The Hatfield Contract
8th Grade Lesson (40 minutes)

This lesson introduces students to the challenges of working class coal mining communities in Southern West Virginia in the early 20th century through a microhistory of Paint Creek and Cabin Creek during the 1912-13 strike. Students will role play community members and in meeting one another will learn about and piece together interconnected stories surrounding the strike. This will expose them to the diversity of the coal fields and remind them of the crucial role of women and immigrants in the strike and the development of a union movement in the region. It also will allow students to see and understand the challenges of the working class and the union movement by inserting them into this story as actors, encouraging them to think about their own agency and responsibilities to their community.

Learning Themes:
- General history of coal camp life, challenges of union movement
- Diversity and inclusion
- Personal responsibility to community
- Civil and Constitutional Rights
- Introduction to important figures in WV and US history

Background of company town life
Give a brief background of life in the company town. Make sure to define unfamiliar vocabulary on the board (union/UMWA, scrip, company store, strike, strike breaker, company town). Make sure to especially discuss what a union is and what a strike is and why many workers wanted to join the union.

“Tea Party”
Have students read their roles and write their thoughts on where they stand on the Hatfield Contract on their student handout. Then have them go around the room and meet other characters, if they need to, following the prompts on their student handout.

Vote
Divide students into 5 groups (wives of miners, union organizers, coal operators, mine guards, and miners) Give each group 2 minutes to select a spokesperson and jot down 2-3 points to convince the miners to vote for or against the contract. Each spokesperson gets 30 seconds to make their case to the miners who then vote on whether to accept the contract or not.

Discussion
The teacher facilitates a discussion on what students learned from this exercise. Making sure to raise themes like:
- challenges of forming a union
- limits on constitutional and civil rights
- role of minorities and women
- importance of community, and what strengthened it.
Below are some possible guiding discussion questions for the discussion:

- Did talking to anyone make your character change their mind?
- What stories were particularly powerful?
- How do you think a character's place in the community affected how they felt about the agreement and the strike?
- What surprised you most about meeting the others?
- What different backgrounds did you meet? How do you think that affected organizing the strike? Did it make it more difficult, why do you think so? (Here you can raise the issue that bosses sought out workers from different places to make organizing harder).
- How did living in the tent camp affect people’s attitude toward the strike, the union, the company?
- Do you think the strike has anything to teach us about us today, or is it just interesting history?
- What was the role of women in the strike?

Notes:
Supplies: Student handouts

If you have already discussed the background of coal camp life in previous lessons, you can give more time for the tea party, voting, and discussion.

Meets the Following West Virginia Content Standards
8th Grade

SS. 8.2: Evaluate how citizens can influence and participate in government
SS. 8.3: Identify, analyze, and evaluate the responsibilities, privileges, and rights of citizens
SS. 8.8: Analyze the impact of absentee ownership, renewable, and non-renewable natural resources, labor unionization on the economic growth of W.V.
SS. 8.9: Research and cite industries and products that are vital to the economy of W.V.
SS. 8.23: Demonstrate an understanding of major social, political, and economic developments that took place in W.V. during the second half of the 19th century
  - changes in family life and the growth of industry
  - significance of increased immigration
SS. 8.24: Demonstrate an understanding of W.V.’s development during the early 20th century
  - analyze the labor movement