Workers Seek Change

Trace how two labor movements grew and why their appeal remained limited.

TOT.C.2.3 "Trace the rise and limited appeal of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party in the United States of America."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline conditions that helped these movements rise, circle evidence of their growing reach, and number the limits on their appeal in the order they appear.

Two Paths to Workers' Power

1 At the turn of the twentieth century, factory wages could be low, hours long, and injuries common. Large corporations held enormous power, while many workers had little say on the job. Some Americans sought change beyond the major political parties. Founded in 1901, the Socialist Party argued that the public should own major industries and that workers should gain political power through elections. Eugene V. Debs became its best-known speaker. His campaigns drew people frustrated with inequality. In 1912, he won about 6 percent of the presidential vote, a striking showing for a party outside the two major parties.

2 Another response took shape in Chicago in 1905, when labor activists founded the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW. Unlike unions that organized mainly skilled workers by craft, the IWW tried to unite workers across trades, nationalities, and skill levels. Its members, often called Wobblies, favored workplace action, including strikes, over winning elections. In the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike, IWW organizers helped immigrant workers from many language groups demand better pay. Their efforts made the union visible, but victories in particular strikes did not mean that most American workers had joined it.

3 Both movements faced limits as the decade continued. Many workers stayed with established unions, and most voters backed the two major parties rather than the Socialists. Employers fought IWW organizing, and authorities sometimes arrested its speakers and strikers. After the United States entered World War I in 1917, opposition to the war brought intense government pressure on both groups. Federal officials prosecuted IWW leaders, and Debs was imprisoned for an antiwar speech. Wartime disputes also divided Socialists. By the early 1920s, neither organization had become a dominant national force, though both had brought demands for workers' rights into public debate.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What conditions helped both movements rise, and how did their approaches to change differ?

2. How did the 1912 Lawrence strike show both the IWW's growing reach and a limit to its appeal?

3. How did Debs's 1912 presidential vote show both the Socialist Party's rise and its limited appeal?

4. Trace how events after the United States entered World War I weakened each movement.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 105 word newspaper editor's brief dated 1920 explaining why neither movement became dominant despite its earlier momentum. Include at least three dated turning points, contrast the movements' methods, and end with your judgment about what their histories show.

ANSWER KEY

Workers Seek Change

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.2.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline conditions that helped these movements rise, circle evidence of their growing reach, and number the limits on their appeal in the order they appear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What conditions helped both movements rise, and how did their approaches to change differ?	**Low wages, long hours, injuries, and corporate power encouraged workers to seek change. The Socialist Party pursued elections and public ownership of major industries; the IWW organized workers across trades and favored workplace action such as strikes.**
2	How did the 1912 Lawrence strike show both the IWW's growing reach and a limit to its appeal?	**IWW organizers helped immigrant workers from many language groups demand better pay, making the union visible. Success in a strike did not mean most American workers had joined the IWW.**
3	How did Debs's 1912 presidential vote show both the Socialist Party's rise and its limited appeal?	**Winning about 6 percent was a striking result outside the two major parties, but it also showed that most voters supported other parties.**
4	Trace how events after the United States entered World War I weakened each movement.	**After 1917, government pressure increased: federal officials prosecuted IWW leaders, and Debs was imprisoned for an antiwar speech. Wartime disputes also divided Socialists.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

From the editor's desk, 1920: The Socialist Party, founded in 1901, tried to change industry through elections. The IWW, founded in 1905, united workers across trades and favored strikes. Their rise reflected anger over dangerous jobs and unequal power. In 1912, Debs drew about 6 percent of presidential voters, while IWW organizers helped Lawrence textile workers fight for higher pay. Yet most voters chose major parties, and many workers preferred established unions. After 1917, wartime pressure brought prosecutions of IWW leaders and imprisonment for Debs. Their story suggests that public attention and local victories do not guarantee national power.

Accept other passage-supported limits, including employer opposition, arrests of IWW organizers, and wartime divisions among Socialists. For Part 3, look for an accurate sequence, a contrast between elections and workplace action, and a judgment supported by that sequence.