

Brady Kondek

Ms. Kraynak

AP English Language

26 November 2022

Working Conditions

Getting a job, one of the many moments in our life where we begin to transition from being a kid to becoming an adult in America. The restrictions, maximum weekly hours, and many other regulations in place have become common nature for minors in the workforce. However, that has not always been the case. Not even 100 years ago it was the complete opposite for them, with superfluous hours, unfair wages, and even unsafe working conditions. In her speech given to those at the National American Woman Suffrage Association's 1905 convention, social worker Florence Kelley implements precise diction, repetition, and rhetorical questions in order to convey her opposition to how minors are treated within the workforce, ultimately calling for change and moving the audience to fight alongside her to bring this change, as well as to ensure women the right to vote.

Kelley throughout her speech is quite keen when it comes to the words she selects, and the connotations that they emit to her audience. Using strong and precise diction, she effectively conveys the immorality of individuals this young having to work so hard and for so long, at times even more than the average adult. She makes mention to them as "*little beasts of burden robbed of school life*," (Kelley), referring to how the kids are treated in the perspective of the employers, and that they are not able to live a normal life of someone their age; something that all should have. As well, Kelley points out the system they are forced to work under by referring

to it as a “*sweating system*,” (Kelley). The strong connotations conveyed by her choice of diction effectively allow her to bring light to the matter, and give her audience an insight into how this affects them, as well as what they are forced to sacrifice and go through on a daily basis through this horrendous conditions.

Repetition as well plays a big role within her speech, helping to connect and bring the audience along with her into the situation. The word “*we*” is most commonly repeated by Kelley, such as when she says, “*we do not wish this*,” (Kelley), “*we shall none of us be able to*,” (Kelley), and “*we prefer to have our work done by men and women*,” (Kelley), which connects her and the audience together in regard to this situation, consequently making them part of this need for change. She also makes great use of the word “*they*,” repeatedly using it to refer to the children. To bring light to the hard and strenuous work they are forced to endure, she explains how “*They spin and weave our cotton underwear in the cotton mills. Children braid straw for our hats, they spin and weave the silk and velvet wherewith we trim our hats. They stamp buckles and metal ornaments*,” (Kelley). Kelley’s repetition as well works to tie all her claims together into one line of reasoning, which as a whole greatly resonates with the audience, and makes them want to fight alongside her.

Kelley aims to have the audience question their own role and what they can do with this child labor situation they find themselves in. Not only that, but she also ultimately aims to fight for women’s suffrage. She asks, “*If the mothers and the teachers in Georgia could vote, would the Georgia Legislature have refused every session for the last three years to stop the work in the mills of children under twelve years of age?*” (Kelley), which opens up for the audience to come up with their own answers. This as well invigorates the audience to do what is needed to bring change. Kelley also asks, “*Would the New Jersey Legislature have passed that shameful repeal*

bill enabling girls of fourteen years to work all night, if the mothers in New Jersey were enfranchised?" (Kelley), which has the same effect. Pulling in the spirit of American democracy, she urges that people should elect those who will fight for and protect these children from what they are forced to endure, further stating "*we should enlist the workingmen voters, with us, in this task of freeing the children from toil!*" (Kelley).

In the end, a lot comes along with American democracy. With it, we have the opportunity to dictate how we want our country to operate, and who we want to deliver and represent us to deliver that. In this case of child labor, it robs children of their chance to be a child. Take a second to think of how children live their lives now. They make friends, go to school, grow with their families, and so much more. Now flashback to this situation, in which children do not get those opportunities. Kelley, who sees the immorality of this, makes it her mission to fight for these children, along with fighting for women's suffrage as well. Her speech helps us to realize that we must always fight for what is right, and fight for those who are not able to do so for themselves. So let us continue to do our part, and make our world a better place.

Works Cited

Kelley, Florence. *2011 AP English Language and Composition Free-Response Questions*.

secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap11_frq_english_language.pdf. Accessed 16 Nov.
2022.