

Jane Addams (1860-1935)

"I recall an incident which must have occurred before I was seven years old, for the mill in which my father transacted his business that day was closed in 1867. The mill stood in the neighboring town, adjacent to its poorest quarter...On that day I had my first sight of the poverty which implies squalor...I remember launching at my father the pertinent inquiry why people lived in such horrid little houses so close together, and that after receiving his explanation, I declared with much firmness, when I grew up I should, of course, have a large house, but it would not be built among the other large houses, but right in the midst of horrid little houses like these.

... I gradually became convinced that it would be a good thing to rent a house in a part of the city where many primitive and actual needs are found, in which young women who had been given over too exclusively to study might restore a balance of activity along traditional lines and learn of life from life itself; where they might try out some of the things they had been taught and put truth to 'the ultimate test of the conduct it dictates or inspires.'" - Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*

Questions for Group Activity

1. Why did this experience have such a profound effect on Jane but not her father?
2. What do you think Jane meant in saying "learn of life from life itself"?
3. Make a list of the "primitive and actual needs" Jane may have witnessed in the city. Indicate whether those needs are valid or not valid today.

