Lesson 1

The Gilded Age

Subject Area:

Historical introduction and overview of the Gilded Age time period.

Grade Level:

five and six

Time Frame:

At least three class periods of 60 minutes, or lessons can be broken down into smaller pieces as the teacher sees fit for the class.

Learner Factors:

Differentiated Ideas and Extensions are available at the end of the unit.

Day One

Materials: (included in this kit)

1. Large time line
2. Time line graphic organizer for the students (Two choices)
3. Venn diagram for compare and contrast activity.

Lesson:

1. Start out by telling the students that they will be learning about an era in history from the end of the Civil War to the turn of the century known as the Gilded Age, and that the Gilded Age began in the year of 1876 and ended in 1900.

2. Begin by reading Cornelius Vandermouse The Pride of Newport by: Peter W. and Cheryl Shaw Barnes. Although this book may seem inferior for the grade level the writers of this unit felt as though it would lend itself well to the feel of the Gilded Age time period.

3. When finished reading the book ask the students if they noticed anything about the life of Cornelius Vandermouse that might be the same or different from their own lives. Ask the students to fill in a Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts this information.
4. Have the students share their Venn diagrams to discover if they find any themes among their classmates.

5. Plot on the time line these dates with the students: The start of the Gilded Age, The building of the Breakers, Marble House, and Rosecliff. (you will find these dates in the back of the book.) *Cornelius Vandermouse The Pride of Newport* by: Peter W. and Cheryl Shaw Barnes.

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**Day Two**

**Materials:**

1. Mark Twain books. These books will need to be provided by the teacher.

**Lesson:**

1. Introduce the children to the author Mark Twain also known as Samuel Longhorne Clements.

**Background information for the Teacher:**

- During the Gilded Age, Mark Twain was an established author. It was 1863 that he began using the pen name of Mark Twain.
- The first book that Twain wrote was *The Celebrating Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*. (1867)
- The second book was *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. (1876)
- The third book was *The Prince and the Pauper*. (1881)
- The fourth book was *The Adventures of Huck Finn*. (1884)

Please see other information provided in the teacher resources. You may want to delve further into Mark Twain depending on the students that this is being presented to.

2. Tell the children that Mark Twain called the late 19th century the Gilded Age because he was literally poking fun at the fact that at this time in history all was glittering on the surface, but underneath there was immense greed and corruption. It was also Twain that said that this period in history known as the gilded age was also a very formative time, a time of industry, and a time when the rich wore diamonds while may wore rags.
3. Mark Twain quote to share with students “What is the chief end of man? To get rich. In what way? Dishonesty if we can; honesty we must.” (1871)

This quote may be shared with the students in whatever way the teacher feels is appropriate for the group.

4. Have the students look up the following vocabulary words with a partner.
gilded, renowned, corrupt, greed, yacht, bauble, commodore

5. **Writing Prompt and discussion:** Which would you rather be, the smartest man in the world, or the richest one?

The teacher can give this writing prompt to the students and have them write their opinions, and then when finished get in small discussion groups to talk about why they would choose to be the richest man or the smartest.

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**Day Three**

**Materials:**

2. Compare and contrast chart (enclosed)

**Lesson:**

1. Give the clothing pictures to the students. Have them make observations of the clothing in small collaborative groups in relation to their own clothing that children wear today.
2. Each group can then fill out a compare and contrast Venn diagram and share with the whole class when completed. What things do they notice that are the same and different from today’s clothing that children wear? Would they have wanted to live in the time of the gilded age if they had to wear the same clothing that the children wore?