

Depth Study J – The Campaigns for factory and mines reform, c.1800-1880

SOURCE A: A cartoon by G. Cruikshank, called *English Factory Slaves*, produced in the early nineteenth century. It shows the treatment of children in the mills.



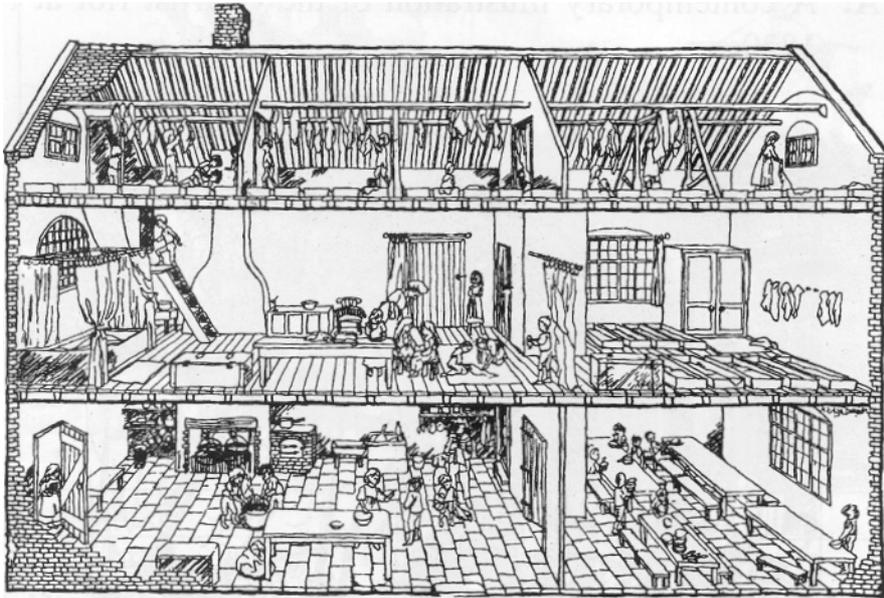
SOURCE B: From the evidence of a factory overseer given to a parliamentary enquiry in the early 1830s.

After the children aged eight to twelve years had worked eight, nine or ten hours, they were nearly ready to faint. Some were asleep. Some were only kept working by being spoken to, or by a little beating, to make them jump up. I was sometimes forced to beat them when they were almost fainting, and it hurt my feelings.

SOURCE C: Taken from *The Condition of the Working Class in England* by Friedrich Engels, 1844-5.

The supervision of machinery, the joining of broken threads, is not an activity which requires any thought, yet it prevents workers from thinking about anything else. It is their fate to be bored every day and all day long from when they are eight. They must not take a moment's rest because the steam engine never stops. If they try to rest for a moment, the overlooker is on their back with the book of fines. Work in the mill is the harshest possible torture to the operatives.

SOURCE D: A modern reconstruction of the apprentice house at Greg's mill at Styal (Cheshire). Here the apprentices were looked after better than in many mills.



SOURCE E: Evidence given by A. Bower, a mill worker, to the Royal Commission on Factory Conditions in 1842. It concerns Greg's mill at Styal.

They said there were some bad reports about the mill, that many left the place and would not stay. Bower said that few left and they were generally glad to come back again. He had worked for 35 years under Mr Greg and did not think there was a better master.

SOURCE F: A view of factory conditions by a lady visitor who made two visits to two cotton mills near Bolton in 1844. From *Chambers' Journal*, 1844.

The factory people are better clothed, better fed, and better behaved than many other classes of working-people. I found the mill a large building, with a wide stone staircase. The working rooms are spacious, well-ventilated, and lofty, kept at a pleasant temperature, and, like all parts of the factory, exceedingly clean. There are also many windows in each room. Great care had been taken to see to the 'boxing-in' of dangerous machinery. I was told that accidents were very rare, and that when they did occur, they were the 'result of the greatest stupidity or carelessness' by the workers.
