

**Engagement**

**Inquiry  
and  
Investigation**

**Definition**

**Resolution**

**Debriefing**

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING  
IN SOCIAL STUDIES OR LANGUAGE ARTS

## **Hull House**

Living Democracy in the Progressive Era

NAGC Curriculum Award-Winner

### **Teacher Manual**

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# Problem Narrative:

## The Storyline for *Hull House*

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*Ideally, the direction of a Problem-Based Learning unit is decided through the questions students ask. To some extent, this is made manageable by the structure of the opening scenario presented during Problem Engagement. The opening scenario is carefully designed to point students in the direction of some predictable questions. For example, it would be hard for students to avoid asking questions about the living conditions of Chicago's working-class immigrants. The narrative below and the lesson plans in this unit respond to these more predictable questions and address other desirable learning outcomes. They also provide a helpful guide for teachers new to PBL.*

*Experienced PBL teachers are encouraged to use this unit as a framework, selecting lessons that fit the students' questions (and, as above, many should fit) and adding other lessons to address other questions. It would be easy, for instance, to integrate other issues associated with the Progressive Era, such as women's suffrage, or to increase the emphasis of particular historical figures like Jane Addams or Florence Kelley.*

### Problem Engagement

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Students arrive in the classroom to find a letter from Jane Addams addressed to the Board of Directors of a place called Hull House. Jane has enclosed a series of political cartoons that criticize the “inconsistency of American policy and local treatment of immigrants” (this direct quote from Addams is out of context historically; it appears in her retrospective *Twenty Years at Hull House*). The exercise introduces students to the horrific conditions immigrants experienced during the Progressive Era. Brief references to “Mr. Lincoln’s philosophy,” nativists, and muckrakers introduce students to Addams’s philosophy and to key terminology.

As students analyze the cartoons, they are introduced to the gulf between rich and poor in America during the Progressive Era, specifically the equivocal feelings about immigrants, tenement living, and abusive labor practices for adults and children. Students synthesize the messages in the cartoons to construct a picture of immigrant life in America—at least as portrayed by muckraker journalists.

The following day the Board of Directors receives a more formal memorandum from Jane. The memo informs them that significant funding will be withdrawn from Hull House as a result of Jane Addams’s involvement in the labor movement. The letter is seeded with references to *Hull House Maps and Papers* and to the disdain of the “Chicago elite” toward immigrants. Jane informs the Board that it will no longer be able to proceed with all of the projects it had planned but instead must choose one to support.

Attached to Jane’s memo is a letter from the offended funder, Hugo Price, who reveals attitudes about immigrants and women that were typical of the period. (Price’s letter also contains an oblique reference to the “Haymarket affair,” which students could be encouraged to pursue, if desired.) The list of projects is also included with Jane’s letter; each project represents a major branch of Hull House advocacy:

- Public health
- Juvenile crime and adjudication
- Education and enculturation of immigrants and children
- Working conditions in factories and sweatshops
- Housing standards
- Child labor

After reading through the information, students complete the Learning Issues Board. Questions that should emerge include:

- Are the descriptions of the living and working conditions of immigrants accurate?
- What is Hull House? Are the poor really our neighbors?
- What is the *Hull House Maps and Papers*?
- What is the Haymarket affair?
- What is the exact situation addressed by each proposal (background information)?
- Why doesn't Hugo Price want Hull House involved in labor issues?
- How is the underclass "exploited"?

Students end Problem Engagement by prioritizing their learning issues and deciding how to go about gathering necessary background information.

## **Inquiry and Investigation**

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The first days of Inquiry and Investigation are devoted to research. Two lessons are included to guide research; it does not matter which comes first. One lesson is an example of "embedded instruction," teaching students how to read and analyze the sociological data presented in *Hull House Maps and Papers*. In this lesson, students analyze the ethnic background and wage-earning power of the residents of Chicago's south side. Students learn that:

- Residents tend to cluster according to country of origin.
- A majority of immigrants are Italian, Russian, and Irish.
- English-speaking residents tend to earn more than foreign speakers.
- Low wage earners are significantly more numerous than "higher" wage earners.

The second lesson provides a structure for student research into the learning issues questions. Specific information students are likely to uncover as a result of their initial research includes:

- Pervasive exploitation of child labor and an associated lack of education
- Crowded, unsanitary, unsafe housing conditions
- Unregulated industry
- Unhealthy working conditions, no voice for workers, and poor wages, especially for non-English speakers
- High levels of infant mortality and childhood illness
- Rampant malnutrition
- Ethnic neighborhoods that only increase the nativist movement and prevent the concept of the Great American Melting Pot from coming to fruition
- Poor or nonexistent education

Students then look at the interrelationship of the social challenges facing the immigrants by discussing the ways in which their compound effects create a "closed loop" that keeps the immigrants oppressed. In an optional lesson, they take the individual social challenges and make inferences about the short- and long-term consequences of leaving each social issue unaddressed.

*Optional Kicker #1:* A board member sends a memo with potentially good news: Mr. Price has suggested that he would be willing to reinstate the donation if Jane would just give up her labor work. The anonymous board member urges Jane to consider that they could do much good with the money and that giving up labor work might be a relatively small price to pay. The Board is asked to deliberate whether or not to take the money.

## **Problem Definition**

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With a better understanding of the importance of their task, students turn to Problem Definition. The problem definition includes both the issue that needs attention and constraints that may limit solution options. In this problem, the core issue facing students is relatively clear: They need to choose a proposal to fund. Students refine their problem definition and narrow their focus through consideration of constraints. To guide the process of identifying constraints, they are introduced to criteria commonly used to determine how to allocate scarce resources: age (favoring youngest or oldest), need (favoring most challenged), urgency (eliminating short-term crises), permanence (sustained benefit), and social benefit (favoring those likely to become productive members of society). Students discuss which criteria should form the core of their decision making. They combine these criteria with the core values presented in the Hull House mission statement to create a structured, goal-oriented statement of their problem. The problem definition takes the following format:

*We must choose a proposal that (constraints).*

Example:

*We must choose a proposal that focuses on the neediest and brings people to Hull House.*

## **Problem Resolution**

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Students have acquired their background information and have created a problem definition with explicit criteria to guide their decision making, so they are ready to choose a proposal. They debate the alternatives and reach consensus as a class on a final choice. Having made their selection, the students then present their choice to Jane, defending their selection and describing why other projects should be put on hold.

*Optional Kicker #2 (for language arts teachers, homeschool parents, or interdisciplinary instruction):* Just as the students complete their deliberations, they receive a final letter from Jane. In this letter, Jane reports her surprise at having a cameo role in a new novel by an acquaintance, Upton Sinclair. She also makes reference to a newspaper article describing a recent Hull House “salon” for Italian immigrants. Jane tells the Board that the novel reminded her of the need to take all avenues to fundraising and requests that the Board prepare another salon, this one for potential funders, oriented around Sinclair’s new novel *The Jungle*. Students create a presentation that highlights the need for each project and integrates literary descriptions of the plights facing their neighbors. The students’ presentations supporting their recommendation create an additional final assessment.

## **Problem Debriefing**

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To help review and extend the information they’ve learned during the problem, students are provided with a list of Hull House “firsts.” Using a modified Taba Concept Development approach, they categorize and recategorize the firsts into groups. Then, using those groups, they reach conclusions about the impact of the settlement house on the city of Chicago.

# Problem Engagement

## *A Picture Is Worth...*

### Goals:

- Acquire background information regarding social inequities during the Progressive Era.
- Analyze primary resources.
- Use political cartoons as a source of information.

**Grouping:** Individual or small-group work; whole group discussion

**Generalization:** Americans do not always live up to American ideals.

 <b>Materials</b>	 <b>Problem Log</b>	 <b>Teacher Reference</b>
<p><b>Included in Unit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Letter from Jane</li> <li>• Political Cartoons (in the Resource Book)</li> <li>• Cartoonists' Persuasive Techniques</li> <li>• Cartoon Analysis worksheets</li> <li>• Cartoon Analysis Summary Page</li> <li>• Reflective Moment</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional copies of the Cartoon Analysis worksheets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cartoonists' Persuasive Techniques</li> <li>• Cartoon Analysis worksheets</li> <li>• Cartoon Analysis Summary Page</li> <li>• Reflective Moment</li> </ul>	

### Summary:

Students are introduced to the social inequities of the Progressive Era through an analysis of political cartoons. They receive a letter and some political cartoons from Jane Addams. The letter addresses the students as the Hull House Board of Directors. Addams encourages them to make note of the social issues raised in the cartoons. After analyzing the cartoons, students create summaries synthesizing the conditions they depict.

*Note: This lesson includes three versions of the Cartoon Analysis worksheet, allowing teachers to differentiate by ability, if desired.*

### Things to Do Before Class:

1. If possible, prepare the classroom to resemble a Board of Directors meeting room at Hull House. Create a bulletin board of articles about Hull House, and download and print photographs of Hull House to hang in the classroom (the photos are scattered throughout the Resource Book).

2. Look through the political cartoons included in the Resource Book, and select about five to use. Some cartoons are more complex than others, so make your selections based both on the social issues you want students to discuss and on the level of complexity that you feel is appropriate.
3. Review the three versions of the Cartoon Analysis worksheet, and decide which one to use. Alternatively, you can use all three to differentiate by student ability.
4. Download, print, and make copies of the cartoons you want to use, the letter from Jane Addams, and the Cartoon Analysis worksheet(s) for small-group work. Students have these worksheets in their Problem Logs, but they will need one for each cartoon they analyze.
5. Have the letter from Jane Addams and the political cartoons on students' desks at the beginning of class.

### Things to Do During Class:

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1. Give students time to read the letter from Jane and look over the cartoons.
2. Review the letter with the students, drawing out questions about muckrakers. Discuss why cartoons are sometimes used to send social messages, as well as the role that perspective plays on the creation and interpretation of political cartoons.
3. Organize students for cartoon analysis individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Review the Cartoon Analysis worksheet(s) with them, and allow them time to work on them. Note: This lesson lends itself to a "jigsaw" technique. Start students in small groups to complete the analysis, and then reconfigure the groups so that students who analyzed different cartoons can share their analyses with each other. Gather the whole class together to create a synthesis of their major findings.
4. Toward the end of the discussion, remind students of the claim made in the *Declaration of Independence*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Have the students discuss the extent to which these ideals seem to be upheld, based on what they see in the cartoons.

### Key Questions:

#### Distinguishing Features

- *What themes are repeated across the cartoons?*
- *How are major symbols of America used (Uncle Sam, Statue of Liberty, etc.)?*
- *How are immigrants depicted? Clean? Intelligent? Useful?*
- *How are children depicted?*
- *What do the cartoons suggest about the relationship between the rich and poor? How do the rich and poor regard one another?*
- *Why do you suppose the newspapers published these cartoons?*
- *How widespread do you think these problems are?*
- *How well do these conditions match the ideal presented in the Declaration of Independence?*

5. Assign the Reflective Moment in the students' Problem Logs to close class or as homework.

June 11, 1901

Board of Directors  
Hull House  
335 S. Halsted Street  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Friends,

I hope all is well at the House. I will be glad to get home after this long sojourn to New York.

I am enclosing for your amusement and reflection some cartoons that I have clipped from the newspaper. I think they say as loudly as anything that our country has changed indeed from the ideals held so dear by our greatest leaders like Mr. Lincoln.

If they cause you to smile, smile wryly, and let them serve as a continued reminder that we are responsible for maintaining social good, for "social changes can only be inaugurated by those who feel the unrighteousness of contemporary conditions." One look, and I think you'll agree that social change is essential.

Isn't it good, though, to know that we have kindred spirits like these muckrakers to help us resist the nativist bias?

As ever,  
Jane

## Cartoonists' Persuasive Techniques

### Visuals

**Symbolism:** Using simple or common objects to stand for global concepts.

Example: Humpty Dumpty stands for something important yet fragile.

**Exaggeration:** Sometimes cartoonists exaggerate the physical characteristics of people or things in order to make a point.

Example: All the king's men could be portrayed as small relative to Humpty Dumpty to suggest that they are not powerful.

**Analogy:** A comparison of two unlike things to reveal common underlying characteristics.

Example: Humpty Dumpty might represent a "broken" idea or system.

**Irony:** The difference between the way things are and the way they should be or are expected to be. Irony is often used in cartoons to express an opinion or issue.

Example: Politicians could be portrayed as "all the king's men" to suggest that people who should be powerful are not.

### Words

**Labeling:** Identifying objects or people with words to make it clear exactly what they stand for.

Example: The words *American economy* might be written across Humpty Dumpty so the reader knows exactly what Humpty Dumpty is supposed to represent.

**Captions:** Captions are used outside of the cartoon box to give words to characters, to send an ironic message to the reader, or to present the overall message of the cartoon.

Example: The caption "Humpty Dumpty falls again" suggests a recurring problem.

## Cartoon Analysis

### Form A

#### Visuals

1. What objects or people are central to the meaning of this cartoon?
2. Which of the objects are symbols?
3. Which of the people are symbols representing a larger group of people? What group does he or she represent?

#### Words (Note: Not all cartoons include words.)

1. Record the cartoon caption and/or title.
2. What are the important words or phrases? Why are they important?

#### Synthesis

1. What do you think you are supposed to think or feel about the situation in the cartoon?
2. Jane Addams seemed to think that the Board of Directors would like this cartoon. What does that tell you about Jane Addams and the philosophy of Hull House?

## Cartoon Analysis

### Form B

#### Visuals

1. Which elements of persuasion do you see used in the cartoon? Select at least two:

Caricature      Caption      Irony      Exaggeration      Juxtaposition

2. What do you think each element in the cartoon represents?

#### Words (Note: Not all cartoons include words.)

1. Which words or phrases (labels, captions) in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?

2. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

#### Synthesis

1. Write a sentence that expresses the overall message about social conditions presented in these cartoons.

2. Jane Addams seemed to think that the Board of Directors would like this cartoon. What does that tell you about Jane Addams and the philosophy of Hull House?

## Cartoon Analysis

### Form C

1. Describe how the cartoonist uses elements of persuasion in the cartoon. Choose from among the following: symbolism, caricature, analogy, irony, juxtaposition, and exaggeration.
  
2. How does the cartoonist blend intellectual (thinking) and emotional (feeling) appeals? How does the combination affect the impact of the cartoon?

1. Write a sentence that expresses the overall message about social conditions presented in these cartoons.
  
2. Jane Addams seemed to think that the Board of Directors would like this cartoon. What does that tell you about the philosophy of Hull House and its Board of Directors?

## Cartoon Analysis Summary Page

*Directions: Take notes as you listen to the analyses of the cartoons. Write a general description of the cartoon in the first column and the overall message of the cartoon in the second column. When all of the cartoon analyses have been presented, see what messages the cartoons seem to have in common, and summarize those messages in the large box on the right.*

<b>Cartoon Description</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Put the Ideas Together:</b> Summarize the messages of the cartoons. What picture do they present of America in the early 1900s?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

