First Source: Wage Map

Which of these questions could be answered with information from the map? If the question can be answered with information from the map, write “Yes.” If it can’t, write “No.”

- What city are these blocks in?
- Which streets run north and south?
- Which streets run east and west?
- When was this map made?
NAME _________________________

- Who are the people who live in this neighborhood?
- Where do the people who make the most money live?
- Where do the people who make the least money live?
- Are any of the people in this neighborhood rich?
- Do people with more money and people with less money live in the same blocks?
- Are there blocks where only people with more money live?
- Are there blocks where only people with less money live?
- Are there more families at the top of the income range or at the bottom?
- Do any families at the top of the income range live next door to families at the bottom?
- What conclusions can be drawn from the answers to these questions?
- What could you buy with these incomes?
- What kinds of buildings do these people live in? (houses, apartment buildings, etc.)
- What are the blank spaces on the blocks?

Background

Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr founded Hull House, Chicago’s first settlement house, in 1889. At one point, Hull House conducted a study of the people who lived in its Near West Side neighborhood.

According to the inflation calculator at www.in2013dollars.com:

- $5 in 1895 was equivalent in purchasing power to about $157.66 today.
- $20 in 1895 was equivalent in purchasing power to about $630.66 today.

Second Source: Ethnicities Map

While looking at the second map, it’s important to remember that we would no longer use “nationality” to describe ethnic groups in the United States. “Ethnicity” would be a better label for this map. Also, instead of “Colored,” we would use Black or African American. Also, think about the significance of not including African Americans and Irish in the category “English speaking.”
Which of these questions could be answered with information from the map? If the question could be answered with information from the map, write “Yes.” If it can’t, write “No.”

- Did people in the neighborhood get along with each other?
- How many different countries did the people who lived in this neighborhood come from?
- What countries did the largest number of people come from?
- Which groups have the smallest representation in the neighborhood?
- What kind of work did people do who lived in this neighborhood?
- Why did people leave their countries and come to Chicago?
- Which groups tend to have the highest incomes? (Find out by comparing the blocks of color on the two maps.)
- Which groups tend to have the lowest incomes?
- What conclusions can be drawn from the answers to these questions?
- What was life like in this neighborhood?
Third Source: Autobiography Excerpt

Background

Hilda Satt Polacheck (1882–1967) came to Chicago from Poland with her family in 1892. The family settled in Chicago, in what was called the Near West Side neighborhood. Young Hilda became active at Hull House and wrote about the place and the neighborhood around it in her autobiography, which was published after her death.

From I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull House Girl by Hilda Satt Polacheck

The excerpt provides information in a very different form from that of the maps.

The only part of Chicago that I saw that summer was the block on South Halsted Street, where we lived, and a few of the side streets.

Father went to work very early every morning. On the Sabbath, the day of rest, we were not allowed to ride on streetcars; we were told it was too far to walk to the lake. The lake was only a mile from our home, but it may as well have been in Poland, as far as we children were concerned. We were left to our own devices. No one seemed to have time to show us the lake.

The only play space was the street in front of the house. The small yard in back of the house had been rented to a junk man and was used to store junk.

Halsted Street is thirty-two miles long. It runs from the extreme north end of Chicago to the extreme south. Hull-House is located at 800 South Halsted.

The home to which Father brought the family was a six-room flat, the upstairs of a two-story wooden house. The first floor was a steamship ticket agency. It was typical of the houses that had been built after the Chicago Fire, just twenty-one years before we arrived. Compared with some of the homes of children that I played with, our home was luxurious. We had a toilet with running water in a narrow hall just

(continued)
outside of the kitchen. One of my playmates, a little girl, lived in three rooms in back of a basement grocery store with her two sisters, five brothers, a father, and a mother.  

Most of the houses had privies in the yards. In many cases the owner of the front house would build a shanty in the rear to bring in additional income. Very little attention was paid as to how near the privy was to the shanty. On hot days the people living in these shanties had to keep their windows closed to keep out the stench.

The sidewalks were wooden planks, which became slimy and slippery after a rain. The streets were paved with wooden blocks, and after a heavy rainfall the blocks would become loose and float about in the street. During the drying process the stench was nauseating. There were many places where the blocks did not return to their mooring and the smelly water would remain for days. If this happened at an intersection, it was impossible to cross the street . . . and there was no Sir Walter Raleigh to spread a coat.

I have a feeling that some of the young people were politically minded in those days and put some of the blame for these conditions on the shoulders of the city fathers. I remember a sign that some pranksters put up at one such intersection after it had been raining for a week:

The Mayor and the Aldermen  
are invited  
to swim here

There was not a tree or a blade of grass anywhere in the neighborhood. Here I played my first American game, which was called “run sheep run.” I do not recall any of the rules of the game, but I do know that we ran out into the street while playing it. But the streets were fairly safe for play. We did not hesitate to run into the street as there was very little traffic. An occasional horse and wagon would clump down the street, but the horse was nearly always old and tired and would drag along at such a slow pace that we could easily get out of the way.

The wagons were filled with either fruits and vegetables or junk. Potatoes were sold for five cents a peck, apples were ten cents a peck, and bananas were five cents a dozen.

The peddlers had their distinctive calls. After several weeks, Mother could tell by the call if her peddler was in front of the house. Most of the day the air was filled with these calls:

“Any rags, any bottles, any junk today?”
“Ripe bananas, five cents a dozen.”
“Shiny red apples, come out and see.”
Even if the prices were low, the women would still complain that they were too high. It seemed to be a custom never to pay what was asked. The haggling was always good-natured. The peddlers seemed to expect it and perhaps would have been disappointed if a woman paid the price asked. Often a compromise would be reached by the peddler giving an extra banana or a few extra apples or potatoes to consummate the sale.

The ground floors of all the houses on the block were shops and stores. There were saloons where people would buy a big pail of beer for five cents. Women and children were not supposed to go through the front door of the saloon, but it was proper to go through the side door. Then there were so-called cigar stores where all sorts of tobacco were sold. Most men bought little bags of tobacco and small books of tissue paper and rolled their own cigarettes. Chewing tobacco and snuff were also sold in these stores. In front of each cigar store stood a wooden Indian, painted in many bright colors.

The barbershops were designated by a red-and-white striped pole, and every drugstore had large glass globes filled with colored water.

The grocery stores were filled with large burlap bags containing rice, beans, coffee, barley, and other staples. Everything had to be weighed by the grocer. I remember when there were no paper bags. The grocer would roll a sheet of brown paper into a cornucopia and fill it with whatever was bought. Eggs were shipped in boxes and baskets and many would be cracked on arrival at the grocery store. All cracked eggs were sold a penny cheaper. The only canned foods that I can remember were salmon and peas. When I was sent to the store for a can of salmon, the grocer had to open the can, as can openers were scarce. I would then have to walk home very slowly in order not to spill the liquid in which the salmon was packed.

Which of these questions could you answer using this excerpt?

- What were the buildings like in the neighborhood around Hull House?
- Where did kids play?
- What kind of work did the neighborhood people do?
- What were the streets and sidewalks like?
- Where did the kids go to school?
- How did the people feel about their neighborhood?
- Where did people get their food?
- What kinds of stores were in the neighborhood?

What questions are still left unanswered and where could you look to find more information to answer those questions?