

STRIKING WOMEN | STRIKING OUT

» The 'Striking Out' module tells the story of two groups of South Asian women workers who came to Britain, following very different migration journeys. They took part in struggles for workers' rights at Grunwick (1976-1978) and at Gate Gourmet (2005), which sparked off bitter trade union disputes. The disputes are remembered as crucial moments in British history, which were shaped through the actions taken by these women.

Objectives of Module

- To understand the Grunwick and Gate Gourmet industrial disputes.
- To understand the role immigrant women of South Asian descent played in these two disputes.
- To understand how migration and history influenced the actions of these women.

1. The Grunwick Dispute



10 mins

Background to the Dispute

Discuss the background of migrant workers employed at Grunwick and suggest reasons why these migrants and their families found it difficult to find suitable employment.

Extend this discussion, in groups or pairs, by exploring the ways in which London appeared unwelcoming to migrants in the 1970s.

Has the situation changed? Are migrants workers welcomed in London and Britain today?





12 mins

Conditions at Grunwick

Read the section 'Conditions at Grunwick' and describe the working conditions the women had to endure.

Use evidence from this section of the site, including a quotation taken from a woman worker at Grunwick.

You can also look at the gallery, and examine the flyers, placards, and newspaper article on in the Grunwick section to enhance your written answer and understanding.



Blank space for writing the answer to the 'Describe' task.



30 mins

» Watch the video: 'Hidden Herstories - Jayaben Desai'

In this table, write the impacts the Grunwick dispute had on different groups as shown in the video.

Stakeholder Groups	Impact of Strike on group
The Women Workers of Grunwick	
The Factory Owners	
Trade Unions	
Women Workers across the UK	



Can you think of any other groups affected by the strike? Add another group to your table.



20 mins

» Watch the video: 'Grunwick Dispute - Shirley Williams'

What viewpoint does this news report adopt?

TIP: You must remember you are writing your report during the strike, therefore your language must be in the present tense, as you do not yet know the outcome of the dispute.

Write a short newspaper article based on this video and its main message. Your article must include:

1. Reasons for the dispute.
2. Explanation of why the ministers visited the Grunwick picket line.
3. A quote from a minister or worker.
4. A summary of likely outcomes for the dispute.

Headline Here

Main Story Here

Photo Here

Caption Here

Quote Here



10 mins

The Trade Union Response

Why did the Trade Union Council (TUC) withdraw support for the Grunwick dispute in 1978?



Discuss the impact this had on the final outcome of the dispute.



Looking at this quote do you think that Jayaben Desai's view of the positive impact of the dispute is an accurate assessment of its legacy?



Because of us, the people who stayed in Grunwick got a much better deal. When the factory moved, the van used to come to their home and pick them up because it was difficult for them to get to the new place. Can you imagine that? And they get a pension today! And we get nothing. That was because of us, because of our struggle."

The Grunwick Dispute 1976-1978 : Chronology of Events

Explore the chronological events that led to the Grunwick Dispute 1976 - 1979 and write down the events as they unfolded. You may illustrate these dates and events, using symbols and images to enhance the event being shown. The space given indicates the amount you should write for each event.

1965



1969



1972



1973



1974



1975



August 1976



September 1976



October 1976



November 1976



December 1976



January 1977



February 1977



March 1977



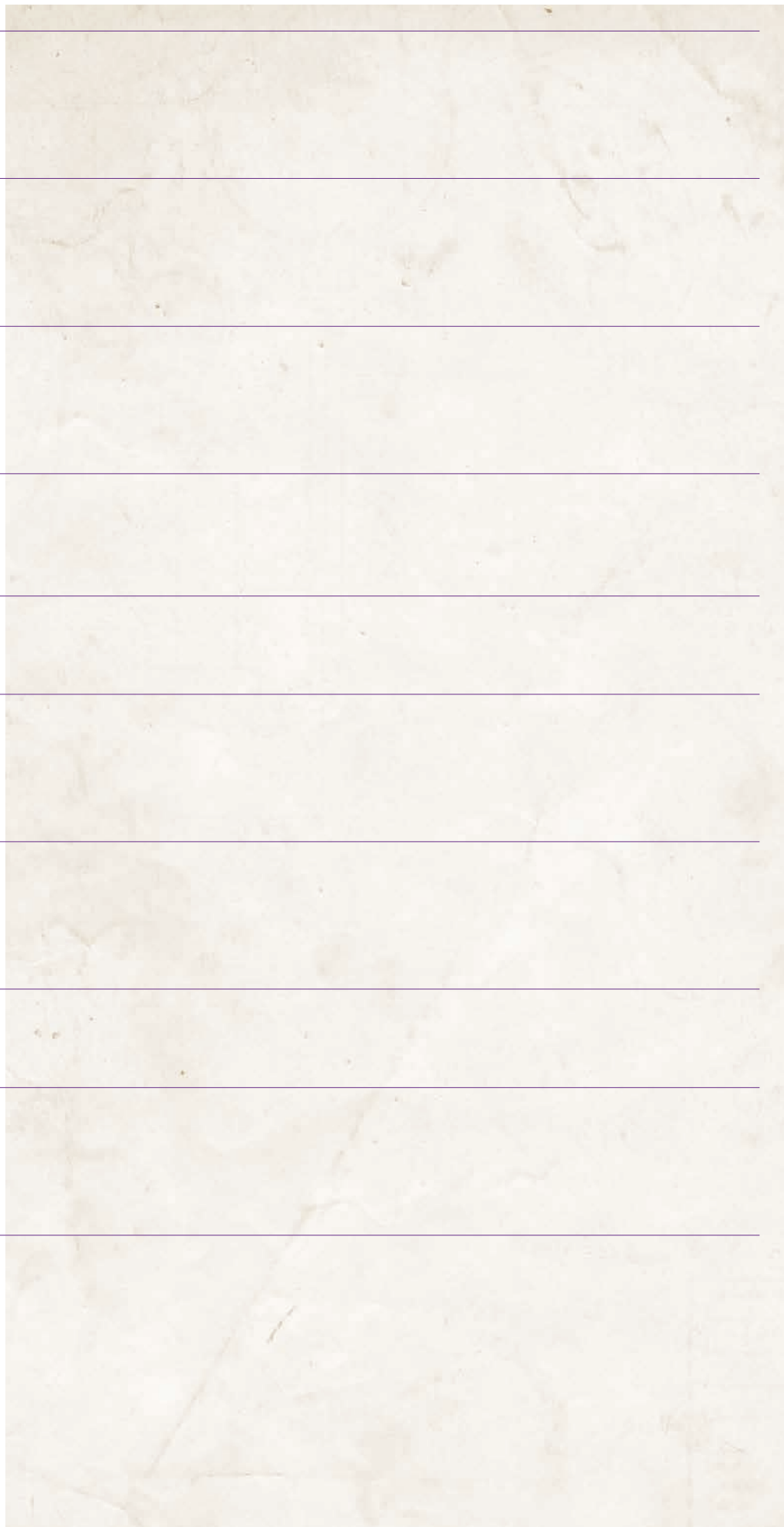
April 1977



May 1977



June 1977



July 1977



August 1977



September 1977



October 1977



November 1977



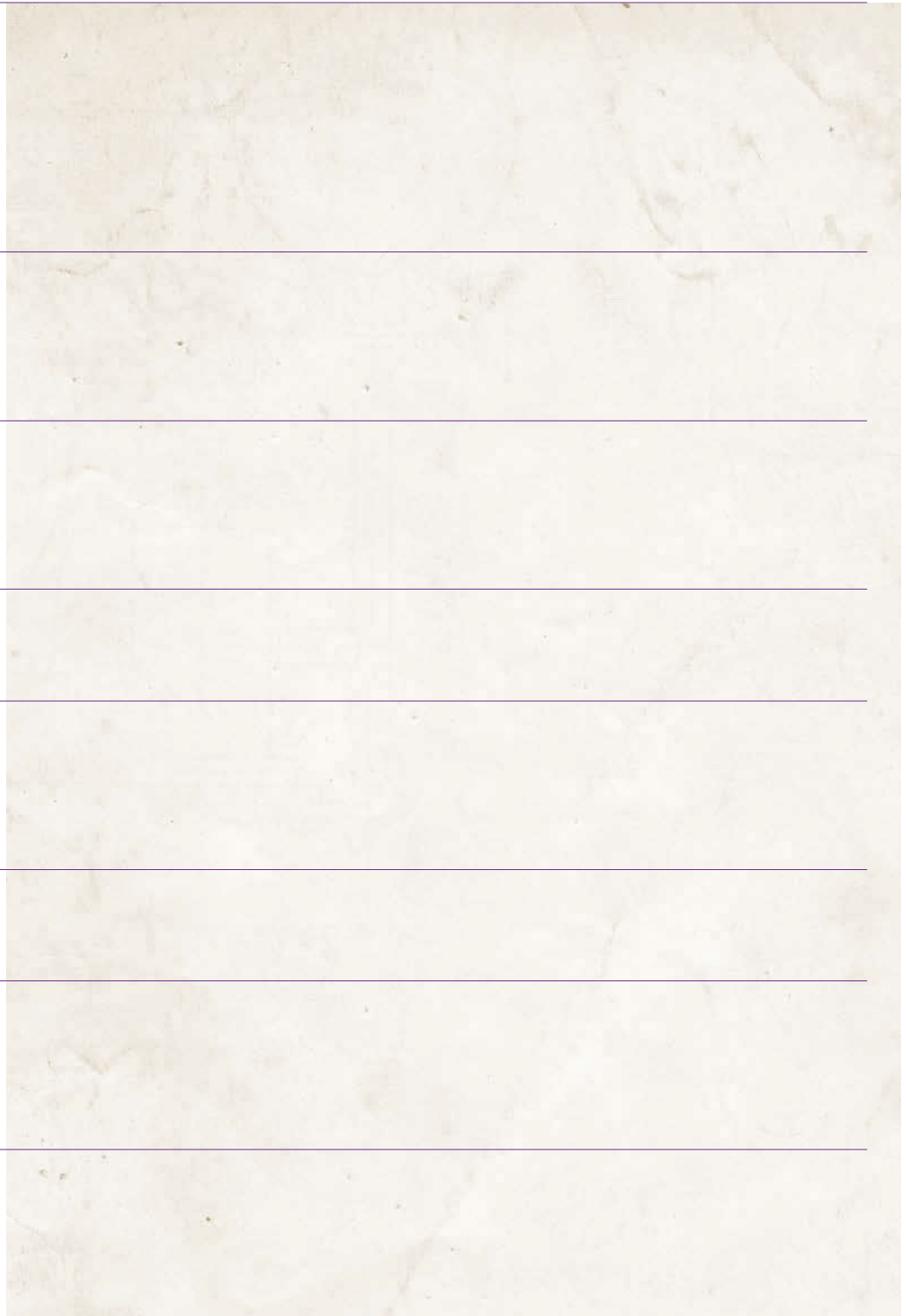
December 1977



May 1978



July 1978



After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:

- ☐ Describe the background of migrant workers employed at Grunwick.
- ☐ Compare the lives of British citizens of South Asian descent with the lives of Asians living in their home country.
- ☐ Explain the reasons for the Grunwick strike.
- ☐ Analyse the impacts of the Grunwick strike, considering the perspectives of different stakeholders.

2. From Grunwick to Gate Gourmet: The Intervening Years



DISCUSS

10 mins

During the 1980s and 1990s, changes in the law made it increasingly difficult for unions to take strike action. But many South Asian women workers in the UK continued to take part in industrial action in defense of their rights during this period.

Read the information contained in this section of the 'Striking Out' module and discuss how different groups were affected by these political changes (ie, workers, employers, trade unions).

The Ghost Of Grunwicks Returns



Asian women took to the streets last Friday demonstrating outside a Harlesden factory in a dispute that has the seeds of another Grunwick. The women, AUEW members and supporters, were protesting outside Futers, a family owned light engineering firm only a couple of miles away from George Ward's photographic processing plant.

Like Grunwicks, Futers employs a high proportion of Asian women workers, and like Grunwicks there have been consistent complaints about low wages and poor working conditions. Late last year a refusal by management to pay a wage increase led to a walkout. Since then more than 60 of the 175-strong workforce have become unionised though so far negotiations to improve conditions have proved futile. The women complain that pregnant workers have been made to do heavy work, that toilet facilities are pathetically inadequate and that there has been victimisation of activists.

Unlike Grunwicks, Futers have at least deigned to meet with union officials to discuss complaints, but they are now priming for an anti-union campaign. Like the management at Garners—another dispute involving immigrant labour—the management have attempted to forestall unionisation by the formation of powerless workers liaison committees. But recently they circulated a carefully worded leaflet in English and Gujarati suggesting that workers joining unions could end up losing their jobs. (Steve Haywood)



EXPLAIN

10 mins



When the journalist stated in the article:

“

The seeds of another Grunwick'

he/she was referring to...



Do you think that the struggles Grunwick workers endured, these being: for better pay, working conditions and dignity at work continue to inspire future generations of workers to take action?

Base your discussion on evidence from this article, other parts of the site and personal experiences.



After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:

- ☐ Discuss the changes that took place in the laws that regulate the relationship between employers and trade unions in the UK.
- ☐ Explain the changes that took place in the nature of work during this period.
- ☐ Appreciate the continuing role of migrant women workers in the struggles for workers' rights

3. The Gate Gourmet Dispute



DISCUSS

10 mins

The Gate Gourmet dispute started in 2005 in a factory that produced food for airlines in Southall, London. To understand the events of this dispute, complete these activities as they examine the backgrounds of the workers who took part and explore the reasons they joined in this dispute.

Using information contained in this section, together with the background section and comics:

Discuss the backgrounds of the women workers at Gate Gourmet.
What kind of jobs had these women done before they worked at Gate Gourmet?



DEFINE

20 mins

Conditions at Gate Gourmet

Draw a picture or poster, which depicts a 'day in the life' of a Gate Gourmet worker.

TIP: The picture/poster should be provocative and cause the viewer to think and understand the difficult working day these women faced, working for Gate Gourmet.





DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GATE GOURMET WORKER

**EXPLAIN****10 mins**

Imagine you are a recent migrant from the Punjab region in India. Write a letter home to your best friend telling them about your life in England. Be sure to tell them about the job you are doing and how you feel about doing this work.





30 mins

56 women workers refused the compensation of between £5000 and £8000 offered by Gate Gourmet. They felt they had been betrayed by their union, and decided to continue their fight. Do you think these women made the right decision?

Look at the Gate Gourmet Timeline, then hold a class debate:

Team 1 should write a short speech in support of this decision.

Team 2 should write a short speech against this decision.

Both debate teams should use evidence and quotes taken from this page when forming their arguments.

Each team should have:

1. An introduction to their argument
2. A strong piece of evidence in support of their argument
3. A concluding statement to persuade the listener that their argument is the most valid

The class then needs to vote on which team created the most convincing argument. This can be done by show of hands or secret ballot.

The Gate Gourmet Dispute 2005-: Chronology of Events

Explore the chronological events that led to the Gate Gourmet Dispute in 2005 and write down the events as they unfolded. You may illustrate these dates and events, using symbols and images to enhance the event being shown. The space given indicates the amount you should write for each event.

1997	
2000	
2002	
2004	
March 2005	

August 2005



September 2005



October 2005



November 2005



December 2005



January 2006



April 2006



September 2006



December 2006



2007



2008



2009





After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:

- ☐ Explain the background of migrant workers employed at Gate Gourmet.
- ☐ Discuss the reasons for the Gate Gourmet strike.
- ☐ Evaluate the actions taken by the strikers, their employers and trade unions.
- ☐ Analyse the impact of the Gate Gourmet strike on the workers and on British labour history.
- ☐ Compare the backgrounds and lives of the groups of women who took part in the Grunwick and the Gate Gourmet strike.

4. The Legacy of Grunwick and Gate Gourmet



ANALYSE

10 mins

Now you have explored the Grunwick and Gate Gourmet dispute, answer the following questions:

1. In what ways did these women workers make history?

2. How did the actions of these women challenge stereotypes?

3. What have other women gained from their actions?

4. If similar disputes were to occur again, do you think they would have similar outcomes? Explain your opinion and why they would or would not.



After undertaking these activities you should now be able to:

- ☐ Explain the legacy of South Asian women workers' struggles in the Grunwick, Gate Gourmet and other industrial disputes in the UK.