

## **Child Labor** **Alisa Blaauw**

**Grade level : 11 or 12**

**Objectives:** Groups of students will analyze opposing viewpoints on the issue of child labor. Students will use their knowledge to lobby a “Legislator” in the form of a debate.

**Curriculum Map:** Post Civil War Growth and Change and the Legislative Branch

**Sunshine State Standards:** SS.A.1.4.2, SS.A.5.4.1, SS.B.2.4.6, SS.C.1.4.4, SS.D.2.4.3, SS.C.1.4.3, SS.C.1.4.4, SS.D.2.4.3

**Materials:** You will need documents for child labor and documents against child labor. TAH DBQ titled: Monopolies and Child Labor.

**Source:** Listed on each document

**Time:** 135 minutes (3-45 minutes periods)

### **Terms to Know**

Child labor: the exploitation of children who worked in factories, mines and farms.  
Factory system: system which workers and machines are brought together to produce goods  
Industrialization: was the uprising of machines in industries  
Labor: the ability to work  
Laborer: a person hired to work  
Laws: legal document which sets rules for a body of people  
Mass Production: method of manufacturing large amounts of goods  
Muckrakers: journalists who uncovered the horrible working conditions children faced on a daily basis.  
Productivity: the amount of goods a worker can produce in an allotted amount of time  
Progressives: reformers who fought for progress in all forms socially, economically and politically.  
Reformers: people who fought for changes  
Rural: living in a country area  
Social reformers: reformers that assisted the poor by fighting for health care and better housing.  
Unconstitutional: not supported by the Constitutional  
Urbanization: movement of millions of people from rural location to cities

### **Lesson Plan:**

1. Preteach terms to know
2. Students will be divided into pro-child labor and anti-child labor groups.
3. Each group will be given the appropriate documents which support their position.
4. Each group will answer the questions which accompany the document
5. Groups will formulate an argument for their position
6. Teacher or selected students will hear arguments
7. As assessment, students will complete the TAH DBQ titled: Monopolies and Child Labor.

## **Overview of Child Labor:**

Forms of child labor, including indentured servitude and child slavery, have existed throughout American history. As industrialization moved workers from farms and home workshops into urban areas and factory work, children were often preferred, because factory owners viewed them as more manageable, cheaper, and less likely to strike. Growing opposition to child labor in the North caused many factories to move to the South. By 1900, states varied considerably in whether they had child labor standards and in their content and degree of enforcement. By then, American children worked in large numbers in mines, glass factories, textiles, agriculture, canneries, home industries, and as newsboys, messengers, bootblacks, and peddlers.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the numbers of child laborers in the U.S. peaked. Child labor began to decline as the labor and reform movements grew and labor standards in general began improving, increasing the political power of working people and other social reformers to demand legislation regulating child labor. Union organizing and child labor reform were often intertwined, and common initiatives were conducted by organizations led by working women and middle class consumers, such as state Consumers' Leagues and Working Women's Societies. These organizations generated the National Consumers' League in 1899 and the National Child Labor Committee in 1904, which shared goals of challenging child labor, including through anti-sweatshop campaigns and labeling programs. The National Child Labor Committee's work to end child labor was combined with efforts to provide free, compulsory education for all children, and culminated in the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, which set federal standards for child labor.

Source: [http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child\\_labor/about/us\\_history.html](http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/us_history.html)

## Document 1: Anti-Child Labor



**SHED WORKERS**

**Title:** Do children work in the canneries?

**Author(s)/Creator(s):** Goldmark, Pauline Dorothea ; New York Child Labor Committee ; Consumers' League of New York City

**Publication Date:** 1907

**Publisher:** Consumers' League of the city of New York, New York Child Labor Committee

**Library Holdings:** View location in library

**PDF Pages:** 22

**Source:** <http://libraryimages.dol.gov/awweb/main.jsp?flag=browse&smd=2&awdid=6>

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1. Caption of document:
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  4. List 5 key items found in the document:
  5. Argument: Must be three well-developed paragraphs which give three reasons for your position including three examples for each reason.

## Document 2: Anti-Child Labor

### *Long Hours.*

The following reports of persons who were employed in these canneries during the bean season give some idea of the number of young children actually seen at work, and the shockingly long hours they are employed:

I started to work at 7 a. m. and was put on piece work in the shed. Sixty women and thirty children were here all stringing beans. They were sitting on boxes; forty-five of the sixty were Italians and they had all their children with them. One woman, a Mrs. T , had two girls *seven* and *nine* years old, with her. She began work at 5 a. m. and worked to-night till 9:30. The two little girls worked the same length of time. They complained of being tired when their mother had gone for beans, and said their limbs ached. They did not leave for meals but ate bread, etc., in the shed.

Worker No. 6.—Aug. 12, 1907, Cannery No. 16.

At 5 o'clock I counted the children in the shed—there were actually *eighty under fourteen years* and a large proportion of these were not more than eleven years. There were four nursing babies close to where I had been sitting. In the evening I went over for an hour more and at 9 o'clock counted fifty children under fourteen. Italian children from eight years up do regular snipping, but some of the more spirited boys will play part of the time.

Worker No. 4.—Aug. 20, 1907, Cannery No. 13.

Josephine S , aged *ten years*, worked all day from

7 a. m. till 5 p. m. and snipped thirty pounds of beans. Henry, her brother, is *nine years* old, and he said he was going to collect \$2.60 for the week. They worked all day, stopping only long enough to eat lunch without leaving the work place. Both children are dirty and thin.

Edward H , *fourteen years*, worked *i<sup>5</sup>/<sub>7</sub>* hours.

For at least a week he has been beginning work at 7 a. m. and working till between 9 and 10 p. m., helping at the sorting tables. Told how he worked last year from 7 a. m. till 9 and 10 at night, sometimes till 1 or 2 the next morning, keeping this up for days in succession; and one Saturday he worked from 6 a. m. till 5 a. m. Sunday with less than two hours off for meals. He was thirteen years old last year when he worked so and other boys the same age worked the same hours. He has begun at 7 and worked till between 9 and 10 at night since I have been here.

**Worker No. 8.—Aug. 19, 1907, Cannery No. 28.**

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## Document 3: Anti-Child Labor

### *Loss of Sleep.*

Even when young children do not work continuously during the whole time they remain in the sheds with their mothers, they suffer gross discomfort and neglect. Their hardships are most marked during the evening hours after long days spent without proper nourishment or care in the bean fields under the blazing August sun, or in the noisy sheds.

Many little ones are utterly overcome by sleep long before their mothers are ready to go home. Pathetic instances of these overtired children making pitiable efforts to continue working before finally succumbing to sleep, are described by our workers.

"To illustrate conditions by one family who sat facing me: There was the father, mother and five children, the oldest a boy of eleven, the youngest a baby in arms. The father and mother worked along steadily like machines except as interrupted momentarily by the demands of the baby or next older child. The oldest boy worked along stoically till on towards 10 o'clock and then he could not help nodding and stopping work, but he braced up and helped with the other children when the family was ready to go home at 10:30. A little girl of nine snipped beans until 9 o'clock, then began to nod, tried to rouse herself but finally succumbed to sleep, sitting with her head against the side of the bench. A girl of seven made a similar struggle then sat on the floor and leaned against the bench. A boy of four lay on the seat. The father had to shake and scold him in order to wake him. The girls whimpered when awakened."

Worker No. 4.—Aug. 12, 1907, Cannery No. 13.

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## Document 4: Anti-Child Labor

### *Truancy Encouraged.*

If employment of young children at the canneries injures them physically, it is no less detrimental to their mental development. No class of children is in greater need of systematic instruction and training for future citizenship than the sons and daughters of illiterate immigrants, ignorant of our speech, laws and customs. Whenever the Italian families are ready to migrate to the canneries the children are as a matter of course taken away from school.

The cannery workers emphasize the fact that they employ children only during the vacation of the public schools. The canning season often lasts from about June 1 until as late as December 1, while school vacations rarely commence earlier than the middle of June and close not later than the middle of September. This leaves about four months in which cannery work and school session may overlap. In an effort to ascertain how far the children deserted school for the canneries, some of the public schools in the western part of the state were visited, where the attendance of children of Italian cannery workers is comparatively large. In a Catholic school in Buffalo thirty-five children ranging from eight to eleven years old, were found in one room, of whom twenty-four had been at the canneries during the summer. From the testimony of the children and their teacher it was found that all but a half dozen of the twenty-four had come to Buffalo from one to seven weeks after the school had opened. All of them had been kept at the canneries by their parents to work at peeling apples and the like. Only seven or eight raised their hands, when asked whether they had gone to school in the country.

As to the general effect of cannery work upon school attendance, their teacher expressed herself in no uncertain terms. "The children come straggling back to school long after the others have started work, so that they are backward and deficient throughout the winter. Last June something over a third of our children here were absent from the final examination, and I have found out since that practically all of these had gone to the canneries to work. We cannot stop it in Buffalo. The children do not seem to take up their school work again in the country, and while we think in the city that the country school authorities ought to compel the children to attend school while they live at the canneries, they do not."

A principal of a Public School in Buffalo, who has a wide knowledge of the Italian residents of Buffalo, said that there was hardly a school in the city in which the Italian attendance was large, that did not struggle with the truancy problem of the cannery children who leave school early and return late. "Ordinarily," he said, "I find Italian children attentive, docile and reasonably regular in attendance; but there is always a large number who come in late from the canneries in the fall, and by the time they have recovered the ground lost by their tardiness they are ready to leave Buffalo again for the early summer work in the canneries. Certainly the children should be sent to school in the country as soon as they get there, but to my personal knowledge this is not done."

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## Document 5: Anti-Child Labor

### *Loss of Education.*

At one school (Buffalo Public School No. 2) the school records show that *seventy-seven* children were absent from school at the beginning of the fall term (September, 1907) on account of being employed at the canneries. These children ranged from eight to fourteen years in age and stayed away for periods varying from *three to twenty weeks*. The local boards in the towns where the canneries are situated, failed lamentably to secure the attendance of these children. Only seven of the whole number attended local schools, most of them going for only one or two weeks when forced by the truant officer. As the school term for the whole year lasts for only thirty-six weeks it will be seen that these children are in large part deprived of the benefits of an American education.

An effort to learn why local school authorities in the cannery towns are so lax in their enforcement of the school laws brought forth this statement from a principal of a school near a cannery:

"I have a total registration of forty-five Italian children. Of this number about thirty-five are permanent residents here. Most of them are exceedingly irregular in attendance until after the cannery is closed. Not only can they obtain work without question at the cannery after school has commenced in the fall, but I am convinced that the superintendent encourages the children to work in the canneries. My predecessor here tells me that last year the local truant officer went to the cannery in an effort to locate a number of Italian truants and was ordered off the premises by the factory superintendent. This of course, is illegal, but the cannery seems to be above the law in several respects; this year we have made repeated attempts to search the factory for truant children and have not infrequently discovered them hiding with the knowledge of the factory superintendent. All these children were truants only because of the opportunity to work in the cannery. When the cannery closes we never have any trouble in compelling the attendance of our Italian pupils. They are fairly diligent and regular in attendance, but will leave school at the first opportunity to secure pay-ing work, and even if they were not willing, their parents would make them."

The canner's position in the community is such that he is able to defy local authority. His attitude alone decides whether the children shall work in the factory or attend school. The parents are allowed to follow the dictates of their cupidity and are encouraged to recognize no authority except that of their employer. The inevitable result is to keep the children out of school and at work.

The foreigners are at the plant to make money. Doubtless they are unconscious of the harm they are doing to their own children. But the canners know, or should know, that these children are being exploited in their service. Moral responsibility does, and legal responsibility as well should rest with them. Ignorant and untaught, deprived of all the immunities of childhood and of the benefits of consecutive school life, the children in the canneries show little promise of developing into citizens more valuable to the state than their immigrant parents.

The employment of children in cannery sheds has in the past been countenanced on the plea that the work is easy and resembles agriculture more than factory labor.

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## Document 6: Anti-Child Labor



CHILDREN DOING MEN'S WORK



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## Document 7: Anti-Child Labor



### WEIGHING THE BEANS

Children carry boxes, often weighing 20 lbs., a distance of 200 feet

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## Document 8: Anti-Child Labor



SNIPPING BEANS IN A CROWDED SHED

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City

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## Document 9: Anti-Child Labor

### Child Labor Reform and the U.S. Labor Movement

1832

New England unions condemn child labor

The New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen resolve that “Children should not be allowed to labor in the factories from morning till night, without any time for healthy recreation and mental culture,” for it “endangers their . . . well-being and health”

Women’s Trade Union League of New York

1836

Early trade unions propose state minimum age laws

Union members at the National Trades’ Union Convention make the first formal, public proposal recommending that states establish minimum ages for factory work

1836

First state child labor law

Massachusetts requires children under 15 working in factories to attend school at least 3 months/year

1842

States begin limiting children’s work days

Massachusetts limits children’s work days to 10 hours; other states soon pass similar laws—but most of these laws are not consistently enforced

1876

Labor movement urges minimum age law

Working Men’s Party proposes banning the employment of children under the age of 14

1881

Newly formed AFL supports state minimum age laws

The first national convention of the American Federation of Labor passes a resolution calling on states to ban children under 14 from all gainful employment

1883

New York unions win state reform

Led by Samuel Gompers, the New York labor movement successfully sponsors legislation prohibiting cigar making in tenements, where thousands of young children work in the trade

1892

Democrats adopt union recommendations

Democratic Party adopts platform plank based on union recommendations to ban factory employment for children under 15

National Child Labor Committee

1904

National Child Labor Committee forms

Aggressive national campaign for federal child labor law reform begins

1916

New federal law sanctions state violators

First federal child labor law prohibits movement of goods across state lines if minimum age laws are violated (law in effect only until 1918, when it's declared unconstitutional, then revised, passed, and declared unconstitutional again)

1924

First attempt to gain federal regulation fails

Congress passes a constitutional amendment giving the federal government authority to regulate child labor, but too few states ratify it and it never takes effect

1936

Federal purchasing law passes

Walsh-Healey Act states U.S. government will not purchase goods made by underage children

1937

Second attempt to gain federal regulation fails

Second attempt to ratify constitutional amendment giving federal government authority to regulate child labor falls just short of getting necessary votes

1937

New federal law sanctions growers

Sugar Act makes sugar beet growers ineligible for benefit payments if they violate state minimum age and hours of work standards

1938

Federal regulation of child labor achieved in Fair Labor Standards Act

For the first time, minimum ages of employment and hours of work for children are regulated by federal law

**Source:** [http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child\\_labor/about/us\\_history.html](http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/us_history.html)

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## Document 10: Pro-Child Labor

Due to the rise of cities, many families moved from their rural dwellings. Over two million children worked during this era. Child labor was seen in all facets of work. Children worked in factories, fields, mines and in the city streets. Children were an asset to the employees because they were cheap labor. Children worked to help support their families. As soon as they were old enough to help they did some were young as five years old. At this time in history children were uneducated unless they came from a wealthy family.

Source: The History of Child Labor in the United States: Hammer v. Dagenhart, by Sharron Solomon-McCarthy

Available at: <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2004/1/04.01.08.x.html>

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## Document 11: Pro-Child Labor

Facing opposition by employers many felt that social reformers were unable to see how child labor was the driving force of the United States economy. Employers who favored child labor suggested that it added to the moral fiber of the child by instilling a value system of work ethic

Source: The disgrace of Child Labor available at <http://www.snolabor.org/pages/cartoon.htm>

Source: American Labor, A Social Pictorial History by M.B. Schnapper, Copyright 1972

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1. Purpose of document:
2. List 2 key items found in the document:
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## Document 12: Pro-Child Labor

So far as employers were concerned, child labor was a blessing in disguise. Instilling the work ethic in youngsters was good for their character and kept them out of mischief. Besides, as Charles Harding, president of the Merchants Woolen Company, told a Congressional committee: "There is a certain class of labor in the mills where there is not as much muscular exercise required as a child would put forth in play, and a child can do it about as well as a grown person....There is such a thing as too much education for working people sometimes. I have seen cases where young people are spoiled for labor by.....too much refinement."

Source: The disgrace of Child Labor available at <http://www.snolabor.org/pages/cartoon.htm>

Source: American Labor, A Social Pictorial History by M.B. Schnapper, Copyright 1972

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1. Person quoted:
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## Document 13: Pro-Child Labor

One textile employer wrote lyrically about the pleasures of child labor: "They seem to be always cheerful and alert, taking pleasure in the light play of their muscles; enjoying the mobility natural to their age. It was delightful to observe the nimbleness with which they pieced the broken ends as the mule-carriage (textile mill machine) began to recede from the fixed roller beam, and to see them at leisure after a few seconds' exercise of their tiny fingers, to amuse themselves in any attitude they chose till the stretching and winding-on were once more completed. The work of these lively elves seemed to resemble a sport in which habit gave them a pleasing dexterity."

Source: The disgrace of Child Labor available at <http://www.snolabor.org/pages/cartoon.htm>

Source: American Labor, A Social Pictorial History by M.B. Schnapper, Copyright 1972

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## Document 14: Pro-Child Labor



Source available at: <http://www.snolabor.org/pages/history.htm>

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## Document 15: Pro-Child Labor



Proud to work alongside full fledged miners, youngsters gladly posed for photos such as those appearing in these pages. A few of the boys, apparently fearful that school authorities were after them, ducked out of the camera's range. These pictures were taken by Lewis Hine in Grafton, West Virginia, and South Pittston, Pennsylvania in 1908.

Although a notoriously dangerous occupation, coal mining employed more than 15,000 boys under sixteen years of age in 1910. They worked from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the coal mines of western Pennsylvania.



Source Available at: <http://www.snolabor.org/pages/history.htm>

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