

US History

Muckraker Assignment

Background

During the Progressive Era, a new kind of investigative reporting developed, that is pejoratively called "muckraking." Today, we would call this "investigative journalism." Writers began to go undercover or find inside sources to investigate a social problem and bring it to the attention of their audiences. Often, powerful and influential people read the writings of these journalists and social change would be brought about.

Here are a few famous "muckrakers" and their subjects:

Ida Tarbell: wrote about Standard Oil and the greed and corruption of the Rockefellers and industries controlled by them.

Lincoln Steffens: wrote about the oppressive poverty of American slums in *The Shame of the Cities*.

Jacob Riis: One of the first photojournalists, he wrote about slum conditions in *The Shame of the Cities*.

Upton Sinclair: Wrote about the unsanitary practices of the meat packing industry in *The Jungle*.

Ray Stannard Baker: unsafe practices of the mining industry.

Nellie Bly: Wrote *Ten Days In a Madhouse*, in which she went undercover at a mental hospital by being admitted as a patient.

Your Assignment

You may do one of three things:

1. Research and present a summary of the work of one of the above muckrakers or another one of your choosing from the Progressive Era.
2. Write your own "muckraking" piece, drawing attention to a problem in our world, or in the life of teens, or . . . (no exposés that contain personal attacks on PEP tutors or students . . .)
3. Produce a muckraking video of the same nature as the assignment in No. 2 above.

Due: Monday March 19/Tuesday March 20. You will have the opportunity then to present it to the class