

Excerpts from *The Jungle* (1903) by Upton Sinclair

Read/Underline words you don't know/Be able to recognize on a test/On the back, briefly summarize the final excerpt.

Jurgis witnesses the "speeding up" process whereby the bosses force a pace man to set a nearly impossible pace for the workers on the line, leading to dangerous exhaustion, physical ailments, and the author writes, even death. If the workers do not keep up, they are immediately fired.

Dede Antanas, Jurgis's elderly father, is offered a job on the condition that he pays his boss a third of his salary. It is just the entry point to a vast system of graft (obtaining money or advantage through the dishonest use of power) and Jurgis's first inkling that justice and honesty does not exist in the yards.

The workrooms at the meatpacking plants are unheated and dangerous in the winter. Men often suffer frostbite, and in desperation, stick their frozen feet into the steaming carcasses of cattle when the bosses aren't looking. The steam is so thick in the butchering rooms that it creates an extremely dangerous environment where men may be stabbed in a cloud of hot steam, or suffer other injuries. Some men slip on the frozen blood on the floors.

All day long the blazing midsummer sun beat down upon that square mile of abominations: upon tens of thousands of cattle crowded into pens whose wooden floors stank and steamed contagion; upon bare, blistering, cinder-strewn railroad tracks and huge blocks of dingy meat factories, whose labyrinthine passages defied a breath of fresh air to penetrate them; and there are not merely rivers of hot blood and carloads of moist flesh, and rendering-vats and soup cauldrons, glue-factories and fertilizer tanks, that smelt like the craters of hell—there are also tons of garbage festering in the sun, and the greasy laundry of the workers hung out to dry and dining rooms littered with food black with flies, and toilet rooms that are open sewers.

The great corporation which employed you lied to you, and lied to the whole country—from top to bottom it was nothing but one gigantic lie.

...and the wild beast rose up within him and screamed, as it had screamed in the Jungle from the dawn of time.

They had chains which they fastened about the leg of the nearest hog, and the other end of the chain they hooked into one of the rings upon the wheel. So, as the wheel turned, a hog was suddenly jerked off his feet and borne aloft. At the same instant the ear was assailed by a most terrifying shriek; the visitors started in alarm, the women turned pale and shrank back. The shriek was followed by another, louder and yet more agonizing—for once started upon that journey, the hog never came back; at the top of the wheel he was shunted off upon a trolley and went sailing down the room. And meantime another was swung up, and then another, and another, until there was a double line of them, each dangling by a foot and kicking in frenzy—and squealing. The uproar was appalling, perilous to the ear-drums; one feared there was too much sound for the room to hold—that the walls must give way or the ceiling crack. There were high squeals and low squeals, grunts, and wails of agony; there would come a momentary lull, and then a fresh outburst, louder than ever, surging up to a deafening climax. It was too much for some of the visitors--the men would look at each other, laughing nervously, and the women would stand with hands clenched, and the blood rushing to their faces, and the tears starting in their eyes. Neither squeals of hogs nor tears of visitors made any difference to them; one by one they hooked up the hogs, and one by one with a swift stroke they slit their throats. There was a long line of hogs, with squeals and life-blood ebbing away together; until at last each started again, and vanished with a splash into a huge vat of boiling water. It was all so very businesslike that one watched it fascinated. And yet somehow the most matter-of-fact person could not help thinking of the hogs; they were so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests--and so perfectly within their rights! They had done nothing to deserve it; and it was adding insult to injury, as the thing was done here, swinging them up in this cold-blooded, impersonal way, without a pretense at apology, without the homage of a tear. Now and then a visitor wept, to be sure; but this slaughtering-machine ran on, visitors or no visitors. It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory.