

PATIENCE LEARNING • FREE 1-DAY CASE

Four Accounts, One Strike

A free single-session case from the world of **The Account**, the 11-day historical-thinking simulation.

GRADE 8 • SOCIAL STUDIES (PRIMARY SOURCES & SOURCING) • ~45 MIN • 1 CLASS PERIOD

Your students are historians reconstructing a single event — a 1907 mill strike — from four primary sources that flatly contradict each other. None is simply “true.” The skill is weighing each source by who wrote it, why, and how close they stood, then building the most defensible account of what happened.

TEACHER QUICK-START

Objective: Students evaluate conflicting primary sources using sourcing (author, purpose, proximity, corroboration), then construct a defensible account — learning that the most confident or vivid source is not automatically the most reliable.

Standards tie-in: CCSS RH.6-8.1, .2, .6 (cite/summarize primary sources; identify author's point of view) and C3 D2.His.10–13 (sourcing, corroboration, using evidence).

What you need: Just this packet. Print the student pages (works individually or in teams of 3–4). No prep.

- 1. Set the scene (5 min).** “Four people described the same strike. They don't agree. Your job: figure out what most likely happened, and why you trust what you trust.”
- 2. Read the sources (8 min).** Teams read the four accounts and the sourcing questions.
- 3. Weigh & decide (20 min).** Rate each source, then write the most defensible account.
- 4. The reveal (8 min).** Walk the answer key. The point: reliability comes from sourcing, not volume or confidence.
- 5. Reflection (4 min).** Each student answers the reflection question.

The Strike File

On March 4, 1907, workers at the Halden Textile Mill walked off the job. Did the strike turn violent, or stay peaceful? Four primary sources describe that day — and they contradict each other. You are the historian who has to decide what most likely happened.

THE SOURCING QUESTIONS (how historians judge a source)

For each source ask: **(1) Who wrote it, and what did they want?** **(2) How close were they to the event?** **(3) When** was it written — right away, or years later? **(4) Does anything else back it up (corroboration)?**

THE FOUR ACCOUNTS

Source 1 — The mill owner's letter to investors (written that week). “A violent mob destroyed property and threatened lives.” He wants investors to stay calm and blame the workers.

Source 2 — A worker's diary (written that night). “We stood in the road and sang. The police pushed us but we did not fight.” Private, written immediately, no audience to impress.

Source 3 — A city newspaper (next morning). “Strike remained orderly; police reported no injuries and no arrests for violence.” A third party; reported the day after.

Source 4 — A magazine article (written 30 years later). A dramatic, exciting retelling with vivid fights and a heroic leader. Written to entertain readers decades after, by someone who wasn't there.

Your Call (Decision Sheet)

Team name: _____ Period: _____

Step 1 — Weigh each source (Strong / Weak, and one reason).

Source	Close to the event?	A reason to be biased?	Backed up by others?
1 — Owner's letter	_____	_____	_____
2 — Worker's diary	_____	_____	_____
3 — Newspaper	_____	_____	_____
4 — Magazine (30 yrs later)	_____	_____	_____

Step 2 — Corroboration. Two sources agree the strike stayed peaceful. Which two? _____ Why does two independent sources agreeing matter more than one loud source alone?

Step 3 — The vivid trap. Source 4 is the most exciting to read. Give two reasons it's actually the LEAST reliable:

Step 4 — Your account. Write the most defensible one-sentence account of what happened, and name which sources you trusted and why:

ANSWER KEY (for the reveal)

Step 1 — Weighing the sources:

1 (Owner): close, but strong reason to blame workers (wants calm investors) — biased. **2 (Worker's diary):** close, immediate, private with no audience to impress — reliable, though still one side. **3 (Newspaper):** next-day, third party, reports no injuries/arrests — reliable. **4 (Magazine):** written 30 years later by someone not there, to entertain — least reliable.

Step 2 — Corroboration:

Sources 2 and 3 (the worker's diary and the newspaper) independently agree the strike stayed peaceful — a private eyewitness and a neutral third party, written immediately. Two independent sources agreeing is far stronger than one confident source, because they didn't copy each other.

Step 3 — The vivid trap:

Source 4 is least reliable because (1) it was written 30 years later by someone who wasn't there, and (2) its purpose was to entertain, so drama was rewarded over accuracy. Exciting and reliable are not the same.

Step 4 — A defensible account:

Something like: "The 1907 Halden strike most likely stayed peaceful — the worker's same-day diary and the next-day newspaper independently agree there was no violence, while the owner's letter and the later magazine each had a reason to exaggerate." A strong answer trusts the corroborated, close, immediate sources and explains WHY it discounts the biased and the late/vivid ones.

The big idea:

Four accounts, none simply "true." Reliability came from sourcing — who, why, how close, and who else agrees — not from which source was loudest or most exciting. That's how historians turn contradiction into a defensible account.

REFLECTION (graded on thinking, not the "right" answer)

"Four sources disagreed. What made you trust the quiet diary over the confident owner and the exciting magazine?"

SCORING THE THINKING

	3 — Strong	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Sources each account	Weighs all four by sourcing	Partial	Picks by drama
Uses corroboration	Names the 2 agreeing sources	Mentions it	Ignores it
Catches the late/vivid trap	Explains why Source 4 is weakest	Hints at it	Trusts the exciting one
Explains clearly	A reader can follow it	Partly clear	Unclear

READY FOR THE FULL SIMULATION?

This was four sources. The Account is eleven days of contradiction.

In the full 11-day simulation, each student is a historian reconstructing a single contested event from four primary sources that flatly contradict one another — weighing each by how close it stood, what it wanted, who it spoke to, and whether anything backs it up, then testing a hypothesis against the evidence. Graded on reasoning, never on a “right” answer.

THE ACCOUNT · GRADE 8 SOCIAL STUDIES · \$39 · patiencelearning.com/simulations

PATIENCE Learning — They'll forget they're learning, but never stop thinking. · patiencelearning.com

© 2026 The Chalk and Ledger Group LLC · Free to use in your classroom.