Immigrant Life in a Lower East Side Tenement

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ON THE COVER: A smiling Josephine and John Baldizzi on the roof of 97 Orchard Street in Manhattan, ca. 1935. Josephine is holding neighbor Vincent Bonofiglio. The three children lived in the building during the early 1930s, which is today the site of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. The photograph on the cover is from the Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011.

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Steven S. Lapham MLL Editor
Richard Palmer Art Director
Michael Simpson Director of Publications
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The Lower East Side Tenement Museum:

A Window on Immigrant Life

Adam Steinberg and Michael J. Berson

In the photograph, the boy in a sailor suit stands next to a kneeling girl in a white dress. Both children bend their heads down slightly as they look at the camera, perhaps to avoid the glare of the midday sun. Their eyes are dark and intense. Neither smiles.

Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011

Johnny and Josephine Baldizzi on the roof of 97 Orchard Street, circa 1935.

Young Johnnie and Josephine Baldizzi were residents of the tenement at 97 Orchard Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Around 1935, one of their parents photographed the two children on the rooftop of the tenement. Between 1863 and 1935, the five-story building on Orchard Street was home to nearly 7,000 working class immigrants. Today, the building is the home of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, where visitors can step into the re-created Baldizzi's apartment as it looked nearly 80 years ago when the family lived there.

A Gift from History

When German immigrant Lukas Glockner opened his tenement in 1863, he was hoping to turn a profit by providing cheap homes to other immigrants who were flooding into Manhattan. The first tenants of 97 Orchard had to rely on coal-burning stoves and fireplaces for heat. Electric lights were not installed until 1924.

Three generations later, the property was run down and dangerous. In 1935, the landlord, unable to pay for legally mandated safety improvements, evicted all the families and left most of the building vacant. But what was unhappy news for the Baldizzi family and the other tenants became a gift for students and educators today: the building, unoccupied since 1935, was a time capsule. In 1988, the build-

Clothing stores operating out of a tenement building at 96 Orchard Street in 1992.

Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011 / photo by Jerome Liebling

ing was "discovered" by the museum's founders. Shuttered for over 50 years, the apartments at 97 Orchard were derelict, but otherwise largely unchanged.

It would take time to transform the tenement into a museum. Undaunted by the disorder, researchers carefully searched the rooms and ground, combed through archives, and compiled evidence about tenants and tenement life. Gradually, museum staff began the difficult task of restoring apartments that had been vacant for so long.

In 1992, the museum opened its first restored apartment, the 1878 home of the German-Jewish Gumpertz family. Today, the museum displays six restored apartments of immigrant families that once lived there. Educators lead small groups on guided tours of these apartments, explaining the life stories of the families and putting their stories in historical context.

By interpreting the lives of the immigrants who once lived here, the Tenement Museum encourages tolerance of immigrants today, as well as historical investigation. It offers several programs that encourage community-building among visitors and throughout the Lower East Side. It also encourages dialog among visitors. Perhaps by listening to each other, respecting our differences, and recognizing our similarities, we can together address the serious public policy concerns surrounding immigration today.

Tenement Living

From the 1840s to the 1920s, Irish farmers fleeing famine, German artisans fleeing warfare, Jewish families fleeing pogroms, and southern Italians fleeing high taxes and grinding poverty arrived in New York City by the tens of thousands. Many moved into the residential neighborhood we now call the Lower East Side.

There weren't enough of the old row houses for all those families, so immigrant entrepreneurs purchased the row houses, tore them down, and replaced them with an entirely new kind of building, the tenement. In a tenement, an immigrant family would get an apartment with a lock on the door. But life in a tenement was harsh.

When it opened in 1863, the tenement at 97 Orchard Street was typical: each apartment had three rooms covering about 350 square feet. The bedroom and kitchen had no exterior windows. The parlor and kitchen fireplaces were poorly designed and drafty. The only light came from the two parlor windows and the occasional kerosene lamp. There was no running water

Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011

A midtown Manhattan coat manufacturing shop during the 1940s. Former 97 Orchard Street resident Rosaria Mutolo Baldizzi is pictured second from the right. Rosaria is the mother of Josephine (Baldizzi) Esposito.

inside. All 20 families living at 97 Orchard Street had to share four outhouses in the backyard and, right next to the outhouses, a single water hydrant, the only source of fresh water for the entire building.

By 1900, about 110 men, women, and children were crammed into this building on a lot measuring just 25 feet by 88 feet. An average of five or six persons lived in each apartment. Two families might share one apartment. The constant din, stench, and lack of privacy made life a constant struggle.

End of an Era

Responding to citizen pressure, the New York State government confronted these problems by passing housing codes forcing landlords to make improvements to their buildings. (TIMELINE, page 5) By the time the Baldizzis moved into 97 Orchard Street in 1928, the apartments had electricity, a sink with running water in their kitchen, and a shared toilet in the hallway—although still no bathtub, shower, or private toilet.

By 1928 the neighborhood was rapidly losing population. The subway, which opened in 1904, allowed more and more immigrants to relocate to Brooklyn and the Bronx. And in 1924 the federal government severely limited immigration from southern and eastern Europe. With fewer newly arriving immigrants moving into the Lower East Side, and with more established immigrants moving out, the tenements began to empty. When the state passed another housing law in 1934, the owner of 97 Orchard Street couldn't raise enough revenue to pay for mandated improvements, so he evicted the families and shuttered the apartments.

By the 1980s, many of the tenements of the Lower East Side stood vacant or had been torn down. For the many Asian and Hispanic immigrants and migrants who called the neighborhood home, life was a constant battle to preserve family and community in the face of municipal indifference and social chaos.

But where others saw social disorder and chaos, Ruth Abram and Anita Jacobson saw history and hope. These historians and social activists wanted to create a house museum that would remind current residents of this neighborhood (and maybe all Americans) of the importance and humanity of immigrants past and present. It was Abram and Jacobson who discovered the hidden history preserved at 97 Orchard Street and founded the museum.

Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011

Victoria Confino (Cohen) in the center, age 16, with her friends, ca. 1919.

Student Involvement

If you visit New York City, be sure to schedule a guided tour of the museum and join in a neighborhood walking tour.[1] Each year, 44,000 students visit the museum to learn about immigration and New York City. Many of these students are immigrants themselves, so the stories of Jewish and Italian immigrants in 1900 aren't just history—they echo the students' stories, too. For those born in the United States, a visit to the museum can inspire them to imagine what it would be like to be an immigrant, both yesterday and today.

For example, one middle school audience recently wrote to thank the museum for the Confino Family Program, which features a costumed interpreter playing the role of Victoria Confino, a 14-year-old immigrant girl living in the tenement building in 1916. During the program, museum educators instructed the children to pretend to be newly arrived immigrants curious about life in America. While staying in character, they asked Victoria questions such as, "Where do you buy your food? Where do you bathe? What do you do for fun?"

Upon returning to their classroom, students wrote a thank-you note in character: "Although the street the tenement is on is very busy and dirty most of the time, we really like the name of it. 'Orchard' reminds us of the fruit trees in our country. We hope to get jobs as fruit merchants. The neighborhood around Orchard Street seems like a good place to find this kind of work. …" And if there's any doubt about what the students were up to, they dated their letter "November 23, 1916."

Milestones for Manhattan, Immigrants, and the 97 Orchard Street Tenement

Timeline by Steven S. Lapham

YEAR	EVENT
1860	New York City has more Irish-born residents than any other city in the world (203,760).
1863	**Lukas Gockner opens his tenement to renters at 97 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side.**
	Immigrants fight for the Union in the Battle of Gettysburg; also riot against the draft in New York City.
1882	City life reflects Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Chinese Exclusion Act targets immigrants from China.
1911	Triangle Fire in Greenwich Village. Two years earlier, Triangle laborers had protested poor working conditions.
1921	City life reflects Roaring '20s and Prohibition. Immigrant quota system favors northern and western Europeans.
1931	Empire State Building, tallest in the world, opens. Bank failures and unemployment break records.
1935	**97 Orchard Street is shuttered.**
	F.D.R.'s New Deal is in full swing. Social Security created.
1949	V.A. home loans to WWII vets promote the growth of suburbs. Many inner city neighborhoods languish.
1964	Violent riots in Harlem follow a police shooting. President L. B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act.
1965	Immigration Act ends race, creed, and nationality requirements for foreigners wishing to enter the USA.
1973	World Trade Center's Twin Towers open for business.
1988	**Vacant 97 Orchard Street is "discovered" and The Lower East Side Tenement Museum is founded.**
1990	Immigration Act increases immigration ceilings by 40 percent.
1992	**Lower East Side Tenement Museum opens its first re-created apartment.**
	A formal end to the Cold War allows emigration from nations of the former Eastern Bloc and U.S.S.R.

SOURCES: The interactive timeline about housing policy provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at **www.huduser.org/hud_timeline/index.html.** To learn more about Lower Manhattan's rich history, visit the New-York Historical Society website at **www.nyhistory.org** and see the timeline provided by LowerManhattan.info at **www.lowermanhattan.info/about/history/history_timeline/html.aspx**. PBS provides a U.S. Immigration Timeline at **www.pbs.org/itvs/thecity/america1.html**. K-12 curriculum materials on the contributions of Spain and Latin America to NYC's culture and commerce are at **www.nuevayork-exhibition.org**. Visit the Lower East Side Tenement Museum at **tenement.org**.

Online Resources for Teachers

Here are some of the numerous online resource available for teachers at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (**tenement.org**).

Three lesson plans at the middle level—Teaching with Objects; Primary Source Activities; and Conduct an Oral History—are available at **tenement.org/education_lessonplans.html**.

At "Exploring 97 Orchard Street," students observe the building over time, discovering what changes were made to the building and why. **tenement.org/research.html**.

"What We Collect" invites students to look at and listen to the primary sources used to re-create the homes of families that once lived in the tenement. **tenement.org/collections.html**.

A "Virtual Tour" invites students to navigate through a 3-D image of the tenement. You will need QucikTime 4+ and RealAudio to enjoy the virtual tour at **tenement.org/Virtual-Tour/index_virtual.html**.

"We Are Multicolored" is a brief project that encourages students, as they make their own flag, to think about their values and those of the community they call home. Each shape and color on a flag means something. This project (**www.wearemulticolored.com**) was a collaboration between artists and the museum.

To truly experience life on the Lower East Side, you need your ears, not just your eyes—which is why "Folksongs for the Five Points" helps students explore the "soundscapes" of New York's immigrant neighborhoods. **tenement.org/folksongs**.

A game, "From Ellis Island to Orchard Street with Victoria Confino," transforms students into immigrants in 1916 and allows them to navigate their way through American life with a virtual guide. The game begins with a slideshow (which includes an audiotrack) and then presents interactive worksheets where, for example, a student helps to create his or her passport and pack a suitcase for the journey to the United States. **tenement.org/immigrate**.

In a "Virtual Visit with Victoria," classes interact with a costumed interpreter of Victoria Confino via the Internet. This live program, hosted on the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration website, is offered Monday–Thursday, from 9:00-10:00 am. The cost is $175.00. You must book at least two weeks in advance, and the program is subject to availability. Search on the program title at **cilc.org**.

The Photo Archives (**photos.tenement.org**) contain more than 1,300 photographs. Students will need guidance exploring this vast collection.

Sounds and Images

Not every school, however, can schedule a field trip to Manhattan. So to fulfill its mission, the museum turned to the Internet. Photographs, audiofiles, and primary documents are now available in virtual tours, digital collections, and online activities for young students. (**RESOURCES**, page 6).

A good place for teachers to start is by clicking the Education link on the museum's home page, tenement.org. The Lesson Plans there include some for middle school students: Teaching with Objects; Primary Source Activities; and Conduct an Oral History. Scroll below the lesson offerings to see Primary Sources in visual (PDF) and audio (MP3) formats, as well as Online Activities such as "Visit the Virtual Tenement."

Middle school students often learn best from personal examples, so invite them to learn about a particular child. Which brings us to the Baldizzis.

Adolpho Baldizzi and Rosaria Mutolo married in Sicily in 1922 and soon moved to New York City. At first the family lived in the Manhattan neighborhood of Little Italy, but in 1928 they moved, with their two American-born children, Josephine and Johnnie, to 97 Orchard Street. When they were evicted from the condemned tenement in 1935, they took their photographs with them.

In 1988, Josephine Baldizzi Esposito, then a middle-aged woman living in Brooklyn, heard about a museum opening up in her old tenement. She marched into the new museum's offices, talked for hours about her life on the Lower East Side, and shared her family photographs. Museum staff members were delighted, and they used her memories and photographs to re-create her home as it looked on the day in 1935 when the family packed up to leave 97 Orchard Street.

Photo Archive

Photographs like those donated by the Baldizzi family were the seed from which grew the museum's online photo database. Today the archives include photos taken by former residents of 97 Orchard Street, museum staff, and other residents of the neighborhood.

Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011 / photo by Edward Schwartz

Injured brakeman on Bowery in 1949.

The photo archives (**photos.tenement.org**), which the museum made available online in 2010, include more than 1,300 photographs from the museum's permanent collection. Images of 97 Orchard Street, immigrants and family groups, and street scenes from the neighborhood bring the era to life. Snapshots reveal families raising children, storeowners catering to customers, and immigrant communities forging new American identities that nonetheless allow them to retain some of their native culture.

At the photo archives, you can enter a search word or click on "Browse" and scroll through lists categorized by Place; People; Photographer; or Tags. For example, by clicking on "Place" and then "Bowery," you can see two of Edward Schwartz' 1940s photographs of injured workers as they sit on the Bowery.

Or click on "Sicily" to see photographs of Rosaria Mutolo's family in Sicily in 1924.

Under "People," you can click on "David Coffield" and see the young Sephardic Jewish immigrant and resident of 97 Orchard Street in 1916, dressed for business.

David and three of his brothers changed their last name from Confino to Coffield, so as to "be more American." It was their desire to not be seen

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Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011

left: Former 97 Orchard Street resident David A. Coffield (born David A. Confino) age 11 in 1916.

above: David Confino (who is the cousin of David A. Coffield), pictured from the waist up without his shirt and against painted background, ca.1917. David Confino immigrated to the United States with his brother, Albert Confino and lived with his uncle (Abraham Confino) and the Confino family for a short while. The Confino family lived at 97 Orchard Street between 1912 and 1917.

Josephine Baldizzi Esposito & family at the MetLife/Tenement Museum Family Reunion in 1992. Roger Esposito, Maria Esposito Capio, Josephine's Husband George Esposito, Josephine Baldizzi Esposito, Gina Grzelak, James Grzelak (missing Roger Jr., grandson).

Collection of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum © 2011

as foreigners who might be subjected to prejudice in everyday life and in the workplace. You can see a photo of Coffield's cousin, also named David Confino, Posing with his shirt off, perhaps because he wanted to participate in amateur boxing, which was a common way to earn extra money. Use these two contrasting photos to begin a discussion about assimilation into American culture. Do the photos reflect two aspects of the successful American man in the early 1900s? (He can dress for success, and he can be tough.) Do we see these values reflected in images in the media today?

These Internet resources are continuously being updated, and some categories (under the Places or Tags links) contain only one or two images, while others contain dozens. Thus, teachers should explore the photo archives and its search options before assigning a research project to students, and consider providing students with a list of "best places to look" if they need help. The "Top Tags" link in the left margin usually provides a good sample of images. By registering with the site (a free service), you can keep track of your favorite pictures.[2]

Many Facets

Guide students in thinking critically by reminding them that photographs are never perfect representations of reality. A photo always reflects, to some degree, the perspective of the person holding the camera. For example, in the 1890s, reformers like Jacob Riis depicted immigrants living in squalid conditions—not to denigrate the immigrants, but to help them. By depicting the most miserable housing on the Lower East Side, Riis and his fellow social reformers hoped to convince middle class, American-born voters to support new housing and welfare laws. In the 1930s, Works Progress Administration (WPA) photographers tried to give these immigrants a more human face, depicting as heroism their perseverance in the face of adversity.

Through their family photographs, immigrants sought to tell a parallel story. Their photos depict budding middle-class Americans worthy of the same rights and respect as native-born Americans. One photograph in the museum's online archive shows Josephine on the steps of 97 Orchard Street. It's 1992, and the building has been transformed into the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Josephine is now a well-coiffed Brooklyn matron surrounded by her family—with a proud grin lighting up her face.

Notes

1. Tours of the museum can be reserved online at www.tenement.org and cost $20 for adults; $15 for students and seniors; and free for 5 and under. Group tours are also available. Call 212-431-0233 x 241; or email groups@tenement.org.
2. Comments about the photo archives may be sent to the museum's collections manager/registrar at collections@tenement.org.

Adam Steinberg *is the education coordinator at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. He can be contacted at* asteinberg@tenement.org.

Michael J. Berson *is a professor of social science education at the University of South Florida. He can be contacted at* berson@usf.edu.

RECLAIMING HISTORY

Lower East Side Tenement Museum

Apartment before restoration at 97 Orchard Street.

Lower East Side Tenement Museum

The restored Moore family apartment, as it would have appeared in 1869, on display at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

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The Assignment Journal:

A Student-Created Resource and Organizing System

David W. Denton

Managing their written assignments poses a serious obstacle for many students. This is especially true for middle level learners, who may have grown accustomed to receiving more support and direction in elementary school.[1] The most notable characteristic of this problem is when students are unable to locate class work from one day to the next. Additional issues have to do with how well students maintain a collection of completed lessons for study purposes, and how they decide when to remove dated material from their binders.

Problems in managing and organizing their own notes and papers often contribute to students' low academic performance. Some researchers have shown that problems associated with organization are particularly detrimental for students with learning and behavioral disabilities.[2] There is also evidence that many students rely on deficient organizational systems, especially when they do not receive explicit instruction in this area.[3] For example, students lose assignments in the pockets of their book bags, leave them behind on desks, or abandon them in lockers.

Organizing the Material

Teachers utilize a variety of strategies to assist students with managing their class work, such as providing assignment storage, identifying homework due dates, and prompting positive academic behavior. Two of the most common tools are three-ring binders and folders. Additional strategies to improve organization include the use of assignment sheets, tracking forms, agenda books, and study-skills instruction. Despite the numerous management approaches and methods that are available, many students continue to demonstrate poor academic performance because of problems associated with assignment organization.[4]

An assignment journal is useful as an organizational tool because students record their work in it from one lesson to the next. It's not, however, simply a collection of worksheets stapled into a packet. Rather, students construct their own journal at the beginning of a unit, using mostly blank pages, and then fill it gradually with maps, diagrams, illustrations, reflections, and other student-made material that summarizes key information. A useful metaphor for understanding the concept of an assignment journal is to think of it as a miniature textbook, written by a student for one unit of study. Along these lines, an assignment journal can contain a table of contents, unit concept map, and glossary, which increase its usefulness as a study guide and reference tool.

Preserving a Resource

Unfortunately, many teachers use written assignments only as indicators of students having completed an assigned reading or activity in class, and thus students view the assignment as a one-day task. Unless designated with the specific title "study guide," many assignments remain underutilized as a source to further student learning.

Teachers often give assignments that involve reading material from textbooks or websites. In many social studies classrooms, students can be found searching textbooks to prepare for assessments or to complete worksheets.[5] The Internet, like a textbook, represents a readily accessible source of information, except that it is virtually limitless in scope. With guidance from the teacher, students can efficiently access quality social studies content on the web, but students have a tendency to "gaze" at webpages while retaining little of what they find there.

Written assignments can help students to capture the information they find in various sources, understand it, and record it for future reference.[6] Teachers can then encourage students

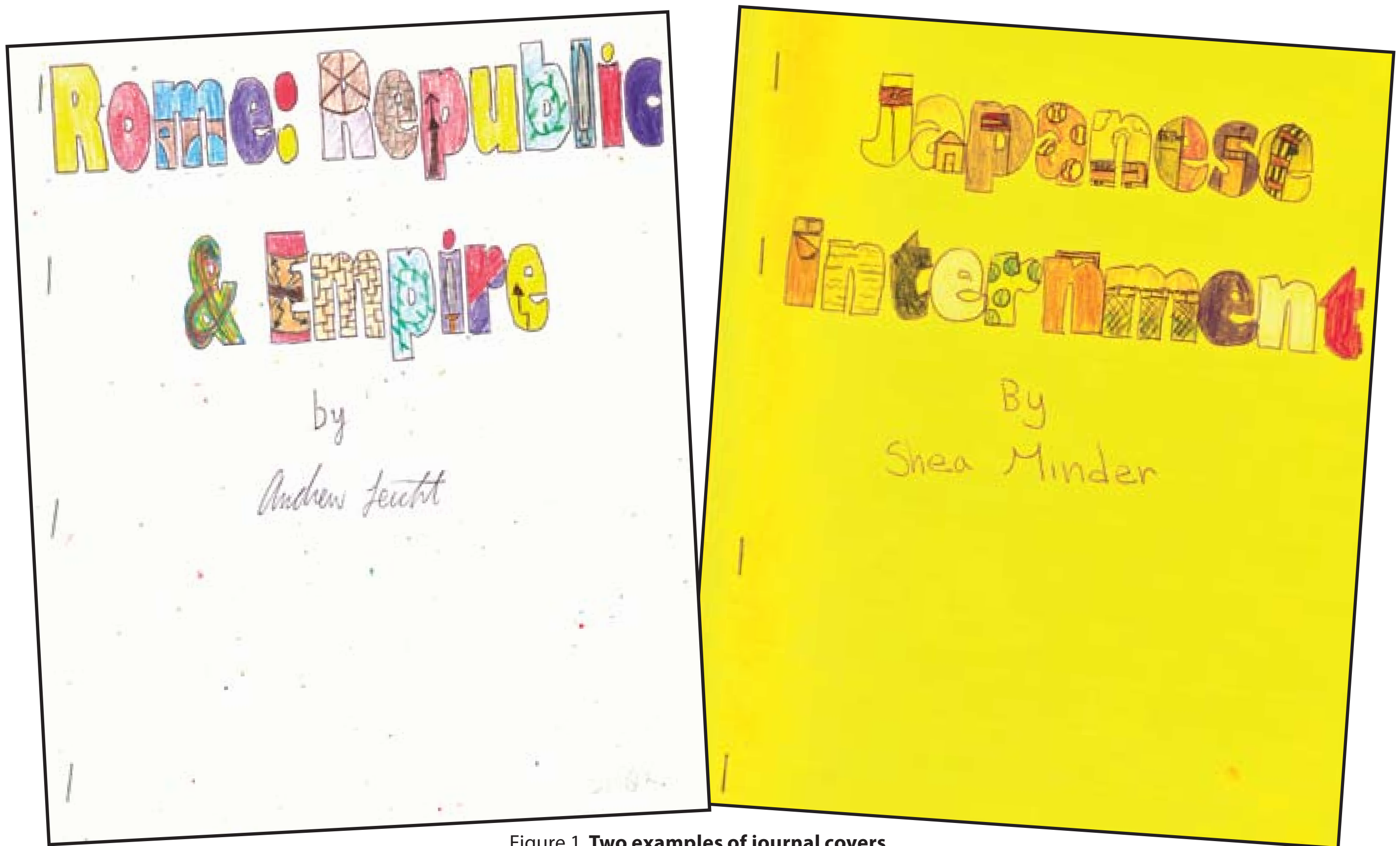

Figure 1. **Two examples of journal covers**

to use their own written assignments, preserved in a journal, as a resource for study and review at a later time.

Owning the Content

An important difference between external sources (textbooks, webpages) and students' own written work has to do with authorship. Students are the authors of the writing and graphics on their assignments. An assignment creates an opportunity for students to claim the content material as their own. Arguably, the connection that students feel toward their schoolwork varies from indifference to satisfaction, but an assignment journal helps students preserve and keep track of their written assignments. It encourages students to take the first steps toward owning the content that they are learning, and to value their own efforts.[7]

There are a number of ways to help students begin to feel ownership of content material with the use of assignment journals. For example, teachers may choose to have students illustrate the titles of their journals as a way to introduce the unit overall. For example, in a unit of study on Ancient Egypt, a student might embellish the cover lettering with hieroglyphs. In the samples shown, students traced the title of the unit and then decorated the letters with images, objects, and colors associated with unit content (FIGURE 1). This embellishment (reminiscent of Medieval illuminated manuscripts) allows students to exercise their artistic abilities and add a personal touch to their work.

Another way to foster a sense of ownership is to include a line for a parent's signature on the inside cover or first page of the journal. When the unit of study is completed and graded, ask students to share their work with their parents and request a signature. This activity can foster parental involvement and enhance a student's sense of pride in his or her work.

Learning to Reason

An advantage of promoting a sense of ownership is that it helps students establish a foundation for their thinking. The educational philosopher John Dewey discussed this idea 100 years ago, when he asked how we can know that something is true (such as a historical event, or a large-scale phenomenon like global warming) if we have not experienced it personally.[8] Reflective thinking, he wrote, "implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as ground of belief."[9]

There are many ways to create classroom activities and assignments according to Dewey's description of reflective thinking (FIGURE 2, page 12). This approach can promote a sense of ownership for students. Then the social studies disciplines become not collections of dry facts dictated by an authority (the teacher), but understandings that must be constructed, tested, and revised over time by the student his or herself.

A journal is a student's own collection of evidence and reasons why "we know what we know" about a topic. As they begin to practice basic research skills (such as citing the source of a passage they have found on a webpage), students' completed assignments will reflect that progress in disciplined thinking.

Figure 2. **Reflective Thinking**

Five "reasons for believing" with explanations and teaching examples inspired by *How We Think* by John Dewey

Witness: a first-hand account of an event

- Engaging in a simulation, like marching in columns and rows to simulate the movements of a Greek phalanx, and then reflecting upon the experience
- Interviewing a community member regarding some issue and then recording their responses
- Attending a mayoral speech, political rally, or local government meeting and taking notes

Evidence: measurements or physical signs of an event

- Visiting a playground and drawing a piece of broken equipment as part of a service learning project to improve a neighborhood environment
- Studying an artifact, such as a foreign coin or household item, by drawing it and forming inferences about its purpose

Voucher: supporting evidence in document form

- Analyzing a historical document, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt's War Speech, and then highlighting words that suggest the viewpoint of the author
- Comparing state and Federal constitutions for civil rights granted in each and listing similarities and differences

Warrant: identifying justifiable reasons for one's thinking or beliefs

- Discussing ways to solve a real problem, such as the waste of materials in the cafeteria, and then writing a plan of action to submit to student government, such as a recycling station
- Listening to a recorded interview and then describing the interviewee's experience and opinions

Proof: providing an argument (that can include evidence, witness, etc.) that establishes some fact

- Surveying classmates about a social issue and reporting the results in the form of a graph
- Constructing tables of demographic data that can help explain changes occurring in a community

Constructing a Journal

An assignment journal works best as a record-keeping system for one unit of study. In my classroom, students construct a journal so it has at least on page per lesson in that unit. Most of the pages of the journal are blank pieces of paper of various types:

- lined notebook paper for writing about activities or discussions,
- blank paper for illustrations and diagrams,
- grid paper for graphs, and
- selected handouts for reference or study.

Ideally, each page has a specific purpose to fit a particular lesson.

The most durable cover for an assignment journal is a new or used file folder. An alternative cover is 11×17-inch construction paper. Three or four staples hold the binding together. An electric stapler operated by an adult usually produces the best results for securing the binding. However, having students do most of the work of assembling an assignment journal creates another opportunity to promote students' sense of ownership over their efforts.

One approach to constructing assignment journals is to use an assembly line. First, decide on the number and type of pages needed to fill one journal. Then place stacks of paper in order on a counter or on desks. Place a sign next to each stack telling students how many pages to take. Line up students and have them collect one or more pages from each stack. Using the assembly line method reduces the number of page omissions and improves consistent page ordering from one student to the next. Keep in mind that forming an assembly line in a crowded classroom requires forethought and planning, but the process improves with practice.

Storing Journals

Another important detail to consider when using assignment journals is how they will be stored between class meetings. Teachers may opt to store journals in their classrooms, distributing them at the beginning of each class and collecting them at the end. Alternatively, teachers may ask students to keep their own journals, bringing them to class each day. The first option requires additional efforts by the teacher, but it eliminates the possibility that students will forget their work or lose their papers. Perhaps the biggest advantage of keeping journals within the classroom is that under-performing students, especially those who struggle with organization, have a stable and predictable method for recording and showing their completed assignments.

Figure 3. **Assignment Journal**

Table of Contents

Student's Name: ____________________

Unit of Study: ____________________

Lesson	Self-check	Peer-check	Teacher-check
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
Comments:			
Parent signature:			

It could be argued that collecting students' assignment journals at the end of each class period works against building students' sense of personal responsibility. An approach for dealing with this issue is to begin the school year by storing assignment journals within the classroom, but later require students to manage their own journals, choosing whether to bring them to class each day or keep them on a shelf in the classroom.[10]

Assessing Student Work

Another advantage of storing journals in the classroom is that teachers can use them to assess student progress. A teacher can simply inspect journal pages. The opportunity to evaluate student progress is particularly important at the beginning of the school year when teachers are familiarizing themselves with students' work habits, penmanship, writing ability, and other academic proficiencies. In addition, teachers might assess specific assignments within the journal for formative purposes. Research has shown that teachers who integrate formative assessment procedures into their own practice generally improve student achievement.[11] Storing assignment journals in the classroom facilitates this process.

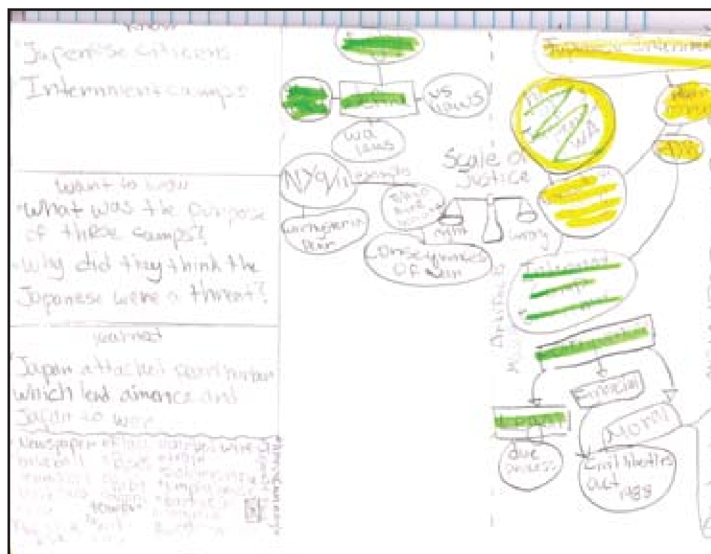

Figure 4. Concept map

A table of contents provides structure to the journal and improves students' ability to locate a specific lesson and use it as a resource. The table of contents can also serve as a record of assessments by providing columns for self-, peer-, and teacher-checks. The example (**FIGURE 3**, page 13) omits any specific rubric to provide flexibility in scoring methods; teachers can apply whatever assessment criteria they prefer. A section near the bottom of the table labeled "Comments" can provide additional space for feedback and grading. Parents can review the completed journal with their students and sign on the line provided at the bottom of the page.

Revisiting a Resource

Just as there are many ways to assess assignment journals, so there are many ways to utilize their pages for learning. Dewey's basis of reasons (described above) suggest a number of useful ideas to this end, including written reflections and descriptions, as well as graphics such as diagrams, illustrations, and graphs. If students informally survey their peers about a topic, the survey questions and tallies could be part of the assignment journal. Students can also include traced maps, hand-drawn flow charts, timelines, notes from a presentation, and written responses to guided reading questions.

Some of these formats fit particular lesson objectives and activities better than others. For example, a concept map showing the overall unit plan (**FIGURE 4**) would be helpful for describing important ideas at the beginning of the unit. Alternatively, a Venn diagram would be useful for summarizing the similarities and differences between two concepts at the end of the unit. (**FIGURE 5**).

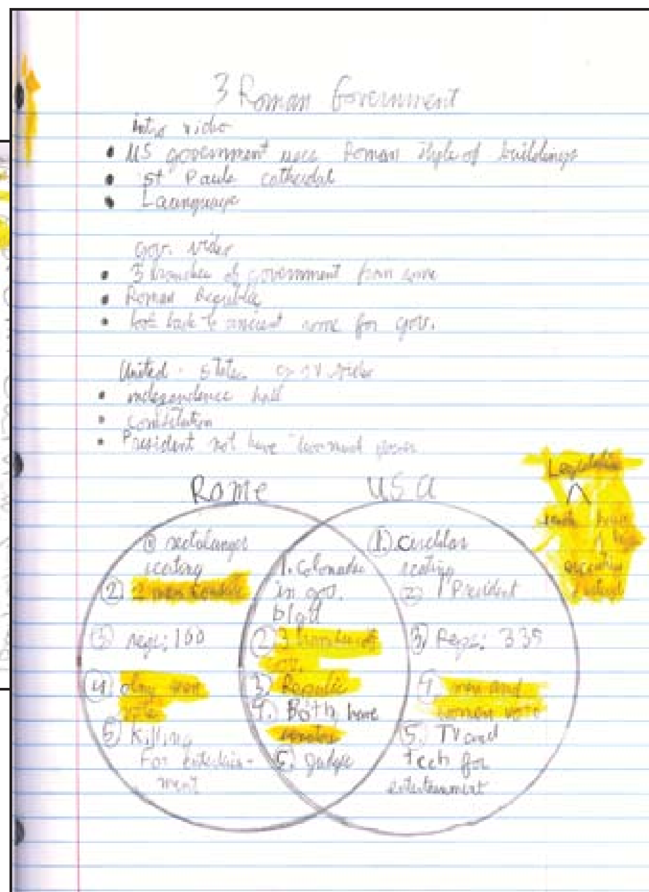

Figure 5. Venn Diagram

As new terms arise during various lessons, a teacher could guide students in constructing a glossary toward the back of the journal (**FIGURE 6**).

Figure 6. Glossary

Students may not realize that they can access their own, earlier work as a resource unless the teacher makes this explicit. To introduce the idea, a teacher could devote ten minutes of class time for students to use the journal while preparing for an assessment—quizzing each other on terms in the glossary, or reviewing their written responses to guided reading questions. Students might simply look back at their work on a specific page and discuss what they learned with another student. The goal is to help students give meaning to their efforts; in other words, to have students think of the work in their assignment journals as a useful source of information.

Conclusion

Assignment journals function as an organizing structure for student work. They also serve as a student-centered repository of content information. Ideally, an assignment journal is useful to students as a resource and reference for continued learning. Journals may include a table of contents, glossary, and informational text, student-created graphics, and images of all sorts. An important objective underlying the use of these "student-constructed textbooks" is to encourage students to think of themselves as organizers and synthesizers of information. To do this, students need a system that helps them co-create, manage, and evaluate what they are learning.[12] An assignment journal provides a system that incorporates these characteristics.

There are several administrative elements to consider when using assignment journals. Most of these are resolved with careful planning, such as deciding when and how to have students construct their journals. Some elements involve larger questions related to learning. For example, how much assistance should students receive in managing their assignments, or in storing journals from one day to the next? On the surface, these issues may seem trivial, but their combined effect on teacher workload and student work habits is significant. The answers will depend on the needs and characteristics of the students in any particular class.

To be sure, implementing an assignment journal system in middle level social studies classrooms will not solve every problem that teachers encounter with respect to keeping assignments organized, using assignments as a resource, or improving student attitudes toward the content of a lesson. Utilizing journals, however, does create opportunities to help students grow in all of these areas.

Notes

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David W. Denton *is a social studies teacher at Poulsbo Middle School in Poulsbo, Washington. He is a National Board Certified Teacher and recently earned a doctoral degree from Seattle Pacific University.*

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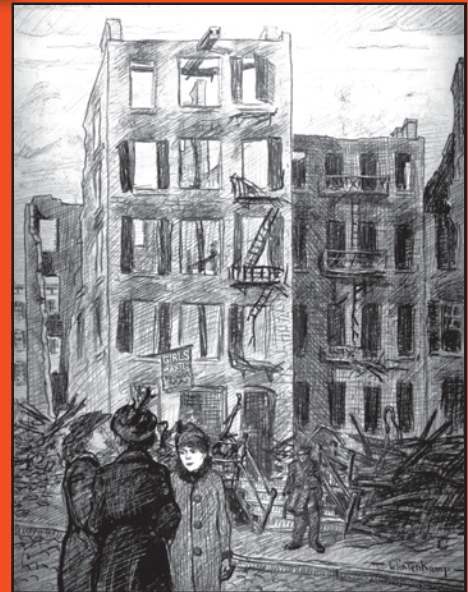
The Centennial of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire: Workplace Safety in the USA and Around the World

Steven S. Lapham



Three women standing across street from the burned-out shell of a building from which hangs the sign, "Girls wanted." A policeman stands guard in front of the ruins. A 1911 drawing by Henry Glintenkamp. (Library of Congress)

March 25, 2011 marked the 100th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. On that day, 146 garment workers, mostly girls and young women, died in that event, which resulted from abusive labor practices in a New York City sweatshop. It was a pivotal moment in the movement for labor rights, and so the topic appears in many social studies curriculums in the middle grades.

Hard-Won Progress

Workplace safety is not perfect in the United States today, but we have come a long way from the days of widespread injury and death on the job. Public protests and organizing eventually led to hard-won legislation to create federal agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) within the Department of Labor and regulations that establish safety standards and practices. The year 2010 was the safest on record, despite the West Virginia coal mine explosion and the Gulf oil-rig catastrophe.[1]

A Global Concern

Unfortunately, labor rights abuses are still common throughout much of the world. Recently in Bangladesh, garment factories have been ravaged by a series of fires and building collapses that have killed hundreds of workers. In February 2010, a fire at the Garib & Garib sweater factory killed 21 workers who died of smoke inhalation because of heavily sealed windows and locked exits. Garib & Garib produces clothing for H&M, which is currently the largest buyer in Bangladesh.

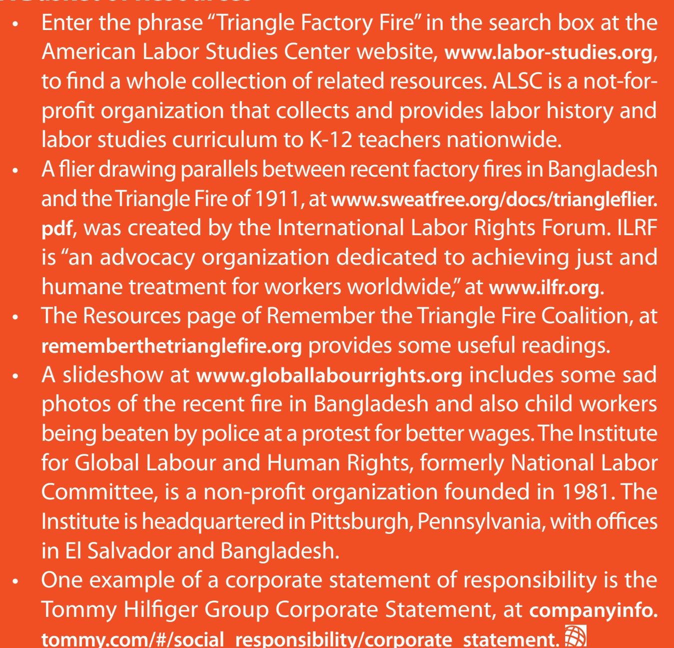
After your students have read about the Triangle Fire, have them read about a recent factory fire in Bangladesh and a statement of corporate responsibility from a clothing brand familiar to students.

Perceiving Connections

Ask students if they see any parallels between the recent fire in Bangladesh and the Triangle Fire of 1911. Then ask students to create a list of who is involved at each step in the manufacture, shipment, and sale of a t-shirt. The final list should include at least the factory workers, factory managers, factory owners, clothing brand owners, company shareholders, shippers, retail-store owners and shareholders, sales clerks, and you—the customer. The agricultural workers who produce and ship cotton to the factory could also be included.

But wait! Where does government fit into this process? What role should regulators, judges, and elected officials in Bangladesh be playing in this "chain of responsibility?" What U.S. government policies and officials might be acting to improve the conditions in another country?

Finally, what is my responsibility (if any) as a citizen, and as a consumer, for helping to improve the life of a Bangladeshi garment factory worker? There may be no simple answer to that question, but the choices are real, and a civic discussion on the topic could be important. Life saving, in fact.



A Basket of Resources

- Enter the phrase "Triangle Factory Fire" in the search box at the American Labor Studies Center website, **www.labor-studies.org**, to find a whole collection of related resources. ALSC is a not-for-profit organization that collects and provides labor history and labor studies curriculum to K-12 teachers nationwide.
- A flier drawing parallels between recent factory fires in Bangladesh and the Triangle Fire of 1911, at **www.sweatfree.org/docs/triangleflier.pdf**, was created by the International Labor Rights Forum. ILRF is "an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide," at **www.ilfr.org**.
- The Resources page of Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, at **rememberthetrianglefire.org** provides some useful readings.
- A slideshow at **www.globallabourrights.org** includes some sad photos of the recent fire in Bangladesh and also child workers being beaten by police at a protest for better wages. The Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, formerly National Labor Committee, is a non-profit organization founded in 1981. The Institute is headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with offices in El Salvador and Bangladesh.
- One example of a corporate statement of responsibility is the Tommy Hilfiger Group Corporate Statement, at **companyinfo.tommy.com/#/social_responsibility/corporate_statement.**

Notes

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STEVEN S. LAPHAM is editor of *Middle Level Learning*.