

THE
MATCHGIRLS'
STRIKE
COURSEWORK
ASSIGNMENTS

GCSE HISTORY COURSEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Teacher Information

Introduction:

These assignments comprise sources, questions and mark schemes which will enable your pupils to fulfil the coursework requirements in history for Edexcel Foundation specifications for first examination in summer 2003. You may use these assignments as they stand. They have been designed to assess the full range of grades targeted by the syllabus (Grades G-A*). Assistance may be given in class to aid the comprehension of the sources.

You may also adapt these assignments if wished by:

- providing additional or replacement sources
- providing additional or replacement questions.

However, if you wish to make changes you should submit these to the Edexcel Foundation for approval to ensure that revised sources or questions give candidates appropriate opportunity to meet the targets specified at the appropriate level.

Management of the assignment:

The assignment has been designed to accommodate some flexibility of classroom practice. The following points should be borne in mind:

- Although all the questions *may* be tackled as part of a single task, this is not necessary. The timing of individual questions within an assignment may be staggered over a period of time and integrated into the programme of study.
- Candidates may use the sources provided in the pack as part of their preparation for Assignment 1 but this is not a requirement.
- Your candidates should draw upon their contextual knowledge when using the sources for Assignment 2. The historical content listed below should be familiar to candidates before they attempt to answer the questions.

The Matchgirls' Strike

This assignment should arise from a teaching programme designed to occupy approximately half a term. Before candidates begin this assignment they should have knowledge of:

- The development of trade unions to 1879; the role of Robert Owen
- Government responses to trade union developments
- Popular protest and demands for political reform
- The development of trade unions, 1870-1914, and attempts to curb their power.

Introduction

A group of unskilled workers went on strike in 1888. They made matches at the Fairfield Works in East London. Most of the factory workers were women and many of them were under 18 so the strike became known as The Matchgirls' Strike. The strike became famous as one of the first of its kind to succeed before there were trade unions for unskilled workers. Much was written about the matchgirls and the strike both at the time and later. How much of what was said was fair or accurate? This paper gives you the opportunity to investigate.

SOURCE A: From a newspaper article by Annie Besant, 23 June 1888. It was published in The Link, a magazine which campaigned for better working conditions.

I went to interview some of the employees [at the Fairfield works] to get first hand information.

A typical case is that of a girl of 16, a pieceworker*, she earns 4 shillings [20p] a week. Her sister earns 8 shillings [40p].

Fines are then deducted from this splendid wage. If the feet are dirty 1p; if a girl is late she is shut out for half a day – that is for the six hours in the mornings and she loses half a day's wages.

One girl was fined 5p for letting material twist round a machine to save her fingers from being cut. She was told 'never mind your fingers watch the machine'.

They also suffer an occasional blow from a foreman; one hits them 'when he is mad'.

They eat their food in the rooms in which they work, so the fumes of the phosphorous mix with their poor meal and they eat disease. The phosphorous poison works on them as they chew their food and it rots away their jawbones.

SOURCE B: From the Times, 14 July 1888

Before the strike, articles were published in newspapers. They told the matchgirls' side of the story. The lowest rate of wages paid to unskilled apprentices who were learning the business was given as the average for all workers. Every grievance has been listened to and accepted as truth and exaggerated in print.

The average amount of each girl's weekly earnings has been lower during these past few weeks. Because peas and strawberries are a late crop this year, the girls have not left the factory to work in the vegetable and fruit gardens. The match factory has therefore given work to more girls, although there is less demand for matches in the Summer months. The wage paid to each girl on piecework will be less. The strike cannot go on indefinitely. Their sympathizers will not continue to support them. The pity is that the matchgirls have been egged on to strike.

* pieceworkers were paid for the number of matches they made.

SOURCE C: A late nineteenth-century drawing showing matchgirls at work



SOURCE D: A photograph of a group of the striking matchgirls, 1888



SOURCE E: A magazine illustration from July 1888. It shows a protest march to Parliament with a petition supporting the matchgirls.



SOURCE F: An extract from Annie Besant's autobiography, 1893

If ever we worked in our lives, we worked for that fortnight. We asked for money and it came pouring in. We registered the girls for strike pay, wrote articles, roused the clubs, held public meetings, got Mr Bradlaugh to ask questions in Parliament, till the whole country rang with the struggle. The London Trades Council acted as arbitrators (umpires) and a settlement was agreed. The girls went back to work, fines were abolished, better wages paid.

SOURCE G: From a Bryant and May public statement made in June 1888

Certain people, who are not aware of the facts, have the idea that this firm does much to crush labourers. Few of the rumours that float about East London are more wrong than this. The workers are well looked after. The factory is in good order and workers are paid a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. Our workers supported us until outside socialist trouble-makers upset them. I have no doubt that they have been influenced by the stupidity of Mrs Besant and other socialists.

Assignment One: Objective 1

1. Why was there a Dock Strike in London 1889? **(15)**

2. How important was the Dock Strike in the development of trade unions to the end of the nineteenth century? **(20)**

3. How did the trade union movement change in the years 1901-1914? **(15)**

(Total: 50 marks)

Assignment Two: Objectives 2 and 3

1. Study Source A.
What can you learn from Source A about the grievances of the matchgirls in 1888? (6)

2. Study Sources A and B
Does Source B support the evidence of Source A about the matchgirls? Explain your answer. (8)

3. Study Sources C and D
How useful are Sources C and D as evidence about the conditions in which the matchgirls worked? (10)

4. Study Sources B, E and F.
The Times (Source B) expected the strike to collapse. Why did the matchgirls' strike succeed? Use Sources B, E and F and your own knowledge to explain your answer. (12)

5. Study all of the sources

‘The Matchgirls’ strike was not an important event in the history of trade unions.’

Use the sources, and your own knowledge, to explain whether you agree with this view. (14)

(Total: 50 marks)

Coursework Assignments Mark scheme

The Matchgirls' Strike

Assignment One: Objective 1

1. *Why was there a Dock Strike in London in 1889?* (15)
- Target:** Analysis of causation \ recall of knowledge
- Level 1:** Simple statement giving reasons for the strike supported by some knowledge, eg poor wages, bad conditions. (1-5)
- Level 2:** Developed statements giving reasons for the strike supported by relevant knowledge, eg details methods of recruiting labour and uncertainty of employment. (6-10)
- Level 3:** Developed explanation giving reasons for strike supported by appropriately selected knowledge e.g. considers grievances as Level 2 plus seen in context of growth of trade union organisation amongst unskilled workers. (11-15)
2. *How important was the Dock Strike in the development of trade unions to the end of the nineteenth century?* (20)
- Target:** Analysis of cause and consequence/reaching a judgement
- Level 1:** Simple statement giving some reasons supported by some knowledge, eg unskilled workers successful. (1-5)
- Level 2:** Developed statements giving reasons supported by relevant knowledge, eg led to formation of unions for unskilled workers. (6-10)
- Level 3:** Developed explanation supported by appropriately selected knowledge, eg makes a judgement setting the strike in the broader context of 19th century trade union history. (11-15)
- Level 4:** Sustained argument supported by precisely selected knowledge, which contrasts the Dock Strike with other specific events in trade union history, eg the NMUs, Mass Unionism etc. (16-20)

3. *How did the trade union movement change in the years 1901-1914?* (15)

Target: Analysis of change/recall of knowledge

Level 1: Simple statement supported by some knowledge identifying some changes, eg growth in membership: more extreme action. (1-5)

Level 2: Developed statements supported by relevant knowledge giving details of changes, eg details of increased militancy in 19th Century, miners, co-operation between unions, Triple Industrial Alliance, 1914. (6-10)

Level 3: Developed explanation of change supported by appropriately selected knowledge, e.g. examines changing membership, militancy and political involvement. (11-15)

Coursework Assignment Markscheme

The Matchgirls' Strike

Assignment Two: Objectives 2 and 3

1. *Study Source A.*

What can you learn from Source A about the grievances of the matchgirls in 1888? (6)

Target: **Comprehension of, and inference from, a source**

Level 1: Information taken from source at face value, eg fines, occasional blow, phosphorous poisoning, rots away jaw bones. (1-3)

Level 2: Makes use of information to show grievance, eg groups information together to show poor working conditions. (4-6)

2. *Study Sources A and B.*

Does Source B support the evidence of Source A about the matchgirls? Explain your answer.. (8)

Target: **Cross-reference of sources to make a judgement**

Level 1: Simple statements identifying points from Source B which shows support, eg grievances exaggerated in print. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements showing several aspects of or support from B, or makes careful use of both sources to explore one aspect of challenge (or support), eg identifies low wages in A and shows, using B, that this is exaggerated. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed analysis using the evidence of B to consider how far the low wages given in A are exaggerated but recognises in coming to conclusion that poor working conditions listed in Source A are not explicitly challenged by Source B. (7-8)

3. *Study Sources C and D.*

How useful are Sources C and D as evidence about the conditions in which the matchgirls worked? (10)

Target: **Evaluation of utility of sources/recall of knowledge**

Level 1: Simple statements taking the sources at face value or based on source types, eg painting/photograph, matchgirls were poor as in the photograph. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements making inferences from the sources, eg matchgirls unlikely to be clothed as shown in Source C. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed explanation using the sources as evidence to reach a conclusion, eg considers unrealistic impression of Source C because it was produced by - but also comments on image conveyed by the photograph, which may be more realistic etc. (7-10)

4. *Study Sources B, E and F.*

'The Times' (Source B) expected the strike to collapse. Why did the matchgirls' strike succeed? Use Sources B, E and F and your own knowledge to explain your answer. (12)

Target: **Analysis of sources/recall of knowledge/causation**

Level 1: Simple statement giving reasons supported from sources or own knowledge, eg protest marches. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements giving reasons supported by relevant information from sources and own knowledge, eg describes newspaper coverage or Annie Besant's work. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed explanation supported by appropriately selected information from sources and own knowledge, eg shows how publicity put pressure on owners or shows significance of Annie Besant's work in generating finance or orchestrating publicity; public support. (7-10)

Level 4: Sustained argument supported by precisely selected information from sources and own knowledge showing how a combination of factors contributed to success, eg role of Annie Besant's organisation combined with pressure created by extent of public support and newspaper coverage. (11-12)

5. Study all of the sources.

“The matchgirls’ strike was not an important event in the history of trade unions”.

Use the sources, and your own knowledge, to explain whether you agree with this view. (14)

Target: Analysis of interpretation of events/recall of knowledge (AO3)

Level 1: Simple statements using the sources at face value OR supported by some own knowledge, eg it was important because they won, conditions were bad etc. (1-3)

Level 2: Developed statements making inferences from the sources supported by relevant knowledge, eg they were the first workers to win an important strike action, they got the public on their side etc. (4-6)

Level 3: Developed explanation using the sources as evidence supported by selected knowledge eg shows that the use of the press was an important precedent, put trade unions into a new light, paved the way for the Dock Strike etc. (7-11)

Level 4: Sustained argument using the sources as evidence supported by precisely selected knowledge, which assesses alternative views, eg contrasts matchgirls with the Dock Strike etc. (12-14)