WebQuest - Effects of Industrialization, Urbanization, and Immigration - How The Other Half Lives

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, early factories had to be located near rivers which were used as a source of energy and as a means of transporting raw materials and finished goods to and from the factory. With the harnessing of new sources of energy and the construction of the railroads, factories could now be located virtually anywhere. The factories created jobs which in turn attracted large numbers of immigrants to eastern cities and led to the urbanization of America. (The 1920 federal census showed that for the first time more Americans lived in cities than in small towns.) Major problems were created by this rapid growth of the cities including crime, sanitation, shortages of fresh drinking water, the threat of fire, and lack of adequate housing. To accommodate the large numbers of immigrants row houses and dumbbell tenements were built but these were often in poor condition and overcrowded.

In 1890, Jacob Riis documented the squalid conditions of Manhattan’s lower east side in his publication How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the tenements of New York. Riis wrote extensive captions to go with the photographs he had taken and commented on the causes and potential solutions to the problems of the slums.

1. Read the wikipedia entry for How the Other Half Lives to get an overview of the publication. Write an SATBP for this entry.

2. Go to the website Authentic History Center. Under the time period 1898-1913, click on Progressivism and then on How the other Half Lives. Click on one of the chapters (other than chapter 16) and summarize it.
http://www.authentichistory.com

3. Now click on Chapter 16: Waifs of the City’s Slums. Read the entry and summarize it.

4. One of the saddest outcomes of the poverty and overcrowding of the slums was the necessity of the Foundling Asylum. Following a wave of infanticides the Roman Catholic order of nuns known as the Sisters of Charity created this organization as a place for mothers to drop off children that they could not care for. Over 20,000 babies were left at the asylum. The mortality rate for these babies was extremely high and some of the lucky ones were sent to families out west as part of the “baby train”. Click on the following link which will show you a collection of notes that were pinned to babies left by their mothers. Make some observations about the notes you read.
http://www.flickr.com/photos/n-yhs/5035989331/in/set-72157624935511447/

5. Research the Baby Safe Haven Law in Massachusetts. What does it say and how do you feel about it?