

The Industrial Revolution's Gilded Age



Interactive Plays

Kitty's unique interactive plays weave history literature, manners, customs, dance and music into theatrical presentations where audience members – both teachers and students – portray the key characters and historical figures of the times.

Great sensitivity is used when involving participants, as some folks would prefer to simply sit back and watch the antics of their comrades.

In order to set a good example of theatre etiquette, it is respectfully requested that teachers attend programs without papers and laptops in hand.

The Industrial Revolution's Gilded Age

(Set in 1891) This performance poignantly contrasts the opulent robber barons with the impoverished workers of the age. Beginning with the grand opening of a "settlement house," the need for progressive social reform is established. Key factors in the industrial revolution's development: power, transportation and technology are revealed through the introduction of three dominant figures: James Watt (steam engine), Cornelius Vanderbilt (railroad) and Thomas Edison (inventions).

As American industry exploded, immigrants poured into the system by the millions. Their squalid living conditions and working environment, along with the tragic practice of child labor, are depicted. And the response to mass homelessness among urban children is illustrated with the creation of the orphan trains.

The show then shifts to opulence and grandeur with an elegant gala and graceful dance. In attendance are robber barons Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller.

The program concludes with an ominous account of the Johnstown Flood of 1889.



Eloise Remington

Mrs. Remington is a fictitious French-born character who married into the aristocracy. After befriending Jane Addams, (founder of the first settlement house - Hull House in Chicago) she leaves the high society of the 1890s to devote her life to helping those less fortunate.

Performance Objectives

To create a supportive environment in which students' participation results in a positive, self-affirming experience that allows them to co-create the show with the character by

- Enabling students to imagine life in the 1890s
- Presenting the injustices of the haves and have-nots
- Introducing students to the need for and beginning of the reform movements (settlement houses, child labor laws, orphan trains)
- Revealing the power of the wealthy men and the position of women in the Gilded Age

Pre-Show Preparation

Familiarize students with major inventors of the era –

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • James Watt (steam engine patent) | Thomas Edison (light bulb) |
| • Henry Bessemer (steel making) | Elisha Otis (elevator) |
| • Alexander Graham Bell (telephone) | Samuel Morse (telegraph) |

Review key players in social reform –

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|------------------------|--------------|
| • Jane Addams | Ellen Starr |
| • Lewis Hine | Jacob Riis |
| • Charles Loring Brace | Clara Barton |

Discuss definition of “robber baron” and group of men to which it applied

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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| • Andrew Carnegie | J.P. Morgan |
| • John D. Rockefeller | Jay Gould |
| • James Fisk | Cornelius Vanderbilt |

Post-Show Activities

Have students write short stories about their lives as a child laborer in one of the offending industries: mining, mill work, factory, farming, tobacco, canning and the like.

Discuss with students the different aspects of life for the working poor and have them create social reforms that would help them overcome hardships.

The Artist

Having developed her unique style of interactive theatre since 1987, Kitty combines her passion for history and love of theatre to create 16 different high-energy shows.

Kitty brings 4000 years of history and literature to life in programs ranging from *The Mysteries of Ancient Egypt* to *Women's Rights*. Since 1996, she has written, choreographed, produced and performs all her own original material for Kit's Interactive Theatre. Kitty Jones has appeared on TV, film and the stages of New York.



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