

Theme 4

Stories from the Factory Workers' Memories



KS2 History and Literacy

Factory Workers' Memories - Teaching Notes

Introduction

This theme looks at the use of oral evidence for finding out about the past. Pupils will read and listen to a number of short accounts of events in the factory from the workers themselves.

This theme contains four stories from interviews with the workers to read and listen to.

Story 1	Dangerous Machinery
Story 2	Fire at the Ropery
Story 3	The Buzzer
Story 4	The Thief Mark

Objectives

Understand what oral history is and how it is collected.

Understand that oral history can tell us how people felt about an event as well as what happened.

Activity 1: How can we find out about work at the Ropery since 1930?

Discuss the uses of different types of sources (clues about the past) and their limitations.

Oral history is people from the time, talking about their own experiences. Oral history is useful for telling historians about people's feelings and opinions. However, people may have forgotten some details or they may not want to tell you about some things that happened.

The interview questions could be used for a real interview with parents, grandparents or local people either relating to the ropery or another topic of interest.

Activity 2: Stories from oral testimony

Stories 1, 3 and 4 can be used with the comprehension questions which accompany them to illustrate how oral history can tell us about people's opinions, views and feelings.

Story 2 has been summarised in 8 statements. Read the story to the class twice, then ask them to sort the cards into the sequence they heard them in the story.

Plenary

What have you found out from the stories people told that:

...surprised you?

...you found most interesting?

...you couldn't have found out from other sources you have looked at in history?

The recordings of the stories can be listened to online at:

www.the-ropewalk.co.uk/heritage_education.html

How can we find out about work at the rope factory since 1930?

1. Make a list of sources that you could use to find out about the ropery since 1930.
2. Why can we not use oral history to find out about the rope factory in 1858?
3. What do you think you could find out from interviewing the workers that you couldn't find out from the other sources in your list?
4. What might be the problems with asking people about their own lives and what they did many years ago?
5. Imagine you are going to interview someone who worked in the factory. Make a list of six questions you would ask them if you wanted to find out what it was like to work in the factory. Think carefully about how you would get them to tell you their feelings and opinions. Try to think of some questions that will get them talking rather than just giving one word answers.

You might want to start some of your questions off like this:

- Why did you decide to...?
- Describe what it was like to...?
- What was the most/least...?
- How did you feel when...?

Story 1: Dangers in the Mill - Madge Audsley

"When we first got those machines in 1937, I don't know how many revolutions a minute they did, there was no guards on them, none whatsoever. They had to get the guards on them and I didn't want them, a health and safety thing. I didn't want 'em. I'd only be fifteen or sixteen and you know what they say, you think you know it all and you know nothing.

But we got them and I realised it was a lot safer. The worst thing really was finger ends off. You didn't stop your machines to put a fresh bobbin up and if you keep 'em going, the twine might get around your finger and if it was going it would take your finger end off. That was the main thing in the old times. Then they got better machinery.

The noise was terrific, and we didn't get those ear-muffs, it was screeching noise, you had to learn to lip read. People would say 'I know what you said'."

Story 1: Dangers in the Mill - Madge Audsley

1. What was the most common accident/injury in the factory while Madge was working there?
2. How did the workers manage to understand each other when it was so loud?
3. Write down three things about the machines and the conditions in the mill that might have been a danger to the workers.
4. Why do you think Madge didn't want guards putting on the machinery?
5. Underline or colour in the phrase that you think best describes Madge's opinions about working in the mill.

1. She had always thought it was a very dangerous place to work.

2. She always thought it was a safe place to work and the guards on the machines were not necessary.

3. At first, Madge thought the machines were safe enough but she later realised the mill could be a very dangerous place to work.

Story 2: Fire at the Ropery - Madge Audlsey

"We didn't get bombed during the war, but we did have a fire.

We had a shed outside where we put all the waste from the bales. It was flammable and I don't know how it happened, well it was spontaneous combustion – and we had a big door at the bottom of the mill, it was shut and somebody opened it. Flame rushed in. At the bottom end where I worked, the tow mill they called it, it just went up like that. They got it out before it spread to the rope machines. And that winter – it was wartime – we worked without a gable end and they had to put tarpaulin across. My, it was cold. But it was no good going on strike because it was for the war effort. Mr. Hendy was quite upset when we had the gable end off. Mrs. Hendy would come down and bring us all a hot drink in the middle of the morning."

Story 2: Fire at the Ropery - Madge Audlsey

<p>The Tow mill went up in flames.</p>	<p>The fire was put out before it spread to the rope machines.</p>
<p>The workers didn't go on strike because there was a war on.</p>	<p>Somebody opened the big door at the bottom of the mill and the fire spread into the Tow mill.</p>
<p>The store of waste fibres caught fire spontaneously.</p>	<p>The women in the mill worked without a gable end and they had to put tarpaulin across.</p>
<p>Mrs. Hendy brought all the workers a hot drink in the middle of the morning.</p>	<p>There was a fire during the war.</p>

Story 3: The Ropery Buzzer - Nev Bavin

"The last thing I did was to climb up on to the roof.

There was a buzzer up there.

They used to blow the buzzer at the Ropery at half past seven every morning to get everybody in.... well it was blown at twenty five past seven, a short blast and at half past seven - they had to be there by the time that buzzer went. Then again at half past four to go.

We could hear the buzzer five miles away in Goxhill and it's a unique sound. I've always said if that buzzer blew now, at half past seven in morning, half the people in Barton would get up and go to Ropery to work.

Everybody worked by that buzzer; they set their clocks by it. And when that buzzer blew at half past four, one mass of people left the factory, running out the gates to the motorbikes outside. One mass of people leaving the factory as the buzzer blew.

The fitters, we used to take it in turns to go in at 7 o'clock in the morning to see to the boilers and blow the buzzer.

The last thing I did, on the last day I was there dismantling the factory, was to climb up, take that buzzer down and bring it home with me."

Story 3: The Ropery Buzzer - Nev Bavin

1. What happened at 7:30 each morning?
2. What was the buzzer for?
3. Why was Nev dismantling the factory?
4. Why do you think Nev took the buzzer down?
What was so special about it to him?



5. Colour in the sentence which best describes how Nev felt about the factory closing according to the story.

1. Nev didn't care about the factory closing, it wasn't important to him at all.

2. Nev was sorry the factory closed because it had been important to everyone living in Barton.

3. Nev was sorry the factory closed because he had enjoyed working there.

6. Use Nev's story to write a caption of no more than 50 words to go next to the Buzzer for a museum display about Barton Ropery.

Story 4: The Thief Mark – Ted Appleyard

“1937, I went in the Navy. I was that fascinated with putting these thief marks in Navy ropes, I thought I’d go in the Navy and see the ropes, thought it was a good thing, that’s what I went in for. And I went all over the world. When we were splicing the ropes together, I found this thief mark – it had been made at Barton Rope works. It was always thrilling for me to see this thief mark. Most likely my dad had made them.”

The Thief Mark

A thief mark, or rogues yarn, was a strip of tape or coloured yarn. It was placed between the strands of Navy ropes when they were being made. If the rope was stolen, it could be cut and identified as belonging to the Navy. Each rope factory used a different colour of yarn or printed the company name on the tape. You can see a roll of thief mark tape in the display.

Story 4: The Thief Mark – Ted Appleyard

1. What did Ted do in 1937?
2. What was a thief mark?
3. How did Ted know the rope he had found was made at Barton Rope works?
4. Circle the word which you think best describes how Ted felt when he found the rope made at Barton while working in the Navy. Use a dictionary to look up words you are not sure of:

sad	happy	indifferent	worried
proud	embarrassed	relieved	

Use Ted's story to write a caption of no more than 50 words to go in the museum display next to the roll of thief mark tape which Ted donated.