

## Seeking Justice: The Leo Frank Case Revisited Growth of the Cities and the Leo Frank Case

### **Overview:**

The purpose of this lesson is to trace the growth of American cities at the turn of the century and to see how new advances and new problems played a role in the Leo Frank Case.

### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Identify reasons for the growth of American cities at the turn of the century
- Evaluate how the influx of immigrants had an effect on life in American cities at the turn of the century
- Understand how industry lured workers to cities
- Draw conclusions about the types of problems that arose from rapid population growth in America's cities
- Identify ways in which those problems could be addressed

### **Resources and Materials:**

Photographs of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City

Photograph of mill workers in Atlanta

Photograph of Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill in Atlanta

Letter written by Abraham Lincoln: On the Know Nothing Party

Photograph of strikers from Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill, 1914

Websites: <http://www.trivia-library.com/a/a-list-of-famous-inventions-and-inventors.htm>

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

[http://www.tenement.org/encyclopedia/nativism\\_discrim.htm](http://www.tenement.org/encyclopedia/nativism_discrim.htm)

### **Activities:**

1. Read the Historical Overview on Growth of the Cities at the Turn of the Century
2. Research some of the new inventions which were created from 1865 to 1920. You may use your own sources or the following website:  
<http://www.trivia-library.com/a/a-list-of-famous-inventions-and-inventors.htm>  
List at least 10 inventions, the inventors, the year they were invented, and explain how they improved the quality of life of Americans living during that period.
3. Using the website: <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/> write a report about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire.
  - When did the fire occur?
  - Why couldn't the workers escape from the building?
  - Address the following questions:
    - How many died in the fire?
    - How many were female?
    - Can you tell how many were immigrants?

- How old were most of the victims?
- What was the public reaction to the fire?
- What changes were demanded after the tragedy?
- What changes were actually implemented after the tragedy?

4. Research the Nativist movement in America using the following website:  
[http://www.tenement.org/encyclopedia/nativism\\_discrim.htm](http://www.tenement.org/encyclopedia/nativism_discrim.htm) .

- What was the Nativist Movement?
- To what was this movement a response?
- To what kinds of prejudices were immigrants subjected?
- Compare and contrast the Nativist Movement and how Americans today are reacting to immigration into the United States.
- Research how countries like Great Britain and France are dealing with immigration issues today.

4. Write an article about the deteriorating condition of America's cities at the turn of the century. Make at least 3 proposals about what planners and politicians could do to improve life in the city.

**On the Know-Nothing Party (anti-immigrant party)  
Letter to Joshua F. Speed  
by Abraham Lincoln  
August 24, 1855**

I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of Negroes, be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we begin by declaring that "all men are created equal." We now practically read it "all men are created equal, except negroes." When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read "all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics." When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty-to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.

May 1914 .....

Second labor strike at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills.



*Strike organizers established a tent colony for mill workers, August 1914.*

*Courtesy of the George Meany Memorial Archives*



Female textile workers at Felton Bag and Cotton Mill, 1915.  
Permission of the Georgia Institute of Technology Library and Information Center



The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was a building which was considered to be fireproof. In fact, there had been other fires in the building before the tragedy.

## Growth of the Cities at the Turn of the Century

### **Historical Overview:**

After Reconstruction, widespread changes took place, not just in the South, but in cities all over the United States. These changes included the arrival of waves of immigrants from Western Europe, but also from Central and Eastern Europe, and Asia. These immigrants contributed to significant changes in the populations of America's cities. Their needs dictated changes in housing, the job market, transportation and social and community services. New inventions, meant to improve the everyday lives of Americans, also contributed to these changes. Indoor plumbing, the telephone, the electric light and the automobile reshaped jobs, homes and cities. By the early 1900s Americans struggled to keep up with these changes and demands.

The diversity of these new Americans put a burden on the infrastructure of American cities. New and inexpensive types of housing – tenements – became the trend in city residences for immigrants. These buildings were often poorly and hastily constructed, providing little in the way of space, sanitary facilities, privacy and safety. Epidemics plagued these densely populated spaces. Fires could break out at any time and residents had little opportunity to escape the blazes. Density of population also led to an increase in crime in tenement communities. Although electric lights had recently been invented, not all city streets had been updated with this crime deterrent. The city police and fire departments and sanitation facilities were stretched beyond their limits. They had neither the manpower nor equipment to adequately protect the expanding populations of the cities. This rapid growth made American cities ripe for disaster.

The job market in America's industrial cities often welcomed the new immigrants with low paying jobs in dangerous conditions. Young and old, many of whom could not speak English, toiled in sweatshops for meager salaries. Factory owners were motivated to increase profits by offering low pay for long hours. New innovations in industry continued to increase the need for unskilled labor and these new Americans became an integral part of this labor pool.

Community activists attempted to address the problems of the immigrants and the cities in which they lived. They wrote scathing editorials and articles about conditions in the tenements and factories. Settlement houses were neighborhood welfare institutions, generally in poor areas of the city, where employees tried to improve social conditions by providing community services and cooperation. They provided language lessons and opportunities for new Americans to learn about their new country. Activists lobbied for increased and improved public services. Through the written word and photography, they revealed the abuses of child labor. Labor organizers tried to improve working conditions, but they understood the power of the factory owners. They realized that the only way they could stand up for workers was to organize them into labor unions. Through the power of their numbers they attempted to make their voices heard.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a time of sweeping change and the changes in America's cities created significant improvements and hardships to which Americans would take decades to adapt.