



MAINE MUSEUM OF
INNOVATION
LEARNING +
LABOR

Child Labor Laws in Maine Lesson Plan

Teacher's Guide and Worksheets

Child Labor Laws in Maine

Grades 7-12

Time: 1-2, 50-60 min. class period (s)

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able identify key legislation regarding child labor in Maine and the nation.
- Students will be able to explain how past labor conditions lead to strict regulation of age and working conditions for children

Materials Needed

1. "Child Labor Laws in Maine" worksheet below
2. Pencils
3. Access to computer and the internet*
4. [Link](#) to interactive slide presentation - this is a Google slide presentation. Copies should be made and shared digitally to students in advance of this lesson.*

*If there is no classroom access to internet or Google Slides, this presentation can be printed and shared as worksheets.

Pre-reading/Preparation

It is recommended that students be familiar with the Child Labor section of our website. Reviewing this material can be done together as a class, or assigned for homework prior to the lesson below.

Set Up

1. In advance of this lesson share A COPY of Google Slide presentation to each student. If access to this is not available to students print a copy of the slide presentation for each student.
2. Each student should have a copy of the "Child Labor Laws in Maine" worksheet and pencil.

Introduction

1. Give students 3 minutes to brainstorm reasons that children under 18 might choose to work today. At the end of the time, have students share their thoughts and note the answers on the board. Then ask if they see any similarities to the reasons children worked during the Industrial Revolution? Are the reasons different? Is there a difference between children working and child labor?

Instruction, Teacher Modeling, Guided Practice

1. Hand out copies of “Child Labor Laws in Maine” worksheet below
2. Have students take turns reading aloud to the class, or have students read silently.
3. Students should then complete the interactive slide presentation using the information provided on the final slide provided by the Maine Department of Labor.

Independent Work Time

1. Students may work alone or in small groups to complete the interactive slide presentation.
2. When complete, students should turn in the presentation by sharing it with the teacher digitally or by collecting the hard copies.

Closing, Review and Additional Activities

1. Teacher may choose to review the answers together as a class.
2. Ask students to share their thoughts about current labor laws for minors in Maine? Are they “fair?” Should there be exceptions? What might the reasons for that be? Etc.
3. Additional activities: have students write an opinion essay about Maine State Child Labor Laws, visit Maine MILL to learn more about the conditions of child workers in the mills, explore [Lewis Hine’s Photographic collection](#) (available on the Library of Congress website) and have students respond to a picture of their choosing - they could either research the history work the child in the photograph did or write a creative writing piece from the perspective of the child in the photo.

Name:

Child Labor In Maine

The evolution of child labor laws in Maine reflects the broader shifts in US labor policies and societal values. During the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution transformed Maine's economy, leading to a surge in child labor within the state's burgeoning mills and factories. Children as young as eight or nine were often employed, enduring long hours in dangerous conditions for meager wages. This exploitation of child labor was driven by various factors, including economic necessity, lack of educational opportunities, and limited government oversight.


The first significant child labor law in Maine was enacted in 1887. This law prohibited children under the age of 14 from working in manufacturing establishments, marking a crucial step toward protecting children from exploitative labor practices. This legislation coincided with the introduction of compulsory school attendance laws, recognizing the importance of education for children's development and well-being.

In the early 20th century, during the Progressive Era, Maine further strengthened its child labor laws. The state mandated work permits for children under 16 and required employers to maintain age certificates and proof of school attendance for their minor employees. These measures aimed to ensure that children's employment did not interfere with their education and that they were not engaged in hazardous or exploitative work.

The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938 significantly influenced child labor policies across the nation, including in Maine. The FLSA established national minimum age standards for employment and prohibited minors from engaging in dangerous occupations. Maine gradually aligned its laws with these federal standards, further enhancing protections for working children.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, Maine continued to modernize its child labor laws. The state implemented restrictions on the number of hours minors could work and expanded the list of prohibited occupations for young workers. Moreover, enforcement of work permit and school attendance requirements was strengthened in the 1980s, ensuring greater compliance with child labor regulations.

Today, the Maine Department of Labor is responsible for enforcing child labor laws within the state. Key regulations include restrictions on the types of jobs that children under 14 can perform, limitations on the number of hours that 14 and 15-year-olds can work during the school year, and fewer restrictions for 16 and 17-year-olds, although they are still prohibited from engaging in hazardous work. Work permits continue to be required for minors under the age of 16.



In recent years, Maine has witnessed debates surrounding proposed reforms to child labor laws. Some advocates have called for loosening work restrictions for teenagers, such as increasing the allowable work hours for 14 and 15-year-olds. These proposals have sparked public discourse regarding the balance between student well-being and workforce needs. Proponents of such reforms argue that they would provide teenagers with valuable work experience and opportunities to contribute to the economy. However, opponents contend that relaxing child labor laws could jeopardize students' education and expose them to exploitation.

The evolution of child labor laws in Maine exemplifies the ongoing efforts to safeguard children from exploitative labor practices while recognizing their potential contributions to the workforce. As societal values and economic conditions continue to evolve, the debate surrounding child labor policies is likely to persist, prompting policymakers to strike a delicate balance between protecting young people and fostering their development into responsible and productive members of society.

Directions

Together with your group complete the Google Slide presentation that your teacher shared with you. Make sure to only use the link provided in the first slide to find the information you need. Turn in the slide presentation when it is complete.