

History of the key mills

Conditions in the mills



In this lesson pupils will gain an insight into the harsh living conditions which children experienced in cotton mills in the 18th and 19th century, including those around the River Maun in Mansfield.

They will learn how child orphans were effectively bought by mill owners (known as pauper apprentices), about the punishments meted out to children for the smallest misdemeanours, as well as the typical diet in the mills and what children might have played if they had any energy left at the end of their shift.

Pupils will learn about the people who advocated a change in the law to improve the lives of mill workers and those who argued that child labour was not only a necessity for poor families, but helped to build children's character.

In particular they will learn about the so-called father of factory reform, Robert Owen who helped bring about the first Factory Act in 1802 and the important Sadler committee which reviewed evidence of the suffering of child mill workers.

They will gain an insight into the number of children who worked in the mills, their long working hours, and how the various Factory Acts of 1802, 1833, 1844 and 1867 gradually ended the misery of thousands of children and gave them the right to a basic education.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- HM_L4LO** Lesson Overview
- HM_L4TN** Teacher's Notes
- HM_L4TS** Teacher's Slides
- HM_L4HO1** The life of a child mill worker
- HM_L4HO2** Child labour in the factories
- two schools of thought
- HM_L4HO3** Images of child workers
- HM_L4HO4** Evidence presented to Michael Sadler
- HM_L4HO5** Robert Owen's address

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The Teacher's Slides will prompt a discussion about the conditions in the mills.

Using Handout 2 which describes the two schools of thoughts about whether children should work in the mills, pupils will be asked to either present the arguments, verbally, either for or against child labour in the factories.

Pupils' understanding of the harsh conditions for children in the mills and lack of health and safety will be tested through an exercise to review images of children in the mills and list their jobs and the hazards to their well-being.

Pupils will review the evidence presented to the government's Sadler committee and be charged with writing a diary entry from the perspective of a mill worker who is their age.

Having learnt about how Robert Owen's model village for mill workers in Lanarkshire signalled a step-change in how factory workers were treated, pupils are asked to write a letter from Robert Owen to his employees explaining his philosophy and what he expects of them in return.

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LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM

HISTORY

Key Stage 1 and 2

- Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- Gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history

Key Stage 1

- The lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements

Key Stage 2

Local history study

- A study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality

ENGLISH

Writing

- Writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)
- Writing for different purposes

Key Stage 1 and 2

Spoken language

- Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- Use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others