repeat Step 3 with the following two primary sources, **"Man Feeding Pigs in the Barnyard, ca. 1895"** and **"Mountain Milk Maids, 1900."** Consider having students make observations with a partner and then reporting back to the class.

5. **Formative Assessment**: While gathered as a class, ask students to "think, pair, share" to describe what life was like for Iowa farm families in 1900. Listen to students as they answer and talk through any important misconceptions.

Farm Women

EMILY Hawley Gillespie of rural Manchester, Iowa, farmed with her husband in the late nineteenth century. In addition to her regular housework, child care, sewing, and cooking tasks, Emily had many farming chores. She planted and tended the garden, took care of chickens, picked and preserved fresh berries, canned grapes, made cheese, husked corn, and cooked extra meals for threshers. To earn money, she churned and sold butter, trimmed hats, and raised and sold over 100 turkeys a year.

Like other Iowa farm women, Emily had the traditional duties of a wife and mother. Some of her farm chores provided her with extra money. Many farm women contributed their earnings to the cash income of the **farmstead** (farmland and buildings). Their work also brought other rewards. When women sold their homemade items, food, and produce, they could spend time socializing with friends and neighbors.

Men and women had separate and different jobs on the farm. While men and boys worked outside building fences, digging wells, planting and harvesting fields, women and girls had other responsibilities. Gardening, taking care of chickens and turkeys, and preparing food were the central farm chores for women.

The **division of labor** was not so rigid on the farm. Women did help in the fields when their husbands were sick or a hired hand quit. Matilda Paul plowed and milked when her husband became ill. When Matilda husked corn and dug potatoes, she put her youngest child in a large box for safety while she worked. "I shouldered my hoe and have worked out ever since," Matilda wrote her family. " . . . I wore a dress with my sunbonnet wrung out in water every few minutes and my dress also wet."



Women who lived on farms had many extra responsibilities. Many fed and took care of poultry like chickens and turkey. Then they sold the eggs and poultry.

Some women managed farms themselves when their husbands died or were away from the farm for a long time.

Many people think that farm women were isolated and lonely. But their work brought them in contact with other women. Women often watched each other's children, sewed for one another, visited town to sell their food and produce, or shared work. Harriet Brown Connor remembered working with a female neighbor. After the men brought a butchered hog into her kitchen, Connor and her friend picked hog guts "all day long."

With the money Emily Gillespie earned from selling homemade molasses and cheese, she purchased groceries and sewing supplies. Women used their extra income to buy schoolbooks for their children and machinery for the farm. Others even contributed to the purchase of a new farm. □

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Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Farm Women," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 9, 1986

Hired Girls and Boys

ELME KNEESKERN earned $1.50 per week to help neighboring farm women with chores in the late nineteenth century. She worked at farms within nine or ten miles of her family's home in northeastern Iowa.

Elme was a hired girl, or domestic servant. In 1880 almost one-half of the working women in Iowa were employed as domestic servants. Unlike a maid in a wealthy city family, hired girls in Iowa usually helped local farmers' wives during the busiest times of the year. During the summer and fall seasons, they helped farm women with the cooking. More meals were served to the extra hired hands (men who were paid to plow and harvest). During the spring and fall, hired girls worked day shifts to help clean houses or harvest crops.

Most hired girls were in their teens, although women of all ages worked as domestic servants. They were often treated like a member of the family. Hired girls sat down and ate with their employers' families. Others lived with their employers.

One midwestern magazine recommended that the hired girl act as an assistant "in all operations of the kitchen—washing dishes, ironing, baking, sweeping, making beds and cooking meals." The magazine also suggested that hired girls sew in the afternoons and help the boys milk the cows every night and morning. Iowa hired girls did many of those things.



Around the turn of the century, this Iowa girl hung up laundry on the clothes line. Hired girls were often responsible for washing, drying, and ironing clothing.

Young boys were also hired to help farmers. Their responsibilities were different from those of a hired girl. A hired boy's job did not usually include domestic duties. Instead, boys helped with slaughtering livestock, building and maintaining fences, taking care of crops, and planting trees.

Older women were included in the ranks of domestic servants. Many were paid as domestic servants to wash clothes. In 1873, Mary Hooper of Scott County paid her washer woman 75¢ a week to do the laundry.

For most hired girls, work lasted until they moved to town for a different job, returned to school, moved back in with their families in case of emergency or illness, or got married. □

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Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Hired Girls and Boys," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp.8, 1986

Farmer Plowing with a Two-Horse Team, ca. 1900



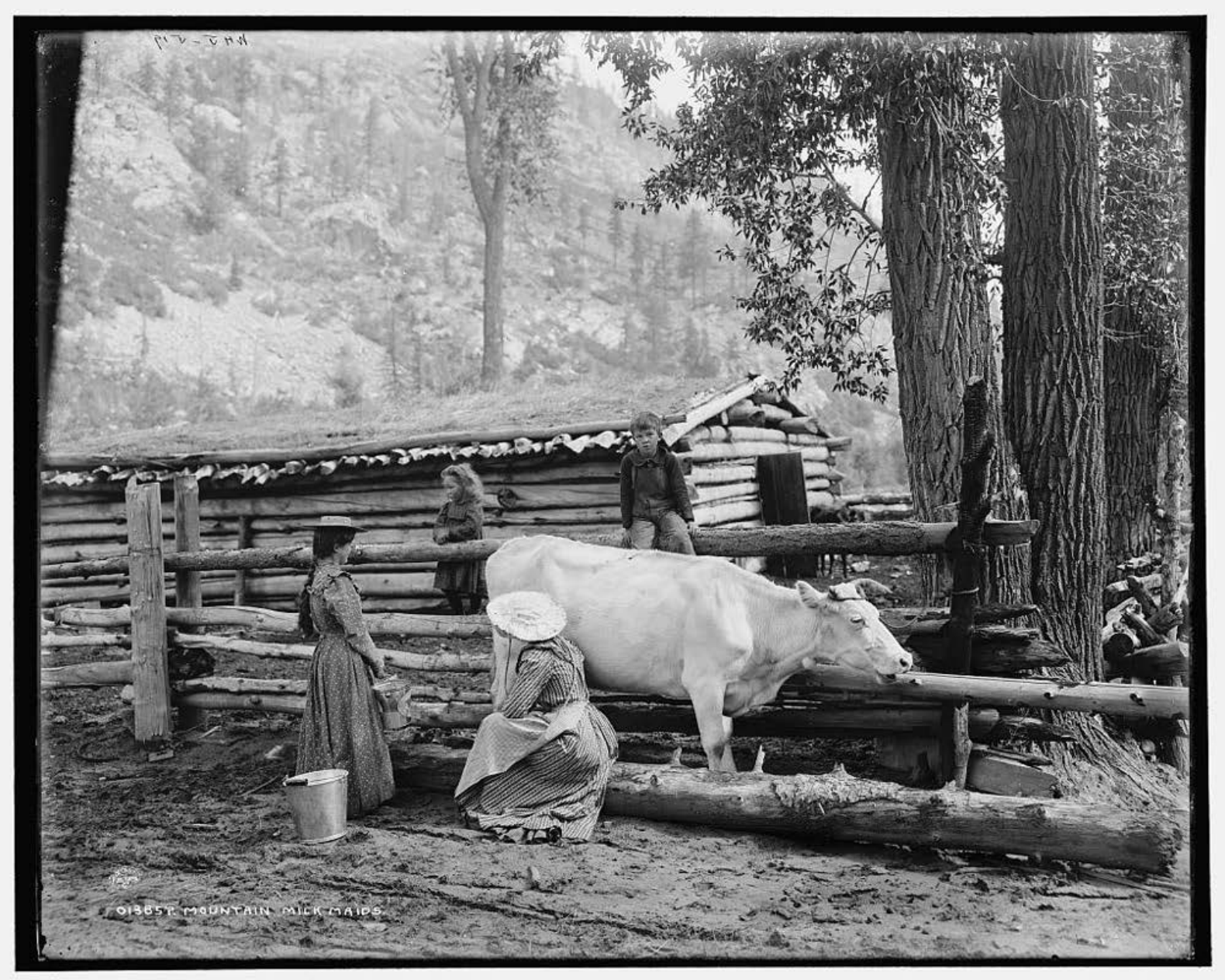
Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Larson, Andrew Orm, ca. 1900

Man Feeding Pigs in the Barnyard, ca. 1895



Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, ca. 1895

Mountain Milk Maids, ca. 1900



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Jackson, William H., "Mountain milk maids," ca. 1900

People at Work in Factories and Stores

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

Overview

In 1900, many Iowans worked in factories making goods such as cars, bricks and buttons or in stores selling goods such as food, shoes and furniture. Students will use primary sources to describe what working in stores and factories was like for Iowans at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Source Backgrounds

Source 1: General laborers did many things such as make bricks, operate a saw mill, build roads, paint buildings or several other jobs. Many of these workers were called "day laborers" and hired to complete a specific job. This image shows men outside the Des Moines Brick Company in 1900.

Source 2: Stores in 1900 were smaller than most of the stores we see today. In small towns, stores carried products such as clothes, food, wagon/machine/auto parts, dishes, tools and hats. In cities, stores specialized in certain kinds of products. This image shows the E.J. Crane Store in Richmond, Virginia. This specialty shop focused on watchmaking and jewelry.

Source 3: Carpenters built things such as furniture, tools, and buildings. Some carpentry projects were small, such as fixing a chair, and some were large, such as building a multi-story building. This image shows two men training to become carpenters by learning to use a saw to cut wood and a plane to make the wood smooth.

Source 4: As fashions became more elaborate and railroad systems made them more available throughout the United States, dressmakers transitioned from sewing by hand to using a sewing machine. In this image, Angelina Guinzali, 15 years old, is working as a dressmaker for Madame Ball, a dressmaker in Boston, Massachusetts.

Instructions

1. Display and read aloud ***The Goldfinch* essay, "In the Millinery Shop."** Pause to discuss, as necessary. Ask students to retell what parts of the essay help them visualize what 1900 factory and store work was like. Circle information from the essay related to students' observations.

2. Repeat Step 1 with ***The Goldfinch* essay, "Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory."**

3. Now, you will introduce the primary sources. Begin by displaying source 1, **"Men Outside the Des Moines Brick Company, ca. 1900."** Read the source background (above) aloud to students. One at a time, ask them to make observations about what they see and how it relates to factory work. Circle these observations on the image.

Instructions continued on next page

Materials

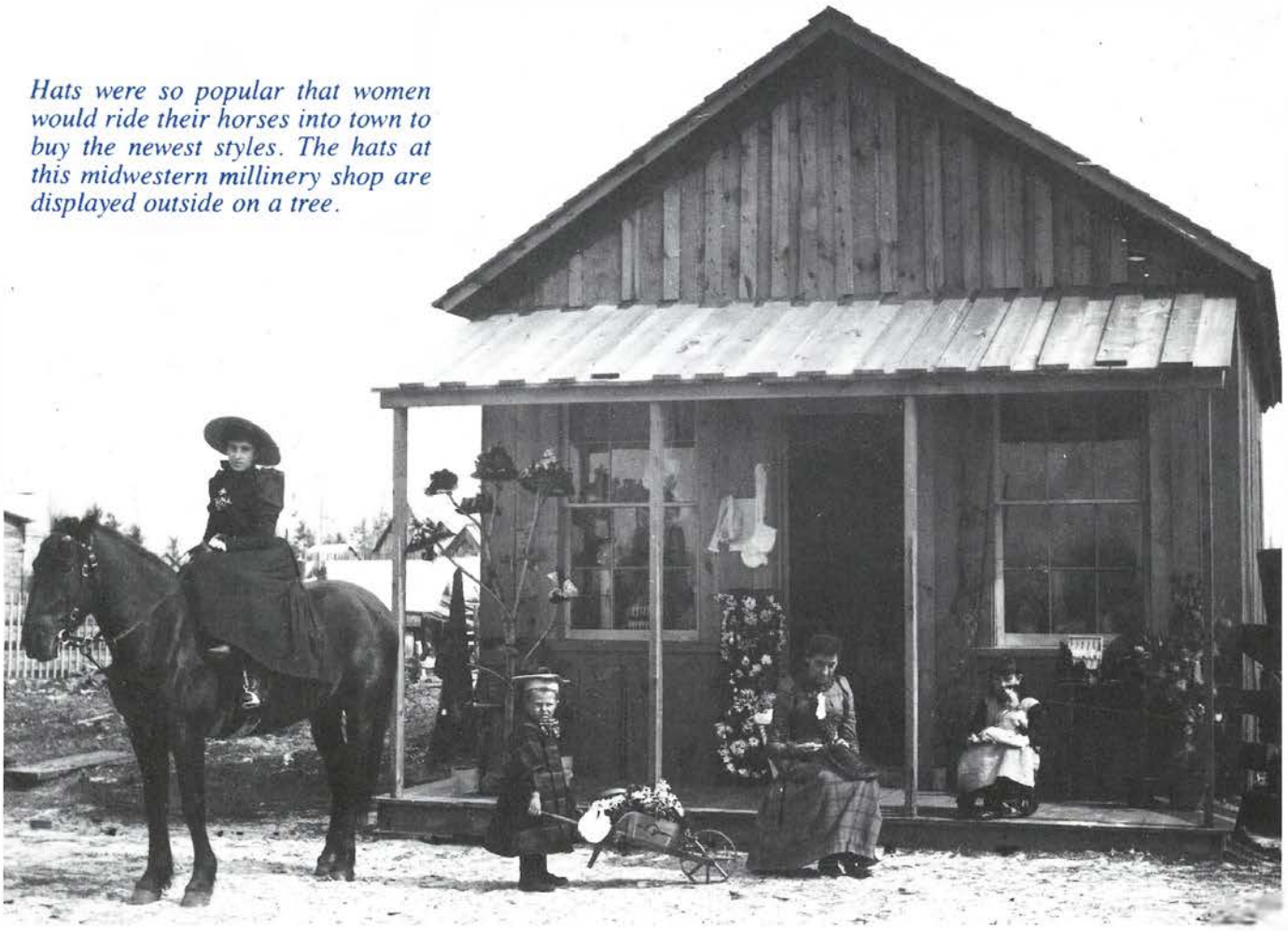
- Four primary source images
- **"In the Millinery Shop" essay from *The Goldfinch***
- **"Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory" essay from *The Goldfinch***
- Markers or highlighters

People at Work in Factories and Stores

Instructions continued

4. Repeat Step 3 with the following two primary sources, **"E.J. Crane, Watchmaker and Jewelry Store, in Richmond, Virginia, 1899"** and **"Dressmaker Angelina Guinzali in Boston, Massachusetts, January 25, 1917."** Consider having students make observations with a partner and then reporting back to the class.

5. **Formative Assessment**: While gathered as a class, ask students to "think, pair, share" to describe what working in factories and stores was like in 1900. Listen to students as they answer and talk through any important misconceptions.



Hats were so popular that women would ride their horses into town to buy the newest styles. The hats at this midwestern millinery shop are displayed outside on a tree.

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

In the Millinery Shop

TWENTY-YEAR-OLD Elizabeth Wright Heller sold hats in 1880 at Mrs. Ann Swezey's millinery shop in Marengo, Iowa. "It was fun to sell hats and I had very good luck at it," Heller recalled. "So I tried them on myself to show them off, and usually made a sale."

Hats were an important accessory for a nineteenth-century woman's wardrobe. Women wore a hat or bonnet whenever they left the house. Some women bought a new hat every season or for special occasions. While hats were available from general stores and mail-order catalogs, most women preferred buying individually designed hats at local millinery shops.

A **milliner** designed, trimmed, and sold hats and bonnets. Most nineteenth-century Iowa millinery shops were owned and managed by women. In the 1870s and 1880s, millinery work

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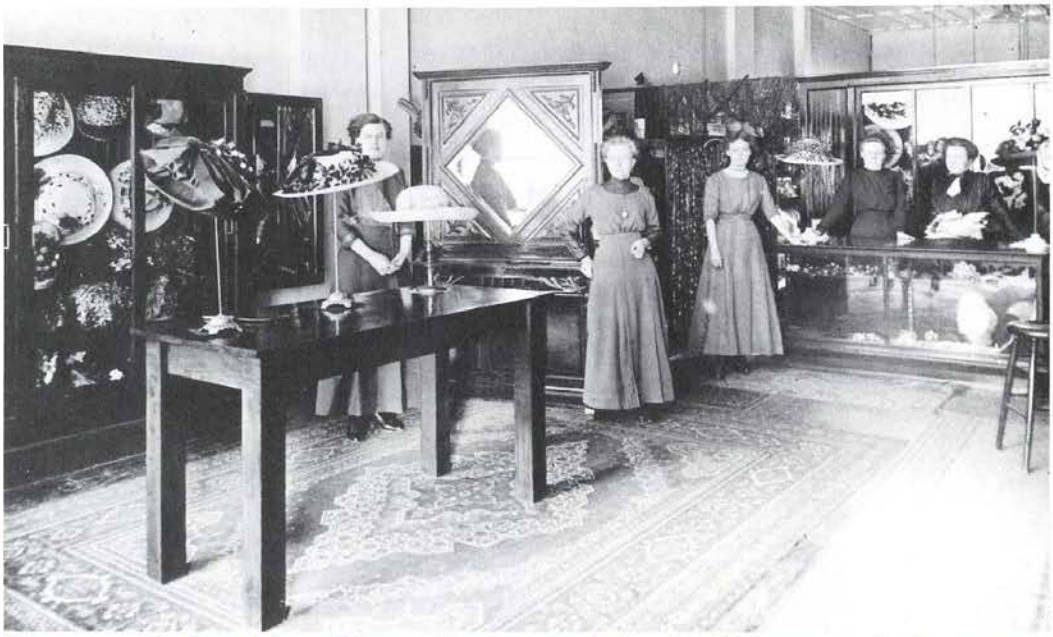
Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "In the Millinery Shop," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 13, 1986

"In the Millinery Shop" Essay from *The Goldfinch*



Gilbert Irish Collection, SHSI

Women at this Iowa City millinery shop are ready for the Christmas rush of customers.

was the third most popular employment for women.

The majority of milliners were single women. However, one study found that almost one-third of Iowa milliners in 1880 were married women.

Owning a millinery shop was one of the few socially accepted ways women could own businesses. Mostly men operated other types of stores. A milliner had a wide variety of duties. She was a buyer, designer, stocker, salesclerk, advertising manager, and accountant.

Milliners were creative in designing hats. Edith Jacks, a nineteenth-century milliner, remembered "fashioning those . . . wire frames with silk or lace; then decorating them with flower and vegetable gardens." Milliners also designed hats with colored feathers, satin ribbons, and clusters of artificial birds and fruit.

Besides hats, millinery shops sold ladies cuffs, collars, gloves, sewing supplies, fashion magazines, and the current dress patterns. The shops provided rural Iowa women with the current fashion styles of eastern cities. An 1873 newspaper advertisement for Pratt and Strub, an Iowa City millinery, read: "Nowhere else are the equals of our millinery offers to be found. We believe we are the only house where original New York Pattern Hats are to be found."

Some milliners traveled to eastern cities to buy new hats. Mrs. Whitcomb, a Hampton milliner, visited Chicago every spring to select new styles. "Pausing from biting off a thread or plying her needle to a bit of straw," remembered Oney Fred Sweet, "she told of her personal contacts with the famous ones of the metropolis."

Women also flocked to local millinery shops to meet friends and socialize. "Every afternoon the narrow space inside the walls of packing boxes was crowded. After school we girls always went there," wrote one novelist. "Married women began to call each other by their first names. In the milliner shop they chattered like girls, laughed, and spoke without thinking." □

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "In the Millinery Shop," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 14, 1986

"Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory" Essay from *The Goldfinch*



Women workers in button factories used dangerous machines to cut the shells into circles called blanks. Some women cut their fingers in the machines.

Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory

THE WORLD'S first fresh-water pearl button industry was started in Muscatine, Iowa, in 1891. A German immigrant named John F. Boepple used clam shells from the nearby Mississippi River to make inexpensive pearl buttons, hat pins, and charms. At the time, buttons made from ocean shells were popular, but expensive. Pearl buttons made from shells found in fresh-water rivers were easier to find and cheaper to make.

Within two years, Boepple's Muscatine Button Factory grew from one-room into a two-story brick business employing 100 people. Entire families dug clams and sold shells to the booming button industry. By 1897, there were 53 button-making companies in Muscatine. The town was nicknamed "Pearl City."

While Iowa was an agricultural state, industries were growing rapidly. The button industry was ranked as the fourth largest in the state for employing women workers. By 1900, more than 21,000 women held manufacturing and mechanical jobs. The 1900 census, for example, showed that women worked in carpet, boot and shoe factories, in knitting mills, and as glove makers and button makers.

In the Muscatine Button Factory, like most late-nineteenth century factories, men and women were **segregated** (separated) and had different jobs. People believed men should have the more physically demanding jobs. Traditional views about "men's work" and "women's work" also divided men and women.

In the button factory, men pulled the shells out of large vats and removed the remaining clam meat. Then they cut shells using automatic saw machines. Boys as young as 14 served as apprentice button cutters.

Some women worked machines that drilled

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Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 16, 1986

"Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory" Essay from *The Goldfinch*



Most women workers in button factories spent ten hours a day sorting buttons and placing them in boxes.

oles or polished buttons, but most women and irls were employed as sorters and button carders. orters separated and counted finished buttons. arders included many married women and girls. hey worked at home and sewed the finished uttons onto cardboard pieces. Their work was ften **repetitive** (doing the same thing over and ver) and dull.

Women were paid not by the number of hours ey worked, but by the number of buttons they rilled, polished, sorted, or sewed. This form of ayment called **piece rate** was common in most rn-of-the-century industries. It encouraged omen to work faster and longer and to bring ork home after hours. Employees already orked ten to twelve hours a day.

Button factory work was often hazardous for oth men and women. Iowa was one of the few tates in the U.S. with no laws concerning orkers' health and safety in the late nineteenth entury. Employees breathed thick shell dust that aused lung diseases. Drilling and pressing achines often cut off or gashed fingers.

Women were slowly stepping out of the home into the public work world. Like the women employed at the Muscatine Button Factory, many found their work tiring, low paying, and sometimes dangerous. □

Based on interviews with employers and employees in Iowa button factories around the turn of the century, O.D. Longstreth wrote a report in 1906. Read about the working conditions for women in button factories. Then answer the questions. *(Answers on page 23.)*

The inspiration and excitement of the crowd are very attractive to the young women. Where the button factories are established girls much prefer the factory to domestic employment.

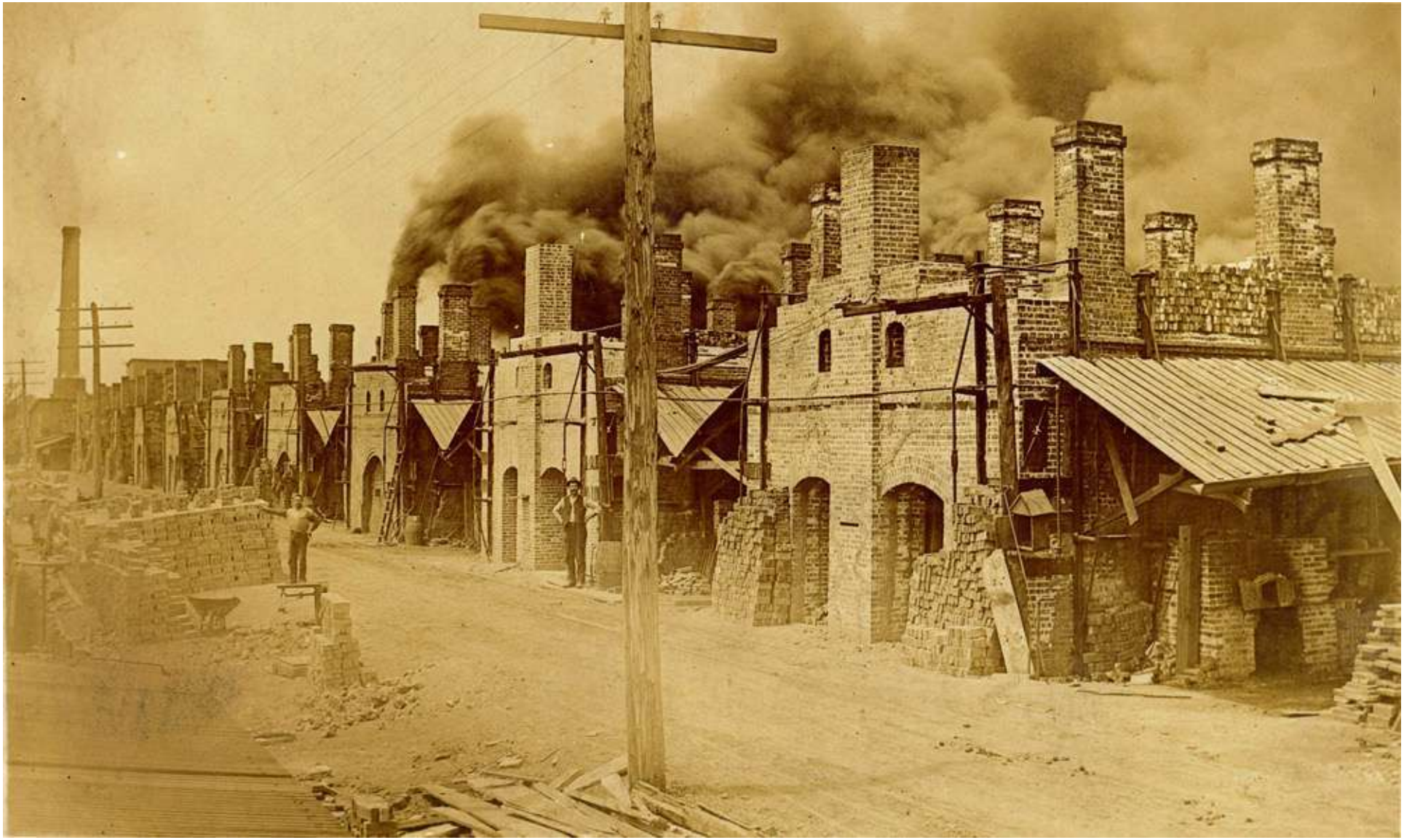
The work which the women do in this business has been done by them since the industry started. The men have come to regard it as women's work . . . The employers regard the women as more refined and [skillful] at the machine work than man could possible be. Since [the employer] can [hire] female labor cheaper than male help, he naturally encourages this view of the proper sphere. The work [requires] great accuracy, quickness of judgment and speed . . . and coordination of the mind, eye, hand, and body . . . this constantly for ten hours daily, must cause nervous harm . . .

Questions

1. According to employers, why are women good factory workers?
2. Why do you think women wanted to work in a factory?
3. Compare working in a button factory to working as a domestic servant. Which would you rather do? Why?

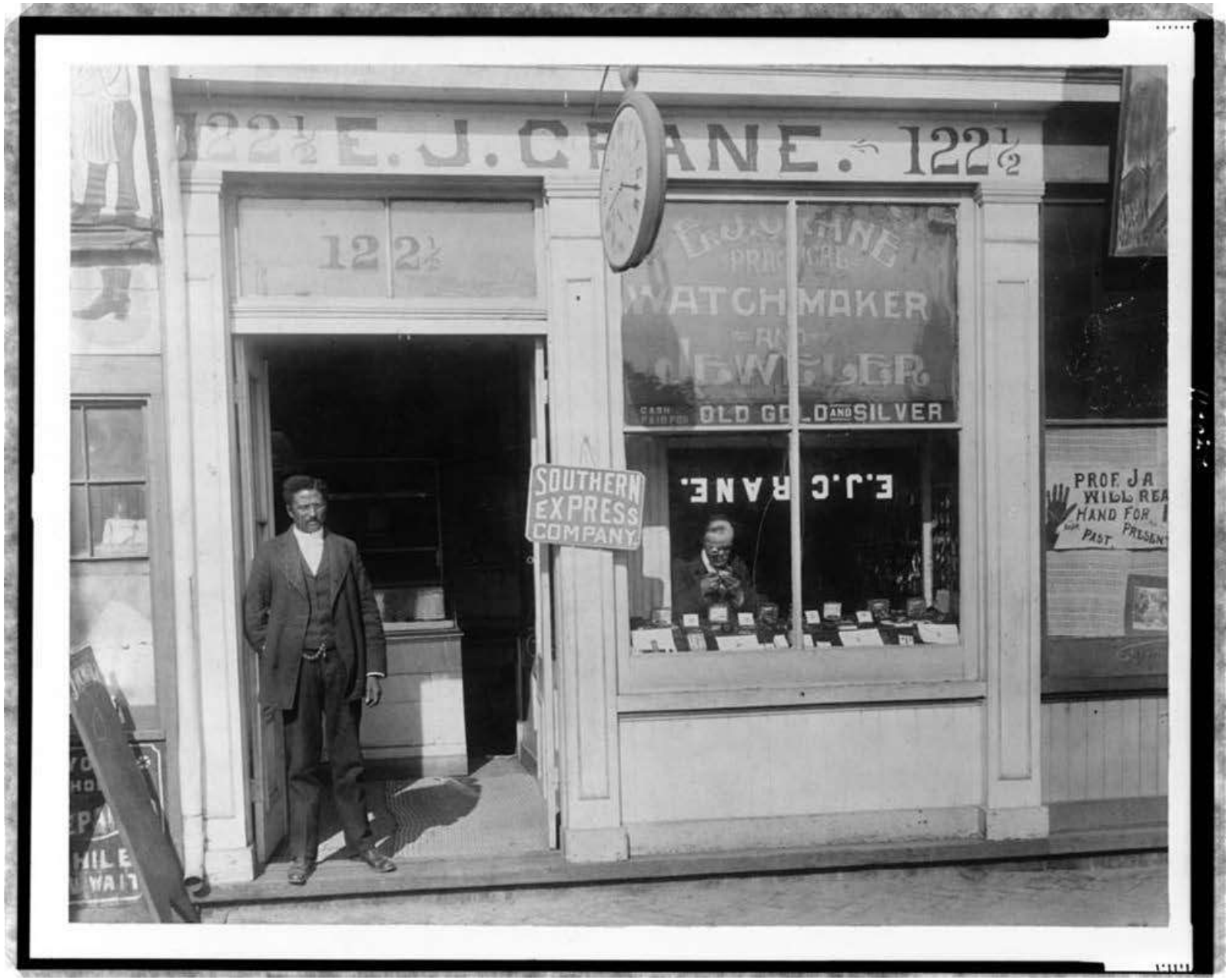
Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Muscatine's Pearl Button Factory," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 17, 1986

Men Outside the Des Moines Brick Company, ca. 1900



Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, ca. 1900

E.J. Crane, Watchmaker and Jewelry Store, in Richmond, Virginia, 1899



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "E.J. Crane, watchmaker and jewelry store with man working in window and man standing in doorway, Richmond, Virginia," 1899

Carpentering, November 1918



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Carpentering," November 1918

Dressmaker Angelina Guinzali in Boston, Massachusetts, January 25, 1917



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Jackson, William H., "Mountain milk maids," ca. 1900

People at Work in Schools

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

Overview

In 1900, many Iowans, especially women, worked as teachers in schools. Students will use primary sources to describe what working in schools was like for Iowans at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Source Background

By 1900, more children in Iowa were going to school. In rural areas, a one-room school had many grades learning together with one teacher. In urban areas a teacher had a class of students who were all in the same grade level. This image shows teachers with pupils at Whittier Primary School in Hampton, Virginia, around 1899. Students learned reading, writing and arithmetic and sometimes geography, needlepoint or Bible lessons. In rural areas, children were not required by law to attend school until 1902, and many of them stayed home to help with work on the farm.

Instructions

1. Display and read aloud ***The Goldfinch* essay, "Slates and Blackboards."** Pause to discuss, as necessary. Ask students to retell what parts of the essay help them visualize what it was like to work in schools in 1900. Circle information from the essay related to students' observations.

2. Now, you will introduce the primary source. Begin by displaying the image, **"Teacher and Students at Whittier Primary School in Hampton, Virginia, ca. 1899."** Read the source background (above) aloud to students. One at a time, ask them to make observations about what it was like to work in schools in 1900. Circle these observations on the image with a marker or highlighter.

3. **Formative Assessment:** While gathered as a class, ask students to "think, pair, share" to describe what work in schools was like in 1900. Listen to students as they answer and talk through any important misconceptions.

Materials

- **"Slates and Blackboards" essay from *The Goldfinch***
- **"Teacher and Students at Whittier Primary School in Hampton, Virginia" image**
- Markers or highlighters

Slates and Blackboards

IN EARLIER times, girls were denied an education because some people thought that their bodies were too weak and their brains too small. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this thinking changed. People believed girls should be educated so that they could be better wives and mothers.

Because women took care of children in their role as mother, teaching neatly fit into their "womanly duties." As men left teaching for

Teachers around the turn of the century often had students of all ages in their classrooms. School supplies were scarce in these early schools. How is this 1900 classroom different from your own?



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Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Slates and Blackboards," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 10, 1986

higher paying work in factories or farming, jobs opened up for women. Women, with less ways to earn cash wages, were paid less than men.

By 1880, teaching was the second most popular employment for Iowa women. Two-thirds of public school teachers were women. Many women wanted to escape what one girl called the "drudgery" of farm work. Others wanted to earn money to help support their family's income, or to pay for a brother or sister's education.

Riding Horseback to School

What was life like for teachers? Let's take a look at Alice Money Lawrence who lived on a farm near Albion. When she was 14 years old, Alice made $1.50 a week for taking care of sheep. She used the money to pay for tuition at the Albion Seminary (school) where she received a teaching certificate in 1866.

Alice's first teaching job was at a school in Grundy County, 16 miles from her home. She rode 45 minutes on horseback each way to school. Twelve students of all ages were in her class, but five left school when harvest began. Older farm boys usually helped with the fall harvest and spring planting. Because so many rural kids had to help with farm chores during these times, there were two school terms: "winter" and "summer." They each were about four months long between the harvest and planting seasons.

In 1868 Alice taught at another school. Teachers often moved from school to school. She instructed 40 students in a one-room Vienna Township schoolhouse. Students learned reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and geography. They had to memorize many facts. Students in nineteenth-century schools did not have colorful textbooks and magazines, maps, globes or films. Students brought whatever books they had from home. The only supplies found in most classrooms were slates and the blackboard in the front of the room.

Like other teachers, Alice "boarded" with a family. She paid for rent and food. She disliked these living arrangements because the house was dirty and her hostess could not cook well. Alice spent long hours alone at the schoolhouse reading and writing letters.

Despite its difficulties, teaching was rewarding for Alice. In the late 1860s, she wrote to her sister Sarah in Ohio:

> You ask if I like teaching. Oh, yes, the teaching part but not the discipline. I had to keep all my scholars but one in at recess today, and I had to whip one boy—the first punishment of that kind that has been necessary. Then it is so hard not to like some children better than others, and there are so many little disputes to settle. But I do like teaching.

In 1869, Alice ended her teaching career. She married a doctor the following year. For many women like Alice, teaching was not a lifetime career. They taught only until they married.

Yet, other women did pursue lifelong careers in education as teachers, principals, and school superintendents. Some women teachers went on to careers in professional fields. Education and teaching had helped to open once-forbidden doors to business, law, and medicine. □

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Slates and Blackboards," The Goldfinch, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 11, 1986

Teacher and Students at Whittier Primary School in Hampton, Virginia, ca. 1899



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Johnston, Frances B. "Thanksgiving Day Lesson at Whittier," ca. 1899

People at Work in Domestic Service

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

Overview

In 1900, many Iowans, especially women, made a living as domestic workers. Students will use primary sources to describe what working in other people's homes was like for Iowans in domestic service.

Source Backgrounds

Source 1: In 1900, servants took care of the household, like in this image, and sometimes the people who lived there. Servants might dust, mop floors, tend fires, run errands and do the shopping, wash laundry, help family members with what they needed and sometimes, do the cooking. Some servants lived with the family they worked for, and sometimes they lived in another house away from the family.

Source 2: In 1900, the work of housekeepers and servants probably looked very similar. In larger homes, more hired help meant that they could specialize and do certain tasks. A housekeeper would be in charge of taking care of the house, cleaning, decorating, repairing household items and sometimes, they were also the cook. The cook in this image is from a very famous house, the White House in Washington, D.C., where the U.S. president lives.

Instructions

1. Display ***The Goldfinch* essay, "A Job for the Summer."** Explain to students that this text is historical fiction, not an informational article. Historical fiction means the author used true facts as part of the made-up story. Read the text aloud and pause to discuss, as necessary.
2. Ask students to retell what parts of the essay help them visualize what working in other people's homes was like in 1900. Circle information from the essay related to students' observations.
3. Now, you will introduce the primary sources. Begin by displaying source 1, **"Servants in Bulloch Hall's Dining Room."** Read the source background (above) aloud. One at a time, ask them to make observations about what working in other people's homes was like in 1900. Circle these observations on the image with a marker or highlighter.
4. Repeat Step 3 for the image, **"Cook in White House Kitchen, ca. 1890."** Consider having students make observations with a partner and then reporting back to the class.
5. **Formative Assessment**: As a class, ask students to "think, pair, share" to describe what it was like to work in other people's homes. Listen to students as they answer and talk through any important misconceptions.

Materials

- **"A Job for the Summer" essay from *The Goldfinch***
- **"Servants" image**
- **"Cook in White House Kitchen" image**
- Markers or highlighters

A JOB FOR THE SUMMER

Millie K. Frese

In the summer of 1920, a young Iowa girl left home to work for a farm family. Will the experience be a good one?

Lena Richards was going on 13. She'd lived in town all her life, with her parents in the bungalow behind the creamery her father managed. She'd never been away from home before by herself. That's why Lena was so surprised when her mother came home with this news:

"Mrs. Graham gave birth to twins last week. She's looking to hire someone to help out for a spell."

Mama always thought Lena was missing out, not having any brothers or sisters around. Working for the Grahams would be a good experience, she reasoned. Mama called it an opportunity. Papa, after a bit of convincing, agreed.

So that's how Lena found herself in the front seat of Mr. Graham's truck early on the first Monday morning of summer vacation. She clutched her suitcase in her lap on the way to her very first job.

"The house sits behind that clump of pines," Mr. Graham said, turning up a bumpy dirt lane toward his place. "We raise a little of this, a little of that," he continued, cheerfully talking about corn, oats, wheat, milk cows, sheep, pigs, and —

Chickens! What a cackle they made scurrying out of the way when Mr. Graham pulled the truck into the yard.

A wiry old man with a white pointed beard opened Lena's door and reached for her suitcase.

"Pa, this is Lena," Mr. Graham said.

"She don't look like much of a farmhand to me," Old Mr. Graham snapped. "She'll have to earn her keep around here like the rest of us." Old Mr. Graham didn't mince words and she'd heard that he didn't waste money. Lena couldn't tell if he was smiling or not as he turned away.

"Don't mind Pa," Mr. Graham said as he led Lena indoors. "It's the roosters you gotta look out for around here!"

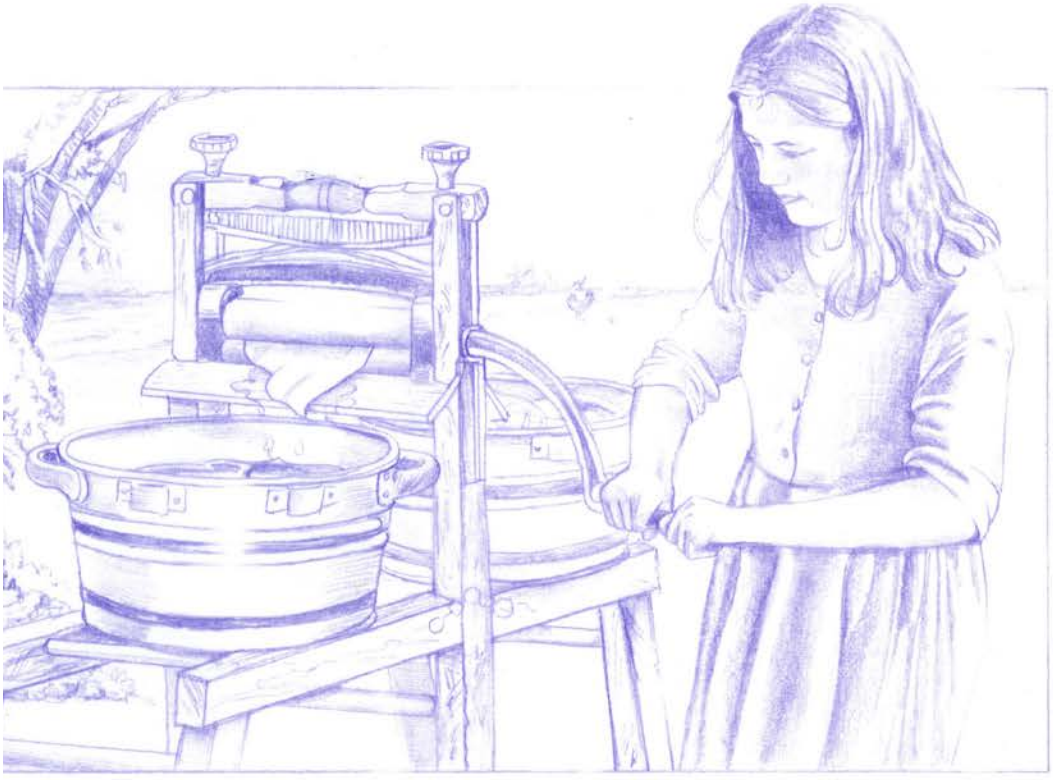
Lena didn't have a chance to ask what he meant. They were already in the kitchen and Mrs. Graham, relieved to see her new helper, had things for Lena to do.

"The wash water's hot," Mrs. Graham said, taking a steaming copper boiler off the stove. Lena followed



Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Frese, Millie K.,"A Job for the Summer," The Goldfinch, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 27, 1996

"A Job for the Summer" Essay from *The Goldfinch*



Mrs. Graham to the wringer washer and piles of dirty laundry on the back porch. She rolled up her sleeves and went to work.

Hot sudsy water splattered the front of Lena's dress as she washed and rinsed the laundry. The shirts. The pants. The dresses. The underclothes. The towels. The diapers. Her arms ached from cranking the washing machine and from lugging fresh kettles of hot water. They ached from stretching to clip the heavy, wet wash onto the clotheslines out by the vegetable garden. Sweat streaked her face. Damp auburn curls stuck uncomfortably to her forehead. It was almost lunch time when she finished.

Lena decided she didn't like Mondays on the farm much at all.

The men came in from cultivating corn; they watered the horses, then sat down to eat. What a feast! Lena helped serve a salad made with fresh greens, fried chicken, new potatoes and garden peas, cold milk, warm rhubarb pie, stacks of sliced homemade bread, and pitchers of cold milk.

Mr. Graham gave thanks for the meal, for the land that provided the food, and for the hands that prepared it. Then they ate until they could hold no more, with Lena refilling the food platters for the hungry workers. After the men were finished eating, it was Lena and Mrs. Graham's turn. They enjoyed a quick meal, then cleared the table and washed the dishes.

During lunch, the babies slept; when the dishes were done, Mrs. Graham fed one while Lena rocked the other on the shady front porch.

"We always rest awhile after lunch," Mrs. Graham explained. "Then it's time to gather eggs." She told Lena where to find the baskets, how to line them with handfuls of grass to cushion the eggs, and where to find the chicken feed.

Lena had never been inside a chicken coop before. She stepped cautiously through the door. A few hens remained on their nests until Lena shooed them away.

"Stubborn birds," she muttered. The eggs she found were warm and smooth to her touch. Some were white, others brown or creamy colored. Soon the basket was full.

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Frese, Millie K.,"A Job for the Summer," The Goldfinch, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 27, 1996

"A Job for the Summer" Essay from *The Goldfinch*

Lena blinked hard as she stepped back out into the afternoon sun. In the moment it took her eyes to readjust, a big black-feathered rooster with a bright red comb collided, scratching and pecking, into the back of her legs. Lena screamed. The rooster crowed. The hens beat the air with their wings.

"Those roosters are mean as the dickens!" Old Mr. Graham hollered above the noise. He ran toward Lena, swatting the fierce bird with a broom. Lena fought back tears as she saw blood trickle down her leg where the rooster had gashed her calf. She was afraid to look into the basket of eggs.

"No harm done," Old Mr. Graham said, noticing a half dozen or so broken eggs oozing from the basket. He helped Lena to her feet and put his arm around her shoulders.

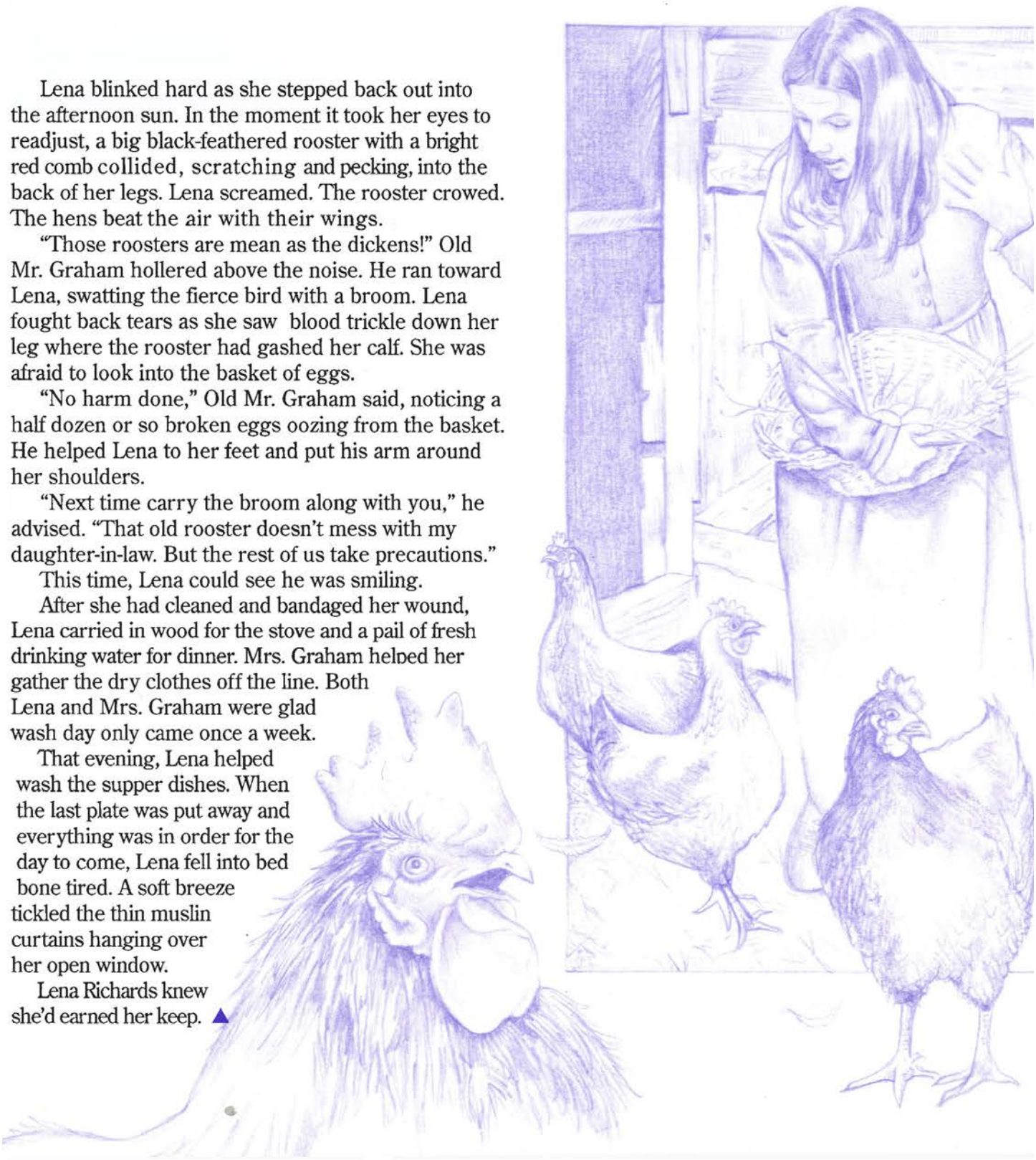
"Next time carry the broom along with you," he advised. "That old rooster doesn't mess with my daughter-in-law. But the rest of us take precautions."

This time, Lena could see he was smiling.

After she had cleaned and bandaged her wound, Lena carried in wood for the stove and a pail of fresh drinking water for dinner. Mrs. Graham helped her gather the dry clothes off the line. Both Lena and Mrs. Graham were glad wash day only came once a week.

That evening, Lena helped wash the supper dishes. When the last plate was put away and everything was in order for the day to come, Lena fell into bed bone tired. A soft breeze tickled the thin muslin curtains hanging over her open window.

Lena Richards knew she'd earned her keep. ▲



Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Frese, Millie K.,"A Job for the Summer," The Goldfinch, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 27, 1996

Servants in Bulloch Hall's Dining Room in Roswell, Georgia, March 27, 1907



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Paxton, William M., "The house maid," between 1900 and 1920

Cook in White House Kitchen, ca. 1890



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Johnston, Frances B., "Cook in White House kitchen," ca. 1890

Lesson Summative Assessment

Unit Compelling Question

How do Iowans work to provide for themselves, their families and their communities?

Unit Supporting Question

How did Iowans make a living to support their families and communities in 1900 according to census records?

Instructions

1. Distribute the **lesson summative assessment worksheet** to each student or set up a rotating station where each student dictates their answers to an adult.
2. This assessment has two parts. First, students will look at a primary source image that shows a work setting from each of the places talked about in this unit (school, store, home, factory and farm). They will draw a line to connect the photo to its correct label. This measures understanding of historical context and specifically place.
3. Then for the second part, students will write or dictate a claim about how work in 1900 compares to work today. This measures students' ability to compare and contrast life today with life long ago.

Assessment Scoring Options

Proficient	Claim shows understanding of how Iowans made a living in 1900 compared to today (possible answers: people did more of the work and not machines, kids did many jobs, was the same kind of job as some people do today, etc.)
Developing	Mixture of some accurate and some inaccurate ideas
Beginning	Unable to write/draw any ideas in the given time and/or ideas are very inaccurate

Lesson Summative Assessment Worksheet

This is an example worksheet that corresponds with the instructions for the lesson summative assessment. This version of the worksheet is for you, the educator, to fill out, add notes and utilize. A version of this worksheet is available for reproduction to students in this topic's Student Materials PDF.

Directions: Draw a line from the photograph to the word that tells where that kind of work is happening.


Courtesy of Library of Congress


Courtesy of Library of Congress

School

Store

Home

Factory

Farm


Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa


Courtesy of Library of Congress


Courtesy of Library of Congress

Directions: Write one sentence to answer the question below.

How does work in 1900 compare to work today?

Vocabulary Flashcards

READ IOWA HISTORY

Goods

READ IOWA HISTORY

Factory

READ IOWA HISTORY

READ IOWA HISTORY

Goods

A good is an item that someone has made. Goods are items you buy, such as food, clothing, toys, furniture and toothpaste.

Factory

A factory is a business where people use tools and machines to make lots of the same kind of good (product).

Additional Resources for Educators

People at Work Primary Source Set
This is a digital collection of primary and secondary sources that explores how work evolved for Americans from 1900 to present-day.

"Iowa: a State of Work," from *The Goldfinch*, 1996
Amy Roth wrote this article for the Summer 1996 edition of *The Goldfinch: Iowa History for Young People*. This article explains different eras of work in Iowa over time, including in agriculture and manufacturing.

Multiple Graphs, Charts and Graphics Featuring Iowa's Population and Occupation
Willis Goudy, a professor of sociology at Iowa State University, published his 2008 book, "Iowa's Numbers: 150 Years of Decennial Census Data With a Glance to the Future." Multiple charts and graphs from the book and other sources are looking at Iowa's population and popular occupation in rural and urban areas in this additional resource.

"Who Worked Where?" from *The Goldfinch*, 1996
This excerpt from *The Goldfinch: Iowa History for Young People* includes a mapping activity to meet standard SS.1.16. and connect with this unit of study about work.

Photo Collection: Top Ten Occupations for Men in Iowa (1900 to 2000)
This document features images of the top 10 occupations self-reported by Iowans who identified as male for 1900, 1950 and 2000.

Photo Collection: Top Ten Occupations for Women in Iowa (1900-2000)
This document features images of the top 10 occupations self-reported by Iowans who identified as female for 1900, 1950 and 2000.