

Title of Lesson: *Reformers Target Child Labor in Alabama in Early 1900s*

(Suggested grade level: 11AP)

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Background Information:

Background information for teacher:

- Download the following linked excerpt from the book [The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor](http://www.archive.org/stream/cryofchildrenstu00vanv#page/n5/mode/2up). This excerpt is twelve pages long and covers most but not all of chapter two. If it is not practical to give each student an individual copy, the teacher can read the selection out loud. In that case, it would be helpful at the end of the reading to project copies of each page (via a digital projector or an overhead projector) to facilitate class discussion. The entire book is available on line at <http://www.archive.org/stream/cryofchildrenstu00vanv#page/n5/mode/2up>

Overview of lesson: This lesson fits into a unit on the Progressive era in American history. It highlights the efforts of two individuals, photographer Lewis Hine and author Bessie Van Vorst, both social reformers from the North who visited Alabama in the early 1900s to document the exploitation of child labor in textile mills. Students will: 1) read a small portion of Van Vorst's book describing her visit to a mill in Anniston, 2) analyze the excerpt in terms of its point of view and persuasive techniques, 3) view and analyze photographs taken by Hine in Alabama, 4) select one photo that they believe corresponds in a meaningful way to the excerpt they read, 5) explain in writing the underlying connections between their chosen image and the text, and 6) re-title Van Vorst's book.

Content Standards

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

Eleventh Grade: Standard 2, p.75

National Standards for History, 1996

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 111)

Era 7, Standard 1 – How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption.

1A – The student understands the origin of the Progressives and the coalitions they formed to deal with issues at the local and state level.

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, (Bulletin 89, 1994)

Standard V – Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, High School

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individual, groups, and institutions, so that the learner can:

h. explain and apply ideas and modes of inquiry drawn from behavioral science and social theory in the examination of persistent issues and social problems.

Primary Learning Objective(s):

The student will:

- Learn about the extensive use of child labor in Alabama textile mills in the early 1900s.
- Discuss how the conditions those children faced affected their lives.
- Analyze the efforts of two reformers who wanted to abolish child labor, paying particular attention to their point of view and persuasive techniques.
- Describe in writing how a visual image relates to a written text.

Additional Learning Objective(s):

This lesson promotes historical thinking skills because it requires a close reading of primary documents and requires students to draw their own conclusions based on these documents. It also calls for students to think imaginatively about the ways images and written words interact and enhance each other.

On a personal level, students will be asked to consider why children need special legal protection, especially as it relates to jobs. What kinds of work are acceptable, even beneficial, for minors to do? What kinds of work should they not be allowed to do and why? This calls for them to think reflectively and analytically about a topic relevant to their lives.

Time allotted: 140 minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- Copies of [*The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor*](#)
- Assignment for each student as he or she reads or listens to the excerpt (attached)
- *Instructions for Examining Photographs* (with computer access) or *Instructions for Examining Photographs* (without computer access)

Technological Resources:

- Computer with internet access and digital projector or overhead projector
- Students need access to computers in order to view the Lewis Hine photographs at the [Library of Congress Web site](#).

Background/Preparation:

Although Alabama passed a law in 1887 prohibiting the employment of women and children in factories and manufacturing establishments, the legislature did not pass any provisions for enforcement. The law was eventually repealed in the 1890s. It was during that time period that many textile mills began relocating from northern states to southern states.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

- Poll the class to see how many students have part-time jobs. Ask them to describe the work they do.
- Put the terms: “Advantages” and “Disadvantages” on the board. Ask students to identify and explain different kinds of benefits young people can derive from a job. List these on the board. (Some possible advantages include: money, learning about expectations in the work world, independence.)

Then ask them to identify and explain some drawbacks. List those. (Some possible disadvantages: less time for other activities including homework and sleep, low pay, low-skill work.)

- Pose this question: Should some kinds of work be totally off-limits for anyone under the age of 18? If so, what kind and why?
- Tell students that forms of child labor have existed throughout American history (e.g. young indentured servants in the colonies, children working on their parents' farms), but it wasn't until 1938 that Congress finally passed national legislation restricting child labor. Pose this question: Why do you think Congress eventually felt it was necessary to pass a federal law regulating the labor of children? Emphasize that students are not expected to know the exact answer, only to venture some guesses and explain their reasoning. Students will probably mention that children were exploited as workers and needed legal protection. Some students may even remember specific information about large-scale textile mills that were built in the Northeast in the first half of the 1800s, many of which employed very young workers, e.g. Lowell Mill. Point out that because of reform efforts in the mid to late 1800s, several northern states instituted laws restricting child labor. As a response to these laws, many textile mills simply relocated to southern states, where such laws either didn't exist or weren't enforced.

Tell students they'll be studying child labor in Alabama in the early 1900s. The first document they will examine is an excerpt from a book published in 1908.

<p>Step 1</p>	<p>Write the title of the book, <i>The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor</i>, on the board. Pose two questions: 1.) What is the obvious topic of this book? 2) Looking at the wording of the title, what point of view can you assume the author has on this topic? (The first five words show that the author is sympathetic to child workers and hopes to expose their plight.) Provide the author's name, Bessie Van Vorst. Tell students that for six weeks, Von Vorst, a northerner, traveled to mill towns in Alabama, Georgia, Maine, and New Hampshire on an investigative tour. She interviewed mill families in their homes, toured textile factories when owners would allow her entry, and spoke with child laborers, both on and off the job. Von Vorst never intended to produce an unbiased examination of child labor. She proudly proclaimed her ultimate goal in her preface when she said she wanted her book to "... stir those it reaches into procuring some remedy for the existing condition of things which is contrary to every principle of civilization and Christianity." In short, this book was propaganda in pursuit of reform.</p>
<p>Step 2</p>	<p>In order to help students deconstruct and analyze the excerpt, pass out one of five different assignment sheets to each student. These sheets (attached) tell students to analyze the reading with one of the five tasks in mind. Give students time to read the instructions and answer any questions they have about what they're supposed to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task #1: students will locate and then list all the "loaded" words or phrases Van Vorst uses. The term "loaded" is defined for students on the instruction sheet. • Task # 2: students will look, locate, and list specific details that relate to children (e.g. their ages, appearance, health, clothing, pay). • Task # 3: students will locate and list specific details related to the mother Van Vorst meets (e.g. clothing, appearance, health). • Task # 4: students will locate and list specific details related to the mill workers' homes. • Task #5: students will locate and list specific details related to the mill

	<p>factory.</p> <p>There is some overlap among the tasks.</p>
Step 3	<p>Prepare students for the second chapter by summarizing what happens in the first. In chapter one, Von Vorst recounts researching state records in Montgomery, Alabama, to determine where the state's cotton textile mills were located. Finding that Birmingham, one of the largest cities in the state, had a textile mill, she traveled there. But when she approached the mill owner with a letter of introduction and asked to tour his factory, he denied her entry. According to Van Vorst, "It was of no interest to him that a piece should be written about his help." She was also dismayed by the lack of serious commitment for reform among the more genteel women in Birmingham who claimed to be opposed to child labor. According to Van Vorst, one of them said, "Child labor in Alabama is a necessary evil...If we made laws restricting labor, we should frighten away capitalists and wreck our very surest chances of progress and prosperity." Having come to a dead-end in Birmingham, Van Vorst traveled to Anniston, the site of several mills, which is where chapter two picks up.</p>
Step 4	<p>Distribute individual copies of the excerpt for the students to read. If it is not practical to make that many copies, read the selection out loud. You want students to interact closely with the text, so if you read it out loud, ask them at the end if they need to hear certain portions read again. Alternatively, you could display portions of the excerpt using a digital or overhead projector.</p>
Step 5	<p>After checking to make certain that each student took his or her own notes, place them in groups according to which task assignment they had (all number ones together, twos together, etc.) Give them time to compare and compile their observations using these questions as a guide. Students can disregard any question that obviously does not apply to their task:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to Van Vorst's account, what were some of the tragic effects the children (and even the mother) suffered as a result of being part of the mill system in Anniston? 2. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the strongest score, how would you rate this selection in terms of its ability to convince readers of the evils of child labor in Alabama textile mills? Identify and explain what evidence you found most convincing and why. <p>How large a part do you think Van Vorst's language played in eliciting reader sympathy? Identify and explain some particularly effective words and phrases.</p>
Step 6	<p>Conduct a whole-class discussion in which each group shares their answers. Insist that students support their generalizations with specific details. Refer to a copy of the text if necessary.</p>
Step 7 Computer Access	<p>Show students the entry web page into the Library of Congress's digital collection of Lewis Hine photographs of child workers. Tell them that they will be examining some of the pictures of child laborers that this famous photographer took at various textile mills in Alabama. They will choose one of these photos and link it to the Van Vorst reading. The Web site address and exact instructions are provided on the attached assignment sheet. Distribute this sheet and the rubric that will be used to grade the essay. Go over each so that</p>

	students understand what is expected.
Alternative Step 7 No Computer Access	If students lack access to computers, the teacher should go to http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/ . Type “Alabama textile mills” in the search box and click on “search this collection.” Click “go.” Select an appropriate number of photos from the collection and print. Pass out the photos, photo analysis worksheet, and the rubric for grading the essay to each student. Go over each so that students understand what is expected.
Step 8	Collect the essay linking the photo and the text. If you can, project some or all of the images, and ask students to share their insights and comments about how the photographs matched Van Vorst’s writing in terms of eliciting sympathy from the viewer/reader. Also, have students share their new titles for the book and explain why they chose them.
Step 9	To bring the topic of child labor up to date for students, display the Alabama Department of Labor on-line “Youth Rules” poster . The poster lists the most current federal and Alabama child labor laws in simplified and understandable form. Allow time for student reaction to the poster.

Assessment Strategies:

- Evaluate task assignment sheets for effort and completeness.
- Evaluate the essay explaining the connection between one photograph and the Van Vorst text. (rubric attached)

Extension:

Define “propaganda.” Have students find a current example of propaganda used to influence a person’s behavior or belief. Have students share the examples which they found.

The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor by Bessie Von Vorst (1908)

Chapter Two

Task # 1: As you read (or listen to) this excerpt, write down any “loaded” words or phrases you notice. “Loaded” words or phrases are ones with strong emotional overtones, specifically chosen to elicit positive or negative reactions. (Example: describing a thin woman as “anorexic” versus just calling her “slim.”) Also, feel free to write down ANY descriptive words or phrases that you believe communicate Van Vorst’s point of view, even if you’re not certain they qualify as “loaded” in the definitional sense.

The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor by Bessie Von Vorst (1908)

Chapter Two

Task # 2: As you read (or listen to) this selection, jot down specific details Van Vorst provides about the children she meets. Include such things as: age, clothing, appearance, health, income, attitudes, interests, general demeanor (e.g. friendly or unfriendly, aggressive or shy), etc. Capture as many different specifics as you can.

The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor by Bessie Von Vorst (1908)

Chapter Two

Task # 3: As you read (or listen to) this selection, jot down specific details Van Vorst provides about the one mother she meets. Include such things as: appearance, clothing, health, and how she interacts with her children and with Van Vorst. Capture as many different details as you can.

The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor by Bessie Von Vorst (1908)

Chapter Two

Task # 4: As you read (or listen to) this selection, jot down specific details that Van Vorst provides about the mill worker home she visited. Include information about both the exterior and interior.

The Cry of the Children: A Study of Child Labor by Bessie Von Vorst (1908)

Chapter Two

Task # 5: As you read (or listen to) this selection, jot down details Van Vorst provides about the textile factory she visits. Include such things as: conditions within the factory, the nature of the work, and how workers seem to feel about what they do. Although most of this information comes at the end of the excerpt, pay special attention in the early part of the chapter when the author says she doesn't need to ask directions to the mills. How does she know where they are? What is the giveaway? **NOTE:** When referring to specific pieces of textile machinery, Van Vorst uses words that will be unfamiliar to you, words such as "bobbins," "quills," and "doffers." Don't let these terms throw you. A "bobbin," also called a "quill," was a large spool that held the cotton thread used in spinning. A worker would "doff" or "remove" full bobbins from the textile machines. They were very heavy.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXAMINING PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHILD WORKERS IN ALABAMA IN THE EARLY 1900s

Background Information:

The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) hired Lewis Hine as an investigative photographer in the early 1900s. NCLC's goal was to lobby Congress into passing a federal law banning child labor. Both NCLC and Hines believed that if people could see for themselves the abuses and injustices inflicted on child workers, they would demand laws ending the practice. A federal law was finally passed in 1938. One interesting note – one of the founding members of NCLC was Edgar Murphy, an Episcopal minister serving in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1902, two years before the national organization was formed, he established the Alabama Child Labor Committee.

1. Go to this Library of Congress web address: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc/>
Information on this page mentions that the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) hired Lewis Hine as an investigative photographer in the early 1900s. NCLC's goal was to lobby Congress into passing a federal law banning child labor. Both NCLC and Hines believed that if people could see for themselves the abuses and injustices inflicted on child workers, they would demand laws ending the practice. A federal law was finally passed in 1938. One interesting note-one of the founding members of NCLC was Edgar Murphy, an Episcopal minister serving in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1902, two years before the national organization was formed, he established the Alabama Child Labor Committee. The [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#) has a biography of Reverend Murphy.
2. Here are instructions for finding photographs taken at Alabama textile mills. Once at the web address:
 - o Type "Alabama textile mills" in the search box and click on "search this collection." Click "go."
 - o Browse the collection of Alabama photos.
3. Look at the content in the photos, but consider composition as well (the focus, the angle, the arrangement of visual elements). Think about the tone and mood of the photos. What emotive characteristics do they have? How did Hine produce those effects?
4. Assume that Van Vorst's book is being reissued, and you are in charge of selecting one photo to put on the cover. Which one do you think most closely relates to the material you read?
5. On a separate sheet of paper, respond to this prompt in a minimum of 250 words:

"Describe the interplay between the photograph you selected and the Van Vorst excerpt. What common elements and approaches to the topic do these two works share, and how does each enhance the other? Support your statements by referencing specifics from both the photo and the excerpt."
6. Lastly, if you were instructed to come up with a new title for Van Vorst's book, based on the photograph you selected, what would that title be?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXAMINING A PHOTOGRAPH OF CHILD WORKERS IN ALABAMA IN THE EARLY 1900s

Background Information:

The National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) hired Lewis Hine as an investigative photographer in the early 1900s. NCLC's goal was to lobby Congress into passing a federal law banning child labor. Both NCLC and Hines believed that if people could see for themselves the abuses and injustices inflicted on child workers, they would demand laws ending the practice. A federal law was finally passed in 1938. One interesting note – one of the founding members of NCLC was Edgar Murphy, an Episcopal minister serving in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1901, two years before the national organization was formed, he established the Alabama Child Labor Committee.

1. Examine the photograph from the Hine collection that you have been given. Look at the content of the photo, but consider composition as well (the focus, the angle, the arrangement of visual elements). Think about the tone and mood of the photo. What emotive characteristics does the photo have? How did Hine produce those effects?

2. Assume that Van Vorst's book is being reissued, and the photo you are analyzing will be used on the cover. Does the photo convey the objective of Van Vorst's book? Why or why not?

3. On a separate sheet of paper, respond to this prompt in a minimum of 250 words:

"Describe the interplay between the photograph and the Van Vorst excerpt. What common elements and approaches to the topic do these two works share, and how does each enhance the other? Support your statements by referencing specifics from both the photo and the excerpt."

4. Lastly, if you were instructed to come up with a new title for Van Vorst's book, based on the photograph you analyzed, what would that title be?

RUBRIC FOR ESSAY LINKING PHOTO TO VAN VORST'S TEXT

Category	Above Standard	Meets Standard	Approaches Standard	Below Standard	Score
Introduction	First sentence or two provides background information: early 1900s, social reform efforts, textile mills in Alabama, Lewis Hine's photograph, Van Vorst's book. Includes a clear and analytical thesis which identifies the major ways (at least two) in which the photo and text connect.	Fails to include one of the essential pieces of background information. Offers a clear and analytical thesis.	Fails to mention two pieces of background information. Thesis lacks clarity.	Fails to mention two or more pieces of background information. Thesis is a restatement of prompt without identifying any ways in which the photo and text connect.	
Body Paragraphs (there should be at least two)	Each starts with a topic sentence. All paragraphs contain substantive evidence that is clearly explained and meaningfully connected to the thesis. Discusses both the photo and the text.	One paragraph is missing its topic sentence. Adequate evidence is cited, but it lacks sufficient development and/or clear connection to thesis. Discusses both the photo and the text in each paragraph.	One or more paragraph is missing its topic sentence. Paragraphs, although not well developed, still bear a loose connection to thesis. Supporting evidence may be thin. Discusses both the photo and the text in each paragraph.	One or more paragraphs is missing its topic sentence. Paragraphs offer little specific evidence and/or simply contain a list of details from the photo and text without any (or very little) explanation. One of the paragraphs discusses only one of the two major components: photo or text.	
Conclusion	Doesn't repeat the thesis word-for-word but still links back to the major point/s. Answers the "so what?" question in a sophisticated way and wraps up the essay in a controlled fashion.	Doesn't repeat the thesis word-for-word and still links back to the major point/s. Attempts to answer the "so what?" question but does so in a less comprehensive or convincing way.	Makes some effort to rewrite the original thesis. While attempting the answer the "so what?" question, statement/s fall short of complete development so thoughts lack clarity and/or relevance.	Repeats the thesis almost word-for-word. No closure provided in terms of answering the "so what?" question (in a meaningful way).	

TOTAL _____