

Modified Lesson Plan

Ty Beck

Child Labor in America

Joyce Kasman Valenza and Carl Atkinson

Children have always worked, often exploited and under less than healthy conditions. Industrialization, the Great Depression and the vast influx of poor immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries, made it easy to justify the work of young children. To gain a true understanding of child labor, both as an historical and social issue, students should examine the worlds of real working children. This unit asks students to critically examine, respond to and report on photographs as historical evidence. Students will discover the work of reformer/photographer Lewis Hine, whose photographs give the issue of child labor a dramatic personal relevance and illustrate the impact of photojournalism in the course of American history.

Overview

Objectives

Students will:

- develop an understanding of the importance of historical inquiry;
- recognize the factors which contributed to the Industrial Revolution in the United States;
- evaluate primary source materials as artifacts for greater understanding of the past;
- function as historians by formulating their own questions from encounters with primary source documents and images;
- identify the problems confronted by people in the past, analyze how decisions for action were made and propose alternative solutions;
- understand that political, economic, and social history are connected; and
- recognize the impact of citizen action on public policy.
- ***respond to questions pertaining to a cartoon and its symbolism of child labor***

- *participate in an organized debate with the topic being child labor (for or against it)*
- *engage in class discussion pertaining to a photograph of children workers and respond to questions.*
- *write from the perspective of a child worker as a diary entry.*

Time Required 2 - 3 weeks, in 45 - 60 minute class periods, depending on activities selected.

Recommended Grade Level Middle and high school

Curriculum Fit U.S. history, industrial development, social issues, economics, literature, art, *writing*

Standards ***HISTORY***
8.2.9.D. Identify and analyze conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in Pennsylvania history from 1787 to 1914.

- *Labor Relations (e.g., National Trade Union, the “Molly Maguires,” Homestead steel strike)*

SPEAKING AND LISTENING
1.6.8.E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

- *Organize and participate in informal debates.*

ART
9.2.3.D. Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective.

McREL 4th Edition [Standards & Benchmarks](#)

Historical Understanding
 Standard 2. [Understands the historical perspective](#)

Language Arts
 Standard 7. [Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts](#)
 Standard 9. [Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and](#)

[interpret visual media](#)

US History

[Standard 18 Understands the rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes](#)

Resources Used

See [Child Labor in America Resource Page](#)

Primary Resource Citations:

Chicago Daily News, Inc. 1903. Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL. American Memory. Library of Congress. 24 Mar 2008

Hine, Lewis Wickes. "Cartoon". Photograph of Cartoon. National Child Labor Committee: Hine no. 2870. Photographs from the records of the National Child Labor Committee (U.S.). Prints and Photographs. Library of Congress. 24 Mar 2008

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/nclc.04783>

Hirsch Emil G. "The Evil of Child Labor". Cleveland Journal 22 April 1905. The African-American Experience in Ohio, 1996-2006. American Memory. Library of Congress. 24 Mar 2008

<http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page1.cfm?ItemID=3772>

Materials

- [Questions about the Hine Report](#)
- [Examining Photographs Organizer](#)
- [Observing Children at Work](#)
- [Confidential Memo](#)
- [Task Assignments](#)
- [Modern Memo](#)

Procedure

In order to establish background, students will be introduced to the causes and effects of the Industrial Revolution. Students will then critically analyze primary source materials with the help of organizers and teacher-guided questions, developing additional questions to support their own inquiry. Students will then react to their encounter with these materials by selecting among a menu of projects, with each student assuming the role of an early 20th century journalist.

Activity One: Introduction and Background (1 - 2 class periods)

- Discuss or review the causes and effects of the Industrial Revolution. This can be done using a variety of methods depending on your time needs. An encyclopedia or textbook section would offer basic introduction. Consider the possibility of class field trips (see [Museums](#) on the Resources Page) or role play to highlight the effects of industrialization.

Activity Two: Primary Source Analysis - Documents (1 - 2 class periods)

- In preparation for this unit preview the resources found on the Learning Page of the Library of Congress:
 - [Using Primary Sources in the Classroom](#)
 - [Lesson Framework](#)
 - [Historian's Sources](#)
- Start with an open-ended question such as "How do we discover our history? How do we learn about our family's past?" Discuss the role of oral or written histories. If your students are new to primary sources, you may want to have them do the [Mindwalk](#) activity found in the Learning Page of the Library of Congress.
- Access [Lewis Hine's Report](#) on Child Labor in the Cotton Mills of Mississippi, 1911.
- Have students respond to [Questions About the Hine Report](#).
- Discuss answers.
- ***The newspaper article "The Evil of Child Labor" (<http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page1.cfm?ItemID=3772>) will be displayed. Students will read it aloud. They will be asked to respond to questions:***
 - *for what audience was the document written?*
 - *why do you think this document was written?*
 - *what evidence in the document helps you know why it was written?*
 - *list two things the document tell you about life in the United States at the time it was written.*
- ***The students will be divided into two groups at random.***
- ***They will participate in a debate pro-child labor and anti-child labor. Students must state the pro's and con's behind their decision of being for or against child labor.***

Activity Three: Primary Source Analysis - Photographs (1 - 2 class periods)

- Pass around several personal snapshots, and discuss what can be learned from examining a photograph.

- Distribute or project the image of [Coal Breaker Boys](#) from [Touring Turn-of-the-Century America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company, 1880 - 1920](#) on a large screen. Feel free to use any other appropriate image.
- Brainstorm observations.
- Using the [Examining Photographs Organizer](#), have students divide brainstormed observations into objective, subjective categories.
- Discuss the differences between the two categories and ask students to suggest possible problems relating to subjective observations.

(Though students' objective observations may be straightforward and easy to record, students may come up with erroneous subjective observations because of their limited perspective and knowledge. Teachers will want to encourage brainstorming, but will need to guide students toward historical accuracy.)

- ***The students will pass around the photograph from the Chicago Daily News collection. They will complete the Photo Analysis Worksheet taken from www.archives.gov.***
- Discuss the experience of investigating the photographs.
- Solicit any additional questions relating to photograph. You may want to ask:
 1. How are photographs used by historians?
 2. What other types of primary sources do you know about?
 3. What is the importance of using primary sources in understanding history?
 4. What if no one took photographs of these children?
- ***The cartoon photograph will be passed around the classroom (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/nclc.04783>).***
- ***The students will be asked to respond to the following questions:***
 1. ***Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.***
 2. ***Explain the message of the cartoon.***
 3. ***What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?***
- ***The students will imagine themselves as child workers back in the early 1900's. They will write a diary entry expressing thoughts, feelings, and the routine work day.***

Activity Four: Guided Practice (2 - 3 class periods) (May be adapted for lab or classroom)

- Divide students into pairs or small groups, depending upon availability of workstations
- Students will independently select, examine and analyze photographs, using the [Observing Children at Work](#) organizer as a tool to record their observations (If web

access is limited, teachers may want to print and develop packets of these photos.) Here are some photographs worthy of study:

1. [Sweeper boy](#)
 2. [Glass factory workers](#)
 3. [Newsboy](#)
 4. [Breaker boys](#)
 5. [The Slebzak family](#)
- There are a significant number of relevant photographs located at The National Archives and Records Administration. Search the Archival Holdings at the [NAIL](#) database using such terms as "Lewis Hine" and "child labor". (Complete directions are on the [Resources](#) Page.)

- Gather the class back as a large group. Solicit observations and discuss the images with students. Compare student findings, attempt to draw consensus, some teacher guidance may be needed. (It may be helpful to project each image on a large screen to prompt discussion.)

Activity Five: Student Project (4 - 6 class periods)

- Form small research groups, approximately four or five students per group.
- Distribute a copy of the [Confidential Memo](#) from the editor of *The New York Examiner* to each research team. Please understand that this memo is a prompt for this activity; it is NOT a primary source.
- Acting as journalists, students will select [tasks](#). Each group should have at least one of the following:
 1. Historian
 2. Editor
 3. Photojournalist
 4. News Reporter
 5. Other tasks to reflect student talents or interests... such as poet, political cartoonist etc.
- Groups will select a presentation format from among the following options:
 1. Traditional print newspaper (a cut and paste activity on large paper)
 2. Newspaper story boards on trifold cardboard displays
 3. Desktop published newsletter
 4. Multimedia presentation (PowerPoint, HyperStudio, Web pages etc.)
- Reminder: though our own communication technology has improved dramatically since the turn of the century, remind students to try to convey a sense for the period through their product (e.g. old fashioned fonts and images).

Evaluation and Extension

Evaluation

- Participation in large group discussion
- Participation and collaboration in small groups
- Questions about the [Hine Report](#)
- [Observing Children at Work](#)
- Student Project

Extension Activities

1. Children continue to work in our own country and around the world and modern-day social reformers are still concerned. Use the Web to research and respond to the current issue of child labor.
 - Using the [Modern Memo](#) prompt, create a newspaper activity which deals with the issue in today's world, mirroring the activity presented above.
 - On a map of the world, label areas where children are working and describe the working conditions.
 - Write a letter to a policy maker or editor expressing your opinions, based on your research.
2. Search for and select a photograph that you find especially moving from either the [American Memory](#) collection or the [NAIL](#) Database. Write a poem expressing the feelings of the child/children in the photograph.
3. Consider a field trip to a museum which focuses on the work of children.
4. Write a letter from the perspective of a working child. Imagine yourself writing to a friend. Describe a typical day working at a mill, factory, cannery, a mine or a farm.
5. Read a work of fiction to get a greater understanding of the life of a child during the Industrial Revolution. (e.g. Katherine Paterson's *Lyddie* or Dicken's *Oliver Twist* or *Hard Times*)
6. Compare a photograph of children working from the early 20th century with a photograph of children working toward the end of the 20th century.
7. Create a simulation of a town meeting in which the issue of child labor is discussed. Participants may play the roles of: parents, employers, children, mayor, social reformers, journalists.
8. For high school, examine issues relating to child labor in the United States. Research the issues and consider whether students who work in malls or fast food restaurants are exploited in any ways. For class discussion or debate:
 - Should there be stiffer legislation?

- Should there be more careful monitoring of children's work by parents and teachers?
- What should the rules be regarding the hours and responsibilities of young workers?
- Should there be rules be regarding interference with school work?