Jessica Piper Outline
The Great Railroad Strike of 1877: A Catalyst for the American Labor Movement
THEME: Turning Points in History

THESIS STATEMENT: The 1877 Great Railroad Strike marked the first national labor event in United States history and served as a turning point for the American labor movement. Although the strike itself failed, it evoked further labor upheaval, organization of American workers, and long-term political and social change.

1. INTRODUCTION
   a. Industrialization
   b. History of labor movements before mid-1800s
   c. What changed in mid-1800s: 2nd Industrial Revolution
      i. Growth of cities
      ii. Growth of factories
      iii. Influx of immigrants
   d. Expansion of railroads
      i. Labor needs
      ii. Power of the industry
      iii. Weak position of workers

2. THE ECONOMY, UNIONS & STRIKES
   i. Commonwealth vs Hunt made unions legal
   ii. Economic depression
      1. Pay cuts
   iii. Workers organize & strike
      1. State militia’s disrupt
      2. President Hayes warns against
      3. Strikes spread

3. TURNING POINT: Public sympathy
   a. Public united behind a common enemy: resenting railroad companies
      i. Charged farmers high freight rates
      ii. Workers from other industries blamed railroads for lowering all wages and creating chronic unemployment
      iii. Even state militias begin to sympathize with workers and refuse to take up arms
   b. Violence spread
      i. President Hayes deployed Federal troops and put down strikes by force

4. FAILURE
   a. The strikes did not result in higher wages.
   b. The railroad companies made no concessions
5. SUCCESS
   a. Because of the cost of putting down the strikes and the property damage, railroads realized that wage reduction may cost more than actually increasing conditions and benefits.
   b. Strike showed the strength of a vast national working class.
   c. Inspired prominent and influential labor leaders:
      i. Terence Powderly
      ii. Eugene Debs
      iii. Samuel Gompers
         1. Very influential American Federation of Labor in 1886

6. POLITICAL CHANGE
   a. Labor-focused political parties emerge:
      i. Greenback-Labor Party
      ii. Workingman’s Party
      iii. Populist Party
   b. Labor Day became national holiday in 1894
   c. Congress established Bureau of Labor in 1884
   d. 1887 Interstate Commerce Act
   e. 1916 Workingmen’s Compensation Bill

7. CONCLUSION: “SO WHAT?”
   a. Summary of thesis