

The newsies in historical context

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



There are many connections you can make between the Newsies movie and the Gilded Age that it portrays. Common themes are the fantasy of the west, labor unions, low wages, and government corruption. Even though it is a Disney movie, it portrays the time fairly accurately, minus the outbreaks of song and dance in the street. The first theme that reoccurs throughout the movie is the idea of the west being this fantasy land where all your problems will be solved. There's a whole song about it!

The westward expansion of the United States provided many people with an opportunity to own land, which is something that wasn't really available on the crowded east coast. The west not only had lots of farm land which was great, but what put the icing on the cake was the railroads which was a way for farmers to get their goods to market.

The second connection is the labor unions that are forming causing some unrest in the labor arena. In the beginning of the film we learn about the Trolley strike which is happening, and we see that it gets very violent at times. Then eventually the Newsies want to unionize, and they do, to a point. No official union of Newsies is formed so at the end of the movie, the Newsies are back where they started pay wise, which is barely enough to live on. This is the next connection, low wages. Throughout the film we see poor boys taking to the streets to sell newspapers, even in the cold of winter. Not only did kids have to work to support their families, but if injured on the job, there was nothing to protect them. We see one of the kids fathers has a broken arm, causing him to be left unemployed. Not only are the wages low, but the greedy men at the top take every opportunity to cut wages even

more, which end up being a main theme in the entire movie. The final connection of the many in the film is government corruption.

Throughout the movie Pulitzer makes many moves to ensure that his paper will come out on top of the scuffle. One instance is in the courtroom. I don't remember the exact line, but I believe it has something to do with a financial donation to the judge's campaign. The next is Pulitzer to the governor where he says they will need to discuss the "upcoming election" with him, implying that he will scratch his back if he scratches his.

Overall the Gilded Age was not the best time in America for the people living then. Between the fantasy of the west, labor unions, low wages, and government corruption, it just wasn't a fun time to be a working class citizen, especially in the cities of the time.