

New MC3 History Chapter Topics and Discussion Questions

Section 1: From Artisans to Wage-earners to Local and National Unions

- How did the apprenticeship system in US evolve from the Guilds (associations of master craftsmen) in Europe?
- Think about the terms journey level worker vs. apprentice. How are these roles different?
- How did building and construction workers lives change when they transitioned from artisans to craft workers?
- Why did building and construction workers favor craft or trade unions when they looked to establish their own organizations?
- What role did the rise of tall buildings known as “skyscrapers” play in the history of the Building Trades?
- What was the “American Plan” in the 1920s?

Section 2: Government Matters

- What was the impact of the Great Depression on the Building Trades?
- What was the impact of the set of national government policies known as the “New Deal” on the Building Trades?
- When did Registered Apprenticeship start and what event caused it to expand? Answer- Registered Apprenticeship started in 1911, and expanded following WWII. The Fitzgerald Act was enacted July 1, 1937.
- What is the purpose of the Fitzgerald Act? Answer- to provide uniform standards for Registered Apprenticeship; protect the rights of Apprentices; and encourage a relationship between Apprentices, Employers, and state agencies.
- What are the benefits to Apprenticeships being Registered and authorized by the Department of Labor? Answer- utilizes Government oversight for the protection of Apprentices and ensures high quality training and good working conditions. With the current regulations, employers know that an Apprentice will be highly qualified for the position.
- What role did the Building Trades play in World War Two? Was their contribution important in the effort to win the war?

Section 3: The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

- What was the Taft-Hartley Act and how did it impact the American labor movement?
- Why was it hard to “break into” the Trades in the post-war era? What was the impact of these exclusionary local practices on the Building Trades?
- Why did owners and contractors push for the “open shop” in the 1970s and 1980s? What was the impact of this movement on the Building Trades?

Section 4: Back to the Future

- How did the Building Trades respond to the “open shop” movement?
- What steps have the Building Trades taken to increase diversity among Building Trades members?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the Building Trades today?
- What did you learn from the interviews with Building Trades leaders in Chapter Six?