

Language Arts/Social Studies Activities
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**Lessons for use in the classroom in conjunction with reading
and studying *Who's Jim Hines?* by Jean Alicia Elster**

Oral Histories with Visual Representations

1. Have students interview and obtain oral histories from their caregivers (e.g., parents and grandparents).
2. Interview questions should focus on which state (or country) the caregivers were born in and any memories specific to or peculiar to that locale.
3. Students should also question caregivers about the kinds of jobs they have held, training or education they received that prepared them for those jobs, and any memories related to that employment.
4. Have students write narratives based upon the information in those oral histories.
5. Prepare a large wall map of the United States (or world, if necessary). Have each student designate the state (or country) from which his/her caregivers came.
6. Attach a string line from that state (or country) to the edge of the map with each student's name, caregiver's name, and livelihood (choose one if more than one is described in the narrative).
7. After completion, have students discuss differences and similarities in the narratives as well as note (via the map and visual representations) the differences and similarities in the geographic backgrounds of their caregivers.

Community Dialog

In *Who's Jim Hines?*, some of the neighborhood men gather at the Ford home on Sundays to discuss a topic important to them: unions.

1. Have the students recount the details of the union talk in the Ford driveway (the newly organized auto unions, the Teamsters and racial restrictions, pay in the auto factories versus pay at Douglas Ford's wood business, et al).
2. Have students research and give brief oral presentations on current local or national union issues.
3. Have students—in small groups of 5-6 classmates—role play a gathering similar to that among the men in the Ford yard, discussing a noteworthy local current event or important community topic. Then have students, individually, write a report detailing the range of opinions expressed within the group, how these opinions did or did not reflect their own opinions, and what value they find in community dialog.

The Entrepreneurial Spirit

1. In order for Douglas Ford Sr. to establish and maintain his business in the 1920s and 1930s—and based upon a reading of the book—what kinds of facilities, equipment, and services did he need? Have the students write their lists. The list should include items such as—

- Real property (wood yard)
- Trucks
- Maintenance of trucks
- Source of wood (automobile factories)
- Telephone service
- Telephone orders for wood
- Drivers-payroll
- Delivery
- Saw
- Preparation of wood
- Maps of neighborhoods in and around Detroit
- Ads in newspapers
- Electric lights

Lead the students in a discussion of the items on their lists as you write the items on white boards or smart boards.

2. As a separate writing assignment, have students write a description of a business they would like to start today in the 21st century and then list what it would take to get it started.

3. Lead the students in a discussion of the similarities and differences between what it took to run a business in the 1920s and 1930s and what it takes to run a business today in the 21st century.

Then ask the students to write a short essay transforming the Douglas Ford Wood Company into a 21st century business. How would the business have to be different? How could it remain the same?

4. Guide the students in a discussion that leads them to a definition of the word “motto.” Have the class, by consensus, come up with a class motto. Douglas Ford Sr.’s business motto was, “Good service at a fair price.” Based upon their reading of the book, have the students—individually—write other mottos appropriate for the Douglas Ford Wood Company.

The Immigrant Experience

1. Ask the students to research and write an essay on Ellis Island as well as current immigration ports of arrival.
2. Lead the class in a discussion of their perceptions of the immigrant experience in the United States today. Then, based upon their reading of *Who's Jim Hines?*, lead the class in a discussion of their perception of the immigrant experience in the United States in 1935.

After the discussion, have the students, individually, write a reflection paper describing their perceptions of the most important similarities and differences between the immigrant experience in the 1930s and the immigrant experience today.