

His Father's Namesake

Lesson 2: Reader's Theater

Focus Questions

Did Chicago's anarchist leaders deserve responsibility for the Haymarket bombing? Was their trial fair? Is violence for a political or social cause ever justified? Should one's ideals come before one's family?

Core Understandings

Students will understand the clash of political and social forces that brought about the Haymarket Affair. They will understand why Chicago's anarchist leaders believed armed revolution was necessary to correct the city's social and political inequalities. They will understand why Albert Parsons was willing to sacrifice his life for the anarchist cause.

Knowledge

Students will know the key historical figures, circumstances, and events surrounding the 1886 Haymarket bombing and trial. They will know what factors led labor and management to such a radical state of polarization and how that polarization erupted in violence.

Skills

Students will use their language arts skills to interpret the past and their analytical skills to discern fact from fiction. They will summarize and express their interpretations verbally and/or in writing.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSS.R.1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.SL.1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

ISBE Fine Arts Standard

Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

In This Lesson

Through a reader's theater performance of *His Father's Namesake*, students will develop historical empathy with the figures involved in the Haymarket Affair and better grasp the complex crucible of economic, social, and political challenges facing Chicago in 1886. The story elements of character, setting, plot, obstacles/challenges, and dramatic tension are addressed. This lesson was researched and written by Jackson Potter.



Activity

Distribute individual copies of *His Father's Namesake* to students.

<http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/namesake/story.php>

Assign student volunteers the following roles for a reader's theater performance:

- Narrator
- Albert Jr.
- Lucy Parsons
- Albert Parsons
- Peter
- Hans
- Man in Crowd 1
- Man in Crowd 2
- Parsons's Colleague 1
- Parsons's Colleague 2

After reading the first two chapters of the story, discuss the following questions:

1) Why does Albert have such difficulty standing up to his mother? 2) Why do workers admire Albert Parsons? 3) What is piecework? 4) According to Peter, what is the businessman's primary objective? 5) Do you agree with Peter or Hans? 6) How does Albert Jr. feel about his father's role in the movement?

Continue reading the final three chapters of the story. Follow up with these discussion questions: 1) Why did Mayor Harrison attend the Haymarket rally? 2) Why did the rally flyers call for a show of force? 3) Why were the anarchist leaders held responsible for the bombing? 4) Was their trial fair? 5) Did the anarchist leaders deserve the death penalty? 6) Is violence for a political or social cause ever justified?

Lesson 2 Home Connection

Have students read an excerpt on Haymarket (pages 468–476) from Donald L. Miller's book *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America*.

Materials & Resources

- **Printouts of *His Father's Namesake***
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/story/His_Fathers_Namesake_by_Katherine_San_Fratello.pdf
- **Copies of book excerpt: pages 468–476 of *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* by Donald L. Miller** (available at many Chicago Public Library branches)

Instructional Notes

See the Classroom Activities section of the *Great Chicago Stories* website for tips on facilitating reader's theater. <http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/classroom/reader.php>

This lesson could also be done as a read-around, or students could read the story in pairs. Alternatively, you could play the story audio for the class. <http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/site/storyaudio/index.html?story=5>

Extension Activities

If you have computer access in the classroom or access to your school's computer lab, have students explore the interactive history map for *His Father's Namesake*. Here students can examine primary source materials documenting the Parsons's home and work, labor conditions of the era, and the Haymarket bombing and trial. The "look closer" feature offers questions for focused inquiry. <http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/site/storymap/index.html?story=5>