



1833 Factory Act

Did it solve the problems of children in factories?

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Introduction

In 1833 the Government passed a Factory Act to improve conditions for children working in factories. Young children were working very long hours in workplaces where conditions were often terrible. The basic act was as follows:

- No child workers under 9 years of age
- Employers must have an age certificate for child workers
- Children of 9-13 years to work no more than 9 hours a day
- Children of 13-18 years to work no more than 12 hours a day
- Children are not to work at night
- Two hours schooling each day for children
- Four factory inspectors appointed to enforce the law.

However, the passing of this Act did not mean that overnight the mistreatment of children stopped. Using these sources, investigate how far the Act had solved the problems of child labour.

Tasks

Look at Source 1

1. This is an extract from a Factory Inspectors Report (1836).
 - a) Who gave the evidence to the factory inspector?
 - b) Work out how many hours (not including breaks), the boys are reported to have worked without stopping.
 - c) Which parts of the new Factory Act have been broken?
 - d) What does the tone of the letter tell us about what the factory inspectors thought about the firm Taylor, Ibbotson & Co?
 - e) Having studied this source, would you be right to conclude that the 1833 Factory Act did nothing to solve the problems of child workers? Explain your answer.

Look at Source 2

2. This is a piece of a document detailing which companies broke the law
 - a) What is the most common offence recorded?
 - b) Work out how much is fined for the different offences.
 - c) By looking at the fines, which offence is regarded as the most serious?
 - d) How effective was the 1833 Factory Act? Explain your answer.
 - e) (Hint: Is the number of convictions a good or bad sign?)

Look at Source 3

3. This is a photograph of workers in a factory in 1903.
 - a) What kind of factory is the boy working in?
 - b) How old do you think he is?
 - c) Write a list of all the dangers you can see in the factory and what you think could be done to improve them.

- d) This photograph is from 1903, 70 years after the first Factory Act. Explain whether you think work in the factory had improved for child workers by this time.
- e) Is the illustration at the top of this page and this photograph reliable evidence of working conditions in a factory? Give reasons for your answer.
4. You are one of the four factory inspectors in 1836 trying to enforce the Factory Act. You have seen the evidence of abuse of the the law and you are unhappy with the present system. Write a letter to the Home Secretary suggesting ways to improve the law and better methods of enforcing it.

Background

As the Industrial Revolution gathered pace thousands of factories sprang up all over the country. There were no laws relating to the running of factories as there had been no need for them before. As a result, dangerous machinery was used that could, and frequently did, cause serious injuries to workers. To add to these dangers, people were required to work incredibly long hours -often through the night. Perhaps one of the worst features of this new industrial age was the use of child labour. Very young children worked extremely long hours and could be severely punished for any mistakes. Arriving late for work could lead to a large fine and possibly a beating. Dozing at a machine could result in the accidental loss of a limb.

People began to realise how bad these conditions were in many factories and started to campaign for improvements. There was a lot of resistance from factory owners who felt it would slow down the running of their factories and make their products more expensive. Many people also did not like the government interfering in their lives. Some parents, for instance, needed their children to go out to work from a young age, as they needed the money to help feed the family.

Not all factory owners kept their workers in bad conditions however. Robert Owen, who owned a cotton mill in Lanark, Scotland, built the village of New Lanark for his workers. Here they had access to schools, doctors and there was a house for each family who worked in his mills.

By 1833, the Government passed what was to be the first of many Acts dealing with working conditions and hours. At first, there was limited power to enforce these Acts but as the century progressed the rules were enforced more strictly. Nonetheless, the hours and working conditions were still very tough by today's standards, and no rules were in place to protect adult male workers.

Listed below are details of the legislation (laws) that was introduced to improve working conditions in factories.

Date	Industry	Details of law
1833	Textiles	No child workers under 9 years Reduced hours for children 9-13 years

		Two hours schooling each day for children Four factory inspectors appointed
1844	Textiles	Children 8-13 years could work six half-hours a day Reduced hours for women (12) and no night work
1847	Textiles	Women and children under 18 years of age could not work more than 10 hours a day.
1867	All Industries	Previous rules applied to workhouses if more than 5 workers employed
1901	All Industries	Minimum age raised to 12 years.

Teachers Notes

This lesson provides pupils with the opportunity to arrive at a conclusion based upon evidence. Pupils could also be encouraged to look at the evidence with a critical approach.

The extension questions below could be used.

How reliable is this evidence regarding the success of the 1833 Factory Act?
What other evidence would you like see to help you make a decision?

Suggested activities:

Design a poster to campaign against, or for, child labour in the factories.
Have a class debate on child labour with half of the class arguing for child labour.

Sources

Illustration : ZPER 34/19

Source 1: Extract from a Factory Inspectors report - British Parliamentary Papers (1836) No 353

Source 2: Reports of Inspectors of Factories 1863 (No 3390)

Source 3: COPY 1/501

Schemes of Work

Industrial changes - Action and reaction

Key Stage 3 Unit 11

Source 1 : Extract from a Factory Inspectors report - British Parliamentary Papers (1836) No 353

My Lord, in the case of Taylor, Ibbotson & Co. I took the evidence from the mouths of the boys themselves. They stated to me that they commenced working on Friday morning, the 27th of May last, at six A.M., and that, with the exception of meal hours and one hour at midnight extra, they did not cease working till four o'clock on Saturday evening, having been two days and a night thus engaged. Believing the case scarcely possible, I asked every boy the same questions, and from each received the same answers. I then went into the house to look at the time book, and, in the presence of one of the masters, referred to the cruelty of the case, and stated that I should certainly punish it with all the severity in my power. Mr. Rayner, the certificating surgeon of Bastile, was with me at the time.

Source 1 : Transcript of extract from a Factory Inspectors report - British Parliamentary Papers (1836) No 353

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Source 2 : Reports of Inspectors of Factories 1863 (No 3390)

LIST OF PROSECUTIONS—continued.

Date.	Names and Addresses of Persons summoned.	Names of the Magistrates who heard the Case, and Place of Hearing.	Nature of the Offence.	Amount of Penalty.	Amount of Costs.	REMARKS.
1862.			<i>Informations laid by Mr. Buller.</i>			
Sept. 20	Mary Jones, Courtgwillym, near Bridgend, Glamorganshire.	Richard Franklyn and Charles Knight, Esqrs., and Captain Quin; Town Hall, Bridgend.	Employing three young persons after 6 p.m.	£ s. d. 1 0 0	£ s. d. 1 0 0	Two cases withdrawn on payment of costs.
" 24	John Jones, Forest Factory, near Newbridge, Glamorganshire.	William Perkins, Esq., and the Rev. Evan Morgan; Newbridge, Glamorganshire.	Employing three young persons and one female (adult) after 6 p.m.	1 0 0	1 10 3	Three cases withdrawn on payment of costs.
" 26	William Llewellyn, Lamb and Flag Factory, Glynneath, near Neath.	Howel Gwyn and Griffith Llewellyn, Esqrs.; Town Hall, Neath.	Employing three young persons and two children after 6 p.m.	2 0 0	3 9 0	Four cases withdrawn on payment of costs.
Oct. 1	John Howell, Mynyddislwyn, near Blackwood, Monmouthshire.	Frederick Levick, Esq., and the Rev. Edward Leigh; Tredegar, Monmouthshire.	Employing four young persons after 2 p.m. on Saturday.	1 0 0	2 15 0	Three cases withdrawn on payment of costs.
" 8	Samuel P. Harris, Glyn Gwentfwd, near Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.	The Honourable W. P. Rodney, Rev. James Parquhar, W. W. Manning, and Thomas Davis, Esqrs.; Town Hall, Abergavenny.	Employing two young persons and two children after 2 p.m. on Saturday.	- -	1 14 0	Withdrawn on payment of costs.
July 21	William Kirk, Burnley	Thomas Hordern Whitaker and John Heelis, Esqrs.; Burnley.	<i>Information laid by Mr. May.</i> Employing two young persons without surgical certificates.	2 0 0	1 0 0	One summons withdrawn on payment of costs, in consideration of the state of trade.

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Reports of Inspectors of Factories.
[31st Oct.

Source 2 : Transcript of reports of Inspectors of Factories 1863 (No 3390)

List of Prosecutions - continued

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Source 3 : Photograph of workers in a factory 1903 (COPY 1/501)

