



0. REGULATED CHILD LABOR - Story Preface

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About his photo—taken in February of 1911—[Lewis Hine](#) wrote: “Josie, six year[s] old, Bertha, six years old, Sophie, 10 years old, all shuck [oysters] regularly. Maggioni Canning Co. Location: Port Royal, South Carolina.” Image online via the National Child Labor Committee collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Click on it for a better view.

Congress did not pass a meaningful law, protecting children from harsh labor practices, until the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. It remains the law in the United States today since the Supreme Court (in 1941) reversed its previous holding in *Hammer v Dagenhart*.

Among other things, that law generally sets an age limit of 16 for nonagricultural jobs. (America, which began as a nation of farmers, still has different laws for children working on farms compared to young people working in industry.)

- Since the Fair Labor law, the nature of working children has dramatically changed in the United States, although many young people still work. Child labor has given way to teen labor.
- Compared to other developed countries, the percentage of working teens in America is relatively high. But unlike their counterparts in European countries like Germany, Denmark, and Switzerland (where work-study programs can be the first rung in a career ladder), most American teenagers work for disposable income. According to government reports, “the size and impact of that discretionary income is enormous.”
- Elsewhere in the world, the International Labor Organization estimates that more than 250 million children work - many in occupations that are detrimental to their welfare. Reminiscent of American children before the law changed things, about 120 million of those children have little hope for an education which could make their lives better.

Child labor issues remain a “hot topic” throughout the world. Developed countries, including the United States, have committed resources to facilitate change.

One can only hope that conditions elsewhere improve more quickly than they did in America.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/REGULATED-CHILD-LABOR-Child-Labor>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/REGULATED-CHILD-LABOR-Child-Labor>