

U.S. History – Textiles as a Turning Point

Compelling Question	
How could the textile industry in Spartanburg be indicative of 19th century turning points in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century?	
Standard	College Board AP US History: ● 6.4 The “New South” ● 6.5 Technological Innovation ● 6.6 The Rise of Industrial Capitalism ● 6.7 Labor in the Gilded Age
Disciplinary Practice	AP Historical Thinking Skills: ● Sourcing and Situation ● Contextualization ● Making Connections ● Argumentation
Staging the Question	Students brainstorm/review what they remember about Lowell and its significance in the antebellum period. Prior to reading the article, students should brainstorm/discuss, “What would it mean to be labeled the ‘Lowell of the South’ in 1900?”

Supporting Question
What were some characteristics of the textile industry in Spartanburg at the turn of the twentieth century?
Formative Performance Task
Students read the <i>New York Times</i> article on Spartanburg from 1900. They should follow their regular checklist/routine of analyzing a primary source (identifying the significance of the author, audience, purpose, format, and context of the source). Students use the source as a means of learning about the textile industry in Spartanburg but should also be searching for how the content of the article connects to as many of the College Board’s themes for the AP US History course. In identifying as many connections as possible, students should then identify as many significant turning points as they can. They may use the organizer below.

	From the article: What connects to this theme?	What turning points can you identify by 1900 within this theme?
American and National Identity		
Work, exchange, and technology		
Geography and the Environment		
Migration and Settlement		
Politics and Power		
America in the World		
American and Regional Culture		
Social Structures		
Featured Source		
“The Lowell of the South: Spartanburg and Its Great Cluster of Cotton Mills,” <i>New York Times</i>, January 28, 1900 https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1900/01/28/101047269.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0		

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT How could the textile industry in Spartanburg be indicative of 19th century turning points in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century? Construct an argument using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION Using the headline from the news article as a stimulus, create a set of short answer questions that the College Board might ask. Remember to focus on the skills of comparison, causation, and continuity and change over time.

How could the textile industry in Spartanburg be indicative of 19th century turning points in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century?

Overview

Inquiry Description

This lesson is designed for a 10th grade AP U.S. History class which is very fast paced and often lacks much depth. Students have historically struggled with being able to “step back” and see the “big picture” over time. This inquiry is meant to help students reflect on what they have learned about the late 19th century and try to summarize some of the major changes in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century while also getting a little more specific content on the New South. Students will practice their source analysis skills while also making connections from the content within the article the major themes of the course. With this content students will then reflect on the themes throughout the 19th century and try to determine various changes over the century. This article does not cover all aspects of the textile industry. The exercise is meant to review prior content and make connections and should be done in small groups.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “How could the textile industry in Spartanburg be indicative of 19th century turning points in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century?” students work through a supporting question, formative performance tasks, and a featured source to construct an argument supported by evidence while also acknowledging competing perspectives.

Staging the Compelling Question

Within their small groups students will begin with a quick brainstorm about Lowell and its significance. They should be able to recall some basic information on the industry, the labor structure, and also how it played into sectional divisions within the antebellum period (students previously read multiple sources that showed both sections of the country critiquing the others’ labor system). In discussing, “What would it mean to be labeled the ‘Lowell of the South’ in 1900?” students will consider the context of 1900 which should include a reflection on sectional divides and opposing attitudes/systems throughout the nineteenth century.

Supporting Question

The supporting question, “What were some characteristics of the textile industry in Spartanburg at the turn of the twentieth century?” is geared toward ensuring that students can draw some content out of the *New York Times* article. Being a survey course, students did not learn very much beyond the concept of the “New South.” However, students did delve into Northern labor of the Gilded Age more, including the Pullman strike. They should come to understand that

similar systems of living conditions and pay were created in the South as well. The article also touches upon education, transportation, and taxes, so hopefully students will be broadening their understanding of at least one Southern community following the Civil War. One glaring omission within the *Times* article is any mention of the Black community in Spartanburg. As part of their critical analysis and discussion of the primary source, students should recognize that omission. The teacher should check in on the supporting question and ask the students what they think is missing from the article and *why* that may be. At this point some gaps can be filled in. However, the exclusion of the Black community from the article should spark further connections to some of the themes and their prior knowledge of the Jim Crow era and Reconstruction.

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined “How could the textile industry in Spartanburg be indicative of 19th century turning points in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century?” Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and their abilities to use evidence from the source and prior knowledge to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument using sources to answer the compelling question “How could the textile industry in Spartanburg be indicative of 19th century turning points in the U.S. by the turn of the twentieth century?”

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Spartanburg’s textile industry shows a turning point within the textile industry that there had been a shift from Northern to Southern presence/power within the industry.
- The Southern textile industry reflects a change in the Southern economy after the Civil War from nearly strictly agrarian to a more diversified economy with industry.
- The textile industry in the South shows that the South was changing to embrace some aspects of the Northern labor system with company towns and scrip.
- The textile industry is related to an increase in transportation systems in the South after the Civil War.
- Spartanburg reflects an increase in education systems in the South after the Civil War.

Extension task: At this point in the year students have had multiple practice in short answer questions (a component of the AP exam) as well as making their own. The goal in making their own is to try to not just predict what could be asked on a given topic, but to use the skills of comparison, causation, and continuity and change. Inevitably, in creating their own questions, students will be thinking backwards and coming up with their own possible answers.

Featured Sources

“The Lowell of the South: Spartanburg and Its Great Cluster of Cotton Mills,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1900 - https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1900/01/28/101047269.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0