

History in Our Backyard Mills in Connecticut Child Labor in Connecticut's Mills

Grade Level: K-2

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Use photographs of the past to make observations about child labor in Connecticut's textile mills. (Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks HIST K-1.7, 2.9; INQ K-2.3; Common Core State Standards CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.K-2.6; SL.K-2.1-3, K-2.6)
2. Compare their own lives to the lives of children who worked in Connecticut's factories. (Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks HIST K-1.1, K-1.3; HIST 2.2; Common Core State Standards.ELA-LITERACY.L.K-2.6; SL.K-2.1-3, K-2.6; W.K.2, 2.8)
3. Explain why children long ago may have worked instead of going to school. (Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks ECO K-1.2, 1.4, 2.1; HIST K.3, K-1.8, 2.4, 2.10; INQ K-2.14; Common Core State Standards.ELA-LITERACY.L.K-2.6; SL.K-2.1-3, K-2.6; W.K.2, 2.8)

Program Framework:

1. Introductory Activity: Look, Think, and Share
2. Drawing Activity I: Me in a Factory
3. Drawing Activity II: Childhood Choices
4. Wrap-Up

Materials: "Child in a Factory" images; "Child Labor in Connecticut's Mills" worksheets (or use blank paper for drawings); crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc. for students to draw with

Throughout this lesson, students will analyze two photographs of children working in Connecticut mills in the 1920s. Students will then use their observations from the photo analysis and the History in Our Backyard pins for Windham, Willington, Stafford, Sterling, and Plainville to draw what working in a Connecticut factory may have looked like. Students then draw what else they think children should be doing with their time. Please visit chs.org/historyinourbackyard to access the pins.

1. Introductory Activity: Look, Think and Share

1. Look at the "Children in a Factory I" image together.

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2. After taking some time to examine the photograph silently, discuss the following questions with a friend or family member. Adults may wish to use [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) to help spark discussion.
 - a. Key VTS questions
 - i. What's going on in this image?
 - ii. What makes you say that?
 - iii. What else do you notice?
 - b. Other questions to explore
 - i. What do you think this place might sound like? Smell like?
 - ii. How do you think the children feel? What makes you say that?
 - iii. Would you want to work with them? Why or why not?
3. Ask an adult to explain the terms **child labor** and **factory**. To learn more about child labor, visit the section titled "Fast Facts about Child Labor."
 - a. **Child Labor:** Child labor is when businesses use children as workers.
 - b. **Factory:** A building or group of buildings where workers make things
4. Now look at the "Children in a Factory II" image below.
5. After taking some time to examine the photograph silently, discuss the following questions with a friend or family member, while you look at the photograph:
 - a. What do you see?
 - b. What do you think this place might sound like? Smell like?
 - c. How do you think the children feel? What makes you say that?
 - d. Would you want to work with them? Why or why not?

2. Me in a Factory!: Drawing Activity I

1. Go to the handout titled, "Me in a Factory."
2. Before you draw, think about these questions:
 - a. What does a factory look like?
 - b. If you were working in a factory, how might you look?
 - c. What feelings would you have if you had to work in a factory all day? Happy, sad, angry, bored, scared, or upset?
3. In the box, draw a picture of yourself working in a factory.
4. When you are done, share your drawing with a friend or family member and explain what you drew.

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3. Childhood Choices: Drawing Activity II

1. Go to the section titled "Childhood Choices."
2. In a moment, we're going to make another drawing. Before you draw, think about these questions:
 - a. Do you think children should work in factories? Why or why not?
 - b. If not, what do you think they should they be doing instead?
 - i. Should children be in school?
 - ii. Should they be having fun?
 - iii. Should they be playing with friends?
3. In the box, draw a picture of what you think children should do instead of working in factories. Make sure you show how they feel about what they are doing (happy, sad, angry, bored).
4. When you have completed your drawing, share it with a friend or family member and explain what you drew.

5. Wrap-Up:

1. What is a factory? What is child labor?
2. Ask a friend or family member if they think children should work in factories. Do you agree? Explain your reasons.
3. Do you think children always have a choice about whether or not they go to work instead of going to school?

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Children in a Factory I
Look, Think, and Share



[Favorable Working Conditions, Cheney Silk Mills](#), photographed by Lewis Hine, 1924. Photography; gelatin silver print on paper. The Newman S. Hungerford Museum Fund, 2001.53.5, The Connecticut Historical Society.

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Children in a Factory II
Look, Think, and Share



Mamie LaBerge at her machine. She was under legal age. Spinner at the Spring Village Mill.
Photographed at Glen Allen Mill, Winchendon, Massachusetts, September 1911.

Photo by Lewis Hine
Courtesy of Yankee Magazine website

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Fast Facts About Child Labor

- In the late 1800s and early 1900s, as factory work expanded, some children as young as four years old would work in factories, rather than going to school.
- Factories hired children for many reasons.
 - Children could be paid much less than adults.
 - Children are smaller than adults and could fit in spaces and do jobs that adults could not.
- Children would often work very long days (10 hours or more). How many hours a day do you go to school?
- Child labor continued in the United States until 1938, when the Fair Labor Standard Acts became law.

Learn More:

More information on child labor in Connecticut (CT Humanities):

<https://connecticuthistory.org/child-labor-in-connecticut/>

Photographs of child labor in Connecticut (Library of Congress):

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-child-labor-committee/?fa=location:connecticut>

More information on Connecticut mills and locations you can visit may be found on the Connecticut Historical Society's *History in Our Backyard* in the towns of Windham, Willington, Stafford, Sterling, and Plainville. Please visit chs.org/historyinourbackyard to access the pins.

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Me in a Factory!

Drawing 1



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Childhood Choices

Drawing II

