

Child Labor Reflection

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My topic was Child Labor and how it affected the children during the Industrial Revolution. Before I researched the topic, I knew quite a bit about child labor laws because when I was younger, around grade 5, I was passionate about child labor and made a speech about it in my free time. I had researched it multiple times for different projects, so I had lots of knowledge. I knew roughly what the jobs were that children were doing. I also knew that they worked very long hours in poor conditions with strict ruling and punishment. I knew that children were getting bad injuries and permanent issues that would stick with them forever from child labor. I used to know some of the specific age ranges and wages per age and for each job but forgot lots of it because I had much stronger of a passion when I was younger. That was about four years ago, and I have forgotten most of the specifics. My research was based more on the Industrial Revolution and the Factory Act and specific laws and jobs. I wanted to further my exploration on this topic because I already knew a lot so it would be easier for me to expand and learn more because I knew what to look for. I also wanted to look more into it because I had a passion for it when I was younger and I forgot about that until I had an opportunity (this project) to bring that passion back and make my work better than it could've been with a different topic. What first led me to learn this topic was learning about it in grade 5, doing a research project on it and making speeches about it. I developed an interest almost immediately and that interest has stayed with me until now. My burning question was "How did the labor laws affect the lives of children?" My guiding questions were "What were the jobs and conditions of labor law?", "What were the physical and mental effects on children?", and "How did the laws evolve?".

To answer my questions, my strategy mainly was to write down different components of the questions I wanted to answer (ex. Jobs and Conditions: Hours and wages, poor conditions (lighting and cleanliness), punishment and discipline, etc.) and then wrote what I knew combined with what I found so that I didn't have to worry about plagiarism. What I learned though, was mostly about how the Industrial Revolution tied into it all, and about the Factory Acts (specifically 1833) and how the government recognized that this was an issue and made efforts to make things better for the lives of children. I learned about the working class ranks which helped me with my research because I then discovered that they were classified as "unskilled laborers". I also learned a lot about the different types of jobs that the children took part in. While looking at the mental and physical component of child labor laws, I learned a lot about who those children would grow up to be and how this rough childhood impacted the rest of their lives. Watching *Oliver Twist* gave me a good idea of the daily lives of children during this time and helped me get a better understanding of child labor laws and the Industrial Revolution in general. When looking into the evolution of the labor laws, I learned a lot about the Factory Act of 1833. Researching the Factory Act of 1833 gave me lots of information on some of the laws that were enforced and were being improved. This helped a lot but also goes to show that the children were still not respected because the outcome of this act being enforced was not what was planned. Nothing really changed, especially at first. I also learned about education a bit and some of the reasons why child labor began decreasing later in the Industrial Revolution. Overall, even though I

thought I knew a lot about this topic, there was still a lot for me to learn and there still are things that I don't know about this topic.

Some new questions did pop up when going through my guiding questions. I want to learn more about the following Factory Acts that were being placed by the government. I also want to learn more about the downfall of child labor during the Industrial Revolution. It would also be interesting to learn about child labor laws in many other countries because it is common knowledge that child labor laws are still in place in many countries around the world to this day. There were some things that I learned about that I wasn't thinking that I would learn about. At first, I wasn't planning on looking into the Factory Acts but then I learned that those were the major parts in the evolution in the laws which was interesting. There were also some things I learned about different perspectives. A new perspective that I noticed was the perspective of the parents and the perspective of the employers. Parents during this time must have been devastated because they didn't have any say in labor laws. The children were torn from their families which caused some mental problems with the child and most likely the parents as well. You would never know how the employers truly felt either. They had to use children for their work or else they wouldn't get as much profit and money as they did. In some cases, the employers may not have enough money to survive if it weren't for the child laborers. Some employers didn't care about the children, but I bet some did but couldn't do anything about it because they needed the money and they needed not only to survive, but to thrive. They wanted to be wealthy rather than just barely making it through the day.

I don't think I had too many frustrating or stressful situations throughout this project since I already had background knowledge, so I didn't have to research super hard on every topic and idea. Something rewarding for me was overall learning more about the topic and getting to use my previous knowledge to get me ahead in my work. This became rewarding the second I started because I knew I wouldn't have to research as much as I would have if I were to choose a topic that I knew nothing about. Though, don't get me wrong, I definitely had to research for this project because I obviously don't know everything about child labor, I bet I still don't even know a quarter of it. There is so much to learn about this topic and having the background knowledge was just a boost and it really helped me. The process the we went through to get here wasn't too difficult or stressful. It was simple if you made sure to follow along. It helped knowing about the Library Resources because I ended up using that a lot. I also used Google, but used websites I thought were accurate because firstly, they seemed realistic, and secondly, I used government or organization website because they are the most trustworthy than something ending in ".com" or ".ca", though sometimes they can be useful. I liked having a bit of guidance and loved having lots of class time to work on things because I feel like I used my class time wisely and was able to get almost everything done in class time and still had time to make sure I put in lots of effort and thought into my work.