

Chapter 20 Viewpoint Activity



Although the Industrial Revolution would eventually bring more goods to more people, life for workers in early factories was often quite harsh (textbook pages 516–518). Below are two sets of rules for factory workers in the 1840s and 1850s. ♦ *As you read, think about the kinds of lives these workers led. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Rules for Workers

APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACT, SILK MILLS (FRANCE, 1850s)

(Article 1) To be admitted, young women must be between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, of good character and in good health, intelligent and industrious, and must have been vaccinated. They must present their birth certificate, a certificate of vaccination, and a trousseau. . . .

(Article 3) During the apprenticeship period, the pupil will be paid wages, fed, lodged, given heat and light, and laundry for her body linen only; she will also be furnished with aprons.

(Article 10) The effective work time is twelve hours. Summer and winter, the day begins at 5 o'clock and ends at 7:15. Breakfast is from 7:30 to 8:15; lunch is from 12:00 to 1:00; snack is from 5:00 to 5:30; supper is at 7:15.

After the second year, pupils will receive lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic. They will be taught to sew and to do a little cooking. . . .

(Article 12) Wages are not due until the end of the year. . . . Gifts, incentive pay, and compensation for extra work will be paid each month.

RULES FOR FOUNDRY WORKERS

(GERMANY, 1844)

Every man employed in the concern named below shall receive a copy of these rules, so that no one can plead ignorance. . . .

(1) The normal working day begins at all seasons at 6 A.M. precisely and ends, after the usual break of half an hour for breakfast, an hour for dinner and half an hour for tea, at 7 P.M., and it shall be strictly observed.

Five minutes before the beginning of the stated hours of work until their actual commencement, a bell shall ring and indicate that every worker employed in the concern has to proceed to his place of work in order to start as soon as the bell stops.

. . . Workers arriving 2 minutes late shall lose half an hour's wages; whoever is more than 2 minutes late may not start work until after the next break, or at least shall lose his wages until then. . . .

(7) All conversation with fellow-workers is prohibited; if any worker requires information about his work, he must turn to the overseer, or to the particular fellow-worker designated for the purpose.

Source:

Discovering the Western Past, by Merry E.

Wiesner, Julius R. Ruff, W. B. Wheeler

(Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

Questions to Discuss

1. What were the requirements for apprentices in the French silk mills?
2. How do the working hours in these two factories compare? How do they compare with normal working hours today?
3. **Using Reasoned Judgment** What provisions in these rules seem fair? Unfair?
4. **Recognizing Cause and Effect** Why might people choose work like this instead of farm work?