Document 1 Children at Work Lesson Strategy

**Lesson Introduction:**

This lesson is intended to be taught in a Social Studies 9, Laurier Period unit or a Social Studies 11, Human Geography unit related to economic and human development. Teachers may adapt it for Social Justice 12 classrooms.

The teacher can begin the class with a brief introduction of the topic of child labour. Teachers should begin with students’ prior knowledge of the role of child labour in the Industrial Revolution (Social Studies 9). They should review its widespread use at the turn of the century in Canada.

After the video the teacher should explain that because of incidents like this, over the years governments across countries like Canada, the United States and Great Britain, began to tighten child labour laws. Particularly after the Second World War, it became very uncommon in Canada and the US for families to rely on the children to work for pay in order to support the family. Initiate a discussion with the class. *Possible questions and prompts (Optional: The teacher may wish to create a handout or worksheet of the following questions for distribution instead):*

* *What do you know about child labour?*
* *What is wrong with child labour? In your opinion, at what age is paid labour appropriate?*
* *Where does child labour take place today? Do you think it is still common?*
* *Do you think the children should have to work?*
* *Why do you think children in Canada’s past often had to go to work? How do economic factors affect child labour?*

Hand out and read aloud with class the excerpts from the essay entitled “Working Children”(Document 2). This gives a good overview of the state of child labour in BC at the turn of the century. Discuss the following essential points which do not arise in the excerpt:

* Turn of the twentieth century union workers and middle class reformers believed the “proper labours” for children was in school, and not at paid employment;
* Families, union workers, and reformers together held a loose consensus that children should work at chores in and around the household. This was a good practice and formed a healthy lifelong habit. In fact, J.J. Kelso of the Children’s Aid Society said that a boy should work and learn to love to work;
* Child labour laws deal mostly with formalized commercial (stores and restaurants) and industrialized (mines and factories) worksites; historians have illustrated that from the 1920s through the 1950s, children’s unpaid chores and labour was vital to the survival of farming families across Canada, and very helpful even to urban families;
* Children’s formal paid labour (for example, from coal mining), was certainly vital to the family economy around 1900. Certainly up until the end of WWII it was not uncommon to surrender earnings from paid employment to a mother or father at home and receive a small allowance for personal discretionary spending.
* After 1945 it became much more common for working children (a sixteen year old is still a child) to keep their earnings and spend it on themselves;
* When teens today spend money on themselves, they are still directly assisting their “family economy” because they, and no longer their parent(s), often pay for their own clothing, shoes, cell phone, etc.

**Body of the lesson:**

The teacher should try to relate the history of child labour in BC **(including the fact that up to 2021, BC had the most permissive child labour laws in North America. Minimum working age was raised from 12 to 16 in 2021**1) to the current child labour issues across the globe. In order to grab the student’s attention on the subject or initiate some conversation, the teacher can create a handout or a PowerPoint with the following child labour facts and then present them to the class:

* There are approximately 150 million children aged 5-14 working in the developing world.
* Worldwide 215 million children under the age of 18 work;
* In the 5–14 age group, 53 million children are in hazardous child labour;
* 60 % of child labour is used in agriculture: harvesting of tea, bananas, cocoa, fruit and vegetables;
* An estimated 14 million children work in manufacturing: carpets, clothing, shoes, basketballs, bricks, glassware, etc;
* Child workers suffer more accidents then adult workers. One quarter of all working children will suffer work related injuries or illnesses;
* In developing countries, like India and Brazil, unions are the main advocates to end child labour.
* Until 2021 BC had the lowest child to work threshold in North America: With their parents’ permission, a child may work in most industries at age 12 in BC. The Law was revised in 20201

*Sources: UNICEF, The International Labor Organization and The Child Labor Education Project*

1[New rules protect young workers | BC Gov News](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021LBR0027-001400)

[https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/young-workers-age-raise-12-16-1.6212548﻿](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/young-workers-age-raise-12-16-1.6212548)

Enclosed in this lesson plan package are photos of child labour both at the turn of the century today (Document 3) and a Photographic Analysis to assist with the interpretation of the photos (Document 3a). These can be incorporated into a PowerPoint or handed out to the class in handout form. It might be informative to draw comparisons between the two. Most of these photo are not assigned dates, but 19th century photos are easily distinguishable from more contemporary ones. It may be useful to ask the class *how* they can tell the difference between the more modern and old photographs.

Once this is done, the teacher can handout and explain the “Child Labour Web Inquiry” sheet (Document 4) The class will require access to a computer lab or a class set of media devices with internet access to be able to complete this activity.

**Closure:**

To end the lesson, teacher should review the Canadian context discussed including the fact that some impoverished Canadian families still use informal child labour today in and around the homes, and teens in British Columbia classes do sometimes give part of their earnings to support the family. Teachers may now wish to discuss how we as Canadians can contribute to ending child exploitation and labour. There is a wealth of information online as to things that everyday people can do. Some of these acts include the following:

* Find out where your food and clothing comes from and who makes it. Then find out what labour practices are like there.
* Be selective in what you buy. Buy Fair Trade products that guarantee that no worker was exploited when the product was made. They cost a bit more, but they are never made with child labour.
* Buy locally: Child labour is illegal here and workers generally have more rights than in countries where child labour is common. Give your business to ethically run industries.
* Get Involved. Volunteer for a credible child welfare NGO like UNICEF Canada.

**Assessment** *– “*Child Labour Web Inquiry” (Document 4)

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