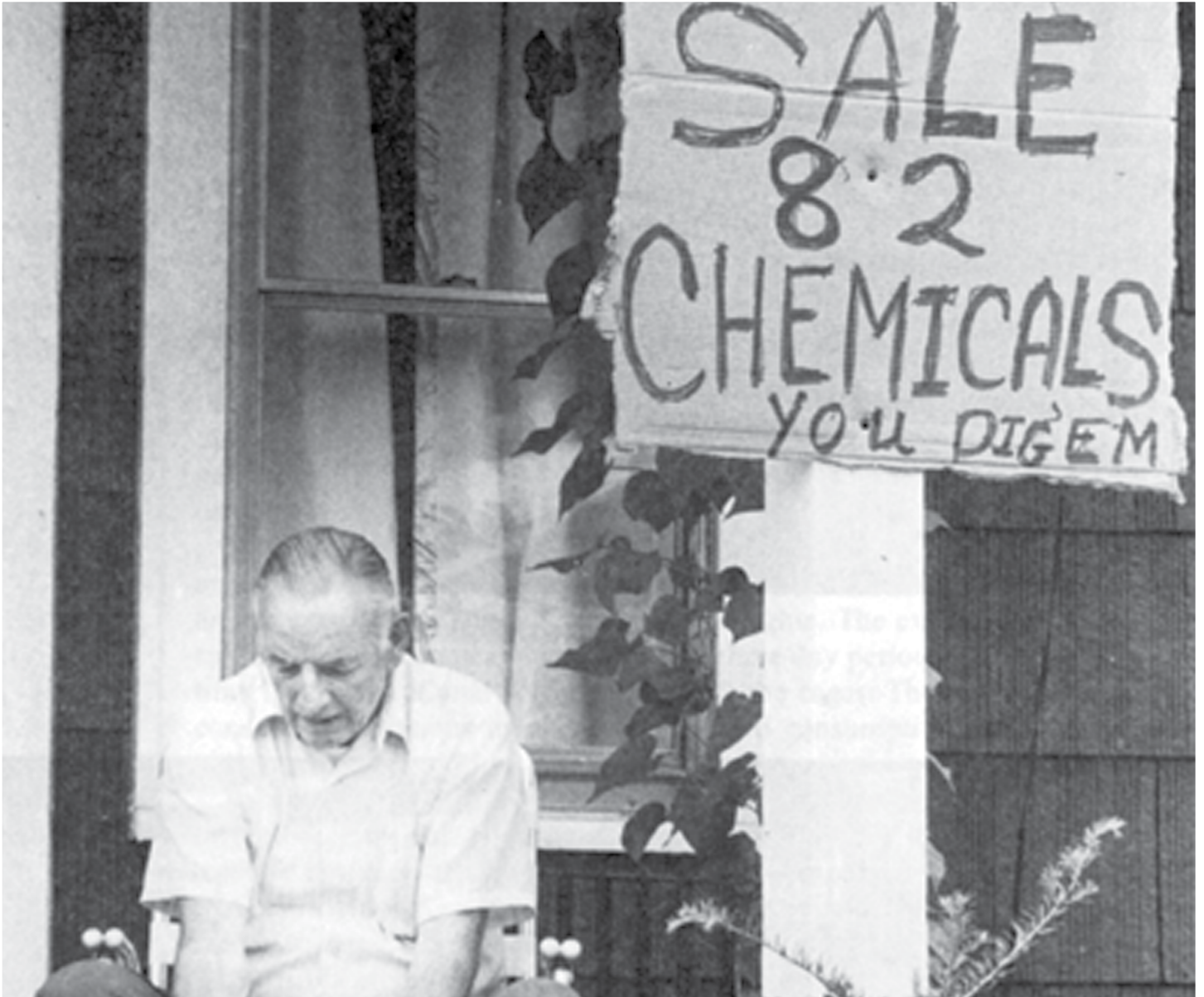


# Environmentalism, Love Canal, and Lois Gibbs, 1953–1997



*Photograph of a sign displayed by the Love Canal resident, 1978, by an unidentified photographer (University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York)*

## Environmentalism, Love Canal, and Lois Gibbs, 1953–1997

BY JOHN McNAMARA (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

*John McNamara taught social studies in New Jersey high schools for over thirty years. He is a project consultant for the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

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**GRADE LEVELS:** 9–12

**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** Four 45-minute classes

### UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary sources as well as sources that combine elements of primary and secondary sources. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

The four lessons in this unit explore an environmental disaster in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York. Students will analyze the causes of the Love Canal hazardous waste disaster, the ways that local environmental activists responded, and how journalists and the courts assigned responsibility. They will read government documents, accounts written by journalists and activists, and a court decision. You will assess students’ understanding through an essay.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary and secondary source documents using close-reading strategies
- Answer critical thinking questions
- Draw conclusions based on textual evidence
- Analyze an image for historical information
- Demonstrate effective analysis of chronological events
- Identify a key moment in American environmental history (e.g., Love Canal protests) and a key figure in the history of environmental activism (e.g., Lois Gibbs)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Who decided to bury toxic waste in and around Love Canal? Why?
- What were the consequences of living near a toxic waste dump for Love Canal's residents and property owners?
- Who did the courts task with paying for and cleaning up Love Canal's pollution?
- How did Love Canal's residents advocate for themselves? What did they want?
- What was the outcome for Love Canal's residents?

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: "Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2: "Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3: "Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4: "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6: "Compare the point of view of two or more for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8: "Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims."

## MATERIALS

- Source 1: Excerpts from Michael H. Brown, *Laying Waste: The Poisoning of America by Toxic Chemicals*, rev. ed. (1979; New York: Washington Square Press, 1981), pp. 5–11.
- Activity Sheet 1: Important Phrases
- Source 2: "Love Canal and Grassroots Environmental Activism" by Richard Newman, Professor of History, Rochester Institute of Technology
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions about "Love Canal and Grassroots Environmental Activism" by Richard Newman
- Source 3: Quit Claim Deed between the Hooker Electrochemical Company and the Board of Education of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, April 28, 1953. Niagara County, New York State, Deed Book 1106: 467. Available from the State University of New York at Buffalo, University Archives, Adeline Levine Love Canal Research Materials (Part I), 1953-1981, Box 1, Folder 12, Boniello, Ralph A., "Letter to the Board of Education," 5 May 1953, [findingaids.lib.buffalo.edu/repositories/2/archival\\_objects/20342](http://findingaids.lib.buffalo.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/20342).
- Source 4: Eckardt C. Beck, "The Love Canal Tragedy," *EPA Journal* 5, No. 1 (January 1979), 17–18, US Environmental Protection Agency website, [nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockkey=93000CMP.txt](http://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockkey=93000CMP.txt)
- Source 5: Conclusion, *United States v. Hooker Chemicals and Plastics Corporation*, United States District Court, Western District New York, Case No. 850 F. Supp. 993, March 17, 1994, pp. 71–72. Available from Nexis Lexis from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website, [extapps.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/932054/Report.HW.932054.1994-03-17.CaseSummaryAndCourtDecisionPg41.pdf](http://extapps.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/932054/Report.HW.932054.1994-03-17.CaseSummaryAndCourtDecisionPg41.pdf).

- Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking for Sources 3, 4, and 5
- Source 6: Lois Marie Gibbs, *Love Canal: My Story* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 15 and 22–23. Available on the Internet Archive, [archive.org/details/lovecanalmystory00gibb](https://archive.org/details/lovecanalmystory00gibb).
- Source 7: Lois Gibbs interview by EPA interviewer, August 11 and 29, 2005, in Falls Church, VA, pp. 9–13, *Superfund 25th Anniversary: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews*, US Environmental Protection Agency, [epa.gov/archive/epa/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/gibbs.pdf](https://epa.gov/archive/epa/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/gibbs.pdf)
- Source 8: Photograph of a sign displayed by the Love Canal resident, 1978, by an unidentified photographer, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
- Activity Sheet 4: Looking Back at the Love Canal Disaster

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## LOVE CANAL AND GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

by Richard Newman, Rochester Institute of Technology

On August 7, 1978, President Jimmy Carter issued an emergency declaration for the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York, where a buried dump had been leaking toxic waste into homes, sewers, and playgrounds. It was the first time that the federal government issued an emergency declaration for a human-made disaster. But Carter's edict also symbolized the growing importance of grassroots environmentalism. From that moment forward, Love Canal activists helped define a new era of environmental protest that focused on the chemical and industrial threats to Americans' daily living environments. As Lois Gibbs, a former resident and one of the leading activists declared, Love Canal proved that "ordinary citizens" could change the environmental status quo "by insisting that we be heard."<sup>1</sup>

Few Americans had ever heard of Love Canal before 1978. That changed after state and federal officials confirmed that the buried dump (which contained nearly 22,000 tons of toxic waste deposited by the Hooker Chemical Company in the 1940s and 1950s) posed a health threat. The New York State Health Department documented a range of illnesses (from asthma and epilepsy to nephrosis) and found an elevated risk for birth defects and miscarriages among women living on streets surrounding the buried dump. Love Canal was infamous. At that time, there were more than 900 families spread across a ten-block neighborhood. But government officials refused to evacuate everyone. Carter's emergency declaration relocated roughly a quarter of Love Canal families closest to the original dumping grounds; those farther away remained stuck.

Why such a limited response? There was little understanding of the public health perils associated with toxic waste in the 1970s—few epidemiological or scientific studies existed to guide government policy. Furthermore, there were no state or federal laws governing the remediation of abandoned hazardous waste sites. While Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) had raised concerns about chemical pollution, even waste management experts did not know how many toxic dumpsites existed. Only after Love Canal did Americans learn that there were at least 30,000 abandoned hazardous waste sites nationally.

At Love Canal, residents with little environmental expertise became powerful advocates of environmental reform. The Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA), which formed in August 1978, initially spoke to the concerns of property owners fearful about the toxic threats to their homes and families. But the LCHA (whose leading members were women) soon raised broader awareness about the perils of hazardous waste. The LCHA gave "toxic tours" to journalists illuminating the extent of chemical contamination in the neighborhood and conducted health studies to prove how many residents were impacted by toxic waste exposures. In an appeal to Congress, LCHA president Lois Gibbs urged the federal government to respond vigorously to the growing problem of hazardous waste, both at Love Canal and across America. But the LCHA was not the only activist group in the area. The Concerned Love Canal Renters Association (CLCRA) argued that renters in the Griffon Manor apartments—roughly 60 percent of whom were African Americans—had the same public health concerns as homeowners and should be included in all discussions about neighborhood evacuation. Led by Elene Thornton, the CLCRA made racial justice a key part of environmental activism at Love Canal. A third group, the Ecumenical Task Force (ETF), mobilized religious reformers and disaster-relief experts in support of reeling Love Canal residents. Though these groups clashed, they found ways to cooperate. Indeed, their collective activism forced federal politicians to see Love Canal not as an isolated disaster but as a sign of toxic hazards nationally.

By the early 1980s, Love Canal activists achieved two important goals. First, they won complete evacuation of the neighborhood. Second, they spurred congressional passage of Superfund, the first federal law aimed at remediating hazardous waste sites nationally. Since then, nearly 1200 toxic waste sites have been remediated, still another testament to Love Canal activism.<sup>2</sup>

*Richard Newman is a professor of history at Rochester Institute of Technology and the author of Love Canal: A Toxic History from Colonial Times to the Present (2016).*

<sup>1</sup> Lois Gibbs, *Love Canal: My Story* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Superfund Remedial Annual Accomplishments Metrics, Fiscal 2023 Report at [epa.gov/superfund/superfund-remedial-annual-accomplishments-metrics#deletion](https://epa.gov/superfund/superfund-remedial-annual-accomplishments-metrics#deletion)

## LESSON 1

### ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS, 1930–1980

BY JOHN McNAMARA (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will read two sources in order to build their background knowledge about the events and parties involved with the Love Canal disaster. The first document is based on articles written at the time of the crisis by a local reporter. The second is an essay written for this lesson by Rochester Institute of Technology historian Richard Newman, an expert on the Love Canal disaster.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary and secondary source documents using close-reading strategies
- Answer critical thinking questions
- Draw conclusions based on textual evidence
- Demonstrate effective analysis of chronological events
- Identify a key moment in American environmental history (e.g., Love Canal protests) and a key figure in the history of environmental activism (e.g., Lois Gibbs)

*John McNamara taught social studies in New Jersey high schools for over thirty years. He is a project consultant for the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

GRADE LEVELS: 9–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary sources as well as sources that combine elements of primary and secondary sources. The four lessons in this unit explore the environmental disaster in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York. Students will analyze the causes of the disaster, the ways local environmental activists responded, and how journalists and the courts assigned responsibility.

#### MATERIALS

- Source 1: Excerpts from Michael H. Brown, *Laying Waste: The Poisoning of America by Toxic Chemicals*, rev. ed. (1979; New York: Washington Square Press, 1981), pp. 5–11.
- Activity Sheet 1: Important Phrases
- Source 2: “Love Canal and Grassroots Environmental Activism” by Richard Newman, Professor of History, Rochester Institute of Technology
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions about “Love Canal and Grassroots Environmental Activism” by Richard Newman

#### PROCEDURE

1. Divide the class into “critical-thinking groups” of 3 to 5 students.

2. Distribute Source 1 and Activity Sheet 1. The first document that the students will be analyzing is an excerpt from an overview of the Love Canal disaster written by a local journalist in 1978. You may choose to have the students read the document in their small groups or “share read” it with the whole class. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read along with the students, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
3. The critical-thinking groups will read and discuss the main ideas and the evidence in the text, completing the Important Phrases activity sheet. They should reach a consensus on the important phrases and a rationale for each selection. Student groups can share their selections and conclusions with the other groups.
4. Distribute Source 2 and Activity Sheet 2. This reading, “Love Canal and Grassroots Environmental Activism,” is a historical background essay written by historian Richard Newman. After reading the essay, the students will answer the questions on the activity sheet. If you do not have time to complete this activity in class, it may be finished as homework and discussed as an introduction to the next lesson.
5. Finally, the students should answer the following question in their small groups or in a class discussion: Who decided to bury toxic waste in and around Love Canal? Why did they make that decision?

## LESSON 2

### ASSESSING RESPONSIBILITY, 1953–1994

BY JOHN McNAMARA (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will analyze three primary sources that illustrate three key aspects of the Love Canal disaster. These represent a primary source–based timeline for the students to examine focusing on the groundwork for the crisis, an EPA evaluation of the disastrous results, and the resolution by the legal system.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources using close-reading strategies
- Answer critical thinking questions
- Draw conclusions based on textual evidence
- Demonstrate effective analysis of chronological events

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GRADE LEVELS: 9–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary sources as well as sources that combine elements of primary and secondary sources. The four lessons in this unit explore the environmental disaster in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York. Students will analyze the causes of the disaster, the ways local environmental activists responded, and how journalists and the courts assigned responsibility.

#### MATERIALS

- Source 3: Quit Claim Deed between the Hooker Electrochemical Company and the Board of Education of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, April 28, 1953. Niagara County, New York State, Deed Book 1106: 467. Available from the State University of New York at Buffalo, University Archives, Adeline Levine Love Canal Research Materials (Part I), 1953-1981, Box 1, Folder 12, Boniello, Ralph A., "Letter to the Board of Education," 5 May 1953, [findingaids.lib.buffalo.edu/repositories/2/archival\\_objects/20342](http://findingaids.lib.buffalo.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/20342).
- Source 4: Eckardt C. Beck, "The Love Canal Tragedy," *EPA Journal* 5, No. 1 (January 1979), 17–18, US Environmental Protection Agency website, [nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockey=93000CMP.txt](http://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockey=93000CMP.txt)
- Source 5: Conclusion, *United States v. Hooker Chemicals and Plastics Corporation*, United States District Court, Western District New York, Case No. 850 F. Supp. 993, March 17, 1994, pp. 71–72. Available from Nexis Lexis from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website, [extapps.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/932054/Report.HW.932054.1994-03-17.CaseSummaryAndCourtDecisionPg41.pdf](http://extapps.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/932054/Report.HW.932054.1994-03-17.CaseSummaryAndCourtDecisionPg41.pdf).
- Activity Sheet 1: Important Phrases
- Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking for Sources 3, 4, and 5

#### PROCEDURE

1. Assemble the students into their critical-thinking groups. If you think that the readings are above the reading level of your students you can share read them as a class as described in Lesson 1.



2. Distribute the three texts—Sources 3, 4, and 5—and one copy of Activity Sheet 1 to every student. Assign each group one of the three documents to analyze (Source 3, 4, or 5). Together, the students in the group will select three important phrases, develop a rationale for each choice, and summarize the document.
3. Each group will now share their summaries with the class. Students should take notes on each others' presentations (which they can do on the back of their own copies of Activity Sheet 1) so all students have an understanding of all three sources.
4. After each group has shared their summaries the students will complete Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking Questions.

## LESSON 3

### GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM, 1978

BY JOHN McNAMARA (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will analyze two sources that give a more personal perspective on the Love Canal disaster. Lois Gibbs was a resident of Love Canal whose effort to bring justice to her community was one of the first examples of grassroots environmental activism.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary and secondary source documents using close-reading strategies
- Answer critical thinking questions
- Draw conclusions based on textual evidence
- Demonstrate effective analysis of chronological events
- Identify a key moment in American environmental history (e.g., Love Canal protests) and a key figure in the history of environmental activism (e.g., Lois Gibbs)

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GRADE LEVELS: 9–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary sources as well as sources that combine elements of primary and secondary sources. The four lessons in this unit explore the environmental disaster in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York. Students will analyze the causes of the disaster, the ways local environmental activists responded, and how journalists and the courts assigned responsibility.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Who decided to bury toxic waste in and around Love Canal? Why?
- What were the consequences of living near a toxic waste dump for Love Canal's residents and property owners?
- Who did the courts task with paying for and cleaning up Love Canal's pollution?
- How did Love Canal's residents advocate for themselves? What did they want?
- What was the outcome for Love Canal's residents?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 6: Lois Marie Gibbs, *Love Canal: My Story* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 15 and 22–23. Available on the Internet Archive, [archive.org/details/lovecanalmystory00gibb](https://archive.org/details/lovecanalmystory00gibb).
- Source 7: Lois Gibbs interview by EPA interviewer, August 11 and 29, 2005 in Falls Church, VA, pp. 9–13, *Superfund 25th Anniversary: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews*, US Environmental Protection Agency, [epa.gov/archive/epa/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/gibbs.pdf](https://epa.gov/archive/epa/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/gibbs.pdf)
- Activity Sheet 1: Important Phrases
- Sources 1–5

- Completed Activity Sheets 1–3

## PROCEDURE

1. As a motivating activity, start with a class reading of Source 6, Lois Gibbs's account of how she discovered the scale of health concerns that were arising in her neighborhood, which was very close to two local schools. You might ask the class:
  - a. Why do you think Lois Gibbs talked to neighbor after neighbor?
  - b. What pattern did Gibbs notice?
  - c. What does the last sentence in this passage mean?
2. Assemble the students into their critical-thinking groups and distribute Source 7, an interview with Lois Gibbs conducted in 2005, twenty-five years after the events took place, along with two copies of Activity Sheet 1 for each student. You may choose to share the interview with the class.
3. Source 7 has been divided into six parts. Each group will be given two parts to read. They will then complete Activity Sheet 1: Important Phrases for each part.
4. Each group will now share their summaries with the class beginning with Source 7, parts A and B, then C and D, and finally E and F. The students should take notes on the summaries of the parts of the interview that they did not analyze, so that all the students have an understanding of the complete document.
5. After each group has shared their summaries, lead a discussion that ties all of the sources together, including those discussed in Lessons 1 and 2. You may use the Essential Questions to direct the discussion.

## LESSON 4

### UNDERSTANDING THE HARM

BY JOHN McNAMARA (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

This lesson provides a summative evaluation for the unit. The students will use all of the information and analysis from the preceding lessons, as well as a historical photograph, to develop a short essay. They will use the sources and activity sheets as well as class discussions to draw conclusions supported by the evidence.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary and secondary source documents using close-reading strategies
- Answer critical thinking questions
- Draw conclusions based on textual evidence
- Analyze an image for historical information
- Demonstrate effective analysis of chronological events
- Identify a key moment in American environmental history (e.g., Love Canal protests) and a key figure in the history of environmental activism (e.g., Lois Gibbs)

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GRADE LEVELS: 9–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary sources as well as sources that combine elements of primary and secondary sources. The four lessons in this unit explore the environmental disaster in the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York. Students will analyze the causes of the disaster, the ways local environmental activists responded, and how journalists and the courts assigned responsibility.

#### MATERIALS

- Source 8: Photograph of a sign displayed by the Love Canal resident, 1978, by an unidentified photographer, University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
- Activity Sheet 4: Looking Back at the Love Canal Disaster
- Sources 1–7
- Completed Activity Sheets 1–3

#### PROCEDURE

1. Display or distribute Source 8, a photograph taken in the Love Canal neighborhood in 1978.
2. Students should have access to Sources 1–7 as well as their accompanying completed activity sheets.

3. Give students Activity Sheet 4 with the following directions:

Explain the following, supporting your statements with evidence from the sources:

- What harms did Love Canal's residents endure?
- What measures did they take to advocate for themselves?
- Describe at least one way corporations and/or the government responded or failed to respond to the environmental disaster at Love Canal.

Then describe the features in the photograph of a Love Canal resident in 1978 that exemplify all of the above.

## Source 1

Excerpts from Michael H. Brown, *Laying Waste: Love Canal and the Poisoning of America*, 1979

Beginning in the late 1930s or early 1940s (no one could be sure just when), the Hooker Company, whose many processes included the manufacture of pesticides, plasticizers, and caustic soda, had used the canal as a dump for at least 21,800 tons of waste residues—“still bottoms,” in the language of the trade. The chemical garbage was brought to the excavation in fifty-five-gallon metal barrels stacked on a small dump truck and was unloaded into what, up to that time, had been a fishing and swimming hole in the summer and an ice-skating rink during the city’s long, hard winter months.

When the hazardous dumping first began, much of the surrounding terrain was meadowlands and orchards, but there was also a small cluster of homes on the immediate periphery, only thirty feet from the ditch. Those who lived there remembered the deep holes being filled with what appeared to be oil and gray mud by laborers who rushed to borrow their garden hoses for a dousing of water if they came in contact with the scalding sludge they were dumping. Children enjoyed playing among the intriguing, unguarded debris. They would pick up chunks of phosphorus and heave them against cement. Upon impact the “fire rocks,” as they were called, would brilliantly explode, sending off a trail of white sparks. Fires and explosions erupted spontaneously when the weather was especially hot and odors similar to those of the industrial districts wafted into adjacent windows, accompanied by gusts of fly ash. On a humid moonlit night, residents would look across the canal and see, in the haze above the soil, a greenish luminescence. . . .

[In 1977], while working as a reporter for a local newspaper, the *Niagara Gazette*, I began to inquire regularly about the strange conditions on 99th Street. The Niagara County Health Department and the city both said it was a nuisance condition but no serious danger to the people. The Hooker Company refused to comment on their chemicals, claiming only that they had no records of the burials and that the problem was not their responsibility. In fact, Hooker had deeded the land to the Niagara Falls Board of Education in 1953 for a token one dollar. At the time the company issued no detailed warnings about the chemicals; a brief paragraph in the quitclaim document disclaimed company liability for any injuries or deaths that might occur at the site. (Ralph Boniello, the Board’s attorney, said that he had never received any phone calls or letters specifically describing the exact nature of the refuse and its potential effects, nor was there, as the company was later to claim, any threat of property condemnation by the Board in order to secure the land. “We had no idea what was in there,” Boniello said.)

Though surely Hooker must have been relieved to rid itself of the contaminated land, when I read the deed, I was left with the impression that the wastes there would be a hazard only if physically touched or swallowed. Otherwise, they did not seem to be an overwhelming concern. In reality, the dangers of these wastes far exceeded those of acids or alkalines or inert salts. The drums dumped in the canal contained a veritable witch’s brew of chemistry, compounds of truly remarkable toxicity. There were solvents that attacked the heart and liver, and residues from pesticides so dangerous that their commercial sale had subsequently been restricted or banned outright by the government.

Yet Hooker gave no more than a hint of that. When approached by the educational board for the parcel of property it wanted for a new school, B. Klausen, then Hooker’s executive vice-president, replied in a convivial letter to the board:

Our officers have carefully considered your request. We are very conscious of the need for new elementary schools and realize that sites must be carefully selected so that they will best serve the area involved. . . . We are anxious to cooperate . . . [and] have, therefore, come to the conclusion that this location is the most desirable one for this purpose; we will be willing to donate the entire strip.

The school board, apparently unaware of the exact nature of the substances underneath this generously donated property, and woefully incurious, began to build the new school and playground at the canal’s midsection. Construction progressed even after the workers struck a drainage trench that gave off a strong chemical odor and then discovered a waste pit nearby. Instead of halting the work, the Board simply had the school site moved eighty feet away. Young families began to settle in increasing numbers

alongside the dump; many of them had been told that the field was to be a park and recreation area for the children. . . .

In 1958, the company was made aware that three children had been burned by exposed residues on the surface of the canal, much of which, according to local residents, had been covered over with nothing more than fly ash and loose dirt. Because it wished to avoid legal repercussions, the company chose not to issue a public warning of the dangers only it could have known were there, nor to have its chemists explain to the people that their homes would have been better placed elsewhere.

The Love Canal was simply unfit to be a container for hazardous substances, even by the standards of the day, and now, in 1977, the local authorities were belatedly finding that out. Several years of heavy snowfall and rain had filled the sparsely covered channel like a sponge. The contents were overflowing at a frightening rate, seeping readily into the clay, silt, and sandy loam and finding their way through old creek beds and swales into the neighborhood.

The city of Niagara Falls, I was assured, was planning a remedial drainage program to reduce chemical migration off the site. But it was apparent that no sense of urgency had been attached to the plan, and it was stalled in a ball of red tape. There was hopeless disagreement over who should pay the bill—the city, Hooker, or the board of education—and the engineers seemed confused as to what exactly needed to be done for a problem that had never been confronted elsewhere.

*Source: Michael H. Brown, Laying Waste: Love Canal and the Poisoning of America, rev. ed. (1979; New York: Washington Square Press, 1981), pp. 5–11.*

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NAME

PERIOD

DATE

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## Activity Sheet 1

### Important Phrases

Title of Document:

*Important Phrases: Which are the most important or powerful phrases or sentences in this document? Choose 3 and explain why you chose each of them.*

Phrase 1:

Why is this phrase or sentence important or powerful?

Phrase 2:

Why is this phrase or sentence important or powerful?

Phrase 3:

Why is this phrase or sentence important or powerful?

Using your analysis of the phrases/sentences as evidence, summarize the document:



## Source 2: Historical Background

### Love Canal and Grassroots Environmental Activism

by Richard Newman, Rochester Institute of Technology

On August 7, 1978, President Jimmy Carter issued an emergency declaration for the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York, where a buried dump had been leaking toxic waste into homes, sewers, and playgrounds. It was the first time that the federal government issued an emergency declaration for a human-made disaster. But Carter's edict also symbolized the growing importance of grassroots environmentalism. From that moment forward, Love Canal activists helped define a new era of environmental protest that focused on the chemical and industrial threats to Americans' daily living environments. As Lois Gibbs, a former resident and one of the leading activists declared, Love Canal proved that "ordinary citizens" could change the environmental status quo "by insisting that we be heard."<sup>1</sup>

Few Americans had ever heard of Love Canal before 1978. That changed after state and federal officials confirmed that the buried dump (which contained nearly 22,000 tons of toxic waste deposited by the Hooker Chemical Company in the 1940s and 1950s) posed a health threat. The New York State Health Department documented a range of illnesses (from asthma and epilepsy to nephrosis) and found an elevated risk for birth defects and miscarriages among women living on streets surrounding the buried dump. Love Canal was infamous. At that time, there were more than 900 families spread across a ten-block neighborhood. But government officials refused to evacuate everyone. Carter's emergency declaration relocated roughly a quarter of Love Canal families closest to the original dumping grounds; those farther away remained stuck.

Why such a limited response? There was little understanding of the public health perils associated with toxic waste in the 1970s—few epidemiological or scientific studies existed to guide government policy. Furthermore, there were no state or federal laws governing the remediation of abandoned hazardous waste sites. While Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) had raised concerns about chemical pollution, even waste management experts did not know how many toxic dumpsites existed. Only after Love Canal did Americans learn that there were at least 30,000 abandoned hazardous waste sites nationally.

At Love Canal, residents with little environmental expertise became powerful advocates of environmental reform. The Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA), which formed in August 1978, initially spoke to the concerns of property owners fearful about the toxic threats to their homes and families. But the LCHA (whose leading members were women) soon raised broader awareness about the perils of hazardous waste. The LCHA gave "toxic tours" to journalists illuminating the extent of chemical contamination in the neighborhood and conducted health studies to prove how many residents were impacted by toxic waste exposures. In an appeal to Congress, LCHA president Lois Gibbs urged the federal government to respond vigorously to the growing problem of hazardous waste, both at Love Canal and across America. But the LCHA was not the only activist group in the area. The Concerned Love Canal Renters Association (CLCRA) argued that renters in the Griffon Manor apartments—roughly 60 percent of whom were African Americans—had the same public health concerns as homeowners and should be included in all discussions about neighborhood evacuation. Led by Elene Thornton, the CLCRA made racial justice a key part of environmental activism at Love Canal. A third group, the Ecumenical Task Force (ETF), mobilized religious reformers and disaster-relief experts in support of reeling Love Canal residents. Though these groups clashed, they found ways to cooperate. Indeed, their collective activism forced federal politicians to see Love Canal not as an isolated disaster but as a sign of toxic hazards nationally.

By the early 1980s, Love Canal activists achieved two important goals. First, they won complete evacuation of the neighborhood. Second, they spurred congressional passage of Superfund, the first federal law aimed at remediating hazardous waste sites nationally. Since then, nearly 1200 toxic waste sites have been remediated, still another testament to Love Canal activism.<sup>2</sup>

*Source: Richard Newman is a professor of history at Rochester Institute of Technology and the author of Love Canal: A Toxic History from Colonial Times to the Present (2016).*

<sup>1</sup> Lois Gibbs, *Love Canal: My Story* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Superfund Remedial Annual Accomplishments Metrics, Fiscal 2023 Report at [epa.gov/superfund/superfund-remedial-annual-accomplishments-metrics#deletion](https://epa.gov/superfund/superfund-remedial-annual-accomplishments-metrics#deletion)



## Source 3

**Quit Claim Deed between the Hooker Electrochemical Company and the Board of Education of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, April 28, 1953**

This Indenture made the 28th day of April Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-three Between Hooker Electrochemical Company, . . . party of the first part, and the Board of Education of the School District of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, party of the second part; Witnesseth that the party of the first part, in consideration of One Dollar, (\$1.00) . . . paid by the party of the second part, does hereby remise, release, and quitclaim unto the party of the second part, its successors and assigns forever, all that tract or parcel of land situate[d] in the City of Niagara Falls, County of Niagara and State of New York, being part of Lot number sixty (60) of the Mile Reserve. . . .

Prior to the delivery of this instrument of conveyance, the grantee herein has been advised by the grantor that the premises above described have been filled, in whole or in part, to the present grade level thereof with waste products resulting from the manufacturing of chemicals by the grantor at its plant in the City of Niagara Falls, New York, and the grantee assumes all risk and liability incident to the use thereof. It is, therefore, understood and agreed that, as a part of the consideration for this conveyance and as a condition thereof, no claim, suit, action or demand of any nature whatsoever shall ever be made by the grantee, its successors or assigns, against the grantor, its successors or assigns, for injury to a person or persons, including death resulting therefrom, or loss of or damage to property caused by, in connection with or by reason of the presence of said industrial wastes. It is further agreed as a condition hereof that each subsequent conveyance of the aforesaid lands shall be made subject to the foregoing provisions and conditions.

*Source: State University of New York at Buffalo, University Archives, Adeline Levine Love Canal Research Materials (Part I), 1953-1981, Box 1, Folder 12, Boniello, Ralph A., "Letter to the Board of Education," 5 May 1953.*

#### Source 4

### Excerpts from Eckardt C. Beck (Administrator of EPA Region 2), “The Love Canal Tragedy,” 1979

It is a cruel irony that Love Canal was originally meant to be a dream community. . . .

In the late [19]50’s, about 100 homes and a school were built at the site. Perhaps it wasn’t William T. Love’s model city, but it was a solid, working-class community. For a while.

On the first day of August, 1978, the lead paragraph of a front-page story in the New York Times read:

Niagara Falls, N.Y. — Twenty-five years after the Hooker Chemical Company stopped using the Love Canal here as an industrial dump, 82 different compounds, 11 of them suspected carcinogens, have been percolating upward through the soil, their drum containers rotting and leaching their contents into the backyards and basements of 100 homes and a public school built on the banks of the canal. . . .

I visited the canal area at that time. Corroding waste-disposal drums could be seen breaking up through the grounds of backyards. Trees and gardens were turning black and dying. One entire swimming pool had been popped from its foundation, afloat now on a small sea of chemicals. Puddles of noxious substances were pointed out to me by residents. Some of these puddles were in their yards, some were in their basements, others yet were on the school grounds. Everywhere the air had a faint, choking smell. Children returned from play with burns on their hands and faces.

And then there were the birth defects. The New York State Department of Health is continuing an investigation into a disturbingly high rate of miscarriages, along with five birth-defect cases detected thus far in the area. . . .

A large percentage of people in Love Canal are also being closely observed because of detected high white-blood-cell counts, a possible precursor of leukemia. . . .

“We knew they put chemicals into the canal and filled it over,” said one woman, a long-time resident of the Canal area, “but we had no idea the chemicals would invade our homes. We’re worried sick about the grandchildren and their children.”

Two of this woman’s four grandchildren have birth defects. The children were born and raised in the Love Canal community. A granddaughter was born deaf with a cleft palate, an extra row of teeth, and slight retardation. A grandson was born with an eye defect. . . .

On August 7, [1978], New York Governor Hugh Carey announced to the residents of the Canal that the State Government would purchase the homes affected by chemicals.

On that same day, President [Jimmy] Carter approved emergency financial aid for the Love Canal area (the first emergency funds ever to be approved for something other than a “natural” disaster). . . .

By month’s end, 98 families had already been evacuated. Another 46 had found temporary housing. Soon after, all families would be gone from the most contaminated areas—a total of 221 families have moved or agreed to be moved.

State figures show more than 200 purchase offers have been made, totalling nearly \$7 million.

A plan is being set in motion now to implement technical procedures designed to meet the seemingly impossible job of detoxifying the Canal area. . . .

I have been very pleased with the high degree of cooperation in this case among local, State, and Federal governments, and with the swiftness by which the Congress and the President have acted to make funds available. . . .

*Source: Eckardt C. Beck, “The Love Canal Tragedy,” EPA Journal 5, No. 1 (January 1979): 17–18.*

### Source 5

#### Conclusion, *United States v. Hooker Chemicals and Plastics Corporation*, March 17, 1994

Upon detailed consideration of the entire record, the court finds that while the State documented many specific instances of Hooker's negligence, it has failed to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that Hooker's actions and omissions in operating the Love Canal landfill or transferring it to the City of Niagara Falls School Board for use as school and park grounds displayed a reckless disregard for the safety of others. Hooker's decision to landfill its chemical wastes, its choice and maintenance of the site, and its method of disposal operation all comported with the available knowledge and industry practice of the time. While the Company should have made greater efforts to keep local residents off the property, it violated no ordinance or legal obligation in failing to do so. It responded to complaints about odors, fires, and exposures to chemicals whenever notified, and there was no evidence of injury during the disposal operations that would have signaled a compelling need to provide more protection.

Hooker agreed to transfer the property to the School Board, despite the misgivings of some of its managers, when it became convinced that the rapid population growth in the surrounding area both created the need for a school and ended the site's usefulness as a landfill. The Company disclosed to the Board that many dangerous chemicals were buried at the site, and the ground would have to be maintained properly and not excavated. Hooker did not disclose the composition and amounts of chemical residues buried. While it is likely that this type of disclosure would have given the Board a better understanding of the responsibility they accepted, there is no indication that this information was either sought or deliberately withheld. The sparse record of the negotiations which led up to the transfer makes it difficult for the court to fix blame at this juncture.

Although Hooker's activities after the transfer were clearly unacceptable by present standards and at times violative of common sense, in general, given the state of scientific knowledge and the legal principles of that time, they did not exhibit the degree of recklessness which would warrant a punitive damages award. The Company's failure to respond adequately to the likelihood of serious harm once it learned that children were playing with and being injured by the waste materials argues strongly that Hooker disregarded a threat to public safety. The Company was clearly negligent in failing to warn the Board that chemicals had been dumped in the central section at the proposed site of the school and to inform the Board that many of the chemical-laden barrels were so shallowly buried that subsidence would inevitably expose them and their contents. However, after the transfer, the Company responded to calls for assistance in dealing with incidents of exposure and no immediate, serious injury or damage was reported. By contemporaneous property law precepts, Hooker's legal duties as a seller were very limited. The Company asserted clearly and consistently that the transfer removed its legal responsibility for the site.

Nevertheless, Hooker had superior knowledge about the health hazards of exposure to such substances as lindane wastes which it never disclosed to either the Board or the community. Even though there was a general awareness that dangerous chemicals were buried in the ground, the threat to the children's health was at least partially latent, because the current users of the property did not know what the residues were nor the type of ill effects they could cause. Incidents of exposure should have put the Company on notice that exposure would most likely continue and result in serious illness. At that point, Hooker should have provided more detailed information and sounded an alarm. The history of Hooker's failure to come forward makes for a strong argument that it showed a wanton disregard for the health and safety of others.

However, it is necessary to consider the many factors which have been previously discussed. Noted again is the very slim support for the State's position that the common law gives a governmental entity the right to sue for punitive damage. Since 1950, both state and federal legislatures have enacted many environmental laws but have chosen to punish by criminal statutes and fines rather than civil punitive damages, in spite of extensive discussion and legislation. Furthermore, actual awards of punitive damage are rare in the absence of conclusive evidence of serious injury or deliberate flaunting of regulatory standards. There is no evidence of either in this record. Additional evidence of damage and wrongdoing may yet be produced in Phase II, but the court must make a decision on the present record, which the

passage of time left woefully incomplete for many of the crucial events by which intent could be inferred.

Considering all of these circumstances, the court finds that the State has failed to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that Hooker's conduct at Love Canal met the Roginsky standard necessary for an award of punitive damages. The court emphasizes that this verdict does not signify approval of Hooker's conduct. Hooker was negligent on a number of occasions as the court has already noted. But a finding of outrageous conduct and reckless or wanton disregard of the safety of others requires more. And the conduct must be judged by the law in force at the time of action or inaction. There are further proceedings in this case. Hooker's conduct as set forth in this decision will be considered a part of that future record, if appropriate.

So ordered.

John T. Curtin, United States District Judge

March 17, 1994

*Source: Conclusion, United States v. Hooker Chemicals and Plastics Corporation, United States District Court, Western District New York, Case No. 850 F. Supp. 993, March 17, 1994, pp. 71–72.*



## Source 6

Excerpts from Lois Gibbs, *Love Canal: My Story* (1982)

As I proceeded down 99th Street, I developed a set speech. I would tell people what I wanted. But the speech wasn't all that necessary. It seemed as though every home on 99th Street had someone with an illness. One family had a young daughter with arthritis. They couldn't understand why she had it at her age. Another daughter had had a miscarriage. The father, still a fairly young man, had had a heart attack. I went to the next house, and there, people would tell me their troubles. People were reaching out; they were telling me their troubles in hopes I would do something. But I didn't know anything to do. I was also confused. I just wanted to stop children from going to that school. Now look at all those other health problems! Maybe they were related to the canal. But even if they were, what could I do? . . .

There were so many unbelievable things about the situation. In one house, a divorced woman with four children showed me a letter from the New York State Health Department. It was a thank-you letter, and a check was enclosed. I asked the woman what the check was for. She said the health department had contacted her and asked if her son would go onto Love Canal proper, find two "hot" rocks, and put them in the jars they sent her. She had been instructed to give the rocks to Dr. Vianna or to someone at the 99th Street School headquarters of the health department. The so-called hot rocks were phosphorus rocks that the children would pick up and throw against cement, and, in the process, burn themselves. The rocks would pop like firecrackers. It amused the kids; but some had been burned on the eyes and skin. I just couldn't understand how a supposedly responsible agency would send an eleven-year-old child into a potentially dangerous area such as Love Canal and ask him [to] pick up something there that could harm him. To get the rocks, he had to climb a snow fence put there to keep children out. It amazed me that the health department would do such a thing. They are supposed to protect people's health, and here they were jeopardizing an innocent child. I used to have a lot of faith in officials, especially doctors and experts. Now I was losing that faith—fast!

*Source: Lois Marie Gibbs, Love Canal: My Story (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 15 and 22–23.*



### Source 7 (A and B)

#### Lois Gibbs interview, August 11 and 29, 2005

- A. We really turned it into a political issue, because we realized, by 1979, we realized that this is not a scientific issue. That we have shown how the chemicals have moved out, we had readings, like in my home that had seven different chemicals in the air of the basement. We had demonstrated, we thought, fairly clearly about the connection between where the chemicals potentially were leaking based on old photos and testimony from historical residents, and the clustering of disease and nobody wanted to address it. They didn't want to address it because of the huge cost. If they did something at Love Canal, they're gonna have to do something at the other hundreds of sites across New York, but more importantly across the country. And so we decided we had to fight it politically. That the science is there; they're choosing not to use the science. So we went after Governor Hugh Kerry [Carey], who was up for reelection once again, and really turned it into a political fight. And I think everybody who knows anything about Love Canal says, "Well that was a political fight. There really wasn't any hard science attached to it." And the truth of the matter is, it was a political fight, but there was hard science that people just chose to ignore.
- B. And people just got angrier and angrier. By May of 1980, if you were pregnant or had a child under the age of two, you could leave with financial assistance. Both elementary schools, the 99th Street School, which was on the perimeter of the site, and the 93rd Street School, which was just north of the site, were closed, so your children were bussed out of the neighborhood everyday for school. We were told not to go in our backyard. We were told not to plant a garden, and God forbid, don't eat out of your garden. Women were told—most of us had basements except for 100th Street—if you insisted on doing laundry and going downstairs in your basement, you should go down quickly and throw your laundry in and come back up. These basements were bedrooms and recreation rooms for people. I had a pool table down in mine. There was a whole list of things that we were told that we couldn't do, and then in the end of it they said, "It's perfectly safe to live at Love Canal." Well, how could you live at Love Canal when your children can't go outdoors and you can't go in the basement and everybody who lives in a northern community with forced air heat understands what's in the basement is also upstairs in your bedrooms? It was just unbelievable. There was just so much fear on government's part of setting a precedent that they were just setting up this stuff that was just—it was just impossible to function as a family.

*Source: Lois Gibbs interview by EPA interviewer, August 11 and 29, 2005 in Falls Church, VA, pp. 9–10, Superfund 25th Anniversary: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews, US Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov>*

### Source 7 (C and D)

#### Lois Gibbs interview, August 11 and 29, 2005

- C. One thing I learned very early on is that when people are angry they will target the leader, so I always learned that what you need to do is find another target, so you don't become the target. So I said, "Look, this is what we'll do. I will call the EPA representative. They're in a hotel here. . . . So Frank Nepal comes over to the Love Canal, and I'm like, "Frank, what are you doing here? Where's Dr. Lucas?" "Well, he's back at the hotel." "Why is he back at the hotel? We don't want to talk to public relations people; we're done with public relations; finished with public relations. Bring Dr. Lucas here."

So he calls him up. He goes into our office and calls him up, and then when the doctor came in, the families said, "To hell with them. If it's so damn safe to live here, these two fools can live here." And so they literally encircled [the building], and this was ad hoc. It wasn't planned. They encircled the building with 500 people, only bodies. So here I have Nepal and Lucas in this office and a bunch of core leadership and I'm like, "OK, let's clear the inside of this house, only two leadership, [and] somebody call the lawyer, because I think we're going to need bail money, and just clear out the house."

- D. And then the women were like, "Well, what do we do?" I said, "Why don't you go make some sandwiches and make some cookies? Let's get some lunch." It's like, "I don't know what to do here." And I called the White House. We had a contact in the White House that we had been working with and Bob Harris from CEQ we were also working with—he was very involved in it. And so I called the White House and said, "We're holding two EPA representatives hostage here. We thought we would let you know." What else do you do?

And so the woman asked me to hold, and then she went away and then she came back and she said the guy who was calling, who I don't remember—I want to say it was Jack Watson but I can't remember absolutely—that he was in a meeting and that he would get back to me. I was like, well, fine, I don't care. Dr. Lucas was with the Centers for Disease Control. So I hung up the phone, and then Frank Nepal was there, and he was telling us how he used to be involved in the Vietnam War protests, so he thought it was kind of cool, being held hostage. He wasn't at all nervous. Well, Dr. Lucas was going to have a heart attack.

*Source: Lois Gibbs interview by EPA interviewer, August 11 and 29, 2005 in Falls Church, VA, pp. 10–11, Superfund 25th Anniversary: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews, US Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov>*

### Source 7 (E and F)

#### Lois Gibbs interview, August 11 and 29, 2005

- E. There were little old ladies with those pink spongy rollers in their hair on Colvin Boulevard, which runs across the neighborhood to a shopping mall with lots of different stores, and they were stopping cars and rocking cars. These little old ladies with these pink rollers! I'm looking out the window and they're rocking the car and they're saying, "You can't go through here. Nobody in government will say it's dangerous but I'm telling you, it's dangerous! Now you turn your car around and you go the long way around. You're not going."

And I'm thinking, "Oh, my God." And then there was one of my core leaders who was [an] incredibly conservative, fundamental Christian who was out there with a gasoline can writing "EPA" in the grass with gas and lighting it! This was like, "What are you doing?" I mean, that's where they were. It was an incredibly intense and dangerous—and I recognized the danger of what was going on, but I had no clue what to do.

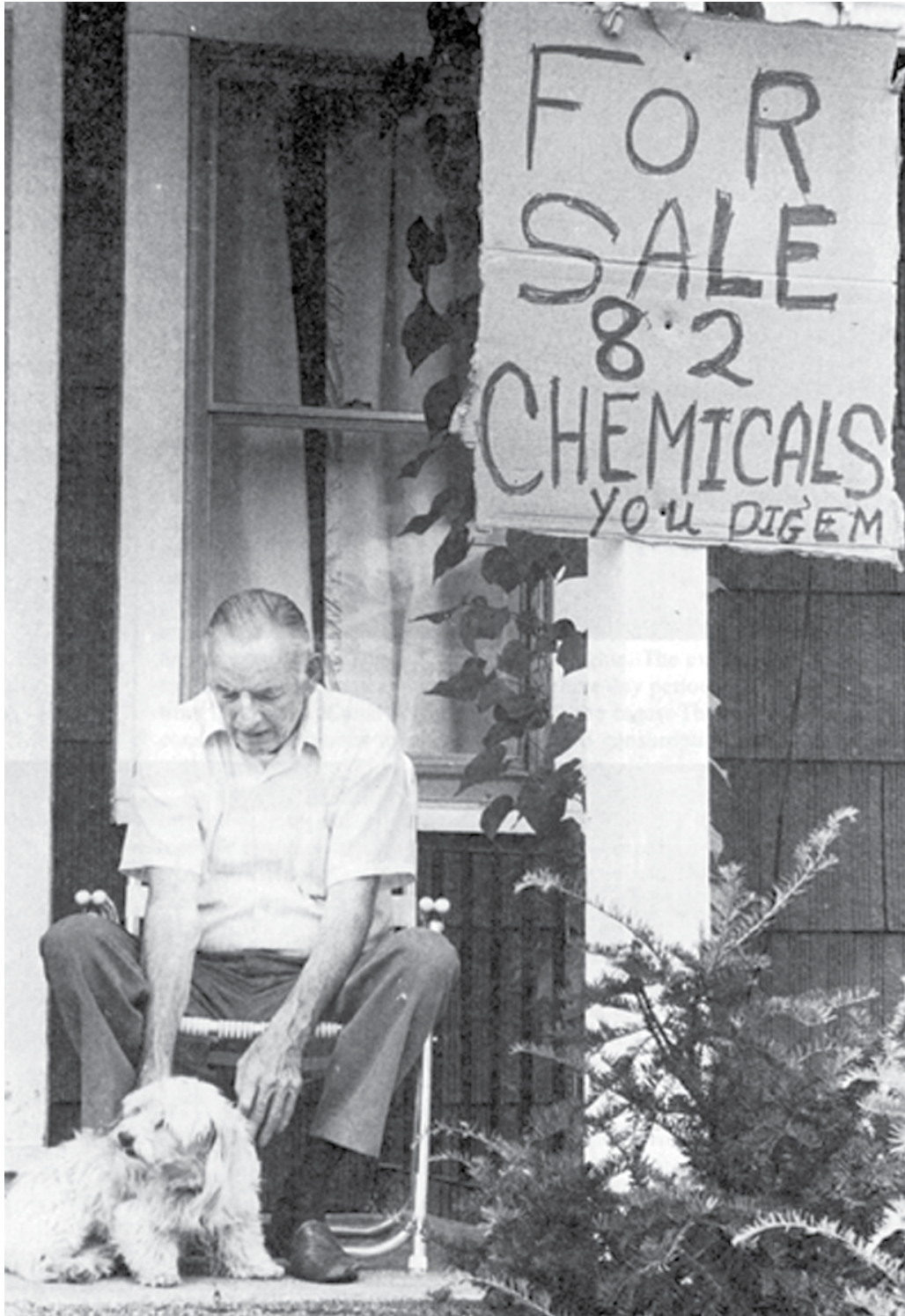
In the meantime, the FBI are on the phone, "Let them go. If you don't let them go," It's like, "You're not helpful. Help me figure out how to get out of this! I can't. I don't know how to get out of this. I didn't create it. It just happened, and how do I get out?" And then we had one of these local residents—every neighborhood has a lunatic, and we had a couple of them—and one of the lunatics comes, and he comes up to the window where the hostages were being held, and he decided I was having a private meeting with EPA to talk about things secretly from the rest of the group. So he puts his elbow through the window and he's having this thing, and our residents just picked him up by under his arm and just plopped him onto the street.

- F. Across the street were the sharpshooters on the roof pointing guns at our head. And Nepal says, "Hey Lois, you know what? They can pick you off without even splitting a hair on my head." It's like, "Well, thanks, Frank, that was really helpful." So what I had to do was figure out a way to let them go. So I went out. We did everything at Love Canal based on a true democracy. People voted and majority ruled. So I went out on the porch and talked about how Congressmen LaFalce and Moynihan were meeting with the President that evening—it was already some other scheduled event that they were going to be together. That they were going to talk about this, and what we really need to do was give that a short chance, and let's wait until Wednesday at noon to see what happens. If EPA doesn't evacuate us by then, we will make this hostage holding thing a Sesame Street picnic compared to what we're going to do Wednesday at noon.

And then I called for a vote and was telling people who don't live here, "You're not a resident. You cannot vote." And the voting was 60-50. I don't think I won that vote, but I called it that I won it, because I knew we had to. The FBI was just going to come in and take those guys, and that was just going to create a riot. So we let the FBI come in and take the two EPA representatives.

*Source: Lois Gibbs interview by EPA interviewer, August 11 and 29, 2005 in Falls Church, VA, pp. 10–11, Superfund 25th Anniversary: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews, US Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov>*

## Source 8



*Photograph of a sign displayed by the Love Canal resident, 1978, by an unidentified photographer (University Archives, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York)*

