

**Title:**

Child Labor in America

**Overview:**

Students will learn about child labor in America by observing, analyzing, questioning and reflecting on primary sources located on the Library of Congress website, reading literature about the time period and making a connection through letter writing with the children in that time period.

**Objectives:**

- Students will be able to analyze primary sources from the Library of Congress.
- Students will be able to question the background or related information about the primary sources from the Library of Congress.
- Students will be able to collect information about the primary sources from the Library of Congress.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast qualities of themselves with those of the characters in the book *The Bobbin Girl* by Emily Arnold McCully and in the primary source photographs.
- Students will be able to construct a letter to the characters in the book or in the primary source photographs.
- Students will be able to express in a letter qualities that are similar or different from the characters in the book or in the primary source photographs.

**Time Required:**

Three days, 40-minute sessions each day

**Recommended Grade Range:**

The recommended grade range for this lesson is Grade 3.

**Subject/Sub-Subject:**

Social Studies

**Standards:****National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:**

- Standard 2 (Time, Continuity, and Change):
  - Understand the study of the past is the story of communities, nations, and the world;
  - Understand key concepts such as past, present, future, similarity, difference, and change;
  - Understand that we can learn our personal past and the past of communities, nations, and the world by means of stories, biographies, interviews, and original sources such as documents, letters, photographs, and artifacts;
  - Key people, events, and places associated with the history of the community, nation, and world; and
  - Understand that historical events occurred in times that differed from our own, but often have lasting consequences for the present and future.

**Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education Standards:**

- Standard 1.4.3.B (Quality of Writing): Write informational pieces using illustrations when relevant (e.g., descriptions, letters, reports, instructions).
- Standard 1.5.3.F (Quality of Writing): Use grade appropriate conventions of language when writing and editing.
- Standard 8.3.3.B (United States History): Identify and describe historical documents, artifacts and places critical to United States History
- Standard 8.3.3.C (United States History): Identify and describe how continuity and change have impacted U.S. History.

**Credits:**

Created by Patricia E. Slaughter

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### Materials Used:

The following instructional materials are needed to teach this lesson:

- Picture book: *The Bobbin Girl* by Emily Arnold McCully
- Smart Board
- Internet
- Library of Congress website ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov))
- Writing paper and pencils

### Resources Used:

*Library of Congress resources:*

1. **Title:** Harriet Jane (Hanson) Robinson, 1825-1911 (Steel engraving)  
**Creator(s):** J.A.J. Wilcox  
**Date Created/Published:** [no date recorded on caption card]  
**URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003669893/>
2. **Title:** Fourteen year old spinner in a [?] Brazos Valley Cotton Mill at West. Violation of the law. Matty Lott runs six sides. See family group and their story. Location: West, Texas. (Photograph)  
**Creator(s):** Lewis Wickes Hine, 1874-1940  
**Date Created/Published:** 1913 November  
**URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/nclc.02873/>
3. **Title:** Cornelius Hurley, right end of picture, 68 Adam Street, was at work in No. 1 Mill room in Merrimac Mill, Lowell, Mass., for six months. About 13 or 14 probably. Michael Keefe, 32 Marion Street been at work in No. 1 Mill room Merrimac Mill. Location: Lowell, Massachusetts. (Photograph)  
**Creator(s):** Lewis Wickes Hine, 1874-1940  
**Date Created/Published:** 1911 October  
**URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/nclc.02387/>

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### Description of Procedure

#### Day One:

1. Using the Smart Board, the teacher will show the following primary source, a photograph from the Library of Congress website, so the entire class can see:

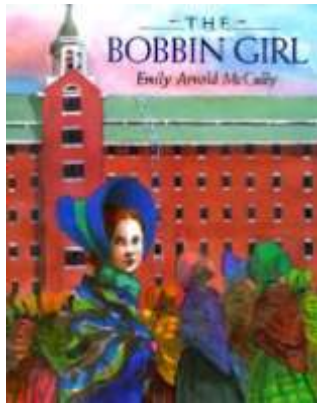


2. Students will then receive a sheet of paper and be given 5 minutes to write their observations of the photograph. When the five minutes are completed, students will then have three minutes to work with a partner and come up with 3 words that describe image.
3. When the time is up, the teacher will ask for volunteers to share one word that their pair wrote down creating a list on the board as the students tell them.
4. After everyone has shared their observations begin a class discussion about the photograph prompting the class to answer the following questions:
  - a. Who are the boys?
  - b. What year was the photograph taken?
  - c. Where do they live?

- d. What are they doing in the photograph?
  - e. How old are the boys?
5. As the students are sharing their answers to the questions above the teacher will record students' answers along with any questions the students may have about the photograph.
6. Once the sharing is completed students will be asked to make a prediction as to what is going on in the photograph.
7. The teacher will then display a document (created by the teacher) answering all of the prompt questions. When the answers are revealed students compare each actual answer with the class' answer.
8. After students are presented with the photographs source information (The teacher explains to the class that the boys in the photograph were child laborers and back in the 1800's and early 1900's, children worked at a very young age, sometimes in horrible conditions and that their parents and families depended on them to bring home money from working.) The teacher will bring to light that the boys in the picture are very young to be working asking students to reflect on what it would be like to be a child working so young.

**Day Two:**

1. To begin day two the teacher will quickly discuss what they learned from the previous day's lesson. Students will then be introduced to the book, *The Bobbin Girl* by Emily Arnold McCully.



2. The teacher begins by asking students about the cover of the book and the students make predictions as to what the title means and what will happen in the book.
3. The teacher is very animated in reading pausing at the appropriate times asking students to construct the meaning of the following words from the context of the story:
  - a. textile
  - b. boardinghouse
  - c. spindle
  - d. loom
  - e. spinning
  - f. bobbin
  - g. wages
  - h. petition
  - i. self-reliance
4. The teacher will also pause in the story to ask the students to make predictions as to what will happen next in the story.
5. The teacher pauses after reading page 3 and 4 in the book and shows the class on the Smart Board the following primary source:



6. Students will observe the photograph and to discuss, as a class, the similarities between the photograph and the drawing in the book. Ask the students to reflect on what is happening in the photograph and if there were any questions they had about what is happening.
7. After reading the book, read the “Author’s Note” on the last page telling them how the bobbin girl in the story was loosely inspired by Harriett Hanson Robinson. While reading the “Author’s Note,” the teacher shows the last primary source on the Smart Board which is a steel engraving of Harriett Jane (Hanson) Robinson:



8. By observing the engraving, the students can make a connection between the book and real-life historical figure.
  - a. Begin a whole class discussion using the following questions:
    - i. Do you think child labor was a good thing?
    - ii. Is there child labor today?
9. Students will then take their seats and write a one-sentence summary of what they learned during the lesson.

**Day Three:**

1. Each student will write a “pen pal” letter addressed to either Rebecca Putney, the child laborer in the book, or to any of the child laborers in the photographs talking about the similarities and/or differences the student has compared to the character. The student can draw their own conclusions, express their opinions or ask more questions they may have about the life the character leads. The student may reflect on what he has learned by expressing his thoughts or asking new questions.

**Extensions:**

- This lesson can be extended to include the women’s suffrage movement because of Harriet Hanson Robinson’s involvement in that movement.
- This lesson can be extended to include the child labor reform movement and subsequent laws.

**Evaluation:**

The students will be informally evaluated through their participation in the class discussions as well as their sentence summary. Students will be formally evaluated by their “pen pal” letter final product.