

Middle-Level: Child Labor and Health

What were the effects of child labor on juvenile health and well-being in the early 1900s?

Standards and Content	ELA/Literacy RST 6-8.1-Cite specific text evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts. WHST-6-8.1 Write arguments focused on discipline content WHST 6-8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources....and quote or paraphrase WHST 6-8.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. US Hist 11- Industrial Revolution to World War I Ms.-LS 1-5 Construct a scientific explanation...based on valid and reliable evidence. Science and Engineering Practices-Cross cutting concepts-Cause and effect. Engaging in Argument from
Staging the Compelling Question	Compare Lewis Hine photographs of children working to photographs of teens working today.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
What kind of labor did children do in the late 1800's and early 1900's?	How many hours did children work and at what pay?	What were the benefits/ advantages to child labor?	What were the risks and dangers of child labor?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Identify jobs children did in the early 1900s.	Identify characteristics of child labor in the early 1900s (e.g., hours worked, pay, labor laws) and compare to juvenile labor today.	Make a bulleted list of possible benefits/advantages of children working.	Create a 3 columned chart explaining the 1) risks/dangers, 2) diseases and 3) education challenges of child laborers.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: Babies in the Mills by Dorsey Dixon Source B: photos of Alabama children taken by Lewis Hine. Source C: Lewis Hine photographs	Source A: Excerpts from <i>Textile Town</i> (2002) Source B: Current Alabama Child Labor Laws on a poster	Source A: Transcript of Interview with Junie Edna Kaylor Aaron Source B: Excerpts from <i>Textile Town</i> (2002)	Source A: Excerpts from <i>Textile Town</i> (2002) Source B: Child Labor Public Education Project The University of Iowa Labor Center (uiowa.edu)

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT: What were the effects of child labor on juvenile health and well-being in the early 1900s? With a partner, state a position on the effects of child labor and give reasons from each source category. EXTENSION. ELA: Write an acrostic poem with a key word phrase (e.g., child labor). History: Interview 2-4 adults to find out about their juvenile work experiences and create a then/now visual. Math: Compare hours and pay from the early 1900s to today using an online inflation calculator. Science: Compare the labor-related eating/diet/health/diseases from the early 1900s to today.
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Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND Students should understand and gain an appreciation for the fact that many children in the early 1900s ago didn't have the education and free time that they do today and that their risks and dangers in life are much less. They should gain an appreciation for the fact that their lives today are steeped in education and recreation time/activities. They should ask themselves if they are healthier because of these factors. What are the challenging factors to their overall health? ASSESS Using a 1, 2, 3, 4 rubric, students can assess to what extent they and their peers are healthier than children in the early 1900s. ACT With these differences in mind, students will decide what type of job would be best/healthiest as a part-time job when they are able to legally have one. Students should list the advantages or disadvantages/risks. They can educate their classmates on the healthier options
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**Featured sources are suggested. It may be that these resources are no longer available, and we apologize in advance for the inconvenience*

What were the effects of labor on juvenile health and well-being in the early 1900s?

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry prompts students to examine the various factors and effects that emerged from employing children in labor at the textile mill industry. By looking at the kind of labor and amount of hours worked by children, along with the benefits/advantages, risks and dangers of child labor students consider the ways children would have been affected socially and physically during this time period. Though this inquiry, students consider the “big picture” of the work done by children and how this impacted the lives of children and their families in this time period. They will also gain an appreciation for the differences between the lives of children who labored and their own. This inquiry focuses on the disciplinary practice of analyzing and interpreting data and evidence. This inquiry can be completed in 2-4 class periods.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “What were the effects of child labor on juvenile health and well-being in the early 19th century?” students work through 4 supporting questions, exploring cause and effect, completing formative performance tasks, and using featured source(s) to construct an argument supported by evidence while also acknowledging competing perspectives. The featured sources reflect different formats and topics that give broader context to the topic of child labor

Staging the Compelling Question

To introduce the inquiry, teachers may guide students in examining photos by Lewis Hine of children working in America in the 1890’s-1920’s in various jobs and compare those photos to current photos of teens working today. Teachers may have students identify significant changes across the photographs - ages, physical differences in size, any observable injuries - and then discuss what students know about child labor and why it is no longer so widespread in America these days.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question “What kind of labor did children do in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s?” asks students to consider the jobs children did in this time period. Students view a video of the song “Babies in the Mills” by Dorsey Dixon that also includes Lewis Hine photos. More photos of Alabama children (or whatever state you’re teaching in) can be shown that were taken by Mr. Hine. Even more photographs are available at from the History Place website. These should provide a variety of jobs done during this time by young children. As the formative performance task, students should make a list of the jobs they see in the photographs.

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question “How many hours did children work and at what pay?” leads students to read and identify information on hours worked, pay received, and laws that governed child labor then and now. Students use excerpts from *Textile Town* and the poster of current Alabama Child Labor Laws (or the laws of the state in which they live) to compare the different centuries. Students may figure out there are interesting laws that currently govern them and may see ways/times they *could* be working. Teachers may also prompt students to evaluate whether employers today *would* be willing to employ them, if their parents would support this, and if they would want to work. As the formative performance task, students should create a chart (e.g., Venn diagram) that compares conditions and policies across the time periods.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question “What were the benefits/advantages to child labor?” requires students to make a bulleted list explaining the possible benefits/advantages of children working. They should listen to an interview in which a person tells about his experience working as a child laborer. They should also explore a few excerpts from *Textile Town*. Lists can be shared and discussed in class.

Supporting Question 4

The fourth supporting question “What were the risks and dangers of child labor?” asks students, in groups, to create a large 3-columned chart explaining possible consequences of child labor including risks/dangers, diseases and education challenges. The sources, from *Textile Town* and the University of Iowa Labor Center, could be printed on card stock or put into plastic protectors to be shared within the groups. Once groups are finished, they could share their findings around the classroom on each topic

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined several sources to explore reasons for child labor and the benefits/advantages/risks/dangers of children working. 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 “What were the effects of child labor on juvenile health and well-being in the late 19th century?” Students should prepare with a partner to state a position on the effects of child labor and give reasons/evidence from each source category.

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

- *Child labor was an important component to the survival and thriving of the family in this time period, bringing in money for the family. The family unit was often working at the mill, while not always together.*
- *Children did a variety of jobs where their smaller hands/stature were needed at the mills/elsewhere, but they encountered dangers and risks to their health and possible injuries to their bodies.*
- *Children worked ridiculously long hours and missed out on many hours of school/educational opportunities.*
- *There were diseases they were likely to get due to their diet limitations and working in the mill.*

Because many middle-level teachers work in multidisciplinary teams, teachers may collaborate with colleagues to implement one of the following Extension Tasks:

- **English Language Arts:** Write an acrostic poem with a key word phrase (e.g., child labor). Students should cite their sources. The teacher can model this process using *Textile Town*.
- **History:** Interview two to four adults about their experiences working as teenagers. Students can work together to develop the questions, which might include A) What type of jobs did you do when you were young? B) How old were you when working your first job? C) What were your hours? D) What pay did you receive? And E) Do you feel it affected your health in any way? Students should compare the information they gather from the interviews to the information they learned from the inquiry and create a Then/Now visual.
- **Math:** Compare hours and pay from the early 1900s to today using an online inflation calculator.
- **Science:** Compare labor-related eating/diet/health/diseases from the early 1900s to today and identify any changes.

For Taking Informed Action, students can turn their attention to the health-decisions they and their peers make. Through the inquiry and additional research, students should understand the various risks and dangers that many children experienced in the early 1900s, often because of expectations that they work. Students should explore social, economic, and political changes that have occurred since then and the impact on their experiences as children. Students should discuss factors that influence children's health today. Using a provided rubric, students work together to assess the extent to which they and their peers are healthier than children in the early 1900s. With their assessment in mind, students can decide what changes they and their peers can take to become healthier.

Featured Sources

Supporting Question 1

Source A: Babies in the Mills by Dorsey Dixon

Source B: Separate photos of Alabama children taken by Lewis Hine.

Source C: [The History Place - Child Labor in America: Investigative Photos of Lewis Hine](#)

Supporting Question 2 Sources:

Source A: Excerpts from *Textile Town* (2002), pages 90, 92

Source B: Current Alabama Child Labor Laws on a poster

https://labor.alabama.gov/docs/posters/childlaborlawposter_english.pdf

Supporting Question 3 Sources:

Source A: Transcript of Interview with Junie Edna Kaylor Aaron

<http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/sohp/id/12031/rec/1>

Source B: Excerpts from *Textile Town* (2002), pages 70, 86, 93, 110

Supporting Question 4 Sources:

Source A: Excerpts from *Textile Town* (2002)

Education – pages 50, 59, 62, 69

Eating/Diet – pages 85, 86

Diseases – pages 48, 69, 102-103, 109, 116, 290

View of Mill workers - page 56

Source B: [Child Labor Public Education Project | The University of Iowa Labor Center \(uiowa.edu\)](#)