

## Lesson Plan: Day 5 & 6

**Grade: 11**

**Unit: The Rise and Fall of a Textile Empire: Lowell, Ma 1820-1861**

### **Goal (enduring understanding):**

Massachusetts has a rich history. Among one of the many events of historical significance is Lowell's rise as a textile manufacturing empire, leading to the birth of the American Industrial Revolution.

Besides the natural resources that provided waterpower, Lowell's close proximity to the Northern New England farmlands enabled the mill owners to recruit labor.

### **Essential Question(s):**

Were the Mill Girls treated fairly in terms of pay, living quarters, etc. or were they treated like the slaves in the south?

Did the mill agents and owners of Lowell help keep slavery alive in the south?

### **Development and selection of activities and resources:**

- Students will be presented with several primary source documents based on the politics of the mill agents, and perspectives of work and leisure by various Mill Girls
- After reading both content packages over two days the students will form into small groups and develop a Venn Diagram which will compare/contrast the slaves of the south with the Mill Girls in Lowell
- After groups are finished discussing their individual diagrams, the instructor will construct a class diagram with input from each group

### **Content:**

- Brief background on the Abolitionist George Thompson
- The Whig politics of the Boston Associates

### **Curriculum Standard:**

#### **Economic Growth in the North and South, 1800-1860**

USI.26 Explain the importance of the Transportation Revolution of the 19th century (the building of canals, roads, bridges, turnpikes, steamboats, and railroads), including the stimulus it provided to the growth of a market economy. (H, E)

USI.27 Explain the emergence and impact of the textile industry in New England and industrial growth generally throughout antebellum America. (H, E)

- a. The technological improvements and inventions that contributed to industrial growth
- b. The causes and impact of the wave of immigration from Northern Europe to America in the 1840s and 1850s
- c. The rise of a business class of merchants and manufacturers
- d. The roles of women in New England textile factories

### **History and Geography**

5. Explain how a cause and effect relationship is different from a sequence or correlation of events. (H, C, E)
6. Distinguish between long-term and short-term cause and effect relationships. (H, G, C, E)
7. Show connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and ideas and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments. (H, G, C, E)

### **Assignment:**

**Day 5** – Finish reading the remainder of the primary source documents  
Read *Lyddie* pages 94-140

**Day 6** – Answer the following question in your class journal: Did the mill agents and owners of Lowell help keep slavery alive in the south? Use examples discussed in the Venn diagram as well as the primary source documents.  
Finish reading *Lyddie* pages 141-182

### **How will the essential question be assessed?**

- The essential questions will be formally addressed through primary source documents, Venn diagram, and student journal entries.

## Primary Source Documents

A Letter by Mary Paul, reprinted in From Farm to Factory, by Thomas Dublin (1993)

Lowell Nov 5th 1848

Dear Father

Doubtless you have been looking for a letter from me all the week past. I would have written but wished to find whether I should be able to stand it--to do the work that I am now doing. . . . I went to work last Tuesday--warping--the same work I used to do [in another mill].

It is *very* hard indeed and sometimes I think I shall not be able to endure it. I never worked so hard in my life but perhaps I shall get used to it. I shall try hard to do so for there is no other work that I can do unless I spin and that I shall not undertake on any account. I presume you have heard before this that the wages are to be reduced on the 20th of this month. It is *true* and there seems to be a good deal of excitement on the subject but I can not tell what will be the consequence. The companies pretend they are losing immense sums every *day* and therefore they are obliged to lessen the wages, but this seems perfectly absurd to me for they are constantly making repairs and it seems to me that this would not be if there were really any danger of their being obliged to *stop* the mills.

. . . The Whigs of Lowell had a great time on the night of the 3rd. They had an immense procession of men on foot bearing *torches* and *banners* got up for the occasion. The houses were illuminated (Whigs' houses) and by the way I should think the whole of *Lowell* were Whigs. I went out to see the illuminations and they did truly look splendid. The Merrimack house was illuminated from attic to cellar. Every pane of glass in the house had a half candle to it and there were many others lighted in the same way. One entire block on the Merrimack Cor[poration] with the exception of one tenement which doubtless was occupied by a free soiler who would not illuminate on any account whatever. . . .

Write soon. Yours affectionately  
Mary S Paul

From *An Idyl of Work* (1875)  
Lucy Larcom

Some strangers came one day into the mills,—  
Among them English travellers,—led on  
Through the great labyrinth of dust and noise  
By the good Superintendent,—a grave man,  
Kindly and manly, and esteemed of all.

They paused awhile among the balsam-flowers  
And pinks and marigolds about the gate;  
Then peered with curious eyes through every door  
Along the winding stair. The carding-room  
They gave one glance, with its great groaning wheels,  
Its earthquake rumblings, and its mingled smells  
Of oily suffocation; and passed on

Into another room's cool spaciousness  
Of long clean alleys, where the spinners paced  
Silently up and down, and pieced their threads,  
The spindles buzzing like ten thousand bees.

Two bright-faced little girls looked up and smiled,  
Swinging a bobbin-box between them. These  
Were Ann and Alice, who, in April, played  
Beside Pawtucket Falls. One stranger said,—

"Now, sir, this should not be! You're copying  
Our British faults too closely, when a child  
Toils in close air, like this." But carelessly  
The children laughed, still turning work to play,  
As children will, nor hardship's meaning guessed.

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## George Thompson's Account of His Visit to Lowell November 30 - December 2, 1834

#2

In 1831 William Lloyd Garrison began publishing an anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator*, in Boston. Garrison became a leading abolitionist figure in the United States, forming the New England Anti-Slavery Society in Boston in 1832 and attracting the attention of prominent abolitionists in England.

Garrison and George Thompson, a well-known English abolitionist, together toured America in 1834 and 1835, speaking twice in Lowell. About 1000 Lowellians turned out to hear Thompson's lecture against slavery in October 1834. When Thompson returned to Lowell in late November, protesters organized by members of the city's industrial and business community rallied against his radical call for abolition. Thompson's account below describes this second and most controversial visit to Lowell.

Second Visit to Lowell, Massachusetts— You will recollect that Lowell was the first place in New England, in which I was announced to deliver an Anti-Slavery lecture. . . . The Sabbath evening's address was attended by an immense crowd, who listened with profound interest to a strictly religious discourse, illustrative of the evil and guilt of slavery. On Monday evening, the Hall was again crowded, and a large number in the avenue. After I had spoken for about an hour, there were indications of a disturbance near the door: a great deal of yelling and stamping. . . . Soon afterwards, a heavy brick-bat was hurled with tremendous force through a window immediately behind me, and passed upon an exact level with my head, about half a foot to the right. Had it struck me, I believe my lecturing would have terminated for ever. Although the Hall was crowded in every part, the missile fell to the floor without touching a human being. . . . A Lady and Gentleman, sitting near to where the brick-bat fell, were the only persons who retired. A young Lady, immediately before whom the shot fell, calmly placed her foot upon it, and sat, heedless of the danger, unmoved, throughout the remainder of the meeting. . . .

Early the next morning an inflammatory handbill appeared, calling on the citizens of Lowell to assemble in the evening, and prevent the "foreigner" from "intermeddling" in their affairs. The excitement increased hourly throughout the day. The managers of the Anti-Slavery society had several meetings. . . .

I addressed a most interesting assembly in the same Hall. A more than ordinary proportion of Ladies was present. Not the slightest interruption occurred. . . . Before leaving this town, I met 36 Ladies under the roof of the excellent clergyman, Mr. Pease, by whom I was entertained—formed them into an Association—gave them a constitution, and laws of a society, and urged upon them the great importance of assisting us, while so much opposed by the ignorant, the prejudiced, and the anti-Christian. Since that time, their number has increased from 36 to between 10 and 11 hundred; and a petition for the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia, has received the signatures of 1640 females. Behold the effects of persecution!

Your affectionately attached, and devoted servt.,

George Thompson

From George Thompson, "Mr. Thompson's Journal", Glasgow, Scotland: Glasgow Chronicle Press, 1835  
Used by courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library.

Who will work like slaves?

### Anti-Thompson Handbill Circulated in Lowell, December 2, 1834

Little is known about the anti-Thompson demonstrators who threatened violence and hurled a brickbat through the window of Lowell's Town Hall where Thompson was speaking during his second visit to the city in the late fall of 1834. William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator* charged that "many of the rabble were foreigners of the lowest grade," suggesting that the mob was composed of Irish. This mob, however, was led by a number of Lowell's business and political leaders, some of whom were prominent in the city's Whig Party. In the mid-1830s, many Whigs and Democrats alike opposed Garrisonian abolition, and few party leaders in Lowell would have welcomed Thompson or Garrison.

Tuesday Morn. Dec. 2, 1834.  
**CITIZENS OF LOWELL,**  
Arise! Look well to your interests!  
Will you suffer a question to be  
agitated in Lowell, which will en-  
danger the safety of the Union?  
A question which we have not, by  
our Constitution, any right to med-  
dle with. Fellow Citizens—Shall  
Lowell be the first place to suffer  
an Englishman to disturb the peace  
and harmony of our country? Do  
you wish insurrection from an Eng-  
lishman? If you are the free born  
sons of America, meet, one and all,  
at the Town Hall, **THIS EVEN-  
ING,** at half past 7 o'clock, and  
convince your Southern brethren  
that we will not interfere with  
their rights.

## "Public [Anti-Abolition] Meeting" Broadside, August 21, 1835

Growing concern over southern reaction to the abolitionist activities of William Lloyd Garrison and the threat abolitionism posed to the union of North and South prompted a large gathering of Bostonians at Faneuil Hall on August 21, 1835. The mayor of Boston and Abbott Lawrence, an important investor in Lowell's textile industry who therefore benefited financially from the South's cotton-producing slave system, presided over a crowd of about 1,500. On the same day as the Faneuil Hall meeting, a group of prominent Lowellians, including Kirk Booth, who as agent of the Merrimack Mills was closely connected to the textile interests in Boston, called for a meeting at the city's Town Hall to proclaim similar anti-abolitionist sentiments.

# PUBLIC MEETING.

The undersigned inhabitants of Lowell, are impressed with a belief, that the rash doings of those who advocate the immediate abolition of Slavery result in much mischief to our common country. We believe that sectional jealousies are thereby engendered, which threaten to disturb the harmony of our political system, and which will effectually prevent the attainment of the object proposed, except through evils far worse than slavery itself. We believe, also, that the great mass of this people are disposed to maintain the Constitution unimpaired, and to leave, where our Federal compact left it, the difficult question of slavery to be adjusted by the states for themselves, without other interference or control.

Under these impressions, we invite the inhabitants of Lowell to assemble in the Town Hall, on Saturday Evening, August 23d, at 8 o'clock, to consult together and to declare their convictions upon this important subject, to the end, that our fellow citizens at the South may be solemnly warned, that the body of our people will not countenance any infringement of their rights, or domestic relations; nor any violation of the peace of the community, or of the constitution and laws of the land.

- |                   |                    |                     |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Kirk Booth,       | Benjamin R. Keoz,  | Albert E. Swasey,   |
| Francis Hobbs,    | Joshua Swan,       | J. Faber Pratt,     |
| P. H. Willard,    | Samuel A. Colburn, | H. Hartshorn,       |
| H. J. Baxter,     | Robert G. Walker,  | Sam'l M. Emery,     |
| H. C. Baxter,     | John Clark,        | Henry Deane,        |
| J. G. Wynn,       | Elyseus Adams,     | H. C. Morrison,     |
| Perez Fuller,     | Walter Wright,     | J. L. Wentworth,    |
| Alex's Wright,    | John Alkin,        | Chas. A. Kibban,    |
| Alanson Cross,    | Edwin Stearns,     | Thos. P. Goodhue,   |
| William Austin,   | J. A. Chamberlain, | Wm. W. Wyman,       |
| Thomas Dodge,     | Jos. Avery,        | Ira Frye,           |
| S. B. Goodard,    | Daniel Cutting,    | A. Allen,           |
| J. W. Tyler,      | Jefferson Hancock, | J. H. Elliott,      |
| John B. Goodwin,  | Deaf. F. Varnum,   | Wm. A. Farwell,     |
| Harrington Hatch, | H. G. F. Corlis,   | John Tredick,       |
| Chas. L. Tilden,  | Walter Miller,     | J. W. Mason,        |
| Joe B. McAlvin,   | Wm. Tredick,       | Samuel A. Appleton, |
| Joe S. Ball,      | C. P. Coffin,      | John A. Harris,     |
| Geo. Brewsall,    | Henry A. Hall,     | Jonathan Tyler.     |

Lowell, Aug. 21, 1835.



when she was sixteen years of age. She was married while in her teens to Mr. John Caryl. She has been a widow twenty years, and has been entirely devoted to her children and grandchildren.

CLEMENTINE AVEJILL

Among the "girl graduates" from the New England cotton-mill, there is one who, although not a writer for *The Offering*, yet deserves to be included in a book like this. This is Clementine Averill.

There was often doubt thrown upon the accounts of the supernormal, moral, and physical conditions of the Lowell factory-girl, and at one time (in 1860) a Senator of the United States, named Clemens (of Alabama, I think), stated in Congress that "the Southern slaves were better off than the Northern operatives." Miss Averill, then at work in the Lowell mill, answered this person's allegation in a letter to the *New York Tribune*, as follows:—

LETTER FROM A FACTORY-GIRL  
TO SENATOR CLEMENS.

Communicated in *The Weekly Tribune*

Lowell, March 6, 1850

Sir, Clemens—Sir, in some of the late papers I have read several opinions which you asked concerning the New England operatives. They have been well measured perhaps, but enough has not yet been said, and I deem it proper that the operatives should answer for themselves.

1st. You wish to know what pay we have. I will speak only for the girls, and I think I can afford it very low when I say that we average two dollars a week beside our board. Hundreds of girls in these mills receive from three to five dollars a week, while others, who have not been here long, and are not used to the work, make less than two dollars. If my wages are ever reduced lower than this, I shall seek employment elsewhere.

2d. Children are never taken from their parents and put into the mill. What an absurd notion! It is not a child from its parents, whether they be black or white, bond or free, unless there is danger of the child's suffering harm by remaining with its parents. Girls come here from the country of their own free will, because they can earn more money, and because they wish to see and to see more of the world.

3d. Our manufacturers will employ laborers dismissed by another if they bring a regular discharge and have given two weeks' notice previous to leaving.

4th. We never work more than twelve and a half hours a day, the majority would not be willing to work less, if their earnings were less, as they only intend working a few years, and they wish to make all they can while here, for they have only one object in view.

5th. When operatives are sick they select their own physician, and usually have money enough laid by to supply all their wants, if they are sick long, and have not money enough, those who have give to them freely, for let me tell you, there is scant-hearted charity here, as well as hard work and economy.

6th. Have inquired, but have not ascertained that one person ever went from a factory to a poor-house in this city.

7th. Any person can see us, who wishes to, by calling for us at the evening-room, or at the hours of labor by calling at our boarding places.

8th. The factory girls generally marry, and their husbands are expected to care for them when old. There are some, however, who do not marry, but such often have hundreds and thousands of dollars at interest; if you do not believe it, come and examine the bank books and rebound stocks for yourself.

9th. We have as much bread as good food as we want. We usually have warm biscuit, or nice bread and tea, with good bread and butter, coffee and tea, for breakfast; for dinner, meat and potatoes, with vegetables, tomatoes, and pickles, pudding or pie, with bread, butter, coffee and tea; for supper we have nice bread or warm biscuit, with some kind of sauce, cake, pie, and tea. But these provisions seem to relate merely to our animal wants. We have all that is necessary for the health and comfort of the body, if that is all; and the richest person needs no more. But as the body is all? Have we no minds to improve, no hearts to purify? Truly, to provide for our physical wants is our first great duty, in order that our mental faculties may be fully developed. If we had no higher nature than the animal, life would not be worth the seeking; but we have God-like faculties to cultivate and expand, without limit and without end. What is the object of our existence, if it is not to glorify God? and how shall we glorify him but by staying to be like him, aiming at the perfection of our whole nature, and aiming all within our influence in their onward progress to perfection? Do you think we would come here and not early and late with another object in view than the gratification of mere animal propensities? No, we would not try to live, and thus we certainly consult the intellect, both in your questions and in your remarks in the *Sensate*, as though it were possible for the body was all we had to live for, as though we had not immortal spirits to train for.

#5

usefulness and a glorious existence.

Let us not whether the "Southern slaves are better off than the Northern operatives." As I have said, we have all that is necessary for health and comfort. Do the slaves have more? It is in the power of every young girl who comes here to work, if she has good health and no one but herself to provide for, to acquire every accomplishment and get as good an education as any lady in the country. Have the slaves lost privilege? By giving ten weeks' notice we can leave when we please, visit our friends, attend any school, or travel for pleasure or information. Some of us have visited the White Mountains, Niagara Falls, and the city of Washington, have talked with the President, and visited the tomb of him who was greatest and best. Would that our present rulers had a portion of the same spirit which animated him, then would misquote and oppression cease, and the gathering storm pass harmlessly by. Can the slaves leave when they please, and go where they please? are they allowed to attend school, or travel for pleasure, and sit at the same table with any gentleman or lady? Some of the operatives of this city have been teachers in institutions of learning in your own State. Why do your people send here for teachers if your slaves are better off than they? Shame on the man who would stand up in the Senate of the United States, and say that the slaves at the South are better off than the operatives of New England, such a man is not fit for any office in a free country. Are we torn from our friends and kindred and sent driven about like cattle, chained and whipped, and not allowed to speak one word in self-defense? We can appeal to the laws for redress, while the slaves cannot. . . . And now, Mr. Clemens, I would most earnestly invite you, Mr. Poole, and all other Southern men who want to know anything about us, to come and see us. We will treat you with all the politeness in our power. I should be pleased to see you at my boarding-place, No. 51 Kirk Street, Boston Corporation. In closing, I must say that I pity not only the slave, but the slave owner. I pity him for his want of principle, for his hardness of heart and wrong education. May God, in his infinite mercy, condescend all pre-slavery men of the great sin of holding their fellow-men in bondage! May he turn their hearts from cruelty and oppression to the love of himself and all mankind! Please excuse me for omitting the "Hiss" before your names. I cannot apply titles where they are not deserved.

CLEMENS TO THE AVERILL.

Miss Averill had many letters of congratulation upon this letter, from different parts of the country, and among them was one from the celebrated Quaker philanthropist, Isaac T. Hopper, who indented her words, as follows:—

New York, 3d mo., 19th, 1850.

My much esteemed friend, *Clemens to Averill*.—I call this so on the strength of the letter of the 6th inst., addressed to Senator Clemens, which I have read in the Tribune of this morning with much satisfaction. I ought to apologize for thus intruding upon thy attention, being an entire stranger; but really I experienced so much gratification on reading it that I could not resist the inclination I felt to tell thee how much I was pleased with it. The information it contained, though perhaps not very gratifying to the advocates of slavery, may be useful, as it so clearly exhibits the wide difference there is between liberty and slavery, and it shows the ignorance of the Southern people as to the condition of the Northern operatives. I think Senator Clemens must have been greatly surprised in reading thy letter, not only at its statements of facts, but at the talent displayed by a "factory-girl" in answering his questions. Some years ago I attended a meeting appointed at Lowell by a minister of the Society of Friends, at which it was said there were about three hundred "factory girls," and I have often expressed the satisfaction I felt in observing their independent and happy consciences and modest and correct deportment. I saw nothing like the gloom of despondency, indeed I think in a general way they would not suffer by a comparison with the daughters of the Southern slaveholders. I believe it would be found, that, for refinement, intelligence, and for any qualification that is requisite to facilitate an agreeable companionship, the "factory girls" are not inferior to any class of women in the South, notwithstanding the calumny that is often flung at them. It is rarely true, that at the benign spirit of the gospel pervades the minds of men, slavery will be seen in its true character, and be finally abolished from every community professing Christianity. I would not hold the money of our benevolent Creator, but I am free to confess that I am unable to see what claim a slaveholder can have to the name of Christian. Avarice and an insatiable love of the world blinds the eyes and hardens the hearts of many. The speech of Hiram Webster, from whom the friends of liberty had a right to expect much, has disappointed them; and has not pleased his pro-slavery constituents. He has manifested himself to be a true sinner; a character not very desirable. If he had possessed as much Christian principle and independence of mind as thy letter exhibits, he would have given substance to sentiments that would have gained him the applause of the wise and good, and have been a lasting honor to himself. "With the talents of an ungentleman may make himself a fool." The subject of slavery is not new to me. I have been instrumental in wresting from the hands of the oppressor some hundreds, and now in my declining period I can look back upon those labors with unmingled satisfaction. I think