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**Comparing and Contrasting Images of Child Labor**

**Writer:** Zoe Voigt, Humanities Teacher

**Grade Level:** 9–12

**Related Big Picture Concepts:** Childhood, Subjectivity

**Subject Areas:** Visual Arts, United States History, Social Studies

**Essential Question:** *What can we learn about the role of children in 19th-century America by studying paintings and photographs?*

**Abstract:** Students will learn about child labor and attitudes toward children in the 19th century through one painting and multiple photographs. In discussion and writing, they will also consider the differences between photography and painting as mediums for expressing these attitudes.

**Duration:** 2–3 class periods

**Focus Works of Art:**

[](javascript:OpenLargeWindow('pictures/artifact/full/17.jpg'))

John George Brown (American, 1831 - 1913)  
***A Tough Story*, 1886**Oil on canvas  
2ft 1in x 2ft 6in (63.5cm x 76.2cm)

[www.artnc.org/node/291](http://www.artnc.org/node/291)

**North Carolina Standards Correlations:**

Visual Arts: I.V.1, I.CX.1, I.CX.2, I.CR.1, A.V.1, A.CX.1, A.CX.2

United States History: USH.H.1, USH.H.2, USH.H.4, USH.H.8

**Student Learning Objectives:**

* Students will understand how Lewis Hine and John George Brown used their works of art to influence Americans' response to child labor.
* Students will compare and contrast images of child laborers and interpret the intentions of those who made the images.

Activities

1. Hold a brief class discussion focused on student perceptions of how Americans may have viewed labor, and child labor specifically, in the 1880s.
2. Assign the students to examine and analyze John George Brown's painting *A Tough Story.*
3. Continue the class discussion by asking the following questions:  
   *What are your feelings and emotions about the boys in the picture?  
   What do you believe is the general attitude (atmosphere) of this painting?  
   Do you believe the children in the painting are happy or unhappy? Why or why not?  
   What do you think John George Brown wanted you to feel about these children?  
   This and other paintings by Brown hung in the private homes of wealthy collectors. What impact do you think this painting might have had on its owner?*
4. Assign the students to examine and analyze Lewis Hine's photographs.  
   *Italian Family Making Silk Flowers in New York*,1908  
   *Boy Lost Arm in a Saw in a Box Factory*, 1909  
   *Child Picking Potatoes on Long Island*, 1912
5. Have the students read some information on [Hine](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/picturing_the_century/text/port_hine_text.html) and the captions that accompanied some of [Hine's photographs](http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/" \t "_blank).
6. Continue the class discussion focused on the following questions:  
   *How do these photos make you feel?  
   What message is Hine communicating through his photographs and captions?  
   How do Hine's photographic images differ from Brown's painting?*
7. Assign the students to read a textbook description of child labor during the Progressive Era. Assign the students to write a one-page paper answering the following question: *Which artist (Lewis Hine or John George Brown) do you think most effectively used art to change viewers' attitudes about child labor? What elements of their works communicated these views?*

**Assessments:**

* The teacher will use class discussion and the paper to determine each student's understanding of how Lewis Hine and John George Brown helped influence Americans' response to child labor.
* Class discussion and the paper will be used to assess each student's analysis of images of child laborers and his or her interpretation of the intentions of those who made the images.

**Resources:**

Vocabulary:

Progressive Era- (n.) In the US, a period of reform that began in America#146s urban regions from approximately the 1890s through the 1920s. Reformers sought change in labor and fiscal policies in different levels of government; initially successful at the local level, and progressed gradually nationally. Progressives shared a common belief in the ability of human nature to improve by bettering living and working conditions.

Links:

Photographs by Lewis Hine:

*[Italian Family Making Silk Flowers in New York](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701800026_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)*[,](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701800026_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)[1908](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701800026_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)

[http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701800026\_ful.html#topofimage](file:///C:\Users\Brooklynne\Documents\IMR)

*[Boy Lost Arm in a Saw in a Box Factory](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701840014_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)*[, 1909](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701840014_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)

[http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701840014\_ful.html#topofimage](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701840014_ful.html%23topofimage)  
*[Child Picking Potatoes on Long Island](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701830012MP_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)*[, 1912](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701830012MP_ful.html" \l "topofimage" \t "_blank)

[http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701830012MP\_ful.html#topofimage](http://www.geh.org/fm/lwhprints/htmlsrc2/m197701830012MP_ful.html%23topofimage)

Information about Hine and other Hine photographs:

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/picturing_the_century/text/port_hine_text.html>

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/>

Additional Resources:

Dijkstra, Bram. *American Expressionism: Art and Social Change 1920*–*1950.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003.

Konzett, Delia Caparoso. *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzi Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation.* New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002.

Pozzetta, George E. *Nativism, Discrimination, and Images of Immigrants.* New York: Taylor and Francis, 1991.