

**INDUSTRIALIZED
BRITAIN - CHILD LABOR
AND THE SADLER
REPORT OF 1833**



INDUSTRIALIZED BRITAIN - CHILD LABOR AND THE SADLER REPORT OF 1833

Description

Through an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Sadler Report of 1833 sought to dramatize the plight of British proletariat children working in deplorable conditions, how it was received by British society, and how Parliament responded to the report by passing the Factory Act of 1833.

Subjects

European History, World History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Woodhouse Cemetery, Leeds
- National Archives, Kew, London

Essential Questions

- What was the Industrial Revolution? Why did it thrive in Britain?
- How were children used as workers in the factories? Why were they used? How were children generally treated?
- Who was Michael Sadler? Why is his report on child labor so important?
- How did Parliament respond to the Sadler Report of 1832? Did conditions improve for children in the factories as a result of the Sadler Report?

Academic Summary

Excerpts from the Sadler Report (1832)

Mr. Matthew Crabtree, called in; and Examined.

What age are you?

--Twenty-two.

What is your occupation?

--A blanket manufacturer.

Have you ever been employed in a factory?

--Yes.

At what age did you first go to work in one?

--Eight.

How long did you continue in that occupation?

--Four years.

Will you state the hours of labour at the period when you first went to the factory, in ordinary times?

--From 6 in the morning to 8 at night.

Fourteen hours?

--Yes.

With what intervals for refreshment and rest?

--An hour at noon.

When trade was brisk what were your hours?

--From 5 in the morning to 9 in the evening.

Sixteen hours?

--Yes.

With what intervals at dinner?

--An hour.

How far did you live from the mill?

--About two miles.

Was there any time allowed for you to get your breakfast in the mill?

--No.

Did you take it before you left your home?

--Generally.

During those long hours of labour could you be punctual; how did you awake?

--I seldom did awake spontaneously; I was most generally awoke or lifted out of bed, sometimes asleep, by my parents.

Were you always in time?

--No.

What was the consequence if you had been too late?

--I was most commonly beaten.

In those mills is chastisement towards the latter part of the day going on perpetually?

--Perpetually.

So that you can hardly be in a mill without hearing constant crying?

--Never an hour, I believe.

Do you think that if the overlooker were naturally a humane person it would still be found necessary for him to beat the children, in order to keep up their attention and vigilance at the termination of those extraordinary days of labour?

--Yes; the machine turns off a regular quantity of cardings, and of course, they must keep as regularly to their work the whole of the day; they must keep with the machine, and therefore however humane the slubber may be, as he must keep up with the machine or be found fault with, he spurs the children to keep up also by various means but that which he commonly resorts to is to strap them when they become drowsy.

At the time when you were beaten for not keeping up with your work, were you anxious to have done it if you possibly could?

--Yes; the dread of being beaten if we could not keep up with our work was a sufficient impulse to keep us to it if we could.

What did you do?

--All that we did when we got home was to get the little bit of supper that was provided for us and go to bed immediately. If the supper had not been ready directly, we should have gone to sleep while it was preparing.

Elizabeth Bentley, called in; and Examined.

What age are you?

--Twenty-three.

Where do you live?

--At Leeds.

What time did you begin to work at a factory?

--When I was six years old.

At whose factory did you work?

--Mr. Busk's.

What kind of mill is it?

--Flax-mill.

What was your business in that mill?

--I was a little doffer.

What were your hours of labour in that mill?

--From 5 in the morning till 9 at night, when they were thronged.

For how long a time together have you worked that excessive length of time?

--For about half a year.

What were your usual hours when you were not so thronged?

--From 6 in the morning till 7 at night.

What time was allowed for your meals?

--Forty minutes at noon.

Had you any time to get your breakfast or drinking?

--No, we got it as we could.

And when your work was bad, you had hardly any time to eat it at all?

--No; we were obliged to leave it or take it home, and when we did not take it, the overlooker took it, and gave it to his pigs.

Do you consider doffing a laborious employment?

--Yes.

Explain what it is you had to do?

--When the frames are full, they have to stop the frames, and take the flyers off, and take the full bobbins off, and carry them to the roller; and then put empty ones on, and set the frame going again.

Does that keep you constantly on your feet?

--Yes, there are so many frames, and they run so quick.

Peter Smart, called in; and Examined.

You say you were locked up night and day?

--Yes.

Do the children ever attempt to run away?

--Very often.

Were they pursued and brought back again?

--Yes, the overseer pursued them, and brought them back.

Did you ever attempt to run away?

--Yes, I ran away twice.

And you were brought back?

--Yes; and I was sent up to the master's loft, and thrashed with a whip for running away.

Were you bound to this man?

--Yes, for six years.

By whom were you bound?

--My mother got 15s. for the six years.

The industrial revolution was a turning point in British history. Over the span of a few short decades in the early nineteenth century the development of a new proletariat working class transformed and modernized the country. New products were developed. Cities expanded. Wealth was created and a new class of people, the bourgeoisie, rose to prominence to control a system based on merit rather than birth. By the dawn of the twentieth century, Britain stood at the forefront of modern civilization as the leader of the industrialized world. Laissez-faire policies coming out of Parliament ensured that the business community prospered. Unfortunately many of those bourgeois leaders tried to forget about the other side of industrialization: the plight of the proletariat.

The proletariat in Victorian Britain often toiled in conditions that would be seen as inhumane to people in the 21st century. Long hours, little pay and dangerous working conditions were the norm in factories. Starvation and poverty were common in working class neighborhoods, where high infant mortality rates, poor sanitation and a lack of access to medical treatment combined to shorten average life spans. Proletariat men, women and children all worked for pittance. Child labor laws were unheard of at the time, but a few reformers in Parliament struggled to change British views on the subject. One such man was Michael Sadler.

Sadler was a representative to the House of Commons from Newark in central England (still an industrial area). A progressive reformer who spent most of his adult life dedicated to helping the poor, Sadler had been elected at the height of the industrial revolution in 1829. Three years later he tried to introduce a law limiting a child's work

day to 10 hours, but it was voted down. Undaunted, Sadler formed a committee that interviewed 89 workers and then presented their testimony to Parliament. The testimony of the workers, all of whom had been children when they started in the factories, was later called the Sadler Report.

When the report was published in 1833, the descriptions of life in the slums and the conditions workers faced on a daily basis horrified the British public, many of whom had simply turned a blind eye to the proletariat. Parliament acted quickly to quiet public indignation by passing a reform bill. Known as the Factory Act of 1833, the new law prohibited children under age 9 from working in the textile industry (England's largest industrial sector at the time), although they could still work in other manufacturing and industrial sectors. It also forbid children between 9 and 13 years old from working longer than 8 hours per day, and prohibited children ages 14-18 from working over 12 hour shifts. Children under 18 were also forbidden from working at night. All children ages 9-13 were required to have at least 2 hours of education per day.

Modern American students looking back at the Sadler Report and the subsequent Factory Act are still appalled at the treatment of Victorian children. It would take many more decades before meaningful child labor laws were enacted (the minimum working age was finally raised to 12 years in 1901 – even today, a 13 year old British child can work part time). The Sadler Report was not the final answer to helping poor proletariat children. It was the beginning.

Sadler was out of Parliament before any meaningful government reforms could change proletariat working conditions in Britain. He died in 1835, but his legacy inspired others who took up the cause, including Anthony Ashley Cooper, who would go on to be one of Britain's leading reformers over the next five decades.

Through an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Sadler Report of 1833 sought to dramatize the plight of British proletariat children working in deplorable conditions, how it was received by British society, and how Parliament responded to the report by passing the Factory Act of 1833.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the Sadler Report of 1833 sought to dramatize the plight of British proletariat children working and living in deplorable conditions.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the report was received by British society.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Parliament responded to the Sadler Report by passing the Factory Act of 1833.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Should children under age 16 be able to work without restrictions? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed below. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Brief Overview of the Industrial Revolution and child labor. (20 min)
- Video – Diary of a Victorian Child Worker (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the primary sources and articles on the Sadler Report and Victorian Child Labor, taking notes as appropriate (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles for homework to prepare for class discussion.
- Group Activity – Discussion on the Sadler Report and Victorian Child Labor (20 min)

III. Closure

- Exit Ticket / Assessment – Short Essay: Explain in detail how the Sadler Report of 1833 sought to dramatize the plight of British proletariat children working in deplorable conditions, how it was received by British society, and how Parliament responded to the report by passing the Factory Act of 1833.

Extension

On tour: Ironbridge Gorge Museums, Shropshire

While on tour in the UK, students and teachers interested in the Industrial Revolution can visit the Ironbridge Museums in Shropshire (about 1 hour west of Birmingham), where they can see for themselves an exhibit on child labor in the factories of Victorian Britain. The site is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is known the world over as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- <http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111sad.html>
Excerpts from the Sadler Report (primary source)
- www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/factmine/sadler.htm
Speech of Michael Sadler in the House of Commons on the Second Reading of the Factories Regulation Bill, 19 March 1832 (primary source)
- www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/factmine/factact.htm
Extracts from the Factory Act of 1833 (primary source)
- www.historyhome.co.uk/people/sadlerbg.htm
Michael Thomas Sadler (website)
- www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1312764/Britains-child-slaves-New-book-says-misery-helped-forge-Britain.html
Britain's Child Slaves (website)
- www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/20979973
Why the Industrial Revolution happened in Britain (website) – from the BBC
- <http://spartacus-educational.com/IRsadler.htm>
Michael Sadler (website) – from Spartacus Educational (UK)
- www.mosi.org.uk/media/34092317/thescavengerbackgroundinfoandresources.pdf
Child Labour in Cotton Mills (PDF file) – from the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, England
- www.slideshare.net/gothbride/child-labour-2703377
Child Labor (PowerPoint)
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=SV3JO_RYIDE
Diary of a Victorian Child Worker (video). This 5-minute video has readings from 19th century diaries and is appropriate for all classes.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=87eVOpbcVo
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_zJeDKE9vI
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJAr9gPyvms
www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRp8vUesbbE
The Children Who Built Victorian Britain (4 parts). This 60-minute BBC video (in 4 parts) is from Jane Humphries, Economic History Professor at All Souls College – University of Oxford (UK). Dr. Humphries is one of the world's leading experts on child labor in Victorian Britain. Highly recommended for all students and classes.

Background Information

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadler_report
Sadler Report – Wikipedia article

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Factory_Act_of_1833
Factory Acts – Wikipedia article
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_united_kingdom/country_profile
On the Road: Britain (country profile) – from Passports Educational Travel

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/victorian-england-charles-dickens
Victorian Britain – Charles Dickens
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/malthus-essay-on-population
Enlightenment in Britain – Thomas Malthus: Essay on Population

Key Terms

- Child Labor
- Industrial Revolution
- Michael Sadler
- Proletariat
- Victorian

