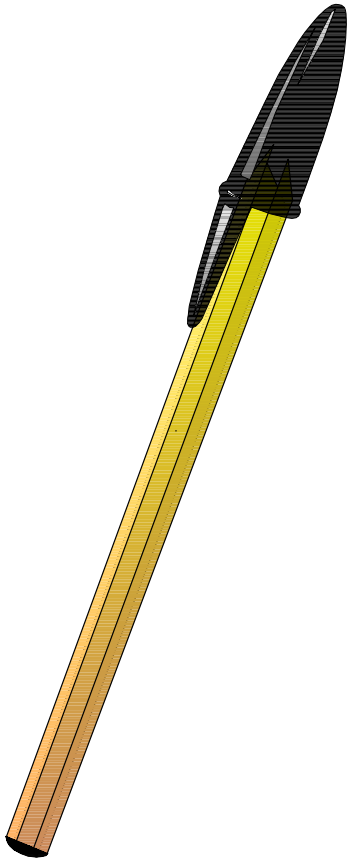

Workplace Health and Safety



ENGLISH UNIT

TEACHER'S INTRODUCTION

Why discuss workplace health and safety in an English class?

Many teens hold jobs while attending school, and nearly all will work eventually. The skills taught in the English Arts framework—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—are crucial for students' success in the workplaces of today and tomorrow.

At the same time, students need basic health and safety awareness so they can protect themselves on the job. Such knowledge can even mean the difference between life and death.

This curriculum helps students develop and apply English skills as they learn about job health and safety. Students build analytical ability by evaluating their own work experiences as well as the experiences of parents, friends, and others.

Purpose and Teaching Methods

This unit teaches analysis of oral and written information, and preparation of oral and written reports in a variety of formats. For example, an oral history exercise focusing on job health and safety is included. This helps develop skills in planning, interviewing, analysis, synthesis, and writing. Readings are also provided which encourage students to reflect on the world of work as expressed through different authors' voices and perspectives.

The unit also presents basic health and safety concepts. It can be used at the beginning of an English course, or at any time thereafter. Each lesson builds on the knowledge and skills taught in the previous lessons, so it is important to present the entire unit in the sequence shown here.

In the first lesson, a video and several statistical overheads introduce students to the subject of workplace health and safety. These are followed in the second lesson by a realistic skit involving teens on the job and their attitudes toward personal safety and job safety. Students are asked to evaluate these attitudes and suggest their possible consequences. In later lessons, students are asked to consider how and why safety attitudes, laws, and working conditions can change. They also read stories about young people who have faced health and safety issues on the job (in both historical and modern times).

In other lessons, students learn about their legal rights and apply this knowledge to suggest solutions to various workplace problems.

Students' major homework assignment for the unit is the oral history interview of a parent or another adult who works. The theme of the interview will be the subject's experiences and attitudes concerning job health and safety. Part of Lesson Four and all of Lesson Five are devoted to preparing students to successfully complete this assignment, which will be due the following week.

These activities particularly support Chapter 3 (Effective Instruction in English-Language Arts) in the *English-Language Arts Curriculum Framework for California Public Schools* (1990). The activities reinforce core skills in listening, speaking, interviewing, reading, writing, and critical thinking.

The unit is appropriate for sophomore and junior English classes.

Contents and Time

This unit takes approximately six hours to complete. It consists of six lessons, each designed to be presented during one 50-minute class session:

- ✓ **1.** Danger on the Job!
- ✓ **2.** Attitudes and Their Consequences
- ✓ **3.** Teen Workers' Rights
- ✓ **4.** Taking Action
- ✓ **5.** Preparing Oral Histories
- ✓ **6.** Presenting Oral Histories

Students will probably need from several days to an entire week to do the oral history project. They will need to prepare and conduct their oral history, and write the final oral history report. Therefore, it is preferable for the oral history presentations (Lesson 6) to begin the following week. Lesson 6 may take more than one class period, depending upon the number of presentations.

Objectives—English Skills

Students will be able to:

- Analyze and discuss workplace health and safety issues based on information from skits, factsheets, and first-hand accounts.
- Form opinions and defend them, orally and in writing.
- Establish and explain cause and effect relationships.
- Conduct oral history interviews and present results in their choice of formats.

Objectives—Workplace Health and Safety

Students will be able to:

- Identify workplace health and safety problems, both historical and contemporary.

- Describe factors that can lead to change in working conditions.
- Explain teen workers' rights—health and safety, work hours, and working conditions.

Materials for the Teacher

The following materials are supplied for the teacher:

- **Lesson Plan** and **Detailed Teacher's Instructions** for each class session (Lessons 1–6).
- **Overheads** to show the class. (Masters are at the end of the unit, following Lesson 6.)
 - Overhead #1—*Where Do U.S. Teens Work?*
 - Overhead #2—*Thousands of Teens Are Injured on the Job*
 - Overhead #3—*Where Are Teens Injured?*
 - Overhead #4—*How Are Teens Injured?*

Materials for Students

To present this unit, the teacher will need the following materials to distribute to students:

- **Handouts.** Make one copy of each handout for each student. (Masters are at the end of the unit, following Lesson 6.)
 - Handout #1—*Danger at the Meat Slicer!*
 - Handout #2—*Think Positive / Think Negative*
 - Handout #3—*Are You a Working Teen?*
 - Handout #4—*Check Your Understanding*
 - Handout #5—*Teen Worker Scenarios*
 - Handout #6—*On the Job—Yesterday and Today*
 - Handout #7—*Your Oral History Project*

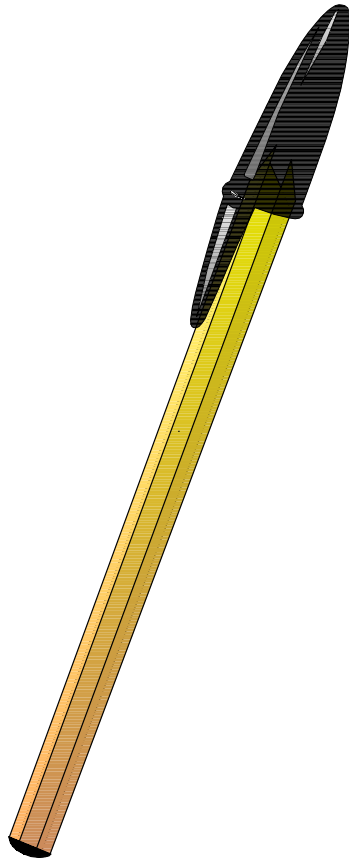
- Handout #8—*The Oral History Interview*
- Handout #9—*Writing Your Oral History Report*
- Handout #10—*Example of an Oral History Written Report*

Teacher Preparation

- Read all six lessons and decide how to adapt them to meet the needs of your class.
- Read the “General Unit” curriculum in this binder for additional introductory health and safety activities that you may want to use.
- Obtain an overhead projector to show the transparencies that are included with this unit.
- Obtain a VCR to show the video that is included with this curriculum. (This 12-minute video, *Your Work—Keepin’ It Safe*, was produced by UCLA’s Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program.)
- Make enough copies of all Student Handouts (see section above).

Tips From Teachers Who Have Used This Unit

- “The Oral History Report was my major writing assignment for this marking period. I would advise devoting a lot of attention to the project and have periodic ‘check-ins’ to make sure students are on track.”
- “I had students do most of the homework assignments in class and extended the time frame to two weeks.”
- “I included Gary Soto’s short story ‘Father’ as an additional class activity. Students had to write a one-paragraph news article about the father’s death (the kind of story that would be ‘buried’ in the back pages of a newspaper). Then I had them write a letter to the editor from the child who told the story in ‘Father.’”



1

LESSON ONE

Danger on the Job!



Lesson Plan One

Activity	Grouping	Time	Materials
A. Video. Students watch a video, <i>Your Work—Keepin' It Safe</i> , and discuss the issues it raises.	Class	30 minutes	● Video and VCR.
B. Health and safety issues for working teens. Teacher presents national statistics on teen workers and job injuries.	Class	20 minutes	● Overheads #1–4.

Total Class Time: 50 minutes

DETAILED TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Video.

(30 minutes)

First, as a “warm-up” discussion, ask the class:

- How many of you have jobs?
- Do you think your job is dangerous?

Let the class spend a few minutes talking about their answers.

Next, as an introduction to the theme of job health and safety, show the video *Your Work—Keepin' It Safe*. (This 12-minute video is included with this curriculum. See page 7 of the **Introduction** at the beginning of the curriculum for more information.)

After the video, hold a brief class discussion of the issues it raises. Ask the class what hazards these teens face on their jobs.

If you are unable to show the video, see the General Unit curriculum for other activities you might use.

Explain to students that this curriculum will focus on workplace health and safety and teen workers' rights.

B. Health and safety issues for working teens.

(20 minutes)

Use the first four overheads to present key statistical information on where teens work and what kinds of injuries occur. (Overhead masters are provided at the end of this unit, following Lesson 6.)

After showing each overhead, ask the class the related discussion question. (See section below.) The questions are designed to help students compare the national statistics given in the overheads to their own experiences.

- Overhead # 1, *Where Do U.S. Teens Work?*

Question: How many students in this class work in a restaurant? grocery store? office? with children? (Calculate the percentage of the class working in various occupations, and write the results on the board. Then compare the class figures to the national statistics in Overhead #1.)

- Overhead #2, *Thousands of Teens Are Injured on the Job*

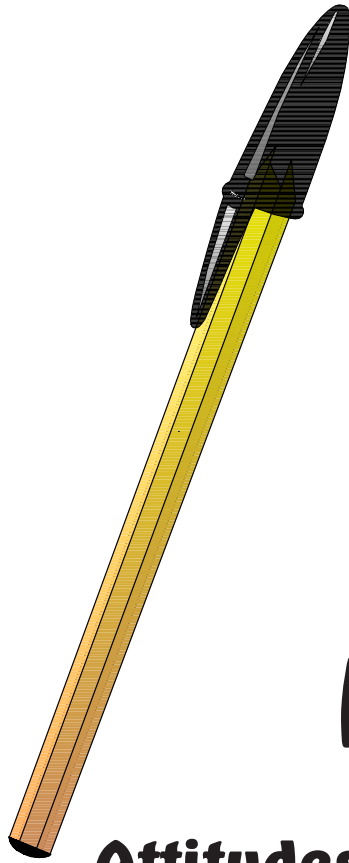
Question: How many students in the class have *ever* been injured on *any* job? (Calculate the percentage of the class who have been injured on the job, and write the results on the board. If there is time, you may also want to break down the total by age and gender. Then, in a general way, compare these class figures to the national statistics in Overhead #2.)

- Overhead #3, *Where Are Teens Injured?*

Question: If you have ever been injured at work, on what kind of job did your injury happen? (Write students' responses on the board, and compare them to the national statistics in Overhead #3.)

- Overhead #4, *How Are Teens Injured?*

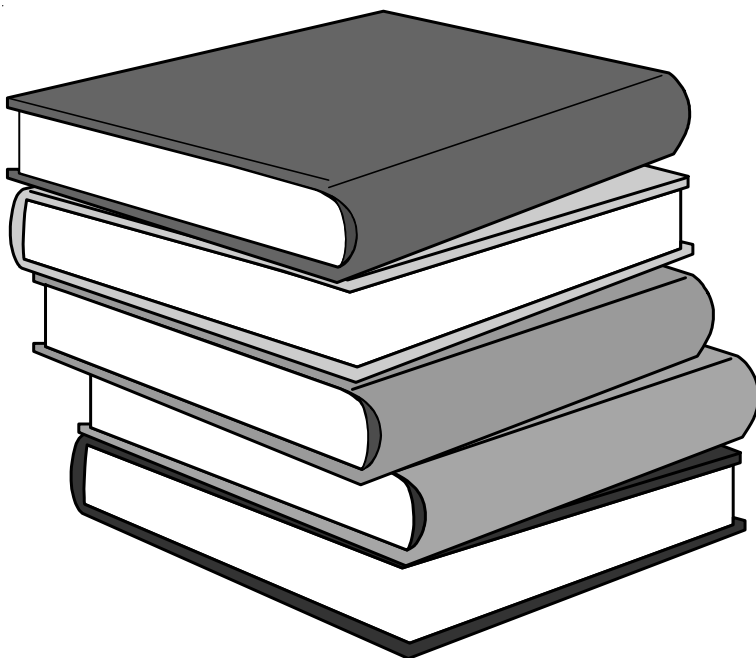
Questions: The overhead shows that a lot of teens get injured on the job when they work late at night, or work alone. How many students in this class work after 10pm on school nights? How many work alone? (Mention that later in this unit, the class will learn about laws that limit the hours teens can work.)



2

LESSON TWO

Attitudes and Their Consequences



Lesson Plan Two

Activity	Grouping	Time	Materials
<p>A. Skit—Teens and safety.</p> <p>Students enact a skit. Each student takes a position on the issues presented, and writes one paragraph to defend this view. Entire class discusses these written statements.</p>	<p>Class & individual</p>	<p>25 minutes</p>	<p>● Handout #1.</p>
<p>B. Attitudes and their consequences.</p> <p>Students classify various attitudes toward safety as “positive” or “negative” thinking. They then choose one “negative” attitude and write a short rebuttal opinion.</p>	<p>Individual & class</p>	<p>20 minutes</p>	<p>● Handout #2.</p>
<p>C. Homework.</p> <p>Students read the factsheet, <i>Are You a Working Teen?</i> and answer a set of questions</p>	<p>Individual</p>	<p>5 minutes <i>(for explanation)</i></p>	<p>● Handouts #3–4.</p>

Total Class Time: 50 minutes

DETAILED TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Skit–Teens and safety.

(25 minutes)

At the beginning of the class, pass out *Danger at the Meat Slicer!* (Handout #1). Ask for three volunteers to play the roles of Mario, Gloria, and Tasha. Have the volunteers come to the front of the class and read their parts.

Next, ask the class to consider the two possible endings for the story (“What Should Mario Do?”). Ask students to choose which action they would take if they were Mario. Each student should write one paragraph defending his or her choice.

After a few minutes, ask several volunteers to read their paragraphs. Try to solicit responses from both sides of the issue. Have the whole class discuss the responses that are read. Remind everyone to express different opinions respectfully, so people will feel free to be honest about their views.

As facilitator, the teacher should ensure that a range of health and safety issues emerge from the discussion. Try to include questions such as:

- Are job injuries usually the worker’s fault?
- If you report an injury, can your boss fire you?
- If you decide to report an unsafe condition to your boss, what should you say?
- If you don’t report an unsafe condition and someone else gets hurt, how will you feel?
- Is it silly to worry about safety?

B. Attitudes and their consequences.

(20 minutes)

Pass out *Think Positive / Think Negative* (Handout #2). Give students ten minutes, working individually, to complete the exercise. They should classify each of the health and safety attitudes as either “positive” or “negative” thinking:

- **Positive** thinking encourages constructive action, and can lead to safer working conditions.
- **Negative** thinking discourages action and won't lead to change.

(If you wish, have students work together in groups of two or three on this exercise.)

After 5 minutes, begin a class discussion of students' answers. Read each statement on the handout aloud. Ask whether it represents "positive" or "negative" thinking, and why. When students classify an attitude as "negative," ask whether they have ever encountered this attitude. Have they ever felt this way? Have their friends?

Then have each student choose one attitude from Handout #2 that represents "negative" thinking, and write a short rebuttal (one to two paragraphs) in class. The rebuttal should attempt to convince other people to change their way of thinking.

When people have finished, ask for several volunteers to read aloud the rebuttal opinions they wrote. Volunteers should explain which attitude (from Handout #2) they chose, and then read their opinions. Finally, students should turn in their written rebuttals to the teacher.

C. Homework.

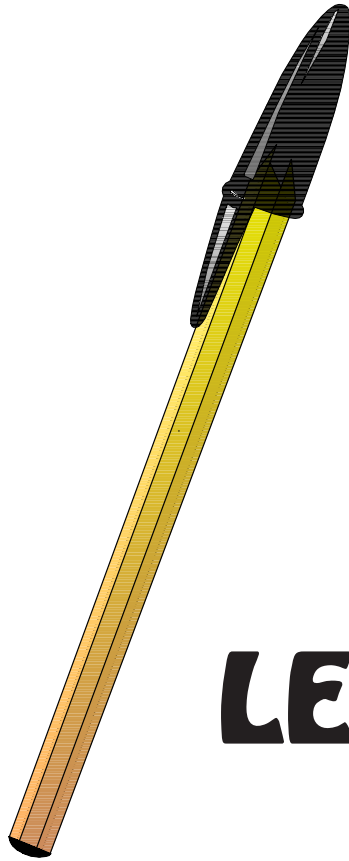
(5 minutes for explanation)

At the end of the class, pass out the four-page factsheet *Are You a Working Teen?* (Handout #3). Also pass out *Check Your Understanding—Questions on the Factsheet* (Handout #4).

Explain that the homework assignment is to read the factsheet and answer the questions. (All the answers can be found in the factsheet.)

Also explain that students should keep the factsheet; it supplies background information they can use later. Remind them to bring Handouts #3 and #4 back to the next class.

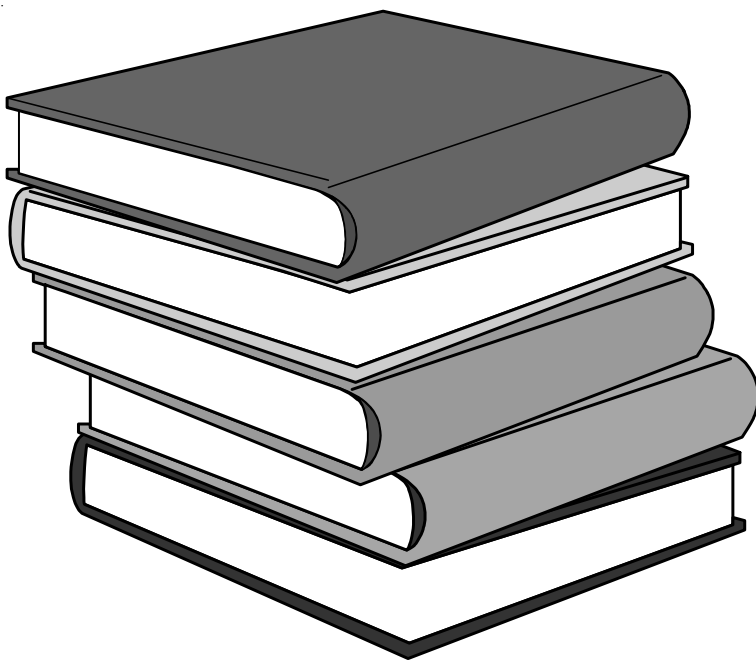
This homework assignment should take no more than 30 minutes.



3

LESSON THREE

Teen Workers' Rights



Lesson Plan Three

Activity	Grouping	Time	Materials
<p>A. “Check Your Understanding” game.</p> <p>Students play a game based on the factsheet, <i>Are You a Working Teen?</i></p>	<p>Small groups & class</p>	<p>20 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handouts #3–4. <i>(Copies used for homework.)</i>
<p>B. Teen worker scenarios.</p> <p>Students read short scenarios that present typical problems teens may face on the job. Small groups try to solve the problems based on legal and other information in the factsheet, <i>Are You a Working Teen?</i></p>	<p>Small groups</p>	<p>25 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handout #3. <i>(Copy used for homework.)</i> ● Handout #5.
<p>C. Homework.</p> <p>Teacher explains reading assignment in the handout, <i>On the Job—Yesterday and Today.</i></p>	<p>Individual</p>	<p>5 minutes <i>(for explanation)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handout #6.

Total Class Time: 50 minutes

DETAILED TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. 'Check Your Understanding' game.

(20 minutes)

Make sure each person has brought copies of the two handouts used for homework—*Are You a Working Teen?* (Handout #3) and *Check Your Understanding* (Handout #4). Ask students what information was new to them, or surprised them.

Now have the class play a game to review their homework. Divide the class into several teams, with 4 or 5 students per team. Pose the first question from Handout #4 to one team and give them 15 seconds to come up with an answer. Their team gets 10 points if they give the correct answer. If they don't answer correctly, any other team can volunteer an answer, and gets 10 points if it is correct. You may want to discuss the answer briefly.

Continue in the same way with the remaining questions. Rotate questions among the teams so they all have a chance. At the end of the game, the team with the most points wins. You can decide what the prize will be.

The section below provides the correct answers as well as some background information on each question. You may want to introduce some of the background information during the discussion.

✓ Check Your Understanding—Teacher's Discussion Guide

1. Who is responsible for keeping the workplace safe and healthy?

Your employer is ultimately responsible for maintaining a safe and healthful work environment. But you also have a responsibility—you should follow all safety rules and instructions, use safety equipment provided by your employer, and keep work areas clean and neat.

2. Are teens allowed to drive a motor vehicle on the job?

For most occupations, California law says that you must be at least 18 years old to drive a motor vehicle on the job. (Teens working in agriculture are allowed to begin driving at age 16.)

3. Who pays for your medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job?

Every California employer must carry workers' compensation insurance. This covers medical care if you get hurt or sick on the job (even if it's your own fault). In many cases, you are also entitled to payments that make up for wages you lost because of the injury. Because you can get these workers' compensation benefits, you usually are not allowed to sue your employer for a job injury.

4. Can 16 year olds work on ladders or scaffolds?

In California, you can work in some types of construction beginning at age 16. This includes working on a ladder or scaffold. For more dangerous construction work, like roofing or demolition, you must be 18.

5. Are teens allowed to work with restaurant equipment like slicers or bakery machines?

In California, you must be at least 18 years old to work with any power machinery like a slicer or bakery machine.

6. Who is responsible for *supplying* safety equipment and protective clothing?

Your employer is required to provide any safety equipment you need. Your employer must also give you any necessary protective clothing (like gloves, aprons, or ear plugs). Your employer must train you in how to use this equipment.

7. Who is responsible for *using* safety equipment and protective clothing?

It is your responsibility to use the safety equipment and protective clothing you are given, as instructed by your employer.

8. If you are over 18 years old but still in high school, do you need a work permit?

No. In California, only students under 18 need to get a work permit before taking a job.

9. If you graduated from high school but are still under 18, do you need a work permit?

No. Only *students* under 18 need a work permit.

10. If you are 15 years old, how late in the evening can you work during the school year?

California teens who are 14 or 15 are not allowed to work after 7pm during the school year.

11. What are four things you can do if you need help with a problem at work?

- Talk to a supervisor about the problem.
- Talk to a parent or teacher.
- Talk to co-workers or friends.
- Call the appropriate government agency.

12. Who can you call to complain about a health and safety problem at work?

Cal/OSHA is the California government agency responsible for health and safety in the workplace. There are Cal/OSHA offices throughout the state. Your local office is listed in the “State Government” pages of the phone book under “Industrial Relations Dept., Occupational Safety and Health.” (You may want to bring a phone book to class and show students how to find the listing.)

13. Can you be fired for reporting a health and safety problem at work?

No—it’s against the law. Still, some employers may *try* to fire you for this reason. In this case, you can file a complaint with the California Labor Commissioner, and you may be able to get your job back. (You may also get back pay.) See the “State Government” pages of the phone book under “Labor Commissioner.”

14. Can your employer pay you less than the minimum wage?

If you’re under 18, your employer can sometimes pay you less than minimum wage for the first 90 days of employment. After the 90 days, you must get at least the minimum wage.

15. Who can you call if your employer doesn't pay you the minimum wage or makes you work too many hours?

The California Labor Commissioner is responsible for wage and hour laws. See the "State Government" pages of the phone book under "Labor Commissioner." The California minimum wage is \$5.75 an hour as of March, 1998.

16. Who should you call if you are a victim of sexual harassment or discrimination on the job?

Call the California Fair Employment and Housing Department. See the "State Government" pages of the phone book under "Fair Employment and Housing Department."

B. Teen worker scenarios.

(25 minutes)

Pass out *Teen Worker Scenarios* (Handout #5). The handout presents four realistic scenarios about teen safety on the job. Each scenario is followed by a set of questions for students to answer. Answering the questions will require information on legal rights and other issues from the factsheet, *Are You a Working Teen?* (Handout #3.) Make sure students still have their copies of the factsheet.

Divide the class into several groups, with 4 to 6 students per group. Before breaking up, assign one of the four scenarios to each group. (If necessary, it's all right to give the same scenario to more than one group.)

Explain that, in each group, someone should read the group's assigned scenario aloud. Then the group should try to answer the set of questions, using both the factsheet and their own knowledge. Ask each group to choose someone as a recorder. This person will take notes on their answers.

Give the groups 10 minutes to work. Then bring the class back together. Ask the recorder from each group, in turn, to read the group's assigned scenario and questions to the class. Then the recorder should present the group's answers. If time permits, encourage the entire class to discuss the answers.

As an alternative to the small group approach, you may choose one or two of the scenarios to study as a class. Ask for a volunteer to read a scenario to the class, and have the whole class discuss and answer the questions.

The section below provides answers for the teacher and some background information on each question.

✓ Teen Scenarios—Teacher’s Discussion Guide

Scenario #1

Billy A.

Billy A. is a 15-year-old restaurant worker. One day, while flipping hamburgers on the grill, he slipped on grease which had splattered on the floor. He tried to grab a bar next to the grill to catch his fall, but missed it and put his hand on the grill instead. His right hand was badly burned.

A few days before, Billy’s boss had told the crew he would never pay for medical treatment if anyone hurt themselves. He said that most injuries happen because workers are careless.

Questions and Answers

1. List four things Billy should do right after he is injured.

- Immediately inform his supervisor about the accident.
- Get emergency medical treatment (call 911 if necessary).
- File a workers’ compensation claim.
- Later, discuss the whole situation with the boss and with a responsible adult like a parent or teacher. Try to figure out how the injury could have been prevented. Make sure Billy and his boss both understand their legal rights and responsibilities.

2. Were any laws broken?

Yes. You have to be at least 16 years old to work at a grill in a restaurant. Also, by law, the employer **must** pay for medical treatment for any workplace injury.

3. Could Billy sue the employer for this job injury?

Workers usually **do not** have the right to sue an employer because of a job injury. Unless the employer was extremely negligent, workplace injuries are handled by the workers' compensation system.

4. Could Billy get workers' compensation?

Billy should be able to get workers' compensation (despite what his boss said). Under the workers' compensation system, Billy's employer (or employer's insurance company) is responsible for medical expenses related to the injury, and for lost wages if Billy has to miss time from work.

5. How could Billy's injury have been prevented?

- Someone should have cleaned up the greasy floor as soon as possible. Cal/OSHA rules say that the employer is responsible for keeping the workplace safe.
- The employer should have given the workers safety training, and posted safety procedures in the workplace.

Scenario #2

Michael B.

Michael B. is 16 years old and works in a sheet metal shop. One day, a machine he uses was not working properly. He told his supervisor. The supervisor told Michael to remove a safety device so a mechanic could fix the machine. He said that Michael should keep working on the machine until the mechanic arrived.

Michael removed the safety device and kept working. After a few minutes, a lever on the machine released on its own. Michael tried to pull his hand out of the way, but the tip of his finger was caught and cut off.

A few days before, Michael's boss had told everyone in the shop to be careful, because he would fire anyone who had a job injury.

Questions and Answers

1. List four things Michael should do right after he is injured.

- Immediately inform his supervisor about the accident.
- Get emergency medical treatment (call 911 if necessary).
- File a workers' compensation claim.
- Later, discuss the whole situation with the boss and with a responsible adult like a parent or teacher. Try to figure out how the injury could have been prevented. Make sure Michael and his boss both understand their legal rights and responsibilities.

2. Were any laws broken?

Yes. You have to be at least 16 years old to work with powered machinery. Also, a machine should **never** be operated if safety devices are removed. Michael's employer could be prosecuted for "extreme and gross negligence" for allowing Michael to work on the machine at the age of 16 and for making him work with the safety device removed.

By law, workers cannot be fired for a job injury. In fact, the boss's threat to fire people is illegal.

3. Could Michael sue the employer for this job injury?

Workers usually **do not** have the right to sue an employer because of a job injury. Unless the employer was extremely negligent, workplace injuries are handled by the workers' compensation system. However, in this case, there is a possibility that the employer might be found negligent. (See answer to question #2.) So Michael might be able to sue for damages.

4. Could Michael get workers' compensation?

Michael should be able to get workers' compensation. All injured workers are eligible for workers' compensation, no matter who was at fault for their injury. Under workers' compensation, Michael's employer (or employer's insurance company) is responsible for medical expenses related to the injury, and for lost wages if Michael has to miss time from work.

If Michael can't do his usual job in the future because of the missing fingertip, he may also be entitled to workers' compensation **rehabilitation** benefits, including retraining for another job.

5. How could Michael's injury have been prevented?

The employer should never have allowed an underage worker to use this machine in the first place. **No one** should have used the machine after the safety device was removed. Safety training might also have helped.

Scenario #3

Tasha C.

Tasha C. is 14 years old. She works a few hours every day after school in a nursing home, for a total of 20 hours a week. She delivers trays of food to the residents, and gives them other assistance when they need it. Sometimes she works until 9pm to help the residents get ready for the night. Some of these patients are bedridden and need to be lifted.

When she gets home at night, Tasha is often too tired to do her homework. Lately she has had a lot of back pain.

Questions and Answers

1. What should Tasha do about her back pain?

Tasha probably hurt her back while lifting trays or patients. If so, this is a job injury. She should tell her supervisor and see a doctor. She should tell the doctor that the injury may be job-related. She may also want to file a workers' compensation claim.

Tasha should also discuss the whole situation with her supervisor and with a responsible adult like a parent or teacher. They should try to figure out how the injury could have been prevented.

2. Were any laws broken?

Yes. If you're under 16, you're not allowed to work after 7pm on a school night. You also cannot work more than 18 hours a week when school is in session.

One reason these laws exist is to allow young people time for homework and other school activities.

3. Could Tasha sue the employer for this job injury?

Workers usually **do not** have the right to sue an employer because of a job injury. Unless the employer was extremely negligent, workplace injuries are handled by the workers' compensation system.

4. Could Tasha get workers' compensation?

Tasha should be able to get workers' compensation. Under the workers' compensation system, Tasha's employer (or employer's insurance company) is responsible for medical expenses related to the injury, and for lost wages if Tasha has to miss time from work.

5. How could Tasha's injury have been prevented?

- Tasha should not work after 7pm on a school night, or over 18 hours a week when school is in session.
- Tasha's employer should have trained her in proper lifting techniques and general safety procedures.
- Tasha should not have been allowed to do heavy lifting (such as patients), or the employer should have assigned someone to help her when lifting.

Scenario #4

Molly D.

Molly D. is 16 years old and works in a supermarket. One evening she was asked to clean the meat slicer in the deli department. She had never used or cleaned it before, and had never been trained to do so. She was afraid of the slicer because once she had seen a co-worker cut his hand to the bone. Still, she did not complain, and did what she was told. She cleaned the slicer without any problems and didn't get injured.

Molly decided to clean the meat slicer without complaint because she didn't want any more trouble with her supervisor. For several weeks, he had been giving her a hard time. The

last time he reprimanded her, he turned to a male co-worker and said “Girls are only good for one thing.”

Questions and Answers

1. Were any laws broken?

Yes. You have to be at least 18 years old to use or clean any powered equipment like a meat slicer. Also, everyone has a right to work without racial or sexual harassment, and in this case Molly is being sexually harassed. Her supervisor’s comments are illegal.

2. What should Molly do about this situation?

Molly can legally refuse to clean the meat slicer. **No one** should be asked to clean dangerous equipment if they haven’t been trained. Most importantly, it is illegal for a 16-year-old to clean the machine. (See answer to question #1 above.) And Molly doesn’t have to prove herself. She shouldn’t give in to the pressure of sexual harassment.

Molly should report her supervisor’s remarks to someone higher in the store management. She should also discuss the situation with a responsible adult like a parent or teacher.

If the harassment doesn’t stop, Molly can file a complaint with the California Fair Employment and Housing Department or the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

3. If Molly refused to clean the meat slicer, could she be fired?

No. By law, an employer can’t fire a worker for refusing an illegal work assignment.

C. Homework.

(5 minutes for explanation)

Pass out *On the Job—Yesterday and Today* (Handout #6). The handout has seven stories about young workers and job safety. Some deal with young people working earlier in this century and others are about young people today. Each story is followed by a set of questions.

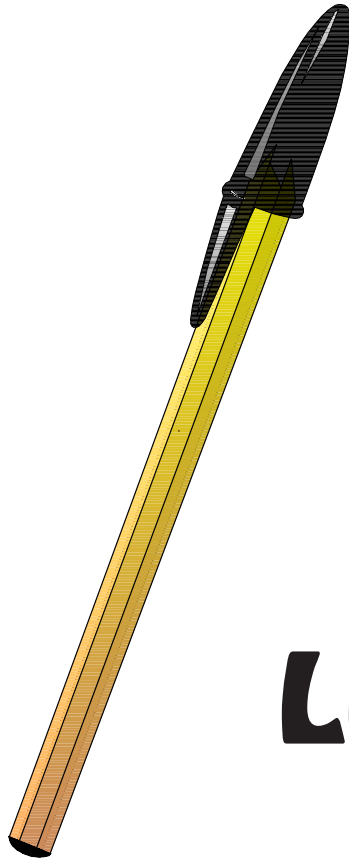
Explain that everyone should read all three stories as their homework. Each student should then choose **one** story that he or she finds particularly interesting and answer the three questions that follow it.

These are essay questions, but the answers may be fairly short. Tell students that to answer some of the questions, they will probably need to contribute facts and ideas from their own knowledge and experience. Suggest that if the answer to a question isn't clear from the story, they should explain in their response what isn't clear and what additional information they would like to have.

If reading all three stories does not seem practical for your class, you can choose one of the three.

This exercise encourages students to think about how and why working conditions change. Students should bring their answers to the next class, where these issues will be discussed in more depth.

Mention that the readings may give students ideas they can use for their oral history presentations later in the unit.



4

LESSON FOUR

Taking Action



Lesson Plan Four

Activity	Grouping	Time	Materials
<p>A. Homework review.</p> <p>Students discuss readings in the handout, <i>On the Job—Yesterday and Today</i>, and answer the questions provided about each story.</p>	Class	15 minutes	● Handout #6. (<i>Copies used for homework.</i>)
<p>B. Brainstorming.</p> <p>Based on the stories students read for homework, the class discusses what factors contribute to change in working conditions.</p>	Class	15 minutes	
<p>C. Oral history assignment.</p> <p>Teacher explains the concept of an oral history and presents an example. Students are given the major week-long homework assignment—an oral history of a parent or other working adult.</p>	Class	15 minutes	● Handout #7.
<p>D. Homework.</p> <p>Students prepare questions for their oral history interview.</p>	Individual	5 minutes (<i>for explanation</i>)	

Total Class Time: 50 minutes

DETAILED TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Homework review.

(15 minutes)

Make sure students have brought their copies of *On the Job—Yesterday and Today* (Handout #6). The homework assignment was to read all three stories and to answer the essay questions on any **one** story.

Go through the three stories in order. (If time is short, you may want to cover only one of them.)

If you wish, have someone read the first story and its questions aloud. Then ask another member of the class to try to answer the questions, and have the entire class discuss the answers. Students who chose this story for their written homework may have more to contribute to the discussion, but try to get everyone involved. Tell students they will probably need to contribute facts and ideas from their own knowledge and experience.

Proceed in the same way with the remaining stories.

As facilitator of the discussion, give special attention to the **second** question following each story. Focus on the health and safety hazards depicted. You may find it helpful to make a list on the chalkboard of the hazards students find in each story. (Make a separate list for each story.)

For example, your list for the first story, *The Triangle Fire*, might include:

- cloth scraps spread fire
- inadequate fire exits and fire escape
- no sprinklers
- doors opened inward
- locked doors
- overcrowding.

B. Brainstorming.

(15 minutes)

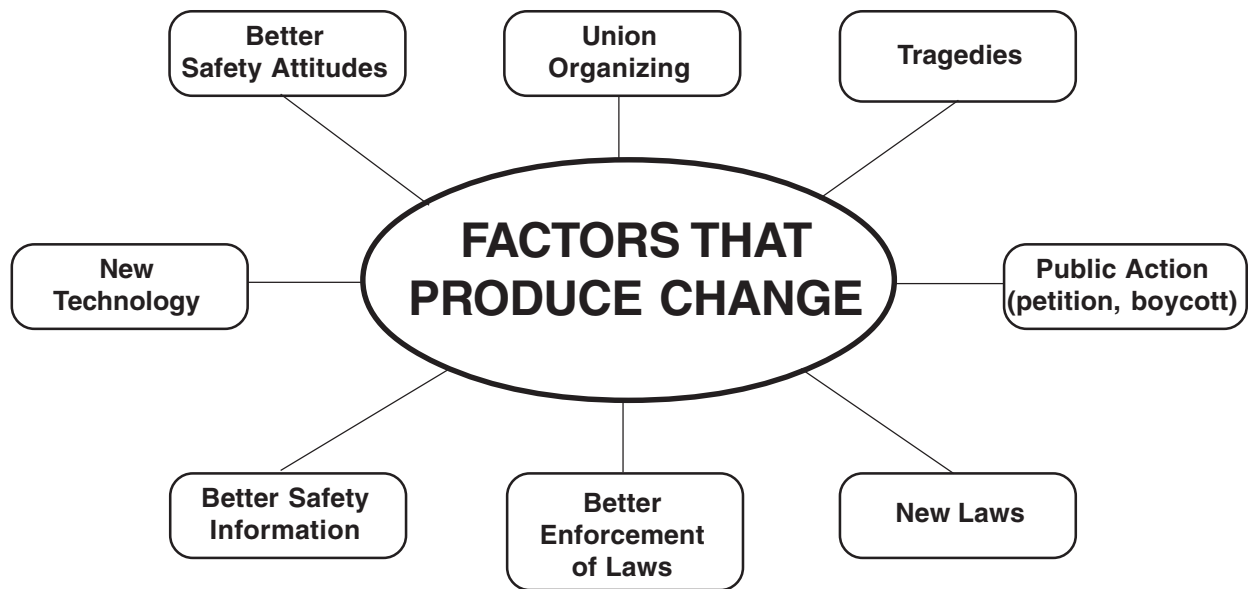
Explain that students will now look at the material from the homework assignment in a new way. The class will “brainstorm” a list of the factors that led to better working conditions in each story.

The class should draw on **all** the stories in Handout #6. Ask for people’s answers to the **third** question following each story. Make a list on the chalkboard of the points they mention—factors that led to change in each story, and what else might have been done. Your list may look like this:

✓ Factors That Can Produce Change

- tragedies
- public awareness of problems
- petition campaigns and boycotts
- government investigations
- new laws—child labor, safety, workers’ compensation
- better enforcement of laws
- penalties and fines
- union organizing
- better worker and employer attitudes toward safety
- better safety information
- different jobs and technology.

A visual diagram of your brainstorm might look like this:



After you have completed the brainstorm, ask students to turn in their written homework.

C. Oral history assignment.

(15 minutes)

Explain to the class that an oral history project will be a major part of this unit. Ask for volunteers to try to define what an oral history is. Then explain that an oral history collects information about past events, attitudes, and actions through personal stories.

Tell the class that each student will interview a parent or other working adult, focusing on workplace health and safety. This will be a two-week homework assignment. Each student will be required to write a **1–2 page report** summarizing the information from the interview. Interview notes should also be turned in with the final report. In addition, each student will give a **short oral presentation** not exceeding 5 minutes.

If students need additional help understanding the concept of an oral history, you may want to have the class read an example. Two of the stories in Handout #6, *Strawberry Fields* and *Pizza Delivery*, are oral history accounts. Although they were used earlier, you may want to have the class re-read one of these stories now with an oral history focus in mind.

If you have access to the Internet, you can find additional oral history examples and information by searching the World Wide Web under “oral history.”

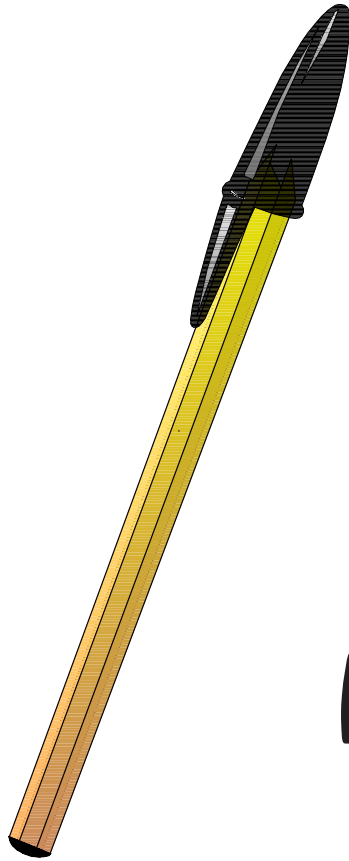
Distribute *Your Oral History Project* (Handout #7).

D. Homework.

(5 minutes for explanation)

Tonight’s homework is the first step in the oral history project. Each student should prepare questions to use in the oral history interview. Everyone should come up with one question in each of the areas below. (These categories are also listed in Handout #7.) Thus each student will write five questions.

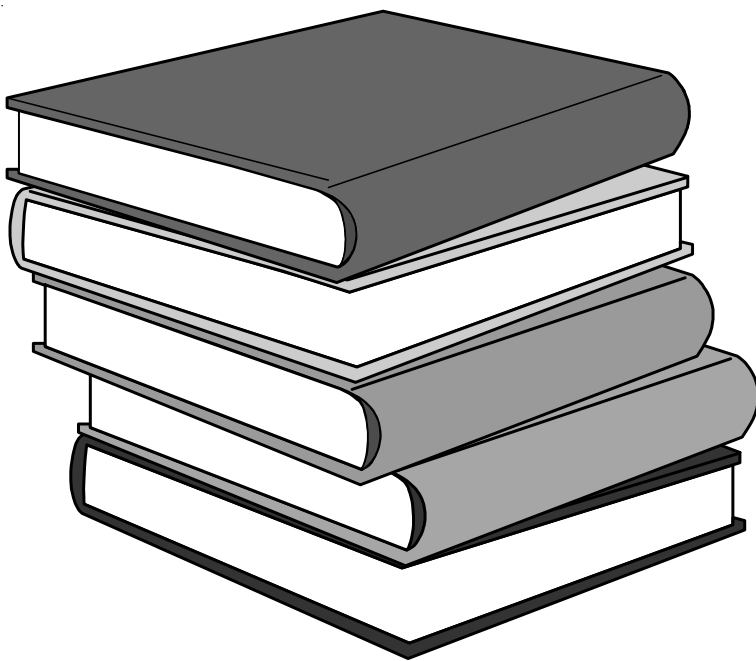
- **Work Experience.** It is important to know what kind of work the interview subject does and/or has done in the past. A description of the working conditions on the person’s job(s) will make the interview interesting.
- **Dangers on the Job.** Learn about any health and safety hazards, work injuries, and/or work-related illnesses that the interview subject has faced.
- **Health and Safety Attitudes.** Ask about the subject’s attitudes toward job health and safety, along with the attitudes of co-workers and supervisors.
- **Changes in Workplace Health and Safety.** Try to find out if the subject has seen any changes in working conditions or health and safety attitudes during his or her working life. It will be interesting to see if working conditions have improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same.
- **Opinions.** Ask the subject why he or she believes changes in workplace health and safety occurred, or why things stayed the same.



5

LESSON FIVE

Preparing Oral Histories



Lesson Plan Five

Activity	Grouping	Time	Materials
<p>A. Preparing for the oral history interview.</p> <p>Students read and discuss the oral history questions they prepared. Teacher presents guidelines for conducting the oral history interview.</p>	Class	25 minutes	● Handout #8.
<p>B. Writing the final report.</p> <p>Students learn how to organize and write their oral history reports.</p>	Class	20 minutes	● Handouts #9–10.
<p>C. Homework.</p> <p>Teacher assigns the oral history project and answers any questions.</p>	Individual	5 minutes <i>(for explanation)</i>	

Total Class Time: 50 minutes

DETAILED TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Preparing for the oral history interview.

(25 minutes)

Divide the chalkboard into five columns. Give the columns these headings: Work Experience, Dangers on the Job, Health and Safety Attitudes, Changes in Workplace Health and Safety, and Opinions. These headings correspond to the topic areas for the oral history interviews.

Work Experience	Dangers on the Job	Health and Safety Attitudes	Changes in Workplace Health and Safety	Opinions

Next, ask for several volunteers to read one question from the list they developed last night for homework. Write these questions on the board under the appropriate topic area. Make sure you get some questions from each topic area. If students come up with questions that are not relevant to workplace health and safety, suggest ways to alter the questions to make them relevant.

Following are examples of questions that should be included in each of the topic areas:

● **Work Experience**

Where do you work?

How long have you worked there?

What business is your company in?

What is your job?

● **Dangers on the Job**

What are some of the hazards on your job?

Have you or a co-worker ever been injured at work? If so, what happened?

- **Health and Safety Attitudes**

Do you think health and safety at work is important? Why or why not?

What are the health and safety attitudes of your co-workers and supervisors?

- **Changes in Workplace Health and Safety**

Is your job safer or less safe than it used to be? Why?

Has your company made any changes that make your job safer?

- **Opinions**

Why do you think health and safety improvements have or have not happened in your workplace?

Have students identify which questions on the board are open-ended questions and why. Remind them that open-ended questions get the person to tell a story instead of just giving a simple “yes” or “no” response. These questions will make the interview more interesting and provide more information for the final report. Most open-ended questions start with “Why,” “How,” “What,” “When,” or “Where.”

Have students copy the questions from the board. Encourage them to use some of these examples in addition to the questions they prepared themselves. However, remind them to make their interview questions specific to the person they are interviewing.

Finally, distribute *The Oral History Interview* (Handout #8). Go over the points on the handout with the class. Tell students to read over these guidelines again prior to their interview. The handout provides tips for making the interview successful. Answer any questions students may have about the handout.

B. Writing the final report.

(20 minutes)

First, distribute *Writing Your Oral History Report* (Handout #9). Using the handout, go over the basic elements of a written report (such as Title, Introduction, Body of Paper, and Conclusion).

Next, pass out *Example of an Oral History Written Report* (Handout #10). This is a sample of a written report of an oral history interview conducted by a student. Have the class read it. Lead a class discussion of the questions following the report on the handout. (Questions are reprinted below.) Then ask students to identify key elements of report writing, based on the example.

Questions

1. What information is included in the introduction? What other information would you include?
2. Put a check mark next to each main topic within the body of the paper. Did the author devote one paragraph to each topic? Look at the paragraphs. What is the main topic of each one?
3. What is the topic sentence of the second paragraph? Does the author provide details to support the topic sentence? List these.
4. How did the interview affect the author's attitudes and opinions about health and safety? In which paragraph is this information provided?
5. What is the title of this report? Write another title that would also fit this report.

C. Homework

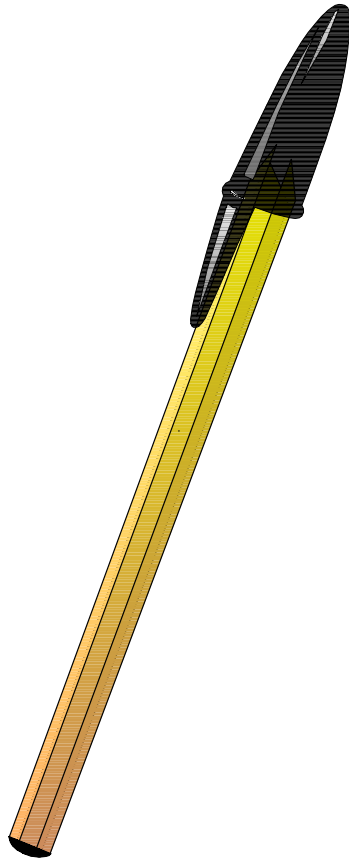
(5 minutes for explanation)

Each student will now conduct an oral history interview and write a report. Everyone should also prepare a short class presentation about his or her project.

Remind students that they will need to turn in their interview notes along with the written report.

Set a due date for the completion of this assignment. This will be the date of the next class in this unit (Lesson 6). It's best to schedule Lesson 6 for a week or more after students begin the assignment, to allow enough time. In Lesson 6, students will turn in their reports and interview notes. They will also give their class presentations.

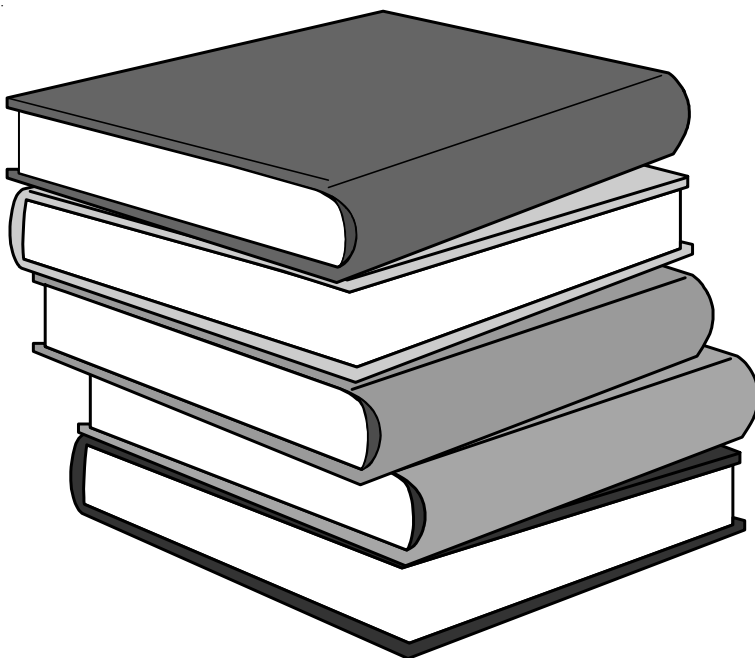
Answer any questions students have about the assignment.



6

LESSON SIX

Presenting Oral Histories



Lesson Plan Six

Activity	Grouping	Time	Materials
A. Presenting oral histories. Students give reports about their oral histories to the entire class.	Class	1–2 class periods	
B. Summing up. Students discuss their reactions to the project and ask any questions they have.	Class	10 minutes	

Total Class Time: Depends on the number of oral presentations.

DETAILED TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Presenting oral histories.

(1–2 class periods)

Have each student give a brief presentation summarizing his or her oral history project. No presentation should exceed five minutes.

If there is insufficient time for all students to give their presentations, it is preferable to devote an additional class period to those remaining. Most students will take pride in their work, and no one should be left out.

In addition to their oral presentations, students are required to turn in their written reports and interview notes. Collect these now.

B. Summing up.

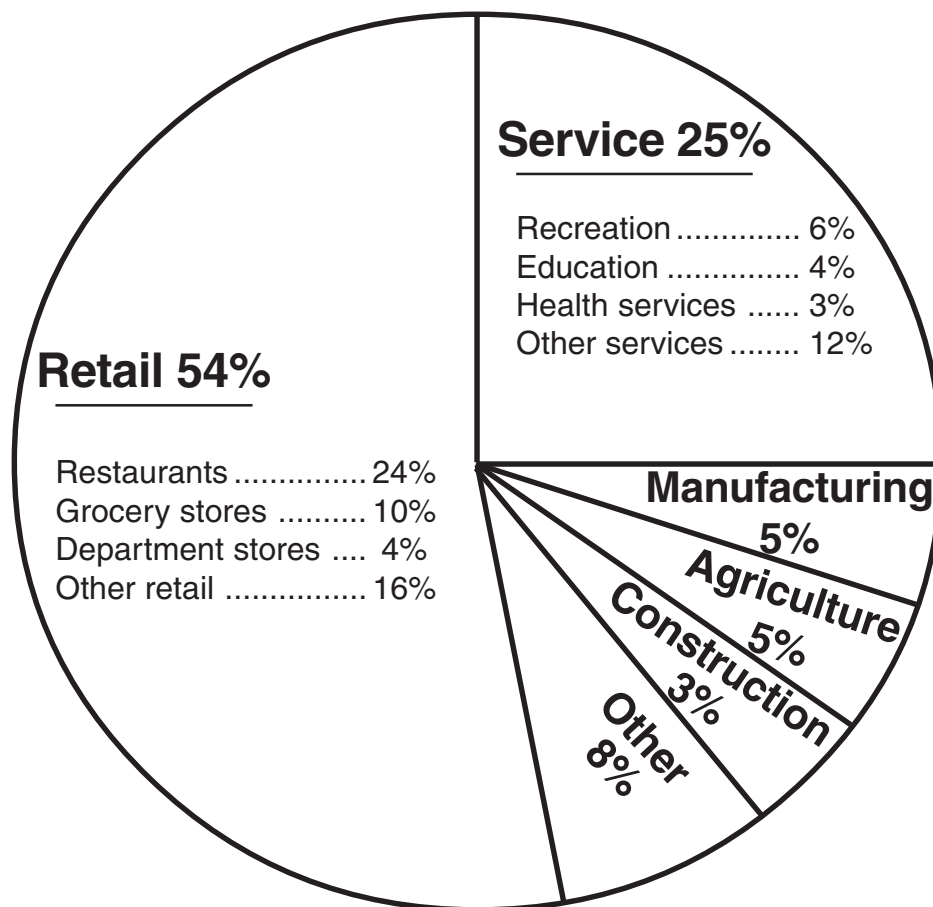
(10 minutes)

Ask students to share their reactions to the entire project, and answer any questions they have. Involve the whole class in this discussion.

Overheads

Where Do U.S. Teens Work?

- Most teen jobs are part-time, temporary, and low-paying.
- Many teens work in industries that have high injury rates. Examples: grocery stores, health services, and recreation.
- This chart shows where U.S. teens work:



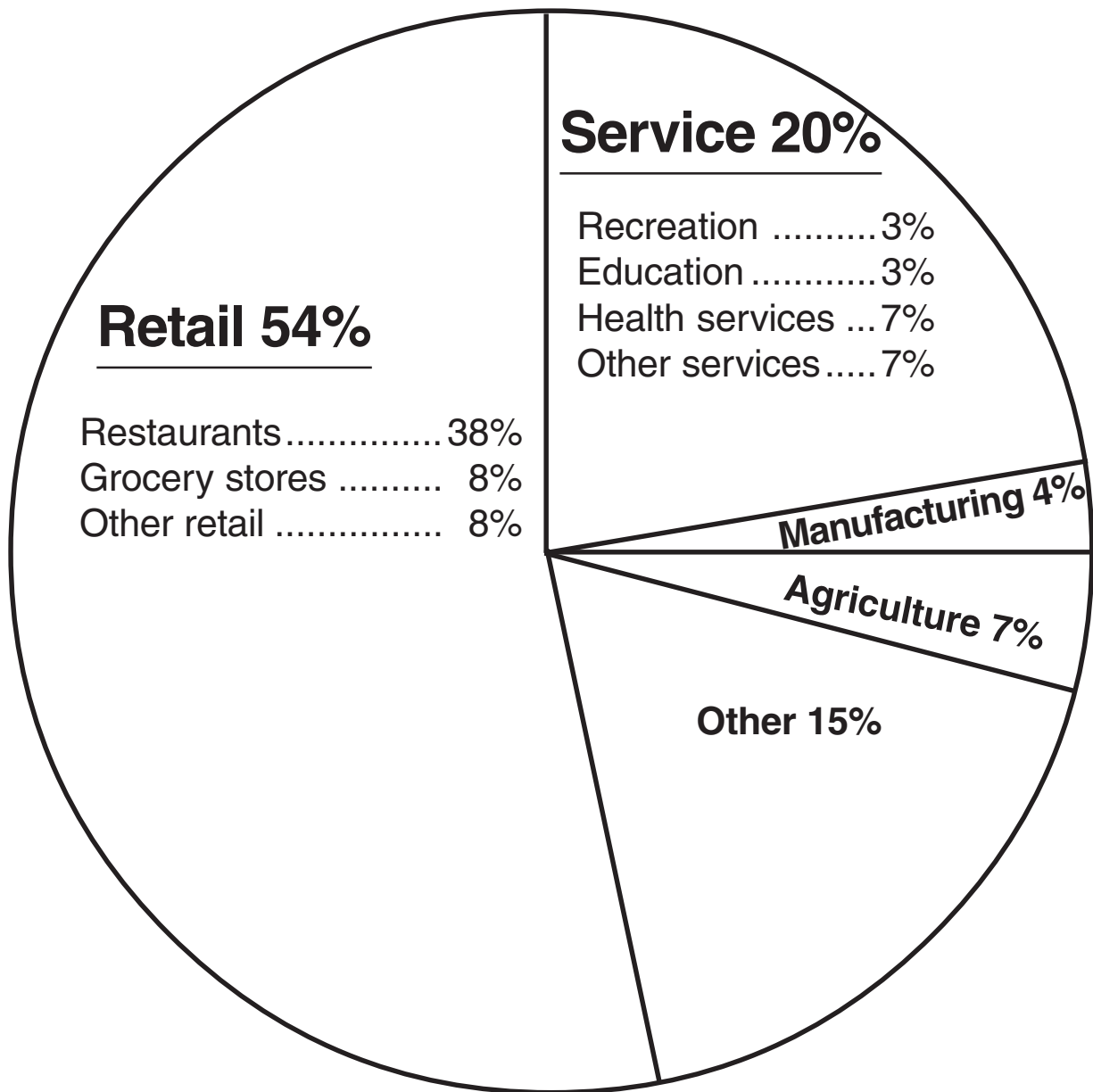
Thousands of Teens Are Injured on the Job

- Millions of U.S. teens work, and thousands are injured on the job every year.
- About 64,000 U.S. teens (ages 14–17) went to hospital emergency rooms with job injuries in 1992.*
- Teen job injury rates:
 - are higher for males than for females.
 - are higher for older teens than for younger ones.
- Common teen job injuries include cuts, sprains, strains, burns and fractures.
- About 70 U.S. teens (ages 16–17) died from job injuries every year during the 1980s.* Leading causes of death were motor vehicles, farm machinery, other machines, electrocution, and homicides.

** These are the latest figures available.*

Where Are Teens Injured?

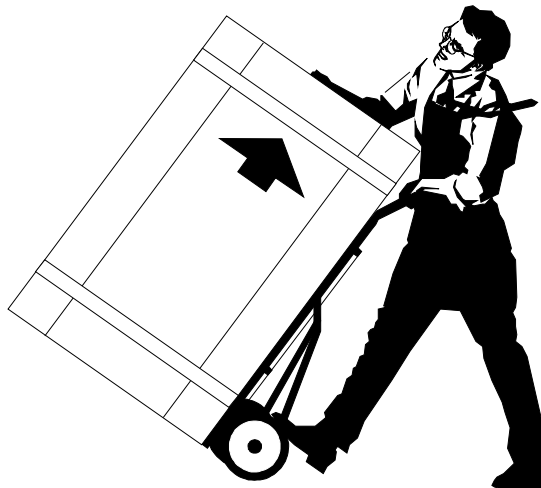
- This chart shows U.S. teen injuries by industry in 1992:



How Are Teens Injured?

- Statistics show that many teen job injuries are caused by:
 - Driving motor vehicles
 - Operating tractors
 - Handling hot liquids and grease
 - Using cutting tools
 - Using non-powered hand tools
 - Lifting heavy objects
 - Working late at night
 - Working alone.

- The law prohibits teens from doing some of these tasks (but not all).





Handouts

Danger at the Meat Slicer!

Scene: Teen workers in a fast food restaurant.

Mario: Oh, man! I really cut myself this time. Maybe I need stitches.

Gloria: You should tell the boss. He should pay for you to go to the doctor. And he should fix that slicer. This isn't the first time someone's been hurt.

Tasha: Are you crazy? You want to get him fired? He should have been paying attention and he wouldn't have been hurt. Jobs aren't easy to find.

Mario: Maybe she's right. I got distracted. Besides, I don't think it's so bad. It has stopped bleeding now.

Gloria: You guys are the ones who are crazy. That slicer needs a safety guard put back on. What if the next person who gets cut isn't so lucky? Someone could lose a finger!

What Should Mario Do?

If you were Mario, what would you do? Read these two possible endings for the story, choose one, and write one paragraph explaining why you think Mario should make this choice.

Ending #1: Mario tells his boss about the accident. He also tells the boss that the meat slicer is missing a safety guard.

Ending #2: Mario just puts a bandage on his cut and keeps working. He says nothing to the boss.

Think Positive / Think Negative

The statements here reflect some common attitudes toward safety. Read each one, and try to decide if it is a **positive** or **negative** attitude. You are not saying whether you agree or disagree with these attitudes—you're trying to decide if they are positive or negative.

● **POSITIVE** thinking encourages constructive action, and can lead to safer working conditions.

● **NEGATIVE** thinking discourages action and won't lead to change.

CIRCLE

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| + | - | It is important to speak up for what I believe in. |
| + | - | It won't happen to me. |
| + | - | I'm more careful than people who get hurt. |
| + | - | A safe workplace makes good business sense. |
| + | - | Getting hurt on the job is too awful. I just don't want to think about it. |
| + | - | People might think I'm silly if I complain. |
| + | - | I don't want to take the extra time to try to change things. |
| + | - | My health is more important than how much money this business makes. |
| + | - | If I don't watch out for myself, I can't assume anyone else will. |
| + | - | I have influence with my friends and try to get them to do what's right. |
| + | - | Safety is all in the cards. Whatever happens happens. There's nothing I can do. |
| + | - | If my job can't be made safe, I'd rather look for another job. |
| + | - | I'm a man. I can take it. You won't catch me worrying about safety. |
| + | - | I'm a woman. It wouldn't be right for me to speak up. |
| + | - | I have to take my job as it is. I can't risk losing my job by complaining. |

Writing assignment: Choose one "negative" attitude and write a short rebuttal (one to two paragraphs) to convince other people to change their way of thinking.

Are You a Working Teen?



**Protect Your Health
Know Your Rights**

Labor Occupational Health Program
University of California, Berkeley

English Handout #3—Page 2

Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?

Every year **70 teens die** from work injuries in the United States. Another **64,000 get hurt** badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

Here are the stories of three teens:

- 18-year-old Sylvia caught her hand in an electric cabbage shredder at a fast food restaurant. Her hand is permanently disfigured and she'll never have full use of it again.
- 17-year-old Joe lost his life while working as a construction helper. An electric shock killed him when he climbed a metal ladder to hand an electric drill to another worker.
- 16-year-old Donna was assaulted and robbed at gunpoint at a sandwich shop. She was working alone after 11 p.m.

Why do injuries like these occur? Teens are often injured on the job due to unsafe equipment, stressful conditions, and speed-up. Also they may not receive adequate safety training and supervision. Teens are much more likely to be injured when they work on jobs they are not allowed to do by law.

What Are My Rights on the Job?

By law, your employer must provide:

- A safe and healthful workplace.
- Training about health and safety, including information on chemicals that could be harmful to your health.
- Protective clothing and equipment.
- Payment for medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job. You may also be entitled to lost wages.
- At least the minimum wage, \$5.75 an hour as of March, 1998. In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first three months, if you are under 18. Call toll-free ☎ 1-888-275-9243 for more information.

You also have a right to:

- Report safety problems to Cal/OSHA.
- Work without racial or sexual harassment.
- Refuse to work if the job is immediately dangerous to your life or health.
- Join or organize a union.

What Hazards Should I Watch Out For?

Type of Work	Examples of Hazards
Janitor/Clean-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toxic chemicals in cleaning products• Blood on discarded needles
Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slippery floors• Hot cooking equipment• Sharp objects
Retail/Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violent crimes• Heavy lifting
Office/Clerical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress• Harassment• Poor computer work station design

English Handout #3—Page 3

Is It OK to Do Any Kind of Work?

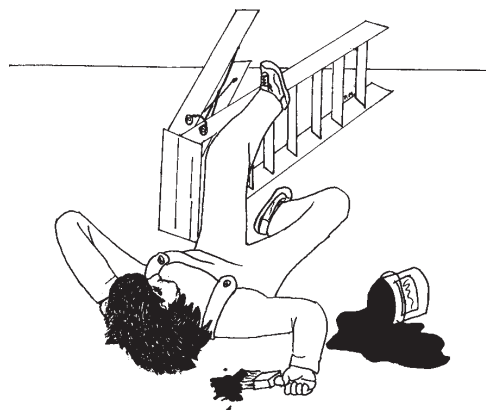
NO! There are laws that protect teens from doing dangerous work.

In California no worker under 18 may:

- Drive a motor vehicle or forklift on the job
- Use powered equipment like a circular saw, box crusher, meat slicer, or bakery machine
- Work in wrecking, demolition, excavation, or roofing
- Work in logging or a sawmill
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages
- Work where there is exposure to radiation

Also, no one 14 or 15 years old may:

- Do baking or cooking on the job (except at a serving counter)
- Work in dry cleaning or a commercial laundry
- Work on a ladder or scaffold
- Do building, construction, or manufacturing work
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor



Are There Other Things I Can't Do?

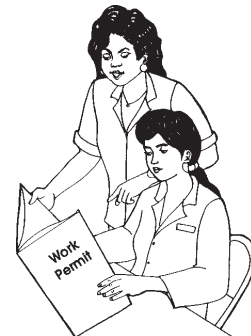
YES! There are many other restrictions regarding the type of work you can and cannot do.

If you are **under 14**, there are even stricter laws to protect your health and safety.

Check with your school counselor or job placement coordinator to make sure the job you are doing is allowed.

Do I Need a Work Permit?

YES! If you are under 18 and plan to work, you must get a work permit from your school (unless you have graduated).



What Are My Safety Responsibilities on the Job?

To work safely you should:

- Follow all safety rules and instructions
- Use safety equipment and protective clothing when needed
- Look out for co-workers
- Keep work areas clean and neat
- Know what to do in an emergency
- Report any health and safety hazard to your supervisor

English Handout #3—Page 4

Should I Be Working This Late or This Long?

Child labor laws protect teens from working too long, too late, or too early.

This table shows the hours teens may work. (There are exceptions for students in work experience programs.)

Work Hours for Teens		
	Ages 14 and 15	Ages 16 and 17
Work Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not before 7 am or after 7 pm during the school year • Not during school hours • 7 am–9 pm during the summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not before 5 am or after 10 pm on school nights • Not before 5 am or after 12:30 am when there is no school the next day
Maximum Hours When School Is in Session	18 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours a day on school days • 8 hours a day Saturday—Sunday and holidays 	48 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 hours a day Monday–Thursday • 8 hours a day Friday–Sunday and holidays
Maximum Hours When School Is not in Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 hours a week • 8 hours a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 hours a week • 8 hours a day

What If I Need Help?

- Talk to your boss about the problem.
- Talk to your parents or teachers.
- For health and safety information and advice, call U.C. Berkeley's Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP).
☎ (510) 642-5507
- If necessary contact one of these California government agencies: (your local number can be found in the State Government pages.)
 - **Cal/OSHA** (under Industrial Relations Dept.)—to make a health or safety complaint.
☎ (415) 972-8500
 - **Labor Standards Enforcement** (under Industrial Relations Dept.) to make a complaint about wages or work hours.
☎ (415) 557-7878
 - **Fair Employment and Housing**—to make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination.
☎ (800) 884-1684

You have a right to speak up!

It is illegal for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem.





Check Your Understanding

Questions on the Factsheet

1. Who is responsible for keeping the workplace safe and healthy?
2. Are teens allowed to drive a motor vehicle on the job?
3. Who pays for your medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job?
4. Can 16 year olds work on ladders or scaffolds?
5. Are teens allowed to work with restaurant equipment like slicers or bakery machines?
6. Who is responsible for *supplying* safety equipment and protective clothing?
7. Who is responsible for *using* safety equipment and protective clothing?
8. If you are over 18 years old but still in high school, do you need a work permit?



English Handout #4

Page 2

- 9.** If you graduated from high school but are still under 18, do you need a work permit?

- 10.** If you are 15 years old, how late in the evening can you work during the school year?

- 11.** What are four things you can do if you need help with a problem at work?

- 12.** Who can you call to complain about a health and safety problem at work?

- 13.** Can you be fired for reporting a health and safety problem at work?

- 14.** Can your employer pay you less than the minimum wage?

- 15.** Who can you call if your employer doesn't pay you the minimum wage or makes you work too many hours?

- 16.** Who should you call if you are a victim of sexual harassment or discrimination on the job?

Teen Worker Scenarios

Scenario #1

Billy A.

Billy A. is a 15-year-old restaurant worker. One day, while flipping hamburgers on the grill, he slipped on grease which had splattered on the floor. He tried to grab a bar next to the grill to catch his fall, but missed it and put his hand on the grill instead. His right hand was badly burned.

A few days before, Billy's boss had told the crew he would never pay for medical treatment if anyone hurt themselves. He said that most injuries happen because workers are careless.

- 1. List four things Billy should do right after he is injured.**
- 2. Were any laws broken?**
- 3. Could Billy sue the employer for this job injury?**
- 4. Could Billy get workers' compensation?**
- 5. How could Billy's injury have been prevented?**

Scenario #2

Michael B.

Michael B. is 16 years old and works in a sheet metal shop. One day, a machine he uses was not working properly. He told his supervisor. The supervisor told Michael to remove a safety device so a mechanic could fix the machine. He said that Michael should keep working on the machine until the mechanic arrived.

Michael removed the safety device and kept working. After a few minutes, a lever on the machine released on its own. Michael tried to pull his hand out of the way, but the tip of his finger was caught and cut off.

A few days before, Michael's boss had told everyone in the shop to be careful, because he would fire anyone who had a job injury.

- 1. List four things Michael should do right after he is injured.**
- 2. Were any laws broken?**
- 3. Could Michael sue the employer for this job injury?**
- 4. Could Michael get workers' compensation?**
- 5. How could Michael's injury have been prevented?**

Scenario #3

Tasha C.

Tasha C. is 14 years old. She works a few hours every day after school in a nursing home, for a total of 20 hours a week. She delivers trays of food to the residents, and gives them other assistance when they need it. Sometimes she works until 9pm to help the residents get ready for the night. Some of these patients are bedridden and need to be lifted.

When she gets home at night, Tasha is often too tired to do her homework. Lately she has had a lot of back pain.

- 1. What should Tasha do about her back pain?**
- 2. Were any laws broken?**
- 3. Could Tasha sue the employer for this job injury?**
- 4. Could Tasha get workers' compensation?**
- 5. How could Tasha's injury have been prevented?**

Scenario #4

Molly D.

Molly D. is 16 years old and works in a supermarket. One evening she was asked to clean the meat slicer in the deli department. She had never used or cleaned it before, and had never been trained to do so. She was afraid of the slicer because once she had seen a co-worker cut his hand to the bone. Still, she did not complain, and did what she was told. She cleaned the slicer without any problems and didn't get injured.

Molly decided to clean the meat slicer without complaint because she didn't want any more trouble with her supervisor. For several weeks, he had been giving her a hard time. The last time he reprimanded her, he turned to a male co-worker and said "Girls are only good for one thing."

- 1. Were any laws broken?**
- 2. What should Molly do about this situation?**
- 3. If Molly refused to clean the meat slicer, could she be fired?**

On the Job—Yesterday and Today

Here are three stories about young people who face health and safety hazards on the job. Some of the stories are about young workers in the past, and some are about young workers today. Each story is followed by a set of questions.

Read all three stories. Then choose **one** story that particularly interests you, and answer the questions that follow it. These are essay questions. To answer some of the questions you may need to add information from your own experience. If the answer to a question isn't clear to you from the story, explain what isn't clear and what additional information you'd like to have.

This exercise encourages you to think about how and why working conditions change. Bring your answers to the next class where we will discuss these issues in more depth.

Reading these stories may give you ideas you can use for your oral history presentation.

The Triangle Fire

It was a Saturday afternoon—March 25, 1911—near quitting time at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York City. Passersby suddenly heard a sound “like a big puff,” the noise of crashing glass, and then smoke billowed through an eighth-floor window. People saw a bundle come out of a window. More and more bundles came out. When they hit the street, they turned out to be bodies.

More than 140 workers—primarily young Italian and Jewish women—died in less than a half hour. Many of the victims were teenagers. Some burned to death, others were overcome by smoke, and many died jumping from windows.

The fire began in workrooms which were full of cloth scraps. These spread the fire quickly. In minutes, flames moved from the eighth floor, where the fire started, to the ninth and tenth floors.

The building had only two staircases, and they were winding and narrow. The elevators stopped running, and some workers tried to climb down the elevator cables. There were no sprinklers. The one fire escape collapsed when workers attempted to use it.

English Handout #6

Page 2

Doors opened inward, not outward, so it was difficult to open them from inside. Many of the doors had been locked by the company so that workers could be stopped and checked for theft when they left the building.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire was a decisive event in labor history. It marked a turning point in the fight by labor unions and reformers to eliminate dangerous sweatshops and to obtain workplace safety legislation. Sweatshops like the Triangle factory had proliferated in late 19th- and early 20th-century American cities, but public horror over the 146 deaths on March 25, 1911 gave new impetus to a reform current in the press and politics. The fire likewise called public attention to the growing number of women workers in the U.S.

After the fire, the factory owners were tried for manslaughter, but were acquitted. Only a few of the dead workers' families received any compensation. But three months after the fire, the state legislature created a Factory Investigating Commission. Under public pressure, the Commission issued dozens of new industrial regulations, covering everything from fire safety to working hours.

Many worker protections taken for granted today originated in New York at that time. New laws were created all over the country. By 1914 every state but one had a minimum working age of at least twelve. Many states also passed their first workers' compensation laws during this period. Unions began to organize garment workers in large numbers.

—*LOHP Monitor and other sources*

Questions

1. What do you find most interesting about this story? Why?
2. What health and safety hazards are shown in this story?
3. Did the events in this story lead to better working conditions? If so, what factors caused conditions to change? If not, what else do you think might have been done to improve conditions?

Strawberry Fields

This is the story of Augustino Nieves, a fourteen-year-old boy born in Mexico whose family moved to California. He spoke before a committee of the U.S. Congress about his work experiences. A few years after Augustino told this story, the United Farm Workers Union began to organize 20,000 California strawberry workers.

I have been working in the fields of California for the past two years. I was unable to begin school in September 1989 because we were still working in the fields. I missed three months of school.

One company said I needed a permit to work. So I went to another company. They knew I did not have a work permit or even a social security card, but they hired me.

My job consists of moving up and down long rows of strawberry plants, bent over looking for strawberries. I pick only the good strawberries and place them in a packing box. I move my push cart up and down the field. I may spend the whole day working in a stooped position. When there are a lot of ripe strawberries in the field our crew begins working at 6:30 a.m. and continues working until 8 p.m. We work 6 days a week.

On a good day, I can pick about 30 boxes of strawberries. If the strawberries are for the market, they pay us \$1.25 a box. If I work really hard, I can make about \$36.50 for a 13-hour day. That comes out to about \$2.80 an hour. We have to work through our breaks. We take only 20 minutes for lunch. By the end of the day, our backs hurt and we are very tired.

The boss is supposed to have clean bathrooms and water for us out in the field. However, there are many days when there are no bathrooms in the field. When there are bathrooms, they are usually several hundred meters away from us, and oftentimes they are very dirty. The boss puts the bathrooms so far away because he wants to discourage us from taking breaks. When we are lucky enough to have water, instead of having disposable drinking cups, we all use the same cup.

One of the worst things about working in the strawberry fields is that every eight days, the ranchers apply sulfur to the fields as a pesticide. When we bend over to pick the strawberries, the sulfur gets into our eyes. The sulfur stings our eyes and burns our throats. We have to keep working even though we are in great pain.

English Handout #6

Page 4

The foreman always puts great pressure on us to work as fast as we can. He comes up behind us and yells at us to work faster and faster. Oftentimes, he insults me because I am a Mixtec Indian. They scream, “Hurry up, work faster, you Pinche Oaxequeno.” The foreman especially puts a lot of pressure on me because I still cannot work as fast as an adult man.

We know that the boss exploits us. However, we cannot complain or the foreman will fire us. There are plenty of people who want our jobs, and we have to put up with these abuses or we will not be able to work.

I wish I did not have to work in the fields but my family needs all the money that I can earn. The rent of our apartment is \$750 a month. About 25 people live in our three-bedroom apartment.

My dream is to graduate from high school. However, if my family ever needs me to go out to work in the fields, that is where I will be.

—Adapted from Milton Meltzer, *Cheap Raw Material*

Questions

1. What do you find most interesting about this story? Why?
2. What health and safety hazards are shown in this story?
3. Did the events in this story lead to better working conditions? If so, what factors caused conditions to change? If not, what else do you think might have been done to improve conditions?

Pizza Delivery

Jesse Colson was a seventeen-year-old Indiana boy who died in 1989 while making a delivery for Domino's Pizza. His mother told a Congressional committee what happened to her son. Shortly after this incident and several other accidents, Domino's ended its guarantee of 30-minute delivery.

Domino's had a policy of guaranteeing the delivery of pizza within 30 minutes. They relied on young people whom they hired as drivers. I wish that someone at Domino's headquarters had taken 30 minutes to think about the sensibility of their policy. That 30 minutes just may have saved my son's life.

After he began working at Domino's, I noticed that Jesse's driving habits were not as good as they had been. He always seemed to be in a hurry. He began to talk about the pressure he was feeling. I could see that he was pressured just by looking at him.

We also began to question the distance he had to go to deliver these pizzas. And Jesse was not getting enough sleep due to the late hours. He would be so "wired" when he came home at night that it took him a while to relax just so he could fall asleep. It was becoming apparent to me that the whole Domino's work ethic was a recipe for disaster.

Finally, I told Jesse he needed to find another job. This one just wasn't worth it. He was under too much pressure, not getting enough sleep, and was tearing up his car. He found another job, which he would have started the following Monday.

On Saturday, Jesse discovered that his car had a flat, and by the time he got it repaired he was running late for work. As he ran out the door, he asked me to call his manager to let him know he was late. That was the last time I saw him alive.

During the day, it had begun to storm and by that evening there was standing water in the roads. The roads in that area are badly paved, rough, curvy, and winding. The site of the accident was three miles from the store. I don't know where he was headed.

From what the police officers could tell, Jesse was driving too fast and he came upon a small rise in the road with standing water. He hydroplaned and became airborne. The officer told me there was no way he could have controlled the vehicle, a pickup truck that belonged to the store.

English Handout #6

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The truck wrapped around an enormous utility pole and Jesse, who wasn't wearing his seatbelt, was thrown between the door and the doorframe and killed instantly. His aorta was ruptured. Officers told me that it wasn't likely a seatbelt would have saved his life.

—Adapted from Milton Meltzer, *Cheap Raw Material*

Questions

- 1. What do you find most interesting about this story? Why?**
- 2. What health and safety hazards are shown in this story?**
- 3. Did the events in this story lead to better working conditions? If so, what factors caused conditions to change? If not, what else do you think might have been done to improve conditions?**

Your Oral History Project

What is an oral history?

An oral history collects information about events, attitudes, and actions through personal stories. The oral history project for this class will focus on hazards in the workplace.

What will I need to do to complete the assignment?

- Choose someone to interview.
- Set up a time and place for the interview.
- Develop interview questions.
- Prepare for the interview.
- Conduct the interview.
- Write your final report.
- Prepare a class presentation at home, and practice delivering it.
- Give your presentation during class.
- Turn in your written report and interview notes.

Whom should I interview?

Interview a parent or other working adult. Your questions should deal with health and safety conditions on this person's current job, or on some job they had in the past. This person is called your **interview subject**.

What should I ask during the interview?

The interview should focus on the person's experiences and opinions about health, safety, and other conditions on the job. You should ask questions in each of the following areas:

- **Work Experience.** It is important to know what kind of work the interview subject does and/or has done in the past. A description of the working conditions on the person's job will make the interview interesting.
- **Dangers on the Job.** Learn about any health and safety hazards, injuries, and/or work-related illnesses that the subject has faced.
- **Health and Safety Attitudes.** Ask about the subject's attitudes toward job health and safety, along with the attitudes of co-workers and supervisors.

English Handout #7

Page 2

- **Changes in Workplace Health and Safety.** Try to find out if the subject has seen changes in working conditions or health and safety attitudes during his or her working life. It will be interesting to see if working conditions have improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same.
- **Opinions.** Ask the subject why he or she believes changes in workplace health and safety occurred, or why things stayed the same.

What makes a good interview question?

Ask open-ended questions. These get your interview subject to say more than **YES** or **NO**. Most open-ended questions start with **WHY**, **HOW**, **WHAT**, **WHEN**, or **WHERE**. For example, “What safety information was given to you before you began working?” is an open-ended question.

The Oral History Interview

Set up the interview.

Agree on a time and place for the interview. Set a definite time, even if the subject is a family member who lives with you. It is important to respect the person's time. Choose a time that is convenient and a place that is comfortable for both of you.

Prepare for the interview.

- **Do some research.** Our work in class should provide you with valuable information to help focus the interview. Other sources include magazines, newspapers, and other outside reading. If you can ask your interview subject a few questions in advance, it may help you to find interesting areas to explore during the interview itself.
- **Make a list of areas of interest.** Plan to cover as many of the topics listed in Handout #7 as possible. It may be helpful to write out a list of questions in advance, but don't limit yourself to these questions. You don't want to just read a list of questions to your subject. You need to be flexible enough to follow up if the person says something interesting.

Conduct the interview.

- **Use a tape recorder** (if possible). Test it before the interview to make sure it works. Place it close enough to the subject to get good sound. Ask the subject's permission to tape. If you can't use a tape recorder, take brief notes during the interview. Immediately afterward, go over your notes and write down other points you remember.
- **Listen carefully.** Answers that the subject gives may raise new questions you'll want to ask.
- **Show that you are listening.** Let your subject know you are interested by the way you sit, look, and respond. Make your subject feel comfortable with you and the interview.
- **Start with simple background questions.** Begin with name, age, place of birth, etc. Your next question should be one which encourages the subject to talk—for example, "How did you choose your occupation?"
- **Ask open-ended questions.** These get your subject to say more than "yes" or "no." Most open-ended questions start with "Why," "How," "What," "When," or "Where." For example, "What safety information was given to you before you began working?" is an open-ended question.

Writing Your Oral History Report

Your written report should summarize the interview. Go over your interview notes. Use your notes to help you remember the details of the interview. Your final written report should include the following sections:

Title

- **Choose a descriptive title for your report.** The title should be fairly short, describe the topic of the report, and catch the interest of your reader.

Introduction

- **Provide general information about the person you interviewed.** For example, you might want to include place of employment, type of job, length of time at that job, age, and place of birth. Feel free to include other general information about the person.
- **Alert your reader to the topics in your report.** End your introduction by listing the topic areas that will be discussed in the body of the paper.

Body of Paper

- **Write one paragraph for each topic you covered during the interview.** You might want to use the topic areas listed in *Your Oral History Project* (Handout #7) as a guide.
- **Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence.** A topic sentence is a general statement that gives the main point of the paragraph.
- **Provide details and examples from the interview for each topic.** The examples you use should support the topic sentence of the paragraph.

Conclusion

- **Use a transitional phrase to begin your concluding paragraph.** Examples: to conclude, in conclusion, in summary.
- **State what you learned overall from the interview.** Summarize the main points of the person's story, and what they taught you.
- **Describe how the interview affected your outlook on work, health, and safety.** Close the report with a few sentences about your attitudes and opinions regarding health and safety on the job, whether this project changed them, and why.

Oral History Report Format

Your name
Your class
Date

Title

Introduction

Body of paper

Topic #1

(one paragraph)

Topic #2

(one paragraph)

Topic #3

(one paragraph)

Topic #4

(one paragraph)

Conclusion

Example of an Oral History Written Report

Office Jobs Can Be Dangerous, Too! An Oral History Interview With My Aunt

I interviewed my Aunt Sandra. She is a data entry clerk in the office of a big trucking company. She has worked at this job for six years. Aunt Sandra was born in 1963 in Chicago. She got her first job when she was in high school. She washed dishes at a restaurant in her neighborhood. She moved to the Bay Area when she was 22. She says that her current job in an office may look safe to outsiders, but it can be dangerous. This report will discuss the hazards at my Aunt Sandra's work, attitudes about health and safety, changes she has seen in her workplace, and her opinions about why these changes happened.

Even though offices seem safe, there are many hazards in my Aunt Sandra's workplace. For example, she spends most of the day typing on a computer. She says that this can make your hands, wrists, and arms hurt. Aunt Sandra had to go to the doctor recently because of pain in her hands. She also got a tingling feeling in her hands. Sometimes the pain was so bad that it was hard for her to button her shirt. Typing was very difficult. She even had pain in her hands at home at night. The doctor told her that she had carpal tunnel syndrome, which is a nerve problem in the wrists and hands. The doctor said it was caused by the long hours of typing. Aunt Sandra said that high pressure and stress are other hazards on her job. Some of the people she works with also get headaches and allergies from the bad air in their office building.

At Aunt Sandra's office, different people have different attitudes about health and safety. Aunt Sandra believes that health and safety are very important. However, some of her co-workers don't think they will ever get hurt at work. Some of the supervisors don't think there are problems either. Aunt Sandra says that people need to realize that office jobs can cause injuries, like hers, as well as health problems. If everyone thinks it's no big deal, more people will get hurt. Aunt Sandra is glad that there are other people at work who feel the same way she does.

There have been a few changes in the working conditions at Aunt Sandra's office. For example, she now has a new chair that is adjustable and a wrist pad for her keyboard. These help put her hands and wrists in a better position when she is typing. During this past year there has also been health and safety training. Aunt Sandra thinks these are good ideas. But she also says that more needs to be done. She thinks that all people at her office need to have good equipment. They also need longer breaks to let their hands rest.

English Handout #10

Page 2

Changes at Aunt Sandra's office have happened for various reasons. She says that the company began training the workers after several people got hurt (like she did) working on the computers. She says that articles in magazines have also made people more aware of the things that can happen when you use computers. In addition, Aunt Sandra says that the union has talked to the company about getting people better equipment. In her opinion, this has been very helpful in getting some improvements. She says the union and many of the workers will keep pushing for more changes.

In conclusion, I learned many things about health and safety on Aunt Sandra's job. Some people think that only jobs like construction are dangerous. But my oral history interview with Aunt Sandra shows that office jobs have hazards, too. I now feel that health and safety in all jobs is very important. I also believe that people must try to improve their working conditions before somebody gets hurt.

Questions

- 1.** What information is included in the introduction? What other information would you include?
- 2.** Put a check mark next to each main topic within the body of the paper. Did the author devote one paragraph to each topic? Look at the paragraphs. What is the main topic of each one?
- 3.** What is the topic sentence of the second paragraph? Does the author provide details to support the topic sentence? List these.
- 4.** How did the interview affect the author's attitudes and opinions about health and safety? In which paragraph is this information provided?
- 5.** What is the title of this report? Write another title that would also fit this report.