



ENGLISH

**American
Tapestry**

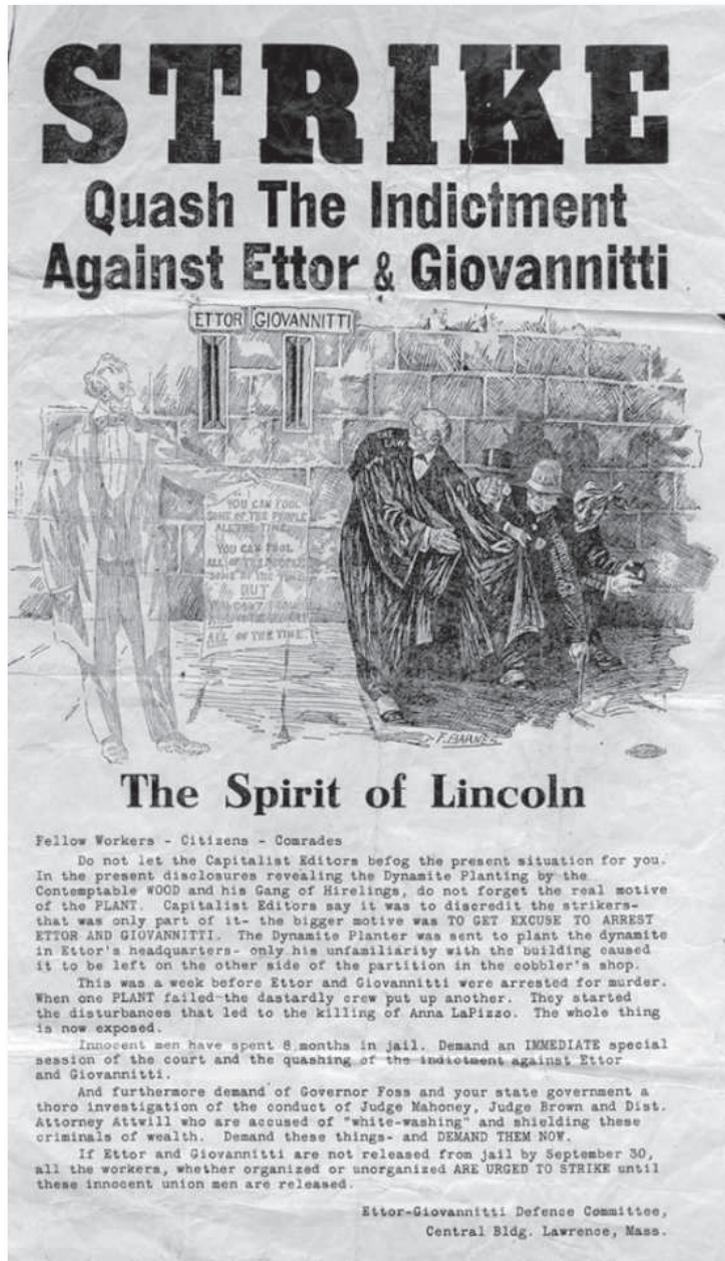
VERSION

WAKE UP TO HISTORY!
Participate • Debate • Decide

TheatreEspresso 

American Tapestry:
Immigrant Children of the Bread and Roses Strike

What Happened?



In January of 1912, a Massachusetts labor law reduced the workweek from fifty-six to fifty-four hours. Mill owners reduced the salaries of struggling men, women and children who lived and worked under miserable conditions. The pay reduction increased tensions between workers and mill owners. As a result, thousands of immigrant workers speaking twenty-five different languages joined forces to fight for justice in what was later known as the Bread and Roses Strike. The workers' demands were: A pay increase of 15%, overtime pay for people who work more than 54 hours per week, and no punishment of workers who went on strike after they returned to their jobs.

The winter strike meant that workers had little money for food and other necessities. In February, families attempted to relocate some of the children from Lawrence to other cities for their health and safety. Violence between strikers and local police reached a dangerous level. In one clash, police used brutal force to prevent parents from putting their children on a train to Philadelphia. In March of 1912, a Congressional investigation into conditions at the mills was launched and a delegation of child strikers from Lawrence testified in Washington D.C.

At the hearing, strikers testified about the poor working and living conditions in Lawrence, and asked that the mill owners grant their demands. Representatives from the mills testified that workers were paid fairly, according to their skill level. They argued that mill owners couldn't afford to pay their workers more, and if they were forced to do so the mills would go out of business, leaving thousands of workers unemployed. They claimed that union leaders from outside of Lawrence started the strike, and that many workers were intimidated to join once it started.

American Tapestry transports audiences to the Congressional hearings of March 1912. As members of the Congressional committee charged with investigating conditions in Lawrence, you will decide how to end the strike and improve conditions for working families. You will witness key moments of these dramatic events, question witnesses, sift through conflicting testimony, debate the issues with your classmates, and vote on a solution.

Questions to consider

- Should companies be held responsible for the health and well-being of their workers? If so, under what condition? If not, why?
- Is it fair for people from outside of a community to put workers' livelihood at risk for a larger cause?
- How are children and other vulnerable people affected by a wide-spread conflict such as the Bread and Roses strike?
- Should people give up on a strike when it affects the health and safety of their family?
- How can opposing sides work together to resolve a conflict?

Arguments for Workers	Arguments for Mill Owners

January 1, 1912: The Massachusetts legislature passes a new labor law reducing the work week from 56 hours to 54. To make up for the loss of profits, Mill owners in Lawrence and elsewhere decide to decrease weekly wages and speed up their machines.

January 12, 1912: A strike is officially declared at the Lawrence mills in response to the decrease in wages and the unsafe working conditions created by faster machines.

January 13, 1912: Lawrence's Mayor deputizes 20 firemen as police officers. By the following week, approximately 800 men served as a militia.

January 20, 1912: Packages containing dynamite are found in three Lawrence locations. A Syrian man linked to the mill workers is arrested as the mastermind of the dynamite plot. It is later discovered that the former mayor's son John Breen planted the dynamite to make it appear as though the strikers were using violence.

January 26, 1912: Mill owner William Wood agrees to meet with strike leader Joseph Ettor to discuss strikers' demands.

January 29, 1912: Anna LoPizzo, age 33, is killed by a stray bullet while passing a clash between strikers and police near her home.

February 10, 1912: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn helps arrange for 150 children to be sent to live with sympathetic families who live in other states. The children arrive safely in New York and Vermont.

February 24, 1912: Armed militia and police gather at the train station to prevent striking families from putting another group of children on a train to Boston and Philadelphia. Police arrest 15 of the 46 children present and several parents.

February 26, 1912: As a result of press coverage of the violence at the train station, the House Committee on Rules decides to investigate the strike. Representatives from both sides of the conflict are called to testify.

Timeline Reflection Questions

1. What were some of the reasons for the Lawrence strike?
2. List three things that happened as a result of the strike.
3. How were children affected by the strike?
4. Why were some people suspicious of the striking workers?

American Federation of Labor (AFL): one of the first labor unions in the United States, formed in 1886 under the leadership of Samuel Gompers. Women, former slaves, and immigrants were not allowed to join the union.

Anarchist: a person who believes in the elimination of government in favor of a social system based on voluntary cooperation.

Exodus: the departure of a large number of people. This term was used to describe the movement of the Lawrence children to New York City during the Bread and Roses Strike.

Foreman: a person in charge of a department or group of people in a factory.

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW): also known as the Wobblies, this labor union provided support and leadership to the Lawrence strikers in 1912, and particularly reached out to immigrants and their families.

Labor Union: an organization formed for the purpose of maintaining fair wages, benefits, and good working conditions.

Militia: a group of volunteer citizens enrolled as soldiers, who are called upon during a time of emergency.

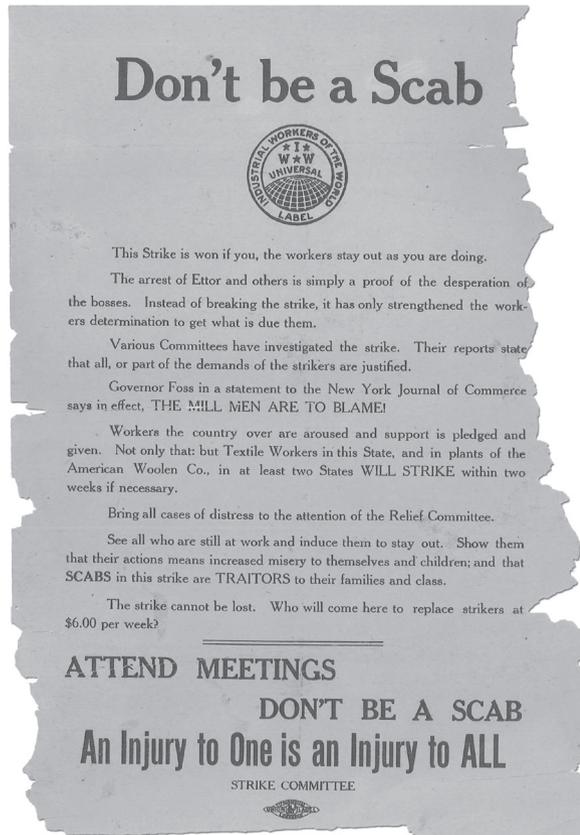
Overtime: work done beyond an employee's regular working hours.

Picket Line: a line of strikers or protesters outside a place of business. This tactic was used for the first time in New England during the Bread and Roses Strike.

Scab: a worker who refuses to join a labor union, participate in a strike, and takes a striking worker's place on the job.

Strike: to suspend work until employees' demands are met.

Wage: the amount of money an employee is paid, usually per hour.



Russian

Я не понимаю (Ya nee pahneemayoo) I don't understand.
Галубчик (galoopchik) little dove
Нет (nyet) no
Емо все (Etta vsyaw!) That's it!
Милый (mealy) dear

Italian

Dio mio! Che giornata! My God! What a day!
Ah, miei piedi! Ah, my feet!
Ai. é 'na disgraziata. That's a shame!
Cosa? What?
Mo ch'pozzu fare? What am I supposed to do?
tesora darling
na brava ragazza a nice girl
mi dispiace I'm sorry
Buonna notte Goodnight
Si, certo Yes, of course
e niente it's nothing
tanti soldi a lot of money
aspetta wait
polizia police
grazie thank you
sciopero strike
Tutto sarà bene! Everything's going to be fine!
ciao goodbye
carina dear
Lasciate le macchine! Leave the machines!
Più pane! More bread!

Polish

Za niskie wypłaty! Short pay!
Przestajmy pracować! Stop working!
Strajk! Strike!
Więcej chleba! More bread!
Witaj moja droga Hello my dear
Tak Yes
Kocham cie! I love you!
Po co? Why?

Union Leaders

JOSEPH ETTOR, known as “Smiling Joe,” began leading the IWW Local 20 strikers in Lawrence after receiving a telegram from young Italian striker Angelo Rocco. Ettor urged peace, but violence often followed his speeches, and he was blamed for the actions of others.

WILLIAM “BIG BILL” HAYWOOD founded the Industrial Workers of the World, or “one big union,” in 1905. In the Lawrence mill strike, Haywood introduced a new strike tactic: the endless picket line.

Representatives of the Mills

AUSTIN P. WADE, cashier of the Ayer Mill, which was owned by the American Woolen Company. Wade testified on behalf of the mills at the Congressional Hearings. In the play, Wade is played by a woman as “Mrs. Austin P. Wade.”

WILLIAM WOOD, president of the American Woolen Company, owned the Ayer and Wood Mills in Lawrence. Because the Wood Mill was the largest in the country, he became a primary target for strikers.

Community Leaders

FATHER MILANESE, acting head of the Catholic Church in Lawrence, tried to bring about a peaceful resolution to the strike. In Church he preached against the strike, and he even went door to door trying to convince strikers that they were asking for too much.

MARGARET SANGER nursed many of the children suffering because of the strike, and testified at the congressional hearings in reference to the children’s terrible health under the mill management.

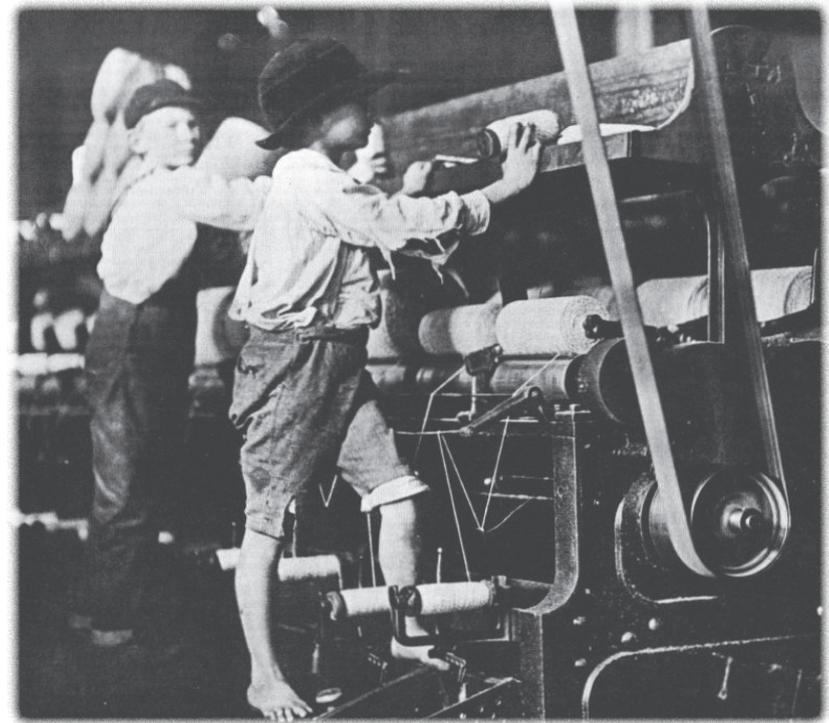


Child Strikers

SAMUEL GOLDBERG began working for the American Woolen Company at age 14. He testified at the Congressional hearings about the wages and long hours at the mills. He also witnessed violence against strikers at the mills and at the train station during the children’s exodus.

VICTORIA WENNARYZK was of Polish descent. She began working at the American Woolen Mill five months before the strike began. At age 14 she testified before Congress about terrible working conditions in the mills and violence against strikers.

CARMELLA TEOLI began working for American Woolen Mill at age 13. Teoli suffered a serious injury to her scalp when her hair was sucked into the gears of a factory machine. She was the twelfth child to testify before Congress.



As members of the U.S. Congress, you will have the opportunity to ask questions of the following key players. Write down some questions that you may ask.

Mrs. Austin P. Wade, a cashier at the Ayer Mill:

Carmella Teoli, a young mill worker on strike, who suffered a head injury while working at the American Woolen Mill:

Father Milanese, a Catholic priest who has ministered to the needs of many working families in Lawrence and believes that workers should end the strike:

Samuel Goldberg, another young mill worker, also on strike, who witnessed the confrontation between families and militia at the Lawrence train station:



TheatreEspresso performs at the Lawrence Heritage State Park Visitors Center, at the John Adams Courthouse in Boston (in collaboration with the Supreme Judicial Court), and in schools and museums throughout New England. The company thanks Mass Humanities and the following foundations for their generous support.



Cabot Family Charitable Trust, Catherine McCarthy Memorial Trust Fund, Clipper Ship Foundation, Friends of Lawrence Heritage State Park, Foley Hoag Foundation, Immigrant City Archives, National Endowment for the Arts, C. Pringle Charitable Foundation, Nathaniel and Elizabeth P. Stevens Foundation, and the White Fund

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Since 1992, **TheatreEspresso** has toured its educational dramas to schools, museums, libraries, and courthouses throughout New England. **TheatreEspresso's** work challenges students to make critical judgments, explore social relationships, reflect on the role of law and human rights in our society, and question accepted truths about the history of America. These plays confront students with complex situations, based on actual historical events, that provoke a variety of opinions and solutions. By asking students to consider themselves participants in the drama, the company engages students in examining contradictory events and testimony in order to reach their decisions.

TheatreEspresso does not advocate any one viewpoint, but hopes to compel students to relate historical events to contemporary issues. **TheatreEspresso** is in residence at Wheelock Family Theatre.



**For further information, visit our website at
www.TheatreEspresso.org**