

Student  
Worksheet

# SUCH AS WE

**DIRECTIONS:** Using information from the reading, answer the following questions.

1. Jacob Riis was especially concerned with the condition of the children who lived in the slums. Describe the problems faced by children in the tenements. How does Riis express the hopelessness of their condition?

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2. What did the father of the dying child mean by his statement “Need we complain—such as we?” Why would this attitude make reform difficult?

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3. How did Riis’ style of writing serve to make middle class America aware of the problems of the slums? Could Riis be compared to a modern investigative reporter?

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4. Chapter 1 discusses early sociologist Herbert Spencer and his views on social reform. Read the passage describing Spencer in the text and answer the following questions:

- a. How do you think Herbert Spencer would have responded to the Jacob Riis book *How the Other Half Lives*? Write your answer as you think Spencer would have responded.

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b. Do you agree with Spencer's theory on social reform? Explain your answer.

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**USE YOUR SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:** Jacob Riis hoped to make the American public aware of the appalling conditions of the slums. What do you think Riis hoped to gain from this public awareness? Do you believe that the individual citizen has a personal responsibility to help the poor? Explain your answers.

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**TOPIC FOR RESEARCH:** Jacob Riis, along with photographer Lewis Hines, took their cameras into the darkest, most desperate areas of slums and factories to photograph the people. Find copies of photographs produced by Riis and Hines and describe the conditions revealed by these images. In your opinion, do the photographs "speak" as loudly as the passage written by Riis?

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