

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Excerpt from The Jungle

By Upton Sinclair  
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*Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) was a famous twentieth century poet who often experimented with different genres. The Jungle, published in 1906, exposed the harsh conditions of the meatpacking industry in Chicago and other similar industrial cities. Public pressure during the aftermath of the book's publication led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act, which helps ensure that meat is packaged under sanitary conditions. As you read the text, take notes on Sinclair's use of imagery and tone in describing the conditions of the meatpacking industry.*

- [1] With one member trimming beef in a cannery, and another working in a sausage factory, the family had a first-hand knowledge of the great majority of Packingtown swindles. For it was the custom, as they found, whenever meat was so spoiled that it could not be used for anything else, either to can it or else to chop it up into sausage. With what had been told them by Jonas, who had worked in the pickle rooms, they could now study the whole of the spoiled-meat industry on the inside, and read a new and grim meaning into that old Packingtown jest—that they use everything of the pig except the squeal.



265 Splitting backbones and final inspection — hogs ready for cooler, Swift & Co., Chicago, U.S.A. Copyright 1906 by H. O. White Co.

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Jonas had told them how the meat that was taken out of pickle would often be found sour, and how they would rub it up with soda to take away the smell, and sell it to be eaten on free-lunch counters; also of all the miracles of chemistry which they performed, giving to any sort of meat, fresh or salted, whole or chopped, any color and any flavor and any odor they chose. In the pickling of hams they had an ingenious apparatus,<sup>1</sup> by which they saved time and increased the capacity<sup>2</sup> of the plant—a machine consisting of a hollow needle attached to a pump; by plunging this needle into the meat and working with his foot, a man could fill a ham with pickle in a few seconds. And yet, in spite of this, there would be hams found spoiled, some of them with an odor so bad that a man could hardly bear to be in the room with them. To pump into these the packers had a second and much stronger pickle which destroyed the odor—a process known to the workers as “giving them thirty per cent.” Also, after the hams had been smoked, there would be found some that had gone to the bad. Formerly these had been sold as “Number Three Grade,” but later on some ingenious person had hit upon a new device, and now they would extract the bone, about which the bad part generally lay, and insert in the hole a white-hot iron. After this invention there was no longer Number One, Two, and Three Grade—there was only Number One Grade. The packers were always originating such schemes—they had what they called “boneless hams,” which were all the odds and ends of pork stuffed into casings; and “California hams,” which were the shoulders, with big knuckle joints, and nearly all the meat cut out; and fancy “skinned hams,” which were made of the oldest hogs, whose skins were so heavy and coarse that no one would buy them—that is, until they had been cooked and chopped fine and labeled “head cheese!”

It was only when the whole ham was spoiled that it came into the department of Elzbieta. Cut up by the two-thousand-revolutions- a-minute flyers, and mixed with half a ton of other meat, no odor that ever was in a ham could make any difference. There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white – it would be dosed with borax and glycerin, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption.

There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one – there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit.

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1. **Apparatus (noun):** the technical equipment or machinery needed for a particular job or purpose  
2. **Capacity (noun):** the maximum amount that something can hold

- [5] There was no place for the men to wash their hands before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage. There were the butt-ends of smoked meat, and the scraps of corned beef, and all the odds and ends of the waste of the plants, that would be dumped into old barrels in the cellar and left there. Under the system of rigid economy which the packers enforced, there were some jobs that it only paid to do once in a long time, and among these was the cleaning out of the waste barrels. Every spring they did it; and in the barrels would be dirt and rust and old nails and stale water – and cartload after cartload of it would be taken up and dumped into the hoppers with fresh meat, and sent out to the public's breakfast. Some of it they would make into "smoked" sausage – but as the smoking took time, and was therefore expensive, they would call upon their chemistry department, and preserve it with borax and color it with gelatin to make it brown. All of their sausage came out of the same bowl, but when they came to wrap it they would stamp some of it "special," and for this they would charge two cents more a pound.

*Excerpt from The Jungle by Upton Sinclair is in the public domain.*

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How does the phrase “they use everything of the pig except the squeal” (Paragraph 1) contribute to the central ideas of the text? [RL.5] [RL.2]
- A. The phrase refers to the meatpacking industry’s use of the entire animal, even non-meat parts, thus contributing to the central idea of American ingenuity.
  - B. The phrase refers to the meatpacking industry’s use of animals, even spoiled meat and non-meat parts, thus contributing to the central idea of the industry’s corrupt and unsanitary nature.
  - C. The phrase refers to the meatpacking industry’s terrible treatment of its livestock, thus contributing to the central idea of the industry’s corrupt and cruel animal-raising practices.
  - D. The phrase refers to the meatpacking industry’s mistreatment of its employees, taking advantage of them and leaving their only voice, thus contributing to the central idea of the employees exposing the horrors of the industry.

2. Summarize the various ways the factory would use or cover up spoiled meat. Cite evidence in your answer. [RL.2]

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3. In what conditions did the employees work or interact with the meat? [RL.3]
- A. The employees mostly worked in ignorance of the horrible conditions of the rest of the industry.
  - B. The employees worked in poor conditions, but this was largely due to their own inability to keep themselves and their workplaces clean.
  - C. The employees worked in squalid conditions, working among disease and rats and lacking the facilities to even wash their hands.
  - D. The employees worked in pretty bad conditions, working with spoiled meat, but they did not understand that these practices were hazards.

4. PART A: Why did the factory likely employ such questionable practices? [RL.6]
- A. Because the factory had no ethical issue in deceiving the public; they were interested in making as much money as possible
  - B. Because there was no regulation to tell them that these were morally wrong practices.
  - C. Because they were confident that no inspection or employee would reveal their secrets.
  - D. Because they had no way of getting rid of the spoiled meat in an environmentally safe way.
5. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
- A. "In the pickling of hams they had an ingenious apparatus, by which they saved time and increased the capacity of the plant...." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "To pump into these the packers had a second and much stronger pickle which destroyed the odor—a process known to the workers as "giving them thirty per cent."" (Paragraph 2)
  - C. "It was only when the whole ham was spoiled that it came into the department of Elzbieta. Cut up by the two-thousand-revolutions- a-minute flyers, and mixed with half a ton of other meat, no odor that ever was in a ham could make any difference." (Paragraph 3)
  - D. "All of their sausage came out of the same bowl, but when they came to wrap it they would stamp some of it "special," and for this they would charge two cents more a pound." (Paragraph 5)

