Episode 3: Building Futures

Lesson Title: From the Tracks to the Tents: How Colorado's Labor Clashes Shaped the Modern Workplace

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Episode Description:

Building Futures: Entrepreneurship and Identity traces the entrepreneurial spirit of Coloradans who forged economic pathways despite discrimination, limited capital, and systemic barriers. Revealing how enterprise, labor, and innovation built communities and created lasting cultural legacies, this episode introduces children's voices—including students from immigrant families, Indigenous, Black, Latino, and neurodivergent youth—reflecting on work and identity, connecting historical entrepreneurship to modern opportunities. Utilizing archival materials and visual sequences emphasizing Colorado's economic development that has always been driven by diverse individuals who carved opportunity from challenge.

Episode Inquiry Questions:

1. How did early entrepreneurship in Colorado reflect the diverse backgrounds of the Indigenous Peoples and others who come to Colorado?
2. What cultural factors and systemic barriers influenced the development of the entrepreneurial spirit in Colorado communities?

Lesson Description:

This lesson examines how marginalized and working-class communities organized collective labor actions to challenge entrenched corporate and state power, ultimately reshaping the baseline of safety, dignity, and worker rights in the United States. Students analyze how labor conflicts were not merely isolated disputes over wages, but systemic struggles over institutional control, structural power, and basic constitutional rights.

Across three distinct frontiers—the remote mountain tunnels built by Chinese railroad laborers (1867), the corporate-controlled coal camps of the Ludlow Massacre (1914), and the dense urban streetcar lines of the Denver Tramway Strike (1920)—students investigate how corporate-state alliances coordinated to suppress worker leverage.

Through an 1895 contract analysis, primary source audits, "Progress of Labor" blueprint mapping, and a "Tug-of-War" structural dilemma activity, students evaluate how violently suppressed local strikes catalyzed long-term institutional progress, including safety regulations, the 8-hour workday, and the right to unionize.

Grade Level/Time Needed:

High School/90-100 Minutes

Lesson Inquiry Question:

When corporate and institutional power control basic human survival, how do marginalized and working-class communities organize in force to redefine safety, dignity, and civic rights?

Supporting Questions:

1. How did the systematic exploitation of Chinese railroad laborers fuel Colorado's physical and economic expansion, and in what ways did their 1867 strike challenge corporate dominance?
2. How did the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) use the "company town" model to strip workers of constitutional rights, and how did the 1914 Ludlow Massacre force a national re-evaluation of industrial democracy?
3. How did the 1920 Denver Tramway Strike reveal the structural trap facing public utility workers—caught between fixed municipal rates, corporate wage cuts, and state-sanctioned strikebreaking—and what did it expose about who the state protects during labor crises?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Analyze primary sources of strike manifests, corporate injunctions, and military orders to map how corporations and the state historically coordinated to suppress worker leverage.
2. Deconstruct the concept of labor progress by evaluating how highly localized, often violently [illegible]ssed disputes (Chinese Strike, Ludlow, Denver Tramway) incre[illegible] shifted the systemic baseline of labor rights (the 8-hour workday, safety inspections, the right to unionize).
3. Compare corporate-state alliances across three distinct frontiers of labor struggle: the remote mountain tunnels (Railroads), the segregated corporate coal camps (Ludlow), and the dense urban streetcar lines (Denver Tramway).

Background Knowledge / Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:

To understand labor history, students must move past the simplistic narrative of "unhappy workers vs. mean bosses." This lesson frames labor history as a contested evolution of systemic structural design.

1. Standard / Surface Viewpoint: Workers strike, sometimes securing wage increases, or sometimes losing their strike efforts.
2. Systemic Viewpoint: Striking impacts more than immediate paychecks; even when crushed, strikes expose systemic flaws, shift public opinion, and catalyze long-term safety regulations and federal codifications.

Colorado historical labor history demonstrates this progression across three core frontiers:

1. The Chinese Railroad Workers & The "Silent Spikes" (1867): Chinese laborers built the backbone of Western transport, making up 90% of the Central Pacific workforce. Paid 30% less than white workers and forced to pay for their own food and lodging, 3,000 workers organized a disciplined, nonviolent strike across 30 miles of Sierra Nevada track in June, 1867. Though corporate executives starved them back to work by blockading supplies, the strike proved that marginalized immigrant groups possessed

collective leverage, establishing that infrastructure expansion could not forever bypass the safety of its builders.

2. The Ludlow Massacre (1914): In Southern Colorado, miners lived in company towns owned by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I), which controlled homes, stores, schools, and police. When 1,200 multi-ethnic miners struck for union recognition, safety, and the right to choose their own doctors, they were evicted into tent colonies. On April 20, 1914, state-backed National Guard and company guards fired upon and burned the Ludlow tent colony, killing 21 people (including women and children). While a military victory for CF&I, the national outrage turned public opinion permanently against corporate feudalism, prompting federal interventions and labor reforms.
3. The Denver Tramway Strike (1920): Squeezed by inflation after Denver rolled back streetcar fares to 5 cents, the private Tramway Company cut worker wages. When workers struck in August 1920, the company brought in armed professional strikebreakers led by "Black Jack" Jerome. Urban riots erupted, leaving 7 dead and 52 injured before U.S. Army troops restored order under martial law. Though the union was broken, the tragedy exposed the dangers of private corporate militias, sparking the long-term shift of urban public utilities toward municipal regulation.

Building Background Knowledge for the Student:

The Hook: The "Would You Take This Job?"
Begin the lesson by presenting students with a comparison of modern workplace norms versus late 19th/early 20th-century working conditions. This activity forces them to evaluate the invisible systems (laws, codes, and historical struggles) that protect them today.

1. Step 1: The Modern Baseline Survey
    a. Ask students to raise their hands or do a quick write on index cards:
    b. How many of you currently have a job (fast food, retail, lifeguarding, babysitting), or plan to get one soon?

c. What is the worst thing that can happen to you on a bad shift? (e.g., getting yelled at by a customer, having your shift extended by an hour, not getting a break).
d. If your boss refuses to pay you for an extra hour of work, or tells you to clean a dangerous piece of machinery without safety gear, what do you do? Who do you call?

2. Step 2: The "Contract from the Past"
    a. Display or hand out the following hypothetical "Employment Contract" based on actual late-1800s working conditions in Colorado mines, railroad camps, and transit lines. (Use the Now Hiring handout.)
    b. The following is the hypothetical employment contract: NOW HIRING: GENERAL LABORER (Year: 1895) Compensation: $1.50 per day (approximately $50.00/day in modern purchasing power). Note: You will not be paid in US Dollars. You will be paid in "Company Scrip" (paper coupons) redeemable only at the Company-owned grocery store. Hours: 12-hour shifts, 6 days a week. Overtime is mandatory and unpaid. Housing: You must rent a wood-and-canvas tent or a company cabin owned by the employer. Rent will be automatically deducted from your scrip. Equipment & Safety: You must purchase your own shovel, pickaxe, dynamite, and safety lantern from the company store. If a tunnel collapses or you are injured by a runaway streetcar, your employment is terminated immediately. The company is not liable for medical bills or funerals. Civic Life: You are forbidden from joining any union, attending political meetings, or speaking to outside reporters. Local police are employed by the company; any worker found complaining will be evicted and escorted out of the county.
    c. The Discussion Prompt: Would you take this job? If you and your coworkers are trapped in this contract, with no labor laws, no Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), no minimum wage, and no voting representation, how do you change your situation? What leverage do you actually have?

3. Pre-Teaching Vocabulary: Tiered High School Framework
    a. Company Town (Structural / Economic): A community where all housing, stores, services, and law enforcement are owned by a single employer.
        i. Real-World Analogy: Living in a school dorm where your principal owns the local store, controls your internet, and acts as the police officer.
        ii. Lesson Context: CF&I owned the homes, stores, and police in southern Colorado coal camps, stripping miners of basic rights.
    b. Injunction (Legal / Institutional): A court order forcing a person or group to stop performing a specific action.
        i. Real-World Analogy: A referee issuing a penalty that forbids one team from running plays on offense.
        ii. Lesson Context: Judges issued injunctions declaring strikes illegal, allowing state authorities to arrest labor leaders.
    c. Yellow-Dog Contract (Legal / Employment): An employment agreement where a worker promises never to join a labor union as a condition of being hired.
        i. Real-World Analogy: Signing an agreement promising never to speak to a student council representative to keep your school club position.
        ii. Lesson Context: Coal and transit companies forced workers to sign these contracts to prevent collective bargaining.
    d. Strikebreaker ("Scab") (Workplace / Labor): A person hired to replace striking workers, deployed to destroy union bargaining leverage.
        i. Real-World Analogy: Subbing in players from another town to play a game while the official school team sits out in protest.
        ii. Lesson Context: The Tramway Company brought in "Black Jack" Jerome and armed strikebreakers, triggering violent urban riots.
    e. Martial Law (Political / Military): Direct military control over civil government functions during periods of extreme unrest.

i. Real-World Analogy: School administrators stepping aside to let federal officers control campus hallways and classrooms.
ii. Lesson Context: The U.S. Army deployed troops to Denver in 1920 to enforce curfew and restore order after transit riots.

Lesson Sources:

1. Archival & Photographic Evidence. These visual records allow students to practice primary source analysis by investigating the physical environment and the immediate aftermath of the tragedy.
   a. Source 1: "Ruins of the Ludlow Tent Colony" Repository: Library of Congress (George Grantham Bain Collection). Details: A glass negative photograph showing the scorched and flattened remains of the striking miners' tent colony taken shortly after the April 20 attack. Source: the Library of Congress - Ruins of Ludlow Colony.
   b. Source 2: "Machine Gun on Water Tower Hill" Repository: Denver Public Library Digital Collections. Details: A striking photograph of one of the three machine gun nests set up by the Colorado National Guard overlooking the tent colony, captured just before the shooting began. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Collections.
2. Letters, Testimonials, & Conflicting Views. Analyzing the direct words of those involved helps students understand the deep divide between corporate interests and the labor force.
   a. Source 3: The Official Strike Call (September 17, 1913)

"*All mineworkers are hereby notified that a strike of all the coal miners and coke oven workers in Colorado will begin on Tuesday, September 23, 1913 … We are striking for improved conditions, better wages, and union recognition. We are sure to win.*"

Details: The United Mine Workers of America issued this notice to notify coal miners to strike starting September 23, 1913, demanding union recognition, wage increases, and improved safety.

Discussion Point: Have students analyze the specific demands of the miners.

b. Source 4: Correspondence Between John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Lamont Bowers:

   Excerpt: *"You are fighting a good fight, which is not only in the interest of your own company but of other companies... and of the business interests of the entire country..."* (Rockefeller, Dec 1913).

   Details: Letters showing Rockefeller's initial defense of the "open shop" system and his active support of CF&I (Colorado Fuel & Iron Company) leadership during the early strike.

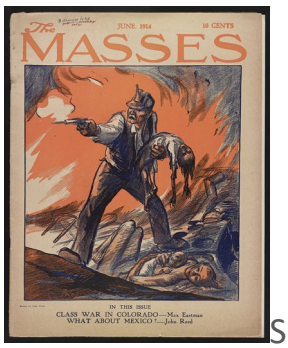
c. Source 5: Federal Mediator Ethelbert Stewart (October 1913)

   Excerpt: "*Theoretically, perhaps, the case of having nothing to do in this world but work, ought to have made these men of many tongues, as happy and contented as the managers claim … To have a house assigned you to live in … to have a store furnished you by your employer where you are to buy of him such foodstuffs as he has, at a price he fixes … to have churches, schools … and public halls free for you to use for any purpose except to discuss politics, religion, trade-unionism or industrial conditions; in other words, to have everything handed down to you from the top; to be … prohibited from having any thought, voice or care in anything in life but work, and to be*

assisted in this by gunmen whose function it was, principally, to see that you did not talk labor conditions with another man who might accidentally know your language — this was the contented, happy, prosperous condition out of which this strike grew … That men have rebelled grows out of the fact that they are men."

Details: A federal perspective describing the extreme surveillance and lack of personal freedoms experienced by the miners in company towns before they went on strike.

Access for Sources 3–5: Transcripts of these contemporary voices are compiled by [PBS American Experience: The Rockefellers].

3. Political & Media Responses (Primary Sources) These sources demonstrate how the massacre was processed, protested, and publicized across the nation.
    a. 

Source 6: "Massacre during Colorado Coal Strike" Illustration. Artist/Creator: John Sloan for the socialist magazine *The Masses* (June 1914). A highly charged, graphic cover illustration depicting a miner firing back in defense after his wife and children were killed in their tent. This illustration was used to mobilize public sympathy for the labor movement nationwide. Source: [Library of Congress Digital Catalog].

4. Modern Historical Analysis & Lesson Support (Secondary Sources). These materials provide excellent historical context to build your lecture slides or background reading assignments.

a. Source 7: "The Colorado Coal Field War Project" done by University of Denver, Binghamton University, and Fort Lewis College. It is an incredible archaeological and historical resource that investigates the daily lives of the ethnically diverse mining families (who spoke over 24 different languages) living in the colony. The source of this research is at the University of Denver Ludlow Project.

b. Source 8: "Remembering Ludlow" (History Colorado). A 100th year anniversary edition of *Colorado Heritage* magazine is a gathering of first-person eyewitness accounts of the "Ten Days War" that followed the massacre. Source: History Colorado Publications.

Lesson Materials Needed:

1. Instructor Setup & Media
    a. Projector & Sound System: For displaying primary source imagery and video clips.
2. Documentary Segment: Becoming Colorado: Episode 3 (Focusing on Chinese Railroad Workers, Ludlow, and Denver Tramway segments).
3. Digital Visual Gallery:
    a. Source 1: "Ruins of the Ludlow Tent Colony" (Library of Congress).
    b. Source 2: "Machine Gun on Water Tower Hill" (Denver Public Library).
    c. Source 6: John Sloan's "Massacre during Colorado Coal Strike" (The Masses, June 1914).
4. Student Handout Packet (1 set per student or pair)
    a. Document A: Modern Baseline Survey & 1895 "Contract from the Past" Handout.
    b. Document B: Primary Source Reading Pack & "Corporate Sovereignty" Audit Sheet (CF&I bylaws and 1915 US Commission excerpts).
    c. Document C: Formative Assessment Template (Choice of Option 1: "Three-Lens Audit" OR Option 2: "Tug-of-War").
    d. Glossary Sheet: "Words of the Working Class" Vocabulary Sheet.

5. Collaborative Supplies per Small Group (4–5 Students)
6. 1 Chart Paper / Large Poster Paper: Pre-marked for Activity 1: The "Progress of Labor" Blueprint Map.
7. 1 Pack of Color-Coded Markers / Pencils:
    a. Red: Corporate and state forces / methods of suppression.
    b. Blue: Unregulated baseline working conditions.
    c. Green: Long-term systemic progress and modern rights.
8. 1 Pad of Sticky Notes (Standard Size): For drafting demands and mapping "Knots" during structural dilemma exercises.

Lesson Instructions:

Part 1: Hook & Setting the Stage (15 Minutes)

Step 1: The Modern Baseline Survey (5 Minutes)

1. Action: Hand out index cards for students to write their reactions to Document A.
2. Teacher Script:
   "Raise your hand if you currently have a job—retail, fast food, lifeguarding, babysitting—or plan to get one soon. Quick write on your card: What is the worst thing that can happen to you on a bad shift? If your boss tells you to operate dangerous machinery without training or refuses to pay you for an extra hour worked, what do you do? Who do you report it to?"
3. Brief Class Call-Out: Collect 2–3 student responses (e.g., calling OSHA, filing a complaint with the HR department or State Labor Board). Point out that these safety nets feel normal today but were nonexistent a century ago.

Step 2: The "Contract from the Past" Reality Check (10 Minutes)

1. Action (Slide 1): Project the 1895 General Laborer Contract.
2. Text Display:

NOW HIRING: GENERAL LABORER (Year: 1895)

- *Compensation: $1.50 per day (paid in "Company Scrip" paper coupons, redeemable only at Company-owned stores).*
- *Hours: 12-hour shifts, 6 days a week. Mandatory, unpaid overtime.*

- *Housing: Rent a company cabin or canvas tent; rent automatically deducted from scrip.*
- *Equipment & Safety: Purchase your own shovel, pickaxe, dynamite, and lantern from the company store. Immediate termination if injured on the job; zero medical coverage.*
- *Civic Life: Forbidden from joining unions or attending political meetings. Company marshals will evict and escort anyone complaining out of the county.*

3. Discussion Prompt:
   "Would you take this job? If you and your coworkers are trapped in this contract—with no labor laws, no minimum wage, no voting power, and no OSHA—how do you change your situation? What leverage do you actually have?"

Part 2: Core Inquiry & Student Activities (45 Minutes)

Option A: Activity 1 — The "Progress of Labor" Blueprint Map (25 Minutes)

1. Setup: Divide students into groups of 4–5. Distribute chart paper, sticky notes, and color-coded markers.
2. Task Prompt (Slide 2):
   "Instead of creating a timeline of dates, your group is building a systemic blueprint. Map the three labor frontiers: Chinese Railroad Strike (1867), Ludlow Massacre (1914), and Denver Tramway Strike (1920)."
3. Group Directions:
   Here are what each color is to be used for:
   a. Blue Marker: Write the Unregulated Baseline conditions before each dispute.
   b. Red Marker: Detail the Means of Force used by corporations and state actors.
   c. Green Marker: Outline the Long-Term Systemic Progress established in the aftermath.

   Here is how the materials break down in practice:

- Directly on the Chart Paper:

    - The Blueprint Scribe draws the structural framework (the three column headers for the labor frontiers: Chinese Railroad Strike, Ludlow Massacre, and Denver Tramway Strike).
    - The group uses the color-coded markers (Blue, Red, Green) directly on the poster to write out their core bullet points under each tier.
- On the Sticky Notes:
    - Drafting & Refining: Students use sticky notes as "scratchpads" to pull direct quotes, evidence, and key terms from their source sheets before sticking them under the correct color-coded section.
    - Interactive Mapping / Movable Ideas: If students are debating whether an event counts as a Means of Suppression (Red) or an Unregulated Baseline (Blue), drafting on sticky notes allows them to easily move, reorganize, or adjust their points before finalizing their group poster.

Option B: Activity 2 — The "Corporate Sovereignty" Company Town Audit.

1. Setup: Distribute Document B (Primary source excerpts from the 1915 US Commission on Industrial Relations investigation and CF&I bylaws).
2. Task Prompt: Students take on the role of "Constitutional Auditors" evaluating CF&I coal camps.
3. Audit Worksheet Template (found in the Student Packet)
4. Debrief Inquiry Question:
   How did the physical structure of a company town prevent workers from using regular civic channels to improve their lives, leaving armed resistance as their primary option?

Suggested Activity for Lesson

1. Whole-Class Discussion Prompts
    a. Use these high-level inquiry questions for a Socratic wrap-up or seminar extensions:
    b. Why do you think these companies paid in “Company Scrip”?

c. Geography & Control: How did geography change corporate control when comparing remote, isolated coal camps (Ludlow) to dense urban transit networks (Denver)? Is civil rights suppression easier in an isolated mountain valley or a major city?
d. Infrastructure Built on Struggle: How does knowing that local Colorado transit lines and railways were shaped by intense labor battles change your view of modern state infrastructure?
e. Short-Term Defeat vs. Long-Term Progress: If Chinese workers were starved back to work in 1867 and the Denver Tramway union was broken in 1920, why do historians classify these events as turning points for systemic progress?
f. Crisis as a Catalyst: Why do institutional systems often require a public tragedy (like the Ludlow Massacre) before enacting structural safety reforms?
g. Modern Parallels: In what ways do gig-economy workers operating under algorithmic scheduling and contractor classifications face updated versions of historical labor pressures?
h. Protective Baselines Today: If local service workers strike today over safety conditions, what current federal and state legal protections exist that were unavailable to historical workers?
i. Media Influence: During the 1920 Tramway strike, coverage heavily framed striking workers as agitators. How does news and social media framing shape public perception of labor unions today?

Strategy Instruction Differentiation:

1. Reading Supports & ML (Multilingual Learners) Students:
2. Dual-Language & Visual Glossaries: Provide the "Words of the Working Class" sheet with graphic icons (e.g., a judge's gavel for injunction, a military barricade for martial law).
3. Sentence Starters for Discussion & Writing:
    a. "The primary source shows that corporate leaders used [mechanism] to suppress..."

b. "Although workers lost the short-term strike, the long-term impact was..."

4. Chunked Primary Sources: Frame Document B primary source quotes alongside side-by-side plain-language translations.

Assessment:

Formative Assessment Options: You can use it all or choose an assessment from below that works best for your class.

1. Option 1: Head, Heart, Conscience (The Three-Lens Audit)
    a. This formative assessment works for lessons dealing with deep human struggles like the Ludlow Massacre or the treatment of the Chinese Railroad Workers. It pushes students to separate intellectual, emotional, and ethical evidence.
    b. Head: What did you learn about how this system operated? (Focus on facts, corporate structures, and laws).
    c. Heart: What did you feel when reading these primary accounts? (Focus on empathy and the human cost of labor).
    d. Conscience: What ethical questions does this historical event raise about our world today? (Focus on modern parallels like gig-worker rights).

2. Option 2: The "Tug-of-War" (Structural Dilemmas)
   This strategy helps students explore complex, non-binary historical tensions where multiple systemic forces are pulling against each other.
    a. Setup: Draw a long “rope” line across the board. Write the central systemic dilemma at the center:
    b. The Action:
        i. Provide students with post-it notes.
        ii. The Left Side ("Tugs" for Public Order): Students write arguments or find primary source quotes supporting the idea that the state or company *must* keep systems running (e.g., during the 1920 Denver Tramway Strike, the city was

completely paralyzed without streetcars, halting food deliveries and medical services).

iii. The Right Side ("Tugs" for Worker Rights): Students write arguments or find quotes supporting the idea that workers must be allowed to halt work to stop exploitation (e.g., during the 1867 Rail Strike, Chinese workers faced freezing, deadly winter conditions in tunnels while white workers were given warm cabins and higher wages).

iv. The "Knots" in the Middle: On a different colored post-it note, students must write "The Knots"—the questions or systemic tensions that make this struggle so difficult to untangle (e.g., *Can a worker truly be free if the government makes striking illegal?*).

c. The Synthesis: Have students place their notes along the rope spectrum. Lead a brief discussion analyzing which side of the rope has "stronger" systemic pull and why.

2022 High School Social Studies Standards:

- SS.H.S.1.GLE 1.EO.b: Evaluate continuity and change over time by analyzing primary and secondary sources related to major economic, social, and political developments in Colorado history.
- SS.H.S.1.GLE 2.EO.c: Analyze how corporate structures, labor movements, and institutional innovations influenced the socioeconomic mobility of diverse populations in Colorado.

Extension Activities:

1. Injunction Legal Analysis: Direct students to research early 20th-century anti-strike judicial injunctions, comparing historical court rulings to modern federal labor laws (e.g., the Norris-LaGuardia Act and National Labor Relations Act).
2. Investigative Journalism Piece: Students write a 1914 newspaper op-ed from the perspective of an independent national reporter visiting Ludlow,

contrasting official corporate press statements against eyewitness worker testimonies.

Additional Resources:

- Andrews, Thomas. *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War.* Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Library of Congress (George Grantham Bain Collection): Photographic archives of the Ludlow tent colony and post-massacre conditions.
- Denver Public Library Digital Collections: Archival photography of the Colorado National Guard, early transit networks, and Denver labor history.
- Colorado Coal Field War Project (DU, Binghamton, Fort Lewis): Archaeological and historical research into multi-ethnic mining communities in southern Colorado.
- Remembering the Ludlow Massacre 100 years later
- PBS Colorado Experience Ludlow Massacre

NOW HIRING: GENERAL LABORER (Year: 1895)

- **Compensation**: $1.50 per day (approximately $50.00/day in modern purchasing power). Note: You will not be paid in US Dollars. You will be paid in "Company Scrip" (paper coupons) redeemable only at the Company-owned grocery store.
- **Hours**: 12-hour shifts, 6 days a week. Overtime is mandatory and unpaid.
- **Housing**: You must rent a wood-and-canvas tent or a company cabin owned by the employer. Rent will be automatically deducted from your scrip.
- **Equipment & Safety**: You must purchase your own shovel, pickaxe, dynamite, and safety lantern from the company store. If a tunnel collapses or you are injured by a runaway streetcar, your employment is terminated immediately. The company is not liable for medical bills or funerals.
- **Civic Life**: You are forbidden from joining any union, attending political meetings, or speaking to outside reporters. Local police are employed by the company; any worker found complaining will be evicted and escorted out of the county.

Episode 3, Lesson 2: From the Tracks to the Tents

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Period: _____

Document A: Modern Baseline Survey & 1895 "Contract from the Past"

Part 1: The Modern Baseline Survey

Answer the following questions based on your own experience or expectations of work today.

1. **Current / Future Employment:** Do you currently have a job (retail, fast food, lifeguarding, babysitting, etc.), or do you plan to get one soon?

2. **Workplace Challenges:** What is the worst thing that can reasonably happen to you on a bad shift today? (e.g., getting yelled at by a customer, staying an extra hour, missed breaks)

3. **Protection & Safety:** If your boss refuses to pay you for hours worked, or forces you to operate dangerous machinery without training, what action do you take?

   Who do you report this to?

Part 2: Contract from the Past Analysis

Read the historical contract below based on working conditions in late 19th-century Colorado.

NOW HIRING: GENERAL LABORER (Year: 1895)

- **Compensation:** $1.50 per day (paid in "Company Scrip" paper coupons, redeemable only at Company-owned grocery stores).
- **Hours:** 12-hour shifts, 6 days a week. Mandatory, unpaid overtime.
- **Housing:** You must rent a wood-and-canvas tent or a company cabin owned by the employer. Rent will be automatically deducted from your scrip.
- **Equipment & Safety:** You must purchase your own shovel, pickaxe, dynamite, and safety lantern from the company store. If a tunnel collapses or you are injured,

your employment is terminated immediately. The company is not liable for medical bills or funerals.

- **Civic Life:** You are forbidden from joining any union, attending political meetings, or speaking to outside reporters. Local police are employed by the company; any worker found complaining will be evicted and escorted out of the county.

Analysis Questions:

1. **Initial Reaction:** Would you accept this job today? Why or why not?
2. **Identifying Leverage:** If you and your coworkers are trapped in this contract—with no labor laws, no OSHA, no minimum wage, and no voting representation—how do you change your situation? What leverage do you actually have?

Document B: Primary Source Reading Pack & "Corporate Sovereignty" Audit Sheet

Primary Source Evidence Pack

- **Source 3: Official Strike Call (Sept 17, 1913)**

  "All mineworkers are hereby notified that a strike of all the coal miners and coke oven workers in Colorado will begin on Tuesday, September 23, 1913 ... We are striking for improved conditions, better wages, and union recognition. We are sure to win."

- **Source 4: Letter from John D. Rockefeller Jr. to Lamont Bowers (Dec 1913)**

  "You are fighting a good fight, which is not only in the interest of your own company but of other companies... and of the business interests of the entire country..."

- **Source 5: Report of Federal Mediator Ethelbert Stewart (Oct 1913)**

  "To have a house assigned you to live in... to have a store furnished you by your employer where you are to buy of him such foodstuffs as he has, at a price he fixes... to have churches, schools... free for you to use for any purpose except to discuss politics, religion, trade-unionism... in other words, to have everything handed down to you from the top... and to be assisted in this by gunmen whose function it was, principally, to see that you did not talk labor conditions... That men have rebelled grows out of the fact that they are men."

"Corporate Sovereignty" Company Town Audit

Directions: Act as a Constitutional Auditor. Evaluate how the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company (CF&I) coal camps impacted workers' constitutional rights using Sources 3, 4, and 5.

Constitutional Rights Investigated	**CF&I Company Policy / Reality (How was it restricted?)**	**Evidence / Primary Source Quote (Quote from Source 4 or 5)**
1. Freedom of Speech & Assembly *(1st Amendment)*	Ex: Workers forbidden from discussing unions or politics; met with armed surveillance.	*Ex: "Prohibited from having any thought, voice or care... except to work..."* (Source 5)
2. Private Property & Protection from Unlawful Eviction	Ex: Housing owned by CF&I; miners evicted without notice during labor disputes.	
3. Equal Protection & Due Process *(14th Amendment)*	Ex: Company hires armed marshals; local law enforcement functions as private corporate security.	

Audit Debrief Question:

How did the physical structure of a company town prevent workers from using regular civic channels to improve their lives, leaving armed resistance as their primary option?

Document C: Formative Assessment Template

(Select **Option 1** OR **Option 2** as directed by your teacher)

OPTION 1: Three-Lens Audit (Head, Heart, Conscience)

- **THE HEAD: Systemic Mechanics**
  What legal, economic, or corporate structures did companies use to suppress worker leverage?

- **THE HEART: Human Impact & Empathy**
  What did it feel like to live under these conditions? What were the human costs of these struggles?

- **THE CONSCIENCE: Modern Ethical Parallels**
  What ethical obligations do modern corporations and governments have to workers today?

OPTION 2: The "Tug-of-War" Structural Dilemma

Left-Side Argument (Public Order): Identify one evidence-based reason why state or city officials felt forced to intervene and keep infrastructure running.
Right-Side Argument (Worker Rights): Identify one evidence-based reason why workers felt forced to halt labor to stop exploitation.
The "Knot" (Central Systemic Tension): Write down the central legal or ethical contradiction that makes this conflict difficult to untangle (e.g., *Can a worker truly be free if striking is outlawed by court injunctions?*).

Glossary Sheet: "Words of the Working Class"

- **Company Town:** A community where all housing, stores, services, and local law enforcement are owned and controlled by a single private employer.
    - *Plain-Language Translation:* Living in a town where your boss is also your landlord, grocery store owner, and chief of police.
- **Injunction:** A formal legal court order that forces a person or group to stop performing a specific action, such as striking or gathering in public.
    - *Plain-Language Translation:* A judge issuing a legal penalty that forbids workers from protesting or withholding their labor.
- **Yellow-Dog Contract:** An employment contract where a worker is forced to promise never to join a labor union as a mandatory condition of being hired.
    - *Plain-Language Translation:* Signing a pledge that you will never organize with coworkers if you want to keep your job.
- **Strikebreaker ("Scab"):** A worker hired by an employer to replace striking employees, specifically deployed to break the union's bargaining leverage.
    - *Plain-Language Translation:* Outside workers brought in to keep business running while regular workers are out in protest.
- **Martial Law:** Direct military control imposed over civil government functions, suspending standard civilian rights during periods of extreme social unrest.
    - *Plain-Language Translation:* The government sending state or federal armed troops to enforce curfews and take over law enforcement.

ACTIVITY KIT: PART 2 (45 MINUTES)

Option A: Activity 1 — The "Progress of Labor" Blueprint Map (25 Minutes)

Group Role Cards

Cut these out or project them on screen so each student in the group (4–5 students) has a designated role during the mapping process.

- **Lead Architect (Marker Specialist):** Responsible for enforcing the color-coding rules (Blue, Red, Green) on the chart paper and ensuring the layout matches the structural blueprint design.
- **Source Researcher:** Reads through the historical background cards and primary sources to pull specific evidence for each of the three frontiers.
- **Blueprint Scribe:** Writes the group's concise bullet points on the sticky notes and chart paper in clear, readable print.
- **Presenter / Spokesperson:** Synthesizes the group's poster and prepares to present one specific frontier during the class gallery walk or debrief.

Frontier Information Cards (For Group Reference)

Frontier 1: Chinese Railroad Strike (1867)

- **Unregulated Baseline (Blue):** Chinese laborers built the backbone of Western transport, making up 90% of the Central Pacific workforce. They were paid 30% less than white workers ($30/month vs. $40/month plus board), forced to work 12-hour shifts in extreme Sierra Nevada winter cold, and required to buy their own food and lodgings.
- **Means of Force / Suppression (Red):** When 3,000 Chinese workers organized a peaceful strike along 30 miles of track, railroad executives completely cut off all food supplies, telegraph communications, and train transport to the mountain camps, starving workers back into submission within a week.
- **Long-Term Systemic Progress (Green):** Though forced back to work, the strike shattered the corporate myth that Chinese laborers were compliant,

proving they held collective leverage. It marked one of the earliest organized, large-scale immigrant labor actions in U.S. history and paved the way for future wage standards in Western infrastructure.

Frontier 2: Ludlow Coal Massacre (1914)

- **Unregulated Baseline (Blue):** Miners lived in segregated "company towns" owned by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I), receiving payment only in company scrip. They faced dangerous, uninspected coal mine shafts and lacked freedom of speech or assembly.
- **Means of Force / Suppression (Red):** Upon striking, families were evicted into tent colonies. CF&I hired private detectives with armored cars ("Death Specials") and conspired with state authorities to deploy the Colorado National Guard. On April 20, 1914, troops fired machine guns directly into the tent colony and set it ablaze, killing 21 people, including women and children.
- **Long-Term Systemic Progress (Green):** The massacre sparked national outrage that permanently turned public opinion against corporate feudalism. It triggered federal Congressional investigations, prompted John D. Rockefeller Jr. to introduce employee representation plans, and ultimately catalyzed the passage of federal labor protections, including the 8-hour workday and child labor prohibitions.

Frontier 3: Denver Tramway Strike (1920)

- **Unregulated Baseline (Blue):** Dense urban transit operators in Denver faced wage cuts when the city capped streetcar fares at 5 cents. Drivers worked long, rigid shifts operating high-risk urban public transit without safety guarantees or union recognition.
- **Means of Force / Suppression (Red):** The Tramway Company imported professional armed strikebreakers ("scabs") under notorious strikebreaker "Black Jack" Jerome. When street riots erupted between armed guards and striking communities, 7 citizens were killed and 52 injured before the U.S. Army was brought in under martial law to restore order.

- **Long-Term Systemic Progress (Green):** Though the local union was temporarily broken, the tragedy exposed the catastrophic public safety risks of private corporate militias operating on public streets. It accelerated the historical shift toward municipal oversight and regulation of public utility contracts across American cities.

Option B: Activity 2 — The "Corporate Sovereignty" Company Town Audit (20 Minutes)

Audit Background & Role Description

The Role: Constitutional Auditor (Investigating Commission on Industrial Relations, 1915)

The Task: Analyze the structural reality of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) coal camps in southern Colorado. Evaluate how corporate policies systematically stripped working-class immigrant families of basic constitutional guarantees, leaving collective striking as their only available recourse.

Primary Source Dossier for Auditors

Evidence Item 1: CF&I Company Bylaws & Camp Rules (1912)

> *"Section 4: No person shall be permitted to reside upon company property, nor shall any person enter upon said premises, who is not an employee of the company or an immediate family member of such employee, without written permission from the mine superintendent."*
>
> *"Section 9: The lease of any dwelling house may be terminated by the Company upon three (3) days' notice to quit, without assigning any cause therefore, in the event of a strike or work stoppage."*

Evidence Item 2: Testimony of Federal Mediator Ethelbert Stewart (U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, 1914)

> *"To have a house assigned you to live in... to have a store furnished you by your employer where you are to buy of him such foodstuffs as he has, at a price he fixes... to have churches, schools... free for you to use*

for any purpose except to discuss politics, religion, trade-unionism... in other words, to have everything handed down to you from the top... and to be assisted in this by gunmen whose function it was, principally, to see that you did not talk labor conditions... That men have rebelled grows out of the fact that they are men."

Evidence Item 3: Letter from John D. Rockefeller Jr. to CF&I Management (Dec 1913)

"You are fighting a good fight, which is not only in the interest of your own company but of other companies... and of the business interests of the entire country... We would rather lose every dollar invested in these mines than surrender the principle of open shop and freedom of contract."

Audit Findings & Synthesis Questions

1. **Structural Control:** How did paying workers in "Company Scrip" (coupons valid only at company-owned stores) reinforce corporate control over the miners' personal lives?
2. **The Failure of Local Channels:** Why was it virtually impossible for miners to use local elections, local courts, or standard legal petitions to resolve their grievances within a company town?
3. **Auditor's Final Determination:** Based on your findings, was the 1914 Ludlow conflict an isolated dispute over wages, or was it a systemic rebellion against total corporate sovereignty? Cite one piece of evidence from your audit table to support your conclusion.

Here is the ready-to-print, student-facing assessment worksheet for **Option 1: Head, Heart, Conscience (The Three-Lens Audit)**, complete with clear directions, a visual layout, and teacher scoring criteria.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: OPTION 1

Head, Heart, Conscience: The Three-Lens Audit

Student Name: _____

Date: _____ Class Period: _____

Student Directions

Now that you have analyzed the three labor frontiers—the 1867 Chinese Railroad Strike, the 1914 Ludlow Massacre, and the 1920 Denver Tramway Strike—you will evaluate how labor conflicts shaped Colorado and the modern workplace.

Complete the **Three-Lens Audit Worksheet** below by analyzing the conflict through three distinct perspectives:

1. **Head (Systemic Mechanics):** Analyze the institutional structures, legal levers, and corporate tools used to control or suppress labor.
2. **Heart (Human Impact & Empathy):** Reflect on the lived human experience, emotional weight, and personal sacrifices of the workers and their families.
3. **Conscience (Modern Ethical Parallels):** Connect historical labor struggles to modern ethical obligations, workplace standards, and worker protections today.