

Muckraker Centers



I. Upton Sinclair – The Jungle

In 1906, Sinclair acquired particular fame for his classic muck-raking novel *The Jungle*, which exposed labor and sanitary conditions in the U.S. meatpacking industry, causing a public uproar that contributed in part to the passage a few months later of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act.

In 1919, he published *The Brass Check*, a muck-raking exposé of American journalism that publicized the issue of yellow journalism and the limitations of the "free press" in the United States. Four years after publication of *The Brass Check*, the first code of ethics for journalists was created. *Time* magazine called him "a man with every gift except humor and silence".

He is also well remembered for the line: "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it." He used this line in speeches and the book about his campaign for governor as a way to explain why the editors and publishers of the major newspapers in California would not treat seriously his proposals for old age pensions and other progressive reforms.

Sinclair had spent about six months investigating the Chicago meatpacking industry for *Appeal to Reason*, the work which inspired his novel. He intended to "set forth the breaking of human hearts by a system which exploits the labor of men and women for profit". The novel featured Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant who works in a meat factory in Chicago, his teenaged wife Ona Lukoszaite, and their extended family. Sinclair portrays their mistreatment by Rudkus' employers and the wealthier elements of society. His descriptions of the unsanitary and inhumane conditions that workers suffered served to shock and galvanize readers. Jack London called Sinclair's book "the Uncle Tom's Cabin of wage slavery". Domestic and foreign purchases of American meat fell by half.



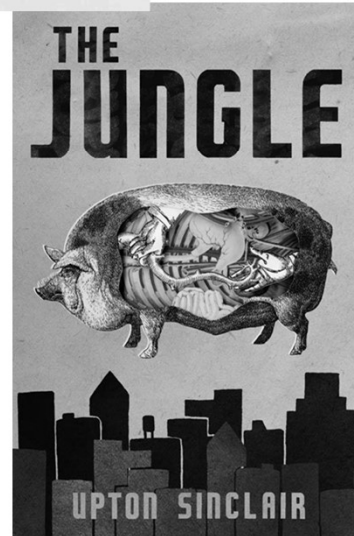
"There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was moldy and white – it would be dosed with borax and glycerin, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. 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. 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..." The Jungle, by Upton Sinclair 1906



Although Sinclair originally intended to focus on industrial labor and working conditions, food safety became the most pressing issue. Sinclair's account of workers' falling into rendering tanks (hoppers) and being ground, along with animal parts, into "Durham's Pure Beef Lard", gripped public attention. The morbidity of the working conditions, as well as the exploitation of children and women alike that Sinclair exposed showed the corruption taking place inside the meat packing factories.



The Jungle caused severe public outcry, which led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, which established the Food and Drug Administration. WHERE'S THE BEEF?!



II. Ida Tarbell – The History of Standard Oil

The History of the Standard Oil Company is a 1904 book by journalist Ida Tarbell. It is an exposé about the Standard Oil Company, run at the time by oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, the richest figure in American history. Originally serialized in nineteen parts in McClure's magazine, the book is a seminal example of muckraking, and inspired many other journalists to write about trusts, large businesses that (in the absence of strong antitrust laws in the 19th century) attempted to gain monopolies in various industries.

The History of the Standard Oil Company is credited with hastening the breakup of Standard Oil, which came about in 1911, when the Supreme Court of the United States found the company to be violating the Sherman Antitrust Act. The subsequent decision splintered the company into 34 "baby Standards." The value of Rockefeller's shares rose after the breakup as the new companies had a positive development on the stock exchange.



Public outcry erupted at the conclusion of Tarbell's 19-part exposure of Standard Oil published in *McClure's*, eventually resulting in the expedited breakup of Standard Oil in 1911. Journalists, politicians, and citizens alike celebrated the accomplishments of Tarbell - a woman "outside" the inner workings of business and without significant money or influence. These reactions are immortalized in political cartoons utilizing imagery of Rockefeller's hidden agendas being demolished by investigative journalism and muckraking.

"... the history of the oil business since the South Improvement Company identified the Standard Oil Company with that organization, and framed the specific complaint of the oil men, as follows: "The railroad companies have combined with an organization of individuals known as the Standard Ring; they give to that party the sole and entire control of all the petroleum refining interest and petroleum shipping interest in the United States, and consequently place the whole producing interest entirely at their mercy. If they succeed they place the price of refined oil as high as they please. It is simply optional with them how much to give us for what we produce..."

...Mr. Rockefeller . . . secured an alliance with the railroads to drive out rivals. For fifteen years he received rebates of varying amounts on at least the greater part of his shipments, and for at least a portion of that time he collected drawbacks of the oil other people shipped; at the same time he worked with the railroads to prevent other people getting oil to manufacture, or if they got it he worked with the railroads to prevent the shipment of the product. If it reached a dealer, he did his utmost to bully or wheedle him to countermand his order. If he failed in that, he undersold until the dealer, losing on his purchase, was glad enough to buy thereafter of Mr. Rockefeller.

. . . There is no independent refiner or jobber who tries to ship oil freight that does not meet incessant discouragement and discrimination. . . "If I get a barrel of oil out of Buffalo," an independent dealer told the writer not long ago, "I have to sneak it out. There are no public docks; the railroads control most of them, and they won't let me out if they can help it. If I want to ship a car-load they won't take it if they can help it. They are all afraid of offending the Standard Oil Company."...

A. WHAT WAS PROGRESSIVEISM?

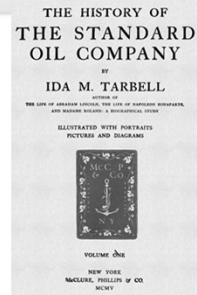
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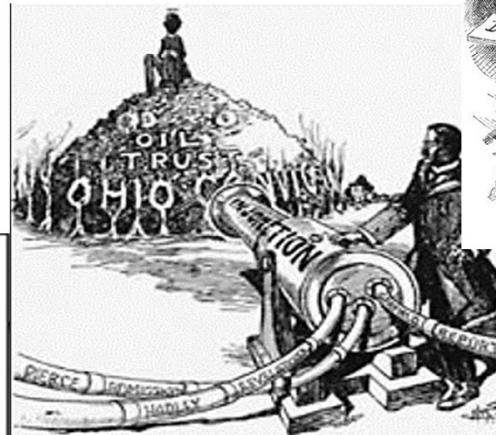


What is this political cartoon implying?

"IN DANGER" What are you going to do about it?



Ida Tarbell exposed Rockefeller's ruthless tactics and their destructive effect on smaller oil businesses. Her book failed to mention that her brother ran a competing oil company, the Pure Oil Company. Tarbell's exposé fueled negative public sentiment against Standard Oil and was a contributing factor in the U.S. government's antitrust actions against the Standard Oil Trust which eventually led to its breakup in 1911.



III. Jacob Riis – How the Other Half Lives

Primary Source: From *The Battle with the Slum* Jacob A. Riis

“The slum is as old as civilization. Civilization implies a race to get ahead. In a race there are usually some who for one cause or another cannot keep up, or are thrust out from among their fellows. They fall behind, and when they have been left far in the rear they lose hope and ambition, and give up. Thenceforward, if left to their own resources, they are the victims, not the masters, of their environment; and it is a bad master. They drag one another always further down.

Too many of us had supposed that, built as our Commonwealth was on universal suffrage, it would be proof against the complaints that harassed older states; but in fact it turned out that there was extra hazard in that. Having solemnly resolved that all men are created equal and have certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we shut our eyes and waited for the formula to work. It was as if a man with a cold should take the doctor’s prescription to bed with him, expecting it to cure him.

...Slow work, yes! but be it ever so slow, the battle has got to be fought, and fought out. For it is one thing or the other: either we wipe out the slum, or it wipes out us. Put it this way: you cannot let men live like pigs when you need their votes as freemen; it is not safe. You cannot rob a child of its childhood, of its home, its play, its freedom from toil and care, and expect to appeal to the grown-up voter’s manhood. The children are our tomorrow, and as we mould them today so will they deal with us then. There for it is not safe.

...Hence, I say, in the battle with the slum we win or we perish. There is no middle way.

Source: Jacob A. Riis, *The Battle with the Slum* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 1-8



“LONG ago it was said that “one half of the world does not know how the other half lives.” That was true then. It did not know because it did not care. The half that was on top cared little for the struggles, and less for the fate of those who were underneath, so long as it was able to hold them there and keep its own seat. There came a time when the discomfort and crowding below were so great, and the consequent upheavals so violent, that it was no longer an easy thing to do, and then the upper half fell to inquiring what was the matter. Information on the subject has been accumulating rapidly since, and the whole world has had its hands full answering for its old ignorance...

...To-day three-fourths of its people live in the tenements, and the nineteenth century drift of the population to the cities is sending ever-increasing multitudes to crowd them. The fifteen thousand tenant houses that were the despair of the sanitarian in the past generation have swelled into thirty-seven thousand, and more than twelve hundred thousand persons call them home...

...in the tenements all the influences make for evil; because they are the hot-beds of the epidemics that carry death to rich and poor alike; the nurseries of pauperism and crime that fill our jails and police courts; that throw off a scum of forty thousand human wrecks to the island asylums and workhouses year by year; that turned out in the last eight years a round half million beggars to prey upon our charities; that maintain a standing army of ten thousand tramps with all that that implies; because, above all, they touch the family life with deadly moral contagion. This is their worst crime, inseparable from the system. ~ How the Other Half Lives, by Jacob Riis 1890



An east wing tenement block, New York City.

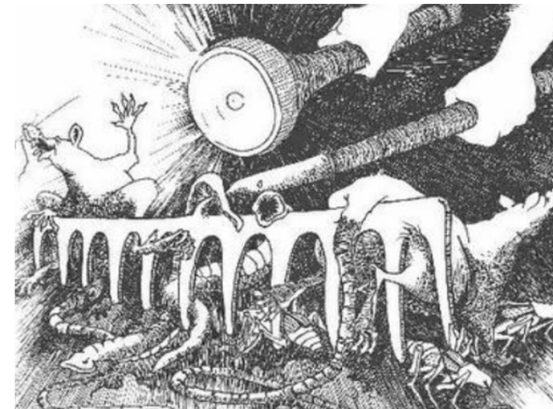
REFORMING SOCIETY



How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York explained not only the living conditions in New York slums, but also the sweatshops run in some tenements paying its workers only a few cents a day. The book explains the plight of working children; they would work in factories and at other jobs.



LODGERS IN A CROWDED BAYARD STREET TENEMENT--"FIVE CENTS A SPOT."



VI. Lincoln Steffens – Shame of the Cities



Published in 1904, it is a collection of articles which Steffens had written for *McClure's Magazine*.^[1] It reports on the workings of corrupt political machines in several major U.S. cities, along with a few efforts to combat them. It is considered one of several early major pieces of muckraking journalism, though Steffens later claimed that this work made him "the first muckraker."

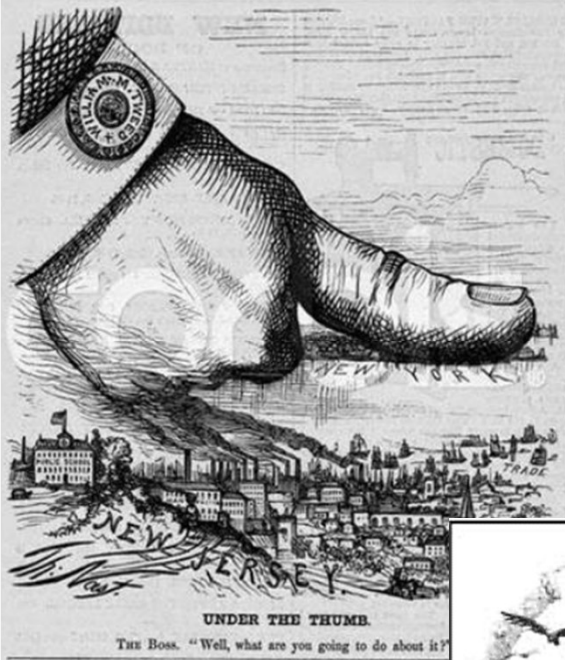
Though Steffens' subject was municipal corruption, he did not present his work as an exposé of corruption; rather, he wanted to draw attention to the public's complicity in allowing corruption to continue. Steffens tried to advance a theory of city corruption: corruption, he claimed, was the result of "big business men" who corrupted city government for their own ends, and "the typical business man"—average Americans—who ignored politics and allowed such corruption to continue. He framed his work as an attempt "to sound for the civic pride of an apparently shameless citizenship," by making the public face their responsibility in the persistence of municipal corruption.^[2]

"The typical business man is a bad citizen; he is busy. If he is a "big business man" and very busy, he does not neglect, he is busy with politics, oh, very busy and very businesslike. I found him buying boodlers in St. Louis, defending grafters in Minneapolis, originating corruption in Pittsburgh, sharing with bosses in Philadelphia, deploring reform in Chicago, and beating good government with corruption funds in New York. He is a self-righteous fraud, this big business man. He is the chief source of corruption, and it were a boon if he would neglect politics. ..

...This is no figure of speech. The honest citizens...have no more rights at the polls than the Negroes down South. Nor do they fight very hard for this basic privilege. You can arouse their Republican ire by talking about the black Republican votes lost in the Southern States by white Democratic intimidation, but if you remind the average [citizen] that he is in the same position, he will look startled, then say, "That's so, that's literally true, only I never thought of it in just that way." And it is literally true.

... [Political bosses control] the whole process of voting, and practices fraud at every stage. The assessor's list is the voting list, and the assessor is the [boss's] man. . . .The assessor pads the list with the names of dead dogs, children, and non-existent persons.... ...The police are forbidden by law to stand within thirty feet of the polls, but they are at the box and they are there to see that the machine's orders are obeyed and that repeaters whom they help to furnish are permitted to vote without "intimidation" on the names they, the police, have supplied. The Shame of the Cities, by Lincoln Steffens 1904

"an alliance between 'respectable' businessmen and disreputable gang politicians to rob the taxpayers". Though most people, Steffens concluded in "Tweed Days in St. Louis", "blame the politicians and the vicious and ignorant poor" for corruption, "In all cities, the better classes—the business men—are the sources of corruption". Steffens clarifies this claim in the book's introduction; there, he specifically castigates the "big business man" as "the source of corruption", calling him "a self-righteous fraud".



BEN GARRISON
©INDEPENDENT GAZETTE, 20



Source: Graff, Henry, *The Glorious Republic*, Houghton Mifflin (adapted)

The Rising of the Usurpers and the Sinking of the Liberties of the People



Source: Thomas Nast, 1889 (adapted)

IV. Thomas Nast- Political Cartoons

Thomas Nast created satirical art criticizing slavery and crime during the nineteenth century. He is called the “Father of the American Cartoon”. Although Thomas Nast was a political cartoonist, his compositions appealed to the common people’s emotions and this made him popular. He gained immense popularity as a political cartoonist at the time of American Civil War.

American journalism saw Nast as a very popular figure as a political cartoonist. In the 1860s, when politics in New York City was dominated by William Tweed, Nast started drawing sketches depicting political corruption of Tweed along with his associates.

Nast's drawings were instrumental in the downfall of Boss Tweed, the powerful Tammany Hall leader. As commissioner of public works for New York City, Tweed led a ring that by 1870 had gained total control of the city's government, and controlled "a working majority in the State Legislature". Tweed and his associates—Peter Barr Sweeny (park commissioner), Richard B. Connolly (controller of public expenditures), and Mayor A. Oakey Hall—defrauded the city of many millions of dollars by grossly inflating expenses paid to contractors connected to the Ring. Nast, whose cartoons attacking Tammany corruption had appeared occasionally since 1867, intensified his focus on the four principal players in 1870 and especially in 1871.

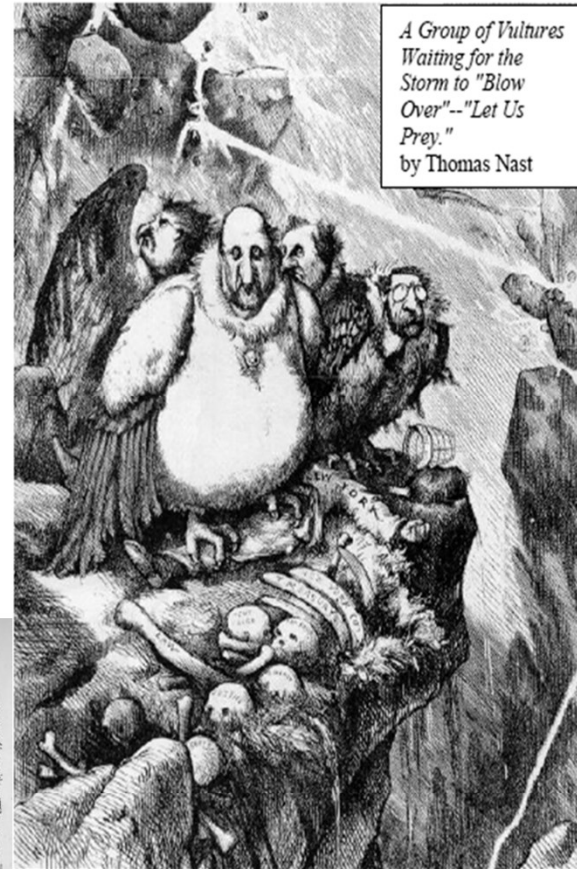
Tweed so feared Nast's campaign that he sent an emissary to offer the artist a bribe of \$100,000, which was represented as a gift from a group of wealthy benefactors to enable Nast to study art in Europe. Feigning interest, Nast negotiated for more before finally refusing an offer of \$500,000 with the words, "Well, I don't think I'll do it. I made up my mind not long ago to put some of those fellows behind the bars". Nast pressed his attack in the pages of *Harper's*, and the Ring was removed from power in the election of November 7, 1871. Tweed was arrested in 1873 and convicted of fraud. When Tweed attempted to escape justice in December 1875 by fleeing to Cuba and from there to Spain, officials in Vigo were able to identify the fugitive by using one of Nast's cartoons.



THE STREET.
HON. WILLIAM M. TWEED. "Why, a fellow feels quite Honest in this Neighborhood."



The 1876 cartoon that helped identify Boss Tweed in Spain.



A Group of Vultures Waiting for the Storm to "Blow Over" -- "Let Us Prey." by Thomas Nast

The Tammany Tiger Loose— "What are you going to do about it?", published in Harper's Weekly in November 1871, just before election day. "Boss" Tweed is depicted in the audience as the Emperor.



THE TAMMANY TIGER LOOSE.—"What are you going to do about it?" (The first use of the famous Tiger symbol)

Nast's drawings were instrumental in the downfall of Boss Tweed, who so feared Nast's campaign that an emissary was sent to offer Thomas Nast a \$500,000 bribe to "drop this Ring business" and take a trip abroad. Declining the offer, Nast pressed his attack, and Tweed was arrested in 1873 and convicted of fraud. When Tweed attempted to escape justice in December 1875 by fleeing to Cuba and from there to Spain, officials in Vigo, Spain were able to identify the fugitive by using one of Nast's cartoons.

VI. Lewis Hines-

American sociologist and photographer. Hine used his camera as a tool for social reform. His photographs were instrumental in changing child labor laws in the United States.

"There is work that profits children, and there is work that brings profit only to employers. The object of employing children is not to train them, but to get high profits from their work."

-- Lewis Hine, 1908

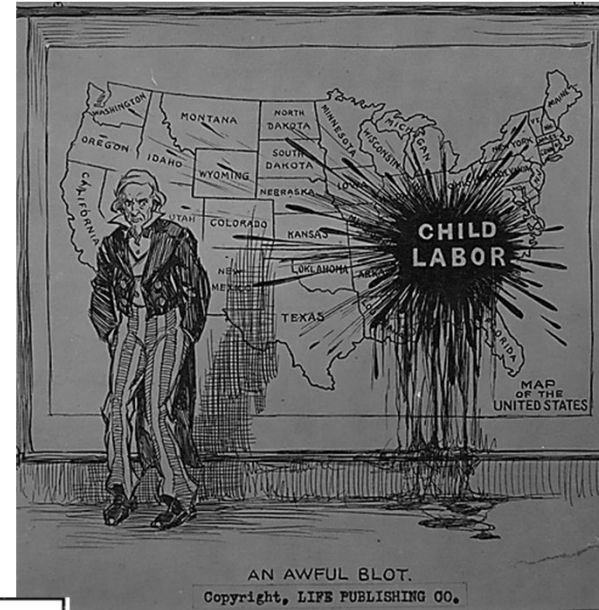
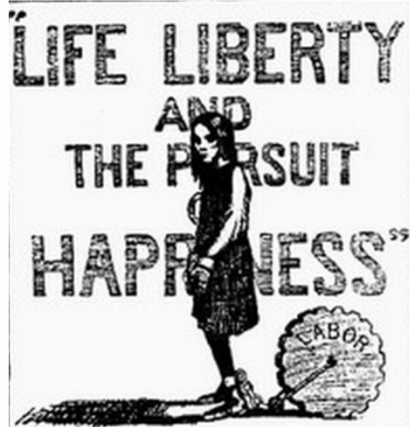
Factory wages were so low that children often had to work to help support their families. The number of children under the age of 15 who worked in industrial jobs for wages climbed from 1.5 million in 1890 to 2 million in 1910. Businesses liked to hire children because they worked in unskilled jobs for lower wages than adults, and their small hands made them more adept at handling small parts and tools. Children were seen as part of the family economy. Immigrants and rural migrants often sent their children to work, or worked alongside them. However, child laborers barely experienced their youth. Going to school to prepare for a better future was an opportunity these underage workers rarely enjoyed. As children worked in industrial settings, they began to develop serious health problems. Many child laborers were underweight. Some suffered from stunted growth and curvature of the spine. They developed diseases related to their work environment, such as tuberculosis and bronchitis for those who worked in coal mines or cotton mills. They faced high accident rates due to physical and mental fatigue caused by hard work and long hours.

Lewis Hine, a New York City schoolteacher and photographer, believed that a picture could tell a powerful story. He felt so strongly about the abuse of children as workers that he quit his teaching job and became an investigative photographer for the National Child Labor Committee. Hine traveled around the country photographing the working conditions of children in all types of industries. He photographed children in coal mines, in meatpacking houses, in textile mills, and in canneries. He took pictures of children working in the streets as shoe shiners, newsboys, and hawkers. In many instances he tricked his way into factories to take the pictures that factory managers did not want the public to see. He was careful to document every photograph with precise facts and figures. To obtain captions for his pictures, he interviewed the children on some pretext and then scribbled his notes with his hand hidden inside his pocket. Because he used subterfuge to take his photographs, he believed that he had to be "double-sure that my photo data was 100% pure--no retouching or fakery of any kind." Hine defined a good photograph as "a reproduction of impressions made upon the photographer which he desires to repeat to others." Because he realized his photographs were subjective, he described his work as "photo-interpretation."

By 1916, Congress passed the Keating-Owens Act that established the following child labor standards: a minimum age of 14 for workers in manufacturing and 16 for workers in mining; a maximum workday of 8 hours; prohibition of night work for workers under age 16; and a documentary proof of age.



In 1907, Hine became the photographer for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC). Over the next decade, Hine documented child labor in American industry to aid the NCLC's lobbying efforts to end the practice. He took all these pictures to show the country the cruelties of child labor. **GET BACK TO WORK!!!!**



Date	Percentage of Children Between the Ages of 10 and 15 Who Worked
1890	18.1
1900	18.2
1910	15.0
1920	11.3

