


Workshop: K-12 Teacher Institute: Historic Children's Voices
By
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Subject/Course	English Language Arts and Social Studies
Topic	"How did the experiences of child laborers in the Lowell Mills during the late 1800s compare to the conditions faced by child laborers today, and what have been the key changes in labor laws, societal attitudes, and the impact on children's lives over time?"
Grade Level	6th-8th Grade
<p>Related curriculum frameworks/grade level standards</p>  <p>Goal 8 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.</p>	<p>Connection to Standards:</p> <p>UN Sustainable Development Goals: Globally competent students recognize their own and others' perspectives.</p> <p>As this relates to children, Target 8.7 of this goal aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as to end all forms of child labour by 2025</p>

Learning Objectives and Goals:

- Students will evaluate primary source materials as artifacts for greater understanding of the past
- Students will understand the history of child labor in the Lowell Mills of the late 1800s and compare it to current child labor practices around the world. They will

analyze changes in labor laws, societal attitudes, and the impact on children's lives.

Background Information:

[Lowell Mills National Historic Park](#)

[North Carolina Mills](#): Children were compelled to work in the mills to supplement the insufficient wages that adults earned. Often children grew up in homes regulated by mill schedules, where meals were allotted during allowed breaks. Most children were working full time by the age of twelve, forced to drop out of school or fluctuate back and forth between work and school. In North Carolina, children under the age of sixteen constituted 25 percent of the workforce in the textile mills.

In the early 1900's Shanghai was the biggest industrial city in China. At that point women were 61 percent of the total Shanghai factory workforce and about three-fourths of the workforce in cotton mills and silk filatures. More than 84,000 adult women were cotton spinners and more than 22,000 were cotton weavers.

AAS Primary Source Materials Used:

V.
Fling wide the grain for those who throw
The clanking shuttle to and fro,
In the long row of humming rooms,



And into ponderous masses wind
The web that, from a thousand looms,
Comes forth to clothe mankind.

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<https://collections.americanantiquarian.org/millgirls/exhibits/show/working/item/77>

Shocking Accident at a Paper-Mill—A Girl Torn to Pieces by the Machinery.

From the Cincinnati Enquirer, Feb. 7.

Saturday morning, between 9 and 10 o'clock, the paper-mill of BECKETT & LAURIE was the scene of a terrible accident, in which a young and interesting girl was hurried into eternity without a moment's warning. MARGARET KRIEGENHAFFER, an employe in the mill, was engaged in carrying rags on the third floor, when she fell through a trap-door on to the whirling machinery below, and was instantly severed in twain. The spectacle of the mangled body, it is said, was a most horrid one. The ribs were torn on the right side from the back-bone, the body was almost cut in two in the back just below the shoulders, and there were numerous other bruises and lacerations. The face, however, was not touched, and it presented an appearance of peaceful repose, as though she had fallen asleep.

<https://collections.americanantiquarian.org/millgirls/items/show/33>

Lesson Materials and other non-AAS resources included in the plan:



<https://www.loc.gov/resource/nclc.01386/>

Girls in Daniel Mill, Lincolnton, N.C. in November 1908.

Location: Lincolnton, North Carolina / Photo by Lewis W. Hine.



Scotland Mills, Laurinburg. November 1914. The tallest boy, Henry Mims, told Hine that he had been working in the mill for 8 years. Photo by Lewis Hine. Courtesy, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



The Padgett family, Weldon, N.C. (Halifax County). Alfred, age 13, far right, and Richard, age 11, worked at the Shaw Cotton Mills. According to Lewis Hine, Alfred made \$4.00 a week prior to a recent injury on the job (note his bandaged right hand). Richard made \$2.40 a week. Photo by Lewis Hine. Courtesy, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



<https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Photos/Images?ID=35154>



<https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Photos/Images?ID=644>

Lesson procedure/summary of tasks

1 Show images of children working in mills in Lowell, North Carolina and China. (10-15 minutes)

- What do you see/first notice about this image?
- What do you think this is a picture of and what evidence makes you think this?
- What kind of work do you think took place here?
- What do you imagine it would have been like to be a worker in charge of operating one of these machines?
- Would this work have been hard or easy and why?
- What would it have sounded like when the machines were operating? Smelled like? Felt like (in summer? In winter?) What would the air in this room be like?
- What dangers might working in this room pose?
- Who do you imagine worked here and what might their pay have been like?

2. Discuss: "Why do you think some families might need their children to work?"

3. Read an article about child labor in America today through the U.S. Department of Labor.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/data/child-labor>

4. Discuss: "How do you think a child's life in the 1800s working in a factory is different from a child's life working today? What are some of the similarities and differences?"

5. Journal Writing Activity. In some parts of the world children spend hours working. Imagine you are one of those children. What activities would you have to stop to help earn money for your family?

