

Stomaching America

Tragedies & Triumphs of The Jungle

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Individual Website

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Process Paper

America is a country of immigrants, many of whom were inspired by the American dream. Optimistic and hardworking, they truly believe that America has the best to offer. Yet, there are countless instances throughout history when established Americans take advantage of the immigrants who believed so strongly in America's promises. It is utterly tragic when this occurs, yet repeatedly, different groups of dreaming new Americans are not given the opportunities once promised to them. My project shows only some injustices that Industrial Revolution era immigrants lived through. Tragically, Upton Sinclair's call to action in *The Jungle* on behalf of these people went largely ignored. I chose this topic because it is critical to me that stories like this are told so that these tragedies do not occur again.

My research process relied on several sources: first, *The Jungle* itself. Second, I had three interviews with experts on different aspects of the topic. Third, I traveled to Chicago and experienced the same setting as the laborers, meatpackers, and Sinclair himself, in addition to doing specialized research in the area. I visited the Packingtown Museum, the Newberry Research Library, and the Union Stockyards Gate, among other sites. I spent hours reading newspapers and letters from historical archives, reading books, and looking at countless primary sources.

I chose to do a website because it can be the most in-depth and interactive category that History Day provides. I used this format to emphasize and extend my original content and to include many quotes, photos, and excerpts. I believe that this format delivers another layer to my content. Additionally, I took advantage of the interactivity of a website and included an

interactive chart that I made, as well as clips from documentaries. These interesting sources help engage the viewer as well as drive home the argument.

The triumphs and tragedies of *The Jungle* are apparent: Sinclair intended to bring attention to the horrifying, tragic conditions that Packingtown's laborers suffered, but the public became incensed over his almost unintentional inclusion of meat product descriptions. When Sinclair wanted legislation passed for improved working conditions, what he got was the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act. Despite Sinclair's dismay, these acts were true triumphs, as illness and death were connected to the contents of the meats. These acts led to the evolution of the Food and Drug Administration. Notwithstanding the tragedies of workers' safety, *The Jungle* drove the triumphs of food purity that are integral to modern life. However, the true tragedy is that the fight for safety and ethical practices within slaughterhouses is far from over. Due to continued immigrant hostility and few consistent federal regulations, the dangers in the slaughterhouse continue to haunt modern laborers. Despite its antiquated time period and environment, my topic has a lot to do with America's current state of affairs. Hopefully, one day this country will remember to value these new Americans. These changes will only come from education, activism, and empathy.