

Muckrakers Packet

**What is a “Muckraker”???**

A Muckraker was an individual during the Progressive Era that to many would have been considered a “Crusading Journalist” or one who writes (or uses images) of truth to expose the ills and hardships that exist in society. People often called them “muckrakers” because they supposedly “racked up the dirt or muck in the real world and exposed it to the public”. Muckrakers helped change public opinion. For years, middle class and wealthy Americans often ignored the need for reform. But, when they saw how troubled society and politics truly was... they too demanded a change.

**Famous “Muckrakers” and their work:**

- Upton Sinclair- The Jungle (Unsanitary conditions in factories & troubles of immigrants)
- Jacob Riis- How the Other Half Lives (Poverty & harsh conditions in cities/child labor)
- Lincoln Steffens- The Shame of Cities (Corruption and wrong doings of political bosses)
- Frank Norris- The Octopus (How the monopolistic railroad was ruining small farms)
- Jane Addams- “Why Women Should Vote” (women’s suffrage and poor living conditions)

Source: The Jungle By: Upton Sinclair

“It was only when the whole ham was spoiled that it came into the department of Elzbieta. Cut up by the two-thousand-revolutions-a-minute flyers, and mixed with half a ton of other meat, no odor that ever was in a ham could make any difference. There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white – it would be dosed with borax and glycerin, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together to be mixed into the sausage we eat.”

Historical Context (Industry)	
Purpose	
Point of View	

Source: Upton Sinclair's Letter to President Theodore Roosevelt

I saw with my own eyes hams, which had spoiled in pickle, being pumped full of chemicals to destroy the odor. I saw waste ends of smoked beef stored in barrels in a cellar, in a condition of filth which I could not describe in a letter. I saw rooms in which sausage meat was stored, with poisoned rats lying about, and the dung of rats covering them. I saw hogs which had died of cholera in shipment, being loaded into box cars to be taken to a place called Globe, in Indiana, to be rendered into lard.

"My education as a physician teaches me that disease follows the same law whether in animals or human beings. An accurate post mortem requires close inspection of all the internal organs together with the use of the microscope before a physician can say there is no disease present.

Intended Audience	
Purpose	
Point of View	

Document 3: Teddy Roosevelt's Letter to Upton Sinclair

But while I agree with you that energetic, and, as I believe, in the long run radical, action must be taken to do away with the effects of arrogant and selfish greed on the part of the capitalist, yet I am more than ever convinced that the real factor in the elevation of any man or any mass of men must be the development within his or their hearts and heads of the qualities which alone can make either the individual, the class or the nation permanently useful to themselves and to others.

But all this has nothing to do with the fact that the specific evils you point out shall, if their existence be proved, and if I have power, be eradicated.

Intended Audience	
Purpose	
Point of View	

Source: Lincoln Steffens, The Shame of Cities

"The Political Bosses control the whole process of voting, and practice fraud at every stage. The assessor's list is the voting list, and the assessor is the boss's man... The assessor pads the list with the names of dead dogs, children, and non-existent persons until he gains the outcome he wants. A victory"

Historical Context	
Point of View	

Source: Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives

“Visiting a tenement is a typical sight. When the summer heats come with their suffering they have meaning more terrible than words can tell. Come over here. Step carefully over this baby--it is a baby, spite of its rags and dirt--under these iron bridges called fire-escapes, but loaded down, despite the incessant watchfulness of the firemen, with broken household goods, with wash-tubs and barrels, over which no man could climb from a fire. No one could escape if fire came. This tenement, holding thousands of poor families huddled together would become a mass grave. But who would notice? This is the refuse of society...”

Historical Context (Industry)	
Intended Audience	
Purpose	

Source: Frank Norris, The Octopus

“The farmers’ profits were the object of attack from many different quarters. It was a flock of vultures descending upon a common prey (the farmers were the prey to be attacked)-- the commission merchant, the elevator combines, the mixing house ring, the banks, the warehouse men, the laboring man, and above all else... the rail road. The rail road vulture descended upon the farmers and their profits and took nibbles wherever and whenever it could...”

Historical Context (Industry)	
Purpose	

Excerpt #5- Jane Addams – “Why Women Should Vote” an article in Ladies Home Journal (1910)

“Public-spirited women who wish to use the ballot, as I know them, do not wish to do the work of men nor to take over men's affairs. They simply want an opportunity to do their own work and to take care of those affairs which naturally and historically belong to women, but which are constantly being overlooked and slighted in our political institutions. In a complex community like the modern city all points of view need to be represented To turn the administration of our civic affairs wholly over to men may mean that the American city will continue to push forward in its commercial and industrial development, and continue to lag behind in those things which make a City healthful and beautiful. After all, woman's traditional function has been to make her dwelling-place both clean and fair. “

Historical Context (Industry)	
Point of View	