OVERVIEW OF LESSON PLAN
In this lesson, students will learn about the different types of workers needed in the construction of the Empire State Building. Through research and discussion, students will understand not only what a colossal feat building the world’s tallest structure in record time was, but will also appreciate the extraordinary commitment of the people who built it.

SUGGESTED TIME ALLOWANCE
1 hour

OBJECTIVES
Students will:
• Contemplate the risks involved with building a skyscraper.
• Learn about the many different kinds of workers needed for such an immense project.
• Research job titles and the responsibilities of those workers.
• Create baseball cards for original workers of the Empire State Building.
RESOURCES/MATERIALS:

• Student journals
• Pens/pencils
• Paper
• Classroom board
• Resources on the Empire State Building, including history textbooks, encyclopedias, computers with Internet access, etc.
• Copies of early photographs of workers on the Empire State Building
• Copies of the August 14, 1930 job list of employees present during construction of the Empire State Building
• Copies of baseball cards of various formats; for examples of baseball card layouts, try a simple Google Image search for “Baseball Card”
ACTIVITIES/PROCEDURES:

WARM-UP/DO-NOW:
Prior to class, print out and display these photographs of workers on the Empire State Building. Ask students to choose one of the photographs and allow five minutes for them to respond to the following in their journals: “The four photographs in front of you depict laborers working on what was to be the tallest building in the world, the Empire State Building. Create a caption that summarizes what you see in the photograph you have chosen. Then write what you think it must have been like to work under the conditions depicted here. Why would workers risk their lives to work under these conditions?” After students have written in their journals, call on several of them to share their thoughts with the class. Record all descriptive words on the board. Urge students to consider what living and working conditions must have been like during the Great Depression when the Empire State Building was being constructed.

Have the class discuss the following, recording class members’ responses on the board: “What types of jobs are needed to build a skyscraper?” After a few minutes, hand out the August 14 list of jobs. Read through the job titles, noting ones the class suggested (including those which fit under different titles), as well as those that were not suggested.

Divide the class into five groups. Each group will be assigned one of the following professions:
• Ironworker
• Mason
• Carpenter
• Electrician
• Plumber

The groups are to research the answers to the following:

1. In what type of work does your group of laborers specialize? Find a working definition.
2. During the construction of the Empire State Building, what specific tasks did your group of laborers perform?
3. How many members of your profession were employed during the thirteen months of the building’s construction?
4. Find statistics to display the amount of work your profession contributed to the building’s design (for example, “How many miles of cable were installed?” Or, “How many bricks were laid?”)
5. If possible, find a photograph displaying a member of your assigned profession working on the Empire State Building, or one that displays the outcome of that profession’s work (this will be more challenging for some groups, such as the plumbers).
6. When the research is completed, ask each group to share its findings with the entire class.
ACTIVITIES/PROCEDURES:

WRAP-UP/HOMEWORK:
For homework, have students use the notes they gathered in class to create a baseball-style card for a worker on the Empire State Building. Each card should include a photograph, the worker’s name, job title, description of the labor, statistics, and any biographical information students wish to add (country of origin, size of family, age, etc.). The workers’ names do not have to be the actual names of those who built the building, but should reflect the ethnicities and sounds of those who might have been employed to work on the Empire State Building. The statistics must come from actual statistics about the construction and design of the building (For example: “Charlie Andreasen and his 4-member rivet crew secured 40 rivets/minute, earning $.15/day.”)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:
What effect do you think the Great Depression had on the speed and cost of constructing the Empire State Building?
Would you want to live or work in a skyscraper? Why or why not?

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT:
Students will be evaluated based on participation in the initial exercises, active participation in group research and reporting, and creation of baseball-style cards celebrating workers of the Empire State Building.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:
Using your knowledge of the amount and type of labor needed, hours worked, and working conditions, create a Help Wanted announcement that seeks workers to build the Empire State Building.
Write a one-page paper on methods used in constructing the Empire State Building that allowed the building to rise in record time (for example, utilizing elevators from the demolished Waldorf-Astoria, or installing a railway system, etc.).

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GLOSSARY

Architect n. a person skilled in the art of building; a building designer.

Beam n. one of the principal horizontal timbers of a building that supports or helps support a load, such as, for instance, the floor above it, or a roof.

Concrete n. a mixture (often of gravel, pebbles, or broken stone with cement or with tar, etc.) used to create sidewalks, roadways, building foundations, flooring, etc.

Derrick n. a machine used for raising and lowering heavy weights and, while holding them suspended, transporting them a limited distance to a designated location.

Erect v. to put up a building or other structure.

Hoist v. to raise or lift, usually by using some kind of machinery.

Immigrant n. a person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another.

Mason n. a person whose occupation is to build with stone or brick; also, someone who prepares stone to be used for building purposes.

Mullion n. a slender bar (pier) which divides the lights (or panes) of windows, screens, etc. On the Empire State Building, these are the vertical, chrome-nickel steel rails that divide each pair of windows and are capped with floral designs.

Rivet n. a metallic pin with a head, used for uniting two plates or pieces of material.

Skyscraper n. a very tall building.

Spandrel n. the triangular space between the curve of an arch and the inclosing right angle; or the space between the outer moldings of two adjoining arches and a horizontal line above them. On the Empire State Building, the spandrels used were aluminum—a rust-resistant material.

Story n. any of the different floors or levels in a building.
ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS:

This lesson plan may be used to address the academic standards listed below. These standards are drawn from “Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education: 3rd and 4th Editions” and have been provided courtesy of the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning in Aurora, Colorado.

Behavioral Studies: Level III (Grades 6-8)

**Standard 1.** Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior

**Benchmark 5.** Understands that various factors (e.g., wants and needs, talents, interests, influence of family and peers and media) affect decisions that individuals make

**Standard 2.** Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function

**Benchmark 1.** Understands that affiliation with a group can increase the power of members through pooled resources and concerted action

**Benchmark 2.** Understands that joining a group often has personal advantages (e.g., companionship, sense of identity, recognition by others inside and outside the group)

**Benchmark 3.** Understands that group identity may create a feeling of superiority, which increases group cohesion, but may also occasion hostility toward and/or from other groups

**Benchmark 4.** Understands that people sometimes react to all members of a group as though they were the same and perceive in their behavior only those qualities that fit preconceptions of the group (i.e., stereotyping) which leads to uncritical judgments (e.g., showing blind respect for members of some groups and equally blind disrespect for members of other groups)

**Benchmark 5.** Understands that a variety of factors (e.g., belief systems, learned behavior patterns) contribute to the ways in which groups respond differently to their physical and social environments and to the wants and needs of their members

**Benchmark 6.** Understands how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture

**Benchmark 7.** Understands that there are similarities and differences within groups as well as among groups

**Benchmark 8.** Understands that a large society may be made up of many groups, and these groups may contain many distinctly different subcultures (e.g., associated with region, ethnic origin, social class, interests, values)