At Levine Museum of the New South, we look at how Charlotte and the surrounding area has changed since the end of the American Civil War in 1865. These changes range from the types of jobs people have held to the constitutional rights we hold dear today. When we think about the New South, we like to define it as:

- A Time — The New South is the period of time from 1865, following the Civil War, to the present.
- A Place — The New South includes areas of the Southeast U.S. that began to grow and flourish after 1865.
- An Idea — The New South represents new ways of thinking about economic, political and cultural life in the South.

This lesson plan explores how millhands challenged the conditions of the textile mill industry.

Objective: Students will learn about the challenges that millhands faced in the early twentieth century.

Essential Question: What changes did millhands seek in the early twentieth century?

Standards Addressed:

| 4.G.1 | Understand how human, environmental and technological factors affect the growth and development of North Carolina. |
| 4.E.1 | Understand how a market economy impacts life in North Carolina. |
| 6.H.2 | Understand the political, economic and/or social significance of historical events, issues, individuals and cultural groups. |
| 7.H.1 | Use historical thinking to analyze various modern societies. |
| 8.H.1 | Apply historical thinking to understand the creation and development of North Carolina and the United States |
| 8.H.3 | Understand the factors that contribute to change and continuity in North Carolina and the United States. |
| AH1.H.1.2 | Use historical comprehension to reconstruct meaning of a passage, differentiate between facts and interpretation, analyze data in maps and analyze visual literary and musical sources. |
| AH1.H.1.4 | Use historical research to formulate historical questions obtain data from a variety of sources, support interpretations with evidence and construct analytical essays using evidence to support arguments. |
| AH1.H.4/AH2.H.4 | Analyze how conflict and compromise have shaped politics, economics and culture in the United States. |
| AH1.H.5/AH2.H.5 | Understand how tensions between freedom, equality and power have shaped the political, economic and social development of the United States. |
| AH1.H.7/AH2.H.7 | Understand the impact of war on American politics, economics, society and culture. |
Bring the Mills to the Cotton: Fighting for Change Part 1
1880s-1930s

Glossary:

- **Child labor** - children working in an industry or business.
- **Strike** - when factory or business workers refuse to work to gain better pay or conditions.
- **Segregation** - the forced separation of different racial groups in society, primarily blacks and whites in the South.
- **Jim Crow** - laws that segregated whites and blacks in the United States.

**Fighting for Change**

Mill families needed everyone in the family to work because wages were so low. Children as young as six began working the same long hours as adults. Their responsibilities included sweeping floors, changing bobbins, doffing (removing spindles from fast moving machines), and other small jobs in the mills. Some people did not agree with child labor and began calling for a federal law to outlaw factory work for children under age 16.

Adult millhands also faced challenges in Southern textile mills, such as poor working conditions, long hours, and low wages. When the price of textile products dropped in the 1920s, mill managers would launch a “stretch-out,” by doubling each employee’s work but not paying them for the extra labor. For example, a worker who ran 24 looms would have to run 48 looms at once without an increase in pay. “Stretch-outs” became one of several reasons why millhands began to strike.

As workers went on strike, they called for shorter working hours, higher wages, safer conditions, and an end to child labor in factories. In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act banned factory work during school hours for children under 16.

**Jim Crow** segregation kept many African Americans from working inside Southern cotton mills. African American men could work as truck drivers, cotton handlers, and janitors. Some mill owners hired African American women as cleaners. Warren Coleman, from Concord, N.C., worked tirelessly to break down barriers to African Americans in the mills. In 1898, he opened the Coleman Manufacturing Company, the first mill in the country to be owned and operated by African Americans. Unfortunately, when he died in 1904, the mill went out of business. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, mill owners slowly began to hire African Americans. The passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act led to the integration of textile mills. Eventually, African Americans made up one-third of the Carolina textile workforce.

**Warren Coleman; circa 1899, courtesy of the Library of Congress.**
Bring the Mills to the Cotton: Fighting for Change Part 1
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Activity 1: Studying Persuasive Images

A. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions about cartoons 1-3.

1. Look at the cartoon and list any of the following you see:
   
   Title:

   Objects/People:

   Words/Phrases:

2. Which objects are used as symbols (representing something or someone else) and what do they represent?

3. Is anything exaggerated?

4. Are there any emotions represented in the cartoon?

5. What is the message of the cartoon? How did the questions you answered above help you figure out the message?

6. Who are the people who might agree with the cartoon? What might be the public’s reaction to this cartoon?
Bring the Mills to the Cotton: Fighting for Change Part 1
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#1: Giving the other fellow a chance; Puck Magazine, 1895.
"LIFE LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT HAPPINESS"

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HAPPY CHILDHOOD DAYS

#3: Happy Childhood Days by Frederick T. Richards in Philadelphia North American; 1913.
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B. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions about recruitment posters 1-3.

1. Who do you think created the poster and why?

2. Who do you think is the intended audience for the poster?

3. What does the creator of the poster hope the reader will do?

4. Do you think the poster is effective? Why or why not?
HELP WANTED

Our New Cotton Mill Will Be Ready to Operate by January 1st

SEVERAL HUNDRED people will be given permanent employment, at good wages, with splendid chances for promotion. We want families from the country and will pay them ample wages while they are learning the work. We will be ready to employ a few families by the latter part of October.

Full particulars in regard to wages and local conditions will be gladly furnished on application to

The Roanoke Mills Company
Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina

#1 Help wanted ad for RRNC Cotton Mills; 1917 Roanoke Rapids Herald.
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#2: National Child Labor Committee; circa 1914, courtesy of Library of Congress.
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Wake Up!
Long Hours
Poverty
Wage Slavery

JOIN the I.W.W.

Bring the Mills to the Cotton:
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C. Create your own persuasive poster with the following requirements:

1. Your image can be either a cartoon or a recruitment poster.

2. You can take a stance on either being for or against the cotton mill industry.

3. Be sure to think about the advantages or disadvantages of mill work as you create your poster.

4. Your poster should include words and images.

Group of mill folks, all ages; by Lewis Hine, 1908, Salisbury Cotton Mills, N.C., courtesy of Library of Congress.