

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?

Tarbell says the goal of a trust is to gain complete control over the resources and products that they are dealing with.

"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?

Riis describes in this excerpt the crowding that takes place in tenement living.

"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?

The focus of this excerpt from The Jungle is the dangers of the meat-packing industry and what the workers had to go through.

"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.

A muckraker is a crusading journalist, a reporter bent on trying to expose corruption or flaws in businesses. A large amount of muckrakers started to pop up around the late 1800's and early 1900's. Some of the most famous included Ida Tarbell, Jacob Riis, and Upton Sinclair.

Ida Tarbell was known for trying to uncover the corruption in the oil industry and breaking up trusts. She wanted to show everyone the unfair business that John D. Rockefeller was running. She succeeded in this. She also wrote a book about the history of the oil business, which made number 5 on New York Time's top 100 of the twentieth century.

Jacob Riis is another famous muckraker known for uncovering the facts about tenement living. He showed how so many people were crowded together in small apartments and how there could more than two families in one apartment. He became a pioneer in photography and used this skill to help with the implementation of tenement living in New York City.

Upton Sinclair was very famous. He helped expose the problems with the meat-packing industry. He showed the dangers the workers went through like the "wool-pluckers" who risked losing their hands because they had to pull wool from sheep with acid. In 1906, his book, *The Jungle*, was published. It was based on the meat-packing industry. He also wrote many other books.

Muckrakers in the late 1800's and early 1900's helped uncover many secrets about corrupted businesses. They revealed things like unfair businesses in the oil industry, the crowding of tenement living, and the dangers workers faced in the meat-packing industry.