

## Elementary Social Studies – Childhood

Did kids in the past live like me?	
<b>Standards and Content</b>	<p><b>South Carolina Kindergarten History</b></p> <p>Standard 1: Utilize the college and career skills of a historian to study continuity and change over time for one’s personal history and one’s community.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">K.H.2: Examine ways in which individuals change or stay the same over time.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">K.H.3: Identify different forms of evidence used in historical inquiry, such as digital sources, maps, photographs/images, or texts.</p>
<b>Staging the Compelling Question</b>	Brainstorm what it was like to be a kid 20 years ago, 50 years ago, and 100 years ago.

  

<b>Supporting Question 1 [Understand]</b>	<b>Supporting Question 2 [Understand]</b>	<b>Supporting Question 3 [Understand]</b>
How did kids help their families?	How did kids celebrate?	What did kids do for fun?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>	<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
Create a Venn Diagram that compares experiences of children at Beaumont Mill to students’ personal experiences.	Add to the Venn Diagram.	Add to the Venn Diagram.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Featured Sources</b>
<p><b>Source A:</b> Lewis Hine photographs of children at Beaumont Mill</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> lyrics from “Babies in the Mill” by Dorsey Dixon</p>	<p><b>Source A:</b> selections from the <i>Beaumont E</i> – birthday parties</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> selections from the <i>Beaumont E</i> – Easter and Christmas events</p>	<p><b>Source A:</b> excerpt from Gene Adams oral history</p> <p><b>Source B:</b> excerpt from Mary Heatherly oral history</p> <p><b>Source C:</b> excerpt from Malinda Willard oral history</p>

  

<b>Summative Performance Task [Assess]</b>	<p><b>ARGUMENT:</b> <i>Did kids in the past live like me?</i> Construct an argument (e.g., outline, poster) that using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources.</p> <p><b>EXTENSION.</b> Interview an adult relative about what their childhood was like. Compare their experiences to children at Beaumont Mill and your own experiences.</p>
<b>Taking Informed Action</b>	<b>ACT.</b> Work together to develop an informative or artistic exhibit about the experiences of children in Beaumont Mill Village to display at the Beaumont Mill Village Playground.

## *Did kids in the past live like me?*

### Overview

#### Inquiry Description

This inquiry prompts students to compare their own childhood to the experiences of kids from the past. Though this comparison can be applied to various locations and periods in time, this inquiry focuses on the experiences of children living and working at Beaumont Mill in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Through this inquiry, students consider economic and social factors that shape childhood to determine similarities and differences across time. This inquiry introduces students to several sources of historical evidence and can be completed in one to three lessons.

#### Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Did kids in the past live like me?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources to construct an argument supported by evidence. Taking Informed Action is embedded throughout the inquiry. The supporting questions help students build an understanding of different facets of the lives of Beaumont Mill children. Students assess ways in which their lives are similar to and different from Beaumont Mill children through the Summative Performance Task. Finally, students act by creating a public display about Beaumont Mill children. It is important to note that this inquiry does not present a comprehensive picture of childhood in Beaumont Mill, and teachers may choose to supplement the inquiry to incorporate a wider array of perspectives and time periods.

### Staging the Compelling Question

To introduce the inquiry, the teacher may guide students in making predictions about what it was like to be a kid at different points in the past (e.g., 20 years ago, 50 years ago, 100 years ago) in a whole-class or small-group settings. The teacher may ask students to explain what led to their predictions (e.g., from a book they have read or a conversation they had with a family member). The teacher may ask students to discuss how much they think their lives are different from kids in the past and why things have changed (or not). The teacher may then explain that they will examine the lives of children who lived in Beaumont Mill to determine if kids in the past lived like them.

### Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question “How did kids help their families?” introduces the practice of child labor, which was common in various industries prior to Progressive Era legislation. Students examine two sources: two photographs taken by Lewis Hine in May 1912 of child laborers at Beaumont Mill and lyrics from a song written by Dorsey Dixon describing the experiences of many child laborers in the mills. For the Formative Performance Task, students create a Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts how the children in the Featured Sources helped their families to how the students help their families. The teacher may direct students to create diagrams individually, with peers, or as a whole

class. The teacher may direct students to use images or pictures on the diagram. This question likely draws the most extreme contrast to contemporary children’s experiences, so teachers may choose to supplement the Featured Sources with ones that demonstrate how children helped families at home or in the community.

## Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question “How did kids celebrate?” turns students’ attention to an aspect of childhood they likely enjoy themselves – parties! The Featured Sources include various selections from *The Beaumont E*, a mill newspaper first published in the 1940s, that highlight birthday parties and other community celebrations. While examining the sources, the teacher may choose to talk with students about ways in which contemporary social media serves similar purposes to the community newspaper and other ways their families share highlights of their celebrations with others. The Formative Performance Task asks students to expand upon the Venn Diagram created for Supporting Question 1. If students are using images to create the diagram, students might bring in a photograph of their own celebrations that illustrates similarities or differences.

## Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question “What did kids do for fun?” turns students’ attention to daily life and how children spent their leisure time. The Featured Sources include excerpts from three oral histories conducted as part of the Beaumont Mill Village Oral History Project. All of the individuals grew up in Beaumont Mill Village in the 1940s – 1960s. Each source highlights a different element of play from sports to toys to popular media. The teacher may discuss all of the sources with the entire class or discuss each source with a different small group, who then present what they uncovered to their peers. The Formative Performance Task asks students to add to the Venn Diagram they began at the beginning of the inquiry. If students are using images to create the diagram, students may draw images of what they like to do for fun that illustrate similarities or differences. The materials in this segment of the inquiry emphasize play, but a teacher may choose to expand to other aspects of daily life (e.g., what people ate) that are discussed elsewhere in the oral histories.

## Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined different facets of childhood for kids living and working at Beaumont Mill in the early- and mid-twentieth century and considered ways in which their own childhood experiences are similar and different. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument using sources to answer the compelling question “Did kids in the past live like me?” Students can present their arguments orally, with pictures, or in written form. Since this inquiry introduces students to different forms of evidence, the teacher may engage students in discussing the strengths of different forms of evidence and encourage students to incorporate information from different forms of evidence in their argument.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Kids in the past did live like me. We both put up Christmas trees and have cakes on our birthdays. We both like to ride bikes and play in our backyards.

- Kids in the past did not live like me. I help my family by doing chores at the house, but I do not have to work a dangerous job like some kids did in the textile mill.
- Kids in the past lived like me in some ways but not in others. They listened to the radio a lot, where I like to play video games and watch movies. Some kids had a television, but my family has more than one plus computers and smartphones.

As an extension task, students may be asked to interview an adult relative about their childhoods and compare that information to the children at Beaumont Mill and their own lives. Students could expand upon the Venn Diagram created during the inquiry or simply share what they learned with this class. The Featured Sources in this inquiry focus on the more distant past and intentionally highlight some major differences. By interviewing relatives who were children more recently, students can further examine the rate at which individuals change or stay the same over time and factors beyond time that contribute to different lived experiences.

The first two steps of Taking Informed Action are built into the inquiry. As explained above, the supporting questions prompt student to *understand* ways in which childhood changes or stays the same across time. Through the Summative Performance Task, students must *assess* the degree to which their lives are similar to kids from the past. The final step is to *act*. Students may work together to develop an informative or artistic exhibit about the experiences of children at Beaumont Mill Village. The exhibit can incorporate images and text from the Featured Sources, students' drawings, or even audio recordings of students explaining what they learned. The exhibit can be displayed at the Beaumont Mill Village Playground or a location better suited to students' community.

## Supporting Question 1: Featured Sources

**Source A:** Photographs taken by Lewis Hine of child laborers at Beaumont Mill in May 1912 available through the Library of Congress National Child Labor Committee Collection – [Young Workers Going Home from the Beaumont Mill](#) and [Some of the Smallest Spinners](#)

**Source B:** Song lyrics from “Babies in the Mill” by Dorsey Dixon. Found in *Textile Town* (B. Teter, 2002, p. 35)

I used to be a factory hand when things was moving slow,  
When children worked in cotton mills, each morning had to go.  
Every morning just at five the whistle blew on time  
To call them babies out of bed at the age of eight and nine.

*Come out of bed, little sleep head,  
And get you a bit to eat.  
The factory whistle’s calling you,  
There’s no more time to sleep.*

To their jobs those little ones was strictly forced to go.  
Those babies had to be on time through rain and sleet and snow.  
Many times when things went wrong their bosses often frowned.  
Many times those little ones was kicked and shoved around.

*Come out of bed, little sleep head,  
And get you a bit to eat.  
The factory whistle’s calling you,  
There’s no more time to sleep.*

Those babies all grew up unlearned, they never went to school.  
They never learned to read or write. They learned to spin and spool.  
Every time I close my eyes, I see that picture still  
When textile work was carried on by babies in the mill.

## Supporting Question 2: Featured Sources

**Source A:** selections from *The Beaumont E* about birthday celebrations – [“Celebrates Seventh Birthday With Party” \(April 1943, p. 10\)](#) and [Jimmie Piercy Celebrates Ninth Birthday \(August 1945, p. 12\)](#)

**Source B:** selections from *The Beaumont E* about holiday celebrations – [“Children Enjoy Egg Hunt” \(May 1946, p. 4\)](#) and [photographs from Christmas \(January 1948, p. 3\)](#)

## Supporting Question 3: Featured Sources

These oral histories were gathered from people who were children in Beaumont Mill Village during the 1940s-1960s.

**Source A:** Gene Adams, Oral interview conducted at USC Upstate, 2021.

There were a lot of sports activities. We had a baseball or softball field in the middle of our block that we could play on. We had a basketball goal and a big one in almost a half a court in our backyard. We had a polevaulting pit and high jumping pit in our backyard. Now they've got the metal pole that looks like it almost throws you over the bar. Well back then people pole-vaulted with cane poles. So, Daddy would go out and we would get cane poles and we would hang them from a tree. And on the bottom of them, we would tie a lot of weight, concrete or something, so it would keep it straight and it would have to dry out for months being held straight like that and then it made it into a pole-vaulting pole. We had a big seesaw in the backyard. Quite a big swing set in the backyard.

**Source B:** Mary Heatherly, Oral interview conducted at USC Upstate, 2021.

One of the things we loved to do was to roller skate. And it wasn't roller skating like you know, now. We had the roller skate that had the key that lengthened the skate and tightened the skate so that it fit your foot and we could skate. There were plenty of sidewalks and up around couple of the churches had sidewalks and we would skate until late in the evening and my dad would come out and call several of us that were skating home because it was time for supper.

Some other things that we did growing up. Most of us had younger siblings, so we would end up having to help entertain them. And there were different things that we did. Our parents would buy these little swimming pools and fill them up with water and we would play with them out in the water, particularly if it was a hot, hot summer day. Other than that, they might have Barbies, and we would sit with them and play Barbies and dress them up in all different kinds of things...We rode bicycles. We normally had bicycles and we rode bicycles around the community, and at that time there was not the fear that there is now about letting your child out and roaming. Because we rode our bikes all over the neighborhood, up one street and down another. But we always had to remember that all of the neighbors, all of the folks in that village, were watching out for you and so we really didn't fear anything like they do now.

**Source C:** Malinda Willard, Oral interview conducted at USC Upstate, 2021.

Malinda Willard: We had radio.

Interviewer: Were there any radio programs that your family liked to listen to together?

Malinda Willard: My sister and I liked *Inner Sanctum*, the scary program that came on late at night. We would lie in bed and listen to the *Inner Sanctum*. The Creaking Door.

Interviewer: Did your family buy a TV? At some point?

Malinda Willard: Eventually, in the late 50s we got a TV. Before we got one, I watched some of the people in the neighborhood who had a TV, they would put their TV's out on their front porch. So that the men could watch the World Series. And I remember going to a neighbor's house to watch the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. And that was just fascinating to me that we could see what was going on in England from Beaumont. But yes, we did eventually get a TV.