

## *The Children in Lewis Hine's Photographs* Lesson Plan

### Overview

In the early 1900s, the National Child Labor Committee hired photographer Lewis Hine to document children at work in factories, on farms, and on streets. Hine recorded the names and ages of some of the children. In this lesson, students analyze photographs of children at work in Vermont. Students use census records to learn more about these children and to consider the complex reasons for child labor.

### Related Vermont History Explorer Articles

Vermont in the 1910s

<https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/vermont-in-the-1910s>

“The Bitter Cry of the Children”

[https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/client\\_media/files/GreenMountaineer/thebittercry.pdf](https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/client_media/files/GreenMountaineer/thebittercry.pdf)

### Related Literature

*Counting on Grace* by Elizabeth Winthrop

*Bread and Roses, Too* by Katherine Paterson

### Enduring Understandings

We learn about the past through records and photographs (primary sources) left behind by others.

### Essential Questions

How can we use a variety of sources to learn about Vermont history?

How do economic decisions affect the experience of individuals?

What events and people have caused change in Vermont?

### Focusing Questions

How did children in the past help their families meet their basic human needs?

Why did the government enact laws against child labor?

### Materials and documents to print – one copy for each group

- Photograph & caption analysis worksheet
- Census analysis worksheet
- Information about the children (one child for each group)

Addie Card

1. photograph with caption
2. 1910 census record
3. 1910 census transcription

Alfred Higgs

1. photograph with caption
2. 1920 census record
3. 1920 census transcription

Anna Grenier

1. photograph with caption
2. 1910 census record
3. 1910 census transcription

Carl Brown

1. photograph with caption
2. 1920 census record
3. 1920 census transcription

Clarence Noel

1. photograph with caption
2. 1910 census record
3. 1910 census transcription

John Friedman

1. photograph with caption
2. 1910 census record
3. 1910 census transcription

Morris Levine

1. photograph with caption
2. 1920 census record
3. 1920 census transcription

Sadie Finnigan

1. photograph with caption
2. 1910 census record
3. 1910 census transcription

- Copies of or link to “The Bitter Cry of the Children” article
- Assessment photograph and worksheet

### Adapting the activity

If time is limited, analyze one child’s photograph and census records as a class. Or have students focus on just the photograph and caption analysis worksheet for the photographs.

### Plan

1. Introduce the photographs of Lewis Hine to students. Lewis Hine was a photographer hired by the National Child Labor Committee to document children at work in factories, on farms, and on streets in the early 1900s. He took photographs in Vermont in 1909, 1910, 1915 and in 1916. Sometimes he recorded the names and ages of the children he photographed; other times he just recorded the locations. By looking at the photographs and finding the children in census records, students can learn more about the children who worked to earn money in Vermont in the early 1900s.
2. Divide class into groups. There are materials for eight groups. Provide each group with a copy of the “photograph with caption” from one of the children. Also give each group a copy of the “Photograph & Caption Analysis Worksheet.” Tell students to look carefully at the photograph and answer the questions. After groups have finished, have students share their answers with the rest of the class. If possible, project a copy of the photograph being

discussed. Discuss the types of places the children were working. Do some of the jobs seem more dangerous than others? Do some of the jobs seem more desirable than others?

3. Introduce the census records to the class. The United States government counts the number of people who live in the country every 10 years. The questions differ each time, indicating what the government wants to know about the population. In the early 1900s, the government collected information including the names and ages of people who lived in each household, their relationship to each other, where they and their parents were from, and if they went to school and/or worked. By finding the census records of the children in Lewis Hine's photographs, the students can learn more about the children and their families. Although the census records do not tell why the children were working, the information can give some insight into the family's financial situation.
4. Distribute corresponding census record for the child in the photograph to each group. Depending on the age and abilities of the students, distribute either the scan of the original or the census transcription, or both. The transcription is easier to read, although the form has been split onto separate lines. Some of the census records are from 1910 and others are from 1920, depending on when they children were photographed Lewis Hine. Also distribute the "Census Analysis Worksheet" to each group. Instruct the students to look at the census records carefully and answer the questions.
5. Help the students analyze the census, as necessary. Depending on when Lewis Hine took the child's photograph, the census might be from before or after the time of the photograph. Sometimes the census indicates that the child is not working, even though Hine photographed the child at work. The child might have worked during part of the year and been at school during other times. Or the child may have started working after the census was taken. Or the parents might have lied to census takers because the children were too young to be working.
6. Have the students present their analysis to the rest of the class. Use the "Answer Key" to help answer questions the students might have about the children in the photograph. Keep track of where the children's families were from to discuss immigration in Vermont. Discuss where the children's families were working. Some of the children worked in the same places as their families.
7. Discuss what these photos and captions tell about immigration and child labor in Vermont in the early 1900s. Immigrants came to Vermont from Canada and Europe. Several of the children in these photographs were the children of immigrants. Sometimes the children went to work to help earn extra money for their families. If possible, read aloud pages 1-10 of *Counting on Grace* by Elizabeth Winthrop to help explain why some children were working.
8. Have students read "The Bitter Cry of the Children" (Green Mountaineer article). Discuss how the photographs of Lewis Hine and the work of other reformers helped convince governments to change laws about child labor. The Vermont Child Labor History Timeline shows the gradual changes in Vermont law that restricted child labor. In general, individual states made the laws that cover child labor. Other laws increased the length of time that

children were required to attend school. Discuss the changes over time. Do students agree that they should be required to attend school and prohibited from working?

9. Assessment: There are many other photographs that Lewis Hine took of children in Vermont where he did not name the children. In others, the children are named, but are not easy to find in census records. Some of these photographs can be used to assess the students' understanding of child labor in Vermont in the early 1900s. Print copies of assessment "Photo 1" and/or assessment "Photo 2" and distribute to students with copies of the assessment questions. Encourage the students to use their knowledge of child labor in Vermont to write an historically accurate story based on a photograph by Lewis Hine.
10. Teachers may want to share how author Elizabeth Winthrop wrote the book *Counting on Grace* based on a Lewis Hine photograph:  
<http://elizabethwinthrop.com/teachers/counting-on-grace-teachers-guide/>  
and how she used census records to learn more about the girl in the photograph:  
<http://elizabethwinthrop.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/SocialEducation.pdf>.  
Winthrop worked with Joe Manning on the research. Manning has taken the project further and discovered more about the children included in the activity.

Addie Card: <https://morningsonmaplestreet.com/2014/11/26/addie-card-search-for-an-amemic-little-spinner-chapter-one/>

Morris Levine: <https://morningsonmaplestreet.com/2015/01/01/morris-levine/>

And also Vermont children not included in the activity:

Meyer Rome: <https://morningsonmaplestreet.com/2015/01/01/meyer-rome/>

Joseph Beadoine: <https://morningsonmaplestreet.com/2018/02/13/joseph-beadoine-burlington-vermont/>

Joseph and Arthur Audette: <https://morningsonmaplestreet.com/2019/01/11/joseph-arthur-audette-burlington-vermont/>