

1919 Pittsburgh - Role Sheet

Name: *Joseph Moore*

Allegiance: *Indeterminate*

Role Context

You're a 13-year-old Black American born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and an unskilled steel worker at one of Elbert Gary's steel mills. You heard about this opportunity in Pittsburgh from one of Gary's recruiters. Gary's recruiter promised you and your brother great pay compared to your previous job in New Orleans, however, in Pittsburgh you are still treated poorly by other white workers. Because your job is unskilled, you make the same wage as all other unskilled workers regardless of race or origin. Your pay is still very minimal, and you can barely afford to keep yourself and your brother safe. You hear rumors of a strike starting, and you think this could potentially be a great opportunity for you.

Motivations

As a young boy, you do not understand many of the implications of the strike. You have been told by other workers that a strike could be good because you will get increased benefits, however, your brother tells you that the unions have no interest in getting African Americans equal working rights. You have even heard some of the strike leaders say derogatory and hateful comments toward African Americans. You feel that it is wrong and terrible that unions have no desire to get equal working rights for you, however, because you are an unskilled worker, a successful strike will likely benefit you. All unskilled workers make the same wage, and from rumors, you have heard, a successful strike will lead to an increase in wages for unskilled workers. Your brother also warns you that if the strike were to happen, you would not be able to get paid. It is already hard enough to make enough wages for you and your brother to survive, and you're not sure if you could go months or even years without pay. You remain undecided

whether or not a strike will benefit you. Do you think it is worth it to possibly sacrifice your wages for months in the hope of better conditions and support a side that is hateful towards your race, or do you want to continue working in the mills, and go against these hateful people?

Play Guidelines

Round #1

- Listen to conversations around the temple and try to learn more about how the strike may benefit or hurt you. You should in particular look for other Black steel workers or those who are sympathetic to you.

Round #2

- Prepare sharp questions for both sides of the debate regarding what they can do for you as a black steelworker.

Round #3

- This round is of utmost importance, as this will decide whether the strike happens or not. Talk to the faction that you did not vote with and listen to what they say. If they are unsuccessful in convincing you, try to convince other indeterminates in the room to align with you.

- Go on strike and forfeit your wages in hope of better pay and conditions, or vote against the strike if you do not want to support the union.

Victory Objectives

Complete Victory

You will achieve complete victory if you manage to secure an improvement in the conditions of black steel workers like yourself at the Pittsburgh Mills.

Complete Defeat

You could face complete defeat if you do not manage to garner any support, and conditions remain the same

Important Sources

- Source 3.3 - “The Chicago Race Riots”
- Source 3.6 - “The Daily Schedule of a Steel Worker in Homestead, Pennsylvania, 1919.”