

Controversy Over Child Labor

MLL 50
middle level learning



Also: Roosevelt and Muir in Yosemite



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Promote Inquiry about Child Labor with Online Historical Primary Sources

Teresa G. Wojcik and William Knous

Consider these opinions, pro and con, from a century ago in America:

My father put me to work in a cotton mill when I was eleven years of age because he found that to be the easiest way we could make a living for a large family...[T]he older I get, the higher regard I have for his judgment in doing so.

—Marshall Dilling, 1916 ¹

Justice is lacking from a civilization that requires child labor.

—Dr. Emil G. Hirsch, 1905 ²

Teaching about the progressive reform movement of the early 20th century inevitably includes the issue of child labor. Textbook treatment of this topic usually consists of a photograph of working children and a statement from a reformer who witnessed deplorable working conditions. And yet, as the opposing viewpoints quoted above reveal, child labor in the United States was a highly contested issue. At the time, there were two sides to the debate.

Various perspectives (of parents, factory owners, educators, lawmakers, and the children themselves) are often missing from our historical recollections. Considering various viewpoints, as suggested by the juxtaposition of quotes above, can offer rich insights into the economic, social, and political issues surrounding child labor. In this article, we show how primary sources, embedded in a WebQuest, can help students develop more sophisticated historical understandings of the controversy over child labor, while also allowing students to connect this newly acquired knowledge to the issue of children's rights today.

More than “Just Google It”

A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which most of the information used by learners is drawn from the Web (the Internet). What sets it apart from activities that allow students to search and browse the Internet independently is that WebQuests “use learners’ time well, to focus on using information rather than looking for it, and to support learners’ thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.”³ WebQuests have much to offer educators interested in diversifying their teaching methods and fostering historical inquiry in their classrooms.⁴

In order to yield their greatest instructional potential, WebQuests should contain the following key characteristics:⁵

- A scaffolded learning structure that guides and supports students in the learning process
- Use of quality websites and online resources
- Authentic tasks, relevant scenarios, and activities that reflect real-life situations
- Open-ended questions, which stimulate higher-level thinking
- Group and individual activities and accountability
- Constructivist learning—transforming information into new understanding

Embedding primary sources in WebQuests is one effective way to use the Internet to help students develop the habits of the historian. Primary sources that were once accessible only if you traveled to a distant museum or archive (or bought a very expensive book) are now available to teachers through the Internet. For example, the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov) has digitized over five million items in its massive repository, including prints, photographs, posters, maps, sound recordings, motion pictures, books, pamphlets, and sheet music. Approaching such a huge archive could be intimidating. The good news is that many of these free resources have been organized into student-friendly collections.

In this article, we describe a WebQuest that uses primary sources to engage students in examining child labor from a variety of perspectives. We organize this section according to the four main parts of a WebQuest: (1) Introductory Questions, (2) Tasks and Process, (3) Drawing Conclusions, and (4) Reporting and Assessment. It's interesting how a carefully designed Webquest mirrors the “four dimensions of inquiry” presented recently in the C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards published by NCSS (SIDEBAR, page 4). We aim to include these elements of quality pedagogy in our WebQuest activities.

ON THE COVER: Detail of a photograph by Lewis Hine, who wrote, “Girl working in Box Factory. I saw 10 small boys and girls working. Has a bad reputation for employment of youngsters, but work is slack now. Tampa, Fla., 01/28/1909” Full photo on page 10.
www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/nclc.05409
(National Child Labor Committee/Library of Congress)

Handout A



(1) Introductory Questions

Our WebQuest is titled “Child Labor in 1900s America: A Necessary Evil or an Inexcusable Abomination?” This question confronted students with some of the conflicting opinions that citizens held in the early 20th century. In that era, many Americans considered child labor a necessary part of economic activity (and a reflection of the “work ethic”), while many others considered child labor quite unnecessary for a healthy economy (and morally repellent, a destroyer of children’s health and happiness). Seeking answers to this question challenged students to evaluate sources, weigh evidence, and draw reasoned conclusions.

(2) Tasks and Processes

The learning process in a WebQuest that addresses such an important issue often spans several class periods. There are at least ten steps (listed “a” through “j,” below) in this section of the WebQuest.

- (a) Students read brief descriptions of upcoming activities as well as “products” that they would be expected to create toward the end of the unit of study. They also got a copy of the rubric the teacher will use when evaluating their individual efforts and group participation. The teacher invited students to ask questions about anything that was described on these pages.
- (b) The teacher divided the class into groups with four students, with each youth playing one of four personas: a parent in an impoverished family, a progressive reformer, a factory owner, or a child laborer. Students maintained the perspectives of these personas throughout the WebQuest—in their writings, during whole class discussions, and in other group arrangements.

- (c) While in these initial small groups, students read Lewis Hine’s 1909 report, “Child Labor in the Canning Industry of Maryland,” a three-page invective against what he saw as dangerous and unacceptable working conditions for children. A PDF of the typed report (a blue ink carbon copy) is at www.loc.gov/pictures/static/data/nclc/resources/images/canneries3.pdf.

C3 Framework Organization

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

NCSS, *Social Studies for the Next Generation: Purposes, Practices, and Implications of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*. National Council for the Social Studies (Bulletin 113) (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013).

*Free PDF of the C3 Framework at www.socialstudies.org/c3

*Buy the paperback book (with introductory essays) at www.socialstudies.org/store



WHO WAS LEWIS HINE?

Lewis Hine, a New York City schoolteacher and photographer, believed that a picture could tell a powerful story. He felt so strongly about the abuse of children as workers that he quit his teaching job and became an investigative photographer for the National Child Labor Committee [NCLC]. Hine traveled around the country photographing the working conditions of children in all types of industries. He photographed children in coal mines, in meatpacking houses, in textile mills, and in canneries. He took pictures of children working in the streets as shoe shiners, newsboys, and hawkers.

In many instances he tricked his way into factories to take the pictures that factory managers did not want the public to see. He was careful to document every photograph with precise facts and figures. To obtain captions for his pictures, he interviewed the children on some pretext and then scribbled his notes with his hand hidden inside his pocket. Because he used subterfuge to take his photographs, he believed that he had to be “double-sure that my photo data was 100% pure—no retouching or fakery of any kind.”

From “Teaching with Documents: Photographs of Lewis Hine: Documentation of Child Labor,” www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hine-photos.



Students then discussed how different individuals living at the time might have responded to Hine's report. "How would your persona have reacted to this information?"

- (d) Each student wrote a one-paragraph response to Hine's report from the perspective of his or her historical persona. We used a blog as the medium in which students would "publish" their editorials because we felt that they'd be motivated by the idea of creating a document, not simply finding things, on the Internet. It also provided an opportunity to define the word "anachronistic" for the class, since "posting a blog" was not an option for people in 1909. Several free options exist online for teachers to prepare a blog (e.g. kidblog.org or edublogs.org).⁶
- (e) Students independently investigated a few primary source images taken by Hine that depict children engaged in different forms of work.

HANDOUT A: Girl Making Baskets, on page 3, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004000234/PP

HANDOUT B: Boys in Breaker Boxes, on page 5, NARA/Flock

We selected images from the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) Collection at the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/nclc), a searchable collection of 5,100 photographs taken in the United States between 1908 and 1924.

Images in the NCLC Collection depict working conditions in agriculture, home labor, street trades, and various other industries, including, mining, canneries, glass factories, and cotton mills. Photos also show recreational activities, victims of work-related accidents, health care activities, and images representing protests of child labor practices. Included are photographs of cartoons and news clippings.

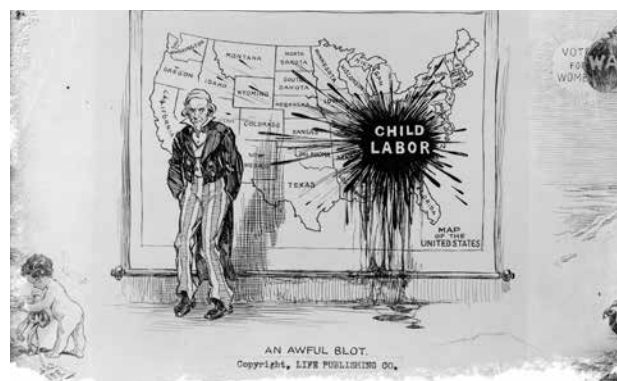
When students viewed items in these collections, they could read the captions, which often provided a few interesting details about when and where that photo was taken.

- (f) Students also viewed a set of four more primary sources (a personal letter; a flier; a newspaper article; and a political cartoon) from collections at the Library of Congress and the National Archives.⁷

HANDOUT C: Marshall Dilling's Letter Supporting Child Labor, on page 7, research.archives.gov/description/5685999

HANDOUT D: Flier, "Declaration of Dependence," on page 9, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004003538/PP

HANDOUT E: News Story, "Lad fell to Death in Big Coal Chute," on page 12, This short newspaper article of 1911 can be seen (scroll down) at www.geh.org/ar/letchild/m197701850007_ful.html. The image is a bit faded, so we created a facsimile for this handout.



The political cartoon "An Awful Blot" was featured on a full page of the November/December 2013 *Social Education*,⁸ and is online at www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004000340/PP.

- (g) We provided a graphic organizer to help students analyze each item. It provided a scaffold for the learning process by modeling some of the analytical steps that a historian might take while investigating a primary source, and then asking students to "state an opinion" from the perspective of their persona.

HANDOUT F: Graphic Organizer for "Child Labor in America," on page 13

- (h) Students carefully examined these primary sources and then hypothesized how their historical persona might have responded to each one. There was a space on the graphic organizer for a brief written reaction to each item. For example, how might a factory owner respond to a political cartoon painting child labor as an "awful blot" on the United States? Or, how might a child react to a newspaper article reporting the death of a teenager who had fallen down a coal chute?
- (i) Students gathered in small groups with others who were assigned the same historical persona. They rehearsed what they could say (about each historical document) in preparation for a simulated town hall meeting on the issue of whether the federal government should pass legislation to restrict child labor. Students shared their editorial blogs and analysis of the primary source sets, anticipated the arguments that might be made by members of other groups (who represent different personas), and strategized how they would present their strongest points.
- (j) The town hall meeting took place the following day and it consumed the 50-minute period. It can be difficult for middle school students to wait quietly while someone else speaks. If students are not practiced in the discipline of a civic discussion, the one who is speaking may hold a small historical artifact—such as a wooden spool that might have been used in a cotton mill—while everyone else is silent. When that student is done speaking, he or she passes the object to the next person waiting to speak.

T. C. THOMPSON, PRESIDENT,
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SILURIA, ALA.

BUCK CREEK COTTON MILLS

MANUFACTURERS OF



SELLING AGENTS
CANNON MILLS
NEW YORK.

SILURIA, ALA.,

March 20, 1916.

Hon. Joseph T. Robinson,
U. S. Senate,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I notice that the Keating-Owen Child Labor Bill now pending before the U. S. Senate has been referred to a sub-committee of which you are ~~a member~~ ^{a member}. I desire to enter a protest against the passing of this bill because I think it will be an injury instead of a benefit to the people in the Southern states who will be affected by it. The cotton mills of the South will be able to overcome the affect it may have on them, but the real sufferers will be the people who depend upon the cotton mills and other industries for a livelihood. My opinion is based on experience of 23 years in the cotton mills of the Carolinas and other southern states and I feel that I am in position and have studied the question sufficiently to know something of the condition of the people in the South and the affect ths bill will have on them.

My father put me to work in a cotton mill when I was 11 years of age because he found that to be the easiest way we could make a living for a large family, and the older I get the higher regard I have for his judgemnt in doing so. I feel that the laws we have in the different states are sufficient to protect the citizens of those states and think these matters should be left entirely with the states to handle themselves.

Hoping you will be able to prevent the passage of this bill, I am

Very truly yours,

MD/N

(3) Drawing Conclusions

The concluding section of the WebQuest looked “backward” and “forward” at the topic under study. In looking backward, we held a whole-class discussion summarizing what students had encountered in the WebQuest. Then we connected the historical topic of child labor in the Progressive Era to the issue of child labor as it exists today.⁹ Students read parts of a two-page “Abstract of Pennsylvania’s Child Labor Law” at www.portal.state.pa.us, which lists some interesting regulations. For example, it is the current law that infants less than 6 months old may not work at a “place of employment” (such as a movie set) for more than 2 hours per day.

Under what conditions would it be okay to have a baby “working” on a movie set, where they are creating a family scene with a baby for the camera? Under what conditions is it fair and safe for teenagers to work as lifeguards at the neighborhood pool? We posed questions about the condition of working children not only in the United States, but around the world. Would you buy a soccer ball if you knew it had been sewn together in a factory by a 12-year-old boy?

Examples in the Children’s Defense Fund report on the “State of America’s Children” (2011)¹⁰ or UNICEF’s “State of the World’s Children, 2011”¹¹ revealed that humankind has not yet closed the book on problems that result from child labor. The concluding discussion invited students to consider the experiences of children around the world, thus making the type of international links called for in NCSS standards Theme 9: GLOBAL CONNECTIONS.

(4) Reporting and Assessment

With the many products and pedagogies available on the Internet today, teachers must carefully discern which technological tools will help them to foster effective teaching and learning with their particular students. WebQuests can assist in the essential task of evaluating student performance of learning objectives. Our WebQuest included two rubrics: one to assess individual students’ ability to write an editorial using a blog, and another to assess student participation in the town hall meeting.

For students, the rubrics (handed out before the Webquest began) provided clear expectations regarding the quality of work. For the teachers, rubrics helped measure to what degree students met those expectations.

In a position statement, NCSS identified the qualities of “powerful and authentic social studies teaching and learning:” the activity should be meaningful for teachers and students, integrative, value based, challenging, and active.¹² Combining primary sources with the inquiry-oriented structure of WebQuests has the potential to result in this type of curricular experience. In this WebQuest, students wrote a blog, worked in small groups, and participated in a town hall discussion that required them to communicate a point of view while also considering other perspectives. Through these authentic assessments, students modeled the types of actions expected of active and reflective citizens, thus providing teachers a way to address Theme 10: CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES.

Integrating the Disciplines, Connecting Past with Present

A WebQuest on the topic of child labor encourages students to think about the relationship between individuals and businesses and the potential role that state and local governments can play in regulating that relationship. In this way, students see connections between several different NCSS themes, such as Theme 5: INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS; Theme 6: POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE; and Theme 7: PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION.

The issue of child labor also connects the past with the present. When they get to high school, many students will work part-time or summer jobs where they are likely to encounter restrictions on the number of hours they can work or types of machinery they can use. An exploration of the genesis of such laws and regulations is pertinent to their lives. Students see a direct link between the actions of progressive reformers in the past and their own experiences as workers today, thus fostering an appreciation for Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE.

The topic also invites consideration of democratic values such as justice and a respect for human rights. Values held by the proponents of child labor, such as learning self-reliance and patience through manual labor, can be fairly considered. Those values were not “wrong” in an absolute sense, but child labor laws have placed limits on how they can be actualized. We no longer send children into coalmines to learn the value of hard work.

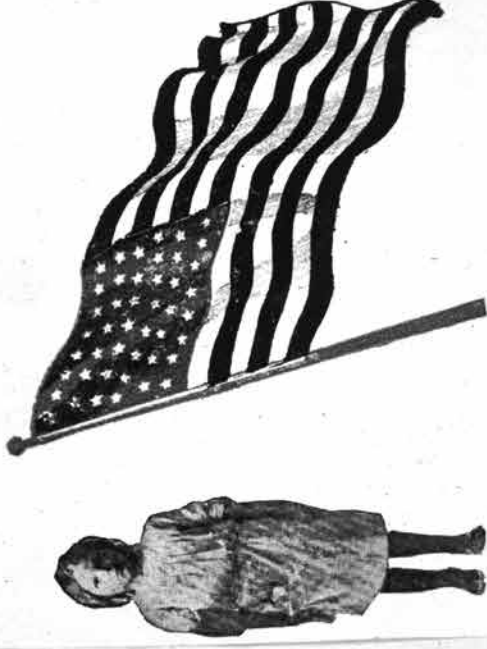
In this WebQuest, the graphic organizer prompted students to consider the potential implications of beliefs held by individuals, businesses, and governments. Through participation in small group discussion and the town hall simulation, students internalized the value of considering opposing viewpoints, providing evidence for one’s assertions, and engaging in respectful, civic deliberation.

Presentism—An outlook dominated by present-day attitudes and experiences; a fallacy of historical analysis that imposes current ideas upon events and ideas in the past.

Analyzing primary sources comprises an essential instructional strategy in the pedagogical repertoire of many social studies educators. In the WebQuest described here, students grappled with an open-ended and compelling question that required them to carefully read and analyze a few historical sources that had been selected by the teacher. Students responded verbally (in discussions) and in writing (when they created a blog). They considered the problem of “presentism” when taking on a historical persona, crafted persuasive arguments in line with a particular viewpoint, and thoughtfully considered other points of view. The use of a rich variety of Internet primary sources coupled with a compelling, open-ended question and authentic assessments offered these students a challenging learning experience that was powered by their own active participation.¹³

DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

by the Children of America
in Mines and Factories and Workshops Assembled



WHEREAS, We, Children of America, are declared to have been born free and equal, and

Whereas, We are yet in bondage in this land of the free; and are forced to toil the long day of the long night, with no control over the conditions of labor, as to health or safety or hours or wages, and with no right to the rewards of our service, therefore be it

Resolved, I - That childhood is endowed with certain inherent and inalienable rights, among which are freedom from toil for daily bread; the right to play and dream, the right to the normal sleep of the night season; the right to an education, that we may have equality of opportunity for developing all that there is in us of mind and heart.

Resolved, II - That we declare ourselves to be helpless and dependent; that we are and of right ought to be dependent, and that we hereby present the appeal of our helplessness that we may be protected in the enjoyment of the rights of childhood.

Resolved, III - That we demand the restoration of our rights by the abolition of child labor in America.

A. J. McKelway

Photograph by Lewis Hine, who wrote, "Girl working in Box Factory. I saw 10 small boys and girls working. Has a bad reputation for employment of youngsters, but work is slack now. Tampa, Fla., 01/28/1909"

(National Child Labor Committee/Library of Congress)



Resources on Child Labor as a Current Event

Pennsylvania Child Labor Law: http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/child_labor_law/7508

The State of America's Children: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/state-of-americas-children-2011/>

UNICEF on Child Labour: http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58009.html

Stop Child Labor Coalition: <http://stopchildlabor.org/>

Child Labor Education Project: http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/causes.html

Human Rights and Business Dilemmas Forum: http://human-rights.unglobalcompact.org/case_studies/child-labour/

International Labour Organization: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>

Notes

1. Marshall Dilling, Letter to U.S. Senator J. T. Robinson, March 20, 1916, [media.nara.gov](http://www.media.nara.gov).
2. Dr. Emil G. Hirsch, "The Evil of Child Labor," *Cleveland Journal* (April 22, 1905): 2.
3. Bernie Dodge, "FOCUS: Five Rules for Writing a Great WebQuest," International Society for Technology in Education (2001). Visit the website, webquest.org.
4. Andrew J. Milson and Portia Downey, "WebQuest: Using Internet Resources for Cooperative Inquiry," *Social Education* 65, no. 3 (April 2001): 144-46; Shari Wennik, "Reporting on the Process of Legislation: A Civics WebQuest," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 17, no. 1 (September/October 2004): 11-14; Phillip J. Van Fossen, "Using WebQuests to Scaffold Higher Order

Thinking," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 16, no. 4 (March/April 2004): 13-16.

5. Dodge, 2001; Tom March, "The Learning Power of WebQuests," *Educational Leadership* 61, no. 4 December 2003/January 2004): 42-47.
6. C. Frederick Risinger, "Using Blogs in the Classroom: A New Approach to Teaching Social Studies with the Internet," *Social Education* 70, no. 3 (April, 2006): 130-132.
7. The idea of creating a primary source set is derived from the "Teachers' Page" of the Library of Congress (LOC) website: www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials. See the Teacher's Guide and analysis tools. Other topics include: Baseball, the Dust Bowl, the Industrial Revolution, Jim Crow, Veterans' Stories, Women's Suffrage, and others.
8. A similar lesson for older students, which tracks the legislative fight in 1915-1916 to prohibit child labor is "Helping Students Visualize the Process of Change with Historic Images" by Stephen Wesson and Cheryl Lederle, *Social Education* 77, no. 6 (November/December 2013) 292-297.
9. William R. Fernekes, "Human Rights for Children: The Unfinished Agenda," *Social Education* 64, no. 4 (May/June 1999): 234-240.
10. Children's Defense Fund, *State of America's Children* (Washington, DC: CDF, 2011), www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/state-of-americas-children-2011.
11. *UNICEF's State of the World's Children* (New York: 2011), www.unicef.org/sowc2011.
12. A Position Statement of NCSS, "A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Effective Citizens," *Social Education* 72, no. 5 (2008): 277-280.
13. National Archives and Records Administration, "Suggested Methods for Integrating Primary Sources into Classroom Instruction," *Social Education* 67, no. 7 (November/December 2003): 414-415.

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January
1911

LAD FELL TO DEATH IN BIG COAL CHUTE

Dennis McKee Dead and Arthur All- becker Had Leg Burned In the Lee Mines.

Falling into a chute at the Chauncery colliery of the George S. Lee Coal Company at Avondale this afternoon, Dennis McKee, aged 13 of West Nanticoke, was smothered to death and Arthur Allbecker, aged 15, had both of his legs burned and injured. Dr. Biel, of Plymouth, was summoned and dressed the burns of the injured boy.

He was removed to his home at Avondale.

Both boys were employed as breaker boys, and going too close to the chute fell in. Fellow workmen rushed to their assistance and soon had them out of the chutes. When taken out McKee was found to be dead. His remains were removed to his home in West Nanticoke. Allbecker will recover.

CAPTIONS FOR PRIMARY SOURCES

- HANDOUT A:** Girl making baskets, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004000234/PP
Girls stand up while making melon baskets in a factory in Evansville, Indiana, in October 1908. (Lewis J. Hines/Library of Congress)
- HANDOUT B:** Boys in breaker boxes www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004002610/PP
Lewis Hine wrote: "View of the Ewen Breaker of the Pa. Coal Co. The dust was so dense at times as to obscure the view. This dust penetrated the utmost recesses of the boy's lungs. A kind of slave-driver sometimes stands over the boys, prodding or kicking them into obedience. S. Pittston, Pa., 01/10/1911." (National Child Labor Committee/Library of Congress)
- HANDOUT C:** Letter by Marshall Dilling, research.archives.gov/description/5685999
This letter by Marshall Dilling, opposing the Keating-Owen Child Labor Bill, bears the date March 20, 1916. It is written on Buck Creek Cotton Mills stationery. (National Archives)
- HANDOUT D:** Flier by A. J. McKelway, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ncl2004003538/PP
This flier is titled, "Declaration of Dependence by the Children of American in Mines and Factories and Workshops Assembled," ca. 1913. The page was photographed by Lewis J. Hines. (Library of Congress)
- HANDOUT E:** News article, www.geh.org/ar/letchild/m197701850007_ful.html
This short newspaper article of 1911 can be seen when you scroll down at the URL above. The image is a bit faded, so we created a facsimile for this handout. Lewis J. Hines took a photo of the news article. (George Eastman House, Rochester, New York)

Child Labor in the Early 1900s A Necessary Evil or an Inexcusable Abomination?

Name _____ My Persona is—a child; a factory owner; a reformer; a labor-class parent (Circle one)

Primary Source Evidence from that era	Response by Your “Persona” How might this citizen have reacted to this piece of information?	Evidence What details in the primary source are especially meaningful for your persona? Are there certain words (in the documents) or details (in a photo) that evoke a strong emotion?	Public Debate How would your reaction affect different types of people in the early 1900s? (a child, factory owner, reformer, or labor-class parent)
1. Photo of girls in a factory			
2. Photo of boys breaking coal			
3. Letter to a senator			
4. Flier: Declaration of Dependence			
5. News report of death and injury			
6. Political cartoon			

Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, and the Idea of National Parks

Carol Thornton

This lesson grew out of a 2013 Library of Congress (LOC) Teaching with Primary Sources Summer Teacher Institute. (See SIDEBAR, on page 14, re. how to apply)

Grade Level/Time Required: Fifth grade; adaptable for grades 3–8/Four 45-minute classes

Big Questions/Inquiry: How do the personal experiences of a leader affect his or her actions? How can citizens petition and lobby to change laws or create new ones? How can we judge the accuracy of a book, written in the present day, that’s about an event in the past?

Learning Objectives: Students distinguish between primary and secondary sources, practice skills in examining and analyzing primary source historical documents, and evaluate the authenticity of a picture book about an event in 1903. They will consider the responsibility and power that citizens have to affect public policies. (A complete list of goals, objectives, and related Common Core State Standards is in the detailed lesson plan.¹)

Assessment: Participation in class discussions; completion of activities using the Primary Source Analysis Tool.

Materials: *The Camping Trip that Changed America: Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir, and Our National Parks* by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012); handouts in this issue of *MLL*, or visit the equivalent websites; teaching guides, free online, from the Library of Congress.

(1) Letter by Roosevelt. To prepare, I referred to teaching suggestions in the “Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Books and Other Printed Texts.”² The lessons began with students working in cooperative pairs, reading a letter³ by President Roosevelt to John Muir, on page 15 (**HANDOUT A**). Muir (1838–1914) was a well-known conservationist, author, and founder of the Sierra Club. In the short, personal letter, Roosevelt asks Muir to take him on a camping trip in California’s Yosemite wilderness.

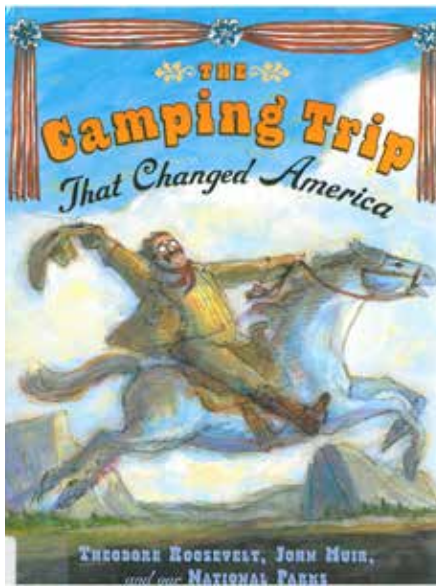
Students used the Library of Congress “Primary Source Analysis Tool” to think critically about this historical document—“observe, reflect, question, and suggest further investigation.” This tool can be printed as a one-page handout, or used as an online form.⁴ Then students shared their thoughts in a class discussion. These discussions followed different paths in each of the classes. Some students wondered how the letter was sent and suggested the Pony Express or stagecoach. They wanted to know how long a letter would take to get to California from Washington, D.C., and when the U.S. Post Office began to use motorized vehicles. Some students wondered if John Muir

replied to the letter and wanted to know more about him. Most students were impressed that the letter was personally signed by Theodore Roosevelt, and noticed that Roosevelt did not want to discuss politics on this trip. Many students questioned what Roosevelt’s purpose was in visiting a wilderness area and particularly wanted to know what was special about Yosemite.

(2) Photo in Yosemite. Students worked in cooperative pairs using the Primary Source Analysis Tool to examine a copy of a photo⁵ of Roosevelt and Muir together in Yosemite (**HANDOUT A**). I used ideas from the *Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints* to direct this activity.⁶ The students first noticed that the photo is black and white and the men are wearing Western style clothing with cowboy hats. Most could identify Theodore Roosevelt. One student wrote, “the view is great.”

Other questions included: “Who took the pictures?” and “What equipment was used?” Students noted that most photographs today are in color and are taken with digital cameras, cell phones, or iPads. Some students wanted to know what season of the year was it when the photo was taken, how old were the men and whether they were friends. Many students wondered about how the men traveled to get to Yosemite, how long did it take, and what were the conditions of the roads in the early 1900’s. Students had a brief debate over land use priorities. Which is more important: preserving the wilderness in a pristine condition or making a park easily assessable to people with roads, cabins, and hotels?

(3) News Article. Students gathered four each around a table to read a 1903 news article⁷ about the camping trip (**HANDOUT B**, page 16). After groups briefly discussed what the news item revealed, we held a whole-class discussion. Students asked, “How did the reporters find out about this camping trip?” “What other newspapers contained articles about this trip?” “Did Roosevelt ever camp with his family?” “Whose horse was it?” “What are some of Roosevelt’s other interests?” “How many people read this newspaper?” The students wished to find out how Roosevelt influenced the government to begin preserving wilderness areas. I asked, “Who else would a president need to persuade, and why?” (Roosevelt’s efforts to convince Congress of the need to establish new national parks and to fund them are mentioned in the picture book—as students find out the next day.)



(4) Picture Book. Our final discussion began by reviewing the differences between primary and secondary sources. Before we read the book *The Camping Trip that Changed America*, I gave each student a copy of the brief bibliography on the last page of that book. Students correctly categorized each of the five citations in that list as either a primary or a secondary source. Among the items were two newspaper articles and one book written

by John Muir that was reprinted in 1992. Even though the original copyright date was not listed for Muir's book, the students correctly identified it as a primary source. The most exciting item was a personal account of the camping trip written by Charlie Leidig. (This unpublished work is in the Yosemite Library collection.) The fifth graders realized that this person was the park ranger mentioned in the first sentence of the news article they'd read the day before!

In anticipation of hearing the picture book read aloud, students listed things that ought to be included in such a book. Suggestions included camping in the snowstorm and the view from Glacier Point. The fifth graders were most interested in the scolding Roosevelt gave to a small boy who cried out, "Hello, Teddy" while the President rode his horse through Yosemite village (as reported in the newspaper). Also, the students were directed to think about the questions they had posed during the document analysis activities and to listen for answers to these questions.

The students were attentive while I read the book aloud; they identified Glacier Point in the illustrations; and they knew the snowstorm was coming just before I turned to that page. Students were delighted by this book's retelling and made connections with their background knowledge of this historic event. Some were disappointed that the author made no mention of the rangers on the trip, the experiences Roosevelt had with reporters and the crowds of people in Yosemite Valley, or with "the little boy." Nevertheless, students judged the book

to be an authentic representation of historical events, so far as they had studied them.⁸

The picture book provided insight regarding questions that students had previously wondered about. "How did Roosevelt travel to Yosemite?" "How did Roosevelt help in creating the National Parks?" "Why did Roosevelt go to Yosemite?" Some questions the book did not answer, such as: "Did Roosevelt ever camp with his family?" "What kind of food did they eat on the camping trip?" "Did they see any wildlife?" What were Roosevelt's other interests?"

"Well," I remarked, "You are truly thinking like historians! These are great topics for further investigation." 🌍

Notes

1. The full lesson plan that I prepared at the Library of Congress Summer Teacher Institute is posted at locinstituteprimarysources.wikispaces.com/The+Camping+Trip+That+Changed+America.
2. "Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Books and Other Printed Texts" (Library of Congress), www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Books_and_Other_Printed_Texts.pdf.
3. Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir, March 14, 1903. (Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University), The URLs for all historical documents appear on the handouts.
4. "Primary Source Analysis Tool" (Library of Congress), www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool.
5. Photo of Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, California, 1903 (Library of Congress).
6. "Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints" (Library of Congress), www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf.
7. New article (excerpt): "President Makes Camp at Bridal Veil Falls," *The San Francisco Call* (May 18, 1903; Library of Congress).
8. Robin D. Groce, "Authenticating *Number the Stars* Using Nonfiction Resources," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 21, no. 3 (January/February 2009): 6–8. Article describes comparing historical sources and historical fiction with a critical eye.

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SIDEBAR: Summer Teacher Institutes: Teaching with Primary Sources

Each year, the Library of Congress selects K-12 educators to attend one of its five teacher institutes in Washington, D.C. During a five-day program, participants work with Library education specialists while exploring some of the millions of digitized historical artifacts and documents available on the LOC website. At the institute, teachers develop primary-source-based teaching strategies that they can take back to their school districts, apply in the classroom, and pass along to colleagues. Educators can access free classroom materials, teaching tools, and strategies for teaching with primary sources at www.loc.gov/teachers. Attendees to the Summer Teacher Institutes come from many different states, representing large metropolitan school districts and smaller, rural school districts. Be aware of the deadline (usually in March) for application to next summer's institute. Read more at www.loc.gov/teachers/professionaldevelopment/teacherinstitute.

Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir in Yosemite, 1903

Use the "Primary Source Analysis Tool" to help you think about these historical documents, www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool

March 14, 1903 .

My dear Mr. Muir:

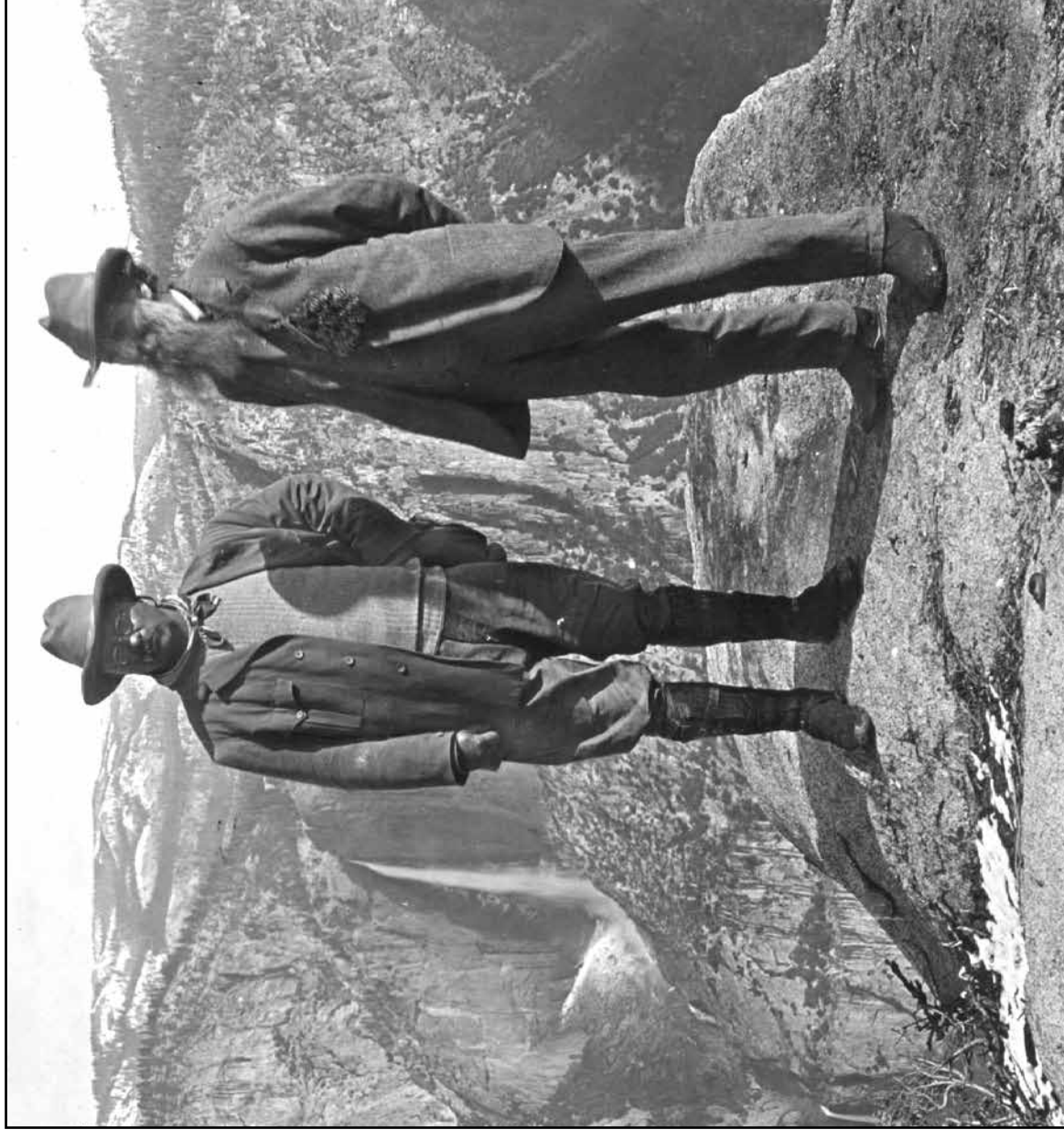
Through the courtesy of President Wheeler I have already been in communication with you, but I wish to write you personally to express the hope that you will be able to take me through the Yosemite. I do not want anyone with me but you, and I want to drop politics absolutely for four days and just be out in the open with you. John Burroughs is probably going through the Yellowstone Park with me, and I want to go with you through the Yosemite.

Sincerely yours,

Theodore Roosevelt

John Muir, Esq.,
Care of President Benj. Ide Wheeler,
University of California,
Berkeley, Cal.

See it online at www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o184498



See it online at www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93503130

*PRESIDENT MAKES CAMP
AT BRIDAL VEIL FALLS*

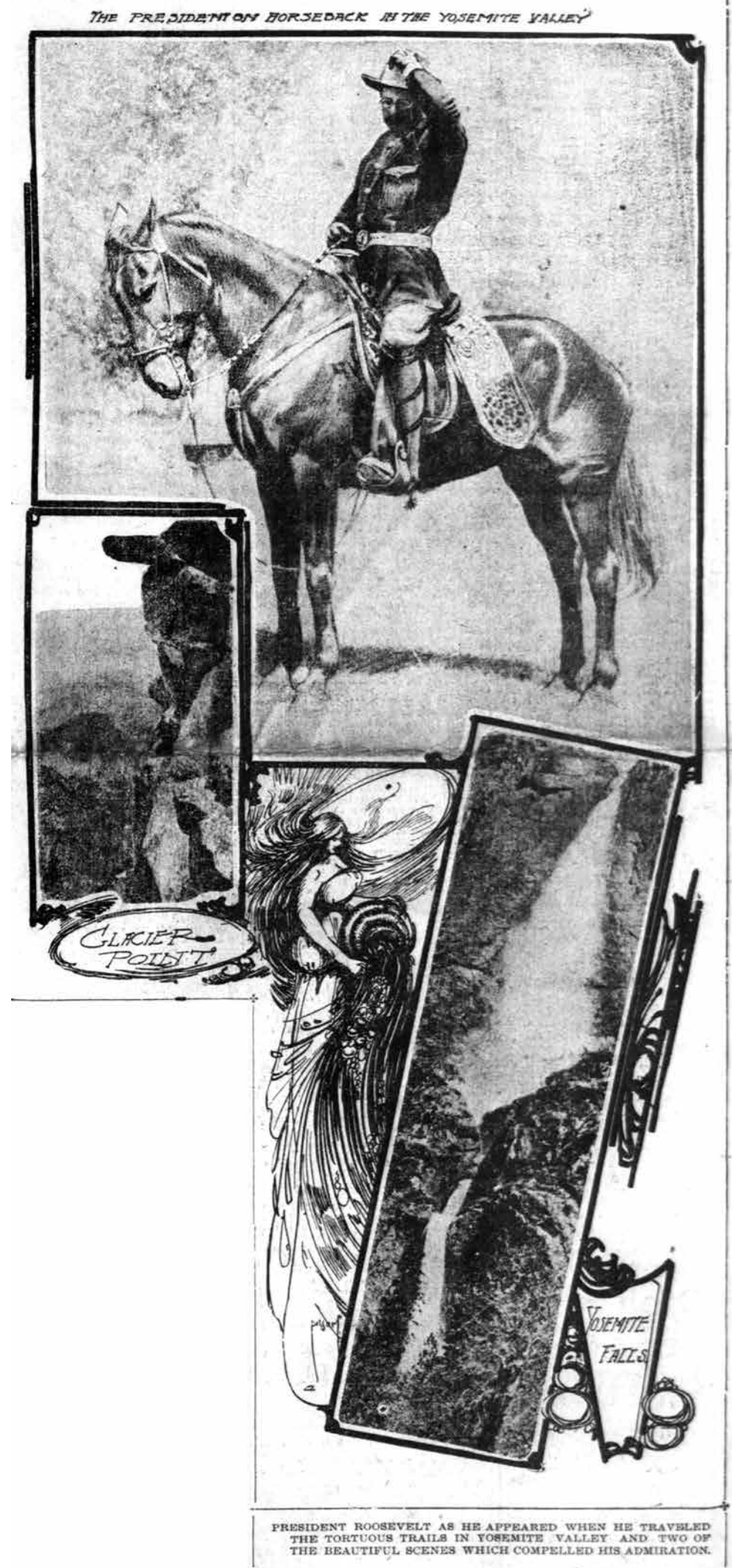
*Roosevelt Reaches Floor of Yosemite
Refreshed and Delighted*

YOSEMITE, May 17.—President Roosevelt, John Muir and Rangers Leidig and Leonard, are encamped in the Bridal Veil meadows tonight. Near the banks of the Merced, in a grove of pines and firs, almost within the spray of the beautiful Bridal Veil Falls, the Chief Executive is resting after one of the most memorable day trips of his life... A wheelman... came down from Camp Curry and reported that the President was coming down the regular road. ... As the president recrossed the bridge three cheers were given him. Then he passed under the arch and rode, unaccompanied by any one, down the street of Yosemite village. A small boy said, "Hello Teddy!" The President stopped his horse and a frown darkened his face. He rode up to the boy, the dignity of the President gone and in its place the face and severity of the father and parent. He gave that youngster a short lecture on manners that he will never forget.

See it online at

chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1903-05-18/ed-1/seq-1

The letter and news excerpt have been re-typed for clarity.



Middle Level Learning

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