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Honors World History

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### Child Labor in the United States

Life has changed a lot since the 1800s. The way we communicate, the resources available to us, and especially the job market have changed tremendously in the last 200 years. 200 years ago, child labor was a big thing, and it had mixed views. The average pay check was a lot less then too. Now today, things have changed. There are requirements for working, people are paid more, and there is more availability in the different kinds of jobs people can do. The biggest thing is that children have more protection in the workforce, as compared to what it was like 200 years ago.

To start this all out, let's go back to the 1800s. Child labor was a big thing in the United States. Those children who worked would do so for over 10 hours a day, pretty much all week, and were paid around \$0.50 a day. The working conditions were not so great either. For those who worked in the mills, they were working in pretty humid areas, as the windows were kept shut to prevent the cotton from breaking, and that would make the temperature really high inside.<sup>1</sup> There also were a lot of health risks with included exposure to dangerous toxins, the

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<sup>1</sup> [Museum of Tolerance](#)

loss of limbs, lung diseases, and many more.<sup>2</sup> Since the children had to work, most of them did not go to school, or did very little of it.

Let's fast forward to today, where things are completely different. We can thank the actions taken during the 20th century for helping to fix the issues that were brought about by child labor. In the earlier parts of the century, committees helped to make the state legislatures pass reform measures.<sup>3</sup> Eventually in 1938, President Roosevelt signed into law The Fair Labor Standards Act. This helped to ensure that when younger people were working, that it was done safely, and added protections for them as well.<sup>4</sup> Now today, younger people start working around the age of 16, and are paid anywhere between \$7 to \$10 an hour. Because of the fact that kids cannot work until 16, that means they can focus on their education, something that was not a priority 200 years ago.

Things have changed a lot in the last 200 years, especially in the workforce, more specifically for kids. In the 1800s, kids worked in really bad conditions. They faced a lot of health risks, minimum education, were paid very little, and did not have much protection. However thanks to reform that was made in the 20th century, things have changed. Now today, kids work in much better conditions, start working around the age of 16, are paid more, and have much more protections than they did in the 1800s.

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<sup>2</sup> [Ducksters](#)

<sup>3</sup> [HISTORY](#)

<sup>4</sup> [U.S. Department of Labor](#)