

The Photographs of Lewis Hine: Documentation of Child Labor



Directions: Read the essay that follows then use the graphic organizer to answer the questions.

After the Civil War, the availability of natural resources, new inventions, and a market of citizens who wanted to purchase new products combined as causes of the industrial revolution. The demand for workers grew, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many children were drawn into the work force. Factory wages were so low that children often had to work to help support their families. The number of children under the age of 15 who worked in factories climbed from 1.5 million in 1890 to 2 million in 1910. Businesses liked to hire children because they worked in unskilled jobs for lower wages than adults, and their small hands made them more adept at handling small parts and tools. Children were seen as part of the family economy. Immigrants and rural migrants often sent their children to work, or worked alongside them. However, child laborers barely experienced their youth. Going to school to prepare for a better future was an opportunity these underage workers rarely enjoyed. As children worked in factory settings, they began to develop serious health problems. Many child laborers were underweight. Some suffered from stunted growth and curvature of the spine. They developed diseases related to their work environment, such as tuberculosis and bronchitis for those who worked in coalmines or cotton mills. They faced high accident rates due to physical and mental fatigue caused by hard work and long hours.

By the early 1900s, many Americans were calling child labor "child slavery" and were demanding an end to it. They argued that long hours of work deprived children of the opportunity of an education to prepare themselves for a better future. In 1904, a group of progressive reformers founded the National Child Labor Committee, an organization whose goal was the abolition of child labor. It hired teams of investigators to gather evidence of children working in harsh conditions and then organized exhibitions with photographs and statistics to dramatize the plight of these children. Lewis Hine was one of the photographers who were hired. He believed that if people could see for themselves the abuses and injustice of child labor, they would demand laws to end those evils.

List three of the causes of the industrial revolution:	List three reasons why businesses hired children to work in factories:	List two reasons why parents wanted their children to work:	List three effects of child labor on children:
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.		

By 1916, Congress passed the Keating-Owens Act a law that restricted the use of child labor by setting up guidelines and rules for children in the workforce. Unfortunately, this law was later ruled unconstitutional on the ground that congressional power to regulate interstate commerce did not extend to the conditions of labor. Effective action against child labor had to await the New Deal. Reformers, however, did succeed in forcing legislation at the state level banning child labor and setting maximum hours. By 1920, the number of child laborers was cut to nearly half of what it had been in 1910.

After seeing the photos of Lewis Hine and learning about working conditions and child labor at the turn of the century, use your knowledge of this topic and social studies to create three laws that would help solve the problem of child labor.

1.

2.

3.

Directions: Read the two opinions below about child labor. Compare the two opinions and evaluate them in order to decide which one you agree with. Write two or three sentences below explaining why you agree with the argument you chose.

Opinion One: Child labor was good for business and child alike. It provided cheap labor to the business owner allowing them to expand and provide new jobs for people and expand the American economy benefiting the nation. Children and their family benefited because the children learned skills they could use in life to get a job, made money and helped to support their families.

Opinion Two: *"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)

Child labor only benefits employers allowing them to make huge profits by taking advantage of children. In addition, children in the work force creates a large supply of workers and causes the wages of adults to be lower than they would be if children were not allowed to work.
