



THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

## 1833 Factory Act

Did it solve the problems of children in factories?

Key Stage 1-3 | Empire and Industry 1750-1850

Lesson pack

# 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 nine years of age
- employers must have an age certificate for their child workers
- children of 9-13 years to work no more than nine 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 the mistreatment of children stopped overnight. Use the original sources in this lesson to investigate how far the 1833 Factory Act solved the problems of child labour.

## Suitable for:

KS 1 - 3

## Time period:

Empire and Industry  
1750-1850

## Connections to the Curriculum:

### Key stage 1:

Events beyond living memory that are significant nationally

### Key stage 2:

Changes in an aspect of social history; a significant turning point in British history

### Key stage 3:

Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901: Britain as the first industrial nation – the impact on society

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## Teacher's Notes

This lesson has a video starter activity based on one of our documents to 'hook' students into the lesson tasks that follow.

The first lesson source is an extract from the Factory Inspector's Report for 1836, three years after the passage of the earlier Factory Act. The second source is a report from 1867. Students can use both to assess the effectiveness of the 1833 Act. Students go onto consider two further visual sources. It is important to evaluate these in terms of their dates and the content they portray. The photograph from 1903 is an interesting piece of evidence. What does it reveal about working conditions and safety in the factory? The image referred to at the top of the lesson of a 'doubling' room in 1851, only shows female workers. Why was this the case? Note, doubling meant the yarn was 'doubled' after spinning to increase its thickness. The drawing is an artist's impression, how realistic is the scene? As a whole, students should be encouraged to think about the reliability of this evidence for assessing the success of such factory legislation. What other sources could help us understand how effective it was? Finally discuss with students what other industries were associated with child labour in the Victorian period?

All documents are provided with transcripts. Students can work through the questions individually or in pairs and report back to the class.

## Sources

Illustration: Women working in the doubling-room at Dean Mills cotton-mill (between Bolton & Manchester, Lancashire, Illustrated London News, 25 October 1851, p524. Catalogue ref: ZPER 34/19

History Hook Source: C 106/44

Source 1: Extract from a Factory Inspectors report – *British Parliamentary Papers* (1836) p.353

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

Source 3: COPY 1/501

## 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.

## Background

Date	Industry	Details of law
1833	Textiles	No child workers under nine 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 ten hours a day
1867	All Industries	Previous rules applied to workhouses if more than five workers employed
1901	All Industries	Minimum age raised to 12 years

# Tasks

## History Hook - Starter Activity

[Watch History Hook Starter Activity video on Youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDAwRL5x5BE)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDAwRL5x5BE>

Source 1: This is an extract from a Factory Inspectors Report (1836).

- Who gave the evidence to the factory inspector?
- Work out how many hours (not including breaks), the boys are reported to have worked without stopping
- Which parts of the new Factory Act have been broken?
- What does the tone of the letter tell us about what the factory inspectors thought about the firm Taylor, Ibbotson & Co?
- 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

Source 2: This is a piece of a document detailing which companies broke the law.

- What is the most common offence recorded?
- Work out how much is fined for the different offences
- By looking at the fines, which offence is regarded as the most serious?
- How effective was the 1833 Factory Act? Explain your answer. (Hint: is the number of convictions a good or bad sign?)

Source 3: This is a photograph of workers in a factory in 1903.

- What kind of factory is the boy working in?
- How old do you think he is?
- Write a list of all the dangers you can see in the factory and what you think could be done to improve them
- 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

## Tasks

- 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.

**Source 1: Extract from a Factory Inspectors report**Catalogue Ref: *British Parliamentary Papers* (1836) p. 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.

## Transcript: Source 1

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 2: List of prosecutions.

Catalogue Ref: Reports of Inspectors of Factories (1863) p. 3390

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Reports of Inspectors of Factories.

[31st Oct.

## 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. Sept. 20	Mr. J. Jones, Courtgwillym, near Bridgend, Glamor- ganshire.	Richard Franklin and Charles Knight, Esqrs., and Captain Quin; Town Hall, Bridgend.	<i>Informations laid by Mr. Butler.</i> 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.
"	John Jones, Forest Factory, near Newbridge, Gla- morganshire.	William Perkins, Esq., and the Rev. Evan Mor- gan; Newbridge, Gla- morganshire.	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.
"	William Llewellyn, Lamb and Flag Factory, Glyn- neath, near Neath.	Howel Gwyn and Grif- fith 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, Mynyddis- wyn, near Blackwood, Monmouthshire.	Frederick Lovick, Esq. and the Rev. Edward Leigh; Tredegar, Mon- mouthshire.	Employing four young persons after 2 p.m. on Saturday.	1 0 0	2 15 0	Three cases withdrawn on payment of costs.
"	Samuel E. Harris, Glyn Gwenffrd, near Aber- gavenny, Monmouth- shire.	The Honourable W. P. Rodney, Rev. James Furquhar, W. W. Man- ning, 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 pay- ment of costs.
July 21	William Kirk, Burnley	Thomas Horder, Whit- taker and John Heells, Esqrs.; Burnley.	<i>Information laid by Mr. May.</i> Employing two young persons without surgical certificates.	3 0 0	1 0 0	One summons with- drawn on payment of costs, in consi- deration of the state of trade.

## Transcript: Source 2

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 Sept 20	Mary Jones, Courtgwilym, near Bridgend, Glamorganshire	Richard Franklyn and Charles Knight, Esqrs., and Captain Quin; Town Hall, Bridgend.	Informations laid by Mr.Buller.  Employing three young persons after 6p.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 6p.m.	1 0 0	1 10 3	Three cases withdrawn on payment of costs.
" 26	William Llewellyn, Lamb and Flag Factory, Glynneath near Neath.	Ilowel Gwyn and Griffith Llewellyn, Esqrs.; Town Hall, Neath	Employing three young persons and two children after 6p.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 Gwenffrwd, near Abergavenny, Monmouthshire.	The Honourable W.P.Rodney, Rev. James Farquhar, W.W.Manning and Thomas Davis, Esqrs. ; Town Hall, Abergavenny	Employing two young persons and two children after 2p.m. on Saturday	---	1 14 0	Withdrawn on payment of costs
July 21	William Kirk, Burnley.	Thomas Hordern Whittaker and John Neels Esqrs.;	Employing two young persons without surgical certificates	3 0 0	1 0 0	One summons withdrawn on payment of costs, in consideration of the state of trade

**Source 3: Photograph of workers in a factory, 1903.**

Catalogue Ref: COPY 1/501



## Transcript: Source 3

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.

## External links

### [New Lanark](#)<sup>1</sup>

Site with photographs and information about Robert Owen's Mill.

### [Ramsden Wood Mills](#)<sup>2</sup>

This website provides more information about the family that build Ramsden Mill, the source for the History Hook video.

### [UK Parliament: The 1833 Factory Act](#)<sup>3</sup>

An overview of the 1833 factory act & 10 hours Movement.

<sup>1</sup> [www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/lanark/newlanark/index.html](http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/lanark/newlanark/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> [sites.rootsweb.com/~todmordenandwalsden/ramsdenwoodmills.htm](http://sites.rootsweb.com/~todmordenandwalsden/ramsdenwoodmills.htm)

<sup>3</sup> [www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/factoryact/](http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/factoryact/)



## Why do our hyperlinks come with footnotes?

Our resources are designed to be printed and used in classrooms, which means hyperlinks aren't always accessible digitally. We include the full link at the bottom of the page so that you can type in the address without distracting from the main text of the lesson materials.

## Did you know?

The National Archives Education Service also offers free workshops onsite in Kew and online in your classroom.

Our [Onsite Workshops](#) are available for free here at The National Archives and allow students to experience genuine original documents reflecting over 1000 years of history. From Elizabeth I's signature to the telegrams of the sinking Titanic, students love the wow-factor of being able to see real history on the desk in front of them.

Our [Online Workshops](#) allow our Education Officers to teach through your projector, leading discussions and guiding students through activities based around original documents. All you need is a computer with a projector, webcam and microphone. We'll arrange a test call before your session to check the tech is working.

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