



Teens, Work, and Safety Activity

There Ought To Be a Law!

THIS ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

This activity has been adapted from “Teens, Work and Safety—A Curriculum for High School Students” developed by the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley.

In this activity, students will be introduced to current and historical working conditions for youth. They will develop “model laws” to help protect youth from dangerous and unhealthy working conditions, and will compare these laws to those that actually exist.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe historical working conditions that led to the development of child labor laws and workplace health and safety laws.
- Describe at least three ways that working teens are now protected under federal Child Labor Laws, including limitations on dangerous types of work that teens may do on the job, and on the hours they may work.
- Identify two health and safety rights that all workers have on the job.
- Identify the government agencies that enforce labor and job safety laws.

Materials Needed

- Overheads, #1–9.
- Student handouts, #1–3.
- Butcher paper and marking pens.

Total Time = 90 minutes

Lesson Plan—Total Class Time: 90 minutes

| Activity | Time | Materials |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| A. Introduction to the unit. Teacher explains the purpose of this unit, and gives a preview of major activities included. | 5 minutes | |
| B. Brainstorm—Unsafe working conditions. Class develops a list of unsafe conditions that workers may face. | 10 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overheads #1–2. |
| C. Health & safety issues for working teens. Teacher presents national statistics on teen workers and job injuries. | 10 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overheads #3–7. |
| D. There ought to be a law! Meeting in small groups, students read first-hand accounts depicting teens and unsafe working conditions. Groups identify the hazards in each story, and propose new laws to improve conditions. | 15 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Handout #1. Butcher Paper. Marking pens. |
| E. Homework. Students answer a set of questions about the factsheet, <i>Are You a Working Teen?</i> | 5 minutes (for explanation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Handouts #2–3. |
| F. Check Your Understanding. The class works in teams to play a game based on the factsheet. | 10 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Handouts #2–3. |
| G. There ought to be a law!—Report Back Groups discuss the laws they developed with the class. | 15 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Handout #2. |
| H. Is there a law? Students compare their model laws with the actual laws shown in the factsheet. | 15 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overhead #8. Teacher Supplement. Student Handout #2. |
| I. Wrap-up. | 5 minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overhead #9. |

DETAILED TRAINER'S INSTRUCTIONS

A. Introduction to the unit.

(5 minutes)

Explain the purpose of this unit to the class.

Many students probably have jobs already, after school or on weekends. Someday they'll be working full time. It's important to realize that the workplace can be dangerous. Some teens get burns, cuts, and even serious diseases at work.

There are laws designed to protect workers on the job. This unit will discuss where laws come from, why they exist, what they say, and how they work. It will cover two main types of laws:

- **Job health and safety laws** that protect all workers
—and—
- **Child labor laws** that give special protection to young people.

Explain that many laws in our society exist to protect us from danger. But students may not usually think of the law that way. Some laws just seem to be a hassle or a nuisance—or even take away their freedom. On the other hand, most people agree that our food, water, and highways are safer because of the law.

B. Brainstorm—Unsafe working conditions.

(10 minutes)

First ask the class a few background questions on teen work and teen workplace injuries:

- How many of you work?
- What kind of work do you do?
- Do you know anyone who has been hurt on the job?
- If so, what kind of injury?

As students answer the last two questions, list the types of injuries they mention on the board. Save your list for use later in this lesson.

Next, explain that the class will “brainstorm” to develop a list of unsafe or unhealthy conditions that workers may face on the job, using modern and historical photos and personal accounts of working youth.



First, show Overhead #1 *Bibb Mill*. “Bibb Mill # 1, Macon, Georgia, 1909”, is a photo by Lewis Hine. (Lewis Hine was a New York City schoolteacher who became an investigative photographer for the National Child Labor Committee in the early 1900’s, because he wanted to stop the abuse of children in the workplace. Hine traveled around the country photographing the working conditions of children in all types of industries. See Teacher Supplement #1 for more background.) Ask students to look at the photo, and to listen to this account by a millworker, and to think about the working conditions that are described. Read Handout #1A. Ask the class:

“What are the working conditions you see in this photo, or that this young man wrote about, that might cause someone to get hurt or sick on the job?”

As students answer, make a list of the conditions they mention on the board. Your list might include:

- Dangerous, unguarded machinery
- No protective gear
- Long hours
- Young children working
- Fire hazards
- No breaks



Now, show Overhead #2, *Judith*, (This is a photo by Rebecca Letz of a young woman working at a pizza shop.) Ask students to look at the photo, and to listen to this account by a young fast food worker, and to think about the working conditions that are described. Read Handout #1B. Ask the class:

“What are the working conditions you see in this photo, or that the young woman is describing, that might cause someone to get hurt or sick on the job?”

Are there any other unsafe working conditions, from your own experience or others you know, that you’d like to add to this list?

- Unsafe machinery
- No safety training
- Long hours
- Late hours
- Exposure to hot surfaces
- Slippery floors

Save these lists for use later in the lesson.

C. Health and safety issues for working teens.

(10 minutes)



Use the Overheads #3–6 to present key statistical information on where teens work and what kinds of injuries occur. Use Overhead #7 to review working conditions for children and youth at the turn of the century.

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

- Overhead #3, *Where Do U.S. Teens Work?*

Question: How many students in this class work in a restaurant? grocery store? office? with children?

- Overhead #4, *Thousands of Teens Are Injured on the Job*

Question: How many students in the class have *ever* been injured on *any* job?

- Overhead #5, *Where Are Teens Injured?*

Question: If you have ever been injured at work, on what kind of job did your injury happen?

- Overhead #6, *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.)

- Overhead #7, *Children and Youth at Work in 1900*

D. There ought to be a law!

(15 minutes)

Now students will write model laws to improve working conditions for teens.

Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 students each. Give each group a large piece of paper (butcher paper, etc.), marking pens, and copies of Handout #1.

This handout has three separate stories, with a set of questions following each. The stories depict teens working in unsafe conditions—in both modern and historical times, and in both the U.S. and other countries. Assign each group to focus on **one** of the stories and answer the questions that follow it. (You may assign the same story to more than one group.)

Before the groups meet, explain that they will have 15–20 minutes to work. Each group will report back at the next class.

Explain that each group should:

- Choose someone to be the facilitator (to lead the discussion).
- Choose someone to be the recorder (to take notes on the discussion).
- Read the group's assigned story from Handout #1. (This may be done any way the group chooses—one student reading aloud to the group, everyone reading silently, etc.)
- Read and discuss the questions following the story. The questions ask the group to identify the hazardous working conditions shown in the story, and to propose model laws that will improve teen working conditions. The model laws may be based on the working conditions in the story, on students' own experience, or on the list of unsafe conditions that the class made earlier.
- Agree on **three** laws the group believes will protect teens the most. Use the butcher paper and marking pens to list the three laws, and save the list. Make the print large—it will be shown to the whole class later. Be prepared to justify the three laws at the next class. Groups should turn in their lists to the teacher to keep until the next class.
- **Bear in mind:** It's not necessary to know what the current law actually says. Groups may propose a law whether or not similar legislation already exists. (At the next class, students will compare their model laws to existing U.S. law.)

E. Homework.

(5 minutes for explanation)

At the end of the class, bring everyone back together to assign tonight's homework. Pass out the four-page factsheet *Are You a Working Teen?* (Handout #2). Also pass out *Check Your Understanding—Questions on the Factsheet* (Handout #3).

Tell students that the homework 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 #2 and #3 back to the next class.

This homework assignment should take no more than 30 minutes.

F. 'Check Your Understanding' game.

(10 minutes)

Make sure each person has brought copies of the two handouts used for homework—*Are You a Working Teen?* (Handout #2) and *Check Your Understanding* (Handout #3). Ask students what information was new to them, or surprised them. Did the factsheet mention rights or protections that they didn't know they had?

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 #3 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 as many questions as time allows. 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?

If you are under 18, you cannot drive a motor vehicle on public streets as a main part of your 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 but not if the work is part of working on or near the roof. 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?

In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first 160 hours of work, if you have no previous similar experience.

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.” California minimum wage is \$6.75 an hour.

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.”

G. There ought to be a law! (Report back).

(15 minutes)

Students will now present the model laws they developed in their small groups to the class. Make sure everyone has their copy of *There Ought To Be a Law* (Handout #1).

Each small group previously chose a recorder to take notes on their discussion. The recorder may present the group’s report, or the group may select someone else (possibly even several people).

Ask each group to report in turn. As each group reports, they should post their three model laws at the front of the class. (They previously wrote these out in large print on butcher paper.) In addition to reading and discussing their model laws, groups should explain **why** they believe each law is needed.

After all the groups have reported, ask the class if they can think of any other laws that are needed, but that no one has mentioned.

H. Is There a Law?

(15 minutes)



Use Overhead #8 and the Teacher Supplement to briefly discuss the following points:

- Social reformers and labor unions succeeded in getting states to pass laws limiting child labor in the early 1900’s, but the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was not passed until 1938.
- The FLSA established a minimum wage, prohibited youth under age 14 from doing most kinds of formal work, and limited the hours that youth under age 16 could work.
- The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 led to the development of health and safety laws, but the current Occupational Safety and Health Act was not passed until 1970. This law required employers to provide safe and healthy workplaces for their employees, and established OSHA as an enforcement agency.

Next have students compare the model laws they developed with the actual law in the U.S. Do any of their model laws already exist?

Ask everyone to turn to the factsheet *Are You a Working Teen?* (Handout #2), which they read previously. Ask each group if they can find laws or regulations mentioned in the factsheet that are similar to their model laws.

In cases where students find that a law similar to the model already exists, ask them to compare the model law to the actual one. How are the two the same? How are they different? Does the model law or the actual law give teens better protection? Would either the model law or the actual law cause problems for teens? Discuss the answers that the class gives.

Here's an example:

- **Model law:** If you need gloves to do your job safely, your employer must pay for them.
- **Actual law:** Your employer must provide any protective clothing or equipment you need. (*Are You a Working Teen?*, page 2.)
- **Comparison:** The actual law is stronger—it covers **any** kind of protective gear. (Safety glasses, respirators, etc. as well as gloves.)

I. Wrap-up

(5 minutes)



Use Overhead #9 to summarize key protections youth have on the job.

Historical Background

“There is work that profits children, and there is work that brings profit only to employers. The object of employing children is not to train them, but to get high profits from their work.”

— Lewis Hine, 1908

After the Civil War, the availability of natural resources, new inventions, and a receptive market combined to fuel an industrial boom. The demand for labor grew, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries many children were drawn into the labor force. Factory wages were so low that children often had to work to help support their families. The number of children under the age of 15 who worked in industrial jobs for wages climbed from 1.5 million in 1890 to 2 million in 1910. Businesses liked to hire children because they worked in unskilled jobs for lower wages than adults, and their small hands made them more adept at handling small parts and tools. Children were seen as part of the family economy. Immigrants and rural migrants often sent their children to work, or worked alongside them. However, child laborers barely experienced their youth. Going to school to prepare for a better future was an opportunity these underage workers rarely enjoyed. As children worked in industrial settings, they began to develop serious health problems. Many child laborers were underweight. Some suffered from stunted growth and curvature of the spine. They developed diseases related to their work environment, such as tuberculosis and bronchitis for those who worked in coal mines or cotton mills. They faced high accident rates due to physical and mental fatigue caused by hard work and long hours.

By the early 1900s many Americans were calling child labor “child slavery” and were demanding an end to it. They argued that long hours of work deprived children of the opportunity of an education to prepare themselves for a better future. Instead, child labor condemned them to a future of illiteracy, poverty, and continuing misery. In 1904 a group of progressive reformers founded the National Child Labor Committee, an organization whose goal was the abolition of child labor. The organization received a charter from Congress in 1907. It hired teams of investigators to gather evidence of children working in harsh conditions and then organized exhibitions with photographs and statistics to dramatize the plight of these children. These efforts resulted in the establishment in 1912 of the Children’s Bureau as a federal information clearinghouse. In 1913 the Children’s Bureau was transferred to the Department of Labor.

Lewis Hine, a New York City schoolteacher and photographer, believed that a picture could tell a powerful story. He felt so strongly about the abuse of children as workers that he quit his teaching job and became an investigative photographer for the National Child Labor Committee. Hine traveled around the country photographing the working conditions of children in all types of industries. He photographed children in coal mines, in meatpacking houses, in textile mills, and in canneries. He took pictures of children working in the streets as shoe shiners, newsboys, and hawkers. In many instances he tricked his way into factories to take the pictures that factory managers did not want the public to see. He was careful to document every photograph with precise facts and figures. To obtain captions for his pictures, he interviewed the children on some pretext and then scribbled his notes with his hand hidden inside his pocket. Because he used subterfuge to take his photographs, he believed that he had

to be “double-sure that my photo data was 100% pure—no retouching or fakery of any kind.” Hine defined a good photograph as “a reproduction of impressions made upon the photographer which he desires to repeat to others.” Because he realized his photographs were subjective, he described his work as “photo-interpretation.”

Hine believed that if people could see for themselves the abuses and injustice of child labor, they would demand laws to end those evils. By 1916, Congress passed the Keating-Owens Act that established the following child labor standards: a minimum age of 14 for workers in manufacturing and 16 for workers in mining; a maximum workday of 8 hours; prohibition of night work for workers under age 16; and a documentary proof of age. Unfortunately, this law was later ruled unconstitutional on the ground that congressional power to regulate interstate commerce did not extend to the conditions of labor. Effective action against child labor had to await the New Deal. Reformers, however, did succeed in forcing legislation at the state level banning child labor and setting maximum hours. By 1920 the number of child laborers was cut to nearly half of what it had been in 1910. Lewis Hine died in poverty, neglected by all but a few. His reputation continued to grow, however, and now he is recognized as a master American photographer. His photographs remind us what it was like to be a child and to labor like an adult at a time when labor was harsher than it is now. Hine’s images of working children stirred America’s conscience and helped change the nation’s labor laws. Through his exercise of free speech and freedom of the press, Lewis Hine made a difference in the lives of American workers and, most importantly, American children. Hundreds of his photographs are available online from the National Archives through the NAIL database.

Resources

Foner, Eric, and John A. Garraty, eds. *The Reader’s Companion to American History* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

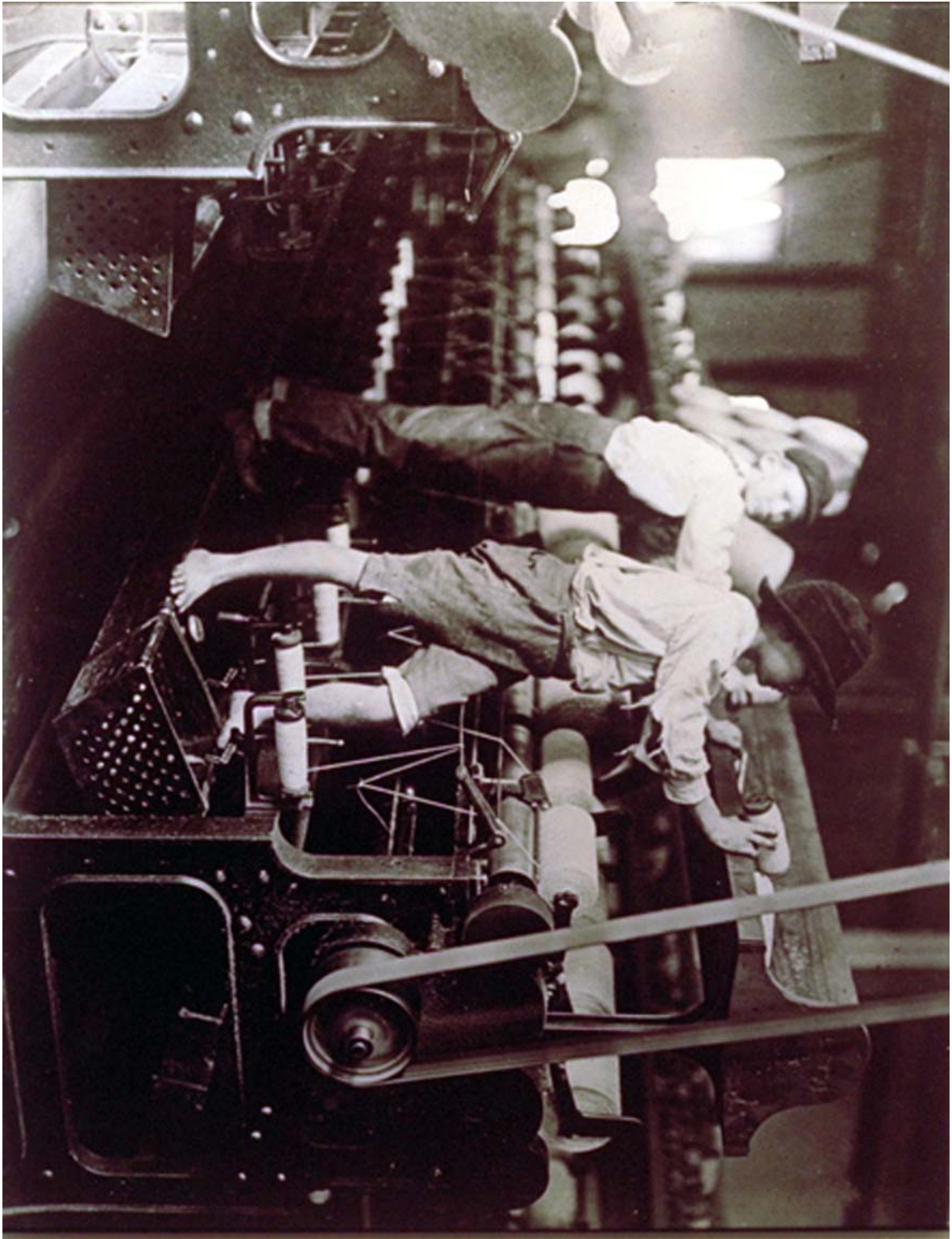
Nash, Gary B., et al. *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* . New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990.

Tindall, George Brown, with David E. Shi. *America: A Narrative History* . New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992.

Taken from “Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan: Photographs of Lewis Hine: Documentation of Child Labor,” written by Linda Darus Clark, available from the National Archives and Records Administration (http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/hine_photographs/hine_photographs.html)

Overhead #1

Bibb Mill



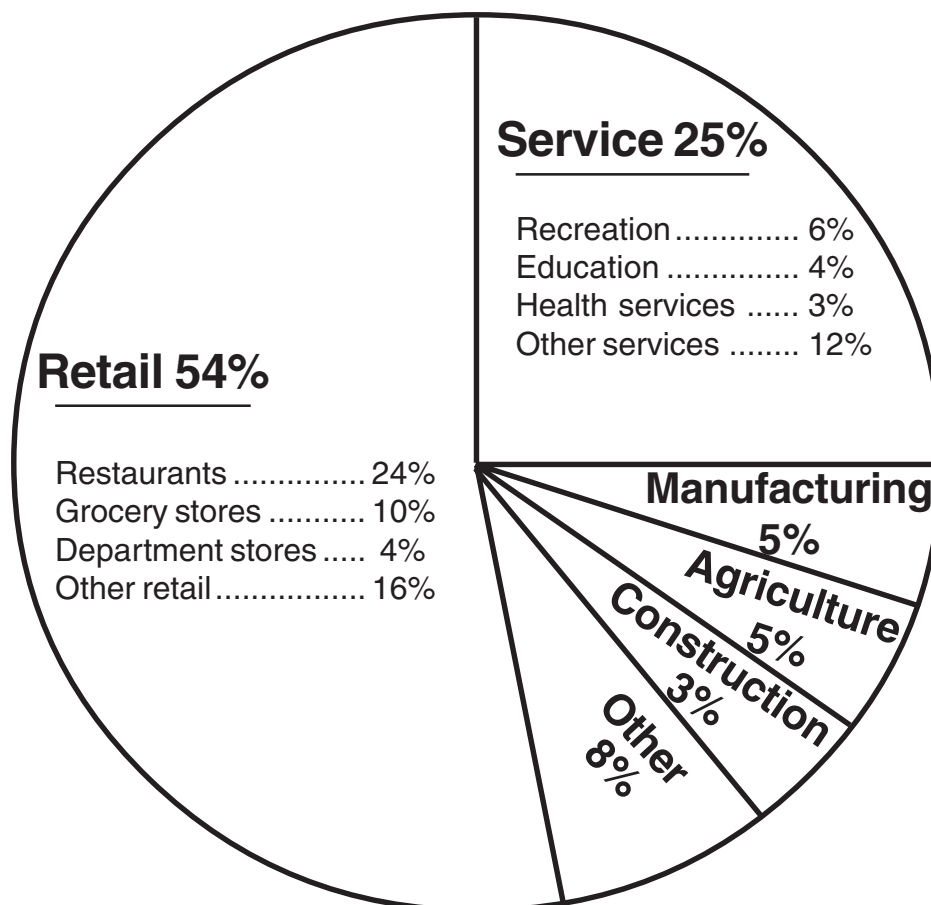
Overhead #2

Judith



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:



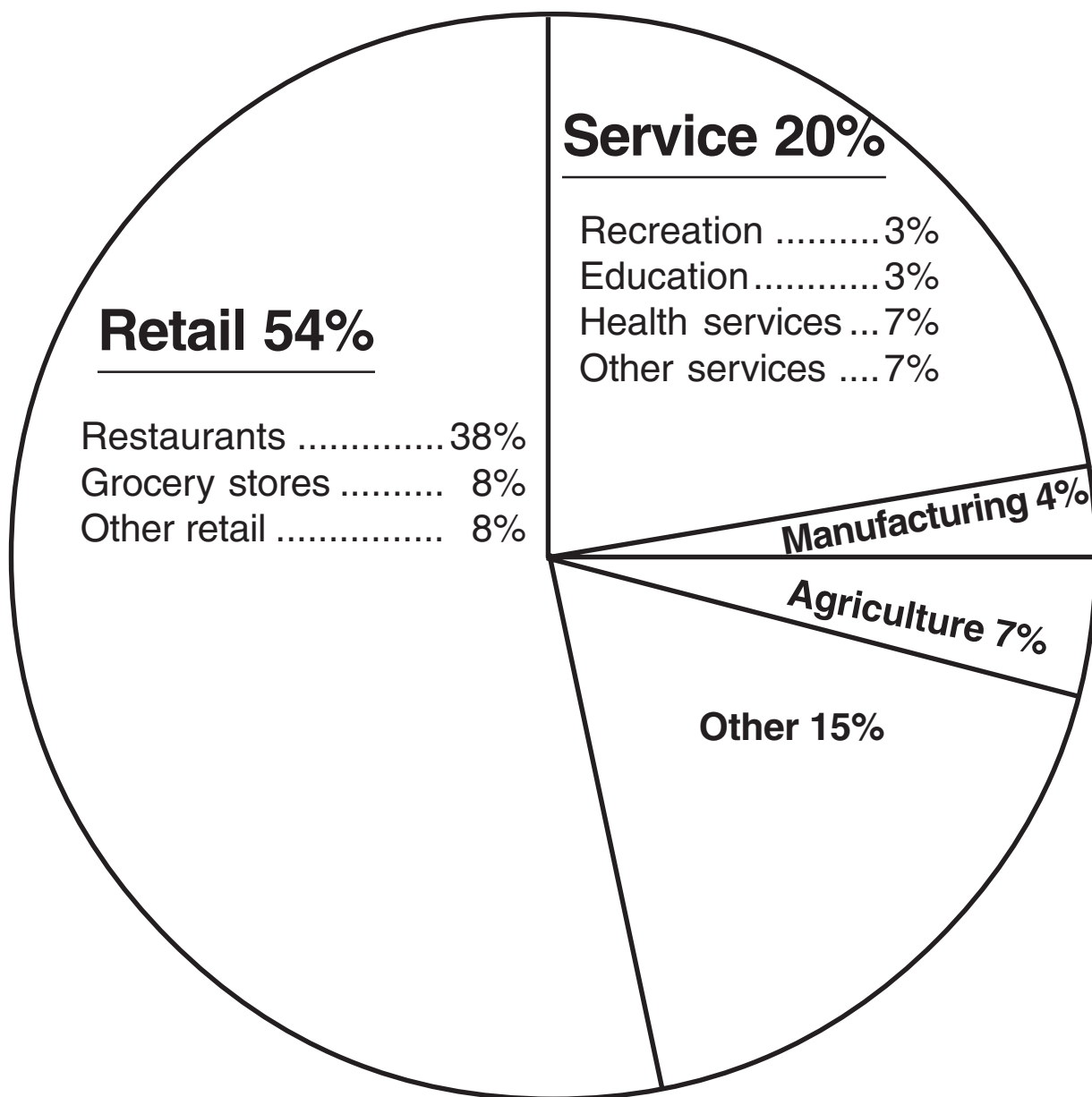
Thousands of Teens Are Injured on the Job

- Millions of U.S. teens work, and thousands are injured on the job every year.
- About 77,000 U.S. teens (ages 14–17) went to hospital emergency rooms with job injuries in 1998.*
- 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.
- An average of 67 U.S. teens (ages 16–17) died from job injuries every year during the 1990s.* 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.



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).



Children and Youth at Work in 1900

- The average laborer worked 10-14 hours per day, 6 days a week, for \$1.50 a day.
- Two million children under 15 worked in industrial jobs for wages.
- Children aged 10-15 made up a fourth of the textile labor force in the South.
- Families received nothing when a worker was injured or killed.
- Some states had laws that addressed working conditions.
- Some states required children to go to school.

When Were Laws Passed?

- 1830s:** States began to pass laws to restrict child labor.
- 1904:** National Child Labor Committee formed. More states pass stronger child labor laws.
- 1911:** Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire: Leads to some of the first job safety legislation.
- 1916:** Railroad workers are the first to be guaranteed an 8-hour day.
- 1938:** Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is passed.
- Establishes a minimum wage.
 - Prohibits youth under age 14 from doing most kinds of formal work.
 - Prohibits youth under age 18 from doing many kinds of hazardous work.
 - Limits the hours that youth under age 16 can work.
- 1970:** Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) is passed.
- Requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace.
 - Establishes specific protections from many types of hazards.
 - Establishes OSHA as the enforcement agency.

Know Your Rights

State and federal labor laws:

- Set a minimum age for some types of dangerous work.
- Protect teens from working too long, too late, or too early.

OSHA says every employer must provide:

- A safe and healthy workplace.
- Safety training, including information on dangerous chemicals.
- Safety equipment.
- A way for workers to report hazards.

By law, you can report a safety problem without fear of punishment.

There Ought To Be a Law!

Here are three stories about young people who face health and safety hazards on the job. The stories are about young workers in the past and present-day U.S., as well as in other countries.

Your assignment is to identify the health, safety, and other labor abuses shown in each story, and to propose laws that might prevent them. To help you, each story is followed by a set of questions.

Note that you don't need to know what the law actually says about these issues. Your purpose is to propose laws that you think might solve the problems, regardless of whether these laws actually exist. Your proposed laws may deal with health, safety, working hours, child labor, or other working conditions.

You will work in a small group. Your group will be assigned **one** of the stories. Everyone in your group should read your story (or pick someone to read it aloud). Then discuss the story and try to answer the questions. Feel free to draw on information from other classes or from your own experience.

Your group should work together to come up with your answers. Choose someone in the group to be the “recorder.” This person will take notes on your discussion and report your group's answers to the class later. You'll have about 20 minutes.



Fast Food

At the age of 15, Jennifer Forshee worked in a Burger King in Santa Rosa, California. She tells what happened to her:

I cut the tip of my right finger off. The reason for this was because the machine I was using was broken. I was forced to use my hand instead of the tool that pushed the vegetables down into the food processor. The only training I ever received on this machine was how to turn the machine itself on and how to make the salads look pretty.

I feel that this Burger King was very irresponsible. . . . I was only 15 at the time and I do not feel that I should have been the one to say that I should not have been on this machine.

Jennifer said that no one—neither her employer nor her school—told her anything about the child labor laws and what her rights were under those laws. She worked 25 to 30 hours a week during the school year, and sometimes 50 hours a week in summertime. She didn't work because her family needed help, but to earn money for a car.

—Milton Meltzer, *Cheap Raw Material*

Questions

- 1. What health, safety, and other labor abuses are shown in this story?**
- 2. What laws do you think there should be to prevent these particular abuses?**
- 3. What other laws should there be to protect teens from being injured at work?**

From your answers to questions #2 and #3, your group should choose three laws to present to the class.

The Mule-Room

Al Priddy, a 13-year-old, took a job in a Massachusetts cotton mill in 1895. According to state law, he had to attend school for at least three months each year, but he was allowed to work full time in the mill the rest of the year. Eventually he was assigned to a part of the mill called the “mule-room.” His job was to clean and maintain spinning machines (called mules) that were used to make thread. Here is Al’s story:

At last the terror of the mill began to blacken my life. The romance, the glamour, and the charm were gone.

Five days of the week, at the outer edge of winter, I never stood out in the daylight. I was a human mole, going to work while the stars were out and returning home under the stars.

I dodged past the mules and the iron posts they met, just in time to avoid being crushed. Alfred Skinner, a close friend of mine, had his body pinned and crushed badly. I also tried to clean the small wheels which ran on tracks while they were in motion, and, in doing so, I had to crawl under the frame and follow the carriage. ... One day the wheel nipped off the end of my little finger, though that was nothing at all in comparison to what occurred to some of my friends. Jimmy Hendricks today is a dwarfed cripple from such an accident. Hern Hanscom has two fingers missing, and Earl Rogers had his back broken horribly.

Yet notices always were posted, the company was never liable, and they said we had no one but ourselves to blame. Yet we could not work there without taking the risk, which shows how much humanity there can be in law.

Legally I worked ten and a half hours, though actually the hours were very much longer. The machinery that I could not clean while in motion, I had to leave until noon or early morning. Then, too, the spinner I worked for paid me to take over some of his work that could be done during the stopping hours. There were generally from three to four days in the week when I worked 13 or more hours a day, in order to catch up.

Five men had the right to boss me—two spinners, the overseer, second hand, and third hand. One of the spinners was a kindly man, very considerate of my strength and time, while the other was the most drunken and violent-tempered man in the room.

Day after day I had to face the thousands of bobbins and keep them moving. Thousands of things turning, turning, turning, emptying, emptying, emptying, and requiring quick fingers to keep moving. A fight with a machine is the most cunning torture man can face—when the odds are in favor of the machine. ... A machine never tires, is never hungry, has no heart to make it suffer. It never sleeps, and has no ears to listen to your appeal for mercy.

—Adapted from *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History*,
edited by Robert H. Bremner (Harvard University Press).

Questions

- 1. What health, safety, and other labor abuses are shown in this story?**

- 2. What laws do you think there should be to prevent these particular abuses?**

- 3. What other laws should there be to protect teens from being injured at work?**

From your answers to questions #2 and #3, your group should choose three laws to present to the class.

The Carpet Weavers

This newspaper account from 1997 shows that serious child labor abuses still occur in some parts of the world.

NEW DELHI, India (UPI)—The South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), an independent organization, has freed more than 20,000 children from bondage in India in the past decade, according to a leader of the movement.

Most of these children were found to be working in industries considered hazardous, such as stone quarrying and construction, said the chairman of SACCS, Kailash Satyarthi.

In a raid on a carpet-weaving factory in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, SACCS, along with a local magistrate, liberated a group of children between the ages of seven and twelve who were working 16-hour shifts with no wages, Satyarthi said.

“Some of these children who had left their families at the age of four seemed paralyzed by their new found freedom,” he added.

According to SACCS, the children are tempted away from very poor households with promises of wrist watches and radios. Parents who try to get the child back are beaten and chased away. Children are used because they cannot form unions or strike, Satyarthi told UPI.

Nine-year-old Sanjay Choudhry told UPI that he was kept hungry while working to prevent him from falling asleep. “I was not allowed to use the toilet, and the weaving master would beat me if I cried for my mother,” the little boy said. Children working under these conditions often fall prey to lung, throat, and eye infections, Satyarthi said.

The Indian government said earlier this week that total abolition of child labor in the near future was not considered feasible due to existing socioeconomic conditions in the country.

The minister of state for labor, P.A. Sangma, told parliament that the government aimed at a slower progressive elimination of child labor.

The national plan of action includes a greater emphasis on compulsory education for children and focuses on antipoverty and development programs, Sangma added.

According to a recent SACCS report, there are about 50 million children employed as laborers in India and an equal number of adults searching for jobs. The United States has put pressure on the Indian government to find a solution to the issue.

Germany, previously India’s biggest buyer of carpets, now refuses to buy any woven by children, according to exporters.

—Adapted from *Worker Rights News*

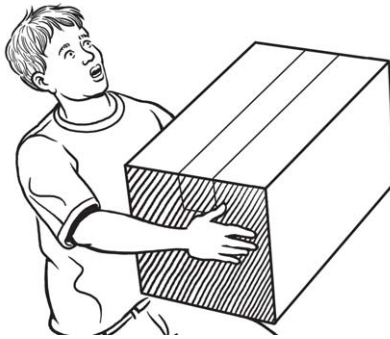
Questions

1. What health, safety, and other labor abuses are shown in this story?
2. What laws do you think there should be to prevent these particular abuses?
3. What other laws should there be to protect teens from being injured at work?

From your answers to questions #2 and #3, your group should choose three laws to present to the class.

Are You a Working Teen?

Protect Your Health! Know Your Rights!



Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?

- 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.

Every year nearly **70 teens under 18 die** from work injuries in the United States. Another **77,000 get hurt** badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

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 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 |

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.
- At least the California minimum wage, \$6.75 an hour. (City minimum wages may be higher.) In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first 160 hours of work, if you have no previous similar experience. For more information, ☎ (888) ASK-WAGE (275-9243).
- Workers' compensation benefits if you are hurt on the job. These include:
 - Medical care for your injury, whether or not you miss time from work.
 - Payments if you lose wages for more than 3 days or if you are hospitalized overnight.
 - Other benefits if you become permanently disabled.

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.

Is It OK to Do Any Kind of Work?

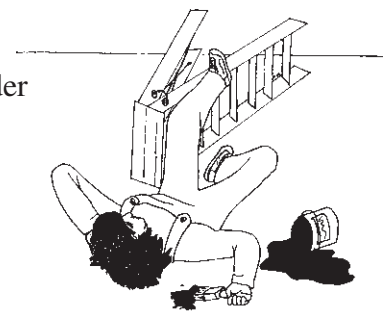
NO! There are laws that protect teens from doing dangerous work.

In California no worker under 18 may:

- Drive a motor vehicle on public streets as a main part of the job
- Drive a forklift
- 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 any baking or cooking on the job (except cooking at a serving counter)
- Work in dry cleaning or a commercial laundry
- Do building, construction, or manufacturing work
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor
- Work on a ladder or scaffold



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 or school district office (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

Should I Be Working This Late or This Long?

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

This table shows the hours teens may work. (Some school districts may have more restrictive regulations. Also, there are some exceptions for teens in Work Experience Education programs.)

| Work Hours for Teens | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Ages 14 and 15 | Ages 16 and 17 |
| Work Hours | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 am–7 pm, from Labor Day–June 1• Not during school hours• 7 am–9 pm, from June 1–Labor Day | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 am–10 pm when there is school the next day• 5 am–12:30 am when there is no school the next day |
| Maximum Hours When School Is in Session | <p>18 hours a week, but not over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 hours a day on school days• 8 hours a day Saturday–Sunday and holidays | <p>48 hours a week, but not over:</p> <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 Get Hurt on the Job?

- Tell your supervisor right away. If you're under 18, tell your parents or guardians too.
- Get emergency medical treatment if needed.
- Your employer must give you a **claim form**. Fill it out and return it to your employer. This helps ensure that you receive workers' compensation benefits.

Workers' Compensation: Did You Know?

- You can receive benefits:
 - Even if you are under 18.
 - Even if you are a temporary or part-time worker (in most cases).
- You receive benefits no matter who was at fault for your job injury.
- You don't have to be a legal resident of the U.S. to receive workers' compensation benefits.
- You can't sue your employer for a job injury (in most cases).

You have a right to speak up!

It is illegal for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem or injury, or for claiming workers' compensation.

What If I Need Help With a Safety Problem?

- Talk to your supervisor about the problem.
- Talk to your parents or teachers.
- Talk to your job training representative.
- Talk to your union representative (if any).
- For health and safety information and advice, call the California Resource Network for Young Worker Health and Safety. Many materials are available in Spanish.
☎ (888) 933-TEEN www.youngworkers.org
- If necessary contact one of these California government agencies (a local phone number can be found in the State Government pages).
 - **Cal/OSHA** (under Industrial Relations Dept., Occupational Safety and Health) for information about making a health or safety complaint.
☎ (800) 963-9424 www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH
 - **Labor Standards Enforcement** (under Industrial Relations Dept.) to make a complaint about wages or work hours.
☎ (415) 703-5300 www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE
 - **Fair Employment and Housing** to make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination.
☎ (800) 884-1684 www.dfeh.ca.gov
 - **Workers' Compensation – Information and Assistance** (under Industrial Relations Dept.) to get information about benefits for injured workers.
☎ (800) 736-7401 www.dir.ca.gov/DWC



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?
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?