



MAINE MUSEUM OF
INNOVATION
LEARNING +
LABOR

Child Labor Today

Teacher's Guide and Worksheets

Child Labor Today

Grades 9-12

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

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- understand the global scope of child labor and how it impacts different regions and industries.
- identify cultural, economic, and political factors that contribute to child labor.
- build empathy by learning about the lived experiences of children affected by labor exploitation.
- develop research skills by gathering information from credible sources (articles, documentaries, databases, etc.).

Materials Needed

1. "Child Labor Today" student handout
2. Pencils
3. Computer/Laptop with access to the internet

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

There is minimal set up for this project. Students should have access to computers/laptop for the class period(s).

Introduction

Students will conduct in-depth research on countries around the world that are currently grappling with the issue of child labor. They will then synthesize their findings into a visually engaging and informative infographic. Students have the option to work independently, focusing on a specific country, or collaborate in small groups of 2-3, sharing the research and design responsibilities.

The following countries will be assigned for research: Somalia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Liberia, India, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and Bangladesh.

To facilitate their research, students will utilize reputable online resources such as World Atlas, Britannica, or other similar databases. They will gather essential information about their assigned country, including its demographics, economic conditions, and social structures. Crucially, they will delve into the specific conditions that child laborers face in that country and identify the major products or industries that rely on their labor. A structured research sheet will be provided to guide their data collection.

The culmination of their research will be the creation of an infographic poster. Students will use Canva or another free infographic maker to design a visually appealing and informative representation of their findings. The infographic should effectively communicate the key information gathered during their research, highlighting the country's context, the plight of child laborers, and the products they produce. The completed infographics will be printed and shared with the class, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

Instruction, Teacher Modeling, Guided Practice

1. Together as a group read a “Brief History of Global Child Labor” together.
2. Explain students will research a country independently or in groups of 2-3. Divide students into groups (if applicable) and either assign or have students choose one of the following countries to research: Somalia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Liberia, India, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and Bangladesh.
3. Review the note taking sheet together. Research areas include demographics, economics, social structure, working conditions, and relevant products/industries.
4. Review where students may get their information from. Reputable online resources like World Atlas and Britannica are recommended.
5. Once research is complete students will demonstrate their knowledge by creating an infographic poster using Canva or another free infographic maker. Using the information gathered on the research sheet below students will create and print an infographic of their country to share with the class.

Additional Activities

To further deepen their understanding and encourage active engagement, students can undertake the following extension activities:

- **Take Action:** Research organizations that are actively working to eradicate child labor globally, such as UNICEF, The Stop Child Labor Coalition, International Initiative to End Child Labor, and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). Identify ways in which students can contribute to their efforts, raising awareness or supporting their initiatives.
- **Writing Prompt:** Explore the nuanced distinction between children engaging in work and the exploitative practice of child labor. Encourage students to critically analyze the factors that differentiate these two concepts, considering issues such as age, working conditions, education, and compensation.

Name:

Brief History of Global Child Labor

Ancient and Pre-Industrial Societies

In ancient and pre-industrial societies, children's participation in economic activities was deeply ingrained in the social fabric. Agrarian economies and family-run businesses relied on the contributions of all family members, including children. The concept of childhood as a separate phase of life with a focus on education and play was largely absent. Children were expected to work alongside adults, learning essential skills and contributing to the family's livelihood. While this provided valuable training and a sense of responsibility, it also meant that children were exposed to the same hardships and risks as adults.

Industrial Revolution (18th - 19th Century)

The Industrial Revolution brought about a dramatic shift in the nature and scale of child labor. The rise of factories and mills created a demand for cheap and docile labor, and children were seen as an ideal source. They were often forced to work long hours in dangerous and unhealthy conditions for meager wages. The exploitation of child labor during this period was rampant, with children as young as five or six working in textile mills, coal mines, and other industries. The physical and psychological toll on these children was immense, and their lack of education and opportunities for social mobility perpetuated a cycle of poverty.

Early Reform Movements (19th - early 20th Century)

As the negative consequences of child labor became increasingly evident, social reformers and activists began to advocate for change. Religious groups, humanitarian organizations, and labor unions played a crucial role in raising awareness and mobilizing public support for child labor reforms. This led to the introduction of laws and regulations aimed at protecting children from exploitation, including restrictions on working hours, minimum age requirements, and compulsory education. While these reforms were a significant step forward, their enforcement was often weak, and child labor continued to be a problem in many industries.

Global Movement and International Legislation (20th Century)

The 20th century saw a growing recognition of child labor as a global issue requiring international cooperation. The establishment of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919 marked a turning point, as it provided a platform for setting international standards and promoting the elimination of child labor. The ILO adopted several conventions and agreements aimed at addressing child labor, including those on the minimum age for employment and the worst forms of child labor. These conventions have been ratified by many countries and have served as a framework for national legislation and policy development.

Modern Era (21st Century)

Despite significant progress, child labor remains a persistent challenge in the 21st century. While the number of child laborers has declined globally, millions of children continue to be trapped in exploitative working conditions. Poverty, lack of access to education, and weak enforcement of labor laws are among the key factors driving child labor today. The focus has shifted towards addressing the root causes of child labor through poverty reduction, education, and sustainable development initiatives. There is also a growing emphasis on corporate social responsibility and ethical supply chains, as businesses are increasingly held accountable for ensuring that their products are not made with child labor.

The fight against child labor is far from over, but the progress made over the past century offers hope for a future where all children can enjoy their right to a childhood free from exploitation and with opportunities for education and development.

Country Research Assignment

- You will research a country affected by child labor—either on your own or with a partner (groups of 2–3 are also allowed).
- Your teacher will either assign you a country or let you choose from the following list: Somalia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Liberia, India, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, or Bangladesh.
- Before starting your research, go over a note-taking sheet that will help guide you.
- Your research should focus on the following areas:
 - Demographics
 - Economics
 - Social structure
 - Working conditions
 - Products/industries related to child labor
- Research Guidelines
 - Use reliable online sources such as World Atlas and Britannica to find accurate information.
 - If you're unsure whether a website is trustworthy, ask your teacher for help.
- Create Your Infographic
 - Once your research is complete, you'll use Canva (or another free infographic maker) to design a poster about your country.
 - Your infographic should clearly show what you learned using facts, visuals, and well-organized information from your notes.
- Present and Share
 - Print your infographic and be ready to share your findings with the class!