

Roslyn Cemetery

Lesson Five – Grade Seven

Roslyn's Labor Movements



Roslyn's history is deeply intertwined with the history of labor movement in the United States. National unions such as the Knights of Labor were present in Roslyn's early days as a coal mining town. In the late 1800s and into the 1900s, the Northern Pacific Coal Company and its subsidiary, the Northern Pacific Railway Company, employed miners to extract the coal that would fuel trains, homes and businesses. Coal miners endured dangerous working conditions, long hours, low wages and the ever-present threat that the company would decide to temporarily close mining operations as a tactic to ignore union demands and force workers back into the mines.

In this lesson, students will learn about the labor movement in Roslyn and the United State by understanding some of the key victories of unions. Students will then learn about the history of dual unionism in Roslyn by engaging in a role play of a court case that involved two workers from competing unions. Students will learn about the internal struggles and negative aspects of unions through this court case and will then make a brief connection to modern labor issues by examining a chart that depicts a steady decline in union membership from 1983 to today.



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State Standards

G1.6-8.3 Analyze maps and charts from a specific time period to understand an issue or event.

H1.6-8.4 Analyze a major historical event and how it is represented on timelines from different cultural perspectives,

H4.6-8.2 Analyze how a historical event in Washington state history helps us to understand contemporary issues and events.

Essential Questions

- What is the labor movement and what are unions?
- What rights do workers have today that were a result of the labor movement?
- Why do workers choose to participate in different unions and what issues can arise from competing unions?

Essential Understandings

- Unions enable collective bargaining by workers to fight for specific demands to improve working conditions.
- Roslyn workers faced internal struggle as a dual union system arose and competed for members and legitimacy in the community.

Primary Sources

Image of United Mine Workers flag

Photograph of John L Lewis

Labor Movement Poster of Ricardo Levins Morales

Secondary Sources

Coal Wars: Unions, Strikes, and Violence in Depression-Era Central Washington (Bullock, 2014)

Teacher Prep

Preview and print all materials needed for this lesson.

Read: <https://wsupress.wsu.edu/2014/09/23/examining-roslyns-dramatic-labor-history/>

Review: <https://usafacts.org/articles/labor-union-membership/>

Student Prep

Prior to this lesson, prepare students to think about labor rights and unions by previewing the labor movement poster from Morales. Display and/or pass out printed copies of the poster and give students time to review.

Engage students in discussion using the following prompts:

1. What does the quote on the poster mean? Who is Frederick Douglass?
2. What are the people in the image doing? Have you seen people doing something similar or have you done something similar before? When/why do people engage in

this type of activity?

3. What do you see on the signs? What do the signs mean and why are they holding them?

4. What does the phrase “Labor Movement” mean? Do you know of other movements?

Inform students that in the next session we’ll be talking about labor unions and examining the history of union activity in Roslyn.

Lesson Plan

WORD	DEFINITION
Hypothesize	
Jury Deliberation	
Labor	
Tensions (between groups)	
Unanimous	
Union	
(other words?)	

Opening

Discuss the meaning of the labor movement poster from Morales and ask students to define the labor movement and recall some of the wins discussed on the poster. Check students’ prior knowledge by asking them to define a union then provide this definition from unionplus.org:

“A labor union ... is an organized group of workers who unite to make decisions about conditions affecting their work. Labor unions strive to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our nation.”

Check students' understanding by asking them to restate the definition in their own words.

Remind students that:

- there are many different unions operating in different areas and workplaces
- sometimes unions have different values, strategies, and priorities
- unions have changed across history.

See if students can name some different unions and guess about the various issues with which they are concerned.

Once the class has clarified what a union is, students complete the “Labor Movement: What We Do and Don’t Know” worksheet to check their current knowledge. Review the worksheet as a class, providing answers and commentary from the answer key (p. 2) before moving on to the main part of the lesson.

Main Activities

To make the connection between the labor movement and Roslyn history, begin by asking students to recall what they already know about workers in Roslyn. If needed, prompt them by asking questions such as:

- Who were the workers?
- Where did they come from?
- What were some problems they faced?
- What jobs / industry did they work in?
- What were the names of the railroad and coal companies we learned about in previous lessons?

Once students have recalled this information, tell them that today we are going to learn about two unions that were operating in Roslyn in the early 1900s, the nature of the tensions between workers in the different unions, and even how those differences resulted in a murder.

Reading activity

Display the flag of the United Mine Workers of America and the image of John L. Lewis. Tell students these images represent the UMWA flag and national leader during the early 1930s. Many miners in Roslyn were enrolled in this union, meaning they paid monthly dues and expected to have their voices heard by the union leadership. However, UMWA was headquartered on the other side of the country, which made it difficult for Roslyn miners to get the attention of UMWA leaders.

Tell students they will read a short passage about a group of miners in Roslyn that wanted to form their own union with local leadership, called the Western Miners Union. Ask students to hypothesize why this might have been the case; then pass out the scans of p. 79-80 from "Coal Wars." Put students in pairs to read, asking them to underline key ideas and difficult vocabulary.

Review the text paragraph by paragraph as a whole class, checking comprehension and defining key terms. When finished, ask students to reflect again on why some miners wanted to leave UMWA and join the Western Miners Union. Ask students to look again at paragraphs 2-4 and to underline the various reasons noted. Discuss these as a class.

In summary, ask students to compare and contrast the two unions and identify the key similarities and differences between them (e.g., national union led by John L. Lewis, far away from Roslyn vs local union led by local people in Roslyn). Tell students that such differences divided the Roslyn community, with some workers on the side of UMWA and some on the side of the Western Miners.

Introduce the case of Bob Ruff, a worker in the Western Miners Union who was murdered by a UMWA miner named Sam Farrimond. Students will re-enact the murder trial.

Role play activity:

Tell students that some of them will play the parts of various participants in the court case and some will participate as jury members. Pass out the script to all students and have students volunteer to read various parts. Ask for 6-12 students who will serve as the jury. Give students several minutes to review the script and especially to pay attention to their parts.

Clarify that Sam Farrimond, the UMWA miner, is on trial for murder and that many witnesses will be called to give testimony about what happened. The jury must pay close attention to the evidence the witnesses give because that is how they will decide if Sam Farrimond is guilty or not guilty.

Once students have played out the case by reading the script aloud, send the jury members out in the hallway to deliberate. Tell the jury that because this is a criminal trial, a unanimous decision must be reached for the defendant to be found “guilty.” Tell them also to select one jury member who will read their verdict before the court. Give students 10 minutes to deliberate then check on the group to make sure they are ready. Bring the jury back and have the selected jury member read the verdict to the class.

To close out this activity, ask students to guess the real jury’s decision. Then tell the class that in the real trial, the jury deliberated from 8:30 at night until 9:30 the next morning, staying up through the night to discuss the case. They returned a verdict of not guilty. If the student jury decision was not the same as the real jury decision, have a discussion about what the real jury might have considered as the important evidence that resulted in the verdict.

Bob Ruff’s former wife was in the crowd, and she fainted and collapsed at hearing the verdict. Allow time for students to react and discuss how they would have felt.

Closing and Self-Assessment:

To connect the labor union history to modern-day unions, pose this question to students:

What percent of American workers today do you think are part of a union?”

Have students call out their guesses and write them on the board. Share with students the actual number (10.8%) and display the first chart on <https://usafacts.org/articles/labor-union-membership/>. Hover the cursor over different points along the chart so students can see how the percentage of unionized employees has steadily declined.

Ask students to hypothesize why this decline has occurred and whether they think unions are important for workers and why. Ask students to reflect on the potential negative aspects of being in a union, some of which were covered in the lesson. Tell students about another reason union membership has declined: when workers try to start a union they face opposition from their employers (see this article for more context). Ask students to explain why employers might be opposed to unions.

In closing, ask students to write on a slip of paper their key takeaway from the day's lesson. Collect these to review and assess student learning on this topic.

Enrichment Activities

Respond in writing to the prompt, "If you were a miner in Roslyn in the early 1900s, which union would you be part of (Western Miners or United Mine Workers) and why? If you could make your own union, what would you tell other workers in order to persuade them to join?"

Additional Teaching Resources:

Zinn Education Project: <https://www.zinnedproject.org/>

Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project: <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/index.htm>

Why Teach Labor History? <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/green.pdf>





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<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3919666>

Labor Movement



Labor Movement Poster of Ricardo Levins Morales

What We Do & Don't Know

(adapted from [“What Rights Do We Have?”](#) from the Zinn Education Project)

1. How long have there been unions or similar forms of worker organization?
 - (a) Since the different craftspeople built Noah's ark
 - (b) Since the time of the great Egyptian pyramids
 - (c) Since the brewers and weavers in the Middle Ages
 - (d) Since railroads were built in the nineteenth century
 - (e) Since the sit-down strikes of the 1930s

2. What do unions do? List all the important things you can think of.

3. Most public school teachers in the United States are represented by a union: true or false?

4. Imagine a large and complex workplace, say a factory that builds trucks. There are people doing many kinds of jobs: operators of metal-cutting machines, electricians, painters, workers to assemble the trucks, maintenance workers, office workers, etc. If this were a union workplace, how many unions would you be likely to find?

5. Which of the following were created as a result of workers' struggles or organizing?
 - (a) Social Security
 - (b) Workers' compensation (for people injured on the job)
 - (c) Unemployment benefits
 - (d) Minimum wage
 - (e) Cure for the common cold
 - (f) Child labor laws (protecting children from heavy work and long hours)
 - (g) Public education
 - (h) The Cincinnati Red Stockings (the first professional baseball team)

Answer key:

Q1. Workers have organized to protect themselves against worsening conditions ever since some people have labored for others. There are records of worker organization in the building of the pyramids. 1 (b), (c), (d), and (e) all included unions, worker associations, or medieval guilds.

Q2. A complete list would be quite long. The aim of this question is to get beyond “strike” and “negotiates wages, benefits, and working conditions” as the common answers. Some additional answers would include:

- set up committees to strive for worker safety and health
- promote laws favorable to workers
- represent and defend workers in disciplinary proceedings within workplaces
- provide a social gathering place for members or be a training ground in public speaking and running meetings and in grassroots democracy

Q3. True. There are two major teacher unions in the United States, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. Most teachers belong to one or the other.

Q4. This varies from workplace to workplace, often geographically. In some parts of the country, the principle of organization is by skill. There, workers may belong to craft unions: machinists, electrical workers, painters, etc. In other regions, all workers in a workplace are members of the same union, e.g., die United Automobile Workers, known as an industrial union. Supervisors are considered management and thus are generally not eligible to join a union.

Q5. All except (e). The Cincinnati Red Stockings were local workers who managed the team through a system of workers' control.

Coal Wars Excerpt

Bullock, David. *Coal Wars Unions, Strikes, and Violence in Depression-Era Central Washington*, WSU Press, Washington State University, Pullman, WA, 2014, pp. 79–80.

By stepping away from the UMWA, the leaders of the new union [*the Western Miners Union of America, headquartered in Roslyn*] were taking an immense risk. They knew that their actions could not be undone. They were now marked men. They could never again reclaim standing as UMWA members. If their gambit failed and their new union should fold, they would never again work in the Roslyn mines. The course of their lives would be changed, their families upended, their careers stymied. Without work in the mines, they would have no option other than to move away and start over.

The new leaders had a strong following, especially among workers in Ronald and much of Roslyn. If the men could stay united, stay the course in protesting for the six-hour day with full pay, attract new members west of the mountains, achieve recognition as the majority mining union in the state, there was hope of reaching their goals and establishing a lasting organization.

Reasons for joining the new union were as varied as the diverse backgrounds of the workers. Many immigrant miners who could not read or write English were undoubtedly swayed by the convincing speeches of the movement's leaders—the promises for a better life, better pay, better working conditions. Many others felt the pull of family and friends and responded with loyalty to those vital relationships.ⁱ

Some joined because they felt that their safety in the mines could be better protected by a local union than a national or international group that had little contact with their daily lives. Still others believed that it was wrong for capitalists in the East to profit from their spilled blood in the mines, and they saw the local union as a means of taking care of themselves and others in their community.ⁱⁱ

Western Miners set out with a passion to recruit every miner in the state. West of the mountains the work went slowly. Few men could afford the expense of travel, and UMWA organizers were working to maintain and build their numbers in that part of the state.

In Roslyn, Ronald and Cle Elum, however, Western Miners organizers pushed hard to gain the support of every miner. Conversations before and after work at times turned heated and bitter. Men loyal to the UMWA responded to the efforts of the Western Miners by pressuring co-workers to stay with their union. UMWA organizers at times went into the mines and threatened miners with expulsion unless they signed checkoff slips for union dues.

A number of miners signed on with both groups, some not caring which union would win out and others playing both sides of the fence to enhance their odds of being on the winning side.

ⁱ Turner, George. Personal interview. 18 June 2011.

ⁱⁱ Briski, Angie. Personal interview. 28 May 2011. Beardsley, Lea. Personal interview. 16 June 2011.

Bob Ruff Murder Case Script

adapted from *Coal Wars* (Bullock, 2014)

Directions: Students are either assigned to a character below or participate as the jury. If time and physical space allow, you can rearrange the classroom to reflect something like a courtroom or seat students in a circle so they can hear each other better.

Cast of Characters (assign to student volunteers)

Judge:

Prosecution Lawyer: F.A. Kern

Lawyer for Farrimond: E.K. Brown:

Defendant: Sam Farrimond

Prosecution Witnesses:

Joe Cusworth

Joe Morris

Joe Raffle

Roslyn Mayor McGovern

Lawrence Barrik

Defendant Witnesses:

Harold Duff

Bernard Henry

Russell Miller

Norman Thompson

John Bator

6-12 Jury Members:

Script (students read aloud)

Judge: We are here today to hear the testimony and decide on a verdict of guilty or not guilty for Sam Farrimond in the murder of Bob Ruff. As we know Bob Ruff was a member of the Western Miners union and Sam Farrimond is part of the United Mine Workers union. On Christmas eve 1933, Farrimond and Ruff were seen arguing at Pete's Place, a tavern in Roslyn, where several people witnessed the shooting. Today we will hear from the prosecution team and the defendant team. Jury, your job is to listen carefully and return a verdict of guilty or not guilty. You should take notes as you listen to support your final decision.

F.A. Kern: I'm the lawyer who is here to prove that Farrimond is guilty in the murder of Bob Ruff. We have several witnesses who can testify to this murder. I first call to testify Joe Cusworth.

Joe Cusworth: On Christmas eve I was inside Pete's Place when I heard shots outside. I went into the street and saw Farrimond holding a gun. I tried to take the gun away but Farrimond said, "Get away Joe, or I'll shoot." I tried to grab Farrimond and in the struggle two more shots were fired but no one was hit. I then disarmed Farrimond.

F.A. Kern: My next witness is Joe Morris.

Joe Morris: On the night of the shooting I was headed to Swede's Hall when I heard shots. I started running toward the sound and approached Farrimond and said: "What's the matter? Are you crazy?" Farrimond said to me, "Get away from me. I don't want to shoot you but I will."

F.A. Kern: I now call Joe Raffle to testify.

Joe Raffle: I was at Pete's Place that night and when I brushed up against Farrimond in the bar, I felt something hard in his shirt and thought it must have been a bottle.

F.A. Kern: Mayor McGovern will now take the stand.

Mayor McGovern: I was working as a special officer the night of the shooting. When we heard shots, we headed to the tavern where Farrimond had been disarmed and we arrested him. I would say Farrimond was intoxicated that night.

F.A. Kern: My last witness is Lawrence Barrick.

Lawrence Barrick: I was also at Pete's Place that night. I heard the first two shots and saw Farrimond with the gun in his hand. Somebody said, "Look out, he's going to shoot again." So then I turned and ran!

F.A. Kern: I rest my case.

E.K. Brown: I am lawyer for Sam Farrimond and am here to prove to you the jury that my client acted out of self-defense. For the past six months the tension between the two unions has caused a continuous state of turmoil in the community and Ruff had threatened my client on several occasions. Farrimond believed his life was in danger and shot to protect himself. I first call Harold Duff to testify.

Harold Duff: Last fall I was deer hunting with Sam Farrimond and we came across Bob Ruff in the woods. One of my friends asked Ruff why he was shooting across our deer run and Ruff replied that he was "practicing up for me and Farrimond."

E.K. Brown: Next, Bernard Henry will take the stand.

Bernard Henry: Back in September Ruff threatened me and Sam Farrimond for our involvement in testifying that the electric cutting machines are safe to use in the mines. Ruff threatened that the miners were going to hang me. After the next union meeting a brawl broke out in which Ruff and Farrimond scuffled.

E.K. Brown: Next, I have several surprise eyewitnesses to call. First, is Russell Miller, an 18-year-old Yakima Civilian Conservation Corps worker.

Russell Miller: I was standing next to the Masonic dance hall on Christmas even when I heard loud talking. Ruff came out of the bar with his arm around Farrimond. They was standing in the doorway. They came out in the street. Ruff called Farrimond a bad word. Farrimond backed away. Ruff turned as if he was going to fight him. Then he was shot.

E.K. Brown: My next eyewitness is Norman Thompson, an 18-year-old Roslyn newsboy.

Norman Thompson: I was on the street and heard what sounded like an argument so I walked over to Pete's Place. As I got the middle of the street, the quarrel ended and some people came out of the door. I saw Farrimond come out of the tavern then I seen Bob Ruff walking away from the doorway. Farrimond took a few steps out of the doorway. When he and Bob Ruff was six or eight feet away, for some reason Bob Ruff turned around. As he did, Sam Farrimond shot him. Then he stood on the sidewalk threatening everybody. Then he fired again. I can't remember exactly if Ruff had taken steps toward Farrimond before or after he was shot. But I think it was after he was shot.

F.A. Kern: Jury, I want you to take note that Thompson says Ruff did not advance toward Farrimond until *after* he was shot.

E.K. Brown: Thompson, didn't you tell me when I questioned you before that you saw Ruff take a step or two *toward* Farrimond before he was shot? Why are you changing your story now? Why did you tell me something different before?

Norman Thompson: Because you asked me too quickly up there. I don't know whether he took the steps before or after he was shot.

E.K. Brown: Sounds like someone's been talking to you and got you confused.

Norman Thompson: Yes.

F.A. Kern: Forgetting all that, tell the jury what is your honest opinion of whether Bob Ruff took any steps toward Farrimond before he was shot.

Norman Thompson: It seemed to me that he did. He took two steps toward Farrimond before being shot.

E.K. Brown: Next, I call John Bator, Farrimond's neighbor, to the stand.

John Bator: On one occasion in the past, I met Bob Ruff in the street and he said that men who testified that the electric machines were safe should be hanged. Farrimond was one of the men who testified.

E.K. Brown: I call my last witness: Sam Farrimond.

Sam Farrimond (speaking in calm and controlled voice): There was some men standing on the sidewalk, but I didn't pay any attention to them because Ruff came up to me as I opened the door. He was standing at the corner of the doorway. He started an argument about the union. I was kinda surprised. He pulled me out on the sidewalk. He didn't pull me roughly. He pulled me about three feet. We talked there. He cursed me. He called me a rat. I started backing away from him. About six or eight feet. He started coming for me. His right hand was clenched and his left hand was near his pocket. Then I shot.

F.A. Kern: I want the jury to note that in your statement prior to the trial there are many inconsistencies with the statement you gave just now. For example, in the earlier statement you said you were sober that night but today we've heard you were intoxicated. Before, you said you were lying on the ground when you fired the shot, but in your statement today you say you were standing. What do you have to say about these inconsistencies?

Sam Farrimond: I don't remember you asking those questions. And my memory was hazy that night because the police officer hit me with a club when I was arrested.

F.A. Kern: Nonetheless, there are many inconsistencies in how you described the event. I rest my case. Jury, you have before you one of the most serious situations this county has ever faced. If you want to prevent further bloodshed, the best way is to deal out justice in this case.

E.K. Brown: Jury, you have before you the deadly result of troubles caused between these two unions. The Western Miners which Ruff was part of are radicals and communists and I hold them responsible--not Sam Farrimond. Farrimond is a good man who was protecting himself. If you find Farrimond guilty, it will send the message that the red flag of communism should replace the star-spangled banner over the county. I rest my case.

Judge: Jury, you now will deliberate. To return a verdict of "guilty" for Farrimond the verdict must be unanimous, meaning every person in the jury feels the same. Otherwise, the verdict will be not guilty and Farrimond will go free. Please exit into the hallway to deliberate.