

## 6.3 DOCUMENT BASED EXERCISE

### MUCKRAKERS

Task: Look at Documents 1, 2, and 3 and answer their accompanying questions. Then, use the documents and your knowledge of history to complete this writing assignment:

**Write an essay about the muckrakers of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Be sure to identify the different muckrakers and to describe their goals and accomplishments. Include information about how they got their name.**

#### Document 1:

The excerpt below is from journalist Ida Tarbell's History of the Standard Oil Company. What does Tarbell say is the goal of a trust? Ida Tarbell is against trusts and says that they "led in the struggle against legislation directed against combinations.

*"Standard Oil Trust is the most perfectly developed trust in existence; that is, it satisfies most nearly the trust ideal of entire control of the commodity in which it deals. Its vast profits have led its officers into various allied interests, such as railroads, shipping, gas, copper, iron, steel, as well as into banks and trust companies.... It has led in the struggle against legislation directed against combinations. Its power in state and Federal government, in the press, in the college, in the pulpit, is generally recognized."*

#### Document 2:

In *How the Other Half Lives*, Jacob Riis called attention to the misery of tenement living. What aspect of tenement living is Riis describing in this excerpt? He is referring to the bad living conditions and tight packing of families in tenement houses.

*"It is said that nowhere in the world are so many people crowded together on a square mile as here.... In this house... there were fifty-eight babies and thirty-eight children that were over five years of age. In Essex Street, two small rooms in a six-story tenement were made to hold a "family" of father and mother, twelve children, and six boarders. These are samples of the packing of the population that has run up the record here to the rate of three hundred and thirty thousand per square mile.*

*The densest crowding of Old London... never got beyond a hundred and seventy-five thousand. Even the alley is crowded out. Through dark hallways and filthy cellars, crowded, as is every foot of the street, with dirty children, the settlements in the rear are reached."*

#### Document 3:

In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair exposes the atrocities of the meat-packing industry. In the excerpt below, what aspect of industry is the focus? Upton Sinclair is speaking out about the different jobs that people perform before packing the meat.

*"There were the wool-pluckers, whose hands went to pieces even sooner than the hands of the pickle men; for the pelts of the sheep had to be painted with acid to loosen the wool, and then the pluckers had to pull out this wool with their bare hands, till the acid had eaten their fingers off. There were those who made the tins for the canned meat; and their hands, too, were a maze of cuts, and each cut represented a chance for blood poisoning. Some worked at the stamping machines, and it was very seldom that one could work long there at the pace that was set, and not give out and forget himself and have a part of his hand chopped off. There were the "hoisters," as they were called, whose task it was to press the lever which lifted the dead cattle off the floor. They ran along upon a rafter, peering down through the damp and the steam; and as old Durham's architects had not built the killing room for the convenience of the hoisters, at every few feet they would have to*

*stoop under a beam, say four feet above the one they ran on; which got them into the habit of stooping, so that in a few years they would be walking like chimpanzees."*

Write your essay here. Remember, all essays need to have a thesis, supporting statements/ paragraphs, and a conclusion.

The Muckrakers were a group of individuals who during the Progressive movement took stands against certain businesses and revealed their problems and faults. They got the name "Muckraker" because they were journalists who sought to find the truth by any means possible even sifting through the muck like animals. Ida Tarbell was a leading Muckraker who spoke out against big business and trusts. Jacob Riis was a wealthy man who wrote articles about the poor and their living conditions. Upton Sinclair was a journalist popular for revealing the horrors in slaughter houses in his book "The Jungle". These three people were the most popular and influential Muckrakers. Ida Tarbell was a muckraker who spoke about oil practices.

Ida Tarbell was a school teacher and a journalist who commonly spoke against the oil industry. In the nineteenth century she began her research on standard oil trusts by interviewing Henry H. Rogers about his time spent in the oil industry. These interviews started in early nineteenth century and were very detailed covering his start in the business all the way to present day. It was because of these interviews and the practices Rogers spoke of that Ida wrote negative articles about oil trusts in the Muckraker magazine McClure's. These articles were shocking and held readers on edge from start to finish. These articles were later condensed in a novel for the whole world to read in 1904 entitled "The History of the Standard Oil Company". Ida Tarbell was an individual who showed the world what real oil companies were like and was a famous Muckraker. Jacob Riis was another commonly known name among Muckrakers.

Jacob Riis was a social reformer and photographer of Danish descent who used his writing and pictures to show upper class Americans the horrible food and hard living conditions that most Americans lived in. He was one of the earliest muckrakers and his book "How The Other Half Lives" was a combination of photography and journalism that not only spoke but showed the atrocities of poor living conditions. Riis's book showed sympathy for poor Americans but was also negatively portrayed immigrants in tenement districts. On the topic of the English language Riis said " *Unlike the German, who begins learning English the day he lands as a matter of duty, or the Polish Jew, who takes it up as soon as he is able as an investment, the Italian learns slowly, if at all.*" Overall Riis's writing was a resource for the Muckrakers that were to come and an influence for their style of writing. Jacob Riis was one of the earliest muckrakers and an influence on ones to come. A Muckraker who was to come was Upton Sinclair.

Upton Sinclair is an American author who has wrote over ninety books his most famous being his Muckraker book “The Jungle” which spoke against slaughter houses and there practices. He went into great detail to illustrate what was going on behind closed doors. Upton Sinclair said about how the meat was treated that *“There were the wool-pluckers, whose hands went to pieces even sooner than the hands of the pickle men; for the pelts of the sheep had to be painted with acid to loosen the wool, and then the pluckers had to pull out this wool with their bare hands, till the acid had eaten their fingers off.”* It was statements like this and others that lead to the Meat Inspection Act and Pure food and drug act of 1906. In a quote Mr. Sinclair stated that he intended to expose *“the inferno of exploitation [of the typical American factory worker at the turn of the 20th Century]”*. Upton Sinclair’s impact on the world and journalism would last for many years to come and was a very shocking novel that helped to make things better for all Americans.

The Muckrakers where an influenceable group of journalists who help to relieve the practices and horror of modern business and living in the eight teen and nine teen hundreds. Ida Tarbell wrote on the topic of oil and the common practices of big business. Jacob Riis showed upper class Americans how the other half was living through his writing and photography. Upton Sinclair shocked Americans in his novel “The Jungle”. These three individuals where some of the most famous Muckrakers who made an impact on culture.