Name_____
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Derivation of *Muckraker*

Read the excerpts and answer the questions which follow.

Part A.

President Theodore Roosevelt coined the word *muckraker* in a speech given on April 14, 1906, at the laying of the cornerstone of the United States House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

> In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, you may recall the description of the Man with the Muckrake, the man who could look no way but downward, with a muckrake in his hands; who was offered a celestial crown for his muckrake, but who would neither look up nor regard the crown he was offered, but continued to rake to himself the filth of the floor. . . .
>
> . . . . it is very necessary that we should not flinch from seeing what is vile and debasing. There is filth on the floor, and it must be scraped up with the muckrake; and there are times and places where this service is the most needed of all the services that can be performed. But the man who never does anything else, who never thinks or speaks or writes save of his feats with the muckrake, speedily becomes, not a help to society, not an incitement to good, but one of the most potent forces of evil.
>
> There are . . . many and grave evils, and there is urgent necessity for the sternest war upon them. There should be relentless exposure of and attack upon every evil man, whether politician or businessman, every evil practice, whether in politics, in business or in social life. I hail as a benefactor every writer or speaker, . . . who . . . with merciless severity makes such an attack, provided always that he in his turn remembers that the attack is of use only if it is absolutely truthful. . . .
>
> An epidemic of indiscriminate assault upon character does not good but very great harm. The soul of every scoundrel is gladdened whenever an honest man is assailed, or even when a scoundrel is untruthfully assailed.[1]

1. What was Roosevelt's criticism of the muckraker?

2. Why did the muckraker have the potential to be a potent force of evil?

3. What did Roosevelt say should be done to evil men and evil practices?

4. What does Roosevelt say it was most important for muckrakers to be?

[1]Theodore Roosevelt, "The Man with the Muckrake," *New York Times* (April 15, 1906).

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Date_____

Part B.

Roosevelt sent a letter to Ray Stannard Baker, a Muckraker, in which he explains his position about muckraking.

> One reason I want to make that address is because people so persistently misunderstand what I said, that I want to have it reported in full. For instance, you misunderstand it. I want to "let in light and air," but I do not want to let in sewer gas. If a room is fetid and the windows are bolted I am perfectly contented to knock out the windows; but I would not knock a hole into the drain pipe. In other words, I feel that the man who in a yellow newspaper or in a yellow magazine . . . makes a ferocious attack on good men or even attacks bad men with exaggeration or for things they have not done, is a potent enemy of those of us who are really striving in good faith to expose bad men and drive them from power. I disapprove of the whitewash brush quite as much as of mud slinging, and it seems to me that the disapproval of one in no shape or way implies approval of the other. This I shall try to make clear.[2]

1. How did Roosevelt feel about journalists who attacked good men or lied about someone?

[2]Arthur Weinberg and Lila Weinberg, *The Muckrakers* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1964), 57.

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Name_____
Date_____

Muckrakers in Action

Part A.

The American Newspaper

Read the excerpt and answer the questions. Be prepared to contribute to your group's discussion.

> . . . It would seem on the surface that the ordinary suppression of news, as when a department store keeps its own accidents and scandals from the public, matters very little in the aggregate. That is not true, as every honest newspaper man knows; such things work with marvelous certitude to take the spirit and independence out of a newspaper staff—but let that pass. When, however, the advertiser presumes to dabble in editorial policies, the harm is patent and beyond argument. Still less is there room for argument when he slants or silences newspaper policies on behalf of what we call "big business."
>
> In 1909, after the investigation of the "White-Slave Traffic" in New York, the Chicago newspapers got up some excitement by exposing a like condition in their slum district. One-half of the story they never told. A feeder of the dive and brothel is the cheap department store, which pays wages at a scale below the lowest cost of living, and all but forces its girl employees to supplement their wages by other means. In this respect, Chicago is perhaps a little worse than the average. And, although the reporters who investigated the white-slave traffic itched to shout it out to the public, no Chicago newspaper whispered the fact that this business policy makes "white slaves. . . ."
>
> Now let us carry the matter one stage further back. If "big business" be well enough organized, the advertiser may ask extension of the favor, claim the privilege for other companies and corporations in which he holds shares, or with which he is allied by interest and sympathy. Philadelphia has poor transportation facilities. Not only do the Philadelphia department stores press hard on newspaper policies which touch their immediate interests—as when they tried to suppress news of the late general strike—but they stand guard between the newspaper and the transportation companies. Though better transit would halve the time between suburb and shopping district, thereby bringing more customers to the stores, the alliance between street railways and banks, banks and department stores, holds advertisers to a policy against their own ultimate interests.[3]

1. How does the author feel about advertising interfering with newspaper editorial policy?

2. What connection did Philadelphia's department stores, street railways, and banks have?

3. How would improved transportation improve business in Philadelphia?

[3]Will Irwin, "The American Newspaper," *Colliers* (June 1911).

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Part B.

The Condemned-Meat Industry

Read the excerpt and answer the questions. Be prepared to contribute to your group's discussion.

> I now propose to state here exactly what I myself have witnessed in Philip D. Armour's packing house with cattle that have been condemned by the government inspectors.
>
> A workman, one Nicholas Newson during my time, informs the inspector that the tanks are prepared for the reception of the condemned cattle and that his presence is required to see the beef cast into the steam-tank. Mr. Inspector proceeds at once to the place indicated, and the condemned cattle, having been brought up to the tank-room on trucks, are forthwith cast into the hissing steam boilers and disappear. That is to say, they disappear so far as the inspector is concerned. He cranes his neck slightly, nods his head approvingly, and walks away.
>
> But the condemned steer does not stay in the tank any longer than the time required for his remains to drop through the boiler down to the floor below, where he is caught on a truck and hauled back again to the cutting room. The bottom of the tank was open, and the steer passed through the aperture.
>
> I have witnessed the farce many times. I have seen the beef dropped into the vat in which a steampipe was exhausting with a great noise so that the thud of the beef striking the truck below could not be heard, and in a short time I have witnessed Nicholas bringing it back to be prepared for the market.
>
> I have even marked beef with my knife so as to distinguish it, and watched it return to the point where it started. . . .
>
> Of all the evils of the stock yards, the canning department is perhaps the worst. It is there that the cattle from all parts of the United States are prepared for canning. No matter how scrawny or debilitated canners are, they must go the route of their brothers and arrive ultimately at the great boiling vats, where they are steamed until they are reasonably tender. Bundles of gristle and bone melt into pulpy masses and are stirred up for the canning department.
>
> I have seen cattle come into Armour's stock yard so weak and exhausted that they expired in the corrals, where they lay for an hour or two, dead, until they were afterward hauled in, skinned, and put on the market for beef or into the canning department for cans.
>
> It was the custom to make a pretense of killing in such cases. The coagulated blood in their veins was too sluggish to flow, and instead of getting five gallons of blood, which is the amount commonly taken from a healthy steer, a mere dark-red clot would form at the wound.
>
> In other words, the Armour establishment was selling carrion.[4]

1. How was the company able to market condemned beef?

2. Why was the canning department regarded as the worst evil in the stockyards?

[4]Thomas F. Dolan in Upton Sinclair, "The Condemned-Meat Industry," *Colliers* (November 1910).

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Part C.

Alice Anderson, a Check Girl

Read the excerpt and answer the questions. Be prepared to contribute to your group's discussion.

. . . This helplessness of a semi-dependent and uneducated girl may be further illustrated by the chronicle of Alice Anderson, a girl of seventeen, who had been working in the department stores for three years and a half.

She was at first employed as a check girl in a Fourteenth Street store, at a wage of $2.62 1/2 a week; that is to say, she was paid $5.25 twice a month. Her working day was nine and a half hours long through most of the year. But during two weeks before Christmas it was lengthened to from twelve to thirteen and a half hours, without any extra payment in any form.

She was promoted to the position of saleswoman, but her wages still remained $2.62 1/2 a week. She lived with her grandmother of eighty, working occasionally as a seamstress, and to her Alice gave all her earnings for three years.

It was then considered better that she should go to live with an aunt, to whom she paid the nominal board of $1.15 a week. As her home was in West Hoboken, she spent two and a half hours every day on the journey in the cars and on the ferry. During the weeks of overtime, Alice could not reach home until nearly half past eleven o'clock, and she would be obliged to rise while it was still dark, at six o'clock, after five hours and a half of sleep, in order to be at her counter punctually at eight. By walking from the store to the ferry she saved thirty cents a week. Still, fares cost her $1.26 a week. This $1.26 a week carfare (which was still not enough to convey her the whole distance from her aunt's to the store) and the $1.15 a week for board (which still did not really pay the aunt for her niece's food and lodging) consumed all her earnings except 20 cents a week.

Alice was eager to become more genuinely self-dependent. She left the establishment of her first employment and entered another store on Fourteenth Street, as cash girl, at $4 a week. The hours in the second store were very long, from eight to twelve in the morning and from a quarter to one till a quarter past six in the afternoon all days except Saturday, when the closing hour was half past nine.

After she had $4 a week instead of $2.62 1/2, Alice abandoned her daily trip to West Hoboken and came to live in New York.

Here she paid six cents a night in a dormitory of a charitably-supported home for girls. She ate no breakfast. Her luncheon consisted of coffee and rolls for 10 cents. Her dinner at night was a repetition of coffee and rolls for 10 cents. As she had no convenient place for doing her own laundry, she paid 21 cents a week to have it done. Her regular weekly expenditure was as follows: lodging, 42 cents; board, $1.40; washing, 21 cents; clothing and all other expenses, $1.97; total, $4.

Of course, living in this manner was quite beyond her strength. She was pale, ill, and making the severest inroads upon her present and future health. Her experience illustrates the narrow prospect of promotion in some of the department stores. . . .[5]

[5]Sue Ainsle Clark and Edith Wyatt, "Working-Girls' Budgets," *McClure's* (October 1910).

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Date_____

1. How much did Alice earn per month as a check girl? How much did she make as a check girl per hour if she worked a nine and one-half hour day, five days per week?

2. When she was a check girl, what portion of her savings did Alice have left after she paid her expenses?

3. How did the type of life Alice led affect her health?

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Muckraking Cartoons

Study the cartoons which follow and be prepared to discuss them in class.

IN FOR IT.
U. S. "I hope I shall get to the bottom soon."

Fig. 8.1. American Heritage, April 1957.

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Name_____
Date_____

BALTIMORE NEWS, SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1906.

That Standard Oil Report

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