

Child Labor

Overview

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Provided by:

Department of Education

Overview

This topic can be integrated into unit on innovation and capitalism in 20th century in a grade 8 or 10 classroom.

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Compelling Question: Should children work for wages?

Introduction

At the start of the 20th century, labor in America was in short supply, and laws concerning the employment of children were rarely enforced or nonexistent. While Americans at the time supported the role of children working on family farms, there was little awareness of the

other forms of labor being undertaken by young hands. In 1908, photographer Lewis Hine was employed by the newly-founded National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) to document child laborers and their workplaces nationwide. His well-made portraits of young miners, mill-workers, cotton-pickers, cigar-rollers, newsboys, pin-boys, oyster-shuckers, and factory-workers put faces on the issue, and were used by reformers to raise awareness and drive legislation that would protect young workers or prohibit their employment. After several stalled attempts in Congress, the NCLC-backed Fair Labor Standards Act passed in 1938 with child labor provisions that remain the law of the land today, barring the employment of anyone under the age of 16.

—From *Child Labor in America 100 Years Ago*, by Alan Taylor

Supporting Questions

Eco 9-12.4 and Eco 9-12.1 refer to the [Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks](#) .

- What types of economic opportunities were available to families and children? (Eco 9-12.4)
- What did certain industrial enterprises, such as the textile mills, produce in Connecticut? (Eco 9-12.1)

Purpose

Students will understand the role of child labor to industrialization at the turn of the 20th century. In addition, students will explore the work of federal and state (CT) government advocates to stop the use of child labor through protective legislation.

Historical Context

"There is work that profits children, and there is work that brings profit only to employers. The object of employing children is not to train them, but to get high profits from their work."

- Lewis Hine, 1908

In 1793, Samuel Slater, a native of Derbyshire, England, ushered in the American Industrial Revolution when he constructed America's

first textile mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. As a young boy, Slater learned the intricacies of industrialization while working in a cotton mill in his hometown. Within three years of establishing his first mill in Pawtucket, the operation had 30 workers, the majority of whom were children aged seven to twelve. Despite the many dangers and health risks associated with this work, mills sprang up throughout the New England colonies, bringing about an unprecedented boom in profits, and the need for a cheap, sustainable labor force.

Connecticut Child Labor Reforms

In accordance with the precedent set by Slater, factory owners typically favored children as a staple of their workforces—they believed them to be more manageable and cheaper than adult laborers. While the employment of young workers was economically advantageous to factory owners, reformers viewed the system as a form of exploitation.

In May 1813, Connecticut became the first state to enact a child labor law requiring employers to provide some schooling in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Additionally, owners became accountable for the moral instruction of their young employees, with the requirement that all working children engaged in religious worship. The law did not address the minimum age of the workers, however.

In 1824, state civil authorities in areas where factories and other manufacturing firms operated began to establish groups known as “boards of visitors.” The state required members of these boards to visit workplaces and ensure that employers complied with the provisions of the act of 1813. If found in violation, factory owners faced fines of up to \$100.

The push for child labor law reforms continued to progress throughout the 19th century, on both the national and state levels. In 1848, Pennsylvania set the minimum age for factory workers at 12, becoming the first state to implement legislation pertaining to the minimum age of child laborers. By 1900, 24 states, including Connecticut, followed suit and set the minimum age for non-agricultural jobs at 14 and strictly limited the working hours of those between 14 and 16 years of age. Despite such legislative action, the issue of child labor was far from resolved.

In the summer of 1902, a large corporation that managed a profitable cotton duck operation in New Hartford announced they were closing their Connecticut locations and moving all of their operations to the South where there were no regulatory laws regarding the age of child laborers like the ones found in Connecticut. This episode proved indicative of a much larger migratory trend that undermined reforms in Connecticut and other progressive-minded states. In a piece condemning corporate greed and calling for further reform, the *Hartford Courant* reflected, "So long as Georgia, for instance, allowed child labor, it would not do for Alabama to pass restrictive laws which would drive the workers across the border, for the mill population was migratory, and the demand for workers so great that mills habitually paid the moving expenses of employees hired from a distance."

In 1916, the US Congress passed the short-lived Keating-Owen Act, which President Woodrow Wilson signed into law. The act prohibited the interstate sale of any goods produced by companies that employed children under 14, or mines that employed children younger than 16.

Presenting the Horrors of Child Labor to Hartford

A year after their lobbying success in Washington, the Connecticut chapters of the National Consumers League presented a child labor show in Hartford's Old City Hall, at which various posters and cartoons adorned the walls, and information regarding the history and current status of child labor in Connecticut were presented to attendees. Many displays noted that while Connecticut had traditionally been a leader in pushing for labor rights, there was still significant room for improvement to its policies. One poster challenged attendees as follows: "Twenty-eight states do not permit children under 16 years of age to work in stores at night. Does Connecticut care less for its children than these states?"

In 1937, as the country slowly emerged from the depths of the Great Depression, labor issues were again at the forefront of senatorial reform. Amid the desperate economic climate of the 1930s, with unemployment numbers soaring, adult laborers became willing to work for the same low wages as their adolescent counterparts. An

increase in the number of adults willing to work for low wages allowed for reform to push forward, without the pressure from companies who feared for their profitability.

In 1937 President Franklin D. Roosevelt appealed to 19 states to ratify a child labor amendment to the Constitution that provided Congress with the power to regulate and prohibit the labor of persons under the age of 18. While a similar amendment in 1935 proved unsuccessful, and met with stiff resistance in the Connecticut House of Representatives, Roosevelt's later appeal passed and eventually formed a part of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. In addition to the introduction of the 40-hour work week, minimum wage, and overtime pay, the statute prohibited the employment of minors in "oppressive child labor."

—*Child Labor in Connecticut*, by Patrick J. Mahoney

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How To

Classroom Setup

Students will work in groups of three to four. Students will need access to the internet and large poster paper. In addition, students will take notes and write reflections in their journals.

Procedure

Part 1: Have students view the following images and develop questions about child labor in CT using the [QFT](#) technique:

Ask as many questions as possible in 2 minutes - No judgment!

- Categorize the questions as closed or open ended.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each kind of question? Prioritize three questions from your list.
- Which questions will help you to understand cause and effect on this topic?
- Which questions will establish context?
- Which questions will give some insights to the different perspectives on this topic?
- Which of their questions could best lead to more investigation?

Image 1



Messenger boys: they work from 5am to 11pm. New Haven, Connecticut. Lewis Hine. National Archives.

Image 2



Child tobacco workers. Hazardville, CT, 1919- Ct Historical Society

Image 3



10 year-old picker in Tobacco Field, Connecticut Lewis Wickes Hine-National Archives

Image 4



Children Tobacco-Pickers: they make 50 cents a day. Lewis Hine.

Image 5



Two of the youngest newsboys in Hartford, Connecticut. They are cousins, eight and ten years-old. August 25, 1924. Location: Hartford, Connecticut. Lewis Hine. National Archives

Image 6



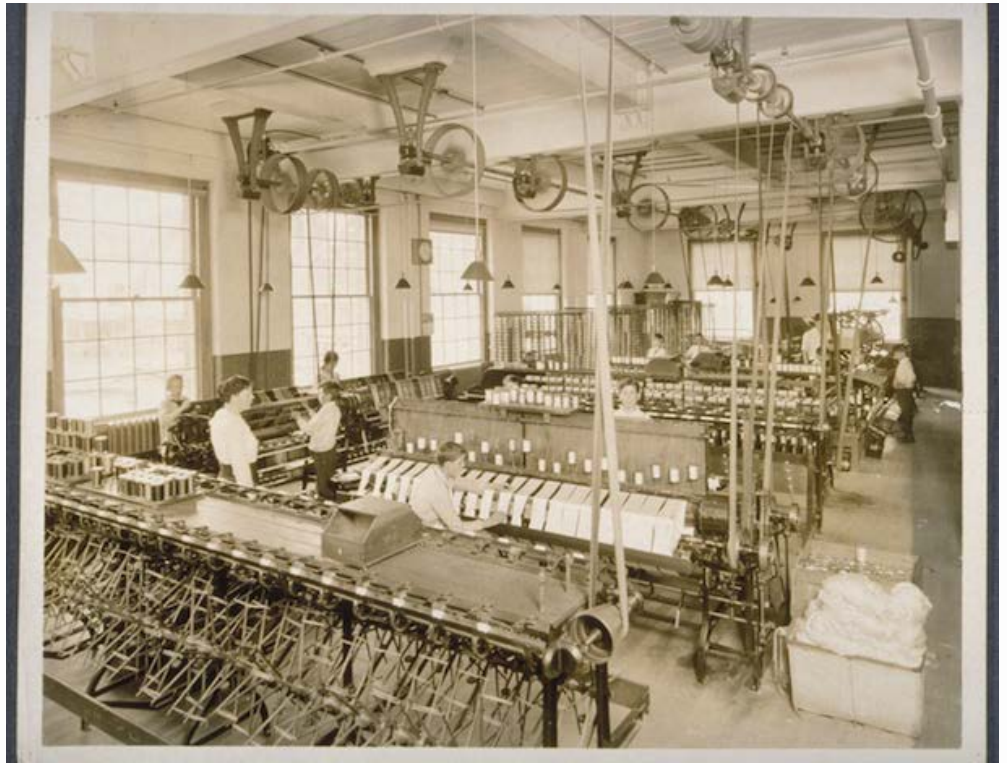
Girl newsies: waiting for papers. Hartford, Connecticut, 1909. Photo by Lewis Hine. National Archives.

Image 7



Cheney Silk Mills, Manchester.

Image 8



Mill interior: Cheney Brothers Silk Manufacturing Company, 1918. Woman supervising boys at work-CT Historical Society. CT, Lewis Hine. National Archives

Part 2: Photography as a Tool for Reform

Have students read the following information about the role of Lewis Hine's photography in bringing about reform.

1. Why is photography a powerful tool to change public perceptions?
2. Why do you think it took so long to change the federal labor laws?
3. Is photography used today to advocate for social and political issues?

Child Labor Exposed: The Legacy of Photographer Lewis Hine

A camera was an improbable weapon against the growing evil of child labor in the early years of the 20th century. Then, children as young as five years old were working long hours in dirty, dangerous canneries and mills in New England.

Lewis Wickes Hine, a former schoolteacher, cleverly faked his

way into places where he wasn't welcome and took photos of scenes that weren't meant to be seen. He traveled hundreds of thousands of miles, exposing himself to great danger. His exertions were ultimately rewarded with a law banning child labor in 1938.

He was born in Oshkosh, Wisc., on Sept. 26, 1874, and came late to photography. He was a 30 year-old prep school teacher at the Fieldston School in New York City when he got a bright idea: He would bring his students to Ellis Island to photograph the thousands of immigrants who arrived every day. Over five years he took more than 200 plates; but more importantly, he realized he could use photography to try to end child labor.

"There are two things I wanted to do. I wanted to show the things that had to be corrected. I wanted to show the things that had to be appreciated," he said.

CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE

In 1908, Hine got a job for the National Child Labor Committee, reformers who fought the growing practice of child labor.

Between 1880 and 1900, the number of children between 5 and 10 working for wages had increased by 50 percent. One in six small children was then mining coal, running spinning machines, selling newspapers on the street or otherwise gainfully employed. They were robbed of an education and a childhood, trapped in a downward spiral of poverty.

Newsies, telegraph messengers and young mill-workers were exposed to vice and abused by their employers, their customers and even their parents.

Over the years, Hine photographed children working in gritty industrial settings that inspired a wave of moral outrage. With a new camera called the Graflex he took photos of child labor throughout New England.

Hine traveled far beyond the giant textile mills of Lowell and Lawrence, Mass. He went to silk and paper mills in Holyoke,

Mass., textile and upholstering plants in Manchester, N.H., a cotton mill in North Pownall, V.T., and cotton mills in Scituate, R.I.

He went to the canneries in Eastport, Maine, where he saw children as young as seven cutting fish with butcher knives. Accidents happened -- a lot. "The salt water gets into the cuts and they ache," said one boy.

One day in August 1911 Hine saw an 8-year-old Syrian girl, Phoebe Thomas, running home from the sardine factory all alone. Her hand and arm were bathed with blood, and she was crying at the top of her voice. She had cut the end of her thumb nearly off and was sent home alone, since her mother was busy.

RELUCTANT EMPLOYERS

Employers didn't want their practices exposed. Photo historian Daile Kaplan described how Hine operated:

Nattily dressed in a suit, tie, and hat, Hine, the gentleman actor and mimic, assumed a variety of personas — including Bible salesman, postcard salesman, and industrial photographer making a record of factory machinery — to gain entrance to the workplace.

Hine might tell a plant manager he was an industrial photographer taking pictures of machines. At the last minute he would ask if a child laborer could stand near the machine to show its size. He also interviewed mill owners, parents and local officials, pioneering tactics still used by 60 Minutes.

Hine confronted public officials with evidence and asked for a response. He asked the children about their lives. He told one heartbreaking story about a child laborer who worked in a cannery, so young and beaten down she couldn't tell him her name.

Russell Freedman, in his book, *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor*, wrote, "At times, he was in real danger, risking physical attack when factory managers

realized what he was up to...he put his life on the line in order to record a truthful picture of working children in early twentieth-century America."

FARM LABOR

That picture included child labor in rural New England, such as in Connecticut's tobacco fields and on Western Massachusetts farms. Hine photographed eight-year-old Jack driving a load of hay and taking care of livestock. He was 'a type of child who is being overworked in many rural districts,' wrote Hine.

By 1912, the NCLC persuaded Congress to create a United States Children's Bureau in the Department of Labor and Department of Commerce. The Children's Bureau worked closely with the NCLC to investigate abuses of child labor.

Years of political battles followed, until finally in 1938 Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. The law prohibits any interstate commerce of goods produced by children under the age of 16. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed it into law on June 25, 1938.

By then, the public had lost interest in Lewis Hine's work. He died two years later, broke, in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. His son offered to donate his photographs to the Museum of Modern Art, but he was rebuffed. Today, Hine's photographs of child labor are held in collections at the Library of Congress and the George Eastman House in Rochester, N.Y.

The National Child Labor Committee Collection at the Library of Congress consists of more than 5,100 photographic prints and 355 glass negatives.

And today there is a Lewis Hine award for people who have done outstanding work in helping young people.

—From: *Child Labor Exposed: The Legacy of Photographer Lewis Hine*

Part 3: Child Advocacy

Have students work in groups to answer the following questions. Students will review the following [four primary documents](#) and complete the following chart. These documents detail the investigation and suggestions of the State of Connecticut to address the use of child labor. [Download worksheet](#)

Image/Document	Specific Issues	Recommendations
Doc 1		
Doc 2		
Doc 3		
Doc 4		

How would the following groups respond to the recommendations in each document? Explain.

- Labor Unions
- Democrats
- Republicans
- Progressive Reformers
- Teachers
- Employers
- Child Workers
- Parents

Who had the most power?

Should the role of government include protection of children? Explain.

Document 1

[Page 9, Recommendations](#), Report of the Bureau of labor on the conditions of wage-earning women and girls by Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics. Charlotte Molyneux Holloway. Hartford, 1914

might, even in its closest neighbor, appear inadequate or more than just compensation. It was also very necessary not to let one man know, save in direct communication with his brother merchant, what that man was paying his help. Such knowledge would not only give him undue advantage over a business competitor but would inevitably lead to his arrangement of his own wage in as close conformity as possible. In a general way this conformity exists. Certain phases of department and other store work has almost uniform remuneration in all stores, but there is a great deal of individual differences that would not exist to the advantage of the clerks if each man accurately knew the wage system of the other.

Believing that the people of Connecticut want a concise and accurate statement of conditions within their own state, there has been close adherence to that belief and no wandering into adjacent fields for illustrations. These can be plentifully found within the borders of the old Charter Oak state. In the opinion of the writer, reference to outside authorities, quoting of economic writings is simply waste of State money, which is being paid to learn the every-day life and stories of the girls with whom the inquiry is concerned. Keeping strictly within the state confines is not only going to be helpful to Connecticut but to other states engaged in similar work. To them compilation of Connecticut work and conditions may be very useful. They can deduce their own comparisons and conclusions.

CHARLOTTE MOLYNEUX HOLLOWAY.

RECOMMEN

After weighing the conclusions of the industrial investigator, appointed by the general assembly commission and placing its views fully present the following recommendations for approval and action.

1. That a law be passed regulating the hours of work of women in establishments, whether wholesale or retail, such as Five, Ten and Fifteen Cent stores, in which such stores as deal in similar work woman nor minor female, who are employed after six o'clock in the evening and on the sixth evening, Saturday and Sunday. That all violations of this law shall be punishable by a fine of not less than \$50 for a first offense.
2. That any employer, past or present, be prohibited from employing an employee on seven legal holidays generally observed in this state, to be punished by a fine of not more than \$50 for a first offense.
3. That all violations of the law relating to the bureau of labor statistics be punishable by a fine of not more than \$50 for a first offense.
4. That every mercantile establishment employing more female employees provide an emergency room, such a provision to be for the health, comfort, efficiency and convenience of the employees.
5. That a lunch period of not less than fifteen minutes be a uniform requirement in all establishments employing more than ten employees, having the right to exercise the same.
6. That every store be provided with a closet for women on the premises and a means of access to a cellar by means of a trap door, to be provided for the convenience of the employees.
7. That in view of the fact that sanitary paper towels, liquid soap and drinking cups be recommended for use in all establishments.

[Report of the Bureau of labor on the conditions of wage-earning women and](#)

Document 2

Page 143, Recommendations, State of Connecticut Report of the Department of Labor on the conditions of wage-earners in the state. Printed in compliance with statute, 1918.

when this amount is multiplied by hundreds and thousands of hours lost, it becomes vast. Even the cessation of work for a minute means loss to the worker and the employer.

As far as it was possible to estimate this loss caused by sickness, taking a few day off, strikes, walkouts, parleys, etc., it reached the sum of \$3,171,841.62 which is the difference between the actual wages paid as given in the report and the wages which would have been paid if the employees had worked every one of the legal working days.

While in some occupations, sickness and drunkenness were factors, the latter figures in a degree gratifyingly small to the workmen who are proud of their standing. A large part of the loss of wages, apart from labor disturbance, was the habit of taking days' off, indulged in by the higher paid workers. One young man who was making \$84 a week habitually took off a day and a half each week.

AS TO OUTPUT.

The summary of the output of the manufacturers of the state should also be considered with reference to the fact that much more money had to be expended for material, upkeep, fuel, etc., as well as wages. The output, also embraces material both raw and finished so that one man in giving the sum total of his output has therein not only his own finished product but the finished product and raw material of perhaps a score of others. The amount given represents in all cases gross output with no deductions made for material, upkeep, wear and tear, wages, insurance, etc.

RECOI

Your investigator urg

1. The establishment courses in grade at the trade schools n
2. Extension of physi for both boys and
3. The passing of a l young mothers in b
4. Every floor used as where men and wom for both sexes, situ or floor, distinctly entrances. Such es kept unobstructed. ventilated and sho lighted by artificia disinfectants shoul seats should be pre en walls and seats bent paint; the wa times a year. Gra ist for separate toi or floor. All toilet the top and from th
5. Buildings, not fact floors are occupied employing both sex both sexes, situated There are hundreds ties or only one wr
6. Lavatories should t room whence the to women in default o in the toilet bowls. and cold water, liqu
7. Lavatories for me stream type where the faucet. Washir

[Report of the Department of labor on the conditions of wage-earners in the :](#)

Document 3

Page 266, [Ignorance an Economic Waste](#), Annual report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the State of Connecticut. 1894,

between this phase of the subject and the law which fixes the age limit of employment at thirteen years. That law permits short-sighted or avaricious parents to send from school to factory many children at the most impressionable age, at an age when an additional year in school would be worth more to them, and to the State, than any two or three years of school life preceding. The children should have that additional year for mental, moral and physical growth. It would involve no great sacrifice. Indeed, in comparison with the important results sought, affecting not alone the life of the citizen, but the best life of the State, it seems a small thing, to ask that the age limit of employment be raised one year, to fourteen.

IGNORANCE AN ECONOMIC WASTE.

To permit any number of children—even a small number—to grow up in ignorance, is an injustice to the children, for which the State may pay dearly. It is an economic waste, positive in the possibilities that are lost, and negative in the resultant cost of poverty and crime. In a democracy it is a moral sin and a lamentable short-sightedness. Governor Washburne, of Massachusetts, in his annual message to the legislature in 1874, well said on this subject:

"The assumption of our laws is that the highest intelligence is the highest good of the entire people. Ignorance is dwarfing to the individual and dangerous to society. It is wiser economy to sustain the common school than the reform school, the normal school than the house of correction, the college than the penitentiary. The State assumes that the physical, mental and moral treasures, embraced in what we call childhood, are so much capital belonging to the community as well as to the parents. And it has been well said that the State undertakes to provide for, invest, develop and look after this childhood treasure in such a way that it shall pay the highest dividends to the Commonwealth. No distinction of outward condition, whether it be of wealth or poverty, of birth or race, can be allowed to interfere with the purposes of the State. She claims the right and responsibility of providing a good common school education for every child within her borders, at the public expense. She starts them all upon the highway toward useful and honorable manhood and womanhood."

HOW MANY ACQUIRE A COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION?

By a common school education, as the phrase is generally understood, is meant not merely a little knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic, but the application of those elements of knowledge

in the branches taught in the grammar schools. It is certainly not asking too much that each child should have the opportunity to acquire a grammar school education. It may be for the few, as some argue, but it is for all. It is not too much to ask that every child who enters a grammar school, education be part of the life-work. That, through the abstention from toil a better fit the child to be a worker at the age of fourteen.

What proportion of children acquire a common school education? The Connecticut Board of Education reported in 1903: "Last year in one town 584 entered grammar schools representing the entire population of the town. Barely 100 at the age of twelve to thirteen had received a common school education." Not one-fifth. In response to an inquiry of the subject, an inquiry was addressed to the principals of the grammar schools in the various counties, towns and schools, as follows:

[Annual report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the State of Connecticut](#)

Page 277, What Some of the Teachers Say

AVERAGE AGE OF GRAMMAR SCHOOL GRADUATES.

The replies as to the average age of completing the grammar school course may be thus summarized :

AVERAGE AGE AT COMPLETION OF HIGHEST GRAMMAR GRADE.	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS REPORTING.				
	1890.	1891.	1892.	1893.	1894.
Over 12 and under 13 years,	1	1
Over 13 and under 14 years,	6	9	6	10	15
Over 14 and under 15 years,	9	11	23	26	29
Over 15 years,	11	16	17	22	29

A study of the summary shows that of the twenty-six schools reporting for 1890 only six report the average age of graduation to be less than fourteen years. For 1891 thirty-six schools reported, and in twenty-seven of them the average age was more than fourteen. It was also over fourteen in forty of the forty-seven schools reporting for 1892, in forty-eight of the fifty-eight reporting for 1893 and in fifty-eight of the seventy-four reporting for 1894. It is quite evident from this showing that the vast majority of children do not acquire a common school education at the age when the present law permits them to leave school and to seek employment. Added evidence of this is given in the percentage (in the original tables) of pupils who do not complete the grammar school course. In the majority of the schools reporting on that query the per cent. is over fifty, rising in some schools, particularly those in manufacturing communities, to sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety and even one hundred per cent. Phrased in another form, it means that in more than half of the schools reporting less than half of the children remain to acquire a common school education. As is shown in the adjoining column of percentages, very many of them leave school for the factory as soon as the law permits. In twenty-one of fifty-seven schools giving percentages on this query more than one-half of the children cease school attendance upon attaining the legal age of employment.

It is unfortunately true, as shown by the tables, that many children would not complete the grammar school course if the age limit of employment were fourteen instead of thirteen. But with that change the number who would finish the course would be largely

increased, while those who would have the added advantage of at least a resultant gain would appear in the commonwealth.

WHAT SOME OF

Interest in the subject induced, unsolicited, comments, the inserted :

KILLINGLY.—“About one-half allows.”

HARTFORD.—“Am deeply interested. I believe our compulsory law limit will be raised one year. The

DEBBY.—“Personally, I should like to see it raised to fifteen years. I think if it could be raised to permit no one to leave school until after children come just to complete one hundred and twenty days has cases, in my estimation, are few to work earlier.”

NORWICH.—“My school is made up of parentage, who will, if possible, be raised one year. The Russians have come into this vicinity of English; consequently, a child, in the United States, has a very fine opportunity to enter a factory at fourteen years to enter a factory spent in acquiring English, and a child with primary children.”

EAST LYME.—“It seems to me that in this school there are compulsory studies of the grammar department among both pupils and parents in completion.”

NEW HAVEN.—“Here is a fact: boys who leave school as soon as they are assisting his mother in keeping the other day the boy printed a sign and Pies.”

NEW BRITAIN.—“Owing to having this year, though I am sure the percentage must have been greater.”

GREENWICH.—“Twelve to fifteen before; hence, make the time fifteen

[Annual report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the State of Connecticut](#)

Document 4

Page 6, Forward, Industrial instability of child workers. A study of employment-certificate records in Connecticut, Robert Morse Woodbury, 1920

FOREWORD.

The following study, based upon employment certificate records in Connecticut, throws light upon important questions regarding child labor. The first question is how soon after passing the fourteenth birthdays do children actually begin to seek employment in a State where 14 is the minimum legal age for employment. The study shows how the proportion of children at work gradually increased from about 7 per cent in the month following the fourteenth birthday to nearly 32 per cent at 16 years of age.

Other questions relate to the way children become adjusted to industrial life. The length of time they stay in their first positions reflects the degree to which the first positions are satisfactory to the children and how well they satisfy their employers. Over half the children stayed six months or longer in their first positions. Girls tended to stay longer in their first positions than boys. As between industries, the textile group showed relatively long periods of employment. On the other hand, the proportion of children leaving their first positions soon after commencing work is an indication of unsatisfactory adjustment. A large proportion—over one-third—left their first positions within three months, and one-half of these within one month. Some children left position after position; a small group, characterized as "unsteady workers" and comprising about 2 per cent, held eight or more positions within less than 24 months of work history. In general the children gradually became adjusted to the discipline of work as their experience increased. This adjustment is shown, for example, in the decline in the monthly rate of becoming unemployed, from 9.1 cases per 100 children at work in the first month after commencing work to only 2.3 after 22 months' experience.

The problem of the unemployed child—that is, the child neither at work nor in school—is a difficult one for the school administration to solve. The Connecticut law requires him to be in school unless he is at work. Without special schools to meet the special needs of working children, it is hard to fit the children who are out of work into the regular school classes, and almost impossible to enforce the school-attendance law so far as concerns them. With compulsory continuation schools for all working children these difficulties would disappear and the unemployed children could be given additional training along their chosen lines during the periods while they are out of work. The analysis shows that nearly half the children studied had one or more periods of unemployment lasting over a week, the periods lasting on an average two and one-half months, and covering one-tenth of the total work histories of all the children.

6

INDUSTRIAL INSTABILITY OF CHILD LABOR—EMPLOYMENT-CERTIFICATE RECORDS

INTRODUCTION

The granting of employment certificates for children is a special privilege, usually permitted to work openings in child labor. Hitherto statistics upon the census or upon necessary localities and covering special cases with the adoption by State of an employment certificate for children have become possible to study the extent of employment and as many other things by the information obtained in the records.

One of the first States to record child labor was Connecticut,¹ which issued certificates for the employment of children to the board of education. This unit was created in the office of the State records covering every child worker in the State since September 1, 1910.

Connecticut thus offered a record of child labor as reflected in its employment certificate histories of children between 1910 and 1919. It was chosen for a ten-year period upon certain points, such as the amount of unemployment, which was a primary investigation because of the high unemployment rate.

Except for Rhode Island, Massachusetts is the most densely populated State in the Union. It is preeminently a manufacturing State, and its industries are widely diversified. In 1910 the number of wage earners in manufacturing industries was 1,100,000.

¹ This system was first adopted in Ohio and Massachusetts. In the latter States was the system of issuing certificates so that the child laborer can be found in any one place.

[Industrial instability of child workers. A study of employment-certificate records.](#)

Page 68, Chart Industry of first employment by age

TABLE 1.—Industry of first employment by distribution of boys and girls of specific employment.

Industry of first employment.	Total.		14-14	
	Number.	Per-cent dis-tribution.	Number.	Per-cent dis-tribution.
All industries.....	4,000	100.0	1,385	100
Manufacturing and mechanical industries.....	2,838	71.0	997	71.0
Metal.....	1,404	35.1	497	35.9
Textiles.....	693	17.3	239	17.3
Clothing.....	185	4.6	59	4.3
Food products.....	46	1.2	15	1.1
Wood products.....	45	1.1	17	1.2
Leather goods.....	48	1.2	22	1.6
Chemical products.....	24	0.6	7	0.5
Bone products.....	85	2.1	48	3.5
Clay products.....	29	0.7	19	1.4
Rubber goods.....	48	1.2	13	0.9
Electrical goods.....	117	2.9	46	3.3
Printing.....	72	1.8	20	1.5
Other.....	72	1.8	13	1.0
Trade.....	711	17.8	275	20.0
Transportation.....	143	3.6	55	4.0
Personal and domestic service.....	39	1.0	17	1.2
Other.....	66	1.7	8	0.6
Not reported.....	201	5.1	33	2.4
G				
All industries.....	3,147	100.0	1,091	100
Manufacturing and mechanical industries.....	2,501	79.6	907	83.2
Metal.....	664	21.1	212	19.4
Textiles.....	835	26.5	317	29.0
Clothing.....	431	13.7	184	16.9
Food products.....	61	1.9	20	1.8
Wood products.....	132	4.2	55	5.0
Leather goods.....	22	0.7	13	1.2
Chemical products.....	28	0.9	6	0.6
Bone products.....	79	2.5	28	2.6
Clay products.....	13	0.4	4	0.4
Rubber goods.....	69	2.2	14	1.3
Electrical goods.....	120	3.8	48	4.4
Printing.....	20	0.6	4	0.4
Other.....	29	0.9	2	0.2
Trade.....	322	10.3	150	13.8
Transportation.....	4	0.1
Personal and domestic service.....	28	0.9	14	1.3
Other.....	12	0.4	5	0.5
Not reported.....	77	2.4	15	1.4

[Industrial instability of child workers. A study of employment-certificate reco](#)

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What's Next

Informed Action

1. Have students investigate the use of child labor in the supply chain for making carpets. Use the [Goodweave website](#) for reference.

- What strategies does this Non Governmental Organization use to advocate for child laborers?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies: consider the impact on children as well as the role of the consumer.

Students can share their research in a PSA or create a website to educate the school community.

2. Have students investigate a child labor issue here in the US or in other countries. Students can refer to the following websites for research:

- [Amnesty.org - Child Labor](#)
- [Human Rights Watch - Child Labor](#)

Have students create a short film to share their research with the school and local community. The [Robert Kennedy Human Rights](#) organization has some suggestions of how students can proceed.

Students can also compose an original song about a current child labor issue and share this with the school and local community.

[Speak Up Sing Out](#) has some suggestions for students.

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[Related Resources](#)

Related Resources

[Annual report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the State of Connecticut. 1894](#)

[Child Labor, Gene Leach and Nancy O. Albert. Ct Explored. 2004](#)

[Child Labor Exposed: The Legacy of Photographer Lewis Hine. New England Historical Society](#)

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[Industrial instability of child workers. A study of employment-certificate records in Connecticut, Robert Morse Woodbury, 1920](#)

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[Report of the Bureau of labor on the conditions of wage-earning women and girls by Connecticut. Bureau of labor statistics. Charlotte Molyneux Holloway. Hartford, 1914](#)

[State of Ct. Report of the Department of labor on the conditions of wage-earners in the state. Printed in compliance with statute, 1918.](#)

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