

WORKSHEET 3

CHILD LABOUR IN THE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES

A. 1. Read the text your group has been assigned and use different colours to highlight or underline:

- the working conditions of the children,
- the reasons why children worked,
- people or organizations fighting child labour,
- the effects that new laws and regulations had on the children's working conditions.

2. Select some key dates in the fight against child labour and explain what they correspond to.

GROUP A

In the UK, during the 19th century, working-class children were often employed in factories and on farms. For many families, it was more important for a child to bring home a salary than to go to school. Children had to work as hard as any adult (dangerous working conditions and long hours), but there were no laws to protect them. Employers liked to employ children because they could pay them less than adults, and they were easier to discipline.

The Church, teachers, and many other people were shocked by such cruelty. English writer Charles Dickens helped publicize the horrors of child labour with his novel *Oliver Twist*. In England, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) was founded in 1889. From 1802 to 1878, Britain was the first country to pass laws regulating child labour. These laws shortened the working hours, made the working conditions better, and raised the legal working age. After 1867 no factory or workshop could employ children under 8, and employees between 8 and 13 had the right to 10 hours of education per week. But inspectors often found it difficult to discover the exact age of young workers, and factory owners did not always organize schooling. Gradually, children were going to school instead of work, and were treated as children instead of 'little adults'.

GROUP B

In America, children had always worked, especially in farming. With industrialization, factories naturally employed children – they were cheap and obedient. A child could work 12 to 18 hours a day, six days a week, to earn one dollar. Many children began working before the age of 7. Factories were often damp, dark, and dirty. Some children worked underground, in coal mines. By 1810, about 2 million school-age children were working 50- to 70-hour weeks. Most came from poor families. These children had no time to play or go to school, and little time to rest. They often became ill.

In the USA, opposition to child labor started in the mid-19th century, but it took many years to make child labor illegal. In 1900, 18 percent of all American workers were under the age of 16. The National Child Labor Committee, an organization fighting for the abolition of all child labor, was formed in 1904. They gained public support by publishing information on the lives and working conditions of young workers. Photographer Lewis W. Hine worked for this organization. Many states gradually adopted laws to protect children, but it's only in 1938 that Congress voted the Fair Labor Standards Act. It fixed minimum ages of 16 for work during school hours, 14 for certain jobs after school, and 18 for dangerous work.

B. 1. Get ready to recap what you have learnt to the other group.

2. Take notes about their own presentation.

C. Use what you underlined, the dates you selected, your notes and the following prompts to recap.

In 19th century Britain and America, children

So they couldn't

Instead, they

But

As a result