

Title of Lesson: *A Lifetime of Responsibilities: Child Labor in Alabama*

(Suggested grade levels: 6, 11)

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Background Information:

- The following links will provide an overview and pictures of the use of child labor in the United States:
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm032.html>
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/>
http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/us_history.html
<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/about.htm>
- The teacher should make copies of the “Proof of Age” and “Violations” sections of *Child Welfare in Alabama* found at [this address: http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/1896](http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/1896)
- Current child labor laws can be found at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/>.
- A brief paragraph about child labor in Alabama can be found in *New South Era*, an article in the [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#).

Overview of lesson: At the turn of the century, many children had to go to work to help pay the bills and feed the family. Were these children working legally? Were they fairly paid? Were they losing their childhoods?

For this lesson, students will read part of a report written by the National Child Labor Committee in 1918 about the problems of monitoring and regulating child labor in the Alabama. In this excerpt, findings concerning children who were working in Birmingham, Mobile, and Montgomery were presented.

The students will be asked to respond to their reading by writing an appropriate editorial to a newspaper about the problems of child labor at the turn of the century.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)

Sixth Grade: Standard 2, p. 42

Eleventh Grade: Standard 1, p. 76

Eleventh Grade: Standard 2, p. 76

Social Studies Item Specifications for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam

(Bulletin 2000, No. 49)

Standard V-2: Evaluate the concepts, developments, and consequences of industrialization and urbanization

National Standards for History, 1996

Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930), p. 111

Standard 1: How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption

National Council for the Social Studies 1994

Standard V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, p. 91

f. describe the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change

Primary Learning Objective:

- The student will be able to write about the problems of regulating child labor in 1918 and will be able to discuss some of the jobs that children were undertaking in the major cities of Alabama.

Additional Learning Objective:

- The students will read and gather information from a primary source in order to learn about the practice of child labor in Alabama.

Time allotted: 45 minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- [*Child Welfare in Alabama*](#), “Proof of Age” and “Violations” sections, pp. 4-6 of pdf
- History notebooks
- Rubric for assessing student-written editorials
- Highlighter pens

Technological Resources:

- Computer with access to internet to download copies of *Child Welfare in Alabama*

Background/Preparation:

- Students should know about the flood of immigrants who came to the U. S. and who struggled to make a new life for themselves at the turn of the century. The students should understand that many of the families were forced to allow their children to work just to make enough money to put food on the table. Students should already be familiar with child labor in New England, although this practice did not just happen in New England or among immigrant families. This lesson will serve as an introduction to child labor in Alabama.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

Discuss with students the current child labor laws and the history behind child labor laws. Note that FDR was the first president to successfully get strong laws passed through Congress in 1938. Allow the

students to discuss today’s laws regarding the age a child can work, the amount of hours he/she can work in a week, and work conditions. End the discussion by telling the students that in 1918, there were few federal child labor laws and those laws were difficult to enforce.

Step 1	Pass out the excerpt from the National Child Labor Committee to the students. Read the first passage about “Proof of Age” aloud to the students. Discuss the problems that were inherent in proving the age of teenage laborers in 1918. Have students highlight some of these problems.
Step 2	Read the second section about some of the violations of the child labor laws. This section also discusses some of the jobs that young teenagers and children had in Alabama and how their work affected their schooling. Encourage students to highlight facts that are interesting about Alabama’s young workers.
Step 3	Ask the students to look over what they highlighted in the excerpts. Ask them to play the role of one of the child labor inspectors sent to visit a city in Alabama. Their assignment is to write an editorial to one of the city’s leading newspapers about their findings. The editorial should be at least three paragraphs and should include information found in the excerpts. Remember, editorials are opinion pieces but are written as expository texts .
Step 4	Allow students to share the editorials with peers for editing. Pass out grading rubrics in advance so that students can see how the writing will be scored.

Assessment Strategies:

- The students’ editorials will be assessed using the attached rubric.

Extension:

- Students may create an annotated timeline of child labor laws of the United States.

Remediation:

- Students may be given an outline of the “Proof of Age” and “Violations” sections for use in writing their editorials.

Accommodation:

- Shorten the amount of reading by paraphrasing the excerpt for the students. Vocabulary may be defined prior to reading.
- Offer the students the shortened excerpt and allow students to work in pairs to highlight important and interesting statements.
- Students may write a shortened editorial, highlighting the events of Alabama’s child labor in one to two paragraphs.

Modification:

- Offer the students the shortened excerpt and allow the students to write a transcript of an interview with one of the child laborers mentioned in the excerpt. Interviews are often short questions with brief answers.

Child Labor Editorial Assignment

Assignment: Write an editorial to one of the city's leading newspapers about your findings.

- The editorial should be at least **three** paragraphs .
- It should include information found in the excerpts.
- Remember, editorials are opinion pieces but are written as [expository texts](#).

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
Quality of Information	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.	
Organization	Information is very organized with well constructed paragraphs.	Information is organized with well constructed paragraphs.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well constructed.	The information appears to be disorganized.	
Grammar & Spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	
Sentence Structure	All sentences are well constructed with varied structure. There are no sentence fragments or run-on sentences.	Most sentences are well constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay. There is one sentence fragment or run-on sentence.	Most sentences are well constructed, but there is no variation in structure. There are two sentence fragments or run-on sentences.	Most sentences are not well constructed or varied. There are more than two sentence fragments or run-on sentences.	
Paragraph requirements and structure	Paragraphs are complete, well constructed and of varied structure. There are three complete paragraphs	Only two of the three required paragraphs are complete.	Only one of the three required paragraphs is complete.	There is little or no paragraph structure.	

TOTAL _____