

# OPEN BOOK

Teacher  
Guide  
7th – 11th  
Grade

## Why Do People Unite?

Rose Schneiderman and the Labor Movement

## The labor movement in the United States developed out of the need to protect the interests of workers.

Organized labor unions fought for workers' rights such as higher wages, shorter workdays, safer working conditions, and financial support for workers injured on the job. Jewish workers who participated often associated political activism with Jewish values. This included cigar maker Samuel Gompers (1850–1924), who became president of both the American Federation of Labor, the largest labor union in the world, and the heavily Jewish International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), which was one of the strongest advocates for improving workers' lives.

Rose Schneiderman (1882–1972) was a cap maker who organized thousands of female workers in one of the largest strikes in American history. In 1904 she became the first woman to hold an office in a national union—as a member of the general executive board of the ILGWU. She led a cap makers' strike the following year, which led to her election as vice president of the New York branch of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), an organization of working-class and middle-class women. In 1909 Schneiderman helped organize workers on the Lower East Side for what became the “Uprising of the 20,000,” the largest strike by women up to that date. In 1911 Schneiderman spoke the words that made her famous: “The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too.” She meant that workers needed basic rights such as fair wages, safe working conditions, and access to affordable food and housing, but they also needed to find meaning in their work, and in their lives, by having equal access to professional advancement, education, and culture. The phrase “bread and roses” became a rallying cry for women workers across the country, inspiring a well-known song often sung on the picket lines.

This lesson, structured around a 1912 poster announcing a public lecture by Schneiderman, focuses on the development of the Jewish labor movement. The poster quotes her famous words on “bread and roses,” which can be used as a focal point for the lesson. This slogan can also help students to think broadly about the idea of community building. The lesson's key questions focus on the development of the Jewish labor movement and encourage students to consider the role of political movements, workers' rights, and female leadership, in history and in our lives today.

### KEY QUESTIONS:

- How did the American Jewish labor movement develop?
- What did labor unions and labor leaders like Schneiderman hope to achieve, and what changes to working life did they propose?
- What role did women play in labor activism during the first part of the twentieth century?
- What is “mutual aid”? How do the labor unions of the early twentieth century help us understand the meaning of community and civil society?
- Why did workers in the early 1900s choose to join the labor movement? How do these reasons compare or contrast to our own motivations for joining together in groups, clubs, political movements, and organizations?

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

### **By the end of this unit students will be able to:**

- Explore a historical argument or question by applying inquiry-based methods to interpreting museum objects or primary sources.
- Apply critical thinking to analyzing texts, interpreting objects, synthesizing multiple sources, and articulating opinions.
- Understand the rise of labor unions, with a focus on the problems faced by workers, like the struggle to make a living and maintain dignity.
- Identify contrasting perspectives on events, such as those between employers and employees.
- Empathize with the motivations for why people unite in service of a cause and/or community.

# Suggested Pre-Lesson Activity

## **1. On a board or a large piece of paper write the word “community.”**

- a) Tell the class they will have 30 seconds to think about a word, phrase or image that comes to mind when they think of the word, “community.” Cue them that they should focus on describing a community (e.g. “welcoming”), rather than identifying a specific type of community (e.g. “congregation”).
- b) Go around the class and have each person share their image, word, etc. Simply record each student’s response; discussion will follow. Depending on time allowed, size of class, etc. you can do this as many times as seems appropriate.

## **2. Working as a class or in small groups divide the responses into categories (you can choose or let the students choose). Write the categories on the board/paper.**

- a) Discuss each category and why the words assigned to them seem to go together.
- b) Ask the group if there are things missing from the list of categories. Ask them to think of communities they belong to or know of and if those communities have anything that is not covered by the categories. As things come up, mention them and put them into the categories.
- c) Ask: How are communities started? Do they appear organically or do people deliberately establish them? Imagine you move to a new place, what community do you think would be most important? How would you set it up? Which do you think would be easiest, hardest?

## **3. Ask the students what communities they think they are a part of. Ask them how they know they are part of those communities? In what ways do they show that they are a part of particular community? Does the community do anything to show that they are members?**

# Procedure

**1. Refer to the *Open Book Overview* and follow the instructions for the “See, Think, Wonder” activity as a class. Consider using the following discussion questions.**

## **See:**

- What type of document is this?
- What does it say?
- Which words are bigger? Which words are smaller?
- Which words are in green? Which words are in orange?
- What images do you see?
- Can you see anything that’s handwritten?

## **Think:**

- What do you think the poster is advertising?
- Who do you think is in the image?
- Where do you think you would find this poster?
- Who do you think is the poster’s audience? Who do you think they want to attend the meeting?
- Who was Rose Schneiderman?

## **Wonder:**

- I wonder why this meeting was necessary.
- I wonder why they misspelled her name.
- I wonder how many more times they held these meetings than is advertised on the poster.
- I wonder why they had to specifically invite men to attend.
- I wonder what “the woman’s question” is.
- I wonder why some words are bigger or in different colors.

**2. If you haven’t already, divide students into pairs or trios. Distribute one Talmud page to each group and Student Guide to each student.**

**3. Refer to the *Open Book Overview* and follow the instructions for the *havruta* study.**

**4. Refer to the *Open Book Overview* and follow the instructions for the *Wrap up activity*. Consider using the following discussion questions.**

- Can you find two texts that disagree with each other? What do you think they would say to each other?
- If you had to use one text to convince someone why it's important to unite, which would you choose and why?
- What adjectives do the various authors use to describe being alone? To describe being in a community? Which do you agree with and why?
- Schneiderman (#2) said that women should have bread, but also roses too. What do you think this means? If you could add one more thing each woman should have, what would you add and why? What do you think each other author would add?
- How did Newman (#3) and Rosenfeld (#4) describe being workers? How are their descriptions similar, and how are they different? If you were their boss, what changes would you make to give them a more positive experience?

**General prompting questions:**

- What are the benefits of being alone? What are the benefits of being in a group? Why are each important?
- What communities are you a part of? Why? How can you tell you are a part of each community?
- How do you treat others who want to be part of a community you belong to?

# Suggested Post-Lesson Activity

**1. Choose a contemporary or historic protest that happened near your school, or a protest of your choice.**

**2. Find a picture or artifact from that protest and analyze it using the “See, Think, Wonder” method. Consider using your analysis to answer the following questions:**

- What were the goals of the protest? How did the protest work towards achieving those goals?
- Do you think the protest’s cause received a lot of attention? Why or why not?
- How are people protesting? Are they carrying signs? Is it taking place online? Are they interacting with others at the protest?
- If you were to attend this protest, what would you write on your sign or post on your social media?

**3. Together as a class, think of an issue you all care about. This can be an issue on a national or global scale or even something happening in your school. Discuss the following questions:**

- What are the goals of the issue?
- Have there been any protests of that issue? How can you (students) participate?
- Have any students been to any protests or other actions? What did they see there?

**4. Besides protesting, come up with a list of other actions that people have been taking to address the chosen issue. For each action, determine if it is something to do individually or as part of a group.**

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## Object Information

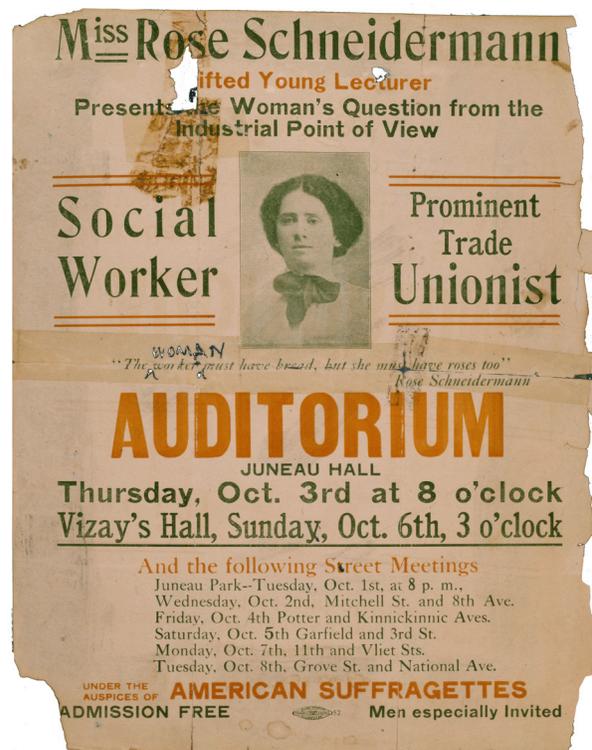
### Poster, "American Suffragettes," New York, New York, 1912

In November 1912 Wisconsin held a referendum on whether to give women the right to vote in state elections. Ironically, only men could vote in the referendum, which explains why men were especially invited to attend Schneiderman's lecture. The referendum was defeated, with 62 percent of men voting against giving women the right to vote. Schneiderman later campaigned for the National American Woman Suffrage Association and helped pass the New York State referendum in 1917 that gave women the right to vote in New York. She believed that women's right to vote was an integral part of the fight for economic rights, since without political rights women would be powerless to determine their own economic conditions.

### HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE POSTER TO BE NOTICED DURING "I SEE, I THINK, I WONDER":

**Rose Schneiderman (notice her name is misspelled on the poster!)**—a union leader, hero to many American working-class women, and a women's rights advocate. Four-foot nine, with red hair, Schneiderman was a powerful orator who impressed even her biggest opponents.

Schneiderman was born in Poland in 1882, the first of four children. Her family immigrated to New York's Lower East Side in 1890, and Rose's father died soon after. Impoverished, Rose had to leave school at age thirteen and begin working to help support her family. While working as a cap maker, Schneiderman realized that women



Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives

received lower wages than men for the same work and that women did not receive the same opportunities for professional advancement. She became an advocate for a new political movement, known as "industrial feminism."

At the time, many people in the labor movement believed that fighting for women's rights, such as the right to vote, was something that would only benefit middle-class and upper-class women. Schneiderman, along with organizations like the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), believed that working-class women would also benefit from gaining a political voice. Excelling as a union organizer, public speaker, and administrator, she became New York WTUL vice president in 1908 and its president from 1918 to 1949. From 1926 to 1950, Rose also served as president of the National WTUL.

**Auditorium: location and time** – Using Google to search for Juneau Hall or street locations will reveal that the event that took place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Similarly, to find out what year the poster was created, students can use a website to check historical dates (such as <https://www.timeanddate.com/date/weekday.html>) and discover that the lecture took place on Thursday, October 3, in 1912.

**Social worker** – In 1912 the term “social worker” did not necessarily refer to the profession as it exists today. Social work was becoming professionalized during Rose Schneiderman’s time, but the term could also indicate a person who sought to investigate and improve social conditions.

**Prominent trade unionist** – By 1912 Rose Schneiderman had become a prominent union leader and popular speaker. According to the poster, what were the goals of trade unionism?

**Bread and roses** – The sentence “The woman worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too” originated in a 1911 speech given by Rose Schneiderman and captured the essence of her political philosophy. The phrase became popular among labor activists and was closely associated with a 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, referred to as the “Bread and Roses Strike.” Ask: What does “bread” mean? (the very basic human rights to which working women were entitled); What might be the “roses”? (schools, recreational facilities, professional networks, respect, and—the right to vote! Or is that “bread”?)

The same year of the lecture advertised by this poster, Schneiderman expanded on her idea of bread and roses, stating: “What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist—the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life, and the sun and music and art. You have nothing that the humblest worker has not a right to have also. The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too. Help, you women of privilege, give her the ballot to fight with.”

**The woman’s question; men especially invited**

– Schneiderman and many of her peers in the labor movement believed that it was crucial for women to have the right to vote and play an active and equal role in choosing their own political leaders. They believed they had a right to voice their opinions about working conditions, political action, and women’s unique position as both breadwinners and caretakers of the family. Women actively sought male allies from their families, communities, unions, and political groups to also speak out on behalf of women’s right to vote, so that the movement would gain nationwide and, eventually, congressional support.

# Appendix A – Historical Background

## **JEWES AND THE GARMENT INDUSTRY**

As millions of Eastern European Jewish immigrants migrated into American urban centers such as New York and Chicago, they gravitated toward industries like the garment trade that employed thousands of unskilled workers. Some worked in factories or sweatshops, others did “piecework,” working in their own home or the home of another worker alongside other Jewish immigrants. Some Jews worked in Jewish-owned businesses that allowed them to take Saturdays off for the Jewish Sabbath, although others worked for Jewish bosses who insisted on keeping their business open on the Sabbath.

Whether working in a tenement or a factory, many Jewish workers, many them young women, endured long, stuffy, hot days hunched over sewing machines or stooped over other factory work. They hoped that, after many years of hard work, they would be able to move into jobs requiring skilled labor, or perhaps even go to night school and transition into white-collar work.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were an exciting, tumultuous, and intense time to be a Jewish woman worker in New York. In 1909, thousands of women garment workers walked off the job and stood on the picket lines in the bitter winter cold for four months, leading a strike that came to be known as “The Uprising of the 20,000,” in which the women protested for better working conditions. Eventually they were successful: the strike settlement, known as the “Protocol of Peace,” gave workers a fifty-two-hour week, four paid

holidays a year, and the right to negotiate between unions and employers, known as collective bargaining. The strike settlement was a milestone for the labor movement, but not every garment company agreed to the change of conditions.

In March 1911, what could have been a preventable fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory near Washington Square in New York City after someone dropped a cigarette into a trash can filled with fabric scraps. One of the stairways was locked, the fire escapes were broken, and the fire department’s hoses and ladders could not reach the top floors, where people were trapped. The fire became one of the worst disasters in the city’s history, with 146 factory workers dead, the majority young Jewish and Italian women. Because better working conditions in that factory could have prevented or mitigated the tragedy, the fire became a symbol for union leaders, and female leaders in particular, to use as a catalyst for political change.

As hundreds of thousands of people throughout the city mourned the fire’s victims, Rose Schneiderman gave a speech in front of thirty-five hundred people at the Metropolitan Opera House. Before an audience of mostly middle- and upper-class women, Schneiderman spoke movingly about rededicating her own life’s work to the fight for the rights of women workers. “This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city.... The life of men and women is so cheap, and property so sacred.... I can’t talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement.”

In 1933, Schneiderman became the only woman appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt to the labor advisory board of the National Recovery Administration (NRA), where she made sure workers received fair treatment in codes written to standardize industry practices. She called the work “exhilarating and inspiring,” though she was unsuccessful in eliminating provisions that allowed lower wages for women doing the same work as men. Schneiderman was appointed Secretary of the New York State Department of Labor in 1935 and played a key role in shaping landmark legislation of the New Deal: the National Labor Relations Act, the Social Security Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Until the 1950s Schneiderman spoke on street corners, lecture platforms, and over the radio. She was one of the most important women in the history of the labor movement, and her ideas changed and improved the working conditions for millions of workers. Her 1972 obituary reads, in part, “A tiny red-haired bundle of social dynamite, Rose Schneiderman did more to upgrade the dignity and living standards of working women than any other American.”

# Appendix B - Supplementary Information for Talmud Page

## 01 MISHNAH, PIRKEI AVOT

If there is no flour, there is no Torah;  
if there is no Torah, there is no flour.  
- *Mishnah, Pirkei Avot 3:21*

The Mishnah is a compilation of Jewish oral law from the first and second centuries CE that supplements and clarifies the commandments of the Torah. *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)* is devoted to the principles of character, faith, divine providence, and justice taught by the sages.

## 02 BREAD AND ROSES

What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist—the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life, and the sun and music and art. You have nothing that the humblest worker has not a right to have also. The worker must have bread, but she must have roses, too.  
- *Rose Schneiderman, 1912*

The ideas of “Bread and Roses” originated from a speech given by Rose Schneiderman during a 1912 strike in Lawrence, MA. That same year she repeated this idea with different words when she said, “What the woman who labors wants is the right to live, not simply exist—the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life,

and the sun and music and art. You have nothing that the humblest worker has not a right to have also. Help, you women of privilege, give her the ballot to fight with.”

Watch Joan Baez singing “Bread and Roses”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWkVcaAGCio>.

## 03 INDUSTRIAL POINT OF VIEW

The machines are so wildly noisy in the shop  
That I often forget who I am.

I get lost in the frightful tumult—

My self is destroyed, I become a machine.

I work and work and work endlessly—

I create and create and create

Why? For whom? I don’t know and I don’t ask.

What business has a machine thinking?

I have no feelings, no thoughts, no  
understanding.

The bitter, bloody work suppresses

The noblest, most beautiful, best, richest,

Deepest, and highest things that life possesses.

I lose my mind, I forget who I am.

There’s tumult and struggling—my self is lost.

I don’t know, I don’t care—I am a machine.

- *Morris Rosenfeld, “The Sweatshop,” early 1900s*

Morris Rosenfeld was the most prominent member of a school of Yiddish writers known as the “Sweatshop Poets.” These poets were themselves workers, laboring for long hours under difficult working conditions, only getting sporadic chances to compose and record their poetry. Many works of the “Sweatshop Poets”

were widely read, and they were even put to music and sung by Jewish workers. Rosenfeld focused on dramatizing the pain and everyday suffering of the Jewish worker.

#### 04 PROMINENT TRADE UNIONIST

Despite inhuman working conditions, the workers, including myself, continued to work for this firm. What good would it do to change jobs since similar conditions existed in all garment factories of that era? There were other reasons why we did not change jobs, call them psychological. One gets used to a place even if it is only a work shop. One gets to know the people you work with. You are no longer a stranger and alone. You have a feeling of belonging which helps to make life in a factory a bit easier to endure. Very often friendships are formed and a common understanding established. These among other factors made us stay put, as it were.

- Pauline Newman to Michael and Hugh Owens, May 1951, letter in the collection of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Archives, Cornell University, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Ithaca, NY

Pauline Newman was a labor pioneer and union organizer once described as “capable of smoking a cigar with the best of them.” The first woman ever appointed general organizer by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), Newman spent more than seventy years working for the ILGWU—as an organizer, journalist, health educator, and government liaison. Newman played a leading role in organizing tenants, laborers, socialists, and suffrage activists. She was also one of the few working-class women of her generation to write about the struggles of immigrant working

women. As vice president of the New York and the National Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Newman knew Schneiderman well.

#### 05 THE WOMAN WORKER

Clara Lemlich Shavelson (1886-1982) was born in Gorodok, Ukraine to religious Jewish parents. Growing up, her family taught her Yiddish and banned Russian, in protest of governmental antisemitism. Clara defied her family's prohibition by secretly teaching herself Russian using books she earned from sewing and transcribing letters for illiterate women. A neighbor discovered Clara's literary appetite and supplied political texts that led her to become a life-long, dedicated socialist.

The Lemlichs immigrated to the United States in 1903, fleeing anti-Jewish violence and political tumult, immigrated. Like many Jews at the time, Clara found employment at a garment factory on the Lower East Side of New York City. Aggravated by the miserable working conditions, such as eleven-hour work days and insufficient wages, she joined the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in 1905 and quickly rose through the ranks. She earned her prominence by inspiring strikes among women workers in the garment industry.

Clara's played a significant role in one of the most famous strikes among female garment workers, the 1909 “Uprising of the 20,000”—the largest strike of women workers to date. Despite the success of the demonstration, and the subsequent strikes it inspired, negotiations ultimately failed and led to Clara's blacklisting by New York's garment industry.

Nevertheless, Clara continued to be an activist. She began organizing wives and mothers in an effort to seek improvements in housing, food costs and the accessibility of public education. Notably, she helped lead the 1917 kosher meat boycotts, protesting a dramatic rise in prices, and rent strikes that swept across New York City in 1919 in response to sharp increases in the cost of acceptable housing. She joined the Communist Party in 1926 and continued to address similar issues when she co-founded the United Council of Working-Class Housewives. In 1935 the UCWC changed its name to the Progressive Women's Councils and aligned itself with similar non-Communist organizations dedicated to advocate for reducing food and housing costs, which became especially important during the Great Depression. Clara served on the American Committee to Survey Trade Union Conditions in Europe in the 1940s and spoke out against nuclear weapons for the American League Against War and Fascism. Clara was interrogated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1951. Her son and husband were also investigated.

Clara continued fighting and organizing wherever she went until her death at the age 81 in the Los Angeles Jewish Home for the Aged. Her last victory was helping the orderlies establish a union.

## 06 AUDITORIUM

More Americans are bowling today than ever before, but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted... If you worry about crime, you can either have 10 percent more cops on the beat or 10 percent more neighbors knowing one another's first name, and all of the evidence

suggests that it's the neighbors knowing one another's first name that has a greater influence on crime rate.... Social connection, social capital, has a powerful effect on the crime rate... Physical health is powerfully affected by our social connections. The best evidence is that controlling for your blood chemistry and how old you are and whether you smoke or not and whether you jog or not—all the standard risk factors—holding those constant, your chances of dying over the next year are cut in half by joining one group, cut in a quarter by joining two groups. These are big effects. The effect of social connectedness on your physical survival is about as great as whether you smoke or not. The effects on our mental health are even more powerful.

- Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2000

In his 2000 book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam observed that more Americans were bowling but fewer people were joining clubs or leagues. Bowling, for Putnam, became a metaphor for an increase in individualism among Americans and the waning of community connections, what he called “the loss of social capital.” Putnam defined “social capital” as the extended social networks of support and care that sustain individual and communal relationships.

## 07 INDIVIDUALISM

The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. To be your own man is a hard business. If you try it, you'll be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.

- Rudyard Kipling, 1935

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was an English poet, author, and journalist. Considered to be one of the great English writers, he was also a major innovator in the art of the short story. Kipling was famous for an array of works like *Just So Stories* and *The Jungle Book* and received the 1907 Nobel Prize in Literature.

## 08 ADMISSION FREE

Mike Antonucci is the owner and director of the Education Intelligence Agency, a private, for-profit research firm specializing in teachers' unions. He writes and publishes blog posts about public education, often criticizing national teachers' unions and public school financing. Antonucci's writing has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*, and he appeared as a guest on Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor*. Antonucci has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communications from the School of Visual Arts in New York City and a Master of Arts in International Affairs from California State University at Sacramento. He previously served in the U.S. Air Force.

## 09 STREET MEETINGS

Joshua Weishart is an associate professor at West Virginia University in the College of Law and the School of Policy and Politics. His research focuses on education law and policy, specifically on constitutional rights to education, and has been published in leading law journals throughout the country. He conducts policy research for the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative and administers the West Virginia Educational Law Blog, where he writes on current events and policy. Before becoming a law professor in 2012, he was an associate attorney and later law clerk in the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. He holds a B.A. from West Virginia University, a Master's degree from the University of Cambridge, and a J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.