

EXPLORING URBAN LIVING CONDITIONS

Name _____
U.S History, Goal 5

Document 1

Source: Letter from Adam Raczkowski to his sister.

Dear Sister,

As to the work, brother is working steadily and since the factory was burned I have had no work for a month and for another month I have had no work. During the two years I worked steadily for the same factory I had money, and now I earn hardly enough to live. I am working in the same factory as brother. I do carpenters work and earn two dollars a day. Work was good and well paid comma, but only if you work steadily, may God let me work this year during the summer in that factory and earn at least enough to live. Then by winter I shall have steady work.

Adam Raczkowski

Document 2

Jacob A. Riis, *How The Other Half Lives*, 1890

Here is a room neater than the rest. The woman, a stout matron with hard lines of care in her face, is at the washtub. "I try to keep the children clean," she says, apologetically, but with a hopeless glance around. The spice of hot soapsuds is added to the air already tainted with the smell of boiling cabbage, of rags and uncleanliness all about. It makes an overpowering compound. It is Thursday, but patched linen is hung upon the pulley line from the window. There is no Monday cleaning in the tenements. It is washday all the week round, for a change of clothing is scarce among the poor. They are poverty's honest badge, these perennial lines of rags hung out to dry, those that are not the washerman's professional shingle. The true line to be drawn between pauperism and honest poverty is the clothesline. With it begins the effort to be clean that is the first and the best evidence of a desire to be honest.

The two passages above were written by average urban citizens in the late 1800s. Briefly describe what urban living conditions were like. When/where/how did people work and live?
