

“DO WE LOOK LIKE OUTLAWS?”:
REPRESENTATIONS OF LABOR UNIONS IN AMERICAN CHILDREN’S NOVELS

by

CYNTHIA ANNE MCLEOD

(Under the Direction of Joel Taxel)

ABSTRACT

In this arts-based multigenre dissertation, I explore representations of labor unions in 53 American novels for children and young adults. The selective tradition described by Raymond Williams (1977) offers a lens for analysis, explaining the process whereby versions of history that serve the interests of the dominant culture come to be viewed as logical or natural when, in fact, other competing versions can and do exist. I analyze depictions of class consciousness within the novels and identify specific topics that are missing or under-represented in the novels. My creative writing about the general textile strike of 1934 provides insight into ways in which alternate viewpoints might be silenced, and historical description of the strike explains how Georgia’s textile workers experienced the strike and its aftermath. Through autoethnographic pieces I examine my own developing awareness of the power and possibilities of story as a means of resisting the selective tradition.

These novels provide opportunities to explore the neglected issue of social class in American children's literature. I argue that labor unions in children’s novels are historicized in ways that weaken their connection with the present and suggest that the

problems unions seek to remedy were resolved long ago. The overwhelming majority of the books are historical fiction, and their representations of labor are far more sympathetic than those of the six contemporary novels. The novels focus on aspects of labor that situate it in the past, so that young readers lack contemporary portrayals of organized labor. Analysis of these texts is useful in understanding how issues such as class and the possibilities of collective action play out in literature for young people. The current economic crisis during which millions of workers have lost jobs or suffered cuts to their wages demonstrates the continued relevance of labor issues and organizations in the 21st century.

INDEX WORDS: Arts-based research, Children's literature, Labor unions, Multigenre, Social class

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memories of my family members who came of age during the Great Depression and who shared both their stories and their love with me:

Shirley Henderson McLeod and Arvel McLeod; Mattie Campbell Dillard and Senior Arlin Dillard; Mary Henderson Haygood; and Ann Henderson.

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could write a multigenre dissertation before I believed it myself. Misha introduced me to arts-based research, challenged me to become a better writer, and pushed me to think through my commitment to arts-based practices. Joel guided my research, meting out enough criticism to make me more attentive to what I was doing along with enough encouragement to keep me going, and over the years, we became friends. I do remain in awe of him. The highest compliment I have ever received on my writing was that it led Joel to change his mind. Because of him, the hard work of these last six years has also been a joy. Thank you, Joel, for everything.

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Introduction

I first heard of the general textile strike of 1934 over thirty years ago. It was a story that would haunt me through the years with its elements of tragedy and expectation, loss and betrayal. Until then I had no idea of the drama that took place less than a mile from my grandparents' homes, the pickets marching in front of the Trion Company and the gun battle that left two men, a strike sympathizer and a sheriff's deputy, dead at the mill. When I realized that the silence about the labor union that had once been enforced by the mill's managers and owners had become part of the norms of the community, I was even more intrigued by workers' reluctance to speak. My newfound knowledge of this dark past threw into question my familiarity with the history of my hometown, a place whose ways I thought I understood. What events had led workers to strike? What had silenced those who participated in the strike and even those who had not? I found myself imagining what their stories might have been, and the strike became a sort of hobby of mine. I searched for histories before any had been written and pored over newspaper archives, looking for clues that would offer some explanation of what took place in September of 1934. It was a story, probably a novel, that called out to be written, but for many years, I resisted writing a traditional narrative about those turbulent weeks during the Great Depression.

When I began graduate work in children's literature, I expected academic studies to preclude any possibility of writing fiction. I found instead that the ideas and feedback I

received from my professors and fellow students who heard about my idea for a novel breathed new life into my writing. The form of the largely unwritten novel shifted into a book for young adults, as the protagonists were almost all teenagers. Some characters would be in school, while others entered the workforce, married, and had children. The book would explore labor issues and the history of the Great Depression, but it would also ask people to consider the costs of loyalty, of what it meant to be a good friend, employee, or spouse, when everyone involved had to choose sides, and the consequences of the wrong choice could be devastating. I learned of Romano's (1995, 2000) work with multigenre writing as research and realized that this creative approach to storytelling required extensive study. The texts have to ring true, to evoke an understanding of the subject that relies on the reader's ability to piece together the various genres in a meaningful way.

I began to write a multigenre young adult novel about the general textile strike and found that my research provided a continuing thread that ran through each paper I wrote in graduate school. Following that thread, I arrived at my dissertation topic. I found that a number of children's novels about the American labor movement had been published since 1976, and I wondered how these depicted conflicts between workers and management. I identified research practices that would help me better understand the mystery surrounding the strike of 1934 and see their relation to silences in other contexts. What representations of union activity are available to young people today? Whose stories might be missing or distorted in the telling? How should I presume to represent my own work, inspired as it is by silence of those millworkers over seventy years ago?

This multigenre dissertation is the story of how a book I had only begun to write inspired my research. It is a story, too, of parallel silences: the reluctance of those who participated to talk about their experiences and a gap in children's literature and its scholarship in regard to depictions of social class and labor history. Parallels by definition cannot intersect, but run concurrently. By following their respective paths, I aim to show how their points of origin can be found within the ambivalent and complicated discourses surrounding social class in American society.

The title of my dissertation "Do We Look like Outlaws?" is a quotation from a sign carried by a striker in Macon, Georgia, on Labor Day in 1934 (Salmond, 2002). Its question has always seemed to me a challenge to those who would deny the existence of social class in the United States. The 1934 general textile strike marked a potential turning point in the history of Southern labor, with workers claiming the right to organize, not as radical dogma but as their due under the provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) of 1933, part of the package of legislation passed in the early days of the New Deal. Section 7(a) of the act guaranteed workers' rights to join labor unions and gave rise to hopes among union organizers, long frustrated in the South, that textile mill employees there would finally join organizations like the United Textile Workers.

My passion for this history made it tempting at times to cast aside altogether the analysis of children's novels about labor unions and to lose myself instead in 1934 and its stories. Yet I knew that my close connection with the textile strike was only a single aspect of that passion. It was story itself that had first engaged me in Trion's history. That, and the simultaneous realization that there are important stories that do not get told at all.

Choosing to examine novels about labor unions written for young people offered a way to focus on the process of a selective tradition (Williams, 1977) that emphasizes certain aspects of a story and ignores or minimizes others. I found the possibilities of silence as fascinating as those of story.

By analyzing the novels I was able to look beyond the textile industry to find commonalities and exceptions in the ways labor is depicted in different settings.

Children's literature is an inherently didactic genre; even authors who wish simply to entertain are simultaneously teaching their readers how to be entertained by a story.

However, books about social movements, past and present, are unlikely to be written for the purposes of entertainment alone. Writers who take up the topics of race, class, and gender in works for children delve into power relations and, at least sometimes, challenge their young readers to think about social inequities. While studies of race and gender in children's literature are common, few studies of children's literature examine how class is inscribed in American children's novels, a fact that may say as much about the role class plays in the United States as it does about the novels themselves. This is a silence I find as compelling as the one kept by textile workers following the 1934 strike, and it is a gap I hope to begin to fill.

My fiction explores what it means to confront powerful interests and how easily one can be labeled as "outlaw." Through its multigenre structure I attempt to challenge the selective tradition, disrupting the narrative cause and effect and allowing the reader to assemble from the pieces his or her own interpretation of how the silencing of the strikers occurred. Creating a multigenre novel permitted me to represent the story of the strike in

a way that felt similar to the way I first heard the story and pieced it together from disparate scraps. However, the pieces of the story the reader finds here are not random but were instead created for the purposes of storytelling. For that reason, the reader should be as critical of this text as any other. Multigenre writing may decenter author/ity, but it does not erase it. The arts-based methodology of the study, specifically the use of multigenre writing, allows me to weave together the story of the textile strike and my research on the topic of social class and labor issues in children's literature, as well as autoethnographic pieces that describe my approach to this research. The dissertation includes creative pieces I have written, fiction, poetry, diary entries, letters, and other genres, along with historical description of the strike, based on primary and secondary sources.

My data sources for the multigenre pieces include notes from interviews in 1978 with my grandparents and other older relatives who were employed as textile workers during the Great Depression, as well as more recent interviews with my parents and T. Emmett Nunn, a writer and photographer born and raised in Trion. I also interviewed Betty Hix Elrod, daughter of the sheriff's deputy who was killed in Trion on September 5, 1934. Much of the historical record of the Trion Company has been lost to periodic flooding of the Chattooga River, which washed away or otherwise destroyed older employment and production records that would have been invaluable to this project. My family's otherwise irksome habit of putting away old papers "in case somebody needs them sometime," served me well in this instance, as I turned out to be that long-anticipated person. Among these artifacts was my great-aunt Ann Henderson's diary from

1936 which included descriptions of her work and wages, as well as how she, her family, and their friends amused themselves at home. Another was a pamphlet published by the personnel department of the Trion Company, which, as it was revised in 1943, was very likely written a few years earlier. This publication provides a snapshot of how the management of the textile mill constructed the town's identity as a modern and "wide awake" community. While neither the diary nor the pamphlet dates as far back as 1934, both helped give me a sense of what the day-to-day lives of textile workers were like during the period. Other primary sources included newspaper archives at the University of Georgia Library and the collected papers of former Georgia governor, Lamartine Hardman, which are housed at the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies. The documentary film, *Uprising of '34* (Stoney & Helfand, 1995) and two excellent histories of the 1934 strike published in recent years - John Salmond's *The General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* (2002) and Janet Irons's *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South* (2000) showed me that I was not alone in my intense interest in the textile workers' strike and my conviction that it was a significant event in Southern labor history.

Juxtaposing a variety of genres, fiction, history, ethnography, and literary analysis demands careful attention on the part of the writer and the reader. At the beginning of each chapter, I include an overview of each of the texts the reader will find, a sort of road map that will enable the reader to navigate the paths between past and present, between the humanities and social science. Also, while poststructural theoretical framework means avoiding pronouncements of absolute truth, it is important that the reader be able to

recognize which parts of this project are fictional. Recent scandals over bestsellers (Rich & Stelter, 2008; Wyatt, 2006) in which memoir blurred too messily into fiction demonstrate the necessity of being as clear as possible as to what is historical and what is invention. In this arts-based dissertation I use the font Times New Roman for parts of the text written in more traditional academic prose as well as autoethnographic pieces and historical description of the 1934 strike. The autoethnographic pieces are designated with subtitles that provide the time and place represented in the text; these offer part of the backstory of the research and reflect the influences of both literature and political events on how I approached my study of children's books about labor unions.

Selections from my multigenre novel based on the 1934 textile strike comprise the final part of each chapter and are entitled "Outlaws" with each part numbered consistently with the number of the dissertation chapter. Within this section of each chapter, I use a variety of fonts to signal shifts of voice and genre. Multigenre novels for children and young adults in recent years have employed similar visual cues to let their readers know that such changes are taking place. Dresang, in *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (1999), offers Avi's *Nothing but the Truth* (1991) and Sharon Draper's *Tears of a Tiger* (1994) as examples of books that show varying perspectives by using newspaper articles, letters, and other documents to tell the story. To those readers who find such devices distracting and unnecessary, I ask for your understanding in regards to these fictional pieces intended for an audience whose sensibilities are different from your own.

Chapter 1

Do We Look like Outlaws?

This first section sets the stage for those to come, beginning with three autoethnographic multigenre pieces that describe my initial engagement with the story and how that evolved over many years. These are followed by two pieces that explain the context of the study within the field of children's literature and the rationale for this arts-based inquiry. These are followed by another autoethnographic text and finally by multigenre fictional pieces from my novel, *Do We Look like Outlaws?*

Stories and Secrets: Trion, 1978 is a dramatic sketch that recounts how I first became aware of the 1934 strike, when I interviewed relatives as part of an undergraduate history assignment. The dialogue is based on my notes from those conversations in 1978. A postscript discusses the beginning of my research process.

Interim: Ringgold, 1980-2003 is a short section that describes my continued fascination with the topic over twenty years.

Beginning Again: Athens, 2004 is a reflection on the experience of returning to newspaper archives and finding once again articles I had first read in 1978. While the textile strike was my focus, reading other articles reminded me how closely linked the issues of race and class were, then and now; yet too often, race has been used to drive workers apart, thus preventing the possibility of collective action.

Social Class, Labor Issues, and Children's Literature describes the gap in scholarship related to social class in the field of children's literature. Race and gender studies remain much more common than research exploring the role of social class in books for children. This section explains my focus on novels depicting labor unions in the United States as a way to initiate discussion about social class and children's literature.

A/R/Tography: Acknowledging the Hybridity of Research explains how I use arts-based research practices to offer an account of my studies and to also show how labor conflict may play out in local contexts. The piece concludes with my questions for research.

Trion, Georgia: A Guided Tour opens with a quotation from the Trion Company's pamphlet published and distributed by the mill's personnel department. This section is a retrospective of my experiences as a young person who considered myself to be from Trion (although I have not lived there since the late 1950s) and suggests the slow death of the Southern textile town.

Outlaws: Part 1 consists of excerpts from my multigenre young adult novel and uses fictional journal entries, newspaper articles and letters to introduce the main characters, Kathleen and Lizzie, who are based on composites of my grandmothers, Shirley Henderson McLeod and Mattie Campbell Dillard. Entries from Kathleen's diary and letters from Lizzie to her older sister Georgia show how Southern textile workers and their families experienced the economic crisis of the Great Depression in a small community whose livelihood depended on the fortunes of the local textile mill.

Stories and Secrets: Trion, 1978

Three women sit on a sofa in the living room of a spacious bungalow. Its age is evident in high ceilings, wooden floors, and antique furniture. The only trace of a male presence is an old photograph on the piano of a young man in Depression-era clothing, his arm around a small girl. The youngest of the three women is just out of her teens. She wears jeans, and her button-down shirt is not tucked in. Her long brown hair is parted down the middle. The oldest woman is small, with gray hair in a bun, sharp dark eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses, and shoulders hunched by osteoporosis. The third woman is middle aged, wearing slacks and a double knit floral blouse. Her hair is also gray, short and clipped. They huddle around an audiocassette recorder that sits on the coffee table.

Mae: I come to Trion in 1923 and met Cliff not long after that. We worked in the weave room. We got married the next year and had Martha the year after that.

Anne: Did a lot of women work back then?

Mae: Lots more over the years, seems like. The glove mill was almost all girls. But that was the only place there was supervisors who was ladies. Most places they was all men.

Time I retired in 1970, half the workers in the mill was ladies. We was so glad to come to Trion though. It was a big place, next to Gaylesville back in Alabama.

Anne: What did it have that you didn't have back home?

Mae: There was a service station 'cause there was lots more cars in Trion, of course, a beauty parlor, and a barber shop. They had a ice plant and a bank and a saw mill. I just

thought it was the greatest thing, to have everything to where you didn't have to walk a mile or more to it like we did back home.

Martha: I remember we kept boarders in the apartments when I was little. Your Uncle John stayed with us and he was always up to something. *(She rolls her eyes, smiling)*

Mae: After Cliff died – Martha was eight then – I kept boarders in our apartment and worked at the mill too. Them boys was always up to something but especially when John was with us. He'd put a pile of suitcases at the bottom of the steps, then holler "Supper's ready!" 'cause he knew they'd come a-running and fall all over each other.

Anne: I remember the tricks he'd play on me and the boys. I still have a bunch of the silver dollars he gave me.

Martha: He was always having fun. That was just John.

Mae: We had some good times then. When we first moved to Georgia, some folks back home thought it was awful, to go to work in a cotton mill. Any honest work is all right though and that's all you had to do. That's the only thing there was to do in a place like that. 'Course there was some hard times too. Like the strike.

Martha starts, looks like she may say something, then keeps still.

Anne: What strike?

Mae: Don't ask your granddaddy about it. He went out with the strikers and lost his job.

Anne *(disbelieving)*: What? When was that?

Mae: 1934. Seems like it was in the fall. September maybe.

Anne: But that's the year Daddy was born. He was born that July. What happened? I never heard anything about this.

Mae: I reckon nobody talks about it. Cliff didn't go out with the strikers, went on in to work. He was scared though. I reckon I didn't know enough to be scared. I was working at the glove mill and I saw a boy used to board with us out on the picket line. I asked him how he was doin'. I didn't know we wasn't supposed to talk to 'em. You was just supposed to walk on by and not pay them no attention.

Anne: How long did the strike last?

Mae: I don't remember but it was a good while before things was back to normal. The mill was shut down for a little bit. Then the people that joined the union was all fired. Them and their families had to move out of their houses.

Martha: Betty Elrod's daddy was one who got killed.

Anne (startled): Paul's mother?

Martha: Her daddy was a policeman, and he got shot at the mill. One of the strikers got killed too.

Mae: We all got together. Shirley and Arvel and your daddy came and stayed with us. And Mama. We was all living in Trion by then. She came over here when Shirl did.

Anne: There was a shooting at the mill during the strike?

Martha: They didn't ever catch the one that did it, did they?

Mae: I think somebody got arrested for killing Mr. Hix, but something happened. He didn't never go to jail, I don't believe.

Anne: I'm kind of surprised I hadn't ever heard about any of this. I mean, Betty living right down the street from Grandma Shirley and Granddaddy. And Granddaddy lost his job? But he retired from the mill. What happened? They hired him back.

Mae: They had to promise never to mention the union or the strike again. Don't go asking him about it, he won't talk about it.

I never did ask him. The story of how my grandfather regained his job and went on to become a supervisor before he finally retired after almost forty years of service is one that is lost to me. Did it even happen? And would he have told me if it did? Maybe. I was his only granddaughter and his favorite; as I grew older, we grew closer. Many years after I heard the story from my paternal grandmother's sister, Mary "Mae" Henderson, I shared it with my parents. They were skeptical, and by then, I was too. I had learned about another of my relatives, my mother's great-uncle, who had sided with the strikers and had, in fact, been injured in the violence at the mill that day. I do not know if my father's aunt knew that someone on my mother's side of the family had been involved in the strike and assumed it was my grandfather, rather than his wife's uncle. Whether the story as Mae told it was true or not, I still regretted not asking my grandfather about the 1934 strike. Whatever side he had taken then, he might have shared at least a little about a difficult episode in a life dedicated to personal and community improvement. I could not bear to ask, though, partly because I knew it would cause him pain, partly because it was a blank I wanted to fill in myself. I was already drawn to the idea of making it up. I wanted to understand what had happened and intuitively grasped the possibilities of

story, of narrative, to provide that understanding. Kramp (2004) notes that “...narrative inquiry serves the researcher who wishes to understand a phenomenon or an experience rather than to formulate a logical or scientific explanation” (p. 104). Logical explanation of events of those days in September seemed elusive; understanding might be something I could achieve.

In 1978 I did interview my maternal grandparents, both of whom were willing to talk about the strike. My grandmother, a young teenager when the strike took place, told of going up on a bluff overlooking the river to see the National Guardsmen called out by the governor, giggling with her friends as they tried to look older and sophisticated for all these new men in town. My grandfather said that those returning to work after the strike were marched back by armed guards who seemed to intimidate as much as they protected. After interviewing my grandparents and aunts, I studied the newspaper archives on microfilm in the basement of the Main Library at the University of Georgia, looking for stories about what had happened in 1934. I found that Governor Eugene Talmadge had been in an intense reelection campaign that summer and had promised to remain on the side of the working man. But as soon as he sealed the Democratic nomination, tantamount to election back in the 1930s, he called out the National Guard to shut down the strike. I found that the strike was widespread, reaching textile mills up and down the East coast. I followed the thread of the strike through pages of stories all too reminiscent to those in my own time – a wanted criminal, a dead movie star, an

attempted abortion; others offered brief, dispassionate accounts of hate crimes with no sense of loss or the pain of lives destroyed.

Interim: Ringgold, 1980-2003

By 1978, when I first heard of the strike, the supervisors who had demanded workers' silence about the labor union were dead or retired, and still the silence persisted. Two years later I moved back to northwest Georgia, settling in Ringgold, a small town close to the Tennessee state line, where I would spend the next 23 years raising a family and working. Even so, I continued to think of my interest in the 1934 strike as *The-Book-I-Have-To-Write-Before-I-Die*. In odd moments, or when I was engaged in something that required no concentration, I returned to 1934. I imagined characters who lived through those tumultuous days, people who walked the streets of mill villages between the identical row houses and heard the mill whistle I remembered from childhood summers spent in Trion. I considered how things might have turned out the way they ultimately did, how a character like my grandfather might have regained his job. The two young women I imagined in my story soon parted ways with the real women whose lives inspired their creation and were renamed. Mattie Campbell Dillard was now Lizzie Dillard, a young teenager beginning to realize just how devastating class differences can be in a setting in which job description becomes life prescription. My paternal grandmother, Shirley Henderson McLeod, became Kathleen Henderson McKenzie, the older of the two but with the naïveté of a young woman not long off the Alabama cotton

farm. She would fall in love and marry a millworker, giving birth to their baby just months before the strike in September of 1934. These characters became real to me, as their struggles to negotiate life in the modern world as women, as workers, as mothers and wives, took shape in my imagination. The most difficult for me to see was the character of my grandfather, Grady Arvel McLeod, now renamed Jesse McKenzie. Finally, I imagined him as someone who strives because he is insecure about his own social status, trying to be all things to everyone around him, ensuring that when the time comes to make a stand, he is torn by conflicting loyalties and will never forgive himself for backing what he comes to see as an immoral choice.

I thought about how to introduce African American characters, perhaps a woman who would quilt a whole quilt top for only a dollar or two and whose own pieced work would give me an opportunity to describe the colorful and inventive designs of many black Southern quilters. I wondered if my own attraction to the labor movement was that of a Southerner looking for a lost cause more glorious than that traditional one, which was only treason after all. I suspected that I saw within the labor movement of the twentieth century one last chance for blacks and whites to understand their economic commonalities and to work together for a more just society, rather than being driven apart by a racism that left a hierarchical society firmly in place.

Beginning Again: Athens, 2004

Descending the stairs to the ground floor of the library, I return to a time seven decades past and a country wracked by economic desperation and a self-sustaining sense of its own historic purpose. The Atlanta newspapers, converted long ago to microfilm, fill a massive cabinet, a half decade or so to each drawer. Sliding open the drawer of reels that contain 1934, I wonder who besides myself might come here. I thread film into the reader, wind through weeks in the dark, caught up in a photo montage of newspaper headlines from a black and white film, flashing furiously through time and events until I find again the familiar story:

340,000 on textile strike

Effect of textile strike unknown

Talmadge seeks support of labor

Strike violence leaves six dead in South Carolina

Georgia under martial law

Cigarettes purport to satisfy and the woman in red gives police clues to the whereabouts of Dillinger. A minister's daughter walks into a bank and shoots its young manager before turning the gun on herself. A "Negro" is taken from jail by a mob, another is shot while resisting arrest, another is pursued by police through woods.

I scroll through death and promises, drawn into a cause lost finally to bayonets and rifle butts, to machine guns mounted on cotton bales. Union organizers emerge at last from a detainment camp where they chanted behind chain link. They rejoin a society

determined to distract them from any awareness of common ground they share with those whose houses stand just beyond the railroad track, a society that pays them in the same poor, bitter coin paid their Black neighbors who bury sons and fathers. Their privilege is meager, but White.

Social Class, Labor Issues, and Children's Literature

Race, class, and gender studies provide means by which to critique societal artifacts and practices in order to identify areas of resistance to the dominant culture. Kelley (1993) explored the roles entertainment and fashion played in Black working class resistance to the social norms of the segregated southern United States. Willis's (1977) groundbreaking ethnography of English "lads" argued that working class males' determined opposition to school culture ensured that they, like their fathers before them, would end up in working class jobs. Radway (1983) demonstrated the ways in which adult female readers of romance novels used them to escape from rather than to acquiesce to demands of contemporary gender roles. The three terms, *race*, *class*, and *gender*, are often linked, yet the first and third receive considerable attention within the field of children's literature studies while the second area, *class*, receives far less. Many studies explore gender (Christensen, 1991; Christian-Smith, 1993; Ernst, 1995; Paul, 1996; Segel, 1986; Zipes, 1987) and race (Harris, 1993; Kohl, 1995; MacCann, 1998; Sims Bishop, 1982, 2007) in books for children and consider how these might shape developing conceptions of identity. However, similar discussions of social class in children's books are lacking in the United States where contradictory attitudes toward

class appear to make discussion of its related issues more difficult. Americans often view class as something both nonexistent and a barrier that can be transcended with sufficient diligence, even as the gap between the rich and poor expands (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2008). If research related to social class and children's books has been rare, even less attention has been paid to representation of labor issues. To begin discussion of class in American children's literature, I chose to focus on the narrower topic of labor, specifically as it pertains to labor unions and strikes, as this is an area in which class must be explicitly addressed. As I describe later in the study, a survey of children's novels featuring labor unions or strikes as part of the story line revealed 53 that have been published in the last 34 years, with a majority published since 2000.

To help the reader better understand the nature of the books I included in the sample, it may help to describe some that I chose to exclude. Books such as *Blue Willow* (Gates, 1940) and others that take up the subject of labor but not organization and collective action of workers were not included. *Blue Willow* and many other novels include rich descriptions of workers' lives and focus on relations between workers and employers but do not include depictions of union activities. Nor did I focus exclusively on the issue of child labor, although some workers in the novels are children or, more commonly, young teenagers. In most of the novels, workers are the parents or siblings of the young protagonists. A number of picture books for younger readers also depict unions or strikes, among them titles such as *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* (Cronin, 2000) and *¡Sí, Se Puede!/Yes, We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A* (Cohn, 2002). These are not included in the present sample, nor are nonfiction works like *We Shall Not Be Moved*:

The Women's Factory Strike of 1909 (Dash, 1996). Because so many novels were available, I decided to concentrate on them for this study and to turn to picture books and nonfiction portrayals of unions for future research.

The focus on unions had the effect of at least potentially resulting in a sample with a particular ideological tilt as the conflict that drives these narratives is a class struggle, with workers and management on opposite sides of a divide. Depictions of that struggle, however, may sometimes be inaccurate, incomplete, or ambivalent. Studies have shown that even children's books exploring racial issues in the context of slavery or the civil rights movement may present versions of historical events that distort the grim brutality of the times. Scholastic's *Dear America* series "softens" the condition of slavery by portraying characters who remain unrealistically optimistic about their future prospects of freedom (Taxel & Williams, 2005). The protagonist of *Amos Fortune, Free Man* (Yates, 1950) forgoes early opportunities for freedom because he does not yet consider himself ready to receive its blessings and selflessly forgives his oppressors (Trousdale, 1990). Just as the presence of African American characters does not guarantee accurate depictions of race relations, so too books about organized labor may or may not provide historically accurate depictions of class struggle.

Studies of children's and young adult literature that address the topics of social class and labor issues are long overdue. With this research project, I aim to begin to fill that gap in scholarship with an examination of children's novels in which labor unions are portrayed and exploration of how or indeed whether characters demonstrate class consciousness. In addition, I have located aspects of labor and class issues that are not

addressed in the novels by comparing them to trades, industries, and ethnicities that were part of labor movements during the time periods the novels depict. These gaps and silences are evoked too through the use of multigenre writing that challenges the notion of a seamless and objective presentation of data mirroring reality and instead foregrounds a research process reflecting a poststructuralist conception of knowledge using arts-based practices.

A/R/Tography: Acknowledging the Hybridity of Research

What makes this study unusual in the field of children's literature is its arts-based approach to educational research. Sometimes referred to as “‘blurred genres,’ ‘arts-based inquiry,’ ‘scholARTistry,’ and ‘a/r/tography,’” (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 6), this approach emphasizes the roles of the artist/researcher/teacher in creating a “hybrid, practice-based form of methodology” (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006, p. 1224). In this case, my study crosses boundaries between the social sciences (education and ethnography) and the humanities (literature and history). Its theoretical framework is a poststructuralism infused with neoMarxism and feminism. Fay (1987) describes an “amended critical social science” whose theory of reflexivity “offers an account of the ways in which it is inherently and essentially contextual, partial, local, and hypothetical” (p. 213). The inclusion of my multigenre writing within the dissertation provides context and emphasizes the partial, local, and hypothetical nature of this inquiry.

The setting of the fictional pieces offers a means to consider the local nature of conflict and how it might play out in unexpected ways.

Eisner maintained that debates about the value of arts-based research are likely to be less persuasive than “exemplary arts-based work which is difficult to dislike” and challenged proponents of arts-based research to produce “deeds, not words” (2008, p. 19). Fortunately, a number of researchers have done so, and their work proved influential on my own. One of the models I used for this arts-based dissertation was *Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching* (Barone, 2001). Although the more literary parts comprise only two sections of the book, *Touching Eternity* as a whole reads like a novel, with Barone’s scholarly sections supplying the tension of the narrative as he troubles the idea of the teacher-hero and considers the conservatism of that image and of the teacher, Don Forrister. What makes his work arts-based is his rendering of the stories of Forrister and his former students using a style that employs “characteristics of imaginative literature, including evocative language and an aesthetic form” (Barone, 2001, p. 2). By paying attention to aesthetic choices as well as providing a theoretical framework, Barone integrates these in a way that achieves his goal of encouraging readers to ask questions about educational practices. *Touching Eternity*, with its careful attention to the details of a particular situation, offers opportunities for reflection on the long-term influences of a creative and gifted teacher on students’ lives.

Others besides Barone have used creative writing in their studies of social or educational issues. Douglas Gosse’s novel *Jackytar* (2005b) was part of his dissertation

(2005a) that relied on data including his own “implicit and explicit experiences and knowledge as an educator, researcher, and bilingual, working-class, disabled gay man who grew up in rural Newfoundland” (Gosse, 2008, p. 183). Gosse used footnotes within the fictional text in the dissertation in order to make connections between it and related issues and referred to these as “marginalia or a kind of hypertext” (2008, p. 184).

Although most people recognize the use of *hypertext* in relation to online text, a printed text with footnotes is a simple example of its use (Lavagnino, 1997), as the reader leaves the main text to refer to related material in a different place on the page or in the book.

Although *Jackytar* was published as a novel without the footnotes that had been part of Gosse’s dissertation, a planned later edition will include them (Gosse, 2008).

Footnotes offer one way of organizing complex, transdisciplinary texts in order to present readers with multiple ways to read and create meaning. Another is a multigenre literary collage like Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = la Frontera* (1999), an exemplary arts-based text that, like *Jackytar* and *Touching Eternity*, has reached audiences inside and outside the academy. Anzaldúa used autoethnography, historical description, and poetry to express the joys and frustrations of a life lived between cultures. These are genres I include in my own research, alongside more familiar academic text.

In the process of a/r/tography, researchers “share their processes of inquiry as well as the products that are derived from those inquiries” (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006, p. 1227). My creative writing explores the events of 1934 through the eyes of young people coming of age during the Great Depression, but it also allows me to

share my own research practices and their products. The use of multigenre pieces foregrounds how I came to this topic which became intensely personal to me, a curiosity not just about the general textile strike of 1934, but also about the people who lived in the milltowns. They were my grandparents and their siblings, people I knew in a completely different time as I grew up in the 1960s and '70s. My grandparents, aunts, and uncles had lived through times of economic trouble and social unrest, experiences that instilled in them a desire for modest financial security, a reliance on family for social support, and an appreciation for the conveniences of modern living. Their story became so entwined with that of my research topic that I found it impossible to separate the two.

Still, gaps remain. My own understanding of how my family members experienced the strike has changed, even recently. I accept that there are many things I will never know. For that reason, multigenre text serves another purpose, pointing to the gaps that remain in the narrative. Often the most important elements of a story are those that are never told. I, the writer, can never be certain about the “truth” of this narrative, or even the final conclusions of this research. What these pieces enable me to do is to lay them before the reader, saying, “This is as I found it, and you have seen my own interpretations. Make of this text what you will.” The use of multigenre writing foregrounds this role of the reader in the creation of meaning; the nature of the text demands it, rather than leaving it implicit. Jung (2005) argues that by their “textual disruptions”

Multigenre texts promote better listening because they break down a reader/writer binary that positions the writer as a disembodied disseminator of “truth” and the

reader as passive recipient. These texts instead create a participatory *relationship* between writer and reader, a relationship that holds both parties responsible for the construction of meaning. (p. 34)

Unlike a modernist/positivist sense of writing as a narrative conveyed by means of cohesion and appropriate rhetorical devices, postmodernism listens for the voices that have been silenced, in effect “mining the gaps” between narratives (Tarabochia, 2006). Multigenre writing, by inscribing gaps within the text, destabilizes author/ity, requiring the reader to engage with text and graphics to create meanings that may be unstable, varying not just from reader to reader but from reading to reading. It is a way of representing that is more appropriate for the topic of labor than I would have first thought, as the more I have searched for some version of the truth about what happened in Trion in September of 1934, the more elusive that truth has become. It remains a mystery, uncovered over time yet something I will never hold all the pieces to. Similarly, possible reasons why so few studies of social class and labor issues in children’s literature exist remain speculative; however, some may be suggested by the ways in which cultural artifacts such as children’s books are products of particular traditions that benefit the dominant culture. This concept of selective tradition (Williams, 1977) as a process through which certain values are emphasized while others are ignored informs my study. By including multigenre fiction within the text, I suggest multiple ways of understanding why the textile strike of 1934 ended in failure, rather than blaming Southern workers’

resistance to unions, a simplistic explanation that minimizes the forces brought to bear on the strikers and ultimately benefits the dominant culture.

Finally, the multigenre pieces in each section suggest class consciousness and silences, the bases of my research questions, as they explore power relations between workers and management, the controversy surrounding union organization at the beginning of the New Deal, and the aftermath of the strike, including the forced silence of rehired millworkers. Class consciousness, or characters' self-identification with a particular class and subsequent recognition of the possibilities of class action to effect social change, is an important element to consider in books about the labor movement. The strategies characters adopt when involved in conflict contain particular assumptions about the nature of the problem being addressed. Characters who see themselves as individuals striving to improve only their own circumstances and not as part of a larger social sphere offer a model of social action very different from that of characters who recognize inherent economic inequalities in society and see themselves as part of a larger struggle. To take collective action based on an understanding of power inequities within industrialized society is quite different from protest based on an individual sense of being wronged by a local company owned by misguided individuals or from passive acceptance of injustice. The task of identifying those silences that persist among stories about labor requires familiarity with the history of unions in the United States as well as awareness of the role labor plays in the present political and social context. For example, the fact that the vast majority of novels about American labor unions are historical fiction suggests

that the deepest silence is that of organized workers in the 21st century. This suggests too the power of a selective tradition that shapes our understanding of past and present, even as it reflects the images and attitudes of those times.

Questions for Research

- How do novels for children and young adults depict the role of unions in the American labor movement? Specifically, how is class consciousness represented?
- Are there aspects of labor/class that are unaddressed in the novels? Why might these silences exist and what is their effect on the overall representation of labor and social class within the novels?

Trion, Georgia: A Guided Tour

Back in October, 1845, three men, Judge Spencer Marsh, Andrew Allgood, and Col. William K. Briers closed a deal which was to invest \$25,000.00 in the construction and operation of a textile mill. The site chosen for the mill was in Chattooga County on the banks of the Chattooga River, the present location of the Town of Trion. The original mill was a 2-story yarn mill with 600 spindles and with only 40 employees. (From “About the Town of Trion and Its Advantages,” a pamphlet published by the Trion Company’s Personnel Department, Revised 1943)

Drive down the streets of any number of Southern towns and you will see rows of similar frame cottages with identical setbacks from the road. Somewhere nearby, smokestacks tower over an aged brick complex of loading docks, warehouses, factory buildings, and perhaps a retail storefront. Railroad tracks suggest distant markets for the textiles once produced by workers who called the mill houses home. The wide streets were once lined with the cars of workers who could not find spaces in the company lots. Today, those streets are empty, and the trains, when they run at all, rarely stop at the loading docks.

Trion, Georgia, the town my grandparents lived and worked in, where my parents met and married while still teenagers, and where I was born in 1957, is home to a textile mill that defied grim economic trends in the 1970s and '80s and remains open today, thanks to its conversion almost forty years ago to blue denim production. But the company store is long gone. The mill-houses have been transformed by three generations of private ownership into a series of variations on just a few themes – rambling two-family homes, many occupied by Latino workers and their families, or alternately converted into large homes for one family only. Some are small cottages, with carports or additions tacked onto the side; most are well maintained, but others fall into disrepair, with peeling paint and empty cracked windows. In those front yards, weeds choke jonquils and forsythia planted under towering shade trees.

The whistle at the mill that once warned workers to begin their walk to work at twenty minutes until eight, four, and twelve o'clock is silent. But the parking lots are

occupied, if not completely full, with cars and workers on cigarette breaks. Mount Vernon Mill, formerly Riegel Textiles, and originally the Trion Company, has been lucky; it has operated almost continuously since its founding fifteen years before the start of the Civil War.

Soon after I was born, my parents rented an apartment along the tree-lined avenue leading to the bridge and the mill just across the river. My father finished his teaching degree, and later we moved away from Chattooga County, living at various times in the suburbs of the mid-sized cities that lie along Georgia's fall line – Macon, Columbus, Augusta. In those years the highlights of my summers were the weeks spent in Trion visiting my grandparents and playing with my cousins. Before my grandfathers and great-aunts retired from the mill, the whistle punctuated our days. At twenty till four, my maternal grandfather would pick up his sack supper, give my grandmother a quick kiss, and start walking to the mill a block away. On the other side of the railroad tracks, my cousin Martha, a school teacher enjoying her own summer vacation, would be getting in her car to drive the mile from her home to the mill, to pick up her mother and my paternal grandfather when they finished their work on the first shift. If my brothers and I were with her and my grandmother, we would wait in the hot parking lot, scanning the weary faces of workers as they streamed across the foot bridge.

These summers came at the end of the glory days of the Southern mill town. The sense of time and place they evoked was so strong, however, that as I grew up, I believed that mill towns were the norm and the suburbs in which we lived, the aberrations. There

was a certain amount of truth to this; after all, sections of the cities we lived close to had obviously been built around textile mills on the rivers. It was easy to recognize these and to mark them as something familiar and more homelike than the ranch houses we lived in. When I moved back to Athens, Georgia, in 2003, a drive down Whitehall Road evoked feelings of nostalgia which I realized came from identical small cottages lining the road, part of an old mill village that once circled the cotton mill on the Oconee River.

By then I knew what I had not known as a child, that many of these now sleepy towns had a troubled history few wanted to talk about. I had begun to realize too that Trion was both an exception to and an embodiment of the tension between workers and mill management. What I never expected was that this dark and ambiguous story would inform my research interests and that all my work would have as its genesis the events that took place in Trion in year of 1934, the summer my father was born.

Outlaws, Part 1

Cast of Characters

Kathleen Henderson: 17-year-old glove mill worker

Nona Henderson: Widowed mother of six, recently moved to Trion

John Robert Henderson: 24 years old, engaged to Amy Alexander

Joe Henderson: 15-year-old, high school student, athlete

Annie Henderson: 14 years old, youngest Henderson sibling

Judith Henderson: 19-year-old worker in Trion Mill's dye laboratory

Leon Stewart: Worker in the spinning room

Edith Henderson Millican: 26-year-old, married to Cecil Millican, mother of
Grace

Georgia Greene: 18-year-old sister of Lizzie, recently married

Arlin Dillard: Father of Lizzie and Georgia, doffer at Trion Mill

Vera Dillard: Mother of Lizzie and Georgia

Lizzie Dillard: 15-year-old high school student

Albert Cole: Lizzie and Georgia's grandfather

Bessie Cole: Lizzie and Georgia's grandmother

From the diary of Kathleen Henderson:

December 25, 1932

Dear Diary,

Today was our first Christmas with everybody together here in Trion. It is good to be with my brothers and sisters for Christmas after almost five years of some of us living back home and the rest over here working in the mill.

I was surprised when Mama decided to move to town back last June. I should not have been though because Joe had been after her about it for months, going on about the football team they had started over here and our school in Alabama didn't have anything like that.

Then when John Robert came home to Gaylesville, he told Mama how good the schools were over here. He said if Joe had a chance to finish up his

schooling in town, he would learn a lot more than he would in a little country school. Besides, he told her he knew I could get hired on at the mill with him and the girls. "Kathleen will be out of school this spring," he told her, "and I can find something for her at the mill. It would save us all some money to get a house together. Judith can move out of the dorm and I can give up my room at the boarding house. We could get a house and still all save some money."

Soon Joe will have the boys' room all to himself because John Robert is getting married this summer to Amy Alexander! That is why he wanted to save up money. She is a school teacher here which is why I think it is so funny. When I was in school back home, the teachers were still telling stories about some of the things John did when he was in school. I wonder if Amy knows what he is really like. I don't think he would do her like he did the men at the boarding house. Once he took all their bags and stacked them on the stairs. Then he yelled dinnertime and watched them run out of their rooms and trip over the bags and each other.

Edith is bringing Grace over tomorrow so I can baby-sit while she and Cecil go to the show. Maybe we'll make cookies. Grace is a good helper to be five years old.

I have written more than I intended and it is getting late.

January 5, 1933

Dear Diary,

The mill is laying off again. They say orders for cotton have been slow so they can not keep running like they have. I hope don't any of us get laid off.

Right now with all us working and living together we are getting by better than some others who don't have people in town. Those are the ones that have it the hardest. John Robert says we should hear this week where the layoffs are. I will hope for the best.

January 9, 1933

Dear Diary,

Well we still have our jobs. There were 20 people got laid off this time was all. The only one I knew was Leon that Judith kindly likes. John said Leon had missed a bunch of days since last summer and Judith got mad and said it was not Leon's fault, that he had been having to go back home to see about his granddaddy's farm. Judith pretends like Leon tells her these things but I think she hears them from girls she works with in the lab. I am not sure if he has ever even said one word to her.

The new Baptist preacher and his family moved into the parsonage today. They have three children two boys and a girl who is about Grace's age. Grace will be happy to have someone to play with living at the end of the street. Mama made them a caramel cake and took it over there. She got it made just in time before the rain started. It seems like every time I try to make that icing, it rains and I can't get it to do right. The rain makes it not want to set up enough to stay on a cake.

January 25, 1933

Dear Diary,

It snowed a little this morning which was real pretty. Judith said Leon was coming over to see her but didn't any of us believe that. But he did. We played Rook until after ten and he left then. Judith was happy.

Everybody is talking about how things are going to get better now that Mr. Roosevelt will be president soon. Lots of things are better for us now in town. When we sold the farm to Uncle Bob back home and moved to Trion some people said we were making a bad mistake. I guess they meant that the people who work in mills like this are not too nice. Maybe some are not but most are good people. Mama just told anybody that said anything that it was honest work same as farming.

It is hard work. I like sewing but I get tired making gloves all day. I have made some friends here though. Lots of them are sisters and cousins all working together. That is one way it is like farming even though you are not working for yourself but for somebody else.

It is better than picking cotton all day at least most days. Back home we did everything on the farm ourselves. Uncle Bob had people who sharecropped so he had help. But not us. It would be Mama and all us out in the field until we thought we were going to fall right over. The last two years on the farm were the hardest. John and Edith and Martha tried to come back over as much as they could to help out but mostly it was just us littler ones picking cotton all day. I got to where I hated cotton. I hated planting it and I hated even worse

picking the stuff. You stay bent over all day and drag around a sack that gets heavier and heavier if you are doing like you are supposed to.

Mama said back during the war they made right smart money from the cotton. Then when they sold it they bought things that Daddy could sell. They had a wagon Daddy used for peddling. He would go all over the county selling pots and pans and shoes and cloth. I do not remember that myself but I remember playing in the little storeroom where he had kept the stuff he sold. It was just off the back porch and Annie and Judith and me would play house in there.

The Trion Facts

January 29, 1933

Mr. and Mrs. Arlin Dillard announce the marriage of their daughter Georgia Elaine to Mr. Andrew Greene of LaFayette. Mr. Greene is the son of Mrs. Betty Greene and the late Mr. Ethan Greene. The couple will live in Chickamauga.

19 Park St.

Trion, Ga.

February 3, 1933

Dear Georgia,

I just wanted to say I am sorry for throwing a fit when you told me that you and Andrew had got married. You know I like him fine and always have. But I was not ready for you leave. Mama and Daddy are fine. Write me back.

Love,

Lizzie

Chapter 2

Class Discussions: The Exercise of Power

If pursuing research means joining in an ongoing discussion of a subject, the lack of research specific to the topic requires that I cross disciplines to identify conversations to join. American and cultural studies, education, and history offer context for my study of social class and labor issues in American children's literature. Multigenre pieces describe my own growing connection to literature and social issues and explore power relations between millworkers and management.

The Selective Tradition and Children's Literature describes Raymond Williams' theory of how the values, narratives, beliefs, and ideologies of a particular society are perpetuated, even as they face resistance to the dominant culture. The first subsection describes Hollindale's work on ideology within children's books and the second explores the capability of authors of historical fiction to offer social critique.

Heroes, Stiffs, and Buffoons: The Working Class in Popular Media shows how depictions of labor and workers in film and television changed over time, ultimately focusing instead on the middle and upper classes, as they emphasized the possibilities of social mobility in the United States.

Locating Social Class and Labor within Children's Literature is a discussion of existing research most directly related to children's literature and labor: studies of social

class in children's novels, periodicals, and dime novels; work that describes the historical role of members of the political Left in children's publishing during the second half of the 20th century; articles that note the absence and later the presence of novels about labor and union members; and studies of how social class and labor issues are represented in school textbooks.

Arts-Based Educational Research in Children's Literature discusses Reisberg's study of picture book illustrators, the only other arts-based dissertation I was able to locate in the field of children's literature.

Reading the World in Black and White: Columbus, 1962 is an autoethnographic essay that describes my passion for reading and awareness of the links between literature and social issues during the 1960s and 1970s.

Revisiting the Past: 1934 provides historical description of life in a textile mill village and the relationship between employers and laborers. As working conditions deteriorated in the mills, the paternalistic practices that had formerly prevented workers from joining unions were no longer sufficient, particularly after the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) of 1933.

Outlaws, Part 2 consists of multigenre fictional texts that suggest how Southern mill workers experienced the lay-offs, the stepped-up production schedule, and racial and class relations in the early days of the New Deal.

The Selective Tradition and Children's Literature

Raymond Williams (1977) draws on the concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 2000) to explain how popular media mirror and reinforce the beliefs, values, and practices of powerful interests in society, enabling those interests to maintain control by means of ideas, rather than force. Williams's conception of how popular culture ultimately promotes the interests of those in power formed what he termed a *selective tradition* (p. 115) that offers insight into how those interests are served. The selective tradition is one in which "certain meanings and values are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and values are neglected or excluded" (Williams, 1977, p. 115). The traditional conception of the past is then used to "connect with and ratify the present. What it offers in practice is a sense of *predisposed continuity*" [italics original] (p. 166). In this process, people make sense of the present through very specific notions of a past, identifying with the values that tradition espouses.

Fay (1987) argues that tradition is just one of the limitations advocates of critical theory encounter when they attempt to bring about social change. By describing people as "embodied, traditional, historical, and embedded creatures" (p. 142), he sought to change the theory and ultimately the practice of what he termed *critical social science*. This revision of critical theory would, Fay contends, acknowledge forces capable of preventing or distorting the social change critical theorists hoped to achieve. He calls for four theories as amendments to critical theory: a *theory of the body*; a *theory of tradition*; a *theory of force*; and a *theory of reflexivity*, each of which would function so as to better account for limitations on human agency. My use of arts-based methodologies offers an

example of one way to amend the practice of critical social science so that it engages with three of Fay's proposed theories. I have already described Williams's (1977) idea of a selective tradition. The next theory, of force, became relevant as I explore the novels and the historical record, looking for instances of class consciousness and collective action. The use of force against labor unions by government agencies and private industry made collective action a risky proposition and prevented workers who might otherwise have joined unions from taking part. Reflexivity is addressed through my use of arts-based research that "gives an account of its own historical emergence" (Fay, p. 213) and acknowledges its own partiality. My study does not engage Fay's theory of the body, although that would be a fascinating avenue to explore, as the work routines of the industrial age imposed their own strictures on employees' bodies and movements. Engaging with the notions of tradition, force, and reflexivity allowed me to better understand and describe the complexity of representations of labor unions in children's novels.

The genre of children's literature tends to be a conservative one, generally reflecting the values of the dominant culture in which it is produced and, at least at times, consciously attempting to reproduce those values among its young readers. According to Kelly (1974),

children's literature is significant and illuminating for the cultural historian because it constitutes one important way in which the adult community deliberately and self-consciously seeks to explain, interpret, and justify that body

of beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices which, taken together, define in large measure a culture....” (pp. xiii-xiv)

At the same time, the ways in which texts reflect and reproduce the assumptions of their culture cannot be reduced to a simple process by which those who control production maintain their dominance through social messages inscribed in cultural artifacts like novels. Authors may subvert their own messages, even when those messages have an emancipatory intent. The notion that children’s books offer up a particular version of reality focused on certain issues and cultures while largely ignoring others compelled me to explore the concept of ideology. Thompson, as cited in Watkins (1999), defined ideology as “meaning in the service of power” (p. 177). With this working definition in mind, I consider how ideology informs children’s literature and its accompanying scholarship.

Ideology: Confrontations with power and meaning.

Hollindale (1992) describes manifestations of ideology in children’s books, beginning with the most obvious, the *surface ideology*, or explicit set of beliefs the author appears to wish to promulgate through the text. Texts that aim to challenge racial or gender stereotypes promote clear messages about that intent, a tactic which does not always succeed. Authors, with the best of intentions, may craft a story designed to promote understanding and decrease prejudice, only to have it read by an audience who use the text to reinforce their own predispositions. Those sympathetic to the author’s

message remain so, while those with opposing views will recognize and resist such attempts to persuade. Galda and Beach (2001) describe studies in which such resistance takes place, based on the “cultural expectations” (p. 65) of the reader. High school and university students from middle class suburban backgrounds whose classes read multicultural literature were more likely to demonstrate defensive attitudes toward texts that challenged white privilege and to deny the significance of racial differences than were their counterparts at an urban school (Beach, 1997).

Another type of ideology Hollindale describes is *passive ideology* which is comprised of the unquestioned assumptions and taken-for-granted values the author inevitably brings to his or her writing. According to Hollindale, this is more powerful than surface ideology because it is based on underlying assumptions about a society and values, which are understood to be shared. Many of the books about African-American characters that Sims (1982) classifies as *social conscience* books provide examples of this passive ideology. Rather than identifying racism as part of the underlying fabric of American society, Sims notes that these stories, usually by white authors, focus instead on the bad behavior of a few ignorant and “prejudiced” individuals, as in *The Empty School House* (Carlson, 1965) or *Iggie’s House* (Blume, 1970). They may also unintentionally evoke stereotypes, such as “The Defeated Helpless Woman” (Sims, 1982, p. 25) as depicted in *Dead End School* (Coles, 1968). The grandmother in this novel advises her grandson “to rely on prayer” (Sims, 1982, p. 25). This stereotype provides an example of what Trousedale (1990) argues is a “submission theology” (p. 117), one that denies the agency and self-determination of African-American religious experience.

Trousdale contrasts such depictions with those in the novels of Mildred Taylor whose characters embody a strong faith that both sustains and empowers them. Encisco (1997) demonstrates how White fourth and fifth graders reading *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990) identified with the story's message of a color-blind society, downplaying the significance of race, while their African-American and biracial classmates showed a willingness to "talk back" to the story, linking their personal experience of history and race to the text in ways the White students did not. Passive ideology, hidden beneath the surface and located within assumptions the author makes about society and its values, is often the more powerful force and can overwhelm the author's intended message.

Still, readers' responses to texts may produce meanings that contradict these assumptions within texts. For example, Radway (1983) found that female readers of romance novels stated explicitly that they read them to "escape" the everyday demands of their lives as wives, mothers, and employees. Although aware that the genre usually included "happily ever after" endings to love affairs, these readers appeared to use the novels to negotiate changing societal roles that required women to be both intelligent and worthy of romantic passion. Even among this group of dedicated readers of romance few subscribed to rigid notions of gender roles and expectations. Christian-Smith (1993) reached similar conclusions about adolescent girls who were avid readers of romance but also suggested that "it is important that educators help students to locate the contradictions between popular fiction's version of social relations and their own lives as well as to help give them the critical tools necessary to make deconstructive readings that unearth the political interests that shape the form and content of popular fiction" (p. 63).

Thus, the passive ideology described by Hollindale may undermine an author's critique of a societal problem while an individual reader's response may lead her to locate a site of resistance within a text that would appear to be antithetical to such resistance. In light of such contradictory outcomes of texts created with particular goals in mind, how can authors hope to produce texts that mount effective challenges to the status quo?

Williams stresses that "cultural formations" (1977, pp. 118-119) including literature can indeed offer alternative or oppositional versions of the past and present, along with those of the more hegemonic tradition. Such cultural formations have the potential to reclaim the past in ways that cast the present in a different light. According to Williams, historical work that presents alternative or oppositional formations is an effective way to resist the dominant selective tradition.

Historical fiction and the challenge of social criticism.

Because so many of the novels in my sample of books about the labor movement belong to the genre of historical fiction, it is worthwhile to consider how some historical novels may provide alternative depictions of the past even though critique through historical fiction may offer particular challenges. According to Stephens (1992), the genre itself is based upon certain essentialist principles inherent to humanism, namely that human nature is largely unchanging over time and because of this, there are important lessons to be learned from history. Cultural relativism in the late 20th century challenged these principles and was accompanied by a concern with the present and future, rather than with the past (Stephens, 1992). If historical fiction is judged, as Stephens contends,

on the basis of criteria that rely on essentialist concepts, namely that narratives can be historically accurate and authoritative, that readers can be induced to identify with the focalizing character, that to read a narrative is to experience historical events vicariously, and that human nature is unchanging through time, all essentialist concepts that a poststructuralist reading would trouble, it would appear that the genre's potential to offer counter-narratives would be limited. In fact, writers who have attempted to show alternative views of gender or race relations in the past have had their work labeled "presentist," with critics claiming that they impose contemporary values and sensibilities on characters from different historical periods.

Power (1998) challenges such critics' accusations that historical fiction for young adults is presentist by documenting the existence of such values and attitudes using historical references. One example she cites is that of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (Avi, 1990) in which an upper middle class girl forms an alliance with sailors staging a mutiny on their voyage across the Atlantic in the 19th century. Some (MacLeod, 1998; Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997) found the character's rejection of traditional feminine roles of that period jarring and accused the author of imbuing Charlotte with late 20th century sensibilities. Power's historical research demonstrated that while such attitudes may have been unusual, held by a small minority of people at that time, they did exist. She argued that authors who present these perspectives within historical fiction are not inaccurate but are instead offering a more complete picture of that time, one that includes views that resist dominant values of the period.

Another aspect of Power's research considered accusations of what she termed *readerly presentism*, the idea that readers who criticized characters in historical fiction for not protesting racial or gender proscriptions of that period were unreasonably imposing contemporary expectations on an author's depiction of a period when such attitudes would have been unrealistic. *Amos Fortune, Free Man* (Yates, 1950) is one such title whose protagonist acquiesces to the conventions of slavery, even when offered opportunities to achieve freedom. *Souder* (Armstrong, 1969), winner of the 1970 Newbery Medal, features a family of nameless African-American characters; only the dog, Souder, has a name. After the father is arrested for stealing food for his family and Souder disappears, the mother offers her son the bleak counsel that "You must learn to lose, child. The Lord teaches the old to lose" (p. 52). Power argued that historical research demonstrates that opposition to slavery and the racism of the post-Civil War era existed and that it is not unreasonable for historical fiction to represent that opposition. Linking accusations of presentism on the part of these writers and readers, she showed how narratives depicting the contented slave and the defeated African-American woman serve to perpetuate stereotypes and constitute a way of thinking about the past that denies the historical diversity of responses to oppression. Similarly, Harris (1993) explained how conscious depictions of positive images of African-American culture in early 20th century publications such as *The Brownies' Book* were aimed at African American children and were produced in order to provide a counter-narrative to popular stereotypical images produced for a white audience.

Studies like these belie more limited notions of the past as a period in which minority voices were not just unheard by the majority culture but were actually nonexistent. This conception of the past as a less enlightened time than our own implies that issues of racism and sexism belong to the past and ignores the real persistence of societal problems. Historical fiction that aims to recover voices that would otherwise be lost can be faithful to the historical record while offering a fresh perspective on both past and present. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party* (Anderson, 2006) is one example of historical fiction that transcends Stephens's description of the genre as inevitably embodying humanistic principles. In this postmodernist account of the beginning of the American Revolution, Octavian and his mother are the subjects of an Enlightenment-era scientific experiment, an investigation by a secretive group of scholars into the intellectual capacity of African-Americans. Their gilded cage of privilege and culture comes crashing down when the group loses its funding. Told through a series of journal entries, letters, and other manuscripts, the story details the hellish existence of Octavian and his mother, the beautiful, doomed Cassiopeia under a new supervisor intent on disproving African-Americans' abilities. Anderson's version of the beginnings of America's War for Independence looks more like brutal civil unrest, and the supervisor, Sharpe, is a pacing, avaricious sadist comfortable with the notion of what would now be called "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2007). Still, the character of Sharpe is less an anachronism than an emergent advocate for corporate profit over all else, a prescient shark navigating primordial waters at the dawn of the Industrial Age. Through Octavian, Anderson critiques both past and present, connecting two

different historical periods in ways that play with the notion of unchanging human nature. The reader of the twenty-first century may at first feel superior to those scientists whose studies appear absurdly random, but by the story's end, the nagging question of what passes for "science-based" or "evidence-based" research remains, along with an uncomfortable sense that we have not, in fact, learned much at all about what it means to be human, much less scientific.

Books like *Octavian Nothing* may be unusual, even rare, but such texts do demonstrate how historical fiction offers the potential to explore different perspectives on the past and to offer examples of resistance to the dominant culture as part of the process of the selective tradition of history. Resistance may enjoy some limited success, or alternately, it may be co-opted or destroyed. The varying portrayals of social class and labor issues in the popular media over the last century offer historical context for their depictions in books for children and scholarship related to children's literature.

Heroes, Stiffs, and Buffoons: The Working Class in Popular Media

Authors of children's books and researchers who study them are part of a society that shies away from discussions of social class, and representation of labor in books for young children and studies of children's literature must be considered in the context of popular culture as a whole. Film, television, radio, music – all mirror to some extent how Americans view themselves, but they also assist in the reproduction of values endorsed by those in power who control the production and distribution of various media. Although film and television programming offered depictions of working class culture and labor in

their early years, both media soon became more conservative (Alper, 2005; Butsch, 1995; Lipsitz, 1994; Ross, 1998; Winn, 2007). The film industry was one of the earlier forms of popular culture and mass media and, in the beginning, offered sites of resistance to industrial economic domination. Ross describes the development of the film industry during which silent films, many produced by recent immigrants, celebrated working-class themes and labor messages. As he explains, just a few years later, the need to propagate a pro-war message during World War I gave rise to the Committee on Public Information and a tradition of government influence and censorship that would shape how the film industry portrayed class and labor relations. Thus the film industry grew more conservative over time, and later efforts to produce labor-friendly films in the twenties met with very limited success in the face of problems with financing, distribution, and censorship. While many films superficially glorified the working class and the work ethic, their underlying message was that happiness came from keeping in one's place. Ross argued that conflict in the workplace was portrayed as the result of bad behavior on the part of individual employers who might be charmed, educated, or enlightened by workers' efforts, but power relations were not shown as something that could be changed by collective action.

Films in the 1940s emphasized social mobility in the form of ownership of a small business, but after the war, another trend emerged as the film *noir* genre reflected alienation and tension experienced by returning soldiers whose lives had been disrupted and who were unsure of their place in society (Lipsitz, 1994). The urban working class served more as a setting than a theme for the films, although Lipsitz explains that a few

filmmakers attempted more political statements. Some would become part of the Hollywood Ten, a group of directors and screenwriters who went to prison for contempt of Congress after refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee about their involvement with the Communist Party. The Hollywood blacklist of writers, producers, and others in the film industry suspected of Communist sympathies helped enforce a largely conservative political culture of the industry well into the 1960s.

Zaniello's *Working Stiffs, Union Maids, Reds, and Riffraff: An Expanded Guide to Films about Labor* (2003) provides a timeline that illustrates how the social upheaval of the 1960s came late to Hollywood in terms of critique of class: Between 1960 and 1970 only five feature films which the author classified as related to labor or the working class were released. Fifteen appeared within the next decade, including *Norma Rae* (Ritt, 1979). From 1980 through 1989, 32 were released; from 1990 through 2002, the last year for which Zaniello reported data, just 25 were listed. Films about social class are much more likely to represent instead the American dream of social mobility, as in *Maid in Manhattan* (Wang, 2002), *An Officer and a Gentleman* (Hackford, 1982), and *Good Will Hunting* (Van Sant, 1997), even if that mobility is ultimately rejected by the individual character who realizes that her working class roots represent moral superiority (Winn, 2007).

Like early movies, some television series in the late 1940s and early to mid 1950s featured working class families, among them *I Remember Mama* and *The Goldbergs* (Holtzman, 2000). Corporate sponsorship in the late 1950s and early 1960s moved television toward more middle class depictions of American life, according to the

documentary *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class* (Alper, 2003). An emphasis on consumerism as the key to social mobility led television to produce shows that focused on the middle class. After all, the middle or upper class home provided a much more appropriate showcase for the products whose advertisers underwrote their production.

Butsch (1995) documented the underrepresentation of the working class in American prime-time network television from 1946 through 1990 and found the lack of depiction of working class life remarkably consistent. The professional classes were represented much more frequently than their true occurrence in real life. Blue collar workers were rarely depicted, and women worked mainly in rewarding careers, not to pay bills. A disturbing trend was the frequency with which working class men were represented as “the white male working class buffoon” (p. 403). Ralph Cramden, Archie Bunker, and Homer Simpson offer three examples from different decades of men who are much less intelligent than their wives and children. Butsch points out that in series about the middle class, there are no buffoons. The working class buffoon, he maintains, makes an implicit argument for society as a meritocracy: More intelligent men would have achieved social mobility. Those left among the working poor remain there because of their lack of intelligence.

Over twenty years ago, John Grimes (1987), a former reporter on labor for the *Wall Street Journal*, noted that stories about labor were becoming increasingly rare in the news and suggested two possible reasons for labor’s lack of visibility. First, he acknowledged that while reporters from the 1940s through the 1960s tried to give

insightful coverage during the stormy years of the post-War labor movement, they may have unintentionally focused on the spectacle rather than the context of labor struggles, leading to distorted representations of labor. The second reason is that the issue has grown more complex in a post-industrial economy, and most media rely on sound-bites rather than in-depth analysis of economic complexities. This trend has exacerbated more recently, as news has taken on the trappings of entertainment, focusing on personalities and celebrity, rather than issues.

Indeed, no celebrity has emerged in the last twenty years to put a popular face on the American labor movement. The early movement saw larger than life characters like Big Bill Haywood and Mother Jones. Samuel Gompers headed the American Federation of Labor for decades, putting his own brand of “pure and simple unionism” (Greene, 1998) on the organization that was the most prominent and conservative of the American trade unions. A generation later, Walter Reuther rose to prominence as head of the United Auto Workers. Later the corruption and notoriety of Jimmy Hoffa offered a narrative to a popular press focused on personalities. Today the name of Andy Stern, head of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), is hardly a household word, despite concerted efforts on the part of SEIU to create a brand identity readily available to the media.

For workers my age, born in the closing years of the Baby Boom and beginning our adult working life in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the most memorable labor conflict was the ill-fated air traffic controllers’ strike of 1981 and the strongest personality to emerge from that conflict was Ronald Reagan, the president who famously

fired all striking members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). In 1983, 20.1 % of American workers belonged to a union; by 2006 that number had dropped to 12%. Union membership has declined steadily since the early 1980s, until 2007 and 2008, when membership increased. Amid high unemployment in 2009, union membership dropped only one tenth of a percent to 12.3 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). The small increases at the end of the 2000s might well be attributed to workers' worries about their working conditions and job security in a severe economic downturn.

Children's novels about American labor unions appear then as other depictions of the working class and membership in unions decrease. Reasons as to why these books have been written and published during a time when unions themselves declined remain speculative. However, this fact, along with the preponderance of historical fiction within the sample suggests that they represent a vision of American labor history that has little connection to the present. It is almost as if it is safe to discuss labor issues only when the political power of unions is perceived as being spent. Nearly all the books are historical rather than contemporary fiction, and half the books in my sample have been published since 2000. Do they represent resistance to hegemony, a minority voice in a popular culture more attuned to the concerns and preferences of the middle and upper classes? If so, is that resistance ultimately effective or is it co-opted or destroyed? These books, which have received little attention from scholars in the field of children's literature, provide an opportunity to explore the intersections of ideology and literature in the context of history.

Locating Social Class and Labor within Children's Literature

Socioeconomic status has long been linked to school achievement (Berliner, 2005; Kozol, 1991; "A Nation Still at Risk," 1998), and the traditional focus of educational research on social class and education aims to overcome the achievement gap between those at opposite ends of the social spectrum. Some suggest that school culture itself is classist, privileging middle and upper class values and behaviors while denigrating or ignoring working class cultural activities (Apple, 2004; Gorski, 2008; Kincheloe, 2007). Although schools pride themselves on offering a means to upward mobility, educational practices more often reinforce the status quo, as instruction for students from poor and working class families emphasizes the values and attitudes of compliant workers while their more well off counterparts enjoy lessons focused on creativity and inquiry (e.g., Anyon, 1980; Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The question of whether such educational practices actually manage to reproduce particular behaviors that serve the economic interests of the dominant class is less clear. Willis (1977), in an ethnographic study of working class teens in England, examines how students' resistance to school culture actually ensures that they become trapped in working class jobs.

Many educational practices are based on deficit theory, the notion that children are unsuccessful because a "culture of poverty" fails to provide them with the experiences and skills necessary for academic achievement (Payne, 2002). Gorski (2008) argues instead that the culture of those in poverty is as diverse as that of middle and upper classes and that it is the extreme vulnerability of the poor to societal problems such as lack of health care and affordable housing that prevents many children from achieving in

school. Among his suggestions: instruction that specifically addresses historical and contemporary class inequities and movements that have attempted to alleviate them, including the labor movement. Studies like the present one offer educators critical perspectives on some available resources like trade books, which can assist them in providing this type of instruction in their classrooms.

Very little educational research examines how class is represented in curricular materials and cultural artifacts like novels that support instruction. Beach, Parks, Thein, and Lensmire (2007) found that by using multicultural literature to encourage high school students to examine critically the concept of society as a meritocracy in which those who worked hard would overcome the odds, they engaged students in thoughtful discussions of both race and class. Trade books are often recommended as supplemental instructional materials (Donelson & Nilsen, 2005; Glaser, 2005; Nodelman, 2003; Overstreet, 2001); when considering issues such as social class, trade books have the potential to offer more varying perspectives than those of textbooks, which, though they purport to provide comprehensive and unbiased views, have been shown to be both highly selective regarding which information is included and likely to reflect a particular ideology regarding economic and social issues (Anyon, 1979). Textbook publishers have shown themselves to be sensitive to the political climate in states like California, Florida and Texas, where populations are large and conservative leanings strong. Books that reflect progressive values are unlikely to sell in these influential markets, so publishers cater to these particular states, knowing that what sells there will be the product they then market to the rest of the nation (Apple, 1992).

The potential of trade books to offer different perspectives from those in textbooks has often been perceived as a threat to the status quo, particularly in the last thirty years as political culture in the United States took a decided turn to the right. Taxel (1997) documented and discussed the attacks of conservative cultural critics and politicians on multicultural literature. These attacks on the so-called “political correctness” of books that demonstrate a worldview beyond that of middle- to upper-class Western culture form part of what Kincheloe and Steinberg (2007), citing Gresson, identify as “the recovery movement,” an effort on the part of those who lost power in the last century and a half of movements against colonialism, racism, sexism, and classism to recover that power. They note, too, that although “[No Child Left Behind] was promoted as a new way of helping economically marginalized and minority students, such representations were smokescreens used to conceal its mission of recovery of traditional forms of dominant power” (p. 11).

These concealments may be particularly effective in regard to social class, as Americans, at least until recently, showed continued faith in the possibility of social advancement. A poll by the *New York Times* (Scott & Leonhardt, 2005) demonstrated that three quarters of those surveyed believed their chances of upward social mobility were greater or at least the same as they were 30 years ago, although the authors explained that this optimism was not borne out in reality. It is unlikely that Americans would offer such optimistic responses today, as the country experiences a severe economic crisis with unemployment just under 9.7% in February 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a). In fact, upward mobility for American families is roughly the same as for families in Great

Britain and less than that of Scandinavian families. Most people in the United States, including the working class and the wealthy, consider themselves part of the middle class (Anyon, 1979; Pascale, 2007). For the working class, this identification is reinforced by a consumer culture that assures them that they can at least possess the trappings of a middle class lifestyle.

The insistence on the permeability of social barriers in the United States stands in contrast to the historical presence of a formal class system in Great Britain, a reality that is evident in the ready availability of books and articles published in Britain critiquing children's books in relation to social class and ideology. A special themed issue of the children's literature journal, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (Wojcik-Andrews, 1993), explored social class in books for children, such as children's bibles, *The Secret Garden*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and fairy tales. No American books were discussed, and, with the exception of Jack Zipes, the authors were British or Canadian. Stephens's analysis of the discourse of narrative fiction and its ideology (1992), Leeson's historical, albeit cursory, survey of class themes in British children's fiction (1977), and Dixon's description of general trends in representations of class over time (1977) provide further examples of British scholarship on the subject of class.

Exploring social class in American children's literature.

The underlying paradox of social class in the United States is addressed by Taxel (1981) in his research on historical fiction about the American Revolution, based on the sociology of school knowledge. The publication dates of the novels in the sample span a

77 year period, thus offering perspectives dating from the late 19th century up through the mid-1970s. Taxel notes that only one of the books in the sample acknowledged the contradiction inherent in an American fight for freedom that would be enjoyed only by its White citizens. Few protagonists in Taxel's sample were drawn from the lower social classes. Class is seldom mentioned in the novels about the American Revolution; when it is, its purpose is to contrast the American conception of social class with that of the English. At the same time, derogatory references to "the rabble" or "mobs" not only denigrate the lower classes but belie the notion of a classless society in the colonies.

Stephens (1992) suggests that such studies as this one, examining books published over a period of time by different authors, can "be a rich area for concentration" (p. 239). MacCann (1998), Sims Bishop (1982, 2007), and Harris (1993) are among the researchers who have employed this approach to studies of race and children's literature, and a number of studies survey gender roles, as described in Huck, Hepler, & Hickman (1993). However, no extensive surveys of children's literature and social class in the United States exist. While my research focuses on the narrower topic of labor and draws from a sample of books published from the early 1980s through the present, I also situate their publication in relation to the American labor movement during that period and offer suggestions as to why a relatively large number of books on the topic appear when, until then, few had been published. These are events which must be discussed in the context of social class and how it is perceived in the United States.

Two of the most substantive studies of American children's literature and social class are Kelly's *Mother Was a Lady* (1974), which describes the ideals of a natural

gentility expressed in children's periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth century and Denning's *Mechanic Accents* (1998), a focused yet comprehensive study of the American dime novel popular in the same period. Neither Kelly nor Denning are professors of children's literature but instead work in American studies, blending history with literary analysis and political theory. Kelly links authors' exhortations of genteel tradition to efforts to reassure a society racked by the economic and social insecurity of urban industrialization while Denning explores the working class voice found in the cheap, sensational fiction read by both children and adults. Tales of adventurers on the frontier, detectives, working girls, American Revolutionaries, and politicians engaged in urban intrigue were told in sensationalized style to an audience that was largely working class but that included enough middle and upper class readers to arouse the indignation of reformers, including Louisa May Alcott who castigated them within the pages of her own novels for their wildly unrealistic plots, their focus on the rapid attainment of wealth, and their use of slang (Anderson, 2004; Hager, 2003).

Denning's thesis that the dime novel valorized labor and working class heroes appears logical, as does his speculation about series fiction in the concluding chapters which describes their voice as that of the entrepreneurial middle class. These books became popular in the late nineteenth century and followed their characters through various adventures in more upscale settings than those of the dime novel. Paralleling the shifts in early film and television, the working class heroes of streets, factories, and frontier towns were replaced by engineers, filmmakers, and genteel adventurers whose aspirations of social advancement were realized, thanks to a combination of luck, talent,

and social connections. Chamberlain (2003) in her study of series fiction set in girls' boarding schools found that social mobility served to superficially deny the importance of class in the United States. This contradictory idea of social class is one I explore in my own research, looking for examples of class consciousness within the novels. The absence of class consciousness implies that class does not, in fact, exist, while its presence suggests potential activity to overcome domination. Whether that opposition is undertaken with the idea of surmounting social class, i.e. achieving social mobility to the extent that some workers actually become a part of the dominant class, or whether its aim is to win more equitable relations with those in authority while still remaining within the working class is critical to understanding how labor is represented in these novels. The former is a more conservative and individualistic view of class while the latter represents a class consciousness that valorizes labor as did the dime novels Denning analyzed.

More recent studies have explored critical literacy and how students interact with text about social class. Deborah Hicks (2005), in an ethnographic study of working class, mainly White girls, first attempted to introduce discussion of social class through novels in which class was foregrounded. She soon found that students rejected such books, preferring instead horror series like R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps*. At that point, Hicks studied how the students used the texts and concluded that, "For working-class girls on the cusp of preteen sexuality, the language of horror fictions presented a literary form in which they could more safely tackle disturbing events and their own vulnerabilities" (p. 186). Stephanie Jones is another researcher who explores class and gender issues, most

notably in *Girls, Social Class, and Literacy* (2006); she is also interested in children's literature, asking educators to pay attention to issues such as "What kinds of economic lives are presented as normal and therefore desirable in children's picture books? (2008, p. 43). Similar concerns were evident in Dutro's (2009) article "Children Writing 'Hard Times': Lived Experiences of Poverty and the Class-Privileged Assumptions of a Mandated Curriculum." Despite the middle-class perspective of the curriculum, students living in poverty resisted being positioned as "other" and offered thoughtful viewpoints as people with firsthand experience with economic adversity. Rogers, Mosley, and Folkes (2009) described using critical literacy practices with second-grade students and also with adult students enrolled in English language classes to explore labor issues that affected their communities. These studies are evidence of renewed interest in discovering how students think about social class and how it plays out in their lives.

Children's publishing and the radical Left.

Herbert Kohl (1995) notes that George Orwell in 1939 "wondered why the most effective writing for young people was infused with the mythology of elitism, individualism, and capitalism" (pp. 60-61) as he echoed Orwell's call for children's books that depicted the struggles of the poor and working class and that demonstrated collective action as a remedy to social ills. In fact, such books were published, but few reached a wide audience. In the early and mid-20th century, unions themselves and radical publications such as the Communist journal *New Masses* published stories about labor

organizations. Occasionally one like *The Story of Your Coat* (Holos, 1946) achieved some recognition in the mainstream market, according to Mickenberg and Nel whose *Tales for Little Rebels: A Collection of Radical Children's Literature* (2008) provides examples of out-of-print stories and excerpts of books about labor, gender, race, war, and the environment. *The Story of Your Coat* describes that garment's manufacturing process from its beginning as wool produced by sheep on an Australian ranch through its purchase "by you" in a department store. In a chapter entitled "The Loom," Holos tells how unions in the past worked to end child labor and improve working conditions, noting that, "Ever since that time, their union has kept on making life better for the textile workers" (Mickenberg & Nel, 2008, p. 72). Later he refers to garment workers' membership in a labor union, thus stressing the important role of labor organizations in the manufacturing process as a whole. While *The Story of Your Coat* received positive reviews, according to Mickenberg and Nel, in *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*, most stories with a pro-union message had a readership limited to children of union members or social activists already sympathetic to labor. During the post-World War II years, a period in which record numbers of strikes took place and the American labor movement was at the peak of its power (Lipsitz, 1994), Howard Fast's *Tony and the Wonderful Door* (1952), a book whose pro-union message is almost incidental to the story, would have to be self-published by the author, after his Communist views became known to mainstream publishing houses.

Tales for Little Rebels, which focuses on books that are now out of print, offers no examples of novels for young people in which labor unions are a major part of the

narrative. A “Working List of Recommended Radical Books for Young Readers” lists picture books and nonfiction titles but includes no novels about labor. In fact, I was unable to locate any children’s novels specifically about labor unions that were published by major publishing houses before 1976. This is particularly interesting in light of the significant numbers of progressives within the industry of children’s publishing, as documented by Mickenberg in *Learning from the Left: Children’s Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (2006). Some were generally sympathetic to leftist causes while others, like children’s book editor Betty Bacon, were actually members of the Communist Party. Mickenberg conducted interviews with hundreds of people who had managed to find a safe haven for their work within children’s literature and music during the years of McCarthyism and the blacklist of anyone suspected of Communist affiliation. Langston Hughes, Meridel Le Sueur, Helen Kay, Nancy Larrick, and Lynd Ward were just a few of the writers, editors, and artists who enjoyed successful careers producing books for children, even as they found doors to adult publishing closed to them. Mickenberg describes their work within mainstream children’s literature as

indirectly political, whether that meant securing contracts for left-wing writers, keeping books by radical writers on library shelves, carrying records by Pete Seeger or books by Howard Fast in their stores, or writing children’s books that subtly challenged the Cold War consensus.” (2006, p. 171)

Among those who found employment in the children’s book industry was Lilian Moore, who founded Scholastic Books’ Arrow Book Club. Arrow published and marketed inexpensive paperbacks for children, a new development in children’s

publishing. Through Arrow Book Club, Moore was able to publish books by a number of her friends on the political Left, although she and they were careful to avoid the overtly political. By the time Dorothy Sterling's *Mary Jane* (1959) appeared on the book order form, Moore had carefully gauged public opinion about school desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement in general and felt that "the time was right" (Mickenberg, 2006, p. 168) for a book about an African-American character attending a newly desegregated school.

Despite widespread concern over Communists targeting young people with their propaganda (and anyone with political views even vaguely left of center might be accused of party membership), those who worked in children's publishing were largely ignored, due, Mickenberg concludes, to "The fact that children's books were viewed as outside the literary establishment - beneath it actually..." (2006, p. 14). Mickenberg suggests too that the presence of large numbers of women in the field contributed to its lack of visibility. Finally, many leftist writers for children chose to focus on nonfiction, benefiting from increased markets for those texts created by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 that funded school libraries' purchases of math and science books. The irony is that the act, passed in the aftermath of the Soviet launch of Sputnik in October of 1957 at the height of Cold War fears about Soviet superiority in science and technology, provided work for writers whose careers Red-baiting had previously threatened (Mickenberg, 2006).

The practice of radicals maintaining a low profile while exerting an indirect influence within children's publishing, whether strategic or unavoidable, was largely

successful. In fact, a group of writers and editors living in New York in the early 1960s who called themselves the “Loose Enders” due to their socializing and networking whenever they found themselves “at loose ends” evolved into an organization that would help initiate a shift in the type of literature written for children and young adults (Mickenberg, 2006). Until then characters in books for children were almost always Caucasian, something Nancy Larrick would later explore in “The All-White World of Children’s Literature” in the *Saturday Review* (1965). The Council on Interracial Books for Children formed by Larrick and her friends aimed to encourage the publication of books depicting characters of various races and ethnicities, so that all children would have access to high quality literature featuring people with whom they could identify. Through their writing contests, the Council identified emerging authors of children’s books such as Walter Dean Myers and Sharon Bell Mathis and also encouraged authors to take up themes related to class, gender, the environment, and war (Mickenberg, 2006). Although it would be years before novels about labor unions began to be published by mainstream publishing houses, the Council on Interracial Books for Children laid the groundwork for them by calling for an expanded notion of what constituted appropriate reading material for young people.

The rise of the labor novel: 1976 - present.

Books about the labor movement have the potential to represent not just alternatives but oppositional strategies to powerful interests in society; yet just over twenty years ago, few such books for children existed. Bacon in 1988 identified only two

works of historical fiction, *Call Me Ruth* (Sachs, 1982) and *A Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind* (Lord, 1981), and just one example of contemporary fiction, *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983). Although union membership in the United States had begun to decline by 1988, at that time over 15% of American workers, a not insignificant percentage, belonged to labor unions. As Bacon pointed out, the lack of representation of labor issues in children's books ignored the fact that many young readers' families were involved in labor organizations and that the children themselves would also be part of the workforce in the near future.

Over the last three and a half decades, a number of novels about the American labor movement have been published. Some are by award-winning authors such as Katherine Paterson; others are more obscure and slipped out of print and out of library circulation quickly. Almost all the books about the labor movement are historical fiction, and the occupations most likely to be unionized in the United States today, government workers such as teachers and police (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010), are seldom represented in the novels in the sample, despite their historical presence within the American labor movement (Eaton, 1975; Heustis, 1958). The cumulative effect is to give the impression that labor issues belong only to the past, as young people reading these texts are offered almost no depictions of contemporary labor unions.

Remarkably few scholars in the area of children's literature have commented on the growing number of labor themed novels published in recent years. Aside from brief mentions by authors of textbooks (Donelson & Nilsen, 2005; Kiefer, 2007) used in courses on children's literature, which describe novels that focus on industrialization and

the immigrant experience, one of the few who has commented on the fact that these have all been published within the last three decades is Dresang (1999) who considers them part of what she calls *Radical Change* books, texts that represent “... fundamental change, departing from the usual or traditional in literature for youth, although still related to it” (pp. 4-5). One of the characteristics of Radical Change books is the breaking of barriers, and Dresang argues that novels such as *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991) or nonfiction works like *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade against Child Labor* (Freedman, 1994) do this by realistically portraying child labor as part of adults’ economic exploitation of children.

Overstreet (2001) also noted their growing availability and, thirteen years after Betty Bacon expressed concern about the lack of representations of labor, stated that many novels and nonfiction books on the topic were available. Her article, published in the *ALAN Review*, offered critical analysis of a sample of twelve historical novels set in the period from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, a time of significant union activity. The novels were set in three different industries – textile mills, shirtwaist factories, and coal mines. Her research questions focused on how working conditions were described in the novels, attitudes of laborers, bosses, owners, police, and others toward unions, and goals and accomplishments of the unions.

The best known of the novels was Katherine Paterson’s *Lyddie* (1991), set in the early days of the textile industry in Lowell, Massachusetts. Overstreet found that Paterson described the harrowing working conditions and the discrimination faced by Irish immigrants who were entering the industry. Union sympathizers compare themselves to

“black slaves,” although Overstreet did not point out that this notion of “wage slavery” was how many early union leaders framed their own economic status as factory workers realized that they were unlikely to ever achieve the rank of skilled, self-employed craftsmen (Dublin, 1979; Wilentz, 1984b). Lyddie, the fourteen-year-old protagonist, rejects the union’s drive for the ten-hour workday until relatively late in the story, fearing that involvement could jeopardize her job. This ambivalence toward union activity was not uncommon in the novels. Overstreet pointed out that in both the novels set in the coal mining industry that the issues seemed to be portrayed as “too complicated to understand fully and that there is good and bad in both labor and management. This may be more accurate today, but was a gross simplification at that time” (p. 65). One of the novels in Overstreet’s sample confused industrial and trade unionism, an important distinction, and she explained that trade unions were for skilled, white males who organized across industries, and tended toward a more conservative unionism than the industrial unions. Industrial unions were organized by individual industries and included women and occasionally people of color. They were more likely to strike, something trade unions like the American Federation of Labor tried to avoid.

Overstreet raised concerns about the authors’ accuracy to historical detail and the relative absence of figures prominent in labor history: Mother Jones was the only labor organizer to appear in the novels. Her survey suggests that while the grueling conditions under which people labored in the mills, mines, and factories in the late 19th and early 20th centuries merited description, the class consciousness that gave rise to union organization did not. Collective action received less attention than that of individuals,

although Overstreet observed that focus on an individual is characteristic of the novel form. In spite of these deficits, she described the novels as a useful adjunct in the classroom. My own research examines areas similar to those Overstreet studied in her more limited sample; however, I provide historical context for the publication over the last three decades of increased numbers of children's books related to labor unions and discuss more explicitly American attitudes toward social class. Overstreet's comments regarding the books' focus on individuals rather than collective action echo those of Saul (1983) who, noting the lack of models of collective action in children's books, argued that texts that depict collectivism would provide young readers "some realistic sense of how power is distributed and how decisions are made. Causes as diverse as the nuclear freeze movement, feminism and creationism have all been furthered by widespread grass-roots collective action" (p. 30). While Overstreet found more instances of focus on individual rather than collective efforts, almost half of the books in my own sample were published in or after 2001 when Overstreet's article was published and provide an opportunity to explore whether this is still the case.

Another article (Glaser, 2005) examined depictions of young female textile workers in the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts. The author discussed workers' experience in terms of child labor, which in itself suggests that the novels may not represent the typical experience of workers as the records for the Hamilton Company, a major employer in Lowell, show that the mean age for beginning work was 19.8 years (Dublin, 1979). Again, *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991) was one of the books discussed. For *Lyddie* and for the narrator of *So Far From Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl*

(Denenberg, 1997), the conditions they found in Lowell, though harsh, represented improvements on their previous situations. However, Glaser focused on female mill workers' exploitation instead of demonstrating how the characters' time in Lowell contributed to their independence. Each character was shown as already "independent, strong-minded, and eager to learn" (Glaser, 2005, p. 319) when she arrived at Lowell. Of course this may have been the case, as young women less strong-minded would have been less likely to have left home to work in the mills.

Glaser stated that she found few novels besides those about the New England textile mill workers that depicted child labor when, by the time her article was published in 2005, a number of other examples existed. *Ashes of Roses* (Auch, 2002) describes the experiences of two young Irish sisters, newly arrived in New York, who find jobs with the Triangle Waist Factory. *The Breaker Boys* (Hughes, 2004) takes place in the coal industry. *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) tells the story of a well-to-do girl from Mexico who flees with her mother to the United States after her father is murdered, only to find herself living and working in a camp for migrant farm workers. All are well written and could easily be used as part of the social studies unit on child labor envisioned by Glaser. Because my research sample is more comprehensive than Glaser's, I hope to provide educators with a wider range of options for use with students.

Representations of labor in social studies textbooks.

Because trade books are sometimes recommended as a supplements to school textbooks (Donelson & Nilsen, 1997; Glaser, 2005; Nodelman, 2003; Overstreet, 2001),

it is important to examine more closely the views expressed in the textbooks themselves, as they provide a sense of how American culture as a whole views labor issues. Even as curriculum content was updated and textbooks were revised, Anyon (1979) found that the perspectives of dominant groups persisted. Textbooks devoted an average of six pages to labor history and usually focused on three of more than 30,000 strikes that took place during the time period between the Civil War and World War I. Anyon notes that these strikes, the railroad strike of 1877, the Homestead strike of 1892, and the Pullman strike of 1894, were violent and represented setbacks to the labor movement. Furthermore, she observes that textbooks emphasized the divisions that existed between workers of various ethnic groups while ignoring the promotion of such divisions by management as a way to discourage labor organization (p. 377).

An earlier analysis of school textbooks of the 19th century demonstrates just how longstanding such characterizations of labor as violent are. According to Elson (1964), labor unions did not even appear in textbooks until the 1870s, and when they did appear, they were portrayed as dangerous, violent, and foreign. Only one text, published by historian John Bach McMaster offered a more balanced depiction. In addition to being portrayed as violent, unions were shown to be promoting idleness and undermining the American values of thrift and industry. It was these virtues, after all, that permitted Americans to accumulate wealth, which, some textbooks suggested, showed evidence of God's favor. Just as the working class buffoon of 20th century television makes an argument for America as a meritocracy (Butsch, 1995), textbooks of the 19th century

suggested that lifelong poverty was “never a result of accident or unfortunate circumstances but only of one’s own willful misbehavior” (p. 253).

A controversy in the mid 20th century showed conservative groups actively seeking to influence content of school textbooks. Harold Rugg, a professor at Teachers College, developed and published a popular social studies series in the late 1920s entitled *Man and His Changing Society* that focused on issues related to race, class, and gender in a democratic society. Although Rugg’s approach differed from those of other textbooks, his ideology was largely the same, supporting the basic tenets of capitalism (Anyon, 1979). In 1939, however, a chapter in a junior high school textbook drew the fire of the Advertising Federation of America, due to its emphasis on the role advertising plays in influencing consumers’ purchasing decisions (Trone, 2003). The American Legion and the National Association of Manufacturers soon joined in the attacks, characterizing the series as subversive and un-American. Set against the backdrop of the debate over the entry of the United States into the Second World War and concerns over Communist influence in the country, the furor over the series grew until diminishing sales caused Rugg to choose to discontinue publication rather than make changes to the content. Publishers thereafter tended to shy away from attempts to address controversial issues in American society, focusing instead on more conventional approaches to Americanism. (Trone, 2003). Children’s nonfiction occasionally offers viewpoints that critique the perspective of the dominant culture (Zinn/Steffoff, 2007; Meltzer, 1990) or that simply offer a more holistic approach to history (Aronson, 2005), but such views have yet to be adopted by publishers of social studies textbooks.

A recent critique of high school history books, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* is a popular bestseller (Loewen, 1995/2007). Because it is updated to include six textbooks published between 2000 and 2007, it represents the most up-to-date versions of history used in high school today. Labor history is covered in most of the texts in a superficial fashion, with a focus on major unsuccessful strikes of the distant past. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which banned wildcat strikes, sympathy strikes, and secondary boycotts, and made union officials responsible for actions by rank and file members, is usually the most recent event included. The cumulative effect of this focus on the past is that labor is portrayed as ancient history, irrelevant to citizens today. In addition, the author quotes an editor from a textbook publishing house as telling him, “There are three great taboos in textbook publishing - sex, religion, and social class” (p. 27). Loewen points out that as abysmal as their depictions of labor are, textbooks’ neglect of that third great taboo is complete, as they ignore the growing gap between rich and poor. He notes too that because of the need to market materials to large, conservative states, the political right has been disproportionately influential in determining what is included in textbooks. Even so, textbooks rarely include information about the role of religion in American history or about the benefits of capitalism (Loewen, 1995/2007). No single ideological view is satisfied by what passes for history in the secondary classroom.

Although most reviews of textbooks focus on high school texts, there is no reason to believe that social studies books for students in the lower grades are different. In fact,

it is logical to assume that publishers would be more reluctant to introduce potentially controversial topics in middle and elementary school classrooms. Using trade books like the novels in my sample as supplemental materials to textbooks in upper elementary or middle grades gives teachers an opportunity to flesh out the often bland, one-dimensional versions of history that fail to engage students with the vitality of the people and issues that make the subject most interesting. By offering an analysis of novels related to labor, I hope to give teachers more insight into some of the books that might help them and their students connect issues of the past with the reality of the present, particularly as it concerns social class.

The increasing gap between rich and poor in the United States (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2008) suggests that social class and the related issue of labor remain relevant to educational research. It is clear that textbooks are inadequate in these areas, and trade books may potentially provide a way in which teachers and students can engage in discussions about social class and labor history. Conversations that take place not just in classrooms but in academic journals as well about books on these topics may lead to deeper understandings about the role class continues to play in American culture. Within this dissertation I have tried to question my own assumptions about labor and social class, while acknowledging that I favor a pro-union stance and recognition of the importance of social class in American society, as well as in children's literature and its scholarship. Apol (1998) noted that "our own blind spots as readers impact our understandings of texts," (p. 43) and the ideology most difficult to identify is often the one closest to one's

own (Nodelman, 2003). I realize that, on those occasions when the author's message is one I find sympathetic, I still cannot turn off my critical stance but must continue to examine the text to see what else it does and to assess its effectiveness.

Arts-Based Educational Research in Children's Literature

When I first began to imagine a dissertation that used arts-based practices to understand children's literature, I was skeptical. How could literature, the art I believed myself most capable of producing, be used to interrogate literature? A search for other arts-based dissertations that focused on literature and education revealed that at least one other doctoral student, Mira Reisberg at Washington State University, had created an arts-based dissertation in the field, entitled *An A/R/Tographic Study of Multicultural Children's Book Artists: Developing a Place-Based Pedagogy of Pleasure* (2006).

Reisberg herself is a children's book illustrator and used her own work and that of five other artists "to activate processes of inquiry such as those related to themes such as race, place, and art" (p. vii). Reisberg noted how social class enters into the work of the artists, arguing that it "appeared to be just as central as race" (p. 255). She found that many of the multicultural picture books she studied portrayed class conflict as connected to broader issues rather than individual problems while never actually calling for actions that would solve those problems by dramatically restructuring society. She questioned how such books can best be integrated into the classroom and wondered whether the inclusion of discussion guides for teachers would turn them into mere textbooks.

As I considered how to use literature to interrogate literature, Reisberg provided an example of a researcher who had used art to interrogate art. In each case, the artwork, the illustrations in Reisberg's case and the fictional pieces in my own, provides a way to open discussion while simultaneously offering the reader/viewer insight into the author/artist's subjectivity and approach to research. While each of these studies could have been developed without the use of arts-based methodologies, each is richer for their inclusion. I maintained a skeptical attitude toward my own work but began to imagine ways in which this might strengthen rather than undermine it. Barone's (2008) suggestion that arts-based research was an "epistemologically humble" methodology made sense as he called for

politically viable arts-based research, that challenges the comfortable, familiar, dominant master narrative, not by proffering a new totalizing counter-narrative, but by luring an audience into an appreciation of an array of diverse, complex, nuanced images and partial, local portraits of human growth and possibility.

p. 39)

That this might be enough did not mean I could substitute aesthetic appeal for argument; instead, it compelled me to make the best arguments I could, even as I realized that these would always have their limitations. Through autoethnography I might find ways to "revise critical social science" (Fay, 1987, p. 213) so that it reflected the complexity and richness of local situations rather than providing a "totalizing counter-narrative."

Reading the World in Black and White: Columbus, 1962

Born less than two months after Sputnik's flight shocked American policymakers, I grew up in the late 1950s and 1960s. My family watched every Mercury launch we could on our small black and white television. One of my earliest memories was the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy, and I never forgot the week of televised horror that followed the president's assassination when I was in first grade. Before I started school in Columbus, Georgia, my days had been full of stories from the Childcraft volumes my parents had invested in for my brother Charles and me, from the bookmobile that visited our neighborhood, and from the Little Golden Books our grandparents and other relatives gave us. I wanted to learn to read more than anything in the world. Part of this was a practical matter. My mother was expecting another baby and would be busy with this new sibling soon. Our reliance on her for entertainment would have to end. But part of it was an attachment to books that went far deeper. Books were my glimpses of other lives and other worlds very different from my own. They brought the arc and organization of narrative to my consciousness which tended toward the dreamy and incoherent.

I grew up during a time when children's books were promoted as a means by which the country could keep its competitive edge. School libraries received funding to fill their shelves, and in those years before standardized testing drove such idle pursuits from the classroom, teachers often made it a point to read books aloud to their classes. Some of my fellow students probably used that thirty minutes for a brief siesta, but I was

transfixed by the stories. There I met Charlotte, the literate spider, and wept when she died. I roamed the corridors of Misselthwaite Manor with Mary Lenox as she searched for the source of cries in the night. In those days before standards and constant assessment, I read almost obsessively.

Still it was impossible to miss the drama that was the 1960s - the war in Vietnam, the battles over school desegregation, and what came to be called the “Generation Gap.” I attended segregated schools until we moved to Belvedere, South Carolina, a bedroom community of Augusta, Georgia, where Black and White students attended school together for the first time. My parents, raised up through a lifetime of segregation, had come to believe its ending was a matter of simple fairness. It was then that my father decided to return to education, and my mother found a job working nights at the newspaper while he took courses at Augusta College to renew his teaching certificate. By 1969, we were a family of six, with my three younger brothers and me. Money was often tight, but one treat my parents would usually indulge was Scholastic Book orders. The books I ordered from Scholastic’s Arrow Book Club were inexpensive, and if I chose carefully, I could buy several books for less than five dollars. I was in the sixth grade. I had seen the first Black teacher I had ever had turn away in tears at some of the cruelty my White classmates directed toward her, and she was an adult. How did the one Black student in our class find the courage to come to school everyday? When *Mary Jane* by Dorothy Sterling (1959) appeared on the book order form, I made a small, deliberate check in the box beside the title.

Later in high school, as the war in Vietnam wound down, I ordered *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo (1939), a Hollywood writer blacklisted during the McCarthy era. His haunting novel about a veteran who returned from World War I, maimed, blind, deaf, and a prisoner of his own body shook me to the core. Before the end of the war, as the draft lottery loomed before my own brothers, cousins, and high school friends, the vision of the frantic young man, using his head to tap out messages in Morse code in protest of the mythology of war resonated with my own sense of the world and how it must work.

When I ordered books like *Mary Jane* and *Johnny Got His Gun*, I knew that I did so not for their literary merit alone. Although very young, I recognized a political act when I committed one. My parents would never have suggested these books for me, though later their own politics would become much more progressive in the wake of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal. To order these books in the deep South of the late 1960s and early 1970s was to put one cautious foot outside the expectations of my teachers and parents, asserting an identity apart from that expected of me. No one appeared to notice, but it felt a little bit dangerous, and I liked it.

By 1971, my family had moved again, this time to the town of Lindale, Georgia, where West Point-Pepperell Mill was the major employer. Lindale was only about forty minutes away from my grandparents' homes in Trion, and like Trion, it had the distinctive look of a textile mill village - identical homes for workers, smokestacks that towered over the brick factory and railroad tracks. My father found a teaching job at Pepperell High School. We were back where we had started, but in a different place.

Revisiting the Past: 1934

Many textile mill workers migrated from rural farms as the price of cotton fell after World War I. The decision to leave land that they had worked and, more importantly, usually owned was not one to be made lightly. To leave the farm to accept what many called “public work” (Hall, Leloudis, Korstad, Murphy, Jones & Daly, 1987) meant accepting economic dependence on industry for the first time in their lives. The paternalistic practices of mill owners also required accepting a degree of scrutiny of workers’ personal lives that many found invasive. For others, the mill’s supervision and control over their lives were necessary to ensure a safe and peaceful community life. At Harmony Grove Mills in northeast Georgia, a professionally printed brochure entitled “What the Employees of Harmony Grove Mills Have to Say about Their President Dr. L.G. Hardman,” begins “We, the employees of the Harmony Grove Mills voluntarily make the following statements:...” Although it is not immediately apparent what (beyond the next year’s governor’s race which Hardman planned to enter) might have prompted this outpouring of compliments for Hardman and life in the mill village at Harmony Grove, the list included the fact that there is “no whiskey drinking permitted.” Another amenity listed is the presence of “2 nice churches” and the fact that the mill provided a home and half the salary of the minister. This was a common practice among mill villages throughout the Piedmont as documented by Liston Pope who addressed the role of the church in the mill villages in his 1942 book, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of*

Gastonia. Ministers whose salaries were fully or partially paid by the textile mill tended toward messages of submission and acceptance rather than social or economic justice.

Work in the mill was often a family affair, as management relied on women and children as well as adult males to provide labor (Hall et al., 1987). The mill village provided rental homes for its workers, and by pooling their resources, they could afford housing close to the mill and still have at least a little money left over for other essentials. Company housing in Trion, Georgia, included a large number of what the workers called “two-family houses” in the half mile radius that surrounded the mill, with some areas more desirable than others. Families could request a specific location, but it was mill management who made housing assignments (M.D. McLeod, personal communication, September 6, 2008). Workers accustomed to simple farmhouses were pleased to find that their new accommodations included running water and electricity. While not all mills were able to provide such amenities, most attempted to offer workers at least some modern conveniences. Opal McMichael, whose family went to work at the East Newnan Cotton Mill in Newnan, Georgia, after the cotton crop at their Carroll County farm was destroyed by the boll weevil, was delighted with running water and electricity: “I just knew we were rich” (Stoney & Helfand, 1995).

African-American workers experienced a much grimmer situation. Jobs at the textile mills were unavailable to African American women who took up domestic work to make ends meet, providing childcare or assistance with an elderly parent for textile workers during their shifts at the mill. The men in their own households could attain only

the most physically demanding and lowest paid positions at the mills: custodian, dock worker, and the opening and picker rooms where they opened cotton bales (Hall et al., 1987).

Although some mill villages were little more than a factory surrounded by shacks and dirt roads, most “consisted of a superintendent's residence, a cluster of single-family dwellings, one or more frame churches, a modest school house, and a company store” (Hall et al., 1987, p. 114). Some of these aspired to become desirable communities in which commerce could thrive through attracting a stable workforce. One of these was the small town of Trion, located almost equidistant between Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Rome, Georgia. A New Yorker named Benjamin Riegel purchased the Trion Company in 1912 at a bankruptcy sale and practiced welfare capitalism early on, renovating workers’ houses and paving roads in the village (Baker, 1988). Providing social support for employees was a means of pre-empting workers’ demands (Brody, 1993) while simultaneously attracting families who aspired to a middle-class lifestyle and wished to avoid working in what they called a “hobo mill” (Irons, 2000, p. 18). Riegel appeared to take a personal interest in the town of Trion, and through the mid-1920s workers there enjoyed relatively comfortable working and living conditions. Even as the economy deteriorated, workers at Trion appreciated continued improvements to the community. By the summer of 1934, a new hospital had opened in the town, and the school looked forward to its new football team’s second season of play.

In the mid 1920s, the relatively relaxed working culture of the early industrial days was changing. Efficiency was the byword of the day, and mill owners were determined to use the scientific methods of time-study experts like Frederick W. Taylor to increase worker productivity. Newer, more efficient looms, division of labor into specialized tasks, and establishment of production goals that determined workers' pay enabled employers to cut costs by laying off employees and pressing those who remained to maintain or exceed previous production (Hall et al., 1987). Workers at textile mills up and down the East Coast experienced shortened work weeks with no corresponding decrease in production goals, a practice that came to be known as the "stretch-out." Workers rushed through their shift to tend more looms, more dye vats. The Trion Company was no exception. Hours and wages were slashed, and working conditions deteriorated as the stretch-out became the industry norm.

The school system in Trion from the primary department through high school is a credit to our town. The system belongs to the State Accredited High School and Secondary Schools. Boys and girls from Trion have been successful in college and business life. Over 87 per cent of our graduates are connected directly or indirectly with the Trion Company. (From "About the Town of Trion and Its Advantages," a pamphlet published by the Trion Company's Personnel Department, revised 1943)

Outlaws, Part 2

The Trion Cotton Mill and Trion Baptist Church announce the calling of a new pastor, the Rev. James P. McDonald. The Rev. McDonald, his wife Susanna, and their three children Paul, Matthew, and Ruth will take up residence in the parsonage next week. A reception in their honor will be held in the Trion Cotton Mill meeting room on January 11 at 1:00. The public is invited to attend and welcome this exceptional young family to our community.

The Rev. McDonald comes to Trion from Adairsville where he served as pastor at Friendship Baptist. He attended seminary at Mercer where he graduated with honors. He is a native of Columbus, Georgia, as is Mrs. McDonald née Hemphill.

"I look forward to working with the people of Trion in the service of our Lord," the Reverend McDonald told this reporter. "I am delighted to be called to this church and this wonderful town."

19 Park St.

Trion, Ga.

February 12, 1933

Dear Georgia,

I was so glad to get your letter! Don't say I was not awful because I was. You were all happy and excited and I had no call to be a baby. I am trying hard to grow up but it is easier some days than it is others.

You wont know me when you see me next. I went over to Bea's house on Saturday and I got her to cut my hair off to above my shoulders and she gave me a finger wave that I thought looked real good. I was sick and tired of plaiting it. You know how even though my hair is stringy when it is left alone it turns all fat when I plait it so it looks like I have braided sausages hanging off of my head. No more. I am a twentieth century woman now. I look a little like Jean Harlow but with brown hair.

You should have heard Papaw when I got home. He yelled at me and said I would go to hell. I don't know what he would have said if I'd have put peroxide on my hair and I don't want to find out. But Mama and Daddy said it was my hair and they thought God was not going to pay a lot of attention to how a 15 year old girl wears her hair so he said they were going to hell too. You know how he is and then he always gets over it and acts like he did not say all those

things. Granny just winked at me and said "I may have to go see Bea myself."

Even though you know her hair is down to her knees and she would never cut it off.

Uncle Ted brought Fay a new puppy. Granny said she didn't mind her having it. She thought it would be better than her playing with the possums whenever Papaw brings one home for his dinner. Won't anybody eat the stuff but him but Fay sure loves to play with the awful things. They scare me with their mean little eyes.

Please tell Andrew I said hello and write back soon.

Love,

Liz

February 15, 1933

Dear Diary,

It rained again today. The river was up when we walked to work. John Robert says this is nothing though. He has seen it flood the streets and people ride in boats. I guess that is why they call those streets there by the river Frogtown. That is where Martha and Evitt live.

Ever since the mill started laying people off they have made it so the ones working have a lot more to do. I am lucky because we do not see that so much in the glove mill as they do in places like the weave room where John Robert works. He has six more looms he is in charge of now so it is hard to keep

up with. When he comes home he is so tired he does not laugh and joke with us all like he always has. Mama let him sleep Sunday instead of going to church with the rest of us. That was the first time I can remember her not getting him up to go. Joe asked if he could not just sleep late too but she gave him a look and he did not say another word.

Leon came by this evening to see Judith. He is working some for the drug store making deliveries. He gave her some candy for Valentine's a day late so I know he got it cheap. Judith said he was working yesterday.

February 16, 1933

Dear Diary,

Grace and Ruth, the Baptist preacher's little girl, spent the day with Mama. She said they were running her ragged so she got out two sets of big knitting needles and taught them to knit. Mama is left-handed so that's how she taught them. They both caught on real fast. Mama said Mrs. McDonald was sure surprised to find the two of them sitting there knitting like little old ladies when she came to get Ruth! She laughed and told Mama that was a good idea.

19 Park St.

Trion, Ga.

February 23, 1933

Dear Georgia,

I hope this letter finds you well. It sounded from your letter like the mill in Chickamauga is doing like they are here. Daddy says they call it the stretch-out. I reckon all the mills are doing that. If they lay off some people and make the others do what those folks were doing they make more money without paying more out. Daddy says that is fine until it gets to the place where you just can't keep up anymore. You said Andrew is looking for a job in Chattanooga. Maybe he can find something better there.

Papaw is speaking to me again. He tries not to look at my hair. Sleeping in bobby pins every night hurts a little but I still like it better than plaiting.

Granny pieced two quilts last week so yesterday I took them over to a colored woman she knows who will quilt them for fifty cents each. Granny told me that this woman whose name is Carrie had a bunch of quilts she had pieced herself and said I ought to get her to show them to me. So when I took the quilt tops I asked if I could see her quilts. She seemed glad to show them. They weren't anything like Granny's. They were all different patterns put together and colors I had not ever seen in a quilt together like orange and red and purple.

I said that and then I knew that sounded rude so I told Carrie I thought her quilts were real pretty. Just different. She laughed and said that is how colored people make their quilts. They have different things to worry about than white people do and one of the things they don't worry about is whether colors

go together or seams line up right. That made sense to me. Granny doesn't make fancy quilts either. Hers are plain and she means them to be used. The scraps she uses are all things we wear or else feedsacks and not many of them are orange or red or purple. Carrie said she would have the quilts done in about 3 weeks.

I just remembered I have a theme to write so I better go do that now.

Love,

Liz

Life in Modern Times

by Elizabeth Dillard

Life in the twentieth century is very different from how people lived in earlier days. Modern inventions and education have changed our lives in many ways. Without them we would live like my great-grandparents did which was hard work. They did not have a lot of the modern inventions that we have now. They did not have to go to school much either.

One of the modern inventions that changed how we live is the automobile. Once if you wanted to go anywhere you had to either walk or ride a wagon. Now automobiles are everywhere. Lots of people in Trion have them now. We don't have one yet but my daddy says we will get one someday.

The telephone is another modern invention. I like the telephone very much. It makes it a lot easier to talk to people in town. Now you do not have to go find them. Or write them a letter. You are able to call them anytime if no one else is on the line.

Education is another way life is different in modern times. I am happy to have a chance to get a good education because I like to read and write. If I had grown up when my mother and daddy did I might not have chance to go to school. Lots of children worked in the mill when they were little like my daddy did. He went to work when he was 5 so he never had much education and he wants me to make the most of mine.

Modern inventions and education have made life better for many people. Even though times are hard right now if we did not have these things life would be harder. I would not want to be without the things that have made life easier like automobiles and telephones. I am glad to have a chance to go to school and read and write.

B-

Watch comma splices and split infinitives. You have a sentence fragment in the third paragraph. Your spelling is excellent.

19 Park St.

Trion, Ga.

March 1, 1933

Dear Georgia,

It is raining again and there is nothing to do here so I am writing to you. I hope your cold is better. Mine is not but that is not what is making me so blue.

Do you remember the Hollifields that lived on Second Street? They had that pretty little girl named Alice Ann. They live at the end of Park Street now in May's old house. I was walking home from school today and saw Alice Ann crying. I asked her what was wrong. If anybody was bothering her I was going to go after them and make them sorry. But it was not one of the other kids. Alice is in fourth grade now and she has Miss. Campbell.

So you know what is happening. She does the same thing now she did when you were in school. Supervisors kids sit on one side of the room and the rest sit on the other. Miss Campbell does that every year. And she calls on the supervisors' kids but not the millhands. That is bad enough but the worst part is how she always has pets she has run errands for her. And those kids never get in trouble and her voice goes all sweet and sick when she talks to them.

I told Alice I was sorry I could not beat up Miss Campbell for her. She still didn't smile. I told her how you had been in Miss. Campbell's class and how glad

I had been when I got Miss Hawthorne that year instead. She kept crying so I wondered what in the world was going on.

Turns out it can be even worse. Miss Campbell has made Alice Ann a pet! Even though her mama and daddy work in the weave room, Mrs. Campbell has decided that the poor child “is bright and can make something of herself with her guidance.” Isn’t that awful? Now nobody will have anything to do with Alice. Not the supervisors’ children and not the millhands’ either.

I thought being called a linthead was bad as it gets but this is so sad I cannot keep from thinking about it. Alice Ann says when she has to run one of Miss. Campbell’s errands, she wants to just walk out the door of the school and not come back.

I wish I could think of a way to help her.

How is Andrew? Is he still looking to move to Chattanooga?

Love,

Lizzie

Chapter 3

Course of Action

Ethics and politics, therefore, start with undecidability. I am in front of a problem and I know that the two determined solutions are as justifiable as one another. From that point, I have to take responsibility which is heterogeneous to knowledge. If the decision is simply the final moment of a knowing process, it is not a decision. (Derrida, 1999, p. 66)

According to Derrida, the choice of response, if all are reasonable ones, can hardly qualify as a true decision. How do I as a researcher select one way among many to frame this inquiry, to collect and and analyze data, to tell this story? My choice to weave a research narrative of multiple genres rather than writing a straightforward and traditional dissertation may be sometimes uncomfortable, making me wonder how this text can accomplish all that is required of it. What once appeared to be the more intimidating choice begins to seem simple and safe compared to creating a tapestry of so many different threads. But each potential methodology can be justified as contributing some particular understanding to a multi-faceted body of knowledge. The decisions workers faced when confronted with deteriorating working conditions and diminished wages were ones with no clear and knowable answer, decisions that might mean life and livelihood, or death. In this chapter I define their courses of action, as well as my own.

Photograph of Textile Strikers in Trion, GA is an original poem inspired by the faces of millworkers, some of whom wear bandages and show bruises, souvenirs of the bloodshed at the Trion Company on September 5, 1934.

Conceptualizing Class Consciousness traces my dissatisfaction with traditional notions of class consciousness and describes how I developed a definition for the purposes of this study, based on characterizations of labor and collective action in the novels.

Listening to the Silences explains how labor is a largely neglected topic within studies of children's literature and popular media; here I describe how I identified gaps in representations of labor unions in the novels belonging to the sample.

The Sample describes how I identified the books in my study and chose specific titles for the purposes of discussion.

Making Meaning through Story explains how an arts-based, transdisciplinary approach to research can be both engaging and useful to educators interested in how social class is represented in books for young people.

Southern Labor: Staking a Claim describes events leading up to the general textile strike of 1934 in Georgia, including the early days of the strike.

Outlaws, Part 3 begins with the early days of the New Deal and renewed efforts at unionization in Trion, after wages fell and working conditions deteriorated.



Figure 1. Textile strikers at Trion, Georgia, September 6, 1934. From Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University. Reprinted with permission.

Photograph of Textile Strikers in Trion, GA

In the front row
 Deepset eyes in a narrow face
 Like my uncles',
 my brothers',
 my father's.
 They carry weapons –
 sticks, bats, guns,
 arms around each others' shoulders.

Two deaths the day before
 Did not move them off the line.
 They face down threats –
 blood, fists, guns they take from deputies
 hired by the mill.

I know the ending though
 And know
 They will be moved
 Like broken glass under the street-sweeper's broom,
 Like tickets torn in two,
 Like lint from off the looms.

Conceptualizing Class Consciousness

Examining how class consciousness is represented in novels for children and young adults requires consideration of what the term means historically and how it can be recognized within the novels. I realized that I was dissatisfied with what many historians considered the term to mean but found that I was not alone. A Marxist conception of class consciousness has traditionally included the assumption that those who identify with the working class would act on the basis of their collective self-interest and that the aim of those actions would be to challenge capitalism itself in order to create a political and economic revolution (Johnston, 2007). Such a narrow definition of what it means to be class conscious excludes much of the American experience in which radicalism is well documented but never presents a significant challenge to the status quo. Workers might rail against the upper class exploiting their labor, participate in lockouts or strikes, and protest the inequity of the treatment of workers, and yet there remains some aspect of class consciousness that fails to satisfy historians' demands. To get one's ticket punched as truly class conscious requires not just storming the barricades but establishing a socialist state and more equitable power relations between workers and the bourgeoisie. Anything falling short is, by this definition, to fail to properly identify with the working class and to be unable to recognize the revolutionary potential of collective action on behalf of the working class.

As I read labor history and the children's novels on the topic, I became more and more convinced that this conception of class consciousness is inadequate. Historians (Zinn, 2007a; Lorence, 2009) have documented workers' self-identification with the

working class in opposition to the bourgeoisie and described their efforts on behalf of their own class. Many ultimately succeeded in improving working conditions and wages (Cohen, 1990; Lipsitz, 1994; Lichtenstein, 1997). To deem them lacking in class consciousness simply because not all gains were achieved and more significantly because the capitalist system remained intact blames these activists for being unable to dismantle a system backed with what was often overwhelming force. If workers were unable to win out over what was often literally an army, it seems unjust to belittle their efforts. Johnston (2007) argues that “Whether persons occupying particular class positions become conscious of the nature of exploitative relations and act in ways consistent with self-interest is a question of historical contingency” (p. 33).

Among those developing a more expanded notion of what comprised class consciousness was historian Sean Wilentz (1984b):

Early on, I abandoned the familiar essentialist concept of class consciousness, still dominant in the Marxist and Weberian traditions, that would define the term as an all-embracing (usually revolutionary) critique of capitalist wage-labor relations, held by the mass of proletarians and expressed in all consequential matters of public and private concern, above all in politics. (p. 15)

Rather than focusing on what aspects of class consciousness were lacking in the United States, Wilentz concerned himself with those he found evidenced by historical records of the work, daily lives, and celebrations of workers. In this way, he bypassed what he termed a “woefully stylized impression of class consciousness abroad” (p. 16)

that bore little resemblance to the historical evidence of the tumultuous lives of workers and activists in the early days of the republic. Wilentz (1984a) suggests that historians examine more closely how workers and employers conceptualize the notion of labor itself. He argues that the American labor movement, from its beginnings in the late 18th century through the first two decades of the 20th century, rejected the idea that labor was a commodity, purchased at whatever price the free market would bear. Labor was instead, a form of personal property belonging to the worker, and the capitalist wage system placed this property in jeopardy with its insistence that labor could be simply bought and sold like any other commodity. As Wilentz traced this idea of labor as personal property through American labor history, he found that it was emphasized in certain historical periods, such as the early 1800s and the post-Civil War era in which the Knights of Labor rose to the forefront of the American labor movement. With the fall of the Knights and the rise of craft unions under the auspices of the American Federation of Labor, this conception of labor diminished but, Wilentz argues, it never faded away completely, even late in 1960s, as evidenced by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s evocation of its power on behalf of the sanitation workers of Memphis, Tennessee, just before his assassination.

For many workers, class consciousness was lived out in their world of work and community: In the early 1930s in rural Georgia, Clyde Johnson and other organizers for the Share Croppers Union (SCU) described class consciousness as “taught by the landlord from an early age.” Johnson explained that “while neither cropper nor the landowner would know the term, ‘they live what they mean’” (cited by Lorence, 2009, p. 73). Exactly what it means to “live what they mean” requires careful consideration of

what it means to identify with the working class as well as what constitutes a political act on behalf of that class. Because so many of the novels in my sample are on the topic of the 1909 garment workers strike and the Triangle Waist Factory Fire of 1911, I found it fascinating to read Enstad's *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure* (1999), in which she explores the subjectivities created by shirtwaist workers in New York in 1909 by their use of fashion and fiction, taking a social constructionist approach to labor history. Enstad notes that identity as an American working *lady*, not just a *woman*, did not exist prior to these young women literally fashioning it for themselves using inexpensive readymade clothing and a discourse sometimes taken from dime novels. The images of flashily dressed young women engaging in behavior that was most unladylike according to the standards of the day meant that many did not recognize the strikers' actions as political acts. Enstad argues that histories of the strike were shaped by labor leaders doing their best to cast the strike as a political act by sober, thinly-clad young women who more nearly met Enlightenment-era notions of political actors, that is, rational and sober activists than contemporary newspapers' accounts of tacky harridans. Enstad maintains that strikers were engaging in political activity, and their excessive plumage and brightly colored clothes evoked a carnival space in which inequality was erased temporarily. Subversion of the expected can result in a sort of political theater incomprehensible to those who define political action in only one way. Arguing that "If we want to know where agency comes from and how people manage to challenge oppressive hierarchies that shape their world, then we have to know who they have become and what resources

are available to them” (p. 207), Enstad calls for a more nuanced understanding of what it means to engage in political activism on behalf of class consciousness.

Drawing from the work of Wilentz and Enstad, I looked in the novels for instances of workers defining themselves as part of a distinctive class, one apart from the owners and managers of the mines and factories that employed them. Representations of conflict between workers and managers had to be depicted as ones that, even if local, were connected to the economic system as a whole wherein workers organized in response to oppression and not merely because of the actions of unsympathetic or “mean” individual employers. This might be seen too in drawing connections between the book’s primary conflict and others in different locations, trades, or times (although the latter would prove occasionally problematic, as I will later describe). These connections provided context to the narrative and emphasized that the conflict between workers and management was part of a larger picture of class and labor relations. Finally, I explored how collective and individual actions are depicted in the plots of the novels. As Overstreet (2001) points out, one convention of the novel form is its focus on the individual. Collective action would be union organizing or participation in a strike or lockout. These criteria, 1) the creation of context for labor conflict in the novels by explicit connections made across time, trades, or locations; 2) description of the daily lives of workers that reflects a culturally conscious understanding of working class culture; and 3) depiction of collective and individual actions permitted an understanding of class consciousness that stopped short of requiring revolutionary acts on the part of workers. They also allowed me to distinguish between a book like *Strike!* (Corcoran,

1983) that told the story of a contemporary teachers' strike while barely mentioning the word "union" and one like *Uprising* (Haddix, 2008) that offered a stinging critique of both capitalism and sexism.

Listening to the Silences

The stories that are not told, the silences that underlie every representation in text, are as critical to study as actual representations. Research that uses a counting model has proven useful in documenting the scarcity of images of African-American (Larrick, 1965) or female protagonists (Clark, Almeida, Gurka & Middleton, 2003; Clark, Lennon, & Morris, 1993; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; St. Peter, 1979) in children's books and helped make the case for seeking more diverse and realistic depictions of under-represented groups. In this study, I chose to count certain specific elements in all books of the sample - occupations represented and the race and ethnicity of protagonists, comparing these data to the historical record of involvement by various groups in the American labor movement. Restricting the counting to these areas alone enabled me to use the data to inform discussion of the stories of people and occupations that were missing and those that were over-represented in the larger sample.

The fact that so many stories about the labor movement are not told in literature for children is unsurprising in light of the neglect of the topic in popular media as a whole. Labor historian Roy Rosenzweig (1987) noted that outstanding historical studies of the American labor movement were published in the second half of the 20th century, but their stories seldom reached the pages of popular history magazines or the television

screen. Rosenzweig described three ways in which labor is represented that are relevant as well to labor's depiction in books for children. The first way to is to simply leave it out, a tact Rosenzweig suggested is most common. Popular history magazines like *American Heritage* publish far more articles featuring leaders of industry such as Andrew Carnegie and Cornelius Vanderbilt than they do of labor leaders like Walter Reuther or John L. Lewis. Museums offer exhibits on industrialization, some with a focus on the daily lives of workers, but only one, the Botto House in Haledon, New Jersey, is devoted exclusively to labor history. Few others address the labor movement in a significant way.

The second way in which labor is depicted was misrepresentation, the inaccurate portrayal of historical events. One example Rosenzweig cited was a rare article in *American Heritage* (1960) that described the 1862 Homestead strike in Pittsburgh in which "the strike was portrayed as the result of a misunderstanding between an obstinate Henry Clay Frick and an equally obstinate set of steelworkers, rather than a fundamental struggle for control of the work process" (p. 52). Similarly, a 1979 television show about the Triangle fire of 1911 emphasized "domestic melodrama and Towering Inferno theatrics and avoided issues of industrial safety and employer negligence" (p. 52). Rosenzweig cited Anyon's study of social studies textbooks as further examples of this second way of minimizing the labor movement in American history.

The third way in which labor was represented is in such a way that its link to contemporary life is completely absent. This was the most troubling as it denied the ways in which the past shapes the present and future. Rosenzweig considered such representations to be the ones that led many of his students to be "perfectly willing to

sympathize with the sufferings of workers in the late 19th century while denouncing labor unions in the present” (p. 52). A preliminary survey of children’s books about labor suggests that they can be similarly categorized. First, while there have been more books about the labor movement published since the early 1980s, their proportion of the total number of children’s books published is small. I have found over 50 published in last 34 years, an average of less than two per year. The inaccuracies about the labor movement that Rosenzweig found in popular media are present as well in at least some of the books for children. Overstreet (2001) found several instances of misinformation in her small sample of novels. Finally, the vast majority of children’s books about labor are historical fiction. Very few are set in the present day. As noted earlier, government workers such as teachers and police, are seldom represented in the novels in my sample despite being the occupations most likely to be unionized today in the United States.

My dissertation research adds to existing scholarship in the area of children’s literature related to social class and labor history in the United States. Others, including Harris (1993), Power (2003), Sims Bishop (1982, 2003, 2007), and Taxel (1979, 1981, 1984, 1986), have demonstrated ways in which better understanding of the sociocultural messages of novels provides greater awareness for educators of power imbalances inscribed in those texts. Although some aspects of my study are similar to these that use neoMarxist literary criticism or the sociology of school knowledge to discuss power relations within texts, my use of multigenre texts situates the novels in the sample historically, underscores the inadequacy of a simple ideological explanation, suggests remaining gaps, and situates myself as a researcher.

Overstreet's (1994) dissertation on adolescent fiction about the Vietnam War offers a useful model for this study. Although she rejected quantitative and structural analysis of the sample novels, she developed a systematic method of content analysis, based on the methodology used by Walsh in her 1987 dissertation on young adult novels about the American Revolution. I similarly adopted Overstreet's research categories, revising those specific to the Vietnam War into ones that reflected labor issues:

- (1) references to causes of labor-related conflict
- (2) how and why characters became involved in that conflict
- (3) attitudes toward and characteristics of unions and workers
- (4) attitudes toward and characteristics of managers and/or owners
- (5) representations of strikes and other union activities
- (6) settings, including trades or professions and time period represented
- (7) depictions of characters' race, ethnicity, and gender

My first research question concerns depictions of the roles labor unions played in American labor history, specifically how, or indeed if, class consciousness is depicted. By examining the causes of labor conflicts, characters' involvement in those conflicts, the portrayal of strikes and other union activities, and attitudes toward and characteristics of workers, unions, and owners, I show how class consciousness is depicted in the novels. The debate among historians regarding just what constitutes class consciousness among American workers made this aspect my research the most challenging. In the United States, class consciousness itself may even be considered part of the problem, as evidenced by accusations of "class warfare" when public discussion turns to causes of the

growing gap between the wealthiest Americans and everyone else. The research categories provide particular markers I used while examining the texts for evidence that workers differentiated themselves as a class apart from that of managers or owners of the business. Paying close attention to how the conflict was portrayed, whether it was viewed as one concerned only with local issues or as part of a set of broader societal problems was particularly helpful.

Williams (1977) reminds those interested in the interaction of popular culture and ideology that it is equally important to consider how “certain other meanings and values are neglected or excluded” (p. 115). These are what I call the “silences,” gaps that must be examined to determine what additional stories that might be told are instead missing. The last two research categories listed above use the books’ settings and representations of characters’ race, ethnicity, and gender to answer my second research question by identifying the settings and characters that are included or even over-represented, while others are not included at all. Comparing the novels’ representations of labor unions and workers to those that were part of the historical record of the labor movement yielded some notion of what aspects of history are neglected in children’s fiction about the subject. Clark (2002), in his article about the uses and limitations of a “counting” approach, notes that social scientists who used the approach have been able to document earlier gaps that existed in children’s books in terms of depictions of active female characters and to show too how these particular gaps diminished over time. By identifying the gaps or silences in books about the labor movement, I demonstrate that the picture is far from complete. For example, few of the novels are set in the South.

Although the South is less likely to be home to American labor unions, many struggles took place in states like Georgia and the Carolinas. Telling those stories would provide an opportunity to consider just why so few Southerners are union members today. My own novel-in-progress about the general textile strike of 1934 is one that could help fill this gap. “Counting” allows the researcher to quantify what is present; but the process of “listening to” the stories as well may lead to insight into authors’ “views of oppression and resistance” (Clark, 2002, p. 291).

Listening to themes of the novels may also yield particular categories into which they may be divided, as Taxel described in his study of children’s novels about the American Revolution (1984). I chose not to attempt to anticipate what those might be. The shifts in historiography of the American Revolution over many decades that permitted Taxel to link the novels in his sample to historical perspectives on events are less dramatic within histories of the American labor movement over the last three decades. The historical labor movement in the United States is over 200 years old, yet the children’s novels that address it are products of a much more limited time period - the late 1970s up through the present. I did not expect, however, that the novels would ultimately prove to be as “apolitical and ahistorical” (p. 255) as Overstreet found those in her sample of books about the war in Vietnam. In fact, I believe that the publication of these novels may well be a result of a particular approach to the history of labor that rose to prominence over 40 years ago. Labor historians in the 1960s, under the influence of E.P. Thompson (1963) and Herbert Gutman (1973), explored the lives of workers themselves, rather than focusing on institutional histories of unions and industries (Brody, 1985). In

addition, civil rights and women's issues moved to the forefront and provided additional rationales for the study of others besides prominent White males. It is hardly coincidental that children's novels about the labor movement have been published concurrently with so many studies that provide authors with the historical detail needed to produce a convincing narrative about events taking place in the past. While not all novels in the present sample offer lists of references, those that do tend to cite the work of historians who have delved deeply into the world of the working class. For example, Paterson (1991) cites secondary historical sources (Dublin, 1979, 1994; Josephson, 1949) that focused on the background and aspirations of the young women who took jobs in the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, as part of her research for *Lyddie*. Some reflect the experiences of family members whose personal histories inspired the story, another source of information for histories of ordinary citizens. Ryan based *Esperanza Rising* (2000) on her grandmother's experiences as an agricultural worker whose life in Mexico had been one of wealth and indulgence. When labor history made the cultural turn, children's literature was a beneficiary.

The Sample

Because the topic of social class in children's literature is so broad and is the subject of so little research in the United States, I chose to narrow the focus of my study to books concerned with labor issues and to narrow still more specifically to those novels related to labor unions. This provided a sample of 53 books, all of which were published between 1976 and 2009 (Appendix A). The sample does not include nonfiction books or

picture books for younger children, not because none were available, but in order to limit the sample to a more manageable size for dissertation research. The novels are intended for children ranging from upper elementary grades through high school. Although I preferred that labor be at least a subplot, if not the major focus of the book, I chose to include a few books in which union activities are incidental to the plot. One was *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999), an award-winning title that featured African-American characters. This novel's brief episode that portrays a union organizer was at odds with the overall sample, in that for most of the novels, if a character was a member of a union, that formed part of the plot and drove the story. In *Bud, Not Buddy*, it was simply a fact about a character. It is not, however, necessarily insignificant, so the book is part of the sample. On the other hand, *Chase* (Haas, 2007) included a similarly brief mention of a miners' labor union but primarily in the context of hostilities between the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a private security firm known for taking action against labor unions, and the Irish secret society known as the Molly Maguires. By the time the action in the novel takes place, the union has been broken and the Molly Maguires appear to be taking revenge on the mine owners and managers, while the Pinkerton agents pursue them. Haas is less concerned with the union and labor than with that pursuit, and, as the union itself never figures into the story at all, I made the decision to omit *Chase* from the discussion sample but to retain it in the general sample, despite the fact that it was among the Children's Books of the Year 2008 and recommended by Wilson's Junior High.

In order to locate titles, I first searched the online Library of Congress catalog, hoping to use its subject headings to identify children's novels related to the labor

movement. This returned few results, as books tended to be catalogued very narrowly. For example, under the subject heading “Strikes and lockouts - United States History - Juvenile literature” were only two titles, both nonfiction. I requested assistance from members of the CHILD_LIT listserv and received several recommendations, but some of their suggested books were set in Great Britain, and my focus was on the United States. NoveList, a database accessed through Georgia Library Learning Online (GALILEO), enabled me to search by plot elements and to create a list of twenty books dealing with labor or strikes. The remainder of the titles I generated by using Follett’s Titlewave website, a database of that vendor’s products. Because Titlewave allows keyword searches, it was easy to find books about labor unions and strikes, including some published very recently.

A preliminary survey of the novels in the sample suggested that the binaries Taxel (1984) found useful in his analysis would be of less use in the present study, in that a more ambivalent and nuanced view of historical events and characterization is often, but not always, present. While some main characters are consistent proponents of labor, like Yetta in *Uprising*, (Haddix, 2007), characters’ views about labor unions are not always clear-cut, and when they come to side with the union at all, it is often late in the game. In Paterson’s *Lyddie* (1991), the protagonist refuses to sign the petition for the ten-hour workday until it is too late, fearing that she will lose her job. The mother in *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004), votes for the union only after her daughter’s death has devastated the family and she hears that the daughter of one of her co-workers is gravely ill as well. The union represents workers’ best chance for sick and bereavement leave, something her

own family has struggled without. Still, for many workers, joining a union means risking their jobs; this quandary is one addressed in many of the novels. Whether equivocation regarding union membership is due to the nature of the topic of social class and labor history or to more recent trends in the publication of children's books that allow more moral ambiguity within the narrative is an additional avenue to explore.

With over 50 novels included in the total sample, I chose to focus on a smaller number of books for the purposes of discussion of class consciousness. This decision resulted in a less unwieldy number of books to explore and an opportunity for more substantive discussion of those texts. This subset of the sample is further divided into two groups. The first group is contemporary fiction, primarily because the quantity of such novels was remarkably small, only six among the entire sample. Although they span over three decades, from 1976 to 2007, this handful of books comes closest to offering a contemporary perspective on labor unions and deserves attention for this reason alone. The second group of the subset is twelve historical novels that have won national awards or are otherwise recommended by selection guides for teachers and librarians. These guides include *School Library Journal*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Wilson's Junior High*. Not surprisingly, such guides reward more complex and literary texts, ones in which characters face complicated situations with no easy choices. These are the books most likely to be found in schools and libraries today and are thus more likely to be read by young people than those receiving less positive reviews or serving a niche market such as Christian fiction or test preparation. This focus

enabled me to concentrate on books with a larger readership and a potentially greater sphere of influence.

One question that arose was at what point a book can be considered historical rather than contemporary fiction. Specifically, was Gary Soto's *Jesse*, set in 1970, historical fiction, when it was published 24 years later in 1994? Children's literature textbooks have attempted to establish guidelines as to how much time between the book's setting and its production must elapse before the author is writing historically. Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson (1999) cite the *Reference Guide to Historical Fiction for Children and Young Adults* (1987) in which Adamson describes historical fiction as "generally written about a time period in which the author has not lived or no more recently than one generation before its composition" (p. 150). Soto had clearly lived through the late 1960s and 1970s, but did that mean that he could not write historical fiction about it? Another staple of children's literature courses, *Literature and the Child* (Galda & Cullinan, 2002), listed various periods in which historical fiction might be set, with the most recent being "The 1950s through the 1980s: Political and Social Turmoil" (p. 228).

My sense was that *Jesse* was historical; in 1970 Richard Nixon was president and the war in Vietnam was a major issue. The 1990s when the book was written seemed far removed from 1970. Although it was unsettling at first to classify a book set during a period of my own lifetime and one I remembered well as "historical," it appeared to be the correct decision. It did mean that only six years elapsed between this, the most recent setting of the historical fiction and 1976, the year in which the first of the contemporary

novels, *Time to Take Sides* (Gold) was set. I sensed that this divide would affect the representations of unions in the books, and as the next chapter demonstrates, it did.

The discussion sample is composed of the following:

Historical fiction.

- Auch, M.J. (2002). *Ashes of roses*. New York: Dell.
- Baker, J. (2002). *Up Molasses Mountain*. New York: Dell.
- Curtis, C.P. (1999) *Bud, not Buddy*. New York: Dell.
- Haddix, Margaret P. (2007). *Uprising*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Hughes, P. (2004). *The breaker boys*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Kadohata, C. (2004). *Kira-kira*. New York: Scholastic.
- Paterson, K. (1991). *Lyddie*. New York: Penguin.
- Paterson, K. (2006). *Bread and roses, too*. New York: Clarion.
- Porter, T. (2007). *Billy Creekmore*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Ryan, P.M. (2000). *Esperanza rising*. New York: Scholastic.
- Soto, G. (1994). *Jesse*. New York: Scholastic.
- Taylor, M. (1981). *Let the circle be unbroken*. New York: Puffin.

Contemporary fiction.

- Barkley, B. & Hepler, H. (2007). *Dream factory*. New York: Dutton.
- Casanova, M. (1996). *Riot*. New York: Hyperion.
- Collier, J.L. (1988). *The Winchesters*. New York: Avon.
- Corcoran, B. (1983). *Strike!* New York, Atheneum.

Gold, S. (1976). *Time to take sides*. New York: Clarion.

Koss, A.G. Koss, (2001) *Strike two*. New York: Dial

General sample.

The general sample includes historical fiction that did not win national awards or is no longer in print. These books were ones I used in addition to the discussion sample primarily to identify the silences or gaps in stories about labor unions. Consideration of literary quality was not the purpose of the present study, but a few of the books in this larger sample were well written and enjoyable. Durbin's story of the Cuban cigar makers in Ybor City, Florida, *El Lector* (2007), emphasized the culture of the workers and also the broader popular culture of the time. *Breaker* (Perez, 1988) featured a character who, rather than leaving the mine, made the decision to stay and to fight for better conditions for workers. Other books in the general sample were less well written and appeared to have been published to meet state social studies standards in various parts of the country. Many of these books were published as part of a series; too many of these were flat and formulaic. The exceptions among the series titles were Scholastic's Dear America novels: *A Coal Miner's bride: The Diary of Anetka Kaminska, Lattimer, Pennsylvania, 1896* (Bartoletti, 2000); *So Far from Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1847* (Denenberg, 1997); *Hear My Sorrow: The Diary of Angela Denoto, a Shirtwaist Worker* (Hopkinson, 2004); and *The Journal of Otto Peltonen: A Finnish immigrant* (Durbin, 2001). Written by respected authors of historical fiction, each of these included well developed characters and attention to historical detail.

Two books in the general sample, *Gilded Delirium* (Stokes & Belinkie, 2007) and *Fight in the Fields: César Chávez* (Sorenson, 1998) use the device of time travel to place characters from the present day into 1894 and 1966 respectively. Because of this, they might more accurately be termed “historical fantasy” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1993, p. 150). For the purposes of this study in which I am more concerned with representations of historical events than with genre, I count them among the historical novels and make it clear in discussion that they do include elements of fantasy.

The general sample consists of the following:

Armstrong, J. (2000). *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters from a young coal miner*. New York: Winslow Press.

Bader, B. (1993). *East Side story*. New York: Silver Moon Press.

Bartoletti, S. (2000). *A coal miner's bride: The diary of Anetka Kaminska, Lattimer, Pennsylvania, 1896*. New York: Scholastic.

Collier, J.L. (2000). *The worst of times*. Columbus, OH: School Speciality Children's Publishing.

Denenberg, B. (1997). *So far from home: The diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish mill girl, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1847*. New York: Scholastic.

Durbin, W. (2001). *The journal of Otto Peltonen: A Finnish immigrant*. New York: Scholastic.

Durbin, W. (2007). *El lector*. New York: Yearling.

Easton, R. (2002). *A real American*. New York: Clarion Books.

Farrell, M.C. (2004). *Fire in the hole!* New York: Clarion Books.

- Goldin, B. (1992). *Fire!: The beginnings of the labor movement*. New York: Viking.
- Greene, J.D. (2009). *Changes for Rebecca*. Middleton, WI: American Girl.
- Greenwood, Barbara. (2007). *Factory girl*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press.
- Haas, J. (2007). *Chase*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Hopkinson, D. (2004) *Hear my sorrow: The diary of Angela Denoto, a shirtwaist worker*.
New York: Scholastic.
- Jones, J.S. (1997). *Frankie*. New York: Dutton.
- Jones, S.D. (1989). *A test of loyalty*. Belmont, CA: Fearon Education.
- Krensky, S. (1994). *The iron dragon never sleeps*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Lieurance, S. (2008). *The locket: Surviving the Triangle Shirtwaist fire*. Berkeley
Heights. NJ: Enslow.
- Lord, A.V (1981). *A spirit to ride the whirlwind*. New York: Macmillan.
- Matas, C. (2003). *Rosie in New York City: Gotcha!*. New York: Aladdin.
- Mays, L. (1982). *The candle and the mirror*. New York: Atheneum.
- Miller, S.M. (1998). *The streetcar riots*. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour.
- Perez, N.A. (1988). *Breaker*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rappaport, D. (1986). *Trouble at the mines*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.
- Robinet, H.G. (2001). *Missing from Haymarket Square*. New York: Atheneum
- Rue, N. (1999). *The stunt*. Minneapolis: Bethany House.
- Sachs, M. (1982). *Call me Ruth*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sebestyen, O. (1985). *On fire*. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Skurzynski, G. (2001). *Rockbuster*. New York: Atheneum.

- Sorensen, M. (1998). *Fight in the fields: César Chávez*. Logan, IA: Perfection Learning.
- Stokes, J. & Belinkie, M. (2007) *Gilded delirium*. New York: Spark.
- Thesman, J. (1996) *The ornament tree*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Weber, J.E. (2004) *Forbidden friendship*. New York: Silver Moon Press.
- Williams, Barbara. (2000). *Making waves*. New York: Dial.
- Winthrop, E. (2001). *Franklin Roosevelt: Letters from a mill town girl*. New York: Winslow.

Making Meaning through Story

As a researcher interested in a range of interconnected questions that do not fit neatly into a single discipline, I find a nontraditional dissertation to be a reasonable choice. When a single epistemology is privileged to determine what is effective in education, the questions that can be asked, much less answered, narrow as well. A multigenre format allows me to create a collage that includes historical research and literary criticism, as well as poetry and fiction, making the study of potential interest to researchers in various disciplines. Through my literary pieces included in the dissertation, I explore both the collective and individual stories of those who faced difficult decisions during the textile strike of 1934. Many of the strikes in the novels in my sample parallel the one in my hometown, a conflict powerful enough to maintain its discipline over the people of Trion for over seventy years. Integrating the historical, the literary, the artistic, and the educational is a challenge, but my own way of knowing is, like that of many people, multiple ways. In their exploration of how women attain and process knowledge,

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) warned against “methodolatry,” using a word coined by feminist theologian Mary Daly to denote the privileging of a methodology in such a way that “it outlaws questions that cannot be answered in that fashion” (p. 96). Their concern was that women, having been traditionally excluded from the development of the favored method, would be at a disadvantage when pressured to use it in their research. This opportunity to develop a research project that allows me to explore different ways of making meaning engages me far more than writing a traditional dissertation would, and I hope that readers will be similarly engaged.

Because reliability and validity are so often raised as touchstones of exemplary educational research, Barone and Eisner (1997) address these concerns in regard to research that uses arts-based methodology. They question the applicability of limited definitions of replicability, validity, and generalization to any research method other than strictly statistical research. Because arts-based research may lead to a better understanding of a situation and assist readers in understanding aspects that had gone previously unnoticed, they argue that the methodology could claim validity, if “our conception of validity is rooted in the ways arts-based research helps us notice, understand, and appraise” (p. 85). The goal of educational research is, after all, to illuminate some aspect of the educational experience with the goal of improving schools. Eisner (2008) stresses that while the pursuit of better questions about educational situations may satisfy those in the academy, teachers, policymakers, and the general public expect research that leads to answers as well. Well designed arts-based inquiry may accomplish this.

The validity of my research is grounded in its utility to educators who want to better understand how issues of social class and labor are represented in novels for children. Because these topics are so seldom addressed adequately (or indeed at all) in social studies textbooks, trade books may be students' first introduction to their discussion. Educators and those who train them need to think about power relations inscribed in texts and how those messages might be read by children. Do they suggest characters' identification with a social class that compels resistance? Do they offer students images of contemporary union members? Do they focus on the stories of some groups while omitting others? Why might these depictions exist while others are missing? Although my dissertation study is based on a subset of the total number of those that explore class issues, I believe that it will help those concerned with social class better understand how trade books can assist them in initiating discussion with students on the issue.

Southern Labor: Staking a Claim

Franklin D. Roosevelt had been elected in 1932, with the promise of a New Deal. One of the first pieces of legislation passed after his inauguration was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) of 1933, which provided for the passage of "codes of fair competition" drawn up by business leaders and designed to allow businesses to control wages, prices, and production levels (Salmond, 2002). The Cotton Textile Institute, the industry's trade organization, quickly produced a code with no input from labor, and after some haggling over the regional minimum wage differential that defined

the difference between the lower wages Southern workers received and those paid their Northern counterparts, the Cotton Textile Code was approved (Irons, 2000).

Workers from the Trion Company almost immediately began to contact Washington with documentation of their employer's violations of the provisions in the code (Salmond, 2002). As the list of grievances grew, workers at Trion and other Southern mills reconsidered labor unions. NIRA section 7(a) provided protection for workers who chose to unionize, something that had not previously existed. However, the section was weak enough that business leaders who had drafted the code were not too concerned by its presence within the Act. Union leaders had viewed section 7(a) as a glass half full, while employers realized that it was in fact, at least half empty. Wages fell below the promised \$12 per week to \$9 or \$5 for a forty-hour week, and the mimeographed form letters the complainants received in response from the Cotton Textile National Industrial Relations Board (CTNIRB) failed to satisfy them. Workers turned then to the United Textile Workers, setting the stage for the showdown that would begin on Labor Day weekend of the following year.

Leadership of the UTW, pressured by the Cotton Board, continued to advise union members to use the complaint process provided by law, even as workers argued that it was clearly ineffective (Irons, 2000). Decisions - if they came at all - were ignored by the textile industry if the board decided in favor of workers (Lorence, 2009). While the rank and file called for strikes and occasionally instituted their own wildcat strikes absent the UTW's endorsement, union leaders urged them to bide their time. At a national

convention of the UTW in August of 1934, it was southern textile workers who insisted on a general strike that fall, and union leadership reluctantly agreed.

Despite extensive coverage of the impending strike in Atlanta newspapers, local newspapers around the state were focused on other affairs, foremost among them the Democratic gubernatorial primary in which Judge Claude Pittman challenged incumbent Eugene Talmadge. Talmadge, a self-styled man of the people, proudly exhibited his calloused hands, deep farmer's tan, and trademark red suspenders even as he enjoyed the support of wealthy industrialists. His antipathy for the policies of the New Deal was well known. "Friends of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt" arranged to place numerous advertisements in newspapers around the state including the *Rome News Tribune* and the *Newnan Herald* proclaiming FDR "On Trial in His Adopted State" and describing Talmadge's resistance to New Deal policies. Political rallies around the state in the closing days of the campaign were spirited, and newspaper accounts included photographs of throngs surrounding each of the candidates in his campaign appearances around the state.

As the strike officially began on Saturday, September 1, at midnight, its effects would be unknown for a few days. The mills were closed on Sunday, and most shut down for Labor Day on Monday as well. Over the next few days, flying squadrons, bands of union members and strike sympathizers from other unions, took to the roads in caravans of automobiles, aiming to shut down any textile mills still open. Some of the flying squadrons came from Crown Mills in Dalton where managers had shut down the mill

“until further notice,” and picketing was fast becoming more picnic than protest (Flamming, 1992). Those who traveled the thirty miles south to Trion on Wednesday, September 5, were joined by as many as 2000 other pickets and protesters in an attempt to shut down the Trion Company. Some of the flying squadrons included striking foundry workers from nearby Rome, Georgia; among them was 25-year-old Roscoe J. Blaylock.

The mood in Trion was tense. Mary Haygood and her husband, both employees at Trion, decided to go to work. She recalled later that Cliff was nervous, but that she was so unaware of strike protocol that when she saw a boy who had once boarded with them walking the picket line, she greeted him in a friendly manner: “I didn’t know we wasn’t supposed to say anything to him. I didn’t know he was a picket, so I asked him how he was” (M.H. Haygood, personal communication. March 1978). Management was determined to keep the Trion mill open, and like other textile mills, had hired special deputies to keep the peace. In addition to these extra security guards, regular members of local law enforcement, including Deputy Milton Hix, patrolled the mill and its property down by the Chattooga River (Baker, 1988).

The town of Trion is blessed with four wide awake churches. The Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Church of Christ all extend hearty invitation to those who will come and worship at the church of his own choice. (From “About the Town of Trion and Its Advantages,” a pamphlet published by the Trion Company’s Personnel Department, revised 1943)

Outlaws, Part 3

March 3, 1933

Dear Diary,

Something happened yesterday I had never even thought about happening here. The bank closed. I don't understand it all. We had heard about a bunch of others closing and people losing their money but I didn't think it would happen here. John Robert was real upset though because he says he has lost the money he had saved for when he and Amy get married. I was surprised that a bank could just close up and keep your money like that but he said it was true.

It was not a whole lot of money he had saved up so he said it could have been worse. He said his boss Mr. White had come back from lunch and had barely said a word the rest of the day, he just looked sick. John said they were all afraid to say anything to him because he looked like he might start yelling or maybe even crying. I cannot imagine what that would be like since I have not had any money yet to lose it.

These hard times seem real to me now that this has happened though. For a long time people pretended like there was nothing bad going on. You never saw anything in the newspapers about a depression. You just heard that so many people had lost their jobs in this city or that mill but nobody talked like this was that bad. It was just these things that happened. Some people said the problem was people not wanting to work. I also heard talk about people from other places coming in and taking American jobs. I know that this

isn't true in Trion though. Maybe in some of the cities but everybody here in town is American and wants to work bad.

Everybody thinks that Mr. Roosevelt can make things better. I hope so. Tomorrow he will be President. John Robert says he has heard that Mr. Roosevelt is very smart so may he can do something about the banks and all. It seems like a bad time for us all to be coming along trying to get a start in life.

March 7, 1933

Dear Diary,

The banks in Summerville closed today too but it is because President Roosevelt told all the banks to shut down while they figure out how to open back up and make sure nobody loses their money again. I do not have a bank account yet. I just put the money I save in my little billfold and keep it in the bureau drawer. But now I am out of school and working I want to open up an account and start saving a little more. Maybe the banks will open up soon. Mama said all those people who tried to get their money out last week all of a sudden are who caused this and they ought to be ashamed.

The weather is starting to warm up a little. It was warm when we walked home from work. The forsythia are blooming pretty. I am going to work in the yard tomorrow.

March 13, 1933

Dear Diary,

Me and Mama and John Robert listened to the president on the radio last night. He sounds like maybe he is smart enough to get things going good again. He said that all the business about the banks in the last few days and before that had been in business and legal talk and he wanted to explain it so ordinary citizens could understand what was happening. He said he owed it to us because we had been so strong while it was all going on. They are opening up the big federal banks today and then when they know which of the rest of the smaller banks are all right they will open those up too. I know these are real complicated things with money and all but he explained it so we did know what was going on. It made me hope that things will get better. John Robert seemed like he thought so too. The president said we must have faith and we want to so bad.

March 23, 1933

Dear Diary,

I have not written in a while and this is why. Jessie McKenzie asked me to go to the show with him and we have seen each other everyday since Sunday this week. Annie told me she thought he liked me but she said he may think I didn't like him. Just because I am quiet when I am out around people. I don't carry on the way a lot of girls do around boys like him. He always knows what to say to everybody and I sure don't know. Annie said she would tell him that I

did so like him, but I told her I'd die first. I hope she didn't go slipping around and tell him I thought he was the handsomest boy in Trion even though I do. If she did, I didn't see her do it or hear her do it so maybe she didn't. But it was that Sunday after church he asked me to go to the show with him on Monday.

It was really funny what happened on Monday. He was so mad and embarrassed, it made me feel a little better for some reason about being out with somebody like him. Ever since he came here last fall, I'd see him at church on Sunday or walking to work, and even though everybody knew he had family here with him, nobody ever saw them. But when we went to Summerville to go the show, we stopped by his family's house for me to meet them. And his daddy came running through the house with a shotgun, yelling that his sister Ruby had gone off with a man and he was going to go find them.

I was kind of scared to start with, but I saw that Jessie wasn't. He was just upset that his daddy was acting so crazy. Then I started to think it was funny. So I felt a little easier because he was so worried about what I'd think of his family. He knew I wasn't used to things like that! And my daddy died before I can remember good but I never heard anybody say anything about him running around with a shotgun.

We went to the show after that and he tried to apologize about his daddy without saying anything bad about him and that was funny. So I had a good time and we have seen each other everyday after work since then.

March 25, 1933

Dear Diary,

Yesterday me and Jessie went over to his house and I met two of his sisters. They are named after jewelry! One is Ruby and one is Opal. Ruby is the one who ran off with the man the other day. Or anyway that is what Jessie's daddy thought. I don't know if she did or not and I guess it's not any of my business even if she did. She was real nice and told me she was happy Jessie and me were having such a good time together. She and Opal are moving to Atlanta next week to stay with their other brother Autrell and look for jobs down there.

Jessie's mama was cooking supper so I helped her as much as she would let me. When I went to shell the beans, she looked at me and said she cut both ends off, not just the one. Then I told her I could slice up the tomatoes too and she said she always peeled them first. I didn't offer to do anything else and other than that, she did not say a whole lot. His daddy was in town seeing about a mule. Jessie has one more sister but she was not there either. Her name is Geneva and she lives up north in Detroit and is married and has two little children.

I still do not know why somebody like Jessie would want to even talk to me. Everybody notices him to start with because he looks the way he does. Big brown eyes and that dark hair and he is always smiling.

Then they notice that he is charming. I do not use that word very much to describe anybody! He really is charming though. He can talk to anybody at

all and get them to talk. Mrs. Elmer Black down the street never says more to me than good morning no matter how nice I try to be to her. Jessie and me walked down the street past her house and he spoke to her and we were still standing there a half hour later listening to the story of her life. I did not know that her husband once threw her down the stairs. He is dead now anyway. I also did not know that her daughter bought a house down in Macon just because it had a pear tree and a porch swing. Jessie finds things out.

The most important thing people notice about Jessie and the last thing usually because the other things, his looks and him being charming, are so easy to see is that he is a kind person. He offers to help and he means it. Mama says he is thoughtful. I like that word. He notices what people need and he does his best to give it to them. That takes some thinking. Mama had told him she missed her flowers from back home in Alabama and he gave Mama a rosebush he had dug up from his parents place. They were fixing to plow that part of the yard for a bigger garden. He went and planted it by the front door of the house and it looks pretty. That is why she called him thoughtful.

These are all things I had seen in him a long time before last Sunday.

From the *Trion Facts* April 15, 1933

"About Town"

...Among those enjoying an ice cream social at the Methodist Church were John Robert, Joe, Judith, Annie, and

Kathleen Henderson, Wade Singleton, Leon Woods, Charles and Margaret Cole, Jessie McKenzie, Sam and Nora Rayburn, ...

July 7, 1933

Dear Diary,

Jessie asked me to marry him and Mama said yes. That sounds odd. I said yes but we both did want to talk to Mama. I was not worried because she knows him and knows what he is like. He told her that he loved me and would do his best to be the husband I deserved. I wanted to cry. I think he is going to make good in the weave room. Times will not be this hard forever I don't think. But we are both used to hard work. We can do what we have to do until things do get better.

We plan to get married in the fall. Maybe in October. Mrs. Jessie McKenzie. Kathleen McKenzie. Fall has always been my favorite season.

Kathleen McKenzie

July 8, 1933

Dear Diary,

When we went to Jessie's house to get peaches to make ice cream with, his mama told us Geneva is coming back from Detroit on the train next Tuesday. She has been sick but is doing better. She has had heart trouble. June and Tommy are coming with her. Mrs. McKenzie still does not talk to me a lot but from the few things she has said she does not appear to think too high of

Geneva's husband Roy. He is staying up there to work. Jessie is real worried about Geneva but he is glad she is coming home. I think she is the sister he is the closest to. Even though Ruby and Opal are younger than Geneva and so closer to our ages, she is the one he talks about the most. Maybe she can rest down here and get well. I am looking forward to meeting her.

July 9, 1933

Dear Diary,

At church last week Mrs. Thomas Jenkins told me that they had a job to come open at the Bargain Loft. She said she knew I was dependable and was good with figures. She told me to come talk to the store manager. I will do that tomorrow at lunch.

Jessie and me are going to the movies tonight. Yesterday Edith and Martha were telling me about when they went to a school dance back home with two boys from their class who were in one of them's wagon. They said it was awful embarrassing to be sitting with a boy when the horse had to do its business there in front of you. Edith said she did not know where to look! I would rather walk 10 miles than go through that. I am glad we moved to town before I started going out with Jessie.

July 11, 1933

Dear Diary,

I am working at the Bargain Loft now. I like it better than the glove mill even though I do not get as many hours. It's real nice to have time to sew a little. There is another reason I am glad to be out of the glove mill. Al Baker and some of them are talking about organizing a union here. They say the NIRA means workers can organize. I do not rightly know what to think about that. Unions have been a lot of trouble in other places. Mama's lips get thin when anybody brings it up. I know John Robert has not said anything to her about him talking to Al and them about any union. When I went over to see him and Amy last night Al was there. John Robert says President Roosevelt says it is all right for workers to have unions. We just have not had one here before. He says the new law means the mill cannot fire people who talk about unions. I hope that is true. He has worked at Trion for almost 10 years now. The company has been good to give all of us jobs when we needed one. I do not want to see John Robert mess up after all this time.

Kathleen McKenzie in October

19 Park Street

Trion, Georgia

July 24, 1933

Dear Georgia,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am just sitting here on the porch. I came outside to see if it was cooler out here and it's not. How is Andrew doing? We are doing fine. Daddy and Papaw say the mill is running them ragged these days though. Daddy says doffing has always been a job where you have to be quick but now it has just about got to be too much.

Mama and Daddy rented out your old room last week to a girl named Geneva Franklin. I think Geneva is such a pretty name. I have not known anyone by that name before. She has the softest voice you ever heard. She's real nice but is getting over being sick. Since she is so nice and tries not to be any trouble, it makes you want to do things for her. When Fay started getting loud I told Granny I would watch her outside. I didn't want her bothering Geneva so Fay is chasing her puppy around the yard and I am writing to you.

How do you like Chattanooga? We miss you but I bet you are having too much fun these days to keep writing letters to me.

Love,

Liz

August 1, 1933

Dear President Roosevelt,

I need to let you know that we are havin a hard time now in the cotton mills. My wifes brothers work in N. Carolina and they says it is no different

there than it is here. We work 8 hour days but do about 16 hours of work in our shift. My daddy started work at the mill when he was 5 so he already has 45 years in. Me and my wife both worked at the mill since we was 12 and 13 and now between the 2 of us we make \$16 a week. The company put my wife down as a learner even though she has worked here near 20 years and they don't pay her as much. We live in a company house but we cant make money enough to buy all the food so have a garden we work in when we can. We are stretched out til nobody can do no more.

I feel like this is honest work and we all want to do our best but we need more money for the time we put in. The company makes us come in 15 minutes before our shift starts and we stay later than the end of the shift.

Lots of us think you want workers to be treated the way they deserve and that is why I am writing to you. We have not been union here and most people say we wont ever be but if things don't get better I don't see how we can keep on. I hope you will understand my not signing my name. If anybody even mentions a union they are libel to get fired.

A Doffer

October 6, 1933

Dear Diary,

It feels funny to be writing in my diary a married woman now. Jesse and me got married last Saturday at church. About thirty people were there with

both our families and friends, Ella, Tony, Ray, and Lizzie. I was kindly nervous but if Jesse was it didn't show.

We went to Rome and stayed two nights at the Mayfair Lodge. One day we had lunch at the Partridge Restaurant which was the nicest place I had ever been to. I had not ever had cheese souffle before. Then we came back to Trion early Monday because he had to work. I want to be a good wife to Jesse. I am not used to having a husband but I guess he is not used to having a wife either. But he is the most patient and kind person I know and I am very proud to be married to him.

Joe and Cecil and them finished painting our house that day as a surprise for us so we were able to start moving in. I made curtains yesterday for the living room. Mama and Annie and Joe came by today to visit. Jesse had gone to the store and Annie asked me where he was. Joe said, "You think she's run him off already?"

They said that Judith was going to come with them but Leon is back from Fort Oglethorpe and she said she would stay home and play cards with him. Mama did not seem to like that and she didn't like John Robert going to those union meetings either. It was Joe told me that he was still going. Joe said Cecil told John Robert to stay away from those Reds. Mama said just because they were union men didn't mean they were Reds but she still didn't want it getting out that John Robert went to the meetings.

November 12, 1933

Dear Diary,

I am so mad at John Robert I can not see straight. He came by the house last night and told Jesse he was going to the big hardware store in Summerville and asked him to go with him. Jesse went and it turned out that they went to a textile union meeting in Summerville too. Jesse told me after they got home and he said he had known about the meeting, he just had not wanted to tell me until he had been to see what it was like. He said they were just regular people who wanted to make sure workers at the mills got paid what they are supposed to.

I know there's laws like the NIRA and I know the mill has a Blue Eagle up in the window but they don't really follow it like they ought to. So Jesse and John Robert are right about that. But we have never had a union here. People act like it is something like Russia, or criminals. Nobody has any money right now. The mill has always tried to look out for the people who work for them. What would they do if anybody goes against them?

December 20, 1933

Dear Diary,

Dr. Allen told me the same thing Mama said Sunday. I am going to have a baby.

December 25, 1933

Dear Georgia,

Even though we saw you yesterday, I just wanted to tell you Merry Christmas! I'm sorry you have to work but I guess people don't stop talking on the phone on holidays.

Jessie and Kathleen came over yesterday after you and Andrew left, and Jesse told Geneva they are having a baby next summer. Kathleen didn't seem real happy about it though. Geneva was excited to hear the news. It seemed to cheer her up. I know she got a letter from her husband this week that must have upset her bad. Roy wants the kids to come back up to Detroit. She said he wouldn't want to look after them himself. I don't know what's going to happen.

Please give Andrew a hug for me and I will see you next Saturday. I am looking forward to visiting you in the big city!

Love,

Lizzie

December 25, 1933

Dear Diary,

I have been a little sick sometimes but not as bad as some have it, I guess. What worries me is telling people and having them look at me. I am

scared to death it is going come early. If I have a seven month baby, people won't believe I was not pregnant at our wedding. I would not have told Lizzie and them but Jesse went and told Geneva so there was not much I could do about that. He is happy, at any rate. Maybe now he will think more about his job and less about those union meetings down at Summerville.

January 10, 1934

Dear Georgia,

Mama said she had talked to you last night about Papaw. He came home from work yesterday worn completely out. Since they put him in charge of more looms, he's been coming in so tired at the end of the day. But yesterday evening he never got up. It seems like he tries to talk and he can't get words out. Daddy called Dr. Allen and he said it looked like he had a stroke. I don't know exactly what that is. Mama has not come back over, except to call you and then she went right back. You know how Daddy never says much. But he told me that they have speeded up things to where he is not surprised somebody Papaw's age is sick from it. He says it is all he can do to keep up and he is over twenty years younger than Papaw is. Granny looks so sad and Fay just sits in the corner. Mama said you were coming home this weekend. I just needed to talk to you before then, even if it is only paper.

Love,

Lizzie

From the *Trion Facts* January 14, 1934

Albert Cole, 61, of 110 Second Street died Friday evening following a brief illness. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth Hayes Cole, four children, Susanna Dillard of Trion, William and James Cole, both of Burlington, North Carolina, and Tennie Gilbert of Rome, by 13 grandchildren,

June 20, 1934

Dear Diary,

Cecil and Jesse got into a fight today. I'm so scared about what is going to happen. Here the baby is coming next month and things are as bad as they can be. John Robert and Jesse are trying their best to get people to join the UTW, and the mill is not going to put up with that. Joe told me he went to one of their meetings, and there were some pretty rough characters from Rome there. When I asked Jesse about it, he said they were just millhands like him and John Robert, but most of them had not had a chance to get as much schooling as we had. "They have been in the mill almost their whole lives, Kathleen. Some went in to work when they were little kids, not much older than Tommy." I tried to imagine that. Even though Lizzie told me her grandfather started work when he was five or six. On the farm we all worked when we were little, but we played too. Jesse said the local just needed people to help build it, and that's what he and John Robert want to do.

I told Jesse to think of his job and the baby, and it was about that time that Edith and Cecil came in. I guess my sister thinks my house is her house. Anyway, Cecil jumped right in and told Jesse that the mill is not going to tolerate people that cause trouble. He told him they would fire him for being some kind of Red. Jesse said he couldn't live with himself if he saw a chance to make a better life his own son, and the union was the best way he saw right now to do that. He told Cecil the New Deal means they can't get rid of workers who join unions. That's when Cecil told him he better not count on Washington DC or the union to save his a**.

All this time Edith and I didn't say a word. She looked at me, and looked down, and when Cecil left, she did too.

I was so happy this morning. The baby will be here soon, born, I hope, in the brand-new hospital. Now I am just scared. What if Cecil is right?

Chapter 4

Class Consciousness: Context, Identification, and Collective Action

By dividing the results of my study into separate chapters, I do not mean to suggest that class consciousness can be considered separately from the silences or gaps in children's books about the labor movement. Reflecting on how characters in the discussion sample chose to respond to societal conflict required situating that response in their ideas about society and the nature of social class and labor. To consider how workers' class consciousness is portrayed requires consideration of the ways in which it is neglected. Threads of both, class consciousness and silences, run throughout these sections of my study by necessity, and in each chapter, I tease out different strands, never completely separating each from the other, in order to consider more carefully the role they play in representations of labor unions. Using the process of the selective tradition as described by Raymond Williams (1977), in this chapter and the next I show how class consciousness is concerned with "certain meanings and values [that] are selected for emphasis" (p. 115). In the following chapter, I consider silences or gaps in representations of labor unions and demonstrate how "certain other meanings and values are neglected or excluded" (p. 115).

Deconstructing Class Consciousness describes how I troubled the concept of class consciousness and identified three areas to examine within the novels of the discussion sample.

Making Connections: Creating Context for Labor Conflict explains how authors established or did not establish links between the current local conflict and larger societal issues.

Daily Lives of the Working Class: Hints of Class and Cultural Consciousness draws on the work of historian Sean Wilentz and children's literature theorist Rudine Sims Bishop to explore how the daily lives of workers are described in the novels.

Collective Action in the Labor Novel explores the various ways in which union activity is represented.

Conclusion is a brief summary of the analysis in Chapter 4.

Coming to Class is an autoethnographic piece that explains my own early consciousness of social class and the uses of art.

“Put Down Your Guns, and Join Us”: The Violence Begins describes the riot in Trion and the measures industry and government took to quell the strike there and in other parts of the state.

Outlaws, Part 4 takes up the story of the mill families in Trion during the summer of 1934, leading up to the impending strike.

Deconstructing Class Consciousness

Class consciousness among American workers can be difficult to identify under an “essentialist” (Wilentz, 1984b, p. 15) conception of the term, that is, one expressed in political action aimed at the capitalist system itself. By rejecting limited notions of what must properly comprise class consciousness, Wilentz was better able to describe the

richness of responses to class conflict in the 19th century. Similarly, I had to expand my ideas of what it meant to exhibit class consciousness in America. Following his model of examining workers' arguments about the nature of labor itself, i.e., should it be considered personal property of those who produce it or a commodity to be bought and sold on the free market (Wilentz, 1984a), I chose to examine the rhetoric of novels in the discussion sample for these ideas. Because the notion of labor as workers' property was emphasized at particular points in American history and de-emphasized in others, I realized that novels set in certain historical periods were more likely to exhibit this aspect of class consciousness, which did prove to be the case.

I focused too on how labor conflict was depicted; this analysis is similar to that used by Sims Bishop (1982) as she pointed out that authors who use the character of the "white villain" often portray that character as belonging to a lower social class and exhibiting "prejudice" (p. 23). Her concern was that "the concept of racism is seldom confronted in these books. It seems to be equated instead with prejudgment, which, unlike racism, may at times be susceptible to reason and experience with the prejudged object(s) or person(s)" (p. 23). In many of the novels about American labor unions, one individual is identified as the owner of the business, and due to the nature of the topic, relations between this individual and his employees (the owners were invariably male) were strained by their differences over work-related issues. Rather than belonging to a lower socioeconomic class like the White racists in Sims Bishop's study, the owner of the company, characterized as the villain, clearly belonged to the upper class and held considerable power over his employees.

Kohl (1995) similarly described how the story of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-1956 is usually portrayed as the story of one heroic individual, Rosa Parks, who impulsively refused to give up her seat to a White person on a segregated city bus. In these simplistic versions of the story, racism is never mentioned; descriptions of segregation are passive and neutral, with no sense of the oppression African-American citizens experienced. These stories also ignore Parks's history of activism within the African-American community and her connections within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). While Parks demonstrated both courage and resolve, the story of the African-American community coming together to organize and support the boycott is far more complex, and versions of the story that ignore these aspects of it are detrimental to the cause of civil rights. Kohl contends that the usual focus on individual courage moves such activism into the realm of heroes, beyond the capabilities of normal people.

This characterization of a problem as the responsibility of an individual with no larger connection to society is, unfortunately, a common theme in education, one that focuses on so-called accountability for individual teachers and students while ignoring the social inequity that results in lower academic achievement among students from families living in poverty. Giroux (1983), considering the pedagogy of a "citizen education model" argues that it "neither recognizes nor responds to social and structural dysfunctions; instead social and institutional failings are translated into personal ones" (p. 180). In this study, I looked for instances in which the capitalist system as a whole was cast as the issue, rather than the oppressive practices of a particular employer. The labor

conflict might be a local one, but it would be based on an understanding that the local situation was part of a broader societal problem. Without this understanding, the implication remained that, were the employer to become a kinder person or at least one “susceptible to reason and experience,” workers would not choose to engage in union activities.

I explored how the author made connections between the labor conflict in the particular setting and those in other trades, geographical locations, and historical periods. I looked for instances of characters expressing solidarity with those beyond their local community or explaining how the present conflict was related to American labor history. The presence or mention of historical figures from American labor history such as Mother Jones or Big Bill Haywood might be used to help establish an overarching connection between the current local conflict and those in other parts of the country. Occasionally a character recalls personal experience with past union activities or explains the history of the labor movement for other characters. This proved to be one of the most fascinating aspects of the study, particularly when it became clear that a few of those historical connections served to undermine the union cause rather than to champion it.

Next I considered how workers’ lives on and off the job were represented in the texts. Here, too, Sims Bishop’s (1982) work informs my own, in particular her identification of “culturally conscious” books as those books about African-Americans that “attempt to reflect and illuminate both the uniqueness and the universal humanness of the Afro-American experience from the perspective of an Afro-American child or family” (p. 15). Culturally conscious texts are aimed at African-American readers but

appeal to a wider audience as well. Although they portray a more generally authentic version of the African-American experience, Sims Bishop points out that culturally conscious books “are not free of ethnocentric outsiders’ perspectives” (p. 73). Those written by White authors, she argues, differ from ones by Black authors in what aspects of that experience they emphasize and the descriptive detail they offer. An example she cites as one way in which writers who have not lived the African-American experience emphasize different aspects of daily life is portrayal of urban life or the ghetto. Outsiders tend to emphasize the grim details of life in a crowded slum, while African-American writers portray these negative aspects but focus as well on the strong relationships and life-sustaining experiences of people who live in urban poverty. Sims Bishop, reflecting on culturally conscious books written by outsiders, describes the difference:

All of those books depict, with some degree of accuracy, some of the harsh reality of ghetto life. But their reality is that which can be seen by anyone who walks through a ghetto, or even by a regular visitor; it lacks the nuances apparent to those who call the ghetto home. The books miss out on the essence; they lose the substance by grasping at the shadow. What is minimized is the recognition that within those grim realities Afro-American people live their lives - they learn and grow and develop strength. They find sustenance in relationships with each other, and in their dreams, and in laughter. (p. 65)

Jenkins (1998) used Sims Bishop’s model of culturally conscious literature as part of her analysis of young adult novels with gay and lesbian characters and found that most

of the texts reflected a “mainstream heterosexual perspective” (p. 315). The majority were what Sims Bishop would term “social conscience” books that show characters from the majority culture learning to get along with people different from themselves. In these novels, a character might discover that a friend or relative is gay, as in one of the earlier novels, *Sticks and Stones* (Hall, 1977) in which a teenager comes out to his best friend who then avoids him until the gay friend almost dies in an accident. *House Like a Lotus* (L’Engle, 1984), *Happily Ever After* (Colman, 1986), and *The Eagle Kite* (Fox, 1995) offer similar examples of reconciliation paired with loss or its threat. In regard to novels about gay or lesbian characters that achieve the equivalent of cultural consciousness as described by Sims Bishop, Jenkins states that, “With rare exceptions, this literature has yet to be written” (p. 315). With this insight into how the same experiences are portrayed from different perspectives, both of which aim to be sympathetic to that experience, I considered what aspects of working class experience might be emphasized in different ways and what details might truly be considered authentic. Because of the size of the discussion sample and the amount of ground I already anticipated covering as I analyzed the texts, I chose not to explore how authors’ backgrounds as insiders or outsiders in relation to working class culture might have influenced the ways in which they depicted that culture. I looked instead to what they chose to emphasize or even celebrate. Wilentz (1984b), describing the rise of the working class in 19th century New York City, focused on their daily lives at work and at home. This approach to historical analysis guided my own, and as I read the eighteen novels in the discussion sample, I paid close attention to how authors chose to depict workers’ daily lives. Did they focus only on the drudgery of

the working day, or did they show characters having fun in what free time they had? Did they suggest as well an ethic of mutuality among workers or show evidence of workers' ingenuity in the face of challenges on or off the job? Those that did could be considered to demonstrate another aspect of class consciousness, albeit one more nuanced than that based on workers' conceptions of labor conflict.

A third aspect of class consciousness I chose to include in discussion of the novels was representation of characters' participation in collective versus individual action. In most of the books in the sample, the labor union or strike was the primary theme that provided the narrative's conflict. For example, in *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2004), *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007), and *Strike Two* (Koss, 2002), the labor struggle is foregrounded, and all action revolves around characters' involvement with it. In other novels, the plot focuses on other day-to-day struggles in the lives of the characters, with the labor conflict occurring in the background through much of the story but occasionally being emphasized. In *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor, 1981) and *Jesse* (Soto, 1994), labor conflict helps establish the books' historical settings and creates political context, while also moving the narrative along periodically. In other words, while labor unions appear in the novels, these books cannot be considered to be ones *about* labor unions.

In other novels in the discussion sample, authors use labor conflict purely as a plot device, but the conflict itself remains offstage throughout the book and main characters' involvement with it is tangential. In *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) labor unions are mentioned in one scene only, in which the protagonist is persuaded to help a union supporter avoid detection by the police. *Dream Factory* (Barkley & Hepler, 2007)

is set during a strike at Disney World, but the strike is mentioned only occasionally. The characters follow news of the strike only insofar as it affects the length of their stay in Orlando.

Aside from these two novels, all books in the discussion sample represent American labor unions in some way, either as primary or secondary themes, and it would initially appear that they might all by definition offer examples of collective action. Most do include some type of strike or lock-out as part of the narrative. Still, the author's choices as to how that strike is portrayed and how or whether the protagonists participate in or support it vary among books in the discussion sample. One contemporary novel about a teachers' strike, *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) hardly mentions the word "union." The strike is instead coordinated by what is called simply "the teachers' committee." Such a choice by an author creates a specific version of collective action that looks very different from those that emphasize membership in a labor union or activities by workers on behalf of a union. Because my sample is composed of novels for older children and teens, the protagonists were usually young teenagers and so were observers rather than participants in labor conflict. This often allowed the writer to maintain a focus on individual actions by a young protagonist, set against the backdrop of collective action by other, older characters. Still, the extent to which the protagonist became involved with or supported collective action by others was another potential identifiable marker of class consciousness within the novels.

By focusing on these three aspects of class consciousness, 1) the creation of context for labor conflict in the novels by explicit connections made across time, trades,

or locations; 2) description of the daily lives of workers that reflects a culturally conscious understanding of working class culture; and 3) depiction of collective and individual actions, I was able identify instances in which authors suggested some degree of class consciousness. A consistent critique of the capitalist system was present only rarely among novels in the discussion sample. Some authors offered a range of viewpoints on labor conflict, attempting to show all sides. Others focused almost entirely on characters' personal struggles, even as economic inequality played a major role in those struggles. Intimidation of prospective union members or strikers was a common theme in the historical fiction, while most of the contemporary novels focused on violence by strikers themselves.

As a whole, the historical fiction fared better than the six contemporary novels, both in terms of historical authenticity and literary value. This can be explained partly by the nature of the discussion sample itself: The historical novels were selected for discussion because they were recommended by selection guides for school libraries and were often award-winning titles. As such they would be expected to feature complex characters and authentic descriptions of setting. The contemporary novels were included in the discussion sample not because of their literary value or the probability of their being found in bookstores or school libraries, but because there were so few, six among over fifty titles in the general sample, that it seemed worthwhile to explore these infrequent contemporary representations of the American labor movement. Their copyright dates, which ranged from 1976 to 2007, with three of the books published before 1990, mean that few can truly be considered contemporary. Still, these are the only

novels published in the last decades to offer any perspective as to how children's authors represent the unions of their day to young readers. Ethnicity, immigration, and gender roles were important themes in most of the historical novels but were entirely absent in the contemporary fiction. Rich description of workers' lives and a sense of the communities in which they lived were usually present in the historical fiction but far less common in the contemporary novels.

The image of American labor unions that emerges from the novels in the discussion sample is one of individuals striving to improve their family's economic fortunes, rather than aiming to change the economic system itself. Characters within the historical novels invoke the American dream of social mobility, while those in the contemporary fiction are more likely to protest in defense of what they have already attained, a fragile security jeopardized by the actions of a specific employer. In fact, this distinction is made explicit within the pages of two of the contemporary novels, when older relatives unfavorably compare the present labor conflicts with those of the past, which they consider more worthy. Comparing the historical novels to the six contemporary novels, the unions of the past are depicted far more favorably than those of the present. A critical look at how these messages are inscribed in text suggests that the nuanced portrayals of class consciousness in historical novels and the lack of representation of class consciousness in contemporary fiction for children and young adults may lead readers to conclude that labor itself is an issue no longer relevant in the twenty-first century.

Making Connections: Creating Context for Labor Conflict

If conflict drives every narrative, the ways in which that conflict are depicted must be examined with care. Only a few of the authors of books in the discussion sample provide statements about why they made the choices they did, in terms of what to include and whose perspectives are given. These choices are part of the process by which particular aspects receive “emphasis” while others are minimized or neglected altogether, according to Williams’s (1977) description of this selective tradition. An important part of this characterization of the conflict is the context in which it takes place. Authors of children’s fiction about the American labor movement cannot assume their young readers will be familiar with basic concepts of the movement, such as unions, collective bargaining, or strikes. The decline in union membership over the last three decades means that children and teenagers are less likely to have older family members who belong to labor unions. Also, as Anyon (1979) demonstrated, even before union membership decreased, social studies textbooks in the United States offered minimal information about the labor movement, and what was presented focused more on the movement’s failures than on its successes. Those who write novels for young people then have the task of providing enough explanatory information to allow young readers to understand why these actions are taking place. That information may include the historical context of the conflict, such as descriptions of labor actions in the past which are then linked to the present conflict. Authors may mention historical figures from the labor movement, such as union organizer Mother Jones, United Mine Workers president John L. Lewis, or César Chávez of the United Farm Workers. For example, the protagonist’s grandmother in *Up*

Molasses Mountain (Baker, 2002) recalls how Mother Jones visited the mining town where she lived to encourage workers to join the union:

“She was a big strong woman, helped with the labor cause. People didn’t want to cross her and she knew it. My mother said she was coars. She was, but she managed to help the men get something from the owners, even spent some time in jail for it.” (p. 45)

In *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) characters discuss the work of Chávez and Dolores Huerta, who co-founded the United Farm Workers of America. Occasionally such figures become a part of the plot, with characters in the novel witnesses to critical scenes in American labor history. Katherine Paterson, in *Bread and Roses, Too* (2006), portrays Joe Ettor, organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World, speaking to a crowd of textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912. Later Elizabeth Gurley Flynn arrives to assist and encourage the striking workers. Characters who belong to unions may also draw explicit connections between their own organization and others in different industries or in different parts of the country, allowing readers to grasp the notion that workers even in different areas share common interests in fair wages and decent working conditions. For example, the young union activist Marta, in *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) assures farm workers that people around the country are joining the strike, suggesting a sense of common interest that underlies the idea of class consciousness.

“I will not be a slave”: Republican rhetoric in the American labor movement.

American workers' identification of themselves both as laborers and as citizens shifted during the 19th century, the earliest historical period depicted in the discussion sample. *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991), set in 1843 when the American Revolution was very much a part of historical memory, strikes notes of what Roediger (1991/2007) describes as *labor republicanism* in which “workers creatively pursued the vision of a republic of small producers,” (p. 43), an egalitarian society - at least for its White citizenry. It is worthwhile to carefully examine this particular novel, as it is one of only three books in the larger sample with a setting between 1829 and 1850, the period during which Wilentz (1984b) suggests

both a process and strain of consciousness emerged in numerous ways from the swirl of popular politics, in which people came at various points to interpret social disorder and the decline of the Republic at least partly in terms of class divisions between capitalist employers and employees. (p. 16-17)

Wilentz argues that although wage labor was traditionally viewed with distrust by workers whose ultimate goal was to become independent farmers or craftsmen, its prevalence by the 1830s meant an accommodation of the republican ideal of independence to a new economic reality. This adjustment of republicanism to admit the reality of long-term dependence on wage labor was what compelled White laborers' “sweeping critiques of wage labor as ‘white slavery’ but it could also reassure workers that they belonged to the ranks of ‘free white labor’” (Roediger, 1991/2007, p. 47). Katherine Paterson, author of *Lyddie* (1991) lays the groundwork for this notion of wage

slavery early in the novel. After the Worthen household dissolves due to economic hardship, with Lyddie heading off to find employment and pay off her family's mounting debts and her mother taking the younger children to stay with relatives, their Quaker neighbors, the Stevenses, agree to keep watch over the farmstead. When she returns home unannounced to check on the property, Lyddie finds an escaped slave staying in their old cabin, stashed there by the Stevens family. Surprised and horrified by her own impulse to give the fugitive her savings to help him on his way to Canada, Lyddie later compares her journey to work in Lowell to the escaped slave's journey: "He walked north for freedom and I am walking south" (p. 47), implying that she will find freedom from poverty and debt through her work in the mill. The chapter itself is entitled "South to Freedom;" soon, however, the question arises as to just how free Lyddie is as a textile worker.

Once trained on the loom by Diana, a union activist, Lyddie focuses on her work to an obsessive degree, persevering even as other workers quit or fall ill when disease spreads through their ranks. Although she recognizes at some level that her single-mindedness deprives her of human relationships and makes her increasingly tightfisted with her hard-earned savings, she refuses to admit the damage done to her own character. When her co-worker Betsy sings a song popular during the 1834 Lowell turn-out or strike, "Oh! I Cannot Be a Slave!" and explains how the mills have extended workers' hours, increased the pace of work, and cut wages so that "the corporation can make a packet of money" (p. 92), Lyddie insists that she is not a slave, but the reader senses that she may be trying to reassure herself rather than Betsy. Lyddie's arguments, both internal and external, reflect the rhetoric used by the striking workers of Lowell during the 1830s

and 1840s. They were “daughters of freemen,” (Dublin, 1979) and invoked the historical memory of the American revolution to emphasize that status.

Despite all Paterson’s description of the grueling circumstances under which the textile workers labored and the related problems of disease and sexual harassment they endured, Lyddie’s growth as a character comes when she finally blames her fears and restricted emotions on herself (p. 181), rather than the poverty and oppression she experienced. Long haunted by nightmares about the bear that had once menaced her family in their tumble-down farmhouse, Lyddie realizes at the end that her fears stemmed from “the bear that she had thought for years was outside herself, but now truly knew was in her own narrow spirit” (p. 181). Without explicit acknowledgement of the societal factors that turned a teenager into a drudge, Paterson misses an opportunity to show the connection between the economic system and the physical and emotional damage done to those whose labor drove the early Industrial Revolution. Although suggestions of some sense of the inequities of the present system of wage labor swirl around her, Lyddie is shown as too caught up in her personal concerns to ever really formulate a class consciousness based on that awareness. The novel ends on a hopeful note, as Lyddie defers a marriage proposal from one of the Stevens sons in favor of seeking to attend Oberlin College in Ohio, a radical act for a female in 1846. If Lyddie’s ambition to improve her circumstances requires a rejection of wage labor rather than challenging its conditions, she was not alone; few of the female millworkers in Lowell intended their stay there to be permanent. For most, it was a means of assisting their families while enjoying a temporary independence. Their chief concern about cuts to their wages was

that such decreases might mean they would have to continue working in Lowell to help support their families, while never again being able to save enough money to return home permanently (Dublin, 1979). Although Paterson never argues that labor is a form of personal property, as described by Wilentz (1984), the notion of wage slavery does imply the theft by employers of their workers' independence.

Interestingly, the only other book in the discussion sample to hint at wage slavery was *Jesse* (Soto, 1994), the historical novel set in 1970. It tells the story of two teenaged brothers living on their own in Fresno, California, and putting themselves through community college in hopes of having an easier life than their parents'. Their only reliable source of income is the ninety dollars they have each received from Social Security since their father died in an industrial accident years earlier. The brothers work as day laborers occasionally in the fields to pay their living expenses and tuition. Jesse hums while he works in the field because he knows slaves sang songs to get through "sweaty hours" (p. 11). To Jesse, fieldwork is a reliable source of income, even easy. Abel, however, soon realizes that even with the two of them working, their income from the fields will not be sufficient to cover living expenses.

"You're thinking like a slave," Abel said.

"No, I'm not," I answered, hurt that my brother would call me a slave.

"This is honest work, and we need it."

Abel shook his head and looked at me strangely with some carrot in his mouth. "Jesse, we'll never make enough this way. They're taking advantage of us." (p. 13)

Social class and race are inextricably linked: Abel insists that the owners take advantage of Mexican workers and later in the book, when the boys attend a meeting of the Chicano student organization Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), a parallel is drawn in their discussion between the war in Vietnam and the plight of Mexican workers in the United States. Jesse notes, “It made me sad that Mexican people were doing all the fighting just the way we were doing all the fieldwork” (p. 118).

The presence of the idea of wage slavery in the historical fiction set in both the earliest and most recent time periods represented in novels of the discussion sample, 1843 and 1970, reflects Wilentz’s (1984a) contention that the concept of labor as belonging to workers, rather than as a commodity purchased at market price by employers, never completely faded in the American labor movement. Rather, it was prominent during certain historical periods and less so in others. The periods in which the argument was foregrounded are those in which the fewest labor-themed novels for children are set - the first half of the 19th century, which includes the period in which *Lyddie* is set, and the 1870s through the early 1890s, during the rise and fall of the Knights of Labor. It was during the latter period that what Wilentz termed “extraordinary repression [was] visited upon organized workers by employers’ associations, with the cooperation of the courts, state legislatures, and increasingly, the federal government” (p. 15). Except for *Lyddie*, all novels in the discussion sample are set after this systematic repression was established as a response to challenges by labor unions. With this in mind, an examination of how or indeed whether authors describe such repression will offer further insight into how class

consciousness is portrayed in children's novels about labor unions in the United States. I will also explore instances in which government comes to the aid of labor.

“When you have power, you use it”: The role of government.

A few of the novels in the discussion sample specifically link private industry with governmental policies that either protect the owners of those industries or fail to protect workers. Young readers unfamiliar with the traditionally close connection between money and the political system are unlikely to realize the extent to which wealth influences government action or inaction. The relationship between those with money and political and even military might is voiced in *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988) by Chris's uncle as he explains, “The family has a lot of power, and when you have power, you use it...We have the courts, the law, the police - the national guard if we need it” (p. 23).

Some novels like *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004) hint that wealth opens a door to the political connections that make life for factory owners easier when a storm takes out the generator at a south Georgia poultry plant in the 1960s, endangering the well-being of the current crop of chickens. Although the power outage is widespread, a sheriff's deputy accompanies a repairman to the processing plant in the middle of the night to repair the generator. Other books suggest that the inverse of the axiom, “What's good for General Motors is good for America” is also true; what is bad for private industry is bad for America. In *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), the young labor activist Marta makes the point that farmworkers are being deported because they are talking about creating a real

union and causing problems for the government. When striking workers are repatriated to Mexico, whether they are actually citizens of that country or not, Marta explains that it is because they are “talking about forming a farm workers’ union and the government and the growers don’t like that” (p. 206). Unfortunately, it is not immediately clear just how a labor union would create these problems for the government or why the government would object to fieldworkers forming a labor union. Ryan gives a brief explanation in the author’s note at the end of the novel of how “The growers were powerful and could sometimes influence local governments. In Kern County, sheriffs arrested picketers for obstructing traffic, even though the roads were deserted. In Kings County, one Mexican man was arrested for speaking to a crowd in Spanish” (p. 257). Still, a young reader is unlikely to understand just what kind of pressure might be brought to bear on local authorities that would result in the abuses Ryan cites. After her more explicit description of political corruption in Mexico earlier in the novel, it appears to be a lost opportunity to explore in more depth the constraints on immigrants’ achievement of the American dream.

While a few novels in the discussion sample refer to government support of private industry like those listed above, more offer instances of police brutality toward strikers or protesters. In *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007), the police ignore people who harass the striking garment workers and instead beat and arrest the strikers themselves. One novel, Pat Hughes’s *The Breaker Boys* (2004) has as its climactic scene the Lattimer Massacre of 1897 in which 19 coal miners were killed by sheriff’s deputies in Pennsylvania. In her author’s note, Hughes explains that the sheriff and deputies were tried and acquitted of

murder. She observes, too, that within five years after the massacre, almost all the independent coal companies whose employees participated in the 1897 strike had been taken over by the railroad monopolies. In the novel, members of the Tanner family who own coal mines in the area discuss this possibility, citing concern about decreased profit as an opportunity for a takeover by the railroad companies. Hughes states that she tried to “balance the perspectives of the operators and the immigrants” (p. 247). While she does make a point to give the owners’ side of the conflict, it is clear that the balance of power is tipped so far in favor of the owners that acts of resistance on the part of the miners are doomed to failure.

Historical events also form part of the narrative in *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2006), which gives an account of the death of Annie LoPizzo, an Italian striker who was shot by police. Paterson explains that labor organizer Joe Ettor, although miles from the scene of the violence, was charged with inciting the crowd and named as an accessory in LoPizzo’s murder. Other books recount fictional episodes of police brutality, as in *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor, 1981) and *Jesse* (Soto, 1994). Rarely are police perceived as being on the side of labor unions. Only one novel points out that police officers are often union members and implies they may be sympathetic to striking employees. In the first chapter of the contemporary novel *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001), Gwen joins her father and his co-workers from the newspaper on the picket line. The mood is light, “a giant party” (p. 4), and Gwen sees the coach for her softball team “joking around with my dad and some police officers” (p. 5). A boy she knows explains to her “They’re

union too” (p. 6) although the implication that as such the police will be more supportive of the strikers than their employers is lost on Gwen.

One novel in the discussion sample describes how lack of government regulation over worker safety failed to protect employees in one of the nation’s worst workplace disasters. *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007), one of two novels in the discussion sample about the Triangle Waist Factory Fire of 1911, includes a detailed author’s note in which Haddix explains that the Triangle fire was the catalyst for a series of government reforms once citizens realized that private industry alone could not be trusted to protect its workers’ safety. Thus, after the owners of the Triangle Factory were tried and acquitted for manslaughter, the governor of New York created the Factory Investigating Commission and, once the commission called for a series of safety reforms, the state’s Department of Labor was officially charged with enforcing them. In addition, Haddix explains how President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s future Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins, was a witness to the fire and later part of the commission appointed by the governor to investigate the disaster. Haddix quotes Perkins as saying, “The Triangle fire was the first day of the New Deal” (p. 342).

Almost half the historical novels in the discussion sample offer instances of the type of repression Wilentz (1984a) describes or cite the failures of government to adequately protect worker safety. Its representations in books for children and young adults provide readers an explanation as to why characters in novels who would might otherwise join a union or participate in a strike choose not to. By including such systematic efforts on the part of employers and government to control workers and

prevent unions from gaining any ground at all, authors show how workers' failures to rally around the union cannot be blamed on "false consciousness" or lack of understanding of their true circumstances. On the contrary, most provide sufficient detail to demonstrate that characters like Esperanza understood the challenges they faced if they were to align themselves with the union. Still, collusion between government and industry efforts to suppress workers' union activities is more often secondary to employers' actual intimidation of those who would join labor unions or participate in strikes, as shall be seen later in the discussion of depictions of collective action in the novels.

The classist villain.

Most of the historical fiction offers at least some suggestion that labor conflict is part of a larger struggle. Newbery Medal winner *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2006) is one novel that portrays the owner of the poultry processing plant as personally evil though and never moves beyond his awful reputation to examine how workers in the industry were often exploited in the small Southern towns where the plants were located. Mr. Lyndon, the owner of the south Georgia poultry plant that employs the parents of the Japanese-American family, is "an invisible legend in the county: the big, mean, rich Mr. Lyndon" (p. 85) who lives in an old plantation home. Mr. Lyndon hires "thugs" to intimidate union organizers and refuses to give workers time off even for bathroom breaks, but it is his cruelty outside the workplace that leads to a key scene close to the end of the book. Lynn, the older sister of the narrator Katie, is ill with lymphoma. Before

she becomes too sick to leave the house, she and Katie take their younger brother Sammy on a picnic in a field that belongs to Mr. Lyndon. While playing in the field, Sammy get his leg caught in an animal trap Mr. Lyndon had set, “the metal kind that bites an animal until the animal is forced to chew off its own leg” (p. 142). When their parents arrive at the hospital, Katie notices that they both are very quiet and that her father in particular seems to be lost in “a dark, smoky, angry silence that I had never seen before” (p. 155). Months later, immediately following Lynn’s death, her father explodes, driving out to the Lyndon home where he smashes the windshield of their red Cadillac with a two-by-four and drives off, undetected. Katie, who has accompanied him, realizes that her long-suffering father, who has always before accepted “rudeness and unfairness to himself, just as he accepted hard work” (p. 210), has been pushed too far at last: “But I saw that on this one day, for the first time since I’d known him, he could not accept the way his life was turning out” (p. 210).

Kadohata’s representation of Mr. Lyndon as a cruel and selfish character stands alone in the narrative as the reason for the exploitation of Katie’s parents and the other poultry plant workers. Although Katie and her family experience racism as Japanese-Americans living in a small and presumably predominately White town, it is clear that Lyndon’s treatment of his workers, no matter what their race, is unfair and insensitive. The book is artfully written in the voice of its young protagonist who is unaware throughout much of the book of just how serious her sister’s illness is, but who knows all too well how great their loss will be. It may be that Mr. Lyndon is seen simply as “the bogeyman” in Katie’s eyes because of her age, but the presence of older characters who

are active in the labor union also fails to offer the reader any reason for the conflict except that, in the words of an adult character, Lyndon is an “idiotic son of a bitch” (p. 147). In *Kira-kira*, Kadohata shows the racism confronted by Japanese families in Georgia in 1960, but Mr. Lyndon operates on the basis of classism as well. There is no indication that White employees fare any better than the Japanese-Americans in his poultry processing plant. Workers in general appear to hold him in low regard.

Kira-kira is the only historical novel to rely on one individual as the villain; all the others establish at least some context for the labor conflict beyond the actions of a single individual. One of the most compelling examples can be found in *Billy Creekmore* (Porter, 2007) in which an organizer for the United Mine Workers exhorts White workers to join together with Black miners based on their common economic interests. He warns that “Those of you who are white and native born and think Mr. Newgate [the mine’s owner] is like you are wrong. He ain’t like you.... He’s like the coal baron in Beckley and the coal baron in Eccles. He’s like the bank owners in Charleston and New York and Boston, but he ain’t like you” (p. 197). The owner’s commonalities with other wealthy and powerful individuals, both local and far removed from their small mining town in West Virginia, suggest that Newgate alone is not the cause of their difficulties but is part of a broader economic system of oppression.

Among the contemporary novels, it is impossible to identify a single individual as the unsympathetic, classist villain. Not only are labor unions depicted far less sympathetically in the contemporary novels than in the historical fiction, but employers are cast as more corporate entities: the board of education (*Time to Take Sides*, Gold,

1976; *Strike!*, Corcoran, 1983); the Winchester family and their powerful allies (Collier, 1988); Badgett Construction Company (*Riot*, Casanova, 1996); management as a whole at the newspaper (*Strike Two*, Koss, 2001); and the Disney corporation (*Dream Factory*, Barkley & Hepler, 2007). Aside from the Winchesters whose perspective is given by Chris's uncle and grandfather in their discussions with Chris about the approaching strike, the perspectives of these employers seldom enter the narrative at all, leaving the exact nature of the labor conflict ill-defined.

Calls for action and solidarity: Historical figures in labor novels.

In most of the historical novels in the discussion sample, the focus is on a single union, with no suggestion that workers in various trades or professions might share a common interest or coordinate their activities. A couple of books in the discussion sample offer vague suggestions of support in other parts of the country or by sympathetic members of the community. Marta in *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), after she and others are evicted from the farm camp, tells Esperanza and her friend Miguel that “thousands around the country” are joining their strike (p. 192). In *Jesse* (Soto, 1994), striking farm workers are joined by college students, priests, and nuns on the picket line.

With so few examples of solidarity with labor unions, either on behalf of other labor unions or individuals in the community, the impression young readers may receive is that collective action takes place in isolation from those who share workers' interests. In spite of the overall lack of specific examples in the discussion sample of workers' common economic interests, many of the authors of historical fiction about unions do

allude to a common cause by introducing labor leaders into the story. Overstreet (2001) in her small sample of novels about the American labor movement set from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s found that although this period was one in which labor unions were particularly active, only one historical figure, Mother Jones, appeared in any of the novels. More recently authors of books about labor appear to have made a particular point of either mentioning labor leaders briefly or occasionally including them in the narrative. *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002), set in 1956 in West Virginia, is told from the points of view of two protagonists: One is Elizabeth, a girl whose family is sharply divided on the question of whether coal miners need a union, the other her friend Clarence, whose father is strongly committed to the union cause. Elizabeth's grandmother recounts to her how Mother Jones came to town to encourage striking coal miners when she was a girl. Clarence's father tells his family he believes the president of the United Mine Workers (UMW), Mr. John L. Lewis himself, has proclaimed the mining company in their town to be "the number-one target of the United Mine Workers" (p. 38) because it is the only non-union mine in the state of West Virginia. An earlier president of the UMW, John Fahy, is mentioned briefly in *The Breaker Boys* (Hughes, 2004) set in Pennsylvania in 1897.

Of the four novels in the discussion sample about the textile and garment industries, two include scenes in which historical figures, some well known and others more obscure, appear. *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) is the only book to include Samuel Gompers, longtime president of the American Federation of Labor, famous for his conservative approach to strikes and his philosophy of a "pure and simple

unionism” (Greene, 1998) that largely avoided overt political entanglements. Gompers appears in a scene at an historic meeting at Cooper Union Hall in New York in 1909 at which the AFL president counsels frustrated garment workers to be patient instead of calling for the strike they had hoped for. Not long afterward, young Clara Lemlich, a garment worker herself, claims the stage and energizes the crowd with her passionate call for action, precipitating the vote for a general garment workers’ strike. Lemlich appears as well in at least one of the books in the general sample, *Call Me Ruth* (Sachs, 1982), although as Overstreet (2001) notes, in this book Sachs does not point out that the leaders of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), all of them male, provided no real support for the strikers. Rarely do accounts in either textbooks or trade books demonstrate the conservatism with which the AFL operated; this scene as represented *Uprising* and *Call Me Ruth* is one of the few to suggest that this was indeed the case.

Bread and Roses, Too (Paterson, 2006) depicts historical figures from another American labor union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or as they were often called, the “Wobblies”). The IWW was formed in part to provide an alternative to the American Federation of Labor; its goal was to create “One Big Union,” made up of workers from all industries and all ethnicities, as opposed to the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor. Joe Ettor, Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn all appear in *Bread and Roses, Too* to lend their support to the protestors.

Although five of the eighteen novels in the discussion sample at least mention historical figures from the labor movement, none of the contemporary novels names a

single union leader. The only specific union named in the six contemporary novels is the Teamsters, and that is in reference to a strike that took place over fifty years earlier. It is as if each of the strikes or threatened strikes occurs in isolation, unconnected to a larger movement. I found the word “union” mentioned only once in *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983), a book about a teachers’ strike that takes place in a nameless locale. The novel, published during Ronald Reagan’s presidency, voiced concerns about conservative community efforts to influence the curriculum and determine what books are selected by school and public libraries. When the idea of teachers sharing common economic interests with other workers is introduced, it is as a discordant notion. Barry, the son of an attorney who serves on the local school board notes: “It was strange to see them out on the sidewalk with signs, like a bunch of carpenters or supermarket clerks or something. It had never occurred to him before to think of them as workers” (p. 30). Indeed, nothing in the novel suggests any sort of class consciousness on the part of the teachers, whose concerns are as much about academic freedom as they are salary issues. Later Barry’s father, a caustic and unsympathetic character, derides the teachers as “a bunch of airheads...They’ve seen strikers on television, marching shoulder to shoulder, singing ‘Solidarity Forever’ or whatever they sing. Romantic. Picturesque. That’s how they see themselves. Fighting for the downtrodden” (p. 40). But just as the strike at the town’s two high schools is portrayed as a purely local event, unconnected to any larger issue, so too the actions of the conservative Committee for a Balanced Curriculum occur in isolation from any larger movement such as Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum, a group founded in the 1970s and still active today. The only way in which authors of the contemporary novels attempt to give

any sort of context to the strikes is by referring to past union activities; however, these references are more likely to denigrate the value of the present strikes, suggesting that workers' goals are not as worthy as those in the past.

Back in the day: Invoking labor's glorious past.

Recalling particular aspects of the history of the American labor movement is one strategy used to link the plot of the present text with the past. Authors of both the historical and contemporary novels employ these techniques, having a parent or grandparent offer insight or opinions about labor activities in earlier years. In some cases, however, this becomes problematic, as the speakers unfavorably compare the present with the more noble efforts of unions in years past, thus suggesting, if not actually stating, that labor unions have lost their relevance. In *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001), Gwen's father, a striking copyeditor, tells his mother, "A *little* picketing builds character" to which she replies "but more than that destroys it....Strikes were more dramatic and romantic in the old days...about workers' rights and decent conditions. Now it's all about money" (15-16).

Similarly, the great-grandparents in *Riot*, recall the strike of 1934 as "part of Teamster history" (p. 37). Grandpa Howie is the embodiment of the need for worker safety regulations, having long ago lost his right arm in an accident that inspired a drive by the union for safer working conditions at the paper mill. In 1934, Bryan's great-grandmother worked in soup kitchens organized by the labor union to feed striking workers. "Oh, and it was a long strike. Not like today. Things are easy today. Then...men

were fighting to earn enough money to feed their families. Some starved right in the streets” (p. 37). Her husband describes police crackdowns and accusations by the Citizen’s Party, a group composed of local business owners, that union members were Communists. When Bryan asks if union members were Communists, his great-grandfather relies, “Heck no!...But there plenty of Reds around then...” (p. 38). Although they provide a point of connection between the present strike and past labor battles, these recollections, served up on a Labor Day family visit, also cast their grandson’s involvement in the construction workers’ wildcat strike as pointless and nihilistic.

One of the historical novels also features older characters who suggest that the current labor protests are less worthy than those of days past. *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002) is set in West Virginia in 1956 and tells the story of a father and son divided by their views of the United Mine Workers (UMW). The protagonist Elizabeth is surprised to find that her grandfather had belonged to the union, in light of her father’s strong opposition to it. Her grandmother recalls a time when “the mines were even more hateful than they are today. They’d kill dozens at a time, men with babies and wives, leaving them with nothing. And little children would be down there all day, crawling in the black, digging all day, just to eat” (44). The grandmother remembers how her own father died in a mining accident, after which she married a young miner and moved away from Paint Creek to a town where the mine was not unionized. Ultimately, she tells Elizabeth, in Paint Creek, the union “milked the cow dry, so the farmers had to go somewhere else. After a time, the union bosses started looking an awful lot like the mine owners” (p. 46). Later Elizabeth asks her father why he and her brother Sterling hold

such different views of the union. “I know it must be hard to understand...Long ago, unions did a lot of good” (p. 89). Now, he explains that he opposes the UMW because “the union makes men think they can’t change anything without them. I know men have more power together, but I don’t want to stand with a bunch of thugs” (p. 89). Still the roots of his resistance to labor unions appear to be located less in a philosophy of individualism and more in a pragmatic loyalty to his employer.

Novels about American labor unions are full of stories of “dark times,” of violence on both sides of the labor struggle. While some encourage solidarity with courageous activists of the past, people like Mother Jones, John Mitchell, Joseph Ettor, Joe Hill, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, others minimize the struggles of the present and imply that the problems unions meant to address were solved long ago. Texts that suggest labor organizations may once have done some good but are now irrelevant to the present workers’ concerns are akin to those that imply racism and sexism are no longer the problems they once were. A closer look at the contemporary workplace indicates that wage issues and unsafe working conditions, like blatant racism and sexism, may not be as obvious as they once were, but even significant progress does not mean the problems can simply be considered solved. The number of Americans without health insurance, a benefit usually linked to employment in this country, has increased steadily over recent years (Cohen, Makuc, Bernstein, Bilheimer, & Powell-Griner, 2009) as healthcare costs rise and employers no longer provide coverage. The financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing deep recession saw further cuts in benefits, with over 60% of companies in a recent survey reporting decreases in employee benefits (Society for Human Resource

Management, 2009). Working conditions and wages do not inevitably improve over time, and a view of history that encompasses its ebbs and flows is more useful here than one that lays claim to an unending march of human progress. With that in mind, I turn to how novels in the discussion sample link issues of the past to contemporary life.

Connection to the present.

In a sample dominated by historical fiction, perhaps one of the most difficult connections to make is drawing a direct line from the past to the present. The best historical fiction does this, and this is the case in the books about the American labor movement. Although the percentage of Americans belonging to unions has declined since the 1980s, a not insignificant percentage, twelve percent, are still union members. In addition, that percentage has increased slightly in recent years. The question must arise then of why so few authors have even attempted to link the labor movement of the past to concerns of the present. Although passages in both *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) and *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) about attitudes toward Latino immigration to the United States resonate today as the issue is one frequently raised, particularly by angry activists who seek to “seal our border,” only one author of a novel in the discussion sample explicitly links the events in her novel to contemporary concerns.

Although I have referred to the disproportionate number of historical novels written about the American labor movement, I do not mean to suggest that the genre precludes the possibilities of engagement with the present. Williams stresses that “cultural formations” (1977, p. 118-119) including literature can indeed offer alternative

or oppositional versions of the past and present, along with those of the more hegemonic tradition. Such cultural formations have the potential to reclaim the past in ways that cast the present in a different light. Historical fiction may potentially demonstrate how social problems of today have their roots in the past, and by portraying various responses of people in the past to those problems, may offer insight for our own times. M.T.

Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing* (2006) provides a postmodernist take on a topic as old as the United States itself as he casts the American Revolution not as a brilliantly fought conflict for high-flown political goals, but as a series of often random and violent engagements with goals not readily apparent to its citizen soldiers. Anderson manages to create a compelling narrative while rendering it artfully enough to receive a National Book Award. Although the historical fiction in my discussion sample was by definition award-winning or recommended by selection guides for children's literature, no authors took as innovative and oppositional an approach to labor history as Anderson did to his story of the American Revolution.

However, *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007), is one in which the author provides a critique not just of the owners of the factory but of the capitalist system itself and establishes connections between the events in past and present. The story is an absorbing one, and the reader knows from the beginning that only one of the three friends survives the Triangle fire. It is not revealed until the end who the survivor is. Haddix provides a detailed author's note that describes immigration in the early 20th century, events leading up to the garment workers' strike, and the disastrous fire and its aftermath. Had she stopped there, Haddix would still have created a work of fiction that portrays important

shifts in how young women viewed their roles in society and described labor unions' efforts to achieve fair wages and safe working conditions in the early 20th century. However, she continues by describing the involvement of Frances Perkins in the Triangle fire investigation. She also notes that industrial disasters are not just a thing of the past, citing a 1991 fire at a chicken-processing plant in North Carolina, and as an example of the effects of globalization and lack of concern with worker safety, a 1993 fire at a toy factory in Thailand. "Like the shirtwaist-wearing college girls in 1909, we have to ask ourselves what responsibility we bear for the people who make our clothes and other possessions" (p. 343). Throughout the narrative and beyond, Haddix focuses on this responsibility in such a way that the connection between past and present is clear.

Uprising is the only novel in the sample to make such an explicit connection, as I will further discuss in the chapter on silences in the literature. Claims like those in *Riot* (Casanova, 1996) and *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001) that workers have it easy today or that strikes are "all about the money" ignore the real problems that persist, including unsafe working conditions, refusal by companies to permit their workers to unionize, and the exploitation of undocumented immigrants. Having considered how authors provide context for labor conflicts in terms of the nature of the conflict and of connections across the boundaries of different trades, geographical locations, and time, I now examine more closely how authors of the novels depict the routines of workers' lives at work and at home.

Daily Lives of the Working Class: Hints of Class and Cultural Consciousness

Cultural histories of communities that experienced labor struggles provide authors of children's fiction with vast amounts of historical data that can be used to create detailed descriptions of workers' lives. Some authors, such as Cynthia Kadohata, Pamela Muñoz Ryan, Christopher Paul Curtis, and Mildred Taylor rely on family histories to give insight into how workers' viewed themselves and the world around them. Such family stories especially offer the potential to move beyond an outsider's interpretation of events and into one that takes into account the rich complexity of a community, one that enjoys triumphs as well as setbacks. Both published cultural histories and family stories show how struggles related to class also implicate race or ethnicity and gender as well. Among the historical fiction in the discussion sample, details about the daily lives of workers tended to focus on workers' ethnicity due to the role immigration plays in American labor history (Bodnar, 1980; Cohen, 1990; Dublin, 1979; Foley, 1997; Frank, 1994; Gerstle, 1989; Wilentz, 1984b). For authors of children's books, this variety of cultural traditions provides a wealth of material in terms of descriptive detail and plot development. Careful examination of the texts shows that, however engaging the description of these cultures may be, not all the authors successfully evoke a distinctive and separate *working class* culture. It seemed almost to substitute at times for any real representation of what it means to be working class.

Only three of the historical novels in the discussion sample did not contain characters who were themselves immigrants or children of immigrants. In two of those three, the protagonists (*Bud, Not Buddy*, Curtis, 1999; *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, Taylor,

1981) are African-American. *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002) is the only historical fiction in the discussion sample in which all characters are from White, European-American families long established in the United States. Table 1 below provides an overview of the twelve historical novels by occupation, the time period and location in which the story is set, the ethnic background of workers, and gender of the protagonists.

Table 1

Historical Novels in the Discussion Sample

Occupation and title	Setting Year	Publisher	Location	Nationality of workers	Gender of protagonist
Textile manufacturing					
<i>Lyddie</i> (Paterson)	1843	Penguin	Lowell, MA	European-American	F
<i>Bread and Roses, Too</i> (Paterson)	1912	Clarion	Lawrence, MA	Italian	F & M
Garment industry					
<i>Ashes of Roses</i> (Auch)	1911	Dell	New York, NY	Irish, Italian, Russian	F
<i>Uprising</i> (Haddix)	1909	Simon & Schuster	New York, NY	Italian, Russian, European-American	F
Mining					
<i>The Breaker Boys</i> (Hughes)	1897	Farrar, Straus & Giroux	Hazleton, PA	Polish	M

Table 1

Historical Novels in the Discussion Sample

<i>Billy Creekmore</i> (Porter)	Early 1900s	Harper Collins	WV	European- American	M
<i>Up Molasses Mountain</i> (Baker)	1856	Dell	WV	European- American	F & M
Agriculture					
<i>Kira-kira</i> (Kadohata)	Late 1950s	Scholastic	South GA	Japanese- American	F
<i>Esperanza Rising</i> (Ryan)	1930	Scholastic	CA	Mexican	F
<i>Jesse</i> (Soto)	1970	Scholastic	Fresno, CA	Mexican- American	M
<i>Let the Circle Be Unbroken</i> (Taylor)	1934	Puffin	MS	African- American	F
Transportation					
<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i> (Curtis)	1936	Dell	Flint, MI	African- American	M

Gender roles in relation to identity as workers were another commonly occurring thread. As Table 1 demonstrates, eight out of the twelve historical novels in the discussion sample featured female protagonists. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, unless they belonged to the highest social classes, women had always worked, but after factories were built, more of that work took place outside their homes. Glaser (2005) noted the juxtaposition of economic exploitation on the job and societal freedom enjoyed by girls and women, and books such as *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991), *Ashes of Roses* (Auch, 2002) and *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) play off this contradiction in their stories of girls working in the

textile and garment industries. The historical fiction in the discussion sample as a whole offered better accounts of the daily lives of workers than did the five examples of contemporary fiction. Here I discuss class consciousness as seen in depictions of workers' identification with a working class, which is sometimes conflated with ethnic identity or changing gender roles or with both. In addition, I describe instances in which authors suggest an ethic of mutuality among members of the working class.

Women's changing roles weigh heavily in the two books in the discussion sample that take up the topic of the Triangle Waist Company Fire of 1911 that killed 146 workers, many of them young women. *Ashes of Roses* (Auch, 2002) and *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) feature female protagonists who consider themselves modern working women, able to support themselves at the dawn of the new century. The two novels use similar tropes: three young women from different ethnic backgrounds become friends through their involvement in the 1909 garment workers' strike (*Uprising*) or their employment at Triangle (*Ashes of Roses*). In both novels, only one of the three survives. Both books feature immigration and ethnic diversity as themes; still, much of the focus is on the girls' identities as independent working women, who, for all their financial challenges, manage to make a living without a man.

In *Ashes of Roses*, Rose Nolan, the narrator, finds herself alone in New York with her younger sister Maureen, after first her father and then her mother return to Ireland when their youngest child is refused entry at Ellis Island due to trachoma. Rose refuses to go with them, fearing that to go back to Limerick will seal her fate as a too-young wife and mother, like her mother before her. Before being hired by Triangle, Rose is

employed, along with her mother and Maureen, by a sweatshop operator making paper roses to be sold on the street. She flees his shop after he sexually harasses her and cheats her of her wages. Gussie Garoff, her landlord's daughter, insists she confront Mr. Moscovitz and demand her wages. Just as Diana mentored Lyddie in the mill at Lowell, Rose Nolan is trained at the Triangle by Gussie. Rose is further encouraged when she makes friends with Rose Klein and Rose Bellini, two workers from Jewish and Italian families. Their different ethnic backgrounds appear to create no language or cultural differences among the three Roses.

Uprising (Haddix, 2007) gives the reader a better sense of the potential for confusion and isolation when co-workers have difficulty communicating because of language barriers. Yetta, although recently arrived in the United States from Russia herself, is quick to note how language and ethnicity could be put to use by bosses determined to prevent workers' solidarity. She tells her older sister,

“About the Italian girls...I think the bosses are trying to make us hate them. You know how they alternate us at the sewing machines so you have to lean past someone Italian if you want to speak Yiddish? And I think it's the bosses who start all the rumors about how the Italians hate *us*.” (p. 62)

Haddix's three heroines struggle past the language barriers that divide them to form a deep and committed friendship. Bella, an Italian immigrant struggles to learn English only to find that what she has picked up is the Yiddish spoken by girls at the sewing machines adjacent to hers. Yetta is the first of the three to embrace the 1909

strike, while Bella, the newcomer, continues to work, confused and frightened by all the uproar. Her only goal is to provide money to assist her family in Italy. Unbeknownst to Bella, her mother and all her siblings, weakened by hunger, died of a fever that swept through their village not long after she herself left for America. Jane Wellington is a sheltered girl from a wealthy family who, along with other upper class women, supports the striking garment workers. Their paths cross during the 1909 strike, which Yetta supports but Bella does not, until she hears that her family is dead.

Jane's beginnings of class consciousness that had stirred at the rallies, when she wonders, "Was the speaker right, the one who claimed there was enough wealth in America that no one should have to live in poverty?" (p. 64), deepen as she questions more and more the system that has allowed so few to prosper while so many are destitute. Through Jane's eyes, the reader sees "beyond their ragged clothes, their laughable attempts at fashionable hats, the poor quality of the 'rats' holding up their pompadours. She saw the girls' faces now, the courage in their gaze, the intensity in their eyes" (116). After her father returns home from an extended business trip, his horror at her socialist leanings turns into a heated argument, and she leaves, going to stay with Yetta and Bella who are now sharing a room.

The young women in *Ashes of Roses* and *Uprising* are very different from Katherine Paterson's Lyddie in terms of how they identified themselves as workers and as women. Although she chooses to pursue an education and postpone marriage, in her identification as a worker, Lyddie harkens back to the Republican ideals of the American revolution, while the Roses, along with Yetta, Bella, and Jane, are self-consciously

modern women, looking ahead to a new century of expanded opportunity, with *Uprising* offering stronger, more detailed criticism of the darker aspects of a capitalist economic system. Locating characters' identification with the working class in *Lyddie* and *Ashes of Roses* requires examination of the workers' social milieu once the working day ended.

“Eight hours for what we will”: Labor and leisure.

Workers in the New England textile mills of the mid-19th century worked thirteen-hour days with a break only on Sunday and had little leisure time. For many of the young mill operatives, accepting employment in the mill meant leaving home entirely. Moving from family farms to boarding houses in milltowns where they roomed with a houseful of their coworkers resulted in way of life completely different from that they had known before. In *Lyddie* (Patterson, 1991), the young millworkers try to make the most of their free time: “...on a regular workday there was no leisure time except the less than three hours between supper and curfew. Most of the girls spent their short measure of free time down in the parlor/dining room or out in the town where there were shops and lectures and even dances, all run by honest citizens bent on parting the working girls from their wages” (p. 57).

The boardinghouses themselves might be sites for entertainment and edification: when Lyddie first visits the boardinghouse where her coworker Diana lives, she enters the parlor to find a sewing circle, jewelry and ribbon vendors, and even a phrenologist doing a reading of a girl's skull. Lyddie, however, has come to study with Diana, as she wants to improve her reading and writing. Members of the Female Labor Reform Association

produced their own publication, *The Voice of Industry*, but Lyddie, afraid that any interest in their cause will result in the loss of her position at the mill, refuses to read it. Although others in Lowell and the textile mills of New England may have identified themselves as members of a class apart from the mill owners and managers, Lyddie is too caught up in her own problems to examine their origins more critically. A sense of class consciousness is expressed instead by Diana, the union organizer and petitioner for the ten-hour day and later by Betsy, the mill girl who aspires to attend Oberlin, as they try to persuade Lyddie that the mill does indeed oppress its employees.

The slogan “Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will!” sung by workers’ marching during the May 1, 1886, general strike on behalf of the eight-hour day emphasized the need for recognition that workers’ lives were more than just their time spent on the job. With more leisure time than earlier workers had enjoyed and growth of popular culture, young workers in the garment industry, while still underpaid and working in tragically unsafe conditions, had many more options with which to fill their hours away from the job. Auch, author of *Ashes of Roses* (2002), draws heavily on Nan Enstad’s *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (1999) to demonstrate how young garment workers made use of the working class themes of dime novels and early motion pictures to help construct their class identity. Rose Nolan is introduced to the joys of dime novels and the nickelodeon by the other Roses, Klein and Bellini, who explain that they choose these particular diversions because they feature female characters who are working girls “just like us” (Auch, 2002, p. 171). Their explicit

identification of the heroines as working girls suggests a desire for class identification and affiliation that Enstad would deem a political act. Still, Gussie, a serious 18-year-old, is dismayed by their choices of entertainment. Her own notions of political action are more traditional: She is an organizer for the garment workers' union and was arrested in the strike of 1909. Their money would be better spent on union dues, she tells them. Gussie herself lives simply; she refuses to go to the cinema and has her shoes repaired rather than buying new ones. After the Triangle fire, it is the steel plate repair to her shoe that enables her father and Rose to identify her charred body. Klein and Bellini also perish in the fire, leaving Rose Nolan to promise herself, "This time when I got a job, I'd join the union and work in a union shop, where somebody would be lookin' out for me" (p. 245). She will remain a worker, one dignified by her affiliation with a union that offers protection to its members. She is a lady of labor who entertains no illusions that she might one day be admitted to the upper class. A well made marriage for Rose will be one with a policeman or politician. Her vision of herself is that of a modern woman of the new century who, until she chooses to marry, will remain a "lady of labor," worthy of respect.

The workers in the farm camps Ryan describes in *Esperanza Rising* (2000) have little leisure time and much drudgery. They occasionally get together for festive dances where people from different camps come together to relax and catch up with one another. The lyrical writing and the division of the year that goes by in the course of the novel into the seasons of the various harvests, grapes, avocados, potatoes, suggests an order even in the rigors of life in the camp. Still, much of Esperanza's time outside of work is spent

chatting with neighbors and working on the crocheted blanket her *abuela* had helped her begin back in Mexico. Between working and visiting her mother in the hospital, she has time for little else.

Ethnicity and immigration are major themes in *Esperanza Rising*, as workers are segregated in their camps. Later in the book, her cabin mate Isabel tells her excitedly about a new farm camp that is being constructed for incoming workers from Oklahoma, one that will have amenities their own does not, such as inside toilets and hot water. In spite of the segregation of the camps, workers' children do attend school together, unlike those who live in town. This does not mean that all children receive equal treatment in school, as Isabel discovers when her ambition to be crowned May Queen based on her excellent grades is shown to be unrealistic; the teacher will not or cannot award such an honor to a child from Mexico. Ryan shows at least one instance of some sense of community between the different groups, as Esperanza and Miguel note that the Japanese shopkeeper Mr. Yakota "stocks many of the things we need and he treats us like people" (p. 186), an approach that garners him both good will and increased business at his shop.

The other book in the discussion sample about Mexican-Americans and agricultural work, *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) also shows how the characters spend what little leisure they have. The protagonist in the novel hopes to major in art, and Soto repeatedly makes connections between art and the politics of the labor movement. Jesse's artwork uses labor themes including farmworkers and strikers, and the term paper he writes is about Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, whose paintings championed labor. His political

sympathies and artistic sensibilities are not shared by his mother: Invited to attend an art exhibit at the college, she sees the drawing of striking Mexican workers and, not knowing that it is her son's work, complains that the workers are "lazy" and "giving Mexicans a bad name" (p. 126). Jesse is disappointed and wonders if "maybe she had peeled too many potatoes in her life to understand very much" (p. 126), a sentiment that betrays his own grasp of how limiting a life of manual labor can become. Soto shows his characters becoming engaged politically, as they voice strong opinions about the war in Vietnam, and Jesse, in particular, makes connections between his own life and a larger world.

In *Jesse*, class consciousness is intimately linked with race, and the novel is a culturally conscious book clearly written by an insider. Soto is from Fresno, California, where the novel is set, and he attended Fresno City College in the early 1970s. He occasionally includes a line of dialogue or a Spanish word with no translation, suggesting that his primary audience is readers who will understand. A description of the varied dialects of spoken Spanish likely to be found on a workers' bus bound for the grape fields reminds the reader that it is no single language but instead a range of speech that includes "Mexican nationals who spoke a really rapid Spanish while ours was as slow as syrup drooling from a bottle" (p. 12). Such a differentiation is reminiscent of the subtly different versions of English spoken by the African-American families in Mildred Taylor's books, English inflected by the speakers' origins and education (Taxel, 1986). References to Mexican foods such as chicken *mole*, *tortillas*, *arroz*, and *frijoles* cooked by Jesse and Abel's mother provide sensory reminders of how nagging the brothers' hunger must be after they move out on their own and can barely afford ramen noodles to

eat. Although *Jesse* is set in 1970, increasing numbers of Latinos living in the United States make the issues it raises timely forty years later. Jesse tells Abel that during a class discussion, two students “really liked the food but wondered if Mexicans changed the meaning of America” (p. 19), a comment that could have easily been made by people opposed to increasing numbers of Latinos immigrating to the United States in the twenty-first century.

Contemporary novels: (White) middle and upper class consciousness.

Despite their settings closer to present day, the contemporary novels fail to establish the cultural context that is more readily apparent in the examples of historical fiction. Except for the book in the sample with the earliest copyright date, *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976), the protagonists range from middle to upper class, and their homes are solidly suburban and generic. As White people, they serve as a sort of default, one for which little description is given because so little appears to be required. Table 2 provides an overview of the settings and characters of the contemporary novels.

Table 2

Contemporary Novels in the Discussion Sample

Occupation and title	Year of publicati	Publisher	Location	Nationality of workers	Gender of
Education					
<i>Time to Take Sides</i> (Gold)	1976	Clarion	CA	European-American	M

Table 2

Contemporary Novels in the Discussion Sample

<i>Strike!</i> (Corcoran)	1983	Atheneum	Not specified	European-American	M
Manufacturing					
<i>The Winchesters</i> (Collier)	1988	Avon	New England	European-American	M
Construction					
<i>Riot</i> (Casanova)	1996	Hyperion	MN	European-American	M
Newspaper					
<i>Strike Two</i> (Koss)	2001	Dial	Not specified	European-American	F
Entertainment					
<i>Dream Factory</i> (Barkley & Hepler)	2007	Dutton	FL	European-American	F & M

There is little sense of place in five of the six contemporary novels; in *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) and *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001), the authors give no geographical location at all, possibly with the aim of inviting more readers to identify with the characters, but it has the effect instead of rendering them rootless. The novel that offers the most sense of the place in which the characters live is *Dream Factory* (2007), written by Brad Barkley and Heather Hepler. Their chapters alternate between perspectives of the male and female protagonists, Luke and Ella, during their stint as replacement workers for striking employees at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. In this case, the workplace itself is the

complete geographical location, as the two characters and their friends rarely leave the parks. They sleep in a hotel, converted to temporary dormitory lodgings. They spend their entire day in various sections of the park, participating in Princess Breakfasts and other staged events for Disney's thousands of visitors each day. Although the park is supposed to be off limits to the workers after closing time, at least a few of them slip out late at night to enjoy the quiet. Luke, who plays the "fur character" Dale (as in Chip and Dale) reflects that

It's the only time I can really say I like the park. There is enough of a breeze to cool things off a little, and I like the emptiness, like how it feels. Like maybe way back someone believed this place really would seem magical, full of wonder...all the crap you hear around this place every day, but everywhere else only at Christmas. Maybe they thought it would seem like another world, set apart from the real one, instead of just the real world on hyperdrive -- more selling, more money, more worn-out families, more hype. (p. 29)

Later their supervisors require the temporary workers to participate in a scavenger hunt through the park, working in pairs so that they get to know each other and their working environment better. The prize: two nights in any accommodations in the park resorts, "including EPCOT" (p. 88). For the replacement characters, Disney World is their world. It is unlikely to be coincidental that the place most carefully detailed in this set of novels is one both manmade and the epitome of corporate branding. The remaining contemporary novels offer little sense of the environment their characters inhabit. This lack of specificity contrasts with the rich descriptions of places in the historical fiction,

like Flint, Michigan, in Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy* (2000), that suggest a gritty working-class city sustained by a vibrant entertainment industry. In *Uprising* and *Ashes of Roses*, Haddix and Auch portray New York City at the beginning of the 20th century as a place where young immigrants found themselves almost overwhelmed by the pace of a bustling and vibrant life in a modern metropolis. As Rudine Sims Bishop noted, "A story that captures the specifics and peculiarities of a people's experience also captures something of the human experience, and thereby becomes 'universal'" (2003, p. 30). The "specifics and peculiarities" of their characters' lives in the contemporary novels remain the experiences of these individuals in this particular time, in ill-defined places, and never achieve the universal.

Among the contemporary novels in the sample, only one of the protagonists, Jeff Mason in *Time to Take Sides*, belongs to a working class family. This novel and *Strike!* (1983) by Barbara Corcoran both depict teachers' strikes, but from different perspectives. Jeff's mother is a lunchroom worker who has recently been offered additional work as a teacher's aide, while Barry, the protagonist of *Strike*, is the son of a local member of the board of education. *Time to Take Sides* portrays aspects of working class life that are ignored in the other five contemporary novels. Jeff is the son of a single mother whose husband was killed in an accident when their younger child was a baby. They live in a small coastal town in California, struggling to get by on the earnings of the mother, a high school dropout. The family's financial situation is foregrounded throughout the novel. His mother tries to dissuade Jeff from joining the Speech and Debate Club, believing school organizations to be "social time-wasters, what with work around the

house and his studies” (p. 10). He supervises his younger sister as they walk to school and babysits her in the afternoon. The two children often take turns cooking dinner, although Bertie, the daughter, is only a third-grader. They have no money for recreation and barely enough for necessities, and Gold portrays the hard choices the family faces, such as whether to save for a dependable car or to purchase a television immediately. Still, the family is shown making decisions together and actively working to maintain their relationships with one another. The mother is as active and involved in her children’s lives at home and at school as her busy schedule allows. Their kitchen is stocked with yogurt and wheat germ, and the meals the children prepare are simple dishes that do not rely on processed foods. Gold makes it clear that not all families living in poverty establish healthy relationships and routines. The family of Jeff’s friend Steve is portrayed as dysfunctional, something Steve himself tries to downplay as he tells Jeff, “My advisor told me I’m disadvantaged - school talk for neglected - but he’s wrong.... I can do whatever I want, almost - and that’s being advantaged” (p. 43).

Another character in the contemporary novels who could be considered blue-collar is Stan Grant, the father in *Riot* (Casanova, 1996), a novel based on actual events in International Falls, Minnesota, in 1989. Casanova’s portrayal of Grant, construction worker and father of three who is involved in the wildcat strike in *Riot*, is telling: He is furious that the local paper mill has selected a non-union company to build their next major project. However, his rage is directed primarily toward the employees of the nonunion company, whom he refers to as “rats” (p. 3), rather than at the paper mill. The mill is excused from any responsibility beyond profit; the stench of the paper mill is

dismissed repeatedly with comments like “That’s what money smells like” (p. 26), although Bryan wonders if the smell is responsible for health problems among people living near the plant. Bryan’s mother is a teacher and herself a union member, but one who appears to have been educated out of her husband’s roughneck brand of radicalism. Their lifestyle is middle class, a world of music lessons, aerobics classes, and the mother’s red minivan. At one point, Bryan notices the contrast between their own home in a neighborhood “where new two-story houses, complete with decks and two-stall garages sprouted up as quickly as dandelions after a rain” (p. 34) with the rundown houses rented by the employees of Badgett, the nonunion company, and wonders, “Is this what it meant to work for Badgett - to live on a lot less money? If unions helped people to earn better wages so they could live better, then unions were a good thing” (p. 34). The union, however, has not approved the wildcat strike Stan and his friends are engaged in. Their malicious actions spiral out of control until the end of the book when Stan is arrested for arson and other crimes during a riot at the housing camp where many of the nonunion workers live.

Riot is almost not a novel about labor unions at all in that the union itself has not approved of the construction workers’ strike and remains off stage for the entire book. The only members heard from are the ones taking illegal action against workers who are not unionized, hardly a positive representation of organized labor. While anger aimed at non-unionized workers who are viewed as strikebreakers is not unusual, the fact that the union members appear to hold little animosity toward the company that hired them does not suggest any real sense of class consciousness. Working class culture as depicted in

Riot appears to be shortsighted, vindictive, and potentially violent, impressions that are reinforced in some other novels' depictions of collective action, as I will describe later.

The Winchesters (1988), by James Lincoln Collier, is set in the troubled manufacturing industry of New England, with the protagonist a nephew of the wealthy owner of the company. It is, in fact, the upper class culture of the Winchesters that is described most explicitly in the novel. Up until labor conflict begins to erupt at the family's local plant, Chris and his mother and siblings have not seemed to truly be part of the Winchester family. His father was the black sheep of the family who joined the Peace Corps instead of the Winchesters' business. After his father's death, his mother moved with her children into the estate's gatehouse where she manages the household accounts for the wealthy family. The impending strike causes tension between Chris and his working class friends from school, including his girlfriend Marie. As the strike approaches, the theme of social class is the focus, and Chris's uncle lectures him about what it means to belong to a privileged class. These discussions of social class are clearly didactic and sound less than authentic. As his family tries to pull Chris into the Winchester fold, his mother explains why his grandfather and uncle plan to send him to boarding school with his cousin: "They see you've developed some ties of loyalty there [in the local public school], and they realize they ought to have sent you to boarding school before. That's what this is about, Chris. They want you to make friends with what they think of as your social equals" (p. 116).

In addition to Chris's education by his family about his obligations as a member of the upper class, the book includes explanations, similarly didactic, about the economic

concerns of the working class as well. Workers in town still recall the lay-offs by the mill during the Great Depression and question whether they were aimed at preserving the mill itself or the Winchester family wealth. Chris's girlfriend Marie is the daughter of an Italian family who own a small grocery-store in town. The Scalzos speak Italian at home and live above their store; in spite of owning their own business, they identify with their customer base as working class people. Mr. Scalzo finally tells Chris that he can no longer see Marie at the store because of "how high feelings are running in town. I own a little store. I compete with supermarkets who can sell everything for ten, fifteen percent less than me" (p. 73). He explains that by allowing his customers to run a tab at his shop and by maintaining a small, family-run business, he is able to keep a stable customer base. He implies that Chris's presence at the store has been noticed and could potentially endanger his customers' good will toward the shop and thus the family livelihood.

Collier, in *The Winchesters*, explores this divide between the interests of the upper class and the working class, emphasizing, as many books about labor unions and strikes do, the pull characters feel to choose sides. The class consciousness as portrayed in *The Winchesters* through Chris's self-identification with the working class is hampered by the writing style. The reader feels "schooled," rather than engaged in a story about believable characters. It remains, though, the one example of contemporary fiction to provide a real sense of the link between social class and economic and political power.

Strike Two (2001) by Amy Goldman Koss, tells the story of a strike at a local newspaper. The story's narrator is the daughter of a middle-class copyeditor, who, although not dissatisfied with his own pay, joins the strike in support of his colleagues.

Again, the story includes little about working class life, on or off the job, and the strike is seen through the eyes of a girl whose closest connection to the working class comes via her friend Vicky who lived in a “an itty-bitty dollhouse of a trailer with a postage-stamp sized yard” (p. 96). Other than her visit to Vicky’s home, the closest Gwen comes to the working class is in her work at union headquarters where she helps babysit children whose parents are either helping organize the strike or getting meals from the union-run soup kitchen.

The young Disney employees in *Dream Factory* (Barkley and Hepler, 2007) also belong to the middle and upper classes. Most will be leaving the park once the strike is over to attend college. The two protagonists, Luke and Ella, have each come to Florida to find refuge from difficult home situations. Luke is reluctant to join his parents’ business, even if it means turning down a generous starting salary and company vehicle, and his sojourn at Disney removes him from the home where his life seems to be already too comfortably arranged. Ella, by contrast, is without a home, her parents having left the country to volunteer in Africa after her older brother’s death in an accident. Although the two are attracted to each other, Luke is already dating the girl who plays Chip to his Dale, the hard-charging Cassie, who plans to pursue a triple major in pre-law, women’s studies, and French at Brown University in the fall. Ella, who landed the starring role as Cinderella purely on the basis of being a perfect fit for the existing costume, begins dating her latest Prince Charming, Mark, a true believer in the Kingdom’s magic who is following in the footsteps of his father who once played the prince. “You know how some

families are filled with doctors, lawyers, or carpenters?...With my family, it's this place" (p. 41). He plans to major in business management.

The teenagers accept their less-than-ideal working conditions, knowing that they will soon be gone. The issues over which the permanent workers are striking, "better working conditions, free meals, cleaner costumes, a dental plan" (p. 12), are less critical to them, although soon they are making their own modest demands.

Not able to go off campus for fear of being jumped by the picketers, we had to ask management to bring in some produce for us. It wasn't until Luke told them that they might not want us all to come down with scurvy that they started bringing in fresh food. There are only so many days that you can live on cheese fries and pizza. (p. 42).

For all its light moments, the novel is unexpectedly thoughtful, depicting young people about to enter the adult world and who face choices as to how they plan to live. Eventually, they learn that one of the regular employees, a man who plays Foulfellow, a character from Pinocchio, has continued to work during the strike and has, in fact, been employed by Disney for 33 years. Luke speaks to him one day after spotting him in a section of the park far from the area he had been in only minutes before. The employee, whose real name is Bernard, impatiently tells Luke about the "utilidors," or utility corridors used by Disney to house all materials required to sustain the park's illusions, explaining, "Just remember - anything real is hidden" (p. 131). The contrast between his

life and their own is thrown into sharp relief when Luke attempts to convince Cassie to accompany him to the shabby trailer where Bernard lives, and she refuses to go.

“I just have no desire to be around people like that....I’m not a snob, Luke. It’s like hippies, right? People think they were so cool and uninhibited, but what were they really like? They wasted half their lives doing drugs, then figured out they what they actually wanted was BMWs. The whole thing is stupid.” (p. 164)

Even Mark, the Prince Charming whose affinity for all things Disney rivals Bernard’s, wonders why Bernard has played the same fur character for so long, “He could move up if he wanted” (p. 196). For Bernard, playing a third-string character in Pinocchio’s entourage is sufficient. Before the end of the book, he surprises Luke by loaning him what are literally the keys to the Kingdom, a collection of nearly 50 keys that allow access to the entire park. When Luke jokes with Ella that Bernard might just take over the park one day, she tells him she believes that Bernard has collected the keys simply because “he like possibility....Like, he can go anywhere. Nothing is closed to him. He doesn’t have to go into those places, but he *can*. He can do anything he wants” (219). Thus, the working class fur character has chosen to live life on his own terms, even within the confines of a corporate home, his knowledge and his keys giving him access to the Kingdom that the young replacement workers will never have.

Aside from these few characters, the working class is strangely absent from the contemporary fiction in the sample. While the historical fiction at least offers a sense of class consciousness in depictions of the daily lives and routines of workers, the settings

of most of the contemporary novels in the social milieu of the middle and upper class, preclude that possibility.

Getting by: An ethic of mutuality.

Another aspect of the daily lives of workers is reliance on community for support in hard times. Accounts of the Great Depression tell of deep financial hardship - unemployment, poverty, hunger, but many tell too of struggling citizens who looked after one another, sharing what little they had with friends, relatives, or strangers. *Like a Family* (Hall et al., 1987) describes an ethic of mutuality that existed among Southern textile mill workers, one based on their previous backgrounds on small farms in the Southern Piedmont and hill country. During waves of immigration to the United States, immigrant communities grew up around factories, mines, and mills, made up of families who assisted newcomers in finding jobs and establishing households in a new country. These examples through history suggest a commonly recognized need for social support during struggle, often through a system of informal networks. Not all examples of assistance are recognizably based on class identification, but some are, and as such suggest a version of class consciousness based on workers' recognition that their interests are not those of the managers or owners.

Bread and Roses, Too (2006) is named for the 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The female protagonist is Rosa, a young girl from a family of Italian immigrants whose mother has joined the strikers; Jake is a young worker at the textile mill whose father neglects and abuses him. Immediately after meeting Jake and realizing

he intends to sleep outside in a trash heap, Rosa invites him to sleep in the kitchen of her family's tenement. It is not the last night Jake spends on the floor at Rosa's, as its warmth and quiet is preferable to facing his drunken father at the shack they call home. Jake often relies on the charity of others in the community, his Italian coworkers who provide the few real meals he gets, the bakery shopgirl who gives him bread, the Catholic priest at the rectory who gives him both food and money.

In *Ashes of Roses* (Auch, 2002), Rose Nolan and her sister receive far more kindness from Gussie Garoff and her curmudgeonly father who are themselves struggling financially than they do from their Uncle Patrick's social-climbing wife and daughters with whom they originally intended to live in New York. In fact, Gussie misses a day of work to go with Rose to recover her wages from the sweatshop owner who has cheated her, and Rose is dismayed to learn later that this has caused Gussie to be demoted at work. Yetta, in *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) takes Bella and later Jane as well, into her small room; Jane's own life has been so sheltered, she does not realize immediately that she must find a way to pay for her share of the rent and food. When she finally does, Yetta comes through for her again, having heard of a position as governess for the children of one of the owners of the Triangle Waist Company. Instead of working in the factory like the others, she can put her social skills to work in a setting where they will be best appreciated.

The historical fiction in which this ethic of mutuality is best interwoven into the story line is *Jesse* (1994) in which Soto tells about the struggles of the working class but also shows the ingenuity they must employ in order to get by. The brothers' meager

grocery budget allows for little more than ramen noodles that they supplement with fruit from citrus trees growing in their neighborhood. Their relationships with their friends give them a network of support they can rely on for help with shelter or transportation when their own resources fail. Jesse helps his landlord's daughter Glenda, a young single mother, fix her car, and she later enlists Abel's help with finding items to sell at a flea market, which gives them all a little extra cash. The brothers allow Leslie, an older student and a Vietnam veteran, to park the car he lives in in front of their cottage so that he can use their shower. This concentration by Soto on the day-to-day logistical hassles and inconveniences experienced by those without a cushion of wealth or social capital to fall back on makes for a narrative that becomes tedious at times, but the story rings true. Being poor is tedious, fieldwork can be monotonous, and even picketing is boring. Soto celebrates the determination, the creativity, and the relationships working class Americans depend on to make their way in the world.

Among the six contemporary novels, only *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) shows instances of workers or members of their families coming together to assist one another. Jeff's mother depends on him to help her run the household, and she and his younger sister help Jeff clean up the kitchen after Steve and his friends throw sand all over it, in retaliation for Jeff's preventing them from putting sand in the gas tanks of substitute teachers hired during the strike. Throughout the novel, Jeff is torn between establishing his independence from his mother and maintaining the relationship that enables them to get through the challenges experienced by families with no financial reserves. When a reporter prints his words of support for the teachers that appear to disparage his mother's

views, Jeff feels a deep obligation to make amends. What is interesting in this novel is that the mother appears to have no sources of support beyond her own children, so the ethic of mutuality is limited to their household, rather than extending to include friends or other family members.

Few workers in the Winchesters' electronics factory (Collier, 1988), aside from the brother of Chris Winchester's girlfriend Maria, are even named. In *Riot*, the workers who are in need of the most social support are the nonunion workers, many of them relocated from the South by the Badgett Company. Instead of receiving help from the community, they find their homes and vehicles are vandalized. Even when Bryan saves the life of a developmentally disabled child about to drown, his father responds, "It would have to be a rat" (p. 54). In these novels, in contrast to the historical fiction in the discussion sample, the reader is left not only with no clear idea what the workers' lives were like before or during the strike but also with no sense that there is much concern, either by the community or individuals, with their welfare.

Strike Two (Koss, 2001) is the only contemporary novel and one of only two in the discussion sample to offer detailed description of the social services labor unions offer workers who are on strike. Gwen goes to the strike headquarters first with her friend Vicky whose father is working there. The union provides free meals for workers short of money, and Gwen and the older children babysit the toddlers and wash dishes. A boy they know turns up, guitar in hand, and teaches the younger children the Woody Guthrie song "Union Maid." Although a few other books, both historical and contemporary fiction depict workers engaging in activities like picketing, only Koss shows how these

particular community building activities create affiliation with the labor union and strengthen support for the strike.

One of the historical novels in the discussion sample similarly demonstrates how unions step up to provide for workers' needs. In *Bread and Roses, Too* (2006) Paterson explains how the strikers receive money from members of the IWW around the country to help them pay for their coal and food. As tensions in Lawrence rise, the union locates families in other parts of the Northeast who are favorably disposed toward the textile strikers and willing to take in children for a "vacation" (p. 144). This massive undertaking requires identifying families willing and able to take in strikers' children, obtaining parents' permission for their children to leave Lawrence, arranging safe transportation for large numbers of underage children, ensuring that they are safely delivered to their "vacation" home, and finally reuniting families once the strike is over.

Depictions of working class life as seen within the historical novels offer more detail about the life of the community in which they are set than do the contemporary novels. Ethnicity and gender provide a focus for much of the authentic detail used by authors to describe workers' lives. The identification of class consciousness based on how workers' lives are portrayed remains more problematic than the exploration of how authors provide context for labor conflict or depict collective action. Certainly in many cases, workers, particularly in the historical fiction, identified themselves as a class apart from their employers. As to whether they similarly concluded, based on that identification, that their own interests were opposed to their employers is less clear.

Of all the novels of the discussion sample, *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) best captures the realities of working class life, with its constant inconveniences alleviated by relationships instead of wealth. Individualism is a philosophy the working poor can ill afford; instead, friends and family provide resources, rides, food, showers, repairs, with the understanding that these will be repaid in kind at another time. Among the contemporary fiction, only *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) portrays a working class protagonist, and the ethic of mutuality is strangely absent in the life of Jeff's harried mother. She never appears to socialize with anyone beyond occasional meetings with other aides who are attempting to decide how best to handle the teachers' strike. She serves as a cautionary tale, warning of the perils of dropping out of school to marry and have babies. The caring relationships Jesse and Abel rely on are absent in her life, which might also provide a warning about the costs of individualism.

Collective and Individual Action in the Labor Novel

Authors of novels about labor face a particular dilemma in how to frame the narrative, as collective action is essential to the labor movement, yet individual struggle is far more likely to be represented in novels (Overstreet, 2001; Saul, 1983). As noted earlier, the ages of protagonists in children's books may preclude them from being active participants in union activities, as most are young teens rather than adults who are employed. In spite of this, I identified at least a few instances in which protagonists participated in collective action to some extent, even within the contemporary novels. In the sixteen novels that form the discussion sample of the study, two primary forms of

collective action occur: union organizing and strikes. *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004), *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991), *Bud, Not Buddy* (1999), and *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981) all contain story-lines related to union organizing, with characters soliciting workers to join a union or otherwise endorse labor-related causes such as the ten-hour workday in *Lyddie*. All six of the contemporary novels, like the remaining historical fiction, are about strikes, rather than organizing. Almost all the novels portray some form of intimidation, if not actual violence, as a part of the conflict. The historical novels show union members or strikers as victims of intimidation, whereas the contemporary novels are much more likely to portray strikers as committing violence or vandalism. I will first describe how the protagonists of the novels or members of their families are depicted engaging in individual or collective action, before exploring differences in how the novels in the discussion sample portray union members as either victims or perpetrators of violence or threats. Yet another aspect of this discussion is the extent to which the union is perceived as achieving its goals, particularly in view of the emphasis in social studies textbooks on union defeats in United States history (Anyon, 1979).

Standing united: Participation in collective action.

Young protagonists in some of the novels occasionally take part in strikes, picketing, or demonstrations on behalf of workers. In *Jesse* (Soto, 1994), the narrator joins a demonstration in support of farmworkers. Yetta in *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) is an enthusiastic picketer in the 1909 garment workers' strike, and Jake in *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2006) joins the textile workers' strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Interestingly, the two contemporary novels about teachers' strikes also include the protagonists joining the picket line in support of their teachers, and in both cases, in defiance of their parents. In *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976), Jeff Mason's mother continues to work at the school, during the teachers' strike, not because she is not supportive of the teachers' demands but because as the sole breadwinner for her family, she cannot afford to miss work. Barry Helving in *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) participates in a rally supporting teachers and also carries a sign on the picket line, even though he knows that his father, a member of the local board of education, will be angered by his actions. Both Barry and Jeff participate in collective action because of their relationships with teachers: Barry considers Mr. Higgins "his physics teacher and friend" (p. 6) and Jeff admires Mr. Joyce, a language arts and speech teacher. Teachers in both books solicit students' support of the strike, so much so that when Jeff's suggestion that Steve and his friends put sand in their substitute teachers' gas tanks is enthusiastically adopted, Mr. Joyce calls his own actions "unprofessional" (p. 155). Both books are dated, and it is hard to read *Strike!* in particular without being taken aback by the willingness of Barry's teacher to confide in a 15-year-old son of a school board member. Similarly, Mrs. Cronin, a young widowed teacher whom Barry has a crush on, tells him to "Drop in any time, if you feel like it," after he visits her home unannounced. Later, after a fist fight with his father, he spends the night on her couch. The boundaries between teachers and students that are defined so clearly and publicly today are represented in these books as much more permeable, even messy, but it is the crossing of

those boundaries that allows the authors to show underage protagonists participating in strikes in the late 20th century.

Some characters support unions in ways that fall short of actual participation in a strike. Rosa, the female protagonist of *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2006), is initially hostile to the labor union due to her teacher's condemnation of the strikers, but creates a sign with slogan "We Need Bread and Roses, Too", a phrase that provides the strike with its name. In *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004), the mother of Katie's friend Silly hosts a union meeting at her home to encourage the poultry workers to organize. Katie and Silly help prepare refreshments for the meeting and also attend the meeting. *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor, 1981) is the only book in the discussion sample besides *Kira-kira* that takes place in the deep South, and it too portrays union organizing rather than an actual strike. Longstanding distrust between Black and White citizens complicates labor organizers' attempts to bring them together during the Great Depression. Two organizers from the Farm Workers' Union approach David Logan, seeking his support as an influential member of the African-American community. The two are disenchanted with New Deal policies and hope "to get tenants and sharecroppers to join together and demand some changes about these government payments" (p. 133), such as the cotton payments that the Grangers and other owners of large farms are exploiting. They need David Logan's help, having heard about the boycott of the local store that he and his wife helped organize the previous year in response to the White owners' unfair treatment of their Black customers. They ask for the Logan's endorsement and the use of their barn for a meeting, which the Logans eventually agree to.

Other novels portray protagonists and their family members acting individually but in ways that ultimately assist union members. Esperanza in *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) shares food with strikers when she sees their dire situation after they have been evicted from the farm camps. She also hides Marta when immigration enforcement officers raid the camp, preventing the young organizer's repatriation to Mexico. Nate Tanner pleads the miners' case to his family in the face of opposition in *The Breaker Boys* (Hughes, 2004) and later, arriving on the scene as the Lattimer massacre begins, renders aid to wounded miners.

Threats and intimidation during labor activities.

A common thread among many novels is intimidation or retaliation directed at either union members or those who refuse to support the labor cause. The difference between the historical fiction and the contemporary novels is stark. Two historical novels (*Up Molasses Mountain*, Baker, 2002; *Esperanza Rising*, Ryan, 2000) show intimidation used by both sides of the conflict. The remaining ten historical novels portray characters who are either union members or sympathetic to the union cause expressing fear of losing their jobs or experiencing outright violence. The image of labor that emerges in the contemporary novels is a far different one. Five of the six books portray union members threatening non-union workers or engaging in vandalism. Only in *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) are union members and the students who support them the victims of violence. Although the number of contemporary novels relative to the general sample is small, this contrast with the more sympathetic portrayals in the historical fiction is intriguing, and it is

worthwhile to examine some of the violence and threats in both the historical and contemporary novels.

In *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991), workers at the boardinghouse warn a girl who announces she is ready to sign the ten-hour day petition that she will likely lose her job. Gertie Garoff, the union activist in *Ashes of Roses* (Auch, 2002) explains to Rose Nolan that her participation in the 1909 garment workers' strike resulted in her arrest. Earlier I described attacks by law enforcement on strikers or demonstrators in *The Breaker Boys* (Hughes, 2004), *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2006), *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) and *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007). In the brief mention of a labor union in Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy* (1999), the man who has given Bud a ride prevails on him to quickly hide the union flyers in the backseat when they are stopped by the police.

The violence depicted in Mildred Taylor's *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1982), while directed primarily at African-Americans, is instigated after labor organizers attempt an integrated farmworkers' union. A Black organizer is murdered, and for a while union efforts are put on hold. At last, though, as sharecroppers and day laborers are turned off their land by the owners of large farms who accept payments from New Deal programs, a fragile coalition attempts to revive the union. David Logan's concern about the lack of trust between the races is justified in the novel's heartbreaking climactic scene when Harlan Granger uses race as a wedge to divide the displaced farm workers who angrily descend on the town of Strawberry, demanding their land and a living wage. Taylor's description of Granger and his methods is terse: "He looked over the faces of the poor

white farmers staring up at him with little more to hold onto than the belief that they were better than black people, and continued to chisel at them” (p. 371-372).

The Latino characters in *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) are themselves divided on the issue of whether or not to strike. When talk among the Mexican fieldworkers turns to a possible strike, Esperanza and those close to her are adamant that they will not join the strikers. Yet, Irene, a neighbor, explains that she can see both sides because both want the same things, “To eat and feed our children” (p. 146). Esperanza’s own reasoning is very simple: “They could not afford to strike. If they didn’t work, the people from Oklahoma would happily take their jobs” (p. 146-147). Soon the growers retaliate against the strikers, turning hundreds of people out of their camp to live in squalor on a field belonging to a farmer sympathetic to the strike. The men have to guard the gate to the fenced enclosure due to threats. After strikers sabotage the harvested produce, hiding rats or snakes in crates along with the vegetables, immigration enforcement officers arrive to round up immigrants and United States citizens alike for “repatriation” to Mexico. Ryan gives additional detail in her author’s note about these sweeps, which began with the passage of the Deportation Act of 1929, as policymakers cast about for any actions that might mitigate rising unemployment.

Representations of strikes in the contemporary fiction are more negative. *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983), the only contemporary novel in which union members and their supporters are attacked by anti-union forces, is one of the older books in the discussion sample. In it the teachers take collective action on behalf of two goals: higher wages and academic freedom. Barry’s friend Mr. Higgins is badly beaten and the Committee for a

Balanced Curriculum stages a book-burning that turns into a brawl, as high school students who had rallied nearby in support of their teachers arrive on the scene. The striking teachers in *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) are not the victims of intimidation, nor do they resort to physical threats, but eighth-grader Jeff Mason finds some of their actions disturbing. Jeff learns that teachers have threatened to ensure that workers like his mother who do not join the strike will eventually lose their jobs unless they join the strikers. He is particularly upset when he discovers that a young Spanish-speaking girl he tutors is not attending school during the strike because her parents have received a letter in Spanish explaining that students are “on vacation” (p. 122). One of their supporters injures an older man in a public altercation during a demonstration and counter-demonstration. Jeff learns firsthand how getting caught up in support of the strike leads some people to abandon good judgment. When a teacher suggests Jeff, Steve, and their friends assist them by creating some “catchy slogans or signs and parade around with them before and after school” (108) in order to discourage the substitute teachers from coming in to work, the boys brainstorm about ways to sabotage the substitutes’ cars before enthusiastically adopting Jeff’s idea of putting sand in the cars’ gas tanks. After Jeff learns that this will completely ruin the engines, he tries to stop them, but they are determined to continue the plan. At last, Jeff goes to the striking teachers who rush to the parking lot before the students can vandalize the cars.

Strike Two (Koss, 2001) shows strikers attacking the vehicle of an employee who continues to work during the newspaper strike. Gwen’s uncle, a manager at the newspaper, receives a threatening note in his mailbox. The wildcat strikers in *Riot*

(Casanova, 1996) vandalize cars and homes of non-union workers before attacking the housing complex. Talk of a strike at the factory in *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988) is enough to trigger threats against Chris. There are repeated references to violence associated with strikes, as Chris's uncle explains that "...once you get a strike, you get violence" (p. 20). Later the reader is assured that "the strike hadn't yet become violent, but it was going that way" (p. 154). Collier returns over and over to the idea of power as something possessed by the Winchesters and others of their class. He never makes the connection between this power and violence by workers, but Gwen's father in *Strike Two*, offers an explanation after Gwen questions him about vandalism at a local car dealership that had continued its newspaper advertising during the strike.

"Gwen, these are the tools of the powerless," Dad said. "Management has all the big guns: They've got the building, the presses, the fancy lawyers....On the other hand, we've got nothing - and no choice but to fight back like cavemen, like terrorists."

Dad glanced at me, then quickly added, "That is, some strikers think violence and vandalism are our only options. They're wrong, of course." (p. 37)

Even the striking Disney characters of *Dream Factory* (Barkley & Hepler, 2007) hurl eggs and shout epithets at their replacements until Ella remarks that, "It's as if each of us got our own worst enemy when we signed up for this" (p. 4).

Thus, the image of striking union members as victims of violence or threats in the past gives way to representations of labor as the perpetrators of violence and

vindictiveness in contemporary society. Such representations are hardly coincidental but reflect an ambivalence about social class that makes even discussion of the topic controversial. Those who participated in the strikes of the past are cast as idealistic activists determined to achieve the American dream, but contemporary union members, in choosing to transgress the boundaries of class by acting on behalf of their collective economic interests become bullies or even criminals. One potential explanation may lie in how labor unions are depicted in popular media. If the press focuses on spectacle and sound-bites as Grimes (1987) suggested, threats and intimidation by unions provide simple, easily characterized narratives. When these become the story, they do not require the difficult work of explaining complex issues. The story, as they say, writes itself.

Winners and losers: Results of collective action.

If American social studies textbooks dwell more on organized labor's defeats than its victories, the novels in the discussion sample take a more measured approach, seldom deeming a result as a win or loss for the union. *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004) offers a rare depiction of union organizers enjoying some success when workers at the poultry processing plant vote for a union. More often, union activity as depicted in the books in the discussion sample falls somewhere in between success and failure. Katherine Paterson's books in the discussion sample show mixed results on behalf of the unions. The ten-hour day petition that Lyddie's friend Diana circulates goes down in defeat, but the Bread and Roses Strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, saw a win for the union, as textile mills raised workers wages after weeks of protests. The only contemporary novel

that concludes with the strikers achieving most of their goals is *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976), which is the book in which the strikers' demands are described explicitly. The reader learns early on that teachers have not had a raise in five years, and that they are concerned also with increasing class sizes. The teachers enter negotiations with the board, demanding a thirteen percent raise. Over the course of the novel, the two sides go back and forth before finally agreeing to an eleven percent raise, class sizes capped at thirty students, and a duty-free lunch period. Such detailed description of the strikers' demands is unusual among the novels in the sample. Furthermore, the notion of workers being people with financial or other needs that are not being met as a result of either their working conditions or their decision to participate in collective action is far less obvious among the rest of the contemporary fiction than among the historical novels. The teachers' material conditions in *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) are minimized by the narrative, rather than emphasized. One of the members of the teachers' committee explains to Barry that "It's not so much the money, though that's an issue....The main thing is all the interference we've been getting lately, people wanting to tell us how and what we should teach" (p. 6).

Occasionally the winner is not the union, but the character who grows and matures through their involvement in the strike. In *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007), each of the three friends identifies the strength she most desires as the girls fashion their own pact of social action, aspiring to overcome the limitations of gender and class: "'So we will not be stupid girls,' Bella said. 'And we will not be useless girls,' Jane added. 'And we will not be powerless girls,' Yetta finished" (233). In *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor,

1981) even the racial violence instigated by Harlan Granger in response to demands by the dispossessed farmworkers fails to silence Dubé, a young young African-American who literally finds his voice in the union as his stutter diminishes when he speaks out on behalf of the union.

Conclusion

From this exploration of representations of labor unions in novels for children and young adults, specifically in terms of class consciousness, perhaps the most inarguable point that arises is that a narrow “essentialist” (Wilentz, 1984b) definition of class consciousness would have failed to identify the varying responses of the novels’ characters, most particularly the protagonists, as they come to terms with what it means to engage in class struggle. By analyzing how authors provided context for the struggle, depicted workers’ daily lives on and off the job, and portrayed collective action within the novels, I resist the impulse to deem one novel but not another as exhibiting “class consciousness.” Instead, the image that emerges is as complex as the situations in which characters find themselves. Few act out of an identification based on ideology but are inspired instead by the messages of labor organizers like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Joe Ettor, and César Chávez. Some like Lyddie and Esperanza resist, at least initially, allying themselves with the union for fear of losing what little they have, while others like the miners in *The Breaker Boys* (Hughes, 2004) and Jake in *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2006) have so little to lose that they make the choice to join the strike.

Only one, *Uprising* (2007) specifically names the capitalist system itself as the source of conflict, but Haddix does not rely on the didacticism employed by Collier in *The Winchesters* (1988) to indict the system. Rather than telling just how the low wages and unsafe working conditions at the Triangle benefited the wealthy owners of the garment factory, she shows how Yetta and Bella experienced and resisted their circumstances and how Jane becomes not just a class traitor but a martyr as well. She draws particular attention to the fact that workers today continue to labor in dangerous conditions and challenges her readers to ask themselves “What responsibility do we bear...?” (p. 343).

Within the small subset of six contemporary novels, almost no connections are made between the current, local conflict and larger issues. When they are, they serve to devalue the present union activity by comparing it unfavorably with those of the past. Their representations of labor focus primarily on the experiences of the middle and upper class, with only one novel, *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) portraying a protagonist who belongs to a working class family. The union members in these books are far more likely to engage in threats and vandalism than those of the historical fiction.

The process of the selective tradition offers a lens through which to examine just what “meaning and values are selected for emphasis” (Williams, 1977, p. 115), thus becoming part of a supposedly natural order or tradition that ultimately is taken for granted. The meaning of collective action and the value of consciousness of class would appear to be more relevant in the past than in the present, based on the representation of labor within historical and contemporary fiction for children and young adults. The

historical fiction of the discussion sample depicts labor far more positively than the contemporary novels. Yet, like portrayals of the Civil Rights movement or the women's movement that situate it firmly in the past, these depictions of labor, with the exception of *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) historicize the topic in such a way as to lead to the impression that the problems the labor movement aimed to solve no longer exist. Rosenzweig (1987) described representations of labor in popular media and concluded that the cumulative effect of so many portrayals of labor's struggles in the past was what led students in his classes to be sympathetic to workers in the distant past while hostile to labor unions in the present. Authors of children's novels are part of that popular culture, and its influence can be seen in their focus on historical fiction. The characterizations within *Riot* (Casanova, 1996), *Strike Two* (Koss, 2002), and *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002) of current labor conflicts as less noble than those of the past offer explicit examples of the attitude Rosenzweig attributes to his students. Still, the increase in novels about labor unions published over the last decade gives cause to believe that at least some more varied representations of labor may yet be produced. Historical novels that demonstrate how labor organizations are part of a longstanding heritage of social activism rather than part of isolated incidents related only to local conditions provide opportunities to link past activism with the present and to recover aspects of labor's story that are less well known. In the next chapter I listen to the silences and imagine what other stories might one day be told.

Coming to Class: Rome, 1974

Once I knew how to warp a four-harness loom, knew how to wind thread around a frame of dowels and shift the fragile mass onto the loom itself. I used a spinning wheel to wind bobbins for the shuttle, learned to slip the shuttle between the warp threads raised and lowered by the loom's foot pedals. This craftwork I performed in the stillness of Berry College's Handicrafts Shop, a far cry from the roaring weave rooms of mills like Riegel, formerly called the Trion Company. The din of those looms deafened workers like my grandfather Arvel McLeod and great-aunt Mary Haygood who worked in the mill's weave room. I worked instead at my college's shop under the firm gaze of Mrs. Mullinix, who forbade chatter among the girls she supervised. I was seventeen years old and a sophomore.

Three years earlier, when my parents moved the family from Augusta to Rome, Georgia, my aspirations for self-reinvention at my new high school had turned instead to plots to leave public education as quickly as possible. Here I was more successful - I was not quite seventeen when I first enrolled at Berry College near Rome. Berry was a school founded by Martha Berry to educate the poor children from the hills of northwest Georgia. For many years, students were required to work on campus. By the 1970s, the work-study program was smaller but still an important component of campus life. Students were paid minimum wage for their work and credited with the same amount toward tuition. My first job at Berry was in the guest cottages, a small group of log cabins that provided accommodations for campus visitors. I was a maid, although not a proficient one. The beautiful setting helped offset the routine of housework - many of the

furnishings had been built by students in years past and bore the rich glow of well crafted antiques. The hand-stitched quilts that lay across linen trunks were nothing like the thick utility quilts my maternal great-grandmother Bessie Cole Campbell made. Their patterns were carefully pieced, and the quilting stitches were exquisite. White curtains framed tall pine trees, neighboring cabins, and the occasional deer that wandered by early in the morning. In the distance, the castle-like Ford Buildings, donated by Henry Ford himself, added a fairy-tale touch.

The guest cottages provided a respite from the demands of my courses and my struggle to find my place in college. I realized now that many of the students at Berry came from backgrounds very different from my own. Although Berry had been established for the poor, its beautiful campus now drew students from well-to-do families. I had believed my mother when she told me we were middle class ourselves. Now I understood just how uneasy my family's claim on even that status really was. I realized that many of the people I attended school with had life experiences that I had no frame of reference for. I had learned at last to recognize social class.

Had Berry not had the Handicrafts Shop, I would have continued on at the guest cottages, absently polishing night-stands and dressers and collecting towels. But textiles were already my passion. My grandmother Shirley Henderson McLeod and her seven sisters enjoyed all types of crafts, and their sewing, knitting, crochet, and quilting were what I loved best. It seemed fitting that I should apply for a job at Berry's Handicrafts Shop at the beginning of my sophomore year of college. The shop was part of the Ford Buildings and featured custom carved wooden room dividers that portrayed the story of

Penelope as she wove her tapestry and awaited Odysseus's return from his adventures. Students called it the Loom Tomb. If Mrs. Mullinix felt particularly lively, she might turn the radio on for a little gospel music; otherwise, we wove in silence, the only sound the swish of the shuttle and the taps of our loom's floor pedals rising and falling. Mrs. Mullinix's meticulous instructions for hemming the linen tea towels we made involved precise measurement so that the hem would not deviate by so much as a thread's width. For the rest of my life, whenever I encountered a project that promised any degree of tedium, I would reassure myself with the fact that I had finally learned to hem the damned tea towels.

It was 1975, and a revival of handcrafts of all kinds was in full swing. My hippie friends rejected a consumer mentality in favor of an aesthetic that favored the homemade. Later I heard the philosophy of a Tennessee commune described as "a religion of competence," and knew that I had found a sort of god. For me, there was no conversion experience; instead I simply acknowledged my own roots.

"Put Down Your Guns, and Join Us": The Violence Begins

Reports later described the trouble in Trion beginning that Wednesday, September 5, 1934, when strike sympathizers from the nearby town of Rome approached three deputies guarding the mill entrance and invited them to join the strikers. After the deputies refused, the strikers attempted to disarm them and did in fact take one deputy's

gun. Another of the deputies opened fire, wounding two strikers, one of them seriously. Management immediately shut down the mill; almost all the deputies turned in their weapons. The strikers from Rome approached the chief of police, requesting that the deputy who had fired be arrested. When this request was denied, they entered the mill in search of the man. Instead they found the three deputies who had retained their weapons, and a gun battle broke out. When it was over, two men, one sheriff's deputy Milton Hix and Roscoe Blaylock, the strike sympathizer from Rome, lay dead, and at least twenty were wounded (2 Slain, 20 Wounded in Georgia Rioting, *Atlanta Constitution*, September 6, 1934).

At a Labor Day rally in Macon only two days before union members carried signs, one of which asked "Do We Look like Outlaws?" The sign carried by cheering union members on Monday would be read differently on Wednesday evening, as workers considered the costs of protest. Historian John Salmond (2002) suggested that, "Local conditions may explain why there was violence in Trion, Augusta, and Macon, but good humor in Dalton and why workers in Newnan, who wished to continue working, petitioned the president for protection from those in Hogansville who came to stop them" (p. 183) If relations between workers and management had suffered due to the abuses of the stretch-out, the presence of the flying squadrons appeared to ignite a rage on both sides that no longstanding paternalistic practices could allay.

In any case, the deaths at Trion were overshadowed the following day by the killings in Honea Path, South Carolina, of six strikers at the Chiquola Mill. Conflicting

stories immediately arose as to who had instigated the violence, the millworkers or the special deputies the mill employed to keep its door open (Irons, 2000). Much later it would be established that the pickets had been unarmed and the shots all fired by the deputies (Salmond, 2002). This incident, coming so quickly after the violence in Trion, persuaded many mill owners, including some at Newnan whose employees had chosen not to strike, to shut down operations. Suspicion on both sides was rampant. At Harmony Grove in Commerce, managers at the mill owned by Georgia's former governor L.G. Hardman documented instances of intimidation on the part of strikers. On the back of cotton bale weighing forms, their notes list the names of those who "will swear" that pickets Ansel Wood, Bill Pierce, and J.L. Young were "toating (sic) a club." (Lamartine, Hardman Collection, 1934) Eight years earlier, J.L. Young's name had been listed among the employees who had praised their employer, Dr. Lamartine Hardman, for the working and living conditions at Harmony Grove (Lamartine Hardman Collection, 1926). Pages of notes list incidents in which pickets cursed or threatened violence toward those who refused to join them. Still another handwritten note suggests that management anticipated a number of new hires in the wake of the strike. A draft of questions such as "Are you a member of any church?" and "Have you ever been arrested? Were you convicted or acquitted?" indicated that employees' moral and spiritual lives remained very much their employers' concerns. (Lamartine Hardman Collection, 1934)

Meanwhile Governor Eugene Talmadge's stated commitment to the working man was being severely tested by mill owners who wanted the state militia called out.

Talmadge initially resisted, citing his vow that “I will never use the troops to break up a strike” (Anderson, 1975, p. 110). After defeating Pittman in the primary held September 12, Talmadge broke that promise, declaring martial law in areas affected by the strike on September 17 and calling out the National Guard to maintain order. In Newnan, 128 pickets, most of them members of the flying squadrons that had come from Hogansville, were rounded up and taken to Fort McPherson near Atlanta where they were held in barbed wire enclosures (Martial law in effect in Georgia strike zones, *Atlanta Constitution*, September 18, 1934). More troops were ordered to Trion; the mill reopened with the militia on guard and machine guns mounted on cotton bales near the mill (Baker, 1988). Although the United Textile Workers had not yet called an end to the General Textile Strike of 1934, the strike in Georgia was over.

The Riegel Community Hospital is staffed by a competent and experienced group of medical men. Its physical set-up and equipment coupled with its medical and nursing staff makes it one of the outstanding institutions of its kind in North Georgia. (From “About the Town of Trion and Its Advantages,” a pamphlet published by the Trion Company’s Personnel Department, revised 1943)

Outlaws, Part 4

June 30, 1934

Dear Georgia,

How are you and Andrew doing? I hope you are staying cool. This week has been hot and miserable and all I can think is how much I dread next month when Granny starts me on canning tomatoes. Even though I'll be glad to have them with cornbread this winter, I just can't seem to enjoy all the boiling and washing and peeling like she does.

You asked me about all the talk about a strike here. Daddy says he thinks there will be one. I asked him if he would go on strike. He went to some of the union meetings in Summerville and told them about Papaw getting sick after he worked so hard. He told me he wanted to go on strike and he knew in his heart that what the mill is doing is wrong. But he said Jim told him when they had that strike up in North Carolina people who had gone out got thrown out of their houses and lost their jobs. He said even though the mill is not supposed to do people that way, he is pretty sure they will. People have tried to tell the president what is going on in the cotton mills, but all they get back is a letter telling them to turn it in to the Cotton Board and he says the bosses run that. He said if it was just him, he would join the strikers but with all us to think about, he has to keep his job and our house.

Kathleen and Jesse's baby is due real soon. They came over to see Geneva and the kids. Kathleen said she just didn't go anywhere much anymore, she was so tired. I thought I'd better talk about something else so I asked her if she thought there would be a strike here in Trion. I do not remember Kathleen ever saying a cross word to me but I must have said the wrong thing because she told me she was sick of everybody going on about strikes and unions. And she got up and walked out the front door. Jesse was playing catch with Billy and she told him she needed to be getting home now. He looked at her funny but they got in the car and left.

I wish I know what I said wrong.

I can't wait till July 4. Mama said we would make ice cream when you and Andrew come down then.

Love,

Lizzie

July 5, 1934

Dear Diary,

The baby will be here soon and I am so glad. I would say I wish it would go ahead and come because I am so hot and tired. But then it really would be early and even as hot as it is, I would still rather it come at least nine months after our wedding!

When I went to see Dr. Allen he was fixing to move his office over to the new hospital and he asked me if I would like to see where my baby would be born. I told him I would and we walked across the street. They are finishing it up this week, he said, and he plans to move next Friday. I guess it is nice. I hadn't ever seen a labor room before so I did not have a lot to go on. I heard Grady down in Atlanta has put air-conditioning on their baby floor. This hospital will not have that. Still Mama says she is proud that I am able to have my baby in a hospital with a doctor. Lots of ladies in Trion still have their babies at home like she did. She had all ten of us at home and whenever the regular midwife could not be there, she helped our neighbors too.

We went over to Mama's yesterday for a picnic on the 4th and she knew something was wrong. Edith and I were polite to each other but we did not say one word we didn't have to. She gave me a crocheted baby blanket and I told her how pretty it was. Cecil and Jesse did not stay in the same room with each other. So Mama noticed. I guess it was a good thing she was having to deal with Judith wanting to go off with Leon to the fireworks in Rome. He had a car - I don't know who it belonged to except it was not his. Mama told her to go on. I knew she had her vacation pay in her pocketbook because she told me she was going to the bank today. And I knew it would be a wonder if she had five dollars left when she came back from Rome last night.

Jesse keeps going on about how the union is our baby's best chance, that it is going to make sure he earns a fair wage so we can get ahead. I tell him that having a daddy with a job is more important right now and if he keeps

going this way, we may not have that. I know this union is not Communist like that one was up in Gastonia. I understand that. I just think it may not matter to the mill who is getting the workers stirred up. Jesse thinks it is going to be all nice and neat sort of like a trial in court where everybody makes their arguments and the union will win that argument because they are right and the law is on their side. If it really was that way, I would not be so worried. But I heard Leon talking about his cousin in Rome who is on strike at the foundry and he is going around to the Alabama mills trying to get workers to strike. Flying squadrons, he called it. And he said some had to be convinced pretty hard to go out. Just the way he smiled made me nervous. Jesse does not need to be mixed up in any of this right now. I don't know how to convince him of that though.

From the *Trion Facts*

July 27, 1934

First Baby Born at Trion Hospital

Charles Gaines McKenzie, 9 lb., 4 oz., was born to Jesse and Kathleen McKenzie of Trion on July 24 at 10:15 AM. The attending physician was Dr. David Allen. Mother and baby are doing fine. Dr. Allen reported that the new hospital marked the arrival in Trion of the latest and most modern medical facilities and services. "I look forward to

delivering many more new citizens of this fine town at the new hospital. I congratulate the McKenzies on their fine little boy."

July 31, 1934

Dear Diary,

At last I have a minute to write. Charles is sleeping and Mama told me to take a nap myself but I can't seem to. So I thought I would just say I love him so much and this is all so hard to do. Mama was glad I could go to the hospital and have a doctor instead of having the baby at home like she did all ten of us. All I can say is I cannot imagine doing that because it hurt bad enough at the hospital. Then they gave me something and I don't remember anything after that. I had heard that what they give you does not take the pain away but only the memory of it so I asked Jesse if he had heard me in the waiting room. He said, "Kathleen, don't - " and I said to tell me the truth. So, "Yes, I heard you, but -." "Jesse, did you hear me more than once?" He told me to stop asking then so I know he did. This diary is my memory because it is all I have of what happened. They say you forget but it is the forgetting that lets you do it again. And even again. I love my baby. And I will never do this again.

August 10, 2009

Dear Diary,

Charles seems to be getting bigger and doing more everyday. I am pretty sure he smiled at me this afternoon.

I am still worried about Jesse and the union. He says workers in Alabama have already gone out and that there is going to be a special meeting this week in New York where the union will decide whether to call for a strike. He thinks they will since the mills have all cut back on production. They just close down and workers don't get any pay at all. Jesse said if they paid what they were supposed to, maybe families could get by, but they have not done it yet.

August 18, 1934

Dear Georgia,

Thanks for your letter. I got it yesterday which was nice. We are putting up vegetable soup here. Granny keeps me chopping and cooking and stirring and washing till I don't have time to sit down a minute. Neither does she. It rained one day this week though and we got to sit down for lunch and even eat some of all this soup we been fixing. We took our lunch out on the porch and she started talking to me, Georgia, Or maybe she was talking more to herself because she was talking to me like I was a grown up and not a little kid anymore. Of course I am not a little kid but I was surprised to hear her saying things to me like I was grown.

She said not a day went by but that she missed my Papaw every minute of it. They were married such a long time. I knew she was not but 13 when they got

married but I had not thought about what that meant. I am older now than she was when she was married. And Papaw was just 17.

She said by the time you have been with someone for 44 years, you learn their ways and figure out how to get along in spite of them. She told me how come we always had little Christmas presents from them even when Mama and Daddy didn't have any money. She said every year when Papaw went to the Quarter Century Dinner at the mill, she would get into the box under the bed where he kept all his cash money and she would take out enough to make sure all her grandbabies had something for Christmas. And each year he would come home with his new pin from the mill and show it to her and she would tell him how nice it looked and he would know she had been into his money but he didn't said anything and neither did she.

There is still a lot of talk about the strike and what is going to happen here. I guess we will know soon. I have heard that some mills in other places have gone out already, They are still playing baseball though. We went to a game tonight down at the ballfield. Trion won 7 to 4.

Mama said you and Andrew were coming next week so I will see you soon.

Love,

Liz

August 30, 1934

Dear Diary,

I never thought I would do what I did today but I had to. I told Jesse I was going to go see Mama but I drove over to Mama's and left Charles with her and went to John Robert and Amy's house instead. John Robert was surprised to see me since I have not talked a whole lot to him in a while. Amy was having supper with one of her teacher friends and he was there by himself so that was good. I told him that he had got Jesse into this union business and now he needed to help me get him out.

He told me he could not do that so I asked him why in the world not.

"Jesse is doing what he's good at" he said. I told him that was what I was afraid of, that Jesse was good at getting people all stirred up, and now all this was going to come down on him when they go out on strike.

"John Robert, it's different for you and Amy. You were not going to stay here anyway. I know Amy wants to go back to Atlanta, and you are going to find something else to do. But what about us? What about Charles? Doesn't Jesse need to consider what can happen to us?"

When John Robert did not say anything, I started thinking maybe I had a chance of talking him into this after all. It was all I could think of because Jesse sure isn't listening to me.

"Tell him you think he needs to back off. Tell him he can do more good at the mill if he doesn't get involved in this strike."

John Robert asked me just what I thought would happen if Jesse got out of the union. And I told him I thought he could keep his job and we could keep our house. We would not have to go live with his family or move away when there are not any jobs anywhere close anyhow. I told him I thought Jesse had a lot more faith in the NRA than he did the mill right now.

“John Robert, I can see the mill - it is right down the road. You tell me about the NRA and about 7a and I can’t see that. I only have so much real faith and what I have is in God. I can’t believe in something else I can’t see right now. I see the mill and our house and we don’t have much and maybe we never will have but right now we have to hold on to what we do have.”

He started to argue and then he stopped. “Kathleen, what do you believe will happen if Jesse quits the union now?”

I said I had just told him that - Jesse would keep his job and we would keep our house.

He shook his head and said it might be that that wasn’t all Jesse had at stake right now. I asked him what he was saying to me, but he wouldn’t say more. I told him I needed to leave and pick up the baby at Mama’s.

“You can’t ever tell him I asked for this. Please, John Robert.”

I picked up my purse and left.

Please.

September 1, 1934

Dear Diary,

The strike is going to be called tonight. Monday will be Labor Day so nobody will know until Tuesday how many are really going out. John Robert came by to pick up Jesse to go to the union meeting. I'm waiting now for them to get back. Charles just now went to sleep. Nothing would make me happier right now than for Jesse to walk through that door and tell me he's quit the union. I am afraid to even hope for it though. I have heard that the mill is hiring special deputies to keep the strikers away and make sure the workers get in. Judith said Leon was one that got hired to do it. They told him to bring a gun.

I do not believe this is happening. Not here. These are our neighbors. We go to church together. We watch baseball and make ice cream. Are we really going to war with each other over the union?

September 3, 1934

Dear Diary,

We went over to Mama's for a picnic. I took some potato salad and chocolate pie and a chicken I had cooked. John Robert and Amy were not there. Jesse has not said anything to me about the strike or the union and I can not ask him.

September 4, 1934

Dear Diary,

I heard Jesse get up during the night and he did not come back to bed. I went in the living room and I saw the door was open. Jesse was out on the front porch, just sitting there. If things were like they were, I would have gone out to talk with him and I would have fixed us some warm milk and toast with butter and we would have gone back to bed. Since I talked to John Robert I feel funny. Like I have lied to Jesse. I did lie to him but not telling him where I was going was not the real lie.

I think things are going to be okay though because Jesse left this morning at 15 till 8, just like always. He kissed me like he always does but he seemed like he was thinking about something. I wanted to ask him what he was going to do but I figured it would be better to just not say anything. He took his lunch with him that I fixed. I felt better after I saw him pick it up. Because that means he is going to work, doesn't it?

September 6, 1934

Dear Diary,

I wanted to write yesterday since it seems to settle my thinking somehow but I was shaking so hard most of the day I knew I could not hold a pen. Jesse came home from work on Tuesday and never said where he had been. I wondered if I should ask him if there had been many who had gone out because maybe that would be safe no matter if he had been one of them that

had. But in the end I didn't ask him anything. I was too afraid of what I was going to hear. I kept wondering how come he wouldn't say anything about it. We never saw John Robert at all and he didn't call.

Jesse played with the baby for a while and it seemed like he was feeling a little better, but I heard him get up again about 2 in the morning yesterday. This time I went out on the front porch and he was in the swing. I stopped. "When did you start smoking?"

"Today. I think."

Well, I thought. It could be worse. At least he is not drinking. I asked him if he didn't want to come on back to bed and he sighed and said he would be in in a little bit.

I waited up for him but he did not come in. It was getting light when I went to sleep and when I woke up it was 8:30. I cannot remember when I last slept that late. I heard the baby crying but I did not see anything that made me think Jesse had come back in at all. All I saw was a saucer of cigarette butts and ashes on the porch rail by the swing.

I fed Charles and got me some breakfast even though I didn't really want anything. I put him on a blanket on the floor and got out my patterns. I had bought some wool on sale at the Bargain Loft just before I quit and I decided I would try to at least get my new suit cut out today. It would be something to think about besides why my husband will barely speak to me and what might be going on at the mill.

I found the pattern I was looking for and laid out the wool on the kitchen table. I went to get some butter knives to lay on top of the pattern pieces to hold them down while I cut it out and I heard the first shot while I stood there with the knives in my hand.

I was just telling myself it could not have been a gunshot when I heard another one and another one and then there were more, and I ran to pick up Charles from off the floor and I ran back to the bedroom. I was crying and he was crying because I had scared him, I was holding onto him so tight. When I could be quiet again and got the baby settled down a little, I heard men yelling and then sirens going on. The shots had stopped.

The telephone rang and I picked it up even though I was scared of what I might hear. It was Edith. "I can't believe I got through. The lines have been busy for the last 10 minutes. Has Jesse called you?"

"No. No."

"Is he at the mill?"

"Yes, he went in to work this morning" I told her and I wondered if it was another lie.

"Oh. I wondered. Cecil thought he might have."

I didn't know what she meant. It's not like Jesse and Cecil are best friends, not since that fight especially. I let it pass. Nothing made sense to me today.

"Some more people went out on strike today, but a lot didn't. And a bunch stayed home because they were scared of the picketers and the deputies

both. There was a lot of workers from Rome came up today, people we hadn't seen before. They were out with the people from Trion who was striking." Edith was quiet a minute. Then she said, "I need to hang up because Cecil might be trying to call me."

It was then I heard more shots, not as loud as the first but still the sharp popping noise I knew was guns.

"Edith, can you hear it? They're shooting some more."

She hung up then.

My baby and I were all alone and my sister was probably all by herself. I wanted to run to her house, just two blocks over, it would take minutes to get there but during those minutes Jesse might call. Or he might come to the door. And even if I could get through to her on the telephone again and beg her to come over here I knew she could not because she was waiting too for Cecil to walk in the door.

I went to the living room window and looked out. Some men were walking up the street from the mill, others ran down to meet them. Women stood on porches or in the front yard. I laid Charles down in his bassinet and wondered how he had managed to go back to sleep during all this. Without him in my arms I felt more alone than I did before but I did not want to chance taking him out until I knew what was happening.

I went out to the sidewalk and saw Jim Tracy from church. He was talking to our neighbor on the other side. "I never seen such blood. I don't know who started it. There was the pickets with their sticks and such and all

them deputies had guns.” I thought of Leon and wondered why the idea of him with a gun in his hand made me feel all cold inside. Then it came to me that he was a weak, weak man and the gun would draw him.

Mr. Tracy said “Somebody got shot outside the mill somebody said. I went out and there was somebody laying on the ground with blood all over his shirt. I think he was a striker because it looked like the other strikers was trying to get him up before the cops got there. Some of them started talking to the deputies, like they was arguing. Then a bunch of them run in the mill. I had been out on the loading dock when this all happened. I got down behind some bales when the shooting started, then looked up and saw him laying there. They started yelling at the cops and I decided it wouldn’t be any use for me to stay. So I started walking home. They’re gonna shut it down. Won’t nobody be going in to work till all this settles down.”

We heard more sirens getting closer then and a flash of light passed through the stop sign at the end of the block going towards the mill. Mr. Abernathy from next door looked after it and said how the mill came out the winner anyhow. “They have cloth setting in the warehouse. They don’t need no more for a while and in the meantime they don’t pay us, we just hang on like always and hope they take all us back when this thing blows over.”

“It ain’t going to blow over as long as there’s a union trying to come in. Blue Eagle or no Blue Eagle, the company is goin’ to shut this one down.”

I asked Mr. Tracy did he see Jesse anywhere when he was heading back home. No, he hadn't. But he'd not been anywhere close to the weave room no way and Jesse wasn't outside the mill so far as he could see.

Was Jesse at the mill? I was asleep when he left. Maybe he was far away from all this. Maybe he had gone down to his mother's and daddy's house and then I could not think of anywhere else in the world he would have gone that morning if he had not gone to work, none that made any sense unless the world really had gone crazy. I went back inside just as the telephone rang. It was Mama and she said John Robert had not come home either.

Posted on the door of Trion Company September 5, 1934
The mill will be closed until further notice. Workers will
be notified when to report.

Chapter 5

Stories and Silence:

Locating Gaps in Representations of the American Labor Movement

In the previous chapter I explored whether and how class consciousness was depicted in the 18 novels of the discussion sample. I turn now to the sample as a whole, a total of 53 novels for children and young adults. Here I compare these representations of labor unions with the historical record to determine aspects of labor history that are included and that remain missing. Macherey (2006) argued that it is the gaps in texts that provide the link between that text and its ideology. The gaps in depictions of labor in children's fiction parallel the silences regarding social class in both American popular culture and the field of children's literature studies. Yet another silence is that of the participants in the 1934 general textile strike. The pieces missing from these stories are significant because of their very absence. I was fortunate in that these were what initially drew me to the story of the 1934 strike, to the study of children's literature, and to the novels themselves, so that it never seemed an inversion of the research process to ask, "What was so important that it had to be left out?"

Historical Projects as Challenges to the Selective Tradition explains the organization of this section of the study and describes how it and other similar studies of children's

literature question dominant views of both past and present that are sustained by a selective tradition (Williams, 1977).

Gaps in the Timeline: Historical Settings in Novels Depicting the Labor Movement

identifies historical periods that have not yet been represented in American children's fiction, including some that were particularly critical to the labor movement.

Missing Images of the American Worker: More than Miners and Factory Girls

compares occupations and industries depicted in the novels to those of the contemporary workforce in the United States and questions the disparities in representation.

Race and Class: Negotiating the Confluence describes the history of troubled relations between labor unions and racial minorities in the United States and suggests that these are inadequately depicted in children's novels.

“We’re Workers Too, the Same as You, and We Fight the Union Way”: Representing

Gender and Class explains that although women are represented in large numbers in the sample novels, most of the books ignore the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace and lack depictions of modern or contemporary female labor leaders.

Aftermath of an Uprising describes events following the general textile strike of 1934 as families were evicted and workers blacklisted.

Breaking the Silence is a reflection on what it means to write or to choose not to write.

July 2006, Trion, Georgia offers a firsthand account from a citizen of Trion who witnessed some of the events of early September 1934.

In Memoriam is a poem commemorating the death of Deputy Milton Hix, who died at the Trion Company on September 5, 1934.

Outlaws, Part 5 concludes the multigenre novel with characters coming to terms with the outcomes of their choices.

Historical Projects as Challenges to the Selective Tradition

The sample as a whole includes 53 novels published from 1976 through 2009. Analysis of the novels in the discussion sample shows, at least within the historical novels, a range of voices and viewpoints, with most of those generally favorable to labor unions. Some characters such as Bella in *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) and *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991) are initially reluctant to join the union cause or to engage in collective action before eventually expressing support. Others like Esperanza in *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) may express sympathy but never fully commit to taking action. A few, such as Yetta in *Uprising*, support the union cause wholeheartedly, even passionately. Others feel pulled in both directions by competing loyalties to their family members or friends (*The Breaker Boys*, Hughes, 2004; *The Winchesters*, Collier, 1988). Workers of various ethnic groups and nationalities are depicted: African-American (*Bud, Not Buddy*, Curtis, 1999; *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, Taylor, 1981); Irish (*Ashes of Roses*, Auch, 2002); Italian (*Bread and Roses, Too*, Paterson, 2006); Polish (*The Breaker Boys*, Hughes, 2004; *Billy Creekmore*, Porter, 2007); Japanese (Kadohata, *Kira-kira*, 2004); and Mexican (*Jesse*, Soto, 1994; *Esperanza Rising*, 2000).

Even with this range of viewpoints expressed by characters who represent a variety of cultural backgrounds and races, at least some aspects of the American labor movement do not appear or are under-represented, even within the larger sample of over

50 novels. This section of the study explores these gaps or silences among the existing stories about the American labor movement in children's fiction. While these gaps are interesting by themselves, it is what they suggest about attitudes toward the American labor movement and the broader topic of social class during the time in which they were written that makes them fascinating for the researcher. The production of these texts requires deliberate choices on the part of writers as to what aspects of the labor movement will be included and how those will be cast within the narrative. These choices are part of the selective tradition described by Williams (1977) that works to perpetuate the interests of the dominant culture. Williams reminds the reader that this process, however powerful, remains vulnerable, particularly within the realm of historical work: "Vulnerable because the real record is effectively recoverable, and many of the alternative or opposing continuities are still available" (p. 116).

Earlier studies of children's literature have relied on this recovery of historical records for the purposes of comparing images, values, and attitudes portrayed in the books with those documented through primary and secondary historical sources. In her research on accusations of presentism in historical fiction for children, Power (2003) showed that the feminist attitudes evidenced by the title characters in *Catherine Called Birdy* (Cushman, 1994) and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (Avi, 1990), while they were held by a very small minority during the historical period in which the novels were set, did exist. Similarly, she explored what she termed *readerly presentism* within books like *Souder* (Armstrong, 1969) in which criticism of African-American characters' passive acceptance of racist attitudes and acts was dismissed as an imposition

of contemporary beliefs onto people from a period in which such beliefs were nonexistent. However, there were women from even the distant past who rebelled against their limited role in society, and many African-Americans prior to the 20th century demonstrated active resistance to racism. By comparing the novels to “the real record,” or perhaps more accurately, a more complete record than that cited by the books’ critics, Power showed how societal attitudes and values of the past were far from monolithic and then took her work a step further by drawing the connection between accusations of presentism and contemporary attitudes toward sexism and racism:

Uninformed accusations of presentism in young adult literature serve to reify a selective tradition that upholds a version of history as linear progression, that excuses present injustices in light of that linear progression model of history, that refuses to acknowledge the agency of women and minorities in the past, that distorts history as far as women and minority experiences are concerned, and that continues to support the traditional, Eurocentric canon in both history and literature. (p. 457)

By making explicit the link between attitudes toward the past and the values held in the present, Power goes beyond simple “recovery of discarded areas, or the redress of selective and reductive interpretations” (Williams, 1977, p. 116). In drawing this connection, she takes aim at the vulnerability of the selective tradition that Williams described.

The present study is even more similar to the exploration by Taxel (1981) of issues of race and class in historical fiction about the American Revolution, as he noted the specific absence of discussion as to whether the ideals of liberty and freedom associated with rebellion against England would be extended to African-American citizens. Most of the 32 books in his sample portrayed Black characters, if they featured any at all, as foolish and childlike people, thus justifying their continued enslavement as a sort of protected status. Taxel cites a number of historical studies that attest to the fact that considerable discussion about the continuation of slavery occurred during the Revolutionary period, something that is not reflected in the novels, all of which were written a century or more after the end of the war. The interactions between White characters in the novels and the often stereotypical Black characters served to justify the racist attitudes and segregation of American society in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even books written after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s avoided discussion of the paradox of Americans fighting for freedom while continuing to own slaves. Only one book in the sample, *When the World's on Fire* (Edwards, 1973) featured an African-American protagonist, and it went out of print relatively quickly. In more recent years, books such as *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing* (Anderson, 2006) and *Chains* (Anderson, 2008) have featured African-American characters and addressed this contradiction between the ideals of the revolution and the institution of slavery, but these are uncommon even today.

As I studied novels in the sample, I found several specific areas that appeared to be missing or under-represented. First of all, an examination of the periods in which the

historical novels were set showed that three periods were under-represented or not represented at all, specifically the years from 1848 through 1867, 1919 through 1929, and 1937 through 1955. Although the labor movement declined somewhat during the first of these periods, the latter two were marked by significant increases in both union membership and involvement in strikes in the years immediately following the two world wars (Brody, 1993; Lipsitz, 1994). Also the relative lack of contemporary fiction in which labor unions appear shows that more recent portrayals of unions are missing as well. In this section of the study I consider what these historical gaps mean in terms of events and ideologies that do not appear in novels for children.

As mentioned earlier, particular occupations, specifically mining and garment manufacturing are over-represented in the sample. In this chapter I compare numbers of workers in particular fields and numbers of their union membership in the present day to their representation in the novels of the sample. Other occupations more likely to be unionized today, such as public employees or service industry workers, are not depicted in novels about the labor movement. These gaps have important implications for representations of the labor movement available to young people who may not associate unions with workers of the twenty-first century.

The third area in which I listen for these silences is race. Although it might initially appear that a range of races and ethnicities appear in the novels, actual practices of discrimination and segregation on the part of unions are rarely suggested. For many years American labor unions were segregated or did not allow non-White workers to join at all. Readers of the novels in the sample are unlikely to realize this, based on most of

the stories. Occasionally, this racial exclusion is implied, as in *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor, 1981), but more often authors avoid the issue altogether. Other issues related to race are the failure to make connections between labor and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the lack of portrayals of White European-Americans from the South.

Finally, although the novels feature many female protagonists and depict women as workers, the historical fiction with more recent settings and the contemporary fiction as well ignore gender-related issues workers confront today, such as unequal pay for men and women and sexual harassment. This gap implies that these problems, which were described in books like *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991) and *Ashes of Roses* (Auch, 2002), do not continue into the present. In addition, the scarcity of images of modern leaders from the American labor movement, such as Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, the first female Cabinet secretary who was appointed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, means that connections between labor and government policy or feminism are not addressed.

These gaps in representations of historical periods, occupations, race, and gender suggest the strength of a selective tradition that neglects those narratives that do not conform to values and attitudes held by the dominant culture. Identifying these silences in labor's stories is a critical first step toward offering young readers representations of American workers that reflect labor's rich history and potential to effect change in the present.

Gaps in the Timeline: Historical Settings in Novels Depicting the Labor Movement

The historical settings of the novels range from 1836 to the early 2000s, but their distribution over that range is quite uneven. The majority of books in the sample, 37 out of 53, are set in the 20th century, with 21 set in the years from 1900 through 1920. This concentration of titles in the first two decades of the century is due to the relatively large number of books set in the mining and garment industries, as I will discuss later. The earliest setting in the sample is found in Athena Lord's *A Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind* (1982), a novel set in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1836. *Dream Factory* (Barkley & Hepler, 2007), the contemporary novel set in Disney World in Orlando, Florida, has the most recent setting (see Appendix for information about settings of novels in the research sample). For the purposes of discussing the gaps in the historical periods represented in the novels, I divide the books into seven periods: 1836-1847; 1867-1899; 1901-1918; 1919-1928; 1929-1936; 1956-1970; and 1976-2005. Certain gaps are readily apparent from the groupings alone; I found no children's novels about labor unions set in the years between 1848 and 1867 or 1937 through 1955. Some periods, such as the years immediately after World War I or from 1956 to 1970, were under-represented in the sample, with few books featuring characters involved in union activities. The distribution of the books is such that 43 of the books take place between 1836 and 1936, while only ten are set in the 74 years since 1936. Such a disparity cannot fail to have implications for how labor is depicted in children's books, especially when so few contemporary images of labor are available for young readers. The lack of books set in more recent decades suggests that labor conflict was a problem in the distant past, but has little relevance to

the present. In addition, the post-World War II years, a period in which record numbers of strikes occurred in the United States, is not represented at all in the books, an omission that is unlikely to be coincidental but that points to the power of a selective tradition.

1836-1847: Early Industrial Revolution and republican ideals.

In 1836, the Revolutionary War was very much a part of the historical memory of American citizens. The fathers and grandfathers of early industrial workers had fought a war based on the principal of equality, and “to be an American citizen was, by definition to be a republican, the inheritor of a revolutionary legacy in a world ruled by aristocrats and kings” (Wilentz, 1984b, p. 61). Equality and independence were the philosophical touchstones of the new nation, but these were at odds with its rapidly changing economy. While these shifts are hinted at in the books from the sample with the earliest historical settings, none of the novels address their significance to workers caught up in an industrial economy that would prevent most of them from achieving the independence they thought their due as sons and daughters of free men.

I was unable to locate any novels about labor unions with settings earlier than 1836, which was not in itself too surprising, given that this was still quite early in the American Industrial Revolution. The only novels with a pre-Civil War setting were *A Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind* (Lord, 1982), *Lyddie* by Katherine Paterson (1991) and *So Far from Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1847* (Denenberg, 1997). All three novels are set in Lowell, Massachusetts, the scene of labor unrest during that period among its young, mainly female textile workers. Given the

body of historical research about the early textile industry in New England, it is surprising that I found only three books that depict collective action on the part of workers during this particular period.

The single focus of these books on the textile industry means that important shifts in how Americans saw themselves as workers and as citizens are not portrayed in children's novels. For example, it was during the first half of the 19th century that many workers found themselves locked into an economy based on wage labor, rather than on participation in networks of independent producers (Wilentz, 1984b). *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991) touches on this in her journey from the farm to the textile mill, but the implications for female workers leaving rural farms for urban areas like Lowell were far different than those for most of their male counterparts, particularly those working in urban centers.

These three novels set in the early New England textile industry illustrate Wilentz's (1984a) observation that those in the past and present reflecting on the coming of industrialization to North America tend to focus more on what he termed "a mechanized contrivance like Lowell" (p. 107) and ignore the growth of industry in the metropolitan area that would dominate commerce into the next two centuries. By 1850, New York's working class had seen relations with their employers deteriorate markedly, even as workers realized that they themselves were unlikely to ever realize the economic independence they aspired to. The notion of wages has become so much a part of American economic culture in the years since the early 19th century, that it may be difficult especially for young readers to grasp the implications of accepting what later textile workers came to call "public work" (Hall et al., 1986, p. 44). For males, the

apprentice system, memorably described in Esther Forbes's *Johnny Tremain* (1943) represented a career path that, ideally, culminated with the trained craftsman establishing his own business. Women, in contrast, were likely to work at home, although that work might include paid piecework for sewing or other handwork (Wilentz, 1984b). The years in which men accepted wages were stigmatized as dependence on another for one's living. Under the system by which men learned their trade, working for wages as hired workers was supposed to be a temporary situation, not a permanent one. Stories of this pivotal period in the nation's history would offer perspective on the faltering republican ideal of economic independence.

Gap: 1848-1866.

The years between 1847 when *So Far from Home* (Denenberg, 1997) ends and the setting of the next novel in 1867 (*The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps*, Krensky, 1994) saw industrialization spread and with it, a dramatic restructuring of American society. Until the end of the 19th century, workers from traditional, preindustrial societies would enter the industrial workplace, only to find that expectations were very different from those they had experienced earlier. Gutman (1977) points out that in England, this transformation of the workforce was complete by 1850, but in the United States, waves of immigrants and workers from the countryside entering industrial centers meant that this process of cultural adaptation to industrialization continued over a longer period of time and in repeated waves. He describes workers' habits of drinking on the job and claiming "Blue Monday" as a holiday in order to enjoy a long weekend. Such practices had been

tolerated, if not always happily, by employers in shipyards and artisans' shops, but the workplace was changing into an environment where punctuality and piecework were the order of the day.

In *Lyddie* (Paterson, 1991), workers allude to times past when even their factory schedule was more relaxed, leaving them with a few minutes to enjoy reading a poem or tending a potted plant in the factory window. By the time *Lyddie* arrives, the workplace routine is set and immutable. Supervisors demand that workers tend more looms and work more quickly in order to increase production and profit. None of the novels depict the conflict that inevitably occurred as workers confronted new demands on their time and particular expectations regarding their personal habits. After the turn of the century scientific management practices would become widespread in factories as engineers prescribed time management routines that effectively removed worker expertise from the process (Brody, 1993).

The most recent immigrants in *Lyddie*, *So Far from Home*, and *A Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind* were Irish. The books describe the tension between them and native-born workers. Brigid, who appears in the second half of *Lyddie*, would have been from a family who moved to America just as the potato famine began in 1845. As the potato blight continued, 750,000 people died and 2,000,000 left the country to find work elsewhere. Through the years of the period in which the next group of novels take place, the reader finds Irish-Americans becoming more firmly established as workers and experiencing unease themselves as new waves of immigrants arrive in the United States from areas other than Northern Europe

1867-1899: Immigration, radicalism, and repression.

The post-Civil War period is represented by ten of the novels in the sample, eight of which have been published since 2000. This period depicts a broader range of occupations than the preceding one: railroad construction; transportation; mining; and manufacturing. Two are stories of Chinese workers recruited for specific purposes by their American employers. *The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps* (1994) takes place in 1867 in California as the railroads rushed to complete the transcontinental line in the late 1860s. Chinese workers stage a strike in protest of their low wages and brutal working conditions. In *Forbidden Friendship* (Weber, 2004) Chinese are brought to work in a Massachusetts shoe manufacturing company as strikebreakers. Interestingly, neither book has a Chinese protagonist. In each book, a young American girl befriends a Chinese boy, and the story is told entirely from her point of view so that the Chinese perspective is never featured in books about labor unions. The female characters in both books have family ties to management or the company owners and as such belong to a middle or upper social class. As Table 3 demonstrates, almost all books set in this period depict workers who are immigrants to the United States, with more workers and their families arriving from places other than Northern Europe. Eastern Europeans appear more frequently in novels set in this time period and the next. Later World War I and anti-immigration laws would restrict such movements, but the late 19th century and the early 20th century saw the American workforce become increasingly diverse.

Table 3

Post-Civil War Period, 1867-1899

Title	Setting: Year	Occupation	Nationality of workers
<i>The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps</i>	1867	Railroad construction	Chinese
<i>Forbidden Friendship</i>	1870	Manufacturing (shoes)	Chinese
<i>Chase</i>	1875	Mining	Irish
<i>Missing from Haymarket Square</i>	1886	Manufacturing and garment	African-American, Polish, Austrian
<i>The Streetcar Riots</i>	1889	Transportation	European- American
<i>A Real American</i>	1892	Mining	Italian
<i>Gilded Delirium</i>	1894	Transportation	None specified
<i>A Coal Miner's Bride: The Story of Anetka Kaminiska</i>	1896	Mining	Polish
<i>The Breaker Boys</i>	1897	Mining	Polish
<i>Fire in the Hole</i>	1899	Mining	Irish

According to Wilentz (1984a), the concept of labor as the personal property of the laborer rather than a commodity to be bought and sold on the free market, a notion which had faded at mid-century, would once again be foregrounded in the rhetoric of the labor movement from the 1870s until the early 1890s, the time in which six of the twelve books

are set. As Wilentz also notes, as the influence of the Knights of Labor rose and then diminished, the dominant classes mounted more systematic attacks on labor organizations, calling on the courts and the military to check labor's campaigns. Almost all novels set in this period include incidents of violence and intimidation of union members, but only one book in the sample, *Missing from Haymarket Square* (Robinet, 2001), mentions the Knights of Labor by name. For years the Knights offered an alternative to the American Federation of Labor, a craft union that was more concerned with workplace issues than with broader social problems. The Knights invoked the rhetoric of wage slavery, without calling for the elimination of the capitalist system itself (Fink, 1983). The wage system, according to their constitution, was inherently in conflict with republican ideals and government. Wilentz locates within this philosophy a "nineteenth-century American class consciousness" (p. 14): "Fundamental to this consciousness was the belief that these inequalities should be removed not by returning to some (apocryphal) traditional 'golden age,' but by democratizing the political and economic relations of industrializing America" (p. 15). The Knights challenged these relations on the basis of an understanding of common economic interests, a fundamental tenant of class consciousness, and advocated action to establish a more equitable balance of power between workers and management. In addition, the Knights' recruitment of African-American workers and women meant that the organization at least potentially provided a voice for workers the AFL ignored.

As noted earlier, social studies textbooks usually focus on only three strikes among the thousands that have occurred in American labor history (Anyon, 1979): the

railroad strike of 1877, the Homestead strike of 1892, and the Pullman strike of 1894. all of which were violent and represented a setback to the union. It is interesting that only one of these, the Pullman strike, is portrayed in a single book in the sample, *Gilded Delirium* (Stokes & Belinkie, 2007). It is also the only novel in which labor leader and Socialist presidential candidate Eugene Debs appears. This decidedly odd book is more a history study guide than a true novel. Part of a series entitled Smart Novels, its cover describes it as “the painless way to learn U.S. history” and states that it covers “Post-Civil War America - More than 500 historical facts painless and fun!” In the series, a group of teenaged friends are sent back in time to various periods of history, courtesy of an extraterrestrial’s “chronobomb” (p. vii). The story of these wisecracking teens, the space aliens, and a “time-cop” is interspersed with occasional pages of facts “From the Chronolyzer’s Hard Drive” (p. vi). The first of these sections describes the era’s “Cast of Characters: The 8 Types of Gilded Age Chicagoans” (p. 9). These include “#3: The Labor Leaders” along with the information that “Some of the most infamous Gilded Age strikes, meanwhile, were the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the Homestead Strike of 1892, and the Pullman Strike of 1894” (p. 10), thus providing evidence that Anyon’s assertion over thirty years ago that social studies textbooks focus only on these particular strikes remains valid. The absence of these particular strikes in the rest of the sample is interesting, given their prevalence in textbooks. Because trade books are so often recommended to supplement textbooks, it may well be that authors turn to stories less likely to be part of the textbooks, hoping to offer some alternative views of the labor movement in the process.

1900-1918: On the factory floor and down in the mines.

The first two decades of the 20th century, the time in which the largest number of novels are set, depicts a smaller range of occupations than the previous period. It is this period in which the preponderance of books about the mining and garment industries are set, as the Table 4 illustrates.

Table 4

Early 20th century, 1900-1918

Title	Setting: Year	Occupation	Nationality
<i>Theodore Roosevelt: Letters from a Young Coal Miner</i>	1901	Mining	Polish
<i>The Candle and the Mirror</i>	1901	Mining	Slovakian, Italian
<i>Breaker</i>	1902	Mining	Irish, Polish
<i>The Journal of Otto Peltonen: A Finnish Immigrant</i>	1905	Mining	Finnish
<i>Billy Creekmore</i>	ca. 1906	Mining	European-American
<i>Rockbuster</i>	1907	Mining	Irish
<i>East Side Story</i>	1909	Garment manufacturing	Italian
<i>Rosie in New York: Gotcha!</i>	1909	Garment manufacturing	Russian
<i>Hear My Sorrow: The Diary of Angela Denoto, a Shirtwaist Worker</i>	1909	Garment manufacturing	Italian
<i>Uprising</i>	1909	Garment manufacturing	Italian, Russian, European-American
<i>Call Me Ruth</i>	1909	Garment manufacturing	Russian

Table 4

Early 20th century, 1900-1918

<i>On Fire</i>	1911	Mining	Not specified
<i>Ashes of Roses</i>	1911	Garment manufacturing	Irish, Italian, Russian
<i>Fire! The Beginnings of the Labor Movement</i>	1911	Garment manufacturing	Russian
<i>The Locket: Surviving the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire</i>	1911	Garment manufacturing	Russian
<i>Making Waves</i>	1912	Garment manufacturing	Russian
<i>Bread and Roses, Too</i>	1912	Textile manufacturing	Italian, European-American
<i>Factory Girl</i>	1912	Garment manufacturing	European-American, Russian, Polish, Italian
<i>Frankie</i>	1912	Mining	Greek, Welsh, Italian, European-American
<i>Changes for Rebecca</i>	1914	Garment manufacturing	Russian

The plight of the New York garment workers in the wake of the 1909 strike and the fire at the Triangle Waist Factory in 1911 captured the imaginations of children's authors, particularly over the last ten years. The fervor of the striking workers who attempted to force employers to raise their pay and improve working conditions in the urban sweatshops was covered extensively in the popular press of the time (Enstad, 1999). With the strike having ended barely a year before the fire, it was easy for newspaper readers to imagine that many of the 146 workers who died might have been among the young

women they had seen picketing factories like the Triangle over the course of the bitterly cold winter, aspiring to high fashion while clad in cheap coats and hats. Over a half dozen books published in the last decade (*Ashes of Roses*, Auch, 2002; *Changes for Rebecca*, Greene, 2009; *Factory Girl*, Greenwood, 2007; *Uprising*, Haddix, 2007; *Hear My Sorrow*, *The Diary of Angela Denoto*, a *Shirtwaist Worker*, Hopkinson 2004; *The Locket: Surviving the Triangle Fire*, Lieurance, 2008; and *Rosie in New York City: Gotcha!*, Matas, 2003) either focus on the Triangle fire or discuss it in the author's notes, probably due to the upcoming hundredth anniversary of the disaster in 2011. The workers' youth and gender made them sympathetic figures in 1911 and later to children's authors who cast them as protagonists of books concerned with gender and social class. The working conditions that led to the tragedy were so obviously unsafe and the factory's owners so unconcerned about the safety of their employees that workers could be portrayed as innocent victims of their greedy employers.

In the meantime, high profile trials of labor figures like Big Bill Haywood and Joe Hill also figured prominently in news of the day. Only one book, *Rockbuster* (Skurzynski, 2001) includes these events and incorporates them into the plot. The protagonist Tommy Nolan's encounters with these men leave him unsure as to whether they are criminals, victims, or at least in the case of Joe Hill, martyrs, but these meetings set Tommy's life on unexpected paths. These aspects of the plot are among the most effective and memorable of the novel, due to Skurzynski integrating them so neatly into the narrative about the choices Tommy Nolan faces. Her attempts to apply an evenhanded treatment to both labor and management fall flat, as when, after reading the Preamble to the Constitution of

the Industrial Workers of the World, which includes the line, “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common,” Tommy reacts angrily. ““Dammit,” Tommy thought. ‘Why is it always that the *workers* are the ones harping about class?’” (p. 222). Such a sentiment from a teen who had at that point already spent almost half his life in the mines does not seem authentic, even if he was in love with the owner’s daughter. Yet, Skurzynski ventures somewhat closer into the dangerous realm of competing ideologies, than do authors of most novels about the Triangle Fire, stories that rely on a more simple binary of innocence and greed for their narrative tension.

Gap: 1919-1928.

The Ornament Tree (Thesman, 1996) and *A Test of Loyalty* (Jones, 1989) are the only books in the sample that represent labor unrest occurring in the years following World War I. These are also the only books in the sample set in the Pacific Northwest. *The Ornament Tree*, the only novel of the sample to portray a general strike, takes place in Seattle and is based on historical events. The main character of the novel is a young orphan who goes to live with her cousins in the boarding house they own in the city. The cousins are active in a number of progressive political causes, and when one of the boarders, seeking to reassure them, suggests that they should not be concerned that the riots predicted in the city would reach their neighborhood, one replies, “We are not the least bit concerned... Many of the men who belong to the International (sic) Workers of the World are the husbands of the women we work with at the neighborhood house. They

respect us” (p. 137). Thus, the strikers are connected with the women’s work for social justice and sexual equality, even though the strike is only a minor event in the story.

A Test of Loyalty (Jones, 1989) is set in Oregon and so far as I could determine, is not based on a strike that actually occurred. It appears to be what is known as a “High/Low” book, one with a high interest topic written at a lower reading level for children who are not skilled readers. Unfortunately, it reads as a strangely violent book intended for young children. A young man travels to Oregon from New York, to learn about the paper business his family owns. Labor unrest ensues, and an organizer is killed. Later countless strikers and the protagonist die in a gun battle with armed men hired by the mill’s manager.

The violence both books describe was very much a part of the post-World War I years. Foner (1988) explains that, “The year 1919 was one of the most militant in United States labor history. During its twelve months, 3,630 strikes were called involving 4,160,000 workers, an increase of 2,933,000 over the number of workers involved in strikes in 1917” (p. xi). Approximately one fifth of American workers were involved in the strikes of 1919 (Zieger, 1995). According to Foner, the confrontations came as workers increased their participation in labor unions and employers renewed their campaign to crush unionism itself, with the assistance of all levels of government. By 1929, this wave of labor unrest had largely been quelled; only 921 strikes occurred that year, involving fewer than 300,000 workers (Zieger, 1995).

Important labor conflicts occurred both early and late in this period, yet only the Seattle general strike of 1919 and the fictional paper mill strike in 1920 are depicted. The

Boston police strike of 1919, the streetcar strikes in Chicago and other cities, the struggles within organized labor regarding African-American workers, none of these aspects of labor movement history appear in the books in sample. The proximity of this period of militancy on the part of labor to the 1917 Russian Revolution meant that when organizers were called “socialists,” “Reds,” or “Communists,” an association with the recent revolution in what was now the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would be suggested immediately. The roots of the McCarthy era and the blacklist can be found in the historic memory of those for whom even the trade unionism of the American Federation of Labor meant a dangerous step toward revolution. The next novel in the sample is set in the early days of the Great Depression, a bleak period depicted more frequently than the riotous one that preceded it.

1929-1936: The Great Depression.

The years of the Great Depression are depicted in seven of the books in the sample, three of which, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor, 1981), *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan 2000), and *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) were part of the smaller discussion sample. Mining does not appear in the books at all, and the garment industry is mentioned in only one, *The Stunt* (Rue, 1999), in contrast with the prevalence of both industries in novels set in earlier periods. Instead the jobs in which workers attempt to organize unions are agriculture (*Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, *Esperanza Rising*), transportation (*Bud, Not Buddy*), and manufacturing (*El Lector*, Durbin, 2007; *The Worst*

of Times, Collier, 2000; *Franklin Roosevelt: Letters from a Mill Town Girl*, Winthrop, 2001)

New Deal programs aimed at stimulating the devastated economy of the United States appear in two of the books, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* and *Franklin Roosevelt: Letters from a Mill Town Girl*, with the latter focusing on legislation like the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). Part of a series of books composed of fictional correspondence between presidents and young children, the novel contains photographs from the period and links to a website with more information on the programs and issues discussed in the letters. The letters between FDR and Emma Bartoletti cover such topics as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, and the passage of the Wagner Act and Social Security legislation. Accepting the premise of the novel itself requires a suspension of disbelief that a sitting president would find the time to engage in extensive correspondence with an adolescent. The thoroughness with which they discuss matters related to social studies standards regarding the New Deal goes a long way toward explaining the author's purpose for this novel.

These seven novels set during the Great Depression manage to touch on a wider range of labor topics relevant to the period than they initially appear. As described earlier, in *El Lector* (Durbin, 2007), the primary event is the cigar factory workers' strike, but the author includes references to the Harlan, Kentucky, coal miners' strike as well. Collier's *The Worst of Times* (2000) features a fictional strike in a Chicago factory that manufactures chrome-plated automobile parts. Throughout much of the book, the main character, Petey, his father, and his uncle discuss economic issues in a didactic fashion

reminiscent of the discussions in Collier's other book in the sample, the contemporary novel *The Winchesters* (1988). The protagonist's cousin Steve, the son of the owner of Rayfield Chrome, outrages his father by leaving college to work as a union organizer. Through his letters to his family, the reader hears of the longshoremen's strike in San Francisco in 1934, including a mention of union organizer Harry Bridges about whom Steve writes, "'They say he's a Communist, and I guess he probably is'" (p. 82). In addition, when Steve returns to Chicago, he explains to his young cousin that he had helped with the Goodyear sit-down strike in Akron, Ohio. "'It was totally spontaneous. Nobody could say it was stirred up by the unions or the Communists. The workers on the shop floor did it themselves'" (p. 104). The next stop on Steve's journey is Flint, Michigan, where workers have staged another sit-down strike at General Motors. Finally Steve returns to Chicago to help workers negotiate at his father's own plant, only to be fatally shot during a confrontation between pickets and strikebreakers hired by his father.

The sit-down strike Steve refers to in *The Worst of Times* is mentioned briefly in *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) as well. The policeman who stops Lefty Lewis explains, "'I don't know if you've heard, but we're having a lot of trouble in the factories here. We've been stopping all cars we don't recognize. There've been reports that some of those stinking labor organizers might be sneaking up here from Detroit'" (p. 135). Once the policeman leaves, Lefty tells Bud that the trouble he had referred to was the sit-down strike. "'Instead of walking in front of the plant with signs the people who are on strike just sit down on their job. That way the bosses can't bring other people in to steal their jobs'" (p. 139). The union Lefty is helping organize is the Brotherhood of Pullman

Porters, or the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, established in 1925 by A. Philip Randolph. In 1936, when *Bud, Not Buddy* takes place, the union had only recently received its charter from the American Federation of Labor, the first African-American union to do so. Thus, Curtis, in a book that has nothing to do with the labor movement, manages to deftly reference two historic events in labor history.

No children's novels are set in places like Gastonia, North Carolina, where the 1929 strike turned violent, when members of the American Communist Party attempted to organize for the National Textile Workers Union (NTWU) (Salmond, 1995). Many of those who participated in the strike were young workers from the Loray Mill (Salmond, 1995). The popular chief of police of the city of Gastonia, Orville Aderholt, was shot and killed in June of that year in a confrontation with strikers at their headquarters, and several labor organizers were arrested for his murder. The Gastonia strike ended in more violence and gave the labor movement one of its martyrs, Ella May Wiggins. Wiggins, born in 1900 and the mother of nine children, lived in neighboring Bessemer City and inspired strikers with her ballads about the struggles of life in a textile mill town. She was one of the few union organizers able to successfully recruit African-Americans to the union cause (Salmond, 1995). Wiggins was shot when she and other union members attempted to enter Gastonia to attend a rally in September of 1929. The narrative of Gastonia is controversial; race, gender, class, religiosity, regionalism, and ideology met in a deadly clash. If the story is a complicated one, it would also be one young adult readers could appreciate. Its omission permits writers to avoid messy ideological arguments in favor of stories in which the union is at least somewhat less controversial.

The seven books set during the Great Depression as a whole offer the largest number of references to what was happening in the larger labor movement. Their small numbers relative to the rest of the sample belie the breadth, if not the depth, of the coverage of events of the 1930s. What is curious is that the period immediately following the years of the Depression, the 1940s through the mid-1950s is the point at which the largest gap in the timeline of the sample novels occurs.

Gap: 1937-1955.

After *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) which takes place in 1936, the next book in a timeline of the novels' settings is *Up Molasses Mountain* (2002, Baker) set in 1956. If labor had been quiescent during this more recent period, such a gap might seem less surprising, but to ignore the years in which more strikes occurred than in any other period in United States history is extraordinary. It is this gap in representation that is most fascinating, as the years after World War II saw unprecedented numbers of strikes and union activity, none of which appear in any children's novels I was able to locate. During the war itself, relations between unions, management, and the federal government were strained as the agreement on the part of the unions not to strike during the course of the war meant that the National War Labor Board would arbitrate disputes between workers and management (Lichtenstein, 1995; Lipsitz, 1994). The influx of women into the workplace as male workers were called to duty meant decisions had to be made regarding pay for jobs formerly done solely by men (Lichtenstein, 1995). Unions were a part of those negotiations. In addition, African-American unionists gained ground in the United

Automobile Workers and the United Mine Workers, but these stories, which provide context for much of the political activism regarding gender and race twenty years later, are not yet part of children's literature.

The years after World War II were pivotal ones for the labor movement. After the war ended, long pent-up frustrations on the part of workers showed as strikes swept the country. Factories attempted to shift from a wartime economy, eliminating overtime hours and cutting workers' regular hours to just 30 per week. Decreased paychecks and rising unemployment brought a wave of strikes that rocked the nation. Strikes in the second half of 1945 occurred among rubber factory workers in Akron, shipyard workers in Camden, New Jersey, service workers in New York, and textile mill employees in the South. A general strike in Stamford, Connecticut, took place early in 1946, followed by another in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and even a brief one in Houston, Texas (Lipsitz, 1994).

None of the children's books about the American labor movement that I located tells the story of these years of unrest and upheaval in the wake of the war. Instead, the popular mythology of the post-World War II period presents images of "The Greatest Generation" (Brokaw, 1998) reclaiming their jobs in factories, attending college on the G.I. Bill, and raising the generational cohort that would become the Baby Boom. In the myth, these years segued effortlessly into the 1950s, during which young families enjoyed peaceful and prosperous years under the leadership of the former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, President Dwight D. Eisenhower. For the returning servicemen, however, the homecoming often meant competing for existing jobs and trying to come to terms with experiences those on the homefront could not understand. Those who had

remained stateside found themselves with smaller paychecks or searching for work alongside returning veterans. The Office of War Information, which had once encouraged women to take industry jobs to assist with the war effort, now extolled their return to the domestic sphere or more traditionally female jobs such as teaching, nursing, or secretarial work (Honey, 1984). Stories about the labor movement that include these strikes and the reconversion of industry and the workforce itself into a peacetime economy do not appear. The result is a disconnect from historical memory young people today might yet claim, if offered the opportunity to hear their stories.

One possible explanation is that these strikes immediately after the war constituted such a challenge to the values of the dominant culture that their story was lost to future generations. Strikers of the mid 1940s raised the specter of social class in the wake of a war which had required considerable sacrifice from those who had served overseas as well as their families and coworkers left at home. The strikes of the post-war years were at odds with an emerging master narrative of American culture and history that downplayed the role of social class and the attendant demands of labor. Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist crusade began in the late 1940s, and unions themselves embarked on serious efforts to purge Communists among their membership. Lipsitz (1994) argues that American business granted workers significant concessions in the postwar years, but these were part of a concerted campaign to co-opt unions and ensure that their own interests, rather than those of workers were served. Houses in the suburbs, private automobiles to drive to them, and health insurance provided by employers ultimately generated considerable profits, even as they shaped the United

States into a place very different from most industrialized nations. Labor's role in the process is a complicated one but might offer young readers a better sense of why this country ended up the path it did, guided by profit rather than equity and sustainability.

1956-1970: Rare glimpses of American labor unions.

Very few books depict labor unions in in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Just four novels are set in this period: *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002) in 1956; *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004) in the late 1950s through the early 1960s, *Fight in the Fields: César Chávez* (Sorenson, 1998) in 1966, and *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) in 1970. Due to both the small number of novels set during these years and the jobs depicted in them, only a very few labor union activities and trends within the movement are portrayed in novels for children. The coal mining industry in 1956 in which *Up Molasses Mountain* is set constituted less than 3% of overall union membership in the United States; only .4% of all union members in the country worked in agriculture (Galenson, 1996), the setting for the remaining three books of this historical period. It is not surprising that two of these are concerned with the struggles of farm workers and the leadership of César Chávez whose work with the United Farm Workers spanned over three decades. By 1970, when Gary Soto's *Jesse* (1994) is set, Chávez had seen membership in the UFW grow to as many as 50,000 dues-paying members and had been instrumental in securing union contracts from many major produce growers (United Farm Workers, 2006). Kadohata's portrayal of Japanese poultry-processing workers in the South in *Kira-kira* is a story that is much less widely known than that of the fieldworkers. These four novels, however, do

not begin to capture the shifts in the American labor movement that took place from the late 1950s through 1970.

In 1957, two years after the merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations into the AFL-CIO, Senator John J. McClellan convened a Senate committee aimed at identifying corruption within labor unions. Senator John F. Kennedy was a member of the committee, and his brother Robert Kennedy served as its chief counsel. Galenson (1996) describes how the investigation resulted in the AFL-CIO being forced into taking action against a number of its affiliate members. The Teamsters were expelled in the wake its officials' refusal to testify about the union's activities, and the United Textile Workers was one of the organizations placed on probation.

Despite this black eye for labor's image, it remained influential in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations (Galenson, 1996; Lichtenstein, 1997). Labor leaders also recognized that the American workforce was changing and began targeting white-collar workers as prospective union members. Government workers and service sector employees were among those whose memberships in unions increased throughout the 1960s (Galenson, 1996). None of these events appear in children's novels. Instead, labor unions as depicted in the only four novels set in in the period from 1956 to 1970 are advocates for manual labor - for the miner, the fieldworker, the poultry plant worker.

Perspectives of the present: The limitations of history.

Over twenty years ago, Betty Bacon (1988) reported that she was able to locate only two books of historical fiction and one of contemporary fiction about labor unions. By 2010, I found far more. A few like *The Candle and the Mirror* (Mays, 1982) and *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) might have been ones Bacon could have named in addition to the three she found, but they may also have been out of print by the time she wrote *How Much Truth Do We Tell the Children?* By expanding my sample to include books that depict unions, even if the stories themselves cannot be said to be truly about labor, I found 53, 47 historical novels and six contemporary fiction. While it is heartening to see how many authors have taken up the topic of labor over the last two decades, it is still remarkable how few books depict unions in the present day.

Copyrights of the six contemporary novels range from 1976 through 2007, a period in which union membership dropped before stabilizing in 2007 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). The most historically significant strike to take place during the period was by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) whose 1981 strike was broken by President Ronald Reagan. This event, although covered heavily in the news at the time, is mentioned in none of the contemporary novels published after 1981. Nor does César Chávez, who literally continued his work with the United Farm Workers until the day he died in 1993, appear in any contemporary fiction.

Two (*Time to Take Sides*, Gold, 1976; *Strike!* Corcoran, 1983) address teachers' strikes, but their copyright dates are among the oldest of the contemporary fiction. These very likely reflect the large number of teacher strikes in 1970s; none offer more recent

portrayals of teachers' unions, as strikes by teachers have become much less frequent than they once were. *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988), which is set in a New England industrial town, is dated by virtue of its portrayal of an industry that employs far fewer Americans than it once did. Since 1988 when *The Winchesters* was published, manufacturing jobs in the United States have decreased significantly. In the late 1980s, almost 20% of nonfarm workers were employed in manufacturing. By 2006, that number had fallen to approximately 10% (Lee & Mather, 2008). The remaining contemporary novels, *Riot* (Casanova, 1996), *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001), and *Dream Factory* (Barkley & Hepler, 2007) are less dated and so would seem to offer more current perspectives on the labor movement, although the wildcat strike depicted in *Riot* would now be 20 years past. *Riot* and *Strike Two* are among the books in which older family members unfavorably compare the actions of present-day unions to those of the past. Neither they nor *Dream Factory* depict peaceful strikes. Instead, strikers target their replacements or those who choose not to strike for harassment and vandalism. They and not the employers who refuse to yield to the unions' demands are cast as the adversaries of union members.

Still, the settings of the two most recently published contemporary novels in the media and entertainment industries speak to the influence those fields enjoy in the public consciousness in the 21st century. Printed newspapers have fallen on hard times since the publication of *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001) almost a decade ago due to the availability of online news. If the book were written today it might well be concerned with job losses within the newspaper because of the shift to online media. *Strike Two*, while still relevant on account of its focus on media, might be considered the last labor novel of the 20th

century and *Dream Factory* (Barkley & Hepler, 2007), the first of the 21st century. One industry whose labor conflicts are most likely to be covered in popular media today and whose strikes are noticed and commented on by the general public is depicted in only one of the books in the sample, *Dream Factory*. The entertainment industry, which includes musicians, athletes, and writers, had only 141,000 union members in 2008, or 7.1% of the total number of people employed in the industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). It is an industry, however, whose influence is wildly disproportionate to its numbers. Strikes involving relatively small numbers of this group have the ability to shut down Broadway plays, close ball parks around the country, and force television networks to rely on so-called “reality shows.” Furthermore, it is an industry that has historically been a part of the labor movement, even if its unions’ memberships are not large. Helen Keller, a radical socialist whose political activities seldom appear in biographies for children, joined the IWW and refused to cross the Actors Equity Union’s picket line to attend an opening of a film about her life in 1919 (Vande Kemp, 2007).

Dream Factory shows temporary replacement workers at Disney World simultaneously lowering their expectations of their corporate employer and subverting its rules to create spaces for themselves in an environment that is among the most controlled in the modern workplace. The male protagonist, Luke, sees his girlfriend Cassie’s comparison of her own upwardly mobile, hard-charging lifestyle and the longtime fur character Bernard’s low status in a corporate world as a false choice. Luke rejects Cassie and his own family’s offer of a good job in the family business but does wonder if Bernard’s keys “weren’t possibility to him, the chance to do anything he wanted, but

more like keys to the prison - if he accumulated enough, or found the right one, he might find his way out” (p. 223). The striking Disney characters remain out of sight for much of the book, and the narrative centers on the choices their replacements have to make, as they decide whether to cast their lot with corporate America or to pursue a more independent and less lucrative living. As members of the middle and upper classes, they enjoy a degree of financial security their working class counterparts do not, and even the most enthusiastic of them will not spend their working days as fur characters, princes, and princesses.

Missing Images of the American Worker: More Than Miners and Factory Girls

The concentration of books on industries like mining and garment or textile manufacturing means that many historical fiction books about labor unions depict jobs that young readers in the 21st century are not personally familiar with. The percentage of workers employed in these fields is now quite small in relation to the workforce as a whole. Furthermore, they comprise only a small fraction of unionized workers today, as compared with other occupations. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009), the combined total numbers of Americans employed in mining and the manufacture of nondurable goods in general, including clothing and textiles, are still fewer than those employed in construction, an occupation under-represented in the sample, and the percentage of unionized construction workers is higher than that of workers in mining and manufacturing nondurable goods (Table 5). Thus, as the number of these jobs

diminishes in relation to other occupations, they still provide the settings for many books about organized labor.

Table 5

Union Membership in Selected Occupations and Industries, 2008

Occupation/Industry	Total employed	Number of union members	Percentage of employees belonging to union
Education, training, and library occupations	8,424,000	3,259,000	38.7
Protective services occupations, including police and firefighters	3,023,000	1,069,000	35.4
Mining	776,000	54,000	6.9
Nondurable goods manufacturing	5,403,000	584,000	10.8
Agriculture and related industries	1,057,000	30,000	2.8
Transportation and material moving occupations	8,201,000	1,491,000	18.2
Construction	7,652,000	1,195,000	15.6

Note. All figures are based on “Union Membership (Annual) New Release” by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 28 January 2009, United States Department of Labor.

What other stories might be told? Are there stories that would better reflect the composition of today's workforce? After all, garment manufacturing and mining were far from the only jobs available to workers in the past, nor were they the only ones to unionize. Historical novels could be written that depict unions for government employees like teachers or police, given their long history of unionism, but I found none. As noted earlier, two contemporary novels *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) and *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) depict teachers' strikes, and another, *Riot* (Casanova, 1996), makes reference to one. Police unions are mentioned in *Strike Two* (2001) when Gwen's friend suggests that the police are likely to be friendly to the striking newspaper workers because "They're union too" (p. 6), a statement that contrasts with previous representations of police in other contemporary and historical novels as hostile to strikers. Although in 2008 36.8% of workers in the public sector were union members (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), their stories are almost entirely missing in literature for young people.

Other industries are almost invisible in the literature as well. Although *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004) described the difficult conditions in poultry processing plants, the meatpacking industry as a whole is largely neglected. Similarly, service industry employees such as custodians, maids, and healthcare workers are not depicted in novels about the labor movement, although one picture book *¡Sí, se puede!// Yes, we can!/: Janitor strike in L.A.* by Diana Cohn (2002) does offer younger children a positive image of collective action on the part of janitors in Los Angeles. Even the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), a union that has been mentioned (and frequently blamed) in recent news stories about the troubled

American automobile industry (MediaMatters for America, 2008), appears nowhere in children's books. Its ascendancy came during the historical period in which books about labor were seldom set, the late 1930s through the late 1960s. During that time, Walter Reuther of Detroit rose as its leader, squared off against General Motors, won solid benefits packages for automobile workers, and was elected president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (Lichtenstein, 1994). He helped organize the 1963 March on Washington, along with A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, and was one of the speakers who addressed the protesters just before Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Reuther worked closely with the Johnson administration's War on Poverty initiative and was a labor leader whose face and name were known to millions of Americans, even those outside of unions. Neither he nor the UAW are even mentioned in the novels, yet their story is one that would give young people insight into the role labor continues to play in both politics and policy decisions.

Another field that is almost completely neglected in the sample is that of transportation and material moving, an area in which 18.2% of employees belonged to a labor union in 2008 (Table 5). After the highly unionized public service sector employees such as teachers, librarians, police, and firefighters, these are among the workers most likely to belong to a labor union. Yet, truck drivers and other transportation industry workers like railroad employees seldom appear in the books in the discussion sample or the larger general sample. *Riot* (Casanova, 1996) makes a brief mention of the Teamsters' strike of 1934 as being "part of Teamster history" (p. 37). The union organizer who gives the young protagonist a lift in *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) is

involved in helping local Pullman porters to organize, and *The Streetcar Riots*, (Miller, 1998) is a historical novel based on events in Minneapolis in 1889 when streetcar drivers walked off the job during a pay dispute. The historical fantasy novel, *Gilded Delirium* (Stokes & Belinkie, 2007), includes a story line about the 1894 Pullman strike. These books are the only ones in which transportation workers appear. As Table 5 shows, in 2008 almost 1.5 million American workers employed in transportation were members of labor unions. In contrast, in that same year only 54,000 miners were members of unions, or only 6.9% of miners as compared to 18.2% of transportation workers. Yet, miners' unions appear in over a dozen books, all of which are historical fiction; nine of the fourteen books about miners have been published within the last ten years. Over 8,000,000 people were employed overall in transportation in 2008, as compared with 776,000 in mining. Thus, the mining industry, with less than one tenth the number of workers employed in transportation, is represented far more frequently in books about labor unions than are workers like truck drivers. One possible reason for such a discrepancy may be that miners are romanticized as a vanishing breed, and to write and to publish a book for young people about their struggles might be perceived as a way in which to give voice to a group that has long been at the forefront of the labor movement.

Other workers are less visible in American society, and it is perhaps more understandable that their involvement with labor unions appears in children's books only rarely. *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) describes efforts to organize agricultural workers during the Great Depression; many labor organizers today continue that work to recruit from among recent immigrants, many of whom arrive without documentation. Their

precarious legal status in the United States permits unscrupulous employers to take advantage of them, holding the threat of a call to the Immigration and Naturalization Service over the heads of any who would protest. While children's and young adult novels such as *Crossing the Wire* (Hobbs, 2007) depict the often grueling journey made by undocumented workers as they cross into the United States, fewer tell what happens in the workplace once they arrive and how workers might seek to address the situation.

Stories of these journeys and struggles have the potential to produce fascinating narratives about social class, race, and gender, for young people and adults as well. Such stories would also provide images of characters engaging in collective action to improve their circumstances, images that are largely missing from children's books. Nodelman (2003) notes that "Surprisingly few award-winning texts for children celebrate the value of groups of people working together as equals; far more celebrate the power of individuals controlling groups" (p. 157). According to Saul (1983), texts that depict collectivism would provide young readers "some realistic sense of how power is distributed and how decisions are made" (p. 30). The American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s relied on such collective action and its history is linked with that of the labor movement, but these stories are only hinted at in a few novels of the sample, and some of the more interesting ones are missing altogether from children's fiction.

Race and Class: Negotiating the Confluence

In the United States in 2008, Black workers were more likely to be members of labor unions than were White, Latino, or Asian workers, with a membership rate of

14.5% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). By comparison, 12.2% of White workers, and 10.6% of both Latino and Asian workers were union members. A hundred years ago, the demographics of union membership were very different. The American Federation of Labor was the province of the skilled trades such as railroad workers, carpenters, and iron workers (Brody, 1993), fields open to few except for White males. I noted earlier that at least initially it would appear that the novels of the sample depict a range of different racial and ethnic groups, although White European-Americans remain by far the group represented most frequently. Representations of discrimination by unions against workers of color are almost entirely missing from books in the sample. Strangely enough, its converse is absent as well: Later, leaders of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s were active in the labor movement, and vice versa, yet no novels focus on these activists' stories. Finally, although a few books are set in the Southern states, none portray a White European-American protagonist, despite that group's over-representation in the sample as a whole. Stories like these would offer opportunities to examine the difficult negotiations and struggles those seeking change faced in the past and continue to face today.

Portrayals of unions that do not depict the historical basis for conflict and suspicion workers experienced when attempting to form alliances risk presenting a simplistic view of unions that ultimately does a disservice to the progress they were able to achieve. Similarly, the lack of depictions of White Southerners as union members leaves intact the longstanding view of the South as uniformly hostile to organized labor. The region does have lower rates of union membership than other parts of the country; however, unions have attempted to organize in the Southern states and some have enjoyed success.

Dismissing the South as resistant to labor unions on the basis of preconceived notions about the nature of the region and its workers ignores the thoroughness with which entrenched business and political interests targeted organizers and workers. Race also proved a useful wedge to divide workers who might otherwise unite on the basis of class.

“You don’t know nothin’ ‘bout me”: Separate and suspicious.

Considerable distrust among the African-American community toward organized labor existed into the 20th century, based on a history of discrimination by unions. Taylor’s *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981) suggests the depth of that distrust, as union organizers repeatedly solicit David Logan’s support. Morris Wheeler, an organizer for the farmworkers’ union, acknowledges the need to establish trust between the Black community and labor:

“I know, I know, I’m a white man and you don’t know nothing ‘bout me, and I understand that. But I’m an honest man. What I believe in I fight for tooth and nail, and a man go ‘long with me in something, I wouldn’t never turn my back on him.” (p. 136)

It is important to understand that while a racially integrated union in the 1930s might have been unusual, it would not have been a complete anomaly. The Knights of Labor enjoyed a brief ascendancy in the two decades following the Civil War, and later the Industrial Workers of the World were active across the country, including the South. Both organizations made at least some attempts to draw from the ranks of less skilled

workers, including Blacks and women. By 1934, when Taylor's novel is set, this vision of racially integrated alliances of workers had largely fallen by the wayside, and the more conservative AFL remained the most influential labor organization (Brody, 1993). Still, racially integrated unions did exist, even within the deep South. Halpern (1994) notes that the United Mine Workers were able to sustain coalitions of Black and White miners in Alabama as well as in Appalachia under the auspices of the AFL and later the CIO. In *Billy Creekmore* (2007), set in West Virginia in the early years of the 20th century, the young protagonist becomes a mule driver in the coal mine and quickly, "a union man" (p. 199) in just such an integrated union. The UMW organizer explains to the gathered miners that, "It's one big union. Not a separate one for colored and another one for Italians and another for Welsh. It's a union of workers, because that's what we are - workers" (p. 197). Such alliances within a society that remained segregated as a whole would always be troubled ones. Their existence, though, offers an image of American labor only rarely glimpsed within the novels of the sample. The scene from *Billy Creekmore* hints at historical division within unions along racial lines and makes an explicit argument based on class interests. *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002) offers a brief mention of an African-American miner, a union member, who steps off a train with a larger group of White miners. The narrator, Elizabeth, observes, "He smiled like he was one of them, but I knew he wasn't. Chances were, he'd been picked on, called names, maybe even beat up" (p. 67). He is, however, still a part of the group of union miners preparing to participate in a strike, alongside the White majority. By suggesting that unions have not always dealt fairly with non-White members, Mildred Taylor, Tracey

Porter, and Julie Baker provide their readers with some sense of just how significant an alliance between Black and White workers might be, a version of history that is both more interesting and more accurate than those that ignore efforts on the part of Black and White workers to come together on the basis of their economic interests.

Many books in the sample do depict racism in society as a whole. *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), *Jesse* (Soto, 1994), and *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004) are examples of novels that portray racism toward Latino and Japanese-American workers, but again, no novels portray workers being barred from union membership due to race. The only children's book I located that contained an explanation of racial discrimination and exclusionary practices on the part of a labor union was not part of the sample because it was a picture book for younger readers. In Faith Ringgold's *Tar Beach* (1991), the narrator explains how her father could not join the union because his father had not been a member. The grandfather was excluded because he was both African-American and American Indian. This is the only mention of Native American workers I was able to locate; the perspective of American Indians is completely missing from the novels. It is remarkable that a picture book aimed at a younger audience confronts the issue of exclusion on the part of labor unions while books intended for older children do not. Although the vast majority of the sample was historical fiction, this aspect of union history is one children's authors have not yet adequately addressed.

Unions are more often depicted as refuges from the racism of society at large, but this also reflects the customary segregation of particular jobs according to race so that union membership means a union composed of one particular ethnic group, such as the

African-American Pullman workers in *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999). In *El Lector*, the Ku Klux Klan is mentioned as “attacking the union and Negroes,” (p. 5). The notion that one might be both a union member and a racist appears only rarely within the novels and is then more likely to be implied as in books like *Billy Creekmore* (Porter, 2007) than to be stated outright.

The omission of this particular part of the labor movement, that its unions often practiced racial exclusion and segregation, appears to be at odds with the intent of most of the authors of the historical fiction to portray unions in a positive light. Robinet, in *Missing from Haymarket Square* (2001), focuses on class divisions to the exclusion of racial ones, and young readers get no sense of just how deep the latter might be. After all, Dinah Bell and her parents who are African-Americans share their small room in Chicago with fourteen other people, two families who have immigrated from Austria and Poland. Noah Bell is both a member of a metalworkers’ union and an organizer for the Knights of Labor. The company where he works, the McCormick Reaper Factory, now owned by the founder’s son, has locked out workers due to union activity, and Dinah’s father is believed to have been detained by police. The author does not make the point that the racially integrated Knights of Labor were not in fact representative of the American labor movement as a whole, leaving them to stand as a typical example of a labor organization. Depictions of the Knights of Labor are rare within the sample, and Robinet’s representation of workers as racially diverse during this particular time period is also unusual. Providing more historical context in regard to just what that racial diversity might mean in terms of labor relations would have given the reader more understanding

of the times in which Dinah and her family lived. Without it, a young reader might easily conclude that all unions were integrated and that workers were able to stand united.

Historically, relations between unionized White workers and workers of other races were strained by employers' use of strikebreakers who were often people of color and who worked for wages lower than those paid union workers. Norwood (2003) offers specific instances of the use of African-American workers or soldiers as strikebreakers in the general packinghouse strike of 1904 and the Chicago Teamsters' strike the following year. Segregation in both the South and the North meant that Black workers had fewer employment options than Whites, as well as no union affiliation, and strikebreaking for some offered a means to industrial work. Norwood calls African-American workers "a logical source of strikebreakers during the early twentieth century" (p. 78), noting that segregated labor unions and an "individualistic and conservative" (p. 79) attitude among some Black leaders toward economic issues made their recruitment feasible. One of the examples Norwood cites is the use of African-American troops to break up a mining strike in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in 1892. A novel in the sample *Fire in the Hole!* (Farrell, 2004) is based on their return to Coeur d'Alene in 1899 to break yet another strike.

African-Americans were not the only people of color used as strikebreakers. *Forbidden Friendship* (Weber, 1993) is based events in North Adams, Massachusetts, in 1870, in which the owner of a shoe manufacturing company brought 75 Chinese workers from San Francisco to replace striking employees. An author's note explains what the novel did not, that the Chinese were paid half of what the union workers they replaced had made. The author also explains that, although in the novel, the owner of the factory is

portrayed as being willing to compromise with the strikers in the aftermath of a fire in which union sympathizers and strikebreakers work together to save the factory, the actual history was quite different. The owner locked out the union for ten years, bringing in new groups of Chinese workers every three years, as their visas expired. Apparently the degree of anti-union sentiment the factory owner actually exhibited was deemed unacceptable in a novel for very young readers, and the author crafted a more reasonable but fictional response on the owner's part.

One contemporary novel, *Riot* (Casanova, 1996) refers to the company bringing in non-union workers to take the place of striking construction workers. Many are from the southern United States, but others are described as "Hispanic, their skin much darker than Cam's.... It made them moving targets in in a nearly all-white community" (p. 46). Still, the practice of hiring replacement workers of a different race could cut both ways. In one novel, *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), it is the Latino workers who are threatened by the possibility of their employer bringing in refugees from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to work for lower wages, if they should join the proposed agricultural workers' union.

The organizing efforts of Black textile workers in the South are another story that has so far been neglected in children's literature. After the Civil Rights movement, African-American workers who had previously been limited to the dirtiest and lowest paid jobs in textile mills began to organize their own unions in the Southern mills. A history of collective action on behalf of civil rights may well have contributed to their ability to gain a foothold in areas where unions had previously failed like Roseville, North Carolina (Newman, 1978). I found no novels that portrayed union activities by

their White counterparts in the textile mills, despite the fact that by the 1930s, the textile industry had largely moved from New England to the Piedmont in the Southern states and unions did successfully organize at least some mills.

Labor and Civil Rights: Where movements intersect.

Another aspect of labor history that has not yet been addressed in historical novels for young people is the extent to which it intertwines with the history of the Civil Rights movement. As I described earlier, Walter Reuther, as president of the UAW, assisted in organizing the March on Washington in 1963, and it was his speech that Martin Luther King would later mention in his meeting with President John Kennedy (Lichtenstein, 1997). For all their earlier efforts to exclude Blacks and other minorities from jobs and membership, unions, in particular the CIO, were instrumental in building a core group of leaders who would become grassroots activists for the cause of civil rights. According to Lichtenstein, “The modern civil rights movement arose out of the proletarianization and unionization of black America” (p. 207). During World War II, the number of African-American workers in Detroit’s automobile industry doubled, and soon these members of the United Automobile (UAW) formed a core group of community activists in the city (Lichtenstein, 1997). There is a story that remains missing from children’s novels about the labor movement. I was also unable to locate novels that included figures like A. Philip Randolph, who not only organized the Pullman Porters in 1925 but also organized the first march on Washington in 1941, a protest that was canceled only after President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Fair Employment Act (Galenson, 1996). Randolph’s career

as an activist in both the labor movement and the campaign for civil rights spanned decades, and a number of biographies for young readers have been published. Yet, I could find no author of children's fiction who has taken up the story of the Pullman workers, beyond the brief mention in *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999).

Randolph is not the only Civil Rights leader whose work intersects that of the labor movement. Martin Luther King, Jr., focused on issues of economic equity and fair wages in the later years of his life, something usually neglected in social studies textbooks. Alridge (2008) describes how textbooks portray King as a messiah, the embodiment of the Civil Rights Movement, and simultaneously a moderate, all the while ignoring the years in which he voiced more radical ideas about workers' rights and capitalism itself. His assassination in Memphis, Tennessee, occurred when he came to the city in support of striking sanitation workers. I found no novels or picture books that addressed this part of King's work, despite its historical connection to his death. Stories like these would establish links between progressive causes, allowing children to see how social movements take place not in isolation but through a powerful series of interconnections and alliances that build over time.

White Southerners and labor unions.

Finally, the novels set in the South offer another opportunity to consider whose stories do not yet appear in children's literature depicting labor unions. Three historical novels in the sample are set in the deep South: *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Taylor, 1981), *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004), and *El Lector* (Durbin, 2007). None of the three features a

White, European-American protagonist. It is both surprising and exciting that Southern workers are depicted as more racially diverse than is usually imagined. But stories of White workers who fought to join the union are needed as well. There is also the story of a non-dominant culture, one that is easy to overlook by those who assume that White Southerners form a cultural monolith, one that is most often depicted negatively.

Such meager representation of labor in the South is very likely due to the region's historically low rates of labor organization as compared to the rest of the nation. It was the region's reputation for low wages and hostility toward organized labor that drew first the textile mills and later automobile manufacturing plants to the region during the twentieth century. On the other hand, as my own investigation into family history showed, some Southern textile workers have attempted to organize, and some of their efforts proved more successful than those of the United Textile Workers in 1934. Myles Horton (1998), founder of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, described his work as a labor organizer in McColl, South Carolina, where he was able to overcome Black workers' longstanding distrust of White people and belief "that unions had sold people out" (p. 89) and form a racially integrated union. Their subsequent strike led to establishment of a minimum wage for all union members and effectively doubled the salary of African-American workers who had previously been paid only half of what their White coworkers received. Harriet Herring in *Passing of the Mill Village: Revolution in a Southern Institution* (1949) devoted a chapter to "The Union and Village Sales" and described between 20 and 25% of textile workers in the South as being members of a union. It was clear that she assumed that labor unions would continue to be a part of the

world of the Southern mill worker in post-War America. The stories of these struggles and gains on the part of Southern workers seldom appear in the popular press and have only recently been rediscovered by labor historians. Zieger (1991) suggests that as archival materials became available in the 1980s, historians finally began to take up the subject of Southern labor. Flamm (1992) confirms this trend:

Less than a decade ago, Southern labor history was a largely underdeveloped and isolated area of study. But in recent years this trend has changed dramatically as a spate of books, articles, and dissertations on southern workers has lifted the field to new levels of richness and significance. Far from remaining an intellectual backwash, Southern labor history has emerged as one of the most vibrant fields in American historiography. (p. xxiii)

It is perhaps this belated recognition that the South does in fact possess a labor history that can explain why so few of these stories are incorporated into children's fiction.

Let the Circle Be Unbroken (Taylor, 1981) offers a harrowing account of systematic intimidation of union organizers common in the region. Men burn down the house where union organizers are staying, and John Moses, an African-American organizer, is killed. Harlan Granger, in the book's climactic scene in Strawberry when dispossessed farmworkers, both Black and White, converge on the town, calling for justice, cites Lee Annie Lees's attempt to register to vote and efforts to organize an integrated union as steps along the way to miscegenation. Although at least one of the union activists points out Granger's strategy of using racial differences to divide workers,

the ploy is successful, and a riot breaks out. Taylor establishes that both Black and White workers were threatened and intimidated by those in power to maintain their privilege. Stories of the White workers who shared many of those experiences with the Black community would offer a more complex but accurate perspective on both race and class in the South.

Only one book in the general sample mentions the textile strike of 1934, *Franklin Roosevelt: Letters from a Mill Town Girl* (Winthrop, 2001), and it is set in North Adams, Massachusetts, a somewhat surprising choice as by then, the bulk of the American textile industry had already moved south (Salmond, 2002). Both FDR and Emma Bartoletti mention violence that occurred in Southern mill towns. Emma tells the president that “Four thousand mill workers are on strike up here in the Northern Berkshires. But we are still trying to PRESERVE the peace. We don’t go fighting with the police the way they do down South” (p. 46). Certainly, the violence began in Trion, Georgia, and the mass shootings of workers in Honea Path, South Carolina, occurred immediately thereafter. Initial reports out of Honea Path did blame the workers, who were later exonerated (Irons, 2000, Salmond, 2002), but by the time Emma’s letter is dated on September 17, 1934, violence had broken out in New England as well. Saylesville and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, as well as Danielson, Connecticut, also saw clashes between strikers and police, with one striker killed in Woonsocket. Still the Southern mills continued to be the sites for much of the violence and tension, possibly because of the relatively small numbers of union members in other industries in the region. Salmond notes that “in the isolated textile villages, there were rarely other unionists to provide support” (p. 69).

The paternalistic nature of the textile mill town offers opportunities for authors to explore the relations between management and workers and how those affected employees' lives on and off the job. Companies' provision of housing and credit at the company store gave managers a means by which to control employees' personal behavior and choices regarding labor unions, but the relationship was more complex than that. Companies attempted to establish community norms ensuring that their own interests were served and also tried to receive what would now be called "buy-in" on the part of their employees. His employees' list of amenities available in Lamartine Hardman's mill at Harmony Grove (Lamartine G. Hardman Collection, 1926) and the description by the Trion Company (*About the Town of Trion and Its Advantages*, 1943) of its community where "within its limits live the finest people of the world with whom we enjoy working honorably, playing wholesomely, and resting peacefully," according to mill president Barnard Murphy attest to the value mills accorded evidence of the fellow feeling between management and employees. Feelings of personal loyalty to one's employer were not unusual, but were always complicated. None of the books from the sample with settings in the South focus on the textile industry, despite its dominance in the Piedmont region during the early to mid twentieth century. much less the paternalism of the mill system. Doing so would provide a means to explore how the process of the selective tradition might operate in a local setting, building both loyalty and resistance, as well as attempting to incorporate that resistance into the dominant culture.

“We’re Workers Too, the Same as You, and We Fight the Union Way”:

Representing Gender and Class

The quotation above is from a modern version of Woody Guthrie’s song “Union Maid.” Women dissatisfied with the original song which extolled the courage of female union workers for two stanzas and then urged them to “Get you a man who’s a union man and join the ladies’ auxiliary” (Guthrie, 1947) adapted the lyrics to better express the contemporary role of women in the workplace (Gribi, 2002). Table 6 illustrates how female workers have come to make up a growing percentage of the American workforce.

Table 6

Union Membership by Gender

Year	Female		Male	
	Percentage of total employed	Percentage union membership	Percentage of total employed	Percentage union membership
1983	45.7	14.6	54.2	24.7
1988	46.9	12.6	53.1	20.4
1993	47.7	12.9	52.3	18.2
1998	47.8	11.4	52.2	16.2
2003	48.3	11.4	51.7	14.3
2008	48.3	11.4	51.7	13.4

Note. All figures are based on “Union Membership (Annual) New Release” by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 28 January 2009, United States Department of Labor and “Women in the Labor Force: A Data Book 2007 Edition” by Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2007, United States Department of Labor.

While the percentage of female workers belonging to labor unions has dropped since 1983, the gap in union membership between male and female workers has narrowed, so that the face of the American labor movement in the 21st century is increasingly female. In light of these numbers, it is curious that the typical book published at the beginning of the twenty-first century is one about a female worker who lived a hundred years ago. While research that explores their constructions of gender in a more qualitative fashion would be fascinating, the size of the sample and the scope of the present study prevent me from taking such an approach. Instead, I turn to counting in order to identify some of the gaps that persist in representations of labor. Representations of female workers, like those of people of color, initially appear to be fairly balanced, at least in numbers of male and female protagonists. In fact, in the sample of a whole, female characters are well represented, even over-represented in more recently published novels, due to the focus over the last ten years on the garment industry and the 1911 Triangle fire. Twenty-eight of the 53 books feature female protagonists, 22 have male protagonists, and three have both male and female perspectives that alternate throughout the book. The three books with both male and female points of view (*Up Molasses Mountain*, Baker 2002; *Bread and Roses, Too*, Paterson, 2006; *Dream Factory*, Barkley & Hepler, 2007) have all been published within the last ten years. Of the remaining 26 novels published since 2000, nine have male lead characters, and seventeen have female. Among the 24 books published prior to 2000, male protagonists appear in thirteen, thus slightly outnumbering females in the earlier books.

The presence of a female protagonist does not necessarily mean that workers depicted in the novels are female. In *A Coal Miner's Bride: The Diary of Anetka Kaminska, Lattimer, Pennsylvania, 1896* (Bartoletti, 2000), a young Polish immigrant describes her husband's grueling working conditions and his eventual death in the mine. *The Candle and the Mirror* (Mays, 1982) is told from the perspective of the daughter of a female social activist attempting to organize miners in Pennsylvania in 1901. Doreen Rappaport's *Trouble at the Mines* (1986) tells the miner's story from the perspective of his young daughter.

Female protagonists appear most frequently in historical fiction. In contrast, only two of the six contemporary novels have female protagonists, and one of those is paired with a male in alternating chapters (*Dream Factory*, Barkley & Hepler, 2007). Only in *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001) is the main character female. The remaining four contemporary novels, *Riot* (Casanova, 1996), *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988), *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983), and *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) all have male protagonists. All the books except *Riot* either describe or at least imply the presence of female workers in union jobs, unlike the historical fiction in which female miners working alongside the males do not appear at all. *Riot* (Casanova, 1996) focuses on a wildcat strike by construction workers, all of whom are men. In the other five contemporary novels, the women on strike confront their replacements with the same bitterness and anger of their male counterparts. The picketing Disney characters harass their replacements as *Dream Factory* opens: "I wasn't at all surprised when Cinderella gave me the finger" (p. 3). In *Strike Two*, it is not entirely clear which women involved in the strike are themselves newspaper employees and which are

wives of employees. When the mother of one of Gwen's softball teammates tries to leave the newspaper parking lot after work, strikers hit her car with their fists and begin to rock it before the police arrive. Because the teaching profession is predominantly female, it is not surprising that union members in novels about teachers' strikes, *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983) and *A Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) include a number of women. Barry, the main character in *Strike!*, has a crush on his teacher, Mrs. Cronin, who is participating in the strike. His friend Emma is a strong supporter of the teachers and organizes a rally to recruit students for the picket line. In *Time to Take Sides*, Gold makes a point of including the perspective of Jeff's mother, a single woman employed as a teachers' aide who cannot afford to join the strike, even though she agrees with the teachers.

The presence of female workers in their factory is cited as a potential source of class conflict for the wealthy family in *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988). Chris's uncle, knowing he is interested in Maria whose family owns a small grocery that caters to factory employees, encourages him to consider what this might mean in the future and explains that as a teen, he had worked in the factory himself and wanted to date a co-worker. He tells Chris that his own father told him to go ahead and date her if he wanted, but that he needed to consider

“What are you going to say to her ten years from now, when you're in charge and every time you go down to the mill you see her on the assembly line putting lock washers on a radio chassis? What are you going to say to her when she looks over her shoulder at you as you go by? Are you going to fire her just so you won't have to face her?” (p. 93)

The majority of the contemporary novels depict the workplace as one in which men and women participate equally, and gender equality is never taken up as an issue as it is in the historical fiction. This omission suggests that the problems facing female workers in the historical novels such as unequal pay and sexual harassment are no longer problems for women in the workplace. The first bill signed into law by President Barack Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, named for a former employee of Goodyear who sued the company after learning her male coworkers received higher pay than herself for the same work. After her suit was dismissed on a technicality, she continued to campaign for equal pay. Obama noted at the signing ceremony that “It’s the story of women across this country still earning just 78 cents for every dollar men earn - women of color even less - which means that today, in the year 2009, countless women are still losing thousands of dollars in salary, income and retirement savings over the course of a lifetime” (“Obama Signs Lilly Ledbetter Act,” *Washington Post*, January 29, 2009). Such stories of contemporary labor struggles related to gender do not appear in the contemporary novels. Only the suggestion that Chris’s uncle in *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988) might later have been tempted to fire the girl he once dated as a teenager hints at their persistence.

In the historical novels female labor leaders are mentioned. Mother Jones appears or is referred to in a number of the books: *Trouble at the Mines* (Rappaport, 1986); *Frankie* (Jones, 1997); *Breaker* (Perez, 1988) and *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002). Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World, appears in *Bread and Roses, Too* (Paterson, 2006) and is mentioned in *Rockbuster* (Skurzynski,

2001). *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) contains a brief mention of Delores Huerta, and in the time slip novel *César Chávez: Fight in the Fields* (Sorenson, 1998), Huerta appears on stage with Chávez at a rally, but unlike Chávez, she does not speak.

One curious omission from the novels is any mention of Franklin Roosevelt's Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins. Only Margaret Haddix in her author's note in *Uprising* (2007) explains how Perkins witnessed the Triangle fire and was later appointed to the commission assigned to investigate it. Perkins had a remarkable career that spanned fifty years. In *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Letters from a Mill Town Girl*, Perkins is never even mentioned. Emma Bartoletti, FDR's fictional correspondent describes her mother's exhaustion after the workday, the stretch-out, and lost jobs. The book covers Eleanor Roosevelt's social activism, FDR's political maneuvers, and various New Deal programs such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation corps. Given the subject matter and the setting, it is odd that Frances Perkins is never even referred to, even in the book's historical notes and references to more resources on the publisher's website.

Although the historical novels portray women and girls as workers and advocates for labor, gaps remain in representations of ongoing issues women face today, such as equal pay and sexual harassment. In addition, images of modern labor leaders, both male and female, are scarce in the historical novels and nonexistent in the contemporary ones. Stories that convey the influence of Frances Perkins on the programs of Roosevelt's New Deal or the dedication of Lilly Ledbetter to ensure that women who followed her would

receive more equitable treatment could demonstrate the connection of labor issues to government policy in the present day.

Aftermath of an Uprising

Those imprisoned at Fort McPherson were quietly released so they never faced the threatened military tribunals. Some managed to return to work at the mills, but many did not. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) specifically forbade the firing of employees for union activity, but it was soon apparent that in the South at least that section of the code would be disregarded. As early as September 21, only four days after the governor's declaration of martial law, the *Newnan Herald* reported that some employees had been denied their jobs "on account of the active part they took in the strike" ("National Guards Protect Loyal Textile Workers," 1934, September 21).

Although an editorial a week ("Who Shall Work?" 1934, September 28) later urged mill owners to rehire them as they would otherwise be forced onto government relief programs, many did lose their jobs and their mill-owned homes. One woman who worked at Newnan reported that the invalid infant of a family she knew died outside in the rain after the parents were evicted. She too lost her home in the evictions, remembering, "My children have lived in hay barns and on the side of the road" (Stoney & Helfand, 1995).

Harmony Grove Mills refused to rehire most of those who had participated in the strike. The mill remained closed for several weeks, citing a lack of orders and a backlog of inventory in company warehouses (Lamartine Griffin Hardman Collection, 1934). Records in the collected papers of the mill's owner show that employees filed numerous complaints with the Textile Labor Relations Board over the next few months, all to no avail. One of the first complaints reported that at the time of the strike 340 employees had been on payroll, and that 300 had been involved in the strike. Of those, ten were rehired. L.G. Hardman, Jr., vice-president of the mill owned by his father, assured the Board that all had been informed of the need to reapply for their jobs and that all workers were hired on the basis of qualifications. Some had attempted to simply return to their old positions without reapplying or talking with their supervisors, and these were turned away, as they had not followed the company's instructions. None of the employees' complaints were found to have merit. A list of company owned houses at Harmony Grove lists 41 homes in which people lived who were employed that fall, 65 homes which were occupied by those not employed, and a total of 25 families who had requested a mill house. Although the records contained no copies of eviction notices, the list suggests that those who were no longer considered employees of Harmony Grove would soon be moved out.

Workers at the Trion Company who had participated in the strike also lost their homes. Friends no longer spoke. Children were forbidden to play with those associated with the opposing side (T.E. Nunn, personal communication, July 8, 2006). The violence that had claimed one of their own appeared to have made those associated with the union

forever outcasts. No charges were filed in the death of Roscoe Blaylock, the Rome foundry worker who was killed in the violence at Trion. Charles McClain of Rome was charged with the death of Deputy Milton Hix and convicted in February of 1935 (“Life Sentence Given McClain at Summerville,” *Rome News Tribune*, 1935, February 17). His conviction was overturned later on the grounds that a juror in the trial was a distant relative of the victim. McClain’s second trial was held in Chattooga County Superior Court in September of 1935. The jury heard from defense witnesses that McClain had been in Trion but had left in an automobile to take shooting victims to the hospital. Judge Pittman had to leave Chattooga County before the verdict was returned; another judge arrived to receive the verdict, only to have the jury report that they remained hopelessly deadlocked. McClain’s third trial the following year resulted in an acquittal (Baker, 1988).

Breaking the Silence: Trion, 2006

The more I read about working conditions and the circumstances surrounding the General Textile Workers Strike in 1934, the more it seemed that no clearly optimal choice existed: Going on strike in Trion meant acting in opposition to a company that had made efforts to improve workers’ standard of living and was under intense financial pressure to preserve both jobs and production in an economy that continued to spiral down. Refusing to strike meant facing pressure from family and friends who were part of the union organization. I saw how easy it would be to keep the promise of silence made years before. It offered a way to preserve an outward image of a life untroubled by shame and

doubt. It denied memories of jeers and evictions, broken friendships and lost chances. Did they after all look like outlaws? And how could I hope to capture the nature of the choices they faced, so many years after the fact?

The story of the strike that emerges from the histories, interviews, and articles is one of an imposed silence that became a complicit one. I must attempt to tell it because it is a reminder that power and its promises are timeless. At the same time, I am mindful that these are the lives of real people who lived in a difficult time that I cannot never completely grasp - a young wife whose husband is fired soon after their baby is born, a man who has friends on both sides of the angry divide, a small girl whose father is shot and killed in a gun battle only blocks from their home. The multigenre pieces I constructed for the novel I planned forced me to read and to imagine what motivated people to make the decisions they did, but they forced me also to acknowledge that my own grasp of the times would remain forever partial and a product of my own time rather than the one I tried to understand. It is an understanding that must increasingly come from texts and artifacts, rather than from the voices of people who lived the events firsthand.

T. Emmett Nunn was a longtime chronicler of the history of the small town, much of it focused on the high school football team whose victories over teams from larger schools have fed its reputation as a football powerhouse. His photographs and articles appeared regularly in the *Trion Facts*. He grew up in Trion in the 1920s and '30s, and my parents suggested he would be a possible source of information about the strike. I spent

two afternoons sitting with Emmett on the front porch of his home overlooking the row of apartments where I had lived as an infant, and where my aunt Mary Haygood had once kept a house full of boarders. He was delighted to talk to me and full of memories about the events of 1934.

“I was a nosy thirteen-year-old and I wanted to know everything that was going on. So I skipped school that day and took off to the mill the day of the shooting.” He heard the shots fired and later went back to find a machine gun mounted on a bale of cotton, a warning of the retaliation strikers could face. “My mother took a picture of me, standing beside that gun,” he told me. No, he no longer had the picture, though he wished he did. His avocation of photography had been passed down to him by his mother who always had a camera handy.

Friends and families would be divided over the strike, those who had walked out evicted from their mill-owned homes by management. He himself came to believe that the strikers were largely “uneducated, no-count people, not the nicer folks.” Most of them had not been from Trion, but were flying squadrons from out of town. Emmett never had any use for labor unions after what he had seen in 1934, but he remained a lifelong Democrat. He told me of his ongoing arguments as a teenager and young adult with a history teacher from Trion School whose sympathies lay with the union (T.E. Nunn, personal communication, July 8, 2006).

Several times Emmett told me how much he enjoyed talking with me and how he wished I could come back every day. He was a happy man, content to spend the day

sitting on his inviting porch that overlooked the town he had documented for over half a century through his photographs and writing. Yet he was lonely too, having lost his beloved wife, Gertie, in a car accident five years before. He missed her terribly. “I met her when she was in the sixth grade. I was a year older but I stayed back, just so I could be with her. She was so good to me! Everybody would give me a hard time because it was always Gertie out doing the yard work and cutting the grass, but after I had some heart trouble, she told me she just couldn’t let me do it, that she wouldn’t know what to do if anything was to happen to me.”

Three months after I interviewed T. Emmett Nunn, I heard that he himself had been in a car accident, had broken a hip, and was undergoing rehabilitation at a hospital in Rome, Georgia. I suspected that he might be anticipating a reunion with his Gertie soon, and that was in fact the case. He died in November of 2006. His death was an occasion for fond recollections as people in Trion recalled his enthusiastic and unabashed delight in small-town life. Everyone knew him or knew of him, and newspaper articles and affectionate letters to the editor marked his passing.

Other deaths are unremarked today, although they once made the front page of the *Atlanta Constitution*. The people who recall their circumstances are dying now themselves. The sheriff’s deputy who was killed on September 5, 1934, left a young daughter. Who today can help her keep what memories she possesses? And who will?

In Memoriam

Black wrought iron frames

A yard of pink azaleas

Under the cool shade of oak

Where sometimes she can almost recall

The smell of his hair tonic and tobacco,

His voice at night through her bedroom wall.

But most times he is lost to her.

A page in a book she cannot read,

As strange to his girl as the man who ran that day

To her mother's door, only to stand silent and still

Weighted with sudden selfish knowledge of their loss,

Of shots and screams and blood down at the mill.

Outlaws, Part 5

September 7, 1934

Dear Diary,

Without the mill whistle the hours of the day all run into one with no reminder of where and when to go. Yesterday evening I just wrote and I did not know how long I sat there with my diary and my pen. Charles would cry and I would feed him and change him and hold him and then I would pick up my pen

and this diary when he settled down again. I don't even know why. The pages have all the days of the year on them. I never paid them that much attention. I don't now. I just write and run over all the days like the hours that don't listen for the whistle anymore. Today I will reach December 31 when this diary ends. I will put it away then and I will never look at it again.

On Wednesday after Mama called I tried to call Edith but the lines were busy. I thought about walking over there or going to Mama's but what if Jesse came home? I folded up my wool fabric and went to put it and the pattern away when I saw a pack of cigarettes on the hutch. I picked them up, wondering and feeling like I was living in some strange place I did not know anymore.

Then I heard footsteps on the steps and the porch. Jesse walked in the front door.

I ran and he hugged me tight and I breathed in the smell of his work shirt and him. One part of the world at least was normal. Some place life still went on. I held him and breathed again. It seemed like along time we stood there. I could not ask but Jesse pulled me to the kitchen and sat down at the table, still holding my hand. I sat down and he closed his eyes.

"What happened was some strikers from the foundry in Rome came up. They were out front with the Trion workers. The deputies were out there too. It was a big crowd."

I waited when he stopped and he finally said, "One of them said something to the deputy and then the shooting started. I heard somebody say

they tried to take away the deputy's gun they were talking to. Cal Hankins got shot, hurt pretty bad. Some others were hit but Cal was bleeding bad."

Cal Hankins was a friend of John Robert's. "Did you see John Robert anywhere or Cecil?"

Jesse said he had seen Cecil while he was walking home but he didn't know about John. "I heard he was outside with the pickets and the ones from Rome. I don't think he came in the mill with the others."

I remembered about the second rounds of shots we heard. "They were inside?"

"Yeah, I was in the weave room and we had heard the shots out front. We started moving away, toward the back of the mill, staying away from windows. Tom Hardy came in and told us to go home. The mill was shutting down. It was about half of us come in anyway. A lot stayed out but who knows if it was because they were on strike or just scared." He shook his head. "Then somebody said stay where we were and someone else said keep going. We heard the yelling then and people running, and shots real close. In the mill. We stopped there in the weave room where we were and Miles Amos and me shut the door behind us and locked it. We didn't know what was going on. We heard shots and then we didn't, just people yelling, more running. Then quite. We stayed there and waited. After a long time, the sheriff came to the door and said he wanted to talk with us. He said for me to go with him first."

I do not think Jesse heard my breath go in sudden and quick because he kept talking.

“He asked me what I knew about what happened out there, who shot Mr. Hicks. That was the first I knew a deputy was shot. I hadn’t seen anybody even with a gun, just heard the shots out front, then inside. He asked me the same thing over and over all different ways. He said he knew I was with them, with-. I told him not no more. I told him yesterday I had gone first thing to Mr. King and told him I knew they knew I had been with the union boys. But I changed my mind. I told him Mr. King listened to me and said he understood how somebody could get mistaken in his thinking. He said he knew I’d been with them but maybe if the others knew I was to quit, they would do it too. Maybe they would come back to the mill tomorrow and we wouldn’t have this strike.”

Listening I thanked the Lord in my mind that John Robert had gotten Jesse to give the union up and Jesse’s supervisor had forgiven him for taking up with them. And I asked Him to never let Jesse know I had done what I had because it still felt like a lie even if it was right.

“I guess he thought maybe I could be some kind of example - just back down now before it goes too far and you can keep your job. Like I did.”

He laughed but he sounded angry too. “I had to swear never to mention the word ‘union’ again. And I won’t. This here is the last time. It’s over.”

The telephone rang and we both jumped. I picked up the receiver. Edith said Cecil made it home and asked about Jesse. I said he was fine and I wondered if it was true.

“John Robert walked in the door 10 minutes ago with his shirt all bloody and like to gave Mama a heart attack. He said he had taken Cal to the hospital,

took him to Rome, in his car. John Robert is all right but he's leaving. He and Amy are packing right now to go to Atlanta. He didn't stay but a minute to let us know he was okay. What he's going to do down there I don't know. But that's his choice. At least Jesse got out and Cecil said it looked like they was going to keep him on at the mill."

Yes, they are, I said. yes.

"Cecil said he heard they was already making a list of people that's going to get fired and evicted tomorrow. It's a hard thing but that's the choice they made, to go against the company. Lucky to have a job these days. You best keep it no matter what."

I thought about the lay-offs and the stretch-out. The wages that got cut. The people who got shorted on their pay. No matter what, I said.

Edith sniffed. "Well, Jesse will be just fine. He can hold his head up. Mill wanted to keep him. He'd be a supervisor but for this. And might be one day anyway. Some of them boys spit on him when they saw him walking home yesterday. Cecil said Cal did. And Jesse just walked away. He can hold his head up, I told Cecil."

Dear God, I thought. I wonder if he can?

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Reisberg (2006) voiced a frustration that I recognize as she reached the final chapter of her arts-based study of children's book illustrators. She describes trying "to pull it all together, trying to access and respond to these different parts - right brain, left brain, that are at times in direct opposition to each other - concrete, abstract, conscious, liminal, logical, poetic." What helped was advice from her mentor Rita Irwin who described a/r/tography to her as "not either/or; it's *and* and *and* and *and*" (p. 239). Here then is my own "*and* and *and* and *and*" in which I consider these transgressions of disciplinary boundaries and the transgressions of the textile workers of 1934 who paid their debt in silence for generations.

Bread and Roses, Too: Hard Times in a Postindustrial Economy

This study, begun in 2004 as the nation's economy recovered from the downturn following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and completed in the midst of the Great Recession, has become more relevant than I could ever have imagined. When I began to write about the textile strike of 1934 and labor novels for children and young adults, I worried that topic was too arcane, one few besides myself would ever care about. Then in August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina almost destroyed the city of New Orleans and

the surrounding areas on the Gulf Coast. Those hit the hardest, the ones forced to remain in the city while the levees broke and the water rose, were people whose lives were not very different from those of the poor in my own community. Many of the storm's victims were African-American, and the months afterward saw discussion in popular media about the role race played in the disaster. But many pointed out that social class was implicated as well. Those who lacked transportation and financial resources were less likely to evacuate to safety than those who owned their own vehicles and could afford a hotel stay or seek refuge with relatives able to take them in. Although class remained a secondary theme to discussions of race (a Google search of "Hurricane Katrina race" turned up over 1.5 million results, while a search of "Hurricane Katrina social class," returned less than 200,000), the fact that it was discussed at all seemed significant. It was apparent that governmental agencies at all levels had failed to aid the nation's most vulnerable citizens.

Just two years later rumors began of an approaching financial crisis due to problems in mortgage-backed securities; shortly thereafter Bear Stearns and other firms heavily invested in these securities began their disastrous collapse. By fall of 2008, Wall Street's problems were brought home to millions of Americans, as the unemployment rate and numbers of home foreclosures rose. In this economic environment, it is impossible to read certain passages from novels set during the Great Depression without a disconcerting sense of recognition that the words could apply to the present all too easily. In James Lincoln Collier's novel, *The Worst of Times* (2000), Petey Williamson's father argues with his nephew who plans to leave the University of Chicago to become a union organizer:

“Look, Steve, we’re all willing to grant that some of the banks, the Wall Street stockbrokers, the money people, were out of bounds. We read the newspapers. And some of them are going to jail for what they did back in the ‘20s when everybody thought good times would never end. I agree that the government ought to have kept a closer eye on the banks, especially so’s they wouldn’t go under the way so many have. But the capitalist system is what’s made this country so prosperous, and it depends on private profit. Why would anybody go to the trouble of starting a business, creating all those jobs, if he couldn’t make a profit out of it?” (p. 16)

Unemployment has not reached 25% as it did during the worst of the Great Depression, and social programs continue to provide at least some aid to families in need, but change the reference to the ‘20s to the 1990s, and it is a quote that might well come from a novel written in early 2010. The realization that “hard times” may, even today, be more than a simple economic downturn but may instead mean a larger crisis affecting millions of Americans and putting their jobs, homes, pensions, and health insurance at risk renders studies such as the present one far more relevant today than it first appeared in 2004.

Transgressions: Results and Implications of Multigenre Research

My interest in labor unions grew out of learning in 1978 about the general textile strike that had taken place in mills along the East Coast 44 years earlier. The secrecy that surrounded events in my hometown of Trion, Georgia, was so complete that I had never heard about the two men who were shot to death at the mill on Wednesday, September 5, 1934, one of them the father of a woman whom I knew. Workers who returned to work after the strike were reluctant to speak of it; many had sworn never to mention the union again. Years before histories of the strike were published (Irons, 2000; Salmond, 2002), I pieced together what I could from newspaper archives and the stories I coaxed from my older family members. What I found most compelling about its aftermath was the thoroughness of the silence that surrounded it in communities like Trion (Hall, et al., 1987; Moore, 2000; Stoney & Helfand, 1995). Pressure from their employers to keep the silence became internalized as part of local norms of behavior. As a result, the story of what happened that September and what motivated those who joined the strikers and those who did not remains partial and contradictory. The only conclusion I could reach was that no good choices existed. Each person had to decide what consequences would be the least painful to live with.

The hard choices faced by workers in the textile strike of 1934 would inspire me to explore their stories through multigenre fiction, excerpts of which are included in this study of how unions are represented in American children's novels. Autoethnographic pieces in each chapter provide insight into how I became the researcher who would

eventually address this particular topic using arts-based methodologies, alongside more traditional practices. Historical description of the 1934 textile strike shows workers, particularly those in the South, attempting to establish unions under the legislative provisions of the New Deal (Irons, 2000). The stories of how they tried and failed and were then silenced as voices for labor is at the core of how I explore the novels of the sample. Mill villages like the one my family has lived in for almost a hundred years offered jobs and a measure of social and economic security in troubled times but required compliance to the company's norms. The cottages, the company stores, the schools and churches, all these commanded a high price, and in 1934 the true costs of life in the village came due for those who challenged the company.

Each of the five previous chapters of this study concludes with fictional letters, journal entries, and newspaper clippings. Multigenre texts like this one require the reader to make inferences based on what is inscribed in the text and what is missing, a process similar to the one I pursued when I first heard about the textile strike. Any narrative, no matter its construction, must be subject to careful scrutiny; immersing oneself in a culture in order to resist its claims is a hazardous enterprise, one liable to being undermined by the strength of its traditions. My analysis of novels in which labor unions are portrayed is drawn from scholarly work on children's literature and education, but also from American studies, primary and secondary historical sources, media studies, and my own multigenre texts. It is informed by Williams's (1977) theory of a selective tradition that mirrors the values, beliefs, and attitudes of a society's dominant culture and assists in

their reproduction over time, while simultaneously ignoring values, beliefs, and attitudes that resist or oppose that dominant culture. Through crossing these bounds and refusing to be limited to a more narrowly defined set of texts, I show connections among disciplines and play with the narrative nature of research. Both the content of my novel, the general textile strike of 1934, and its multigenre form foreground the power of the selective tradition in determining which versions of history are made available to readers. The silence of the textile strikers for years shows how powerful the process of the selective tradition can be, while the multigenre fiction disrupts that process by showing how alternative views existed in the face of societal pressures.

The aim of the study was to examine how labor unions were represented in American children's novels, focusing on class consciousness and also the novels' silences, specific aspects of the labor movement that did not appear in the texts. I located 53 children's novels published since 1976 that portrayed labor unions; the vast majority of these were historical fiction. In order to identify aspects of the labor movement the novels did not address, I compared depictions of unions in the entire sample to the historical record of trade unionism in the United States. For the purposes of the question regarding class consciousness, I identified the novels that had won awards or that had received recommendations in selection guides for children's literature and used these twelve novels, along with the six contemporary novels, as a smaller discussion sample.

The historical novels did a far better job than the contemporary ones of portraying the aspects of class consciousness I chose to examine: the creation of context for the

labor conflict, depiction of workers' daily lives both on and off the job, and portrayal of collective action. In addition, the representations of American labor unions that emerge from the study are rooted more often in the past than in the present, due to the preponderance of historical fiction and, more specifically, the failure of these particular novels to adequately connect labor conflict of the past with contemporary issues. This disconnect can be seen in the disproportionate focus on industries such as mining and garment manufacturing, neither of which is as influential within the labor movement today as it was a century ago.

The historical novels featured complex characters caught up in difficult situations, threatened by those hostile to the union cause (*Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, Taylor, 1981; *Billy Creekmore*, Porter, 2007)), intimidated into submission (*Esperanza Rising*, Ryan, 2000;), or conflicted about where their loyalties should lie (*The Breaker Boys*, Hughes, 2004). Most, but not all, protagonists in the historical fiction belonged to working class families. In contrast, the contemporary novels were far more likely to portray union members as perpetrators of violence or intimidation, and only one protagonist, Jeff, in *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976), was from a working class family.

In my analysis of the novels' silences, I identified a number of omissions that further weakened the link between the labor movement as a whole and labor issues of recent years. I found no novels that depicted labor unions with settings in the post-World War II years, a period that saw the largest number of strikes in United States history. Only four novels, *Up Molasses Mountain* (Baker, 2002), *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004), *Fight in the Fields: César Chávez* (Sorenson, 1998), and *Jesse* (Soto, 1994) are set in the years

from 1956 through 1970. Labor's evolution on social issues in the 20th century does not appear in the novels: The racism and sexism that permeated unions for generations are ignored in the books, along with links to labor's connections in more recent years to the modern Civil Rights Movement and the women's movement. Yet another omission is the role Southern union members played in the general textile strike of 1934.

The cumulative effect of these representations of labor unions in American children's novels is to suggest that labor issues were more relevant to the past than the present. Here I argue that the novels may be seen as artifacts of a selective tradition that incorporates resistance to the dominant culture, i.e., attempted class critique, into an *attenuated message* so that labor issues are presented in such a way that any intended social criticism is muted. Still, the fact that so many novels are being published, particularly in the last ten years, does mean that the potential remains for novels about the American labor movement to address more effectively the issues workers continue to confront in a postindustrial economy.

The Attenuation of Labor

The stories that are told and those that are not are shaped by the process of the selective tradition, a process that permits resistance to the dominant culture, even as it mirrors and reinforces that culture. Stories about the labor movement that portray resistance and even victories on the part of those who remain outside the dominant culture offer children examples of collective action on behalf of a cause that appears to have receded from popular media and public consciousness. Yet these stories retain their

value. Howard Zinn, (2007a) states that he does not “want to invent victories for people’s movements. But to think that history writing must aim simply to recapitulate the failures that dominate the past is to make historians collaborators in an endless cycle of defeat” (p. 13). Similarly, Williams’s (1977) contention that historical projects that offer alternative perspectives on the past represent an effective resistance to the selective tradition makes a strong case for such texts. Power’s study of accusations of “readerly” and “writerly presentism” within children’s literature demonstrates how responses to oppression throughout history have been sufficiently varied that it is hardly necessary to invent such accounts. Indeed, to portray acts that resist the dominant culture as emerging full-blown only later in history ignores links between past and present and suggests that progress is a linear process without exploring where “progressive” viewpoints come from. It also ignores society’s ability to regress as well, for example, to openly consider more critical views of issues such as slavery during the period of the American Revolution before rejecting them later for ones that justified the continuation of the institution (Taxel, 1981). Other scholars have, like Taxel and Power, explored how the selective tradition operates in children’s literature. Violet Harris (1993) examined depictions of African Americans, and Overstreet (1994) studied portrayals of the war in Vietnam in children’s novels. Representations of labor unions in American children’s fiction offer opportunities to explore how class issues are constructed for young readers in ways that often serve the interests of the dominant culture.

Stories about the American labor movement have the potential to offer sites of resistance to the powerful forces of postindustrial capitalism and to address the issue of

social class. However, their ability to do so is diminished by the failure of the sample novels as a whole to adequately demonstrate the relevance of labor organizations to present day concerns. If the labor movement presents a challenge to the dominant culture, one increasingly associated with the power of corporations, its transgressions of a master narrative that maintains dominant power relations must be addressed in such a way as to minimize the movement's effectiveness. Diminishing labor without calling attention to the fact that it is indeed being marginalized from discussion would be optimal. The ways in which the links between the labor movements of the past and present are weakened in the novels of the sample led me to think of labor's cause as *attenuated* within the books and to consider the implications of that attenuation or weakness. What first occurred to me was the metaphor of the weakened virus that serves as a vaccination against the full-blown version of the disease, convincing the body that it has, in fact, encountered the virus and forcing it to produce an effective immune response. Might the novels offer a sort of "vaccination," however accidental, against infection with radical ideas? The effect, however unintended, would limit their ability to challenge students to take a more critical stance of economic relations in the present day workplace. Such a process offers an example of how a selective tradition functions, not as a stated intention on the part of individuals or corporate entities, but as an all too natural process whereby artifacts are produced that serve their interests and reflect the values, beliefs, and attitudes of a dominant culture. Although groups or individuals may attempt to force this process, these manipulations are more open and thus less effective than ones that operate beyond the notice of traditional media.

The most unexpected finding to arise from my study of the novels was the differences in how unions were depicted in historical and contemporary fiction. Unions in historical novels received much more sympathetic treatment than those in the few novels set in the present. All books in the sample were published within the same time period, a time that saw the profile of the American labor movement diminish within popular media. In the 34 years since the earliest of the books of the sample, *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976) was published, organized labor experienced a decline in memberships (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010), but union membership represented only one aspect of this shift. Lipsitz (1994) voiced concerns about what he called “the erasure of the working class from public consciousness” noting that it “hides the disaster that deindustrialization, economic restructuring, and computer-generated automation have brought to the majority of the population” (p. 2). If all the books in the discussion sample, both historical fiction and contemporary fiction, are products of the period in which these events were taking place, why then should genre alone be associated with such differences in representations of labor unions? Whose interests are served by such disparate representations of labor past and present? Closer examination of the requirements of genre writing offer additional insight into how a selective tradition functions.

Historical fiction provides a retrospective on past events that take place before the child reader was born. Occasionally authors like Gary Soto in *Jesse* (1994) write about events that occurred in their younger years, but these books are written from the perspective of someone who recognizes that passage of time and acknowledges it by offering more explanation of context than contemporary readers would require. To put it

simply, a children's book written in 2010 that makes reference to party lines will require more more explication than one referring to text messaging. When this need to provide more background information within historical fiction is extended into areas such as conflicts based on race, class, and gender, explanations are often complicated and even subverted by the cultural attitudes of the times in which they were produced (Power, 2003; Taxel, 1981, 1986; Trousdale, 1990). Both Stephens (1992) and Nodelman (1990) addressed the quandary writers of historical fiction face, that is, how to recreate the past in such a way that it is simultaneously "accurate" in its detail yet not so different from the present that readers cannot recognize the beliefs and values of their own times in those of the past. As Nodelman observes, "For to assume no distance [between values of past and present] is to make the ahistorical assumption that people are uninfluenced enough by their times to be basically and universally the same; history written with that goal is truly fictional" (p. 72).

Still the rich detail historical fiction demands serves the labor movement well. As I noted in Chapter 4, the historical novels provide much more context for the conflict, offer detailed description of the daily lives of workers, and show union members or strikers as victims of systematic repression. These result in more positive representations of unions in historical fiction, but the cumulative effect of the sample novels as a whole is more problematic. The differences in representation by genre mean that the most sympathetic portrayals of labor available to young readers are historical, while labor in the present, or indeed, in the last half century is either represented negatively or under-represented.

I located only six examples of contemporary fiction that depicted labor unions, and any generalizations about how they represent labor organizations are made with that relatively small number in mind. The requirements of writing for a contemporary audience are different from those of writing about the past. Authors of contemporary fiction can assume much more cultural knowledge on their readers' behalf; their goal instead is to create a believable young protagonist who functions in a youth culture they themselves are usually not a part of. Providing historical context for conflict within contemporary fiction may appear to be less critical than within historical fiction, however, three of the authors did attempt it. James Lincoln Collier in *The Winchesters* (1988) traces workers' bitterness toward the Winchesters back to layoffs during the Great Depression and also includes multiple incidents in which adults explain social and economic conflicts to Chris Winchester, resulting in a noticeable didacticism. In both *Strike Two* (Koss, 2001) and *Riot* (Casanova, 1996) older relatives unfavorably compare labor conflicts of the present with those of the past. In the remaining three contemporary novels, *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983), *Time to Take Sides* (Gold, 1976), and *Dream Factory* (Barkley and Hepler, 2007), the strikes are entirely ahistorical, divorced from any connection to broader conflicts or current economic trends. Interestingly, although some of the labor conflict in the historical novels revolved around union organization (Curtis, 1999; Kadohata, 2004; Taylor, 1981), every contemporary novel depicted a strike. While the historical fiction portrayed union members as most often victims of threats, intimidation, or even outright violence, in all the contemporary novels except for *Strike!* (Corcoran, 1983), union members or their sympathizers were instead the perpetrators.

While only one of the novels, *Uprising* (Haddix, 2007) offered explicit critique of the capitalist system, the historical novels as a whole were more likely than the contemporary ones to establish how workers identified as a class whose interests were separate from those of their employers (Auch, 2002; Baker, 2002; Hughes, 2004; Porter, 2007). Only one, *Kira-kira* (Kadohata, 2004) portrayed the labor conflict as stemming solely from an employer's cruel personality. The historical fiction also showed workers coming together to assist one another in an ethic of mutuality to alleviate to some extent the difficulties of everyday life for the working poor (Paterson, 2006; Soto, 1994; Taylor, 1981). The sense of community and place evoked in all the historical novels are largely absent from the contemporary ones.

These differences in perspectives when writing about labor past and present speak to the power of a selective tradition that ensures that versions of history serving the interests of the status quo appear to be both natural and logical, when in fact other competing versions might exist as well. Unions of the past are portrayed as fighting for workers' rights, but almost no portrayals of the modern labor movement appear in novels for young people. Such depictions of class issues are akin to those that focus on the accomplishments of the Civil Rights and women's movements of the past but ignore the continued presence of racism and sexism in contemporary society. Rogers and Christian (2007) demonstrated how children's literature for elementary age children constructed Whiteness in ways that historicized racism. Children's novels about labor similarly historicize the movement so that it fails to connect to issues of social class and workers' rights in the present. Authors of books sympathetic to labor (Curtis, 1999; Haddix, 2007;

Porter, 2007; Taylor, 1981) may aim to offer resistance or alternatives to the dominant culture, one that in the United States, has become increasingly associated with the power of corporations, as evidenced in the most recent contemporary novel, *Dream Factory* (Barkley & Hepler, 2007), set in Disney World. In doing so, they offer examples of times in which workers resisted their employers, with the most effective of those examples found in the past, rather than the present. Thus, their examples of resistance are weakened by the cumulative effect of the group of novels as a whole, even when individually, they depict workers participating in collective action aimed at improving their circumstances.

Children's books are not the only area in which labor is historicized in such a way that the movement's message is muted. Rosenzweig (1987), in a cogent description of how labor is depicted in popular culture notes that some cities create museums that pay tribute to the role industrialization played in the community or that focus on specific groups of workers and their connection to industry, as in the Smithsonian's exhibition, "Perfect in Her Place: Women at Work in Industrial America." Museums sponsor exhibits about the lives of wealthy industrialists but seldom include what Rosenzweig calls "the traditional concerns of labor history," that is, unions and their leaders or the strikes that workers engaged in. The only museum he found that did focus on unions was the Botto House in New Jersey that commemorates the 1913 Paterson textile strike. He noted too that few historical markers explain the significance of events in labor history.

Moore (2000) observes that only recently have Southern textile cities and towns begun to take up the project of memorializing their past and that these memorials have made for uncomfortable discussions in communities trying to reconcile the controversial

nature of labor's reputation with the dominant culture's urge to present a safe and conservative image of their town. He argues that even the expensive urban lofts created in old textile mills represent "memorial landscapes" for the region's history, ones that take a nontraditional form from the more easily recognized historical markers or plaques. Moore describes how many of the memorialization efforts like these involve the "transfer into the consumption fund [of a community] of formerly productive assets" (p. 686), such that areas where labor once produced goods are now themselves being sold as both physical and experiential commodities. This transformation of sites formerly associated with labor may be linked as well to the commodification of labor's stories, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Representing labor in popular culture, whether in children's novels, museums or memorials to events in local history, means confronting the power of a selective tradition that excludes or ignores versions of the past and present that challenge the status quo. Attenuated versions of labor's history allow acknowledgement of its historic role, while suggesting that the movement's day has come and gone. Awareness of the ability of the selective tradition to shape past and present into versions that can best serve powerful interests in a society is the first step in considering how to subvert that process.

Resisting the Power of a Selective Tradition

By offering "a sense of *predisposed continuity*" [italics original](Williams, 1977, p. 116), the selective tradition can make outcomes appear logical and natural, when in fact alternatives might just as easily have occurred. Understanding the points at which the

process is most vulnerable permits a critical observer to disrupt it and to challenge the hegemony it helps perpetuate. Borrowing from Chandra Power (2003), I consider here various *writerly* and *readerly* methods of challenging the selective tradition, beginning with the one I employ within this study. In this dissertation I have used multigenre text in an effort to disrupt the continuity normally associated with the dissertation genre. Making this choice added to the complexity of the project, and many times I reflected on how straightforward that traditional form of the dissertation appeared to be. It allows the author to assume “authority,” to claim validity on the basis of adherence to particular conventions and forms, some of which I have followed within these pages and others which I have ignored.

Williams, describing the selective tradition, notes

It is a very powerful process, since it is tied to many practical continuities- families, places, institutions, a language - which are indeed directly experienced. It is also, at any time, a vulnerable process, since it has in practice to discard whole areas of significance, or reinterpret or dilute them, or convert them into forms which support or at least do not contradict the really important elements of the current hegemony. (p. 116).

The excerpts of my multigenre novel draw on the “practical continuities” Williams refers to, including family, place, institutions, and language. My knowledge of how Southern textile workers experienced the strike in fall of 1934 is based on accounts of people I knew, people who lived in Trion at that time. Knowing that history

predisposed me to be open to other examples of homegrown Southern radicalism, to Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School, to Don West, Lillian Smith, and Millard and Linda Fuller. Although I recognized that theirs was a minority viewpoint within the American South, I refused to allow what I learned about their work and about the strike of 1934 to be discarded, reinterpreted, diluted, or converted into a version of history that cast the region only as a bastion of conservatism, if not out and out racism.

An awareness of the political complexities of the American South informed my creative writing. The character of Jesse McKenzie offers a rare instance in children's fiction about the labor movement of someone choosing to join the union on the basis of political affiliation, that is, identification with the supposedly pro-labor policies of the New Deal. In the union, Jesse realizes his own capabilities for leadership and, to his wife Kathleen's dismay, he seriously considers becoming the local face of the textile workers union. She foresees the consequences and acts to prevent Jesse from joining the actual strike but does not understand until too late that his abandonment of the union means his betrayal of a cause he believed in. By trying to preserve their home and livelihood in the face of retaliation by the company, she causes him to abandon his friends in the union and his own conception of himself as a political actor. I have listened to Lizzie and to Kathleen long enough now to know that Lizzie will be the one to end the story, as Kathleen and her husband have made the bargain that will allow them to continue on, but in silence. Perhaps Jesse's idealism and desire for social change will find a voice in one of his children or grandchildren because somewhere in the distant future a

young woman with his eyes drives through the mountains of northern Alabama, visiting the miners who remain, her satchel full of union cards.

Earlier I noted that the only novel to describe the general textile strike of 1934, *Franklin Roosevelt: Letters from a Mill Town Girl* (Winthrop, 2001), was set in North Adams, Massachusetts. Much of the American textile industry had already moved into the Southern states by 1934, and the story of how workers in that region attempted to unionize needs to be available to readers of all ages. Instead it is neglected, its absence contributing to the generalization that White Southerners have always been resistant to organized labor, when even today union membership in several states in the deep South, including Georgia, show gains (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Recovering stories like that of the general textile strike, stories that have been ignored or excluded, is one way to disrupt the selective tradition, which relies on such generalizations.

Throughout the novel, I have provided extensive detail about how Southern textile workers experienced the Great Depression at home and at work and how they depended on networks of social and familial relationships in hard economic times. Demonstrating how this ethic of mutuality functions undercuts the myth of individuality as the cultural ethos of the United States and emphasizes instead a longstanding tradition of assisting one another within a community. I will need to ensure that these forms of assistance include ones given and received among the working class today, rides to work or to doctors' offices, a place to stay while starting a new job, money to pay utilities.

I want to make the connection between past and present in other ways as well. As Nodelman (1990) and Stephens (1992) pointed out, historical fiction simultaneously

requires historical authenticity and ahistorical universality, which are mutually exclusive. Each writer must decide how to weigh these demands. Taking on the myth of linear progress offers one way to disrupt readers' expectations. Margaret Haddix in *Uprising* (2007) showed the characters of Bella, Yetta, and Jane embracing commitment to gender equality and social action, as did many other women of the early 20th century, both rich and poor (Enstad, 1999). She also includes an author's note at the end of the novel that shows how the problems labor unions aimed to solve a hundred years ago remain today, both in the United States and abroad. Similarly, I want readers of my novel about 1934 to be able to recognize elements of modern feminism within female characters and to recognize how the move from rural farms to the mill village meant a far wider world for workers.

Providing extensive historical detail while remaining mindful of its link to the present is one way to portray labor in a way that maintains its relevance to the lives of young readers and resists the power of the selective tradition. Another is the paradoxically "less is more" approach that Curtis employed in *Bud, Not Buddy* (1999). Curtis first planned to write a book about the 1937 UAW strike in Flint, Michigan (Lamb, 399), but the project turned instead into the story of Bud, a runaway foster child who has an encounter with a union organizer. The fact that Lefty Lewis was attempting to organize Pullman workers had no bearing on the narrative. Almost no authors take this approach. Union membership is seemingly like Chekhov's gun; it must be employed in the interest of plot, once introduced.

Although *Bud, Not Buddy* is set during the Great Depression, this strategy of normalizing labor through such incidental references to unions, could be employed just as effectively in contemporary fiction. Imagine a young adult novel in which a teenager and her friends join the union at the grocery store where they work after school and mention it in passing. Or a book in which a character's parent, instead of going to the gym or a PTA meeting in the evening, attends a union meeting for the librarians she works with. Such small shifts in a story but ones that gradually make unions appear as natural as any other organization a character might be affiliated with. More importantly, they appear not just when labor conflict arises but in the normal course of employment. Normalizing labor unions and their members by showing how they exist in American communities today would assist in the removal of their "outlaw" label.

Readerly resistance to the power of the selective tradition means engaging readers in critical literacy. As Radway (1983) and Christian-Smith (1993) demonstrated in studies of romance novels, the ways in which readers' respond to texts is varied and often unexpected, and the meanings they take away sufficiently diverse to prevent simple reproduction of the values inscribed in the text alone. Young readers may also identify exclusionary or discriminatory practices in books but need assistance in connecting these acts with their own behaviors. Barbara Michalove (1999) described how she used stories about racism, including historical fiction, to begin to generate awareness among her young students that they themselves sometimes excluded classmates on the basis of race. Books about the labor movement, especially those that recover stories previously ignored or ones making clear the links between past and present, may be similarly instrumental in

opening dialogue among students and educators about the role social class continues to play in American society.

Limitations of the Study and Implications for Future Research

The size of the general sample, at total of 53 novels, required me to focus my research questions on very specific areas: representations of class consciousness and silences or omissions of particular aspects of labor history. So far these books have received little attention from scholars of children's literature, but a number of potential areas exist for future research using novels from the sample.

I found fewer female characters in the contemporary novels than in the historical fiction and realized that these, perhaps along with analysis of some of the historical fiction set within the last 40 years, could yield insight into constructions of feminine identity. These books also contained more stereotypical depictions of women. The female character who is transported along with her male classmate back to the 1960s in the historical fantasy *Fight in the Fields: César Chávez* (Sorenson, 1998) is fearful and whiny throughout the book while the boy is never anything but steadfast and resourceful. In *The Winchesters* (Collier, 1988), Chris Winchester is stunned, but his mother is not, when his girlfriend Marie offers to have sex with him if he can convince his family to drop charges against her brother. It would be worthwhile to examine construction of these gender stereotypes occurring in the context of labor issues more closely.

Another avenue that would be fascinating to examine is authors' class backgrounds as they inform books about labor unions, particularly books written as

insiders from a working class culture as Gary Soto does in *Jesse* (1994). His own experience as a working class student in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to his portrayal of the vast amount of time spent negotiating transportation, groceries, and other necessities on minimal budgets yet managed to capture the caring relationships that ease the strain. A critical analysis of working class life in general beyond the narrower issue of labor would permit more discussion of how authors incorporate their own experiences or those of family members into texts and how those might differ from ones written by outsiders.

I chose to examine novels, but a number of children's nonfiction works and picture books also portray unions. *We Shall Not Be Moved* (Dash, 1996) and *Tar Beach* (Ringgold, 1991) are just two examples of titles whose study would add to how authors of books for young people construct labor in their texts. Children's periodicals have also featured labor history themes. I located two issues of *Cobblestone* (Chorlian, 2002; Yoder, 1992), a children's magazine about American history, about labor. One from October of 1992 has as its theme "The History of Labor" and features articles on the history of Labor Day, John L. Lewis, and the Homestead Strike of 1892. The other is about the female mill workers of Lowell, Massachusetts. On the surface neither issue strays far from the topics associated with other children's literature about labor, but publications like these would be other media to examine for additional representations of labor and unions.

Of the 29 novels published since 2000, ten of them, over one third of those published over the last decade, were part of various series, as were five books published

during the 1990s (Appendix B). Some popular historical fiction series were represented in the sample; the most recent book of the sample, *Changes for Rebecca* (Greene, 2009) is part of the *American Girl* series, which markets high-end dolls representing various periods in American history, along with assorted paraphernalia. Four books were published as part of Scholastic's *Dear America* and *My Name Is America* series. Although Scholastic's series feature well known authors of children's books, titles in series fiction are more often written by less well known authors working from a specific outline for the assigned story. Any personal connection to the topic is incidental to the writing, suggesting a detachment that makes a case for the commodification of children's literature (Taxel, 2002). In this case, possibilities for inquiry exist at the level of editorial decisions.

If the children's publishing industry has indeed become yet another example of the fast capitalism Taxel (2002) describes in which turning a profit in the least amount of time possible is paramount, it is also an industry that has in the last decade produced a large number of novels about the labor movement. It may be that these novels, published during what many felt must be the waning of the American labor movement, represent the attenuated version of history I described earlier, one in which the more raucous radicalism of the movement has been removed for popular consumption and thus rendered safe for children. A more subversive explanation would be that children's publishing, which sheltered radicals during the years of the blacklist and the McCarthy era (Mickenberg, 2006), even today provides a haven for at least a few who, through their editorial decisions, offer some resistance to the status quo by encouraging production of

minority perspectives on history. A study of what motivates the editors of series or indeed the editors of publishers like Clarion, which published four of the books in the sample, or other publishing houses that have published multiple books about the labor movement would be fascinating. To paraphrase Mickenberg (2006), it may be that we are still learning from the Left.

“A Sharing of Life’s Glories, Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses”

Historian Charles Dew (1994) described what motivated him to write the story of industrial slaves at an iron foundry in Virginia in the 19th century:

I knew I had to write this book when I found John Rex’s letter to James D.

Davidson describing the wager between Sam Williams and Henry Nash – the bet these two men made in 1855 over whether or not Sam had a savings account in a Lexington bank.... From that point on my fate was sealed” (p. 368).

A small detail, but one that suggests possibilities enough to fuel a writer to pursue a story for many years. It would be over 20 years before Dew finished *Bond of Iron*, but that one incident someone happened to include in a letter kept him researching and writing: “I cannot say with absolute certainty that this is a better book because of the passage of time, but I feel in the marrow of my bones that it is” (p. xvii).

Like Dew, I cannot say for certain that this is a better text for the passage of time. The form it has taken, or more accurately, the forms, are not what I had first envisioned

over 30 years ago when I first heard about the strike. What I can say for certain is that if it had not been for my great-aunt's offhand remark that evening when she and her daughter shared their experiences of living in Trion during the Great Depression, my own life and experiences would have been very different. Here, instead, is my "*and and and and and*," bread and roses, too, it encompasses a range of research practices and disciplines and speaks to the multiple and varying ways in which I make meaning.

The fiction I longed to write is unfinished yet, but it has guided how I engaged in this study. The multigenre writing of the dissertation allowed me to transgress the bounds of traditional academic discourse without rejecting them, to trace the evolution of my involvement with the strike, the novels, and with research itself. For example, I read Mickenberg's *Learning from the Left* (2006) at first with the oddest sense of déjà vu. It was only later when I wrote about my childhood reading practices that I realized how personal my connection to her research was. I was one of the schoolchildren of the 1960s, marking my Scholastic Book order forms. Was I what the Leftist editors in the children's publishing industry would consider a success story? I had believed my progressive leanings to be rooted in a solidly Methodist liberalism, but through my reading and writing, it became clear that other influences were present as well. Later I would find the name of my great-grandfather's brother on the front page of the *Atlanta Constitution* (September 6, 1934) listed among those injured in the violence at the mill in Trion. He was the only person among the injured specifically described as a resident of Trion; the others were from Rome. Establishing this connection to the topic affirmed Mills's (2000)

advice to beginning students of social science: “The most admirable thinkers within the scholarly community you have chosen to join do not split their work from their lives. They seem to take both too seriously to allow such dissociation, and they want to use each for the enrichment of the other. (p. 195).

Through multigenre writing, I share my processes of inquiry as Sinner et al. (2006) described and, I hope, offer an example of arts-based research that is accessible to an audience beyond academia alone. I do not yet know all the ways in which this work might reach a wider audience, but I do know that the chief benefit of having completed it will be that I will hear amazing stories for the rest of my life. Over the last few years, I have been asked many times what my dissertation topic is, and when I explain it, their stories come out - their own connections to the mills or to labor. Perhaps it is this, the simple willingness to state that yes, I am interested in the labor movement, that may encourage the *conspiratorial conversations* Barone (2008, p. 39) imagines.

Arts-based research practices or a/r/tography offer possibilities too for the revisions or amendments to critical social science Fay (1987) proposed. He called for critical social science to encompass four theories; the latter three of his theories, a theory of tradition; a theory of force; and a theory of reflexivity, are ones I consciously applied in my work. The fourth, a theory of the body, is one I have not employed, but I find the notion intriguing. I imagine how authors of children’s novels describe ways in which workers were physically confined and constrained on their jobs. Textile workers wore their hair in careful buns or braids on their heads so as to avoid an accidental scalping by the machinery; miners hunched beneath the creaking timber supports as they searched for

coal in their ever-night; poultry processing workers aimed their knives at the space between speed and safety.

If a/r/tography is one way to attempt these revisions, it is not the only way, and these revisions are not all that it does. By creating art along with research, making it part of my research practices, I aim to craft a work of use and beauty. The divide between the utilitarian and the aesthetic, between bread and roses too, is a false one. Both sustain us.

Spinning Silence, Weaving Still

The enthusiasm of the Southern mill operatives who forced the United Textile Workers to call the general strike of 1934 proved a pivotal point in Southern labor history. Many factors militated against the union - lack of financial resources to support those on strike, a fact union officials had warned of before the strike began; the inability or perhaps the unwillingness of the newly elected FDR to offer union members more than the appearance of support. In the strike's aftermath, the weakness of labor and the determination of industry to defeat the union were clear to Southerners. The mill workers of Georgia like others in the Piedmont region grew skeptical of those who claimed to have their interests at heart. The questions of what might have happened had the union had been able to better support its Southern locals or if the NIRA had been able to provide real protection to striking employees are haunting ones. Labor enjoyed gains across the country in the 1940s, even in Georgia, but unions in the state never achieved a

significant presence. While Eugene Talmadge is either blamed or credited with having “personally broken the back of the unions in Georgia” (Anderson, 1975, p. 111) the governor had help from his friends in industry.

The owners and management of the textile mills made sure that those employees who were rehired after the strike would never attempt to unionize again. With the example before their eyes of neighbors fired and evicted from their homes, they took the vow of silence and kept their jobs, determined never again to “look like outlaws,” when the price was one’s livelihood. The paternalistic relationship between workers and management allowed mill owners a variety of means with which to crush opposition from their employees, but the shame internalized by those who regained their jobs may well have been the most effective, as it guaranteed that any future attempt at organization or collective bargaining would be met with antagonism on the part of workers. In later years workers at other textile mills in Chattooga County would attempt to organize and those at Berryton Mill even struck in 1949 (Baker, 1988). Trion’s workers never again attempted to bring in a union. They, like textile workers in mills across the Piedmont (Hall et al., 1987; Moore, 2000; Stoney & Helfand, 1995), chose instead to keep the silence.

Two months before I finished this dissertation I attended a party in my neighborhood and met a young man who had been raised his whole life in Trion, Georgia, until he moved to Athens. He refused at first to believe I had been born in Trion, as most people have never even heard of the town and in any case it has been a couple of generations since anyone was born there, the hospital having long since closed. A teacher

at a local public high school, his political awareness and eagerness to be a part of wider world were obvious. As we talked about politics and education, Trion and Athens, I realized I had here an opportunity to test my suspicions about just how deep the silence surrounding the strike remains within the community even today.

“Have you ever heard of the general textile strike of 1934?”

“No,” he said. “What’s that?”

Trion, Georgia, 2009

While the nation's manufacturing base has shrunk, Mount Vernon Mills is a rare exception. The tiny town of Trion...has a staggeringly large annual budget for such a small town. Its \$12 million, mostly from taxes the mill pays, provides a state-of-the-art public school, park space and athletic fields. If the mill shuttered, "it would destroy the town," Perry says.

In its heyday, the mill had 5,000 workers in the 1940s and 1950s. The company owned everything in town back then, from the tiny mill houses that surround the plant to the town hospital where Henderson and many of his co-workers were born.

As a result, Trion doesn't have a quaint town square. The mill *is* the centerpiece. (Drash, 2009, CNN.com)

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Appendix A

Books of the Sample

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Appendix B
Novels by Date of Publication

Date	Title/Author	Genre	Occupation	Awards or Reviews/ Series Information
1976	<i>Time to Take Sides</i> (Gold)	Contemporary	Education	
1981	<i>Let the Circle Be Unbroken</i> (Taylor)	Historical	Agriculture	C.S. King Award
1982	<i>Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind</i> (Lord)	Historical	Textile	
1982	<i>Call Me Ruth</i> (Sachs)	Historical	Garment	
1982	<i>The Candle and the Mirror</i> (Mays)	Historical	Mining	
1983	<i>Strike!</i> (Corcoran)	Contemporary	Education	
1985	<i>On Fire</i> (Sebestyen)	Historical	Mining	
1986	<i>Trouble at the Mines</i> (Rappaport)	Historical	Mining	
1988	<i>The Winchesters</i> (Collier)	Contemporary	Manufacturing	
1988	<i>Breaker</i> (Perez)	Historical	Mining	
1989	<i>A Test of Loyalty</i> (Jones)	Historical	Manufacturing	<i>An American Family</i> series
1991	<i>Lyddie</i> (Paterson)	Historical	Textile	<i>Wilson's, SLJ</i> starred
1992	<i>Fire! The Beginnings of the Labor Movement</i> (Goldin)	Historical	Garment	<i>Once upon America</i> series

Date	Title/Author	Genre	Occupation	Awards or Reviews/ Series Information
1993	<i>East Side Story</i> (Bader)	Historical	Garment	<i>Stories of the States</i> series
1994	<i>The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps</i> (Krensky)	Historical	Railroad construction	
1994	<i>Jesse</i> (Soto)	Historical	Agriculture	<i>SLJ</i> , <i>Booklist</i> starred
1996	<i>Riot</i> (Casanova)	Contemporary	Construction	
1996	<i>The Ornament Tree</i> (Thesman)	Historical	General strike	
1997	<i>Frankie</i> (Jones)	Historical	Mining	
1997	<i>So Far from Home: The Diary of Mary Driscoll, an Irish Mill Girl</i> (Denenberg)	Historical	Textile	<i>Dear America</i> series
1998	<i>The Streetcar Riots</i> (Miller)	Historical	Transportation	<i>American Adventure</i> series
1998	<i>Fight in the Fields: César Chávez</i> (Sorenson)	Historical	Agriculture	<i>Time Travel Adventures</i> series
1999	<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i> (Curtis)	Historical	Transportation	C.S. King Award, Newbery Medal
1999	<i>The Stunt</i> (Rue)	Historical	Manufacturing, laundry	Focus on the Family <i>Christian Heritage</i> series
2000	<i>Esperanza Rising</i> (Ryan)	Historical	Agriculture	<i>Wilson's</i> , <i>SLJ</i> , <i>Publisher's Weekly</i> starred, <i>Horn Book</i>
2000	<i>The Worst of Times</i> (Collier)	Historical	Manufacturing and others	<i>Jamestown's American Portraits</i> series
2000	<i>Making Waves</i>	Historical	Garment	

Date	Title/Author	Genre	Occupation	Awards or Reviews/ Series Information
2000	<i>Theodore Roosevelt: Letters from a Young Coal Miner</i>	Historical	Mining	<i>Dear Mr. President</i> series
2000	<i>A Coal Miner's Bride: The Diary of Anetka Kaminska</i>	Historical	Mining	<i>Dear America</i> series
2001	<i>The Journal of Otto Peltonen: A Finnish Immigrant</i> (Durbin)	Historical	Mining	<i>My Name Is America</i> series
2001	<i>Strike Two</i> (Koss)	Contemporary	Newspaper	
2001	<i>Missing from Haymarket Square</i> (Robinet)	Historical	Garment, manufacturing	
2001	<i>Rockbuster</i> (Skurzynski)	Historical	Mining	
2001	<i>Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Letters from a Mill Town Girl</i> (Winthrop)	Historical	Textile	<i>Dear Mr. President</i> series
2002	<i>Ashes of Roses</i> (Auch)	Historical	Garment	<i>Wilson's</i>
2002	<i>Up Molasses Mountain</i> (Baker)	Historical	Mining	<i>Wilson's, Booklist</i> starred
2002	<i>A Real American</i> (Easton)	Historical	Mining	
2003	<i>Rosie in New York: Gotcha!</i> (Matas)	Historical		
2004	<i>Fire in the Hole</i> (Farrell)	Historical	Mining	
2004	<i>Hear My Sorrow: The Diary of Angela Denoto, a Shirtwaist Worker</i> (Hopkinson)	Historical	Garment	<i>Dear America</i> series
2004	<i>The Breaker Boys</i> (Hughes)	Historical	Mining	<i>Wilson's, Horn Book</i>
2004	<i>Forbidden Friendship</i> (Weber)	Historical	Shoe manufacturing	<i>Stories of the States</i> series

Date	Title/Author	Genre	Occupation	Awards or Reviews/ Series Information
2004	<i>Kira-kira</i> (Kadohata)	Historical	Poultry processing	Newbery Medal
2006	<i>Bread and Roses, Too</i> (Paterson)	Historical	Textile	<i>Horn Book</i> , <i>Wilson's</i> , <i>SLJ</i> starred,
2007	<i>El Lector</i> (Durbin)	Historical	Cigar manufacturing	
2007	<i>Factory Girl</i> (Greenwood)	Historical	Garment	
2007	<i>Chase</i> (Haas)	Historical	Mining	
2007	<i>Billy Creekmore</i> (Porter)	Historical	Mining	<i>Wilson's</i> , <i>Booklist</i> , <i>Horn Book</i> starred
2007	<i>Dream Factory</i> (Barkley & Hepler)	Contemporary	Entertainment	
2007	<i>Uprising</i> (Haddix)	Historical	Garment	<i>Wilson's</i> , <i>Horn Book</i>
2007	<i>Gilded Delirium</i> (Stokes & Belinkie)	Historical fantasy	Transportation	<i>Smart Novels</i> American history study guide series
2008	<i>The Locket: Surviving the Triangle Fire</i> (Lieurance)	Historical	Garment	<i>Historical Fiction Adventure</i> series
2009	<i>Changes for Rebecca</i> (Greene)	Historical	Garment	<i>American Girl</i> series