

WEEK 8 INTRODUCTION TO READINGS

Documents from British Parliamentary Committees during the "industrial revolution" (1832, 1842), taken from the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers:

1831-1832, Report from the Select Committee on the "Bill to Regulate the Labour of Children in the Mills and Factories of the United Kingdom"

Vol. 15, pp. 35-36, 95-101, 195-199, 338-349 (Drake, Bentley, Smart)

1833, Commission for Inquiry into the Employment of Children in Factories, Second Report

Vol. 21, pp. 28-30 (Harter)

1842, Reports to the Commissioners on the Employment of Children in Mines:

Vol. 15, pp. 83-84 (Berry et al)

Vol. 16, pp. 226, 230, 244, 250-251, 258-260, 261, 263, 292, 441-442, 461 (Dunn, Payne, Richardson, Day, Lindley, Ostcliffe, Twibell, T. Wilson, Sadler, Willan, Harrison, Wright, I. Wilson).

Vol. 17, pp. 39, 102, 107-108, 122 (Staley, Jagger, Kershaw, Barrett).

Note: The quality of some of these copies is poor, due to faulty film exposure in the microfiches from which these were made. The original volumes were not available. Just read as much as you can.

In response to labor protest and to middle-class demands for reform, various parliamentary committees investigated the working and living conditions of British workers in the first half of the nineteenth century. The proceedings of the committees, particularly those relating to child labor, shocked the British middle classes. In 1833 and 1842, parliamentary acts placed restrictions on the use

of child and female labor for the first time in British history. The laws of 1833 restricted the number of hours women and children could spend at work in textile mills, and the 1842 laws prohibited women and boys (defined as males under the age of thirteen) from working underground in coal mines. The laws did not improve working conditions substantially.

William Blake, "Chimney Sweeper," "London," "The Human Abstract," all from Songs of Experience (1794)

Born in 1757, Blake's father was a London shopkeeper. As a poet and painter, Blake had intermittent commercial success in his own lifetime. Posthumously, Blake has had great critical success, and today most college surveys of English literature include some of his works.

The Songs of Experience were written to accompany an earlier collection, the Songs of Innocence. As in the case of another collection, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (ca. 1789-1790), Blake's poems were created in the form of hand-colored etchings.

WEEK 8 QUESTIONS

Documents from British Parliamentary Committees during the "industrial revolution" (1832-1842)

1. What is the meaning of the following terms as used in these readings? Use the Oxford English Dictionary.

colliery

hurrying

corf, corves

doffer

List other words you did not understand and try the Oxford English Dictionary for their definitions.

2. What evidence is there in the testimony that a capitalist economic order is being described?

3. What reasons are given why women should work? why they should not work?

4. What reasons are given why children should work? why they should not work?

William Blake, "Chimney Sweeper," "London," "The Human Abstract" (1794)

5. What is the chimney sweeper crying?

6. Choose one of the poems and describe the idea of late-eighteenth century England that it expresses.