

What Does It Take to Be Successful-
the Knights of Labor Versus the American Federation of Labor

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3.1.2015
American History
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Junior Thesis

Industrialization has made the United States of America the strongest nation on this planet. Armed with its prominent industrial power, America has rapidly advanced. America industrialized during the Industrial Revolution starting from 1760, and the labor union has been a big part of history ever since then. In the mid-1880's, the future of American labor seemed to lie with the Knights of Labor. However, gradually it became overshadowed by the American Federation of Labor. Success for a labor union can be defined by its influence and power over the society and its ability to survive economic depressions and political upheavals. The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor's membership peaked in the mid-1880s, and gradually declined afterwards while the American Federation of Labor survived the Gilded Age and remained in power through the early twentieth century. The Knights of Labor's policy of embracing all workers, the failure of many strikes, the after-effects of the Haymarket Square Riot and the growing breach between Terence Vincent Powderly and its members were four major factors that contributed to its failure while the American Federation of Labor's success in numerous well-planned strikes, Samuel Gompers' strong leadership and its policy of "unions autonomy" helped it grow stronger and recruit more members under its flag.

The Knights of Labor was the largest and the most important labor organization in the 1880s; however, it dissolved as fast as it rose to power and completely faded out of national scene in the twentieth century. The Knights of Labor, officially known as the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, was founded in 1869 as a secretive fraternal society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At first, it embraced the mystical appeal of ritual and ceremony in order to protect its members from possible employer retaliation. Uriah S. Stephens was the first Master Workman, the highest office in the Order. He strongly believed in the necessity of secrecy. But

as the organization expanded, it abandoned secrecy, and Stephens left office due to his disagreement with it. Gradually, the Order became a more open organization, and its membership grew dramatically from fewer than 10,000 members in 1879 to 730,000 members in 1886 (“Knights of Labor”). In 1883, the Order elected American machinist Terence Powderly as the president, who later became the defining figure of the organization. The Knights of Labor reached its peak in the mid-1880s. At the peak of its power, one contemporary writer said, “It is an organization, in whose hands now rests the destinies of the Republic... It has demonstrated the overmastering power of a national combination among workingmen” (Dulles 126). Even though the Knights of Labor disintegrated before entering the twentieth century, what it left behind was indelible.

The Knights of Labor was a national organization, and it had a structure that put space between its leaders and members. It was made of local assemblies, which united workers in single crafts. Five local assemblies could form a district assembly, and then the district assemblies could join together to form a national organization. It adopted a constitution in 1878, which set up a General Assembly.

Terence Vincent Powderly was a crucial figure in labor history who presided over the Knights of Labor through its glory and greatly contributed to its decline. Powderly was born on January 22, 1849 in Pennsylvania. Before serving as the Master Workman, he was elected as the mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania for six years. Powderly was a Roman Catholic and a Mason (“Terence Powderly”). He possessed a humanitarian vision, which made him become interested in the long-term goals of abolishing the wage system and instituting a cooperative society. Powderly believed that the Order was established to save the future of American Labor. He once

said, “The aim of the Knight of Labor-properly understood-is to make each man his own employer” (Livesay 76).

Unlike the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor was a federation of labor unions, and it survived through the Gilded Age, which crushed the Knights of Labor. The American Federation of Labor, often abbreviated as AFL, was founded in 1881 as the Federation of Organized Trade and Labor Unions. It got reorganized in 1886 and elected Samuel Gompers as its president at the same year. Its membership grew to 2.5 million by 1917. At its peak, AFL included 111 national unions and 27,000 local unions (“American Federation of Labor”). The AFL had strict policies regarding every aspect of its organization. It avoided all party politics, which gained the mass support of labor advocates regardless of political affiliation. It imposed a per capita tax on all member unions in order to build up the financial reserves for striking workers. The AFL was a perfect example of “pure and simple unionists.” It focused its efforts on specific, short-term goals such as higher wages, shorter hours within capitalism. Unlike most of the previous labor organizations, the first principle of the AFL was “strict recognition of the autonomy of each trade,” which laid down the foundation for its later glory (Dulles 161).

Samuel Gompers was the founder of the American Federation of Labor, and he served as the president from 1886 to 1894 and from 1896 till his death. Samuel Gompers was born on January 27, 1850 in London, England. For nearly forty years, he shaped the AFL by fostering a policy that allowed member unions autonomy. Gompers was a gifted organizer and speaker. He was able to make an appeal that went straight to the hearts of his listeners. As the president, he steered the organization toward practical goals. During World War I, Gompers chaired an advisory committee of the Council of National Defense in 1917. He also attended the Paris

Peace Conference in 1919 and was consequential in the creation of International Labor Organization (“Samuel Gompers”). Gompers died on December 13, 1924 at the age of 75 in Texas.

In contrast to the AFL, the Knights of Labor didn’t survive the Gilded Age because it embraced an unrealistic policy of unionism, which caused internal conflicts among different groups of workers. Compared to other labor organizations, the Knights of Labor was friendlier to the unskilled workers, women, and racial minorities. This nondiscriminatory attitude toward the mass was shown in its unionism policy, which embraced all workers, the skilled and the unskilled, in a single labor organization. The Order believed that “an injury to one is an injury to all” (Dulles 127). However, unionism came with a consequence. Workers, especially unskilled workers, were largely drawn from newly arrived immigrants. They all came from different countries and spoke different languages. As a result, they were separated by insuperable barriers of race, language, and religion. Friction and animosities between different groups of workers blocked all possible cooperation and produced race riots. In 1885, Rock Springs Massacre in Wyoming caused the deaths of about 28 Chinese workers. This tragedy occurred due to the tension between white workers and Chinese workers, and most rioters were members of the Order (“The Knights of Labor and the ‘Conditions Essential to Liberty’”). The Order’s unionism originated from a good intention, which was to help all the workers in America. However, it resulted in too much diversity within the Order itself, and diversity caused disunity. Secondly, during the Gilded Age, the mechanics and artisans became more and more unwilling to link with the weak unskilled workers. Skilled workers believed that they would lose their bargaining power with the employers by uniting with unskilled workers since the unskilled workers could

easily be replaced by the waves of newly arrived immigrants. The line between artisans and the unskilled workers gradually divided up the Order. After the founding of the AFL, many artisans abandoned the Knights and went over in pursuit of higher wages and more privileges over the unskilled workers. Also, not every official in the Knights of Labor wanted to welcome unskilled workers. Some important officials sought above all to protect the privileges of the craft elite such as Charles Litchman of Marblehead, who was an important leader in Massachusetts (Fones-Wolf 98). The Order's unionism therefore also caused conflicts between the leaders, which weakened the Order's leadership and divided it up from inside. The Order's unionism policy was extremely unrealistic during the Gilded Age, and it led to animosities between workers from different countries, conflicts between artisans and unskilled workers and disputes between important officers.

Furthermore, due to its rapid expansion and a flawed policy, the Knights of Labor associated itself with numerous abortive strikes in the late 1880s, which marred its reputation and reduced its membership dramatically. The Order experienced rapid expansion during the 1880s. As the membership kept increasing, the organizers lost control of the situation, and the General Assembly was compelled to suspend the formation of new assemblies for a time. Between July 1, 1885 and June 30, 1886, the number of local assemblies rose from 1,610 to 5,896 and the total membership shot up from 100,000 to over 700,000 (Dulles 140). At the peak of its growth, Powderly once stated: "At least four hundred thousand came in from curiosity and caused more damage than good" (Dulles 141). Many workers joined the Order to achieve immediate gains, and they regarded strikes as a way to do so. These workers didn't care about the future of the Order, and they started reckless strikes without considering the possibility of

success. As a result, too many strikes took place at the same time between late 1870s to the mid 1880s, and the Order's early successes eventually became seeds of dissolution ("Knights of Labor"). On top of rapid expansion, the Knights of Labor also had a flawed policy regarding strikes. Under its constitution, the trade assemblies could declare and end strikes without the approval of the general offices of the Order, which happened frequently. The workers counted upon the Order in supporting them while it did not have the ability to do so. The numerous strikes taking place at the same time prevented the Order from focusing on one single strike, and its resources were not nearly enough to support several strikes simultaneously. The dissipation of money and energy caused the failures of many strikes. The Railway Strike of 1886 was one of such abortive strikes. The employees of the Missouri Pacific Railroad were discontented. A local leader named Martin Irons, the Master Workman of District Assembly No.1, called a strike without waiting for any official authorization from the Order. He also made such extravagant demands that convinced the officials of the railways that the Order had to be crushed. The public opinion went against the strikers for disturbing the railway service (Dulles 143). As a result, the strike was crushed by a strikebreakers and Pinkerton guards hired by the railways. The failure of this strike led to the collapse of the Order's organization among the workers on the southwest railroads. Another major defeat was the Anthracite Strike. Near the end of 1887, members of the Knights of Labor refused to load coal for the Lehigh Company because the Lehigh operators supported the coal owners in the striking district by sending coal there (Taft 105). The strikers demanded for a wage increase; however, all pleas for arbitration were rejected. The striking workers were dismissed, and unions on the railroads and the mines were destroyed. Strikes were supposed to be labor unions' last weapon when all other measures failed; however, they were

used on a daily basis. The Railway Strike and the Anthracite Strike both failed because there were too many strikes taking place at the same time, and the Order couldn't supply enough support. Also, they were carried out hastily by workers who wanted immediate gains. Therefore, they were not well planned out. Gradually, many workers lost faith in the Order because the strikes were not giving them what they wanted. Public opinion was turning against the Order along the way because strikes disturbed the lives of regular citizens. People believed that the Knights did more harm than good to the society, and they expressed a feeling of mistrust. The failures of numerous strikes caused by rapid expansion and a flawed policy directly led to the Knights of Labor's decline because it turned public opinion against it and lowered the confidence of its members.

As the most radical labor organization of its time, the Knights of Labor took the main blame for the Haymarket Square Riot, which turned the public sentiment against labor movements. The Haymarket Square Riot originated from a huge eight-hour demonstration arranged by the Central Labor Union in May, 1886. This demonstration was supposed to be peaceful because the workers were willing to take lower wages in exchange of 8-hour workdays. However, on May 3, the peaceful facade shattered with a bomb exploding near the first rank of the police. The police responded by firing into the crowd. Eight policemen were killed on May 3, which set off widespread panic. Chicago's police force arrested over 200 anarchist leaders and suspects, and suppressed all existing strike activities shortly after the bomb ("Haymarket Square Riot"). The public opinion decided that the bomb was the work of socialists and anarchists, and there arose a cry for vengeance. A Chicagoan wrote:

Everybody assumed that the speakers at the meeting and other labor agitators were the perpetrators of the horrible crime. 'Hang them first and try them afterwards' was an expression which I heard

repeatedly... The air was charged with anger, fear and hatred (Russell 207).

The Knights of Labor was the most radical large labor union during the Gilded Age. It sought above all to overthrow capitalism. As the public associated the bombing with radicalism, individuals started to view the Order as a dangerous organization. Due to public sentiment, membership of the Order dramatically decreased. Also, the Order's attempt to defend anarchists convinced many people that this organization had to be crushed. At the general assembly of the Knights of Labor held in Richmond in October, 1886, some members pleaded for mercy in behalf of the condemned since they were all workers. They especially pleaded against the death sentence of Parsons, a member of the Order (Russell 325). This action further identified the Knights with anarchists. After the Haymarket Affair, joining the Knights became an action of anarchism. Many members quit to protect themselves from accusations of being anarchists. The Haymarket Square Riot was the key event that led to the Order's dissolution because it identified the Knights with anarchism and turned the public sentiment against it.

The Knights of Labor's rapid regression in the late 1880s was also caused by Terence Vincent Powderly's idealistic vision of peace, and his incompetence as a leader. Powderly presided over the Order during its expansion and regression. He was the one key figure who steered the organization forward and then shattered it. Instead of devoting himself to the course of labor movement, Powderly paid attention to other reform movements and other union affairs as well. He threw most of his energies into reform movements such as the Women's Christian Temperance Association and the farmers' alliances (Nicholson 118). When the Order was in decline, Powderly turned his attention to ridding himself of troublesome officers, searching boardinghouse cartons, and intercepting personal mails, rather than addressing the corruption

that threatened the existence of the Order in 1887 and 1888 (Fones-Wolf 123). Powderly's dissipation of energy prevented him from focusing on the Knights of Labor only, and therefore weakened his leadership. Another feature of Powderly also greatly weakened the Order. He strongly disapproved of strikes, considering them too costly for small gains. He wrote in 1883, "The tendency of the time is to do away from strikes" (Dulles 137). Powderly's grand vision of the future was a society made up of small independent producers and an elimination of wage system. This overly utopian vision created a breach between him and his fellow workers. When Powderly was the Grand Master Workman, most of the workers in the Order were advocates of strikes. The disagreement between leadership and members led to many defeats such as the eight-hour campaign and the Stockyards Strike. In 1886, the national unions sought to promote the general strike for an eight-hour day. Even the *Boston Daily Globe* published an article, saying that an eight-hour day would "lighten the burden on society by obtaining employment for the unemployed" ("Trades-Unions" *Boston Daily Globe*). However, Powderly would not associate the Order with the strike call. Many Knights still participated and the lack of support from the General Assembly made the eight-hour campaign collapse. The Stockyards Strike occurred on May 1, 1886. The employees of the Chicago Stockyards struck for the eight-hour workday, and 12,000 workers in total were involved. When the strike was taking place, Powderly announced against the striking workers on November 10. This strike ended up failing because the general executive board of the Knights of Labor refused to send in supplies and support the striking workers. After the strike, a resolution by representatives from the assemblies to which the strikers belonged denounced the general executive board as "guilty of an act of heartless cruelty, as well as incompetency" (Taft 104). Instead of being realistic, Powderly's

humanitarian and utopian vision made communication between him and the workers impossible. Workers resented him and the Knights for not supporting the strikes. Powderly's incompetence was exposed when he refused to modify his view according to the actual situation. Terence Vincent Powderly was an incompetent leader; he lacked the determination and dedication needed to be a leader, and his own unrealistic vision against strikes ruined many strikes.

Unlike the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor had a better structure and a more moderate expansion. Therefore, it was involved in much fewer strikes and the percentage of success was higher. The AFL had better policies regarding the issue of strikes. It ruled that Unions must rely on their own efforts and their own funds, and should refrain from striking if they could not carry it through without assistance from the Federation or its affiliates (Mendel 94). Because of this policy, workers didn't blindly count on the Federation for support. Many affiliates didn't dare to strike unless it was well planned. This consideration and cautiousness made the strikes more likely to succeed. Also, in contrast to the Knights of Labor, membership in the federation grew slowly. Many national unions and tradesmen didn't join because they were afraid of being controlled by a superior body, the executive board of the AFL. The slow expansion gave the AFL a more stable structure. Everything was well under control, and the strikes were planned ahead. AFL's successive successes such as the strikes in the coal mines and the eight-hour struggle gave it greater prestige in the 1900s. Between 1891 and 1897, wages and working standards had dropped in the coal fields resulted from growing competition for markets. In 1897, Michael Blatchford, president of the United Mine Workers, ordered a strike throughout the Central Competitive Field (Rayback 209). Blatchford made sure the number of strikers was large enough in order to paralyze the Central Competitive Field. Under his leadership, almost

100,000 miners walked off their jobs in the first four days. The operators had to surrender. In the following year, an eight-hour day and an uniform wage scale were established for all day laborers. This success was the result of a well planned strike, and AFL's membership increased by a sixfold. Compared to the Knights of Labor, AFL's strikes were more restricted and more well planned out. Many strike leaders did not take action until they were sure of the outcome. They made sure the large number of striking workers would overwhelm the employers and force them to compromise. The same cautiousness was used by the leaders of the eight-hour struggle. The 1889 Convention began a new eight-hour drive with the carpenters. Starting the movement with the carpenters was a deliberate choice; they were strong in number and possessed a large strike fund which ensured the success. The AFL secured the eight-hour day in 137 cities (Rayback 195). The success of the eight-hour movement again increased its membership and gave it a strong reputation. This eight-hour campaign proved to workers how powerful the AFL was and what was it capable of. Due to its policy and slow growth, AFL's strikes were well planned out and the number of strikes was limited, which diminished the number of failures and guaranteed the successes of most of its strikes.

Compared to Terence Vincent Powderly, Samuel Gompers was more dedicated, more competent and more pragmatic. Due to these characteristics, the American Federation of Labor under his leadership survived the depression of the 1890s and the Gilded Age. Samuel Gompers was a man of ambition. He had been preparing all his life for the task of being the federation president. He dedicated his whole life to the course of labor movement. One of his colleagues observed that the AFL had become "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" for Gompers

(Livesay 85). Gompers also strongly believed in what he was doing. During a congressional hearing, he said:

I believe that the existence of the trades-union movement, more especially where the unionists are better organized, has evoked a spirit and a demand for reform, but has held in check the more radical elements in society (Garraty 87).

Gompers advocated for the labor movement not only to help the average workers but also to help the society as a whole. He regarded the AFL as a non-radical organization, and this view kept the AFL from accusations of anarchism. When he was serving as the president, Gompers did everything in his power to help and lead the AFL. Upon its founding, he bombarded the officers of existing unions with letters urging the merits of affiliation and of business unionism. He covered twenty thousand to thirty thousand miles a year to bring the gospel of AFL to the rest of the world (Livesay 89). By the mid 1890s, virtually every national union had affiliated with the AFL. Gompers knew the power of labor lied in unionism, and he was willing to work hard to achieve his goal. Compared to Powderly, who spent unnecessary energies on other reform movements, Samuel focused primarily on the expansion of the AFL. Under his persuasion and persistence, most national unions eventually affiliated with the AFL. Gompers was also more farsighted and more competent as an organizer than Powderly. During the 1890s, many people were homeless and jobless because of depression. Jacob Coxey of Ohio proposed a federal program of public work relief. He proposed that government should issue \$500 million in legal tender notes on a road-building program (Mandel 123). Gompers immediately realized the importance of such a work relief, and he talked to many congressmen in person to ensure the endorsement of this proposal. Because of his relentless work, the endorsement was secured by the AFL. This relief program gave jobs to many homeless people, and the depression could

definitely have become worse without it. On top of that, the trade unions under Gompers' leadership prevented a reduction in wage and thus made the panic less acute. Gompers knew maintaining the purchasing power was a key out of depression. Keeping the wages was the best way to keep the purchasing power of the working class. Gompers recommended to the workers that no strikes should take place during industrial stagnation as well. This action impressed many employers, and united the workers and the employers in a way. As a result of his leadership, AFL survived the depression almost unscathed, and maintenance of the unions provided the basis for the growth of the Federation during the years that followed. Gompers had the ability to see what was the best for the AFL, and he had the determination to achieve his goal. Last, Gompers was a pragmatic man. He shifted the primary goals of American unionism away from social issues and toward the "bread and butter" issues of wages, benefits, working conditions, and hours. Many workingmen saw the immediate gains secured by AFL and decided to become members of it. Its membership grew to more than one million by 1901 ("American Federation of Labor"). Also, Gompers did not seek to overthrow capitalism. He spoke moderately in public and insisted the importance of compliance with the law. Therefore, he obtained a reputation as a responsible spokesman that the public gradually accepted. Gompers made the AFL a more moderate organization compared to others. As a result, it was more easily accepted by the mainstream. The Federation succeeded in the Gilded Age largely because of the effective leadership provided by Samuel Gompers. His full dedication, competence, pragmatic plan and moderate view guaranteed its success.

Under the flags of "unions autonomy" and "craft autonomy," the affiliates of the American Federation of Labor remained independent while fighting effectively as a whole.

Unlike other labor organizations of the time, the autonomy of the national and international unions within AFL was secured by giving them representation at the conventions on the basis of their membership. Each body was left to complete management of its own affairs, and the affiliated organizations could secede at any time. The AFL was there only to guide them. Because of this policy, the Federation established a respectable reputation among different labor unions. Most of them were willing to join it because unionism was the strongest weapon of labor movement. Also, “unions autonomy” gave AFL an unexpected advantage. The executive board of the Federation could better focus its energy on planning of labor movements and cooperative ventures compared to the Knights because it didn’t have to deal with individual union affairs. AFL’s “craft autonomy” also laid down the foundation of its success. AFL only embraced skilled workers. In 1901, it issued the “Scranton Declaration,” which made “craft autonomy” the cornerstone of its organization (Rayback 208). Skilled workers organized and united in crafts. Because they all had similar goals and social status, it became much easier for the Federation to unite them. There were less animosities between members, which made the Federation fight more effectively as a whole. The Federation’s policy of “unions autonomy” and “craft autonomy” helped recruit more members under its flag, establish a respectable reputation and promote unionism, which gave it huge advantages over other contemporary labor organizations.

The Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor were two huge labor organizations during the Gilded Age. At first, the future of American labor seemed to lie with the Knights. However, the Federation ended up succeeding. The Knights failed because of its unrealistic policy of unionism, numerous abortive strikes, the Haymarket Square Riot and Powderly’s ineffective leadership. On the other side, the American Federation of Labor was able

to succeed because of many successful strikes, Samuel Gompers' strong leadership, "union autonomy," and "craft autonomy." The success of AFL illustrated the importance of being moderate. No matter what is the time period, radicalism is never something broadly accepted. Being moderate is the key to success for large organizations. A large labor organization like the Federation needs the approval of the public in order to succeed. Radicalism causes social instability and during the Gilded Age, radicalism equalled anarchism. Taking the blame for the Haymarket Square Riot was the one key event that took down the Knights. In order to succeed, being moderate is the key.

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This encyclopedia source provides basic information about the American Federation of Labor. It has details regarding its founding. This source is useful when researching for topic and is used in background paragraphs.

David, Henry. *The History of the Haymarket Affair; a Study in the American Social-revolutionary and Labor Movements*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1958. Print.

This book is specifically focused on the Haymarket Square Riot and provides a lot of details regarding this topic. It is extremely useful when writing one of the body paragraphs. It also provides primary sources regarding the atmosphere immediately after the bombing.

Dulles, Foster Rhea, and Melvyn Dubofsky. *Labor in America: A History*. New York: Crowell, 1966. Print.

Its chapter VIII and IX are extremely helpful. These two chapters provide detailed examinations of the rise and decline of both the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. This source gives me a basic idea of what my arguments are going to be, and the quotes collected in this book are used in the paper.

Fones-Wolf, Ken, Martin Kaufman, and Joseph Carvalho. *Labor in Massachusetts: Selected Essays*. Westfield, MA: Institute for Massachusetts Studies, Westfield State College, 1990. Print.

This book is not that useful for this paper. It specifically focuses on the labor movement within Massachusetts. However, it does provide an example of the conflicts between Powderly and one of the other officials of the Knights, which is incorporated in one body paragraph.

"Gompers, Samuel." Gale Encyclopedia of American Law. Ed. Donna Batten. 3rd Ed. Vol. 5. Detroit: Gale, 2010. 119-120. *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.

This encyclopedia provides a basic examination of Samuel Gompers as the leader of the Federation. Its information is used in the background paragraph regarding Samuel Gompers, but it does not help to come up with an argument.

"Haymarket Square Riot." *Violence in America*. Ed. Ronald Gottesman and Richard Maxwell Brown. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1999. U.S. History in Context. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.

This source gives some facts and basic information about the Haymarket Square Riot. It is used during research, but is not included in the actual paper because the information inside is not in depth enough.

"Knights of Labor." *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*. Ed. Thomas Carson and Mary Bonk. Detroit: Gale, 1999. U.S. History in Context. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.

This encyclopedia provides some basic information and an overview of the Knights of Labor. Its content is used in one background paragraph regarding the Knights of Labor.

Livesay, Harold C., and Oscar Handlin. *Samuel Gompers and Organized Labor in America*. Boston: Little and Brown, 1978. Print.

This book gives a lot of details about Samuel Gompers' actions and his opinions. It helps a lot to come up with an argument about Gompers. There are a lot of quotes in this book, which further helps me to get a grasp of his ideals and opinions regarding different labor movements.

Mandel, Bernard. *Samuel Gompers: A Biography*. Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch, 1963. Print.

This source gives a thorough analysis of Samuel Gompers. It is really helpful because it has chapters that are focused on the American Federation of Labor. It provides detailed information on Gompers as the head of the AFL.

Nicholson, Philip Yale. *Labor's Story in the United States*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP, 2004. Print.

This book is not helpful regarding my specific topic. It only gives a basic overview about the development of labor movements.

Rayback, Joseph G. *A History of American Labor*. New York: Macmillan, 1959. Print.

This book has two parts that are dedicated to the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. It includes a lot of details and is really helpful to me to come up with my thesis statement. Its information is repeatedly used in the body paragraphs.

"Samuel Gompers." *Britannica School. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.*, 2014. Web. 27 Dec. 2014.

It gives an overview on Gompers' life. Its information is used in one background paragraph.

"Samuel Gompers Speaks on the Future of the Labor Movement, 1890." Gale U.S. History in Context. Detroit: Gale, 2014. U.S. History in Context. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.

It is the speech given by Samuel Gompers regarding the future of the labor movement. It is a primary source that I found during research, but it is not included in my actual paper.

Taft, Philip. *Organized Labor in American History*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. Print.

It has four chapters dedicated to the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. It has one chapter specifically focuses on the strikes of the Knights of Labor, which is super helpful. It provides the specific evidences I need to support my argument.

"Terence Vincent Powderly." Encyclopedia of World Biography. Detroit: Gale, 1998. U.S. History in Context. Web. 6 Nov. 2014.

This encyclopedia gives an overview of Powderly as the leader of the Knights of Labor. It is used in one background paragraph introducing the basic facts about him. But this source is not in depth enough to be used in body paragraphs.

"The Knights of Labor and the "Conditions Essential to Liberty"" Boundless. Boundless U.S. History, 14 Nov. 2014. Web. 01 Mar. 2015.

This source provides limited information about the race riots caused by the Knights of Labor. It is cited in the paper.

"Trades-Unions." *Boston Daily Globe* 23 Nov. 1882: 2. *Historical Newspapers*. Web. 4 Jan. 2014.

It is an article on Boston Daily Globe regarding the trade unions. It talks about the benefits of a eight-hour workday. It is helpful in making me realize what a huge breach existed between Powderly and the workers.

Voelker, David J. "Terence V. Powderly on the Eight Hour Day." *Eight Hour Day*. Apr. 1890. Terence V. Powderly on the Eight Hour Day. Web. 25 Jan. 2015.

It is a speech given by Terence Vincent Powderly on the eight hour day. It is a primary source I used to support my argument of Powderly being a weak leader.

Bibliographic Essay

When choosing a topic, I made sure to write about something interesting, so I would not get bored of researching. I have always been interested in the Gilded Age, especially in the wealth gap between the poor and the rich. After reading the Brinkley chapter about the Gilded Age, I realized that the labor movement was a big part of that era, and it offered me a way of looking at the Gilded Age from workers' perspective. After consulting with Mr. Bedar and reading the textbook, I decided to focus on the American Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor. They were the two biggest unions of their time.

At first, I had no idea what I wanted to write or argue about. So I searched them both on Gale Encyclopedia and got a broad sense of what they were. I also searched several key terms and key events Mr. Bedar wrote on my proposal. I did my first twenty notecards using Gale Encyclopedia. After reading through some online sources, I noticed that the American Federation of Labor was really different from the Knights of Labor, and the AFL survived the Gilded Age while the Knights of Labor didn't. Then, I decided to write my thesis about why AFL was more successful than the Knights and do a detailed analysis of why. Unlike many other students, finding an argument wasn't too hard to me. I already had a basic understanding of what the Gilded Age was about, and what I tried to argue was relatively straightforward.

The next step was to find specific evidences. So I went to the Newton Free Library, and the librarian there helped me find many good books about these two labor organizations. *Labor in America: A History* by Dulles and *A History of American Labor* by Rayback were two books that were extremely helpful. These two books both had specific chapters on the AFL and the Knights. The labor movement during the Gilded Age was repetitively written, so finding good

books was not hard at all. The hardest part for me during the whole thesis process was narrowing down information and coming up with specific reasons because there were so many books, and each author had different opinion on why the AFL succeeded while the Knights failed. My solution to this problem was read and read. I went through about eight books before actually coming up with a thesis. I found four reasons for the Knights' dissolution: its policy of unionism, the failure of many strikes, Powderly's poor leadership and the Haymarket Square Riot. I narrowed the AFL's success down into three reasons: its success in numerous strikes, Samuel Gompers' strong leadership and its "unions autonomy" policy. After knowing my specific topics, everything went smoothly. I found some good primary sources in the books I had, and I used a lot of them in my actual paper.

As a whole, I found this process interesting and tiring at the same time. Converting my detailed outline into a rough draft was fun. Because I had such a detailed outline, it took me only one day to finish my whole rough draft. I listened to advices from my senior friends, so I largely avoided procrastination, which made my thesis process much more enjoyable. I was able to finish all assignments before deadlines, and there wasn't a single day that I stayed up late to do my thesis! My last obstacle came when I was starting my final draft. My rough draft was around B range, so I was in a pretty good shape. I talked to Mr. Bedar again before starting my final draft, and he told me some parts of my thesis were too general; I needed more concrete information. It was easy to say, but extremely hard to do. It took me hours, but I still couldn't find some specific evidences. Also, my rough draft was undercited. I didn't know which sentence belonged to which source. So I had to go back to my notecards to find citations, which was extremely time-consuming.

Writing junior thesis is stressful. However, I think knowing how to write a research paper is a really important skill to learn. This skill will a huge asset in college. I am also very happy that I am now an expert on Gilded Age labor unions.