

Women and Labor Issues

j305.42 / KEN

Failure is Impossible! The History of American Women's Rights by Martha E. Kendall. 2001. 96p. (MJS)

From School Library Journal "A well-organized, well-documented resource. Kendall frames her discussion of women's suffrage with an account of the struggles of women throughout the centuries beginning with early colonists such as Anne Hutchinson. In addition to the battles and achievements of the women's movement, the author addresses property and child-custody rights and the fight for fair wages. She includes information on what life was like for mill girls, women in slavery, and on women in the media. Many black-and-white photos and other illustrations add dimension to the text. Four pages of brief biographies of remarkable women complete this thorough, multifaceted history."

j331.38 / GOU

Good Girl Work: Factories, Sweatshops, and How Women Changed Their Role in the American Workforce by Catherine Gourley. 1999. 96p. (EMJ)

From School Library Journal: "A carefully researched look at female labor in the early 19th and 20th centuries in this country when the workforce of the textile mills, shoe factories, and sweatshops was comprised of unskilled "girls" of all ages. Grossly overworked and underpaid, they slowly realized the truth of their exploitation, organized, and eventually changed the workplace. Gourley uses letters, diaries, and other primary sources to give personal glimpses into the feelings and thoughts of these heroines."

331.4 / COL

Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II by Penny Colman. 1995. 120p. (MJS)

From School Library Journal: "Colman chronicles the drive to get women to enter wartime industries, providing insight into the federal government's propaganda campaign and incentives. She also supplies the facts and figures: many more women than one might suppose had full-time employment before the war, and many continued to work after it, sometimes in positions that were considerably less important and less lucrative. The author also discusses the sexual harassment and racial discrimination women experienced while doing their patriotic duty. The compromises they had to make in order to manage child care and to prove to men on the job that they were their equals are frequently ignored in other historical treatments of the Rosie-the-riveter phenomenon."

974.71 / DEA

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire of 1911. 2001. 120p. (MJS)

Examines, using eyewitness accounts, the tragedy that killed 146 workers in a New York City garment factory. Well-written and compelling, but unfortunately, the author offers no source notes, even for direct quotes. (*Great Disasters: Reforms and Ramifications series*)

j331.47 / DAS

We Shall Not Be Moved: The Women's Factory Strike of 1909. 1996. 165p. (MJS)

Amazon.com "Young people feeling like they can't change the world should read Joan Dash's *We Shall Not Be Moved*. In 1909, teenage girls led some 30,000 shirt cutters, pressers, and finishers in the "largest strike of women workers ever known in the United States." These young women, who lived near poverty and spoke different languages, nevertheless brought the shirt-making industry to a halt for more than 13 weeks. Not only did it unite factory workers, it gained crucial support from college-educated suffragists and from women in high society, often called "the mink brigade." The strike, which began in New York and spread to Philadelphia, ultimately led to a settlement between more than 300 manufacturers and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union."

Y / Auch, Mary Jane

Ashes of Roses. 2002. 250p. (MJ)

From Publishers Weekly "Auch combines a classic immigration tale with the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in this spirited novel."

J / Bader, Bonnie

East Side Story. 1993. 71p. (E)

From School Library Journal "Like many immigrant children of the early 1900s, Rachel, 11, and her teenage sister Leah work in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory on the Lower East Side of New York City. This simple-to-read historical novel effectively portrays issues pertinent to the time period. Through Rachel's experience, readers see the courage and determination, success and failure of the workers' efforts to unionize for better and safer working conditions."

J / Dear America

Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl by Kathryn Lasky. 1998. 188p. (EMJ)

From School Library Journal "Zipporah Feldman, a 12-year-old Jewish immigrant from Russia, uses diary entries to chronicle her family's activities as they acclimate to life on New York City's Lower East Side. The story's historical significance is evident in the Feldman's arrival at Ellis Island and the subsequent procedures immigrants had to endure, and in the description of the factory fire in which Zipporah's friend dies, which is based on the famous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory of 1911. Archival photos, accompanied by a recipe for hamantaschen and the traditional Jewish song to welcome the Sabbath, bring the reality of the novel to light."

J / Goldin, Barbara Diamond

Fire! The Beginnings of the Labor Movement. 1992. 54p. (EM)

From Kirkus Reviews "A fictional account of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in N. Y. C., as seen by Rosie, a young Jewish girl whose older sister escapes but whose cousin does not. In the aftermath of the fire, Rosie accompanies her sister to an ILGWU meeting and shares her hope that the union will secure better conditions for the garment workers. A solid addition to the useful *Once Upon America* series."

J / Hopkinson, Deborah

Hear My Sorrow: The Diary of Angela Denoto, a Shirtwaist Worker (New York City, 1909). 2004. 188p. (EM)

Angela and her family have arrived in New York City from their village in Italy to find themselves settled in a small tenement apartment on the Lower East Side. When her father is no longer able to work, Angela must leave school and work in a shirtwaist factory. Against the backdrop of the birth of the labor union movement in the early 1900s, Angela plays a part in the drama and turmoil that erupt as the workers begin to strike, protesting the terrible conditions in the sweatshops. And she records the horrors of the Triangle Factory fire and the triumphs and sorrows of the labor movement. (From the *Dear America* series)

J / Matas, Carol

Rosie in New York City: Gotcha! 2003. 124p. (EM)

When Mama falls ill and Papa invests all the family's money in a new business, eleven-year-old Rosie Lepidus must go to work in a garment factory and soon gets involved in union activities.

Teen / Raphael, Marie

Streets of Gold: A Novel by Marie Raphael. 2001. 216p. (MJ)

Marisia, a Polish teenager, comes to America at the turn of the twentieth century and must fend for herself on New York's Lower East Side.

Contemporary Labor Issues

331.88 / MAT

Fiery Struggle: Illinois Fire fighters Build a Union, 1901 – 1895 by Michael G. Matejka. 2002. 228p. (S)

A moving pro-union account of the history of the Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois. Includes information on the dramatic 1978 strike by Normal fire fighters.

305.569 / HER

Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America by Barbara Ehrenreich. 2001. 221p. (S)

Ehrenreich went “undercover”, working several low-wage jobs, and in this best-selling account she describes the working conditions, the people she met, and the realities of surviving on six dollars an hour. One review says, “*You’ll never see anything – from a motel bathroom to a restaurant meal – quite the same way again.*”

j468 / COH

Si, Se Puede! Yes, We Can! Janitor Strike in L.A. by Diana Cohn. 2002. 32p. (EM)

Spanish/English bilingual account which tells, in picture book format, the story of the 8000 Los Angeles janitors (many whom were Latina immigrants) who went on strike in 2000.

779.93055 / UNS

Unseen America: Photos and Stories by Workers edited by Esther Cohen. 2006. 200p.

In this project, sponsored by the cultural arm of the Service Employees International Union, Cohen gave thousands of workers cameras and lessons in photography, and then asked them to document their lives.

Coal Country: Books about Coal Mining

331.892 / SHO

The Battle of Blair Mountain: The Story of America’s Largest Labor Uprising by Robert Shogan. 2004. 271p.

Depicts the relatively unrecognized but highly dramatic confrontation culminating at Blair Mountain in West Virginia, between unionized mineworkers, mine owners, and the federal government in the largest armed uprising since the Civil War. (The film *Matewan* is based on these events.)

j331.31 / BAR

Growing Up in Coal Country by Susan Campbell Bartoletti. 1996. 127p. (MJS)

From School Library Journal “Bartoletti uses oral history, archival documents, and an abundance of black-and-white photographs to make turn-of-the-century mining life a surprisingly compelling subject for today’s young people. Zooming in on northeastern Pennsylvania in general, and the perspective of children in particular, she writes of the desperate working conditions, the deplorable squalor found in the “patch villages,” and the ever-present dangers of the occupation. Stories of breaker-boy pranks and the roles of the animals at work bring some comic relief, but even they point out the enormous hardships suffered before there were effective unions and child-labor laws. The words and work of children are weighted equally with the efforts of the Molly McGuires, Mother Jones, and other adult players. Captioned, black-and-white photographs, with attributions, appear on almost every page, allowing the images to play a powerful role in the gritty story. The bibliography reveals the depth of Bartoletti’s research. An introduction conveys her motivation (fascination with family stories), while a brief conclusion touches upon the region in the post-World War I era. For a first-rate, accessible study of a time and place that played an important role in American economic and social history, look no further.”

Interested readers should also see Bartoletti’s fictionalized account for the *Dear America* series: **A Coal Miner’s Bride: The Diary of Anetka Kaminska (Lattimer, Pennsylvania, 1896).**

Teen / Hughes, Pat

The Breaker Boys. 2004. 248p. (MJS)

Nate is the son of a wealthy coal miner who by chance ends up befriendng the breaker boys who work his father’s mine. Nate is torn when he sees the poverty and suffering of the miners, even as he still has sympathies with his own family.

Y / Skurzynski, Gloria

Rockbuster. 2001. 253p. (MJS)

From Booklist “On a trip to watch the trial of union organizer Big Bill Haywood, 10-year-old Tommy accidentally blows his pro-union uncle’s cover and witnesses Uncle Jim’s being dragged away and killed. Six years later, when union songwriter Joe Hill, the “voice” of *Industrial Workers of the World*, is unfairly convicted of murder and set to be executed in front of a firing squad, Tom, now 16 and a singer-songwriter himself, is asked to replace Hill as the coal miners’ pro-union voice and conscience. The opportunity forces

him to decide between his loyalties to his socialite girlfriend, Eugenie, and the union that has affected his past, his family, and, with the outbreak of World War I, seemingly the world. “

Child Labor

j331.31 / BRO

Kid Blink Beats the World by Don Brown. 2004. (E)

From Booklist “This grabber of a picture book for older children details the events in the summer of 1899, during which hundreds of young news vendors stood up to two of the most powerful men in the U.S.--William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. The financial circumstance that forced the kids to strike--the extra penny that the newspaper owners wanted to charge the vendors to buy their papers--is clearly explained, but Brown also personalizes the story very well.

j331.31 / FRE

Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor by Russell Freedman. 1994. 104p. (MJ)

From Booklist “The selection of photographs in Freedman’s works (he generally picks the photos himself) is usually as impressive as the text. That’s certainly true of this book, which uses pictures to chronicle the state of child labor in early-twentieth-century America while profiling the life of reformer-photographer Lewis Hine.” Many of Freedman’s books deal directly with poverty and labor issues, including *Immigrant Kids* and his latest book *Children of the Depression*.

j331.31 / CUR

We Have Marched Together: The Working Children’s Crusade by Stephen Currie. 1997. 88p. (JS)

Examines the problem of child labor during the early twentieth century, focusing on a protest march from Philadelphia to New York City in 1903 by a group of child textile workers led by Mother Jones.

J / McCully, Emily Arnold

The Bobbin Girl. 1996. (E)

From School Library Journal “This picture book tale of child labor, early efforts to organize against unfair employers, and human courage is based on the true story of Harriet Hanson Robinson, whose mother ran a mill boardinghouse in 19th-century Lowell, MA.”

J / Winthrop, Elizabeth

Counting on Grace. 2006. 233p. (MJ)

From Booklist “Inspired by a Lewis Hine photo of a child at work in a Vermont cotton mill in the early twentieth century, Winthrop imagines the story of Grace, 12, torn from her one-room schoolhouse and forced to work long hours in the textile mill as a “doffer,” turning cotton into thread, alongside her mother, in the spinning room. The child-labor story is gripping--the dangerous working conditions, the work of activists who sought to publicize the abuse--and although sometimes the research overwhelms the story, Grace’s present-tense narrative makes the history heartbreaking. The fiction is framed by notes about Hine and a bibliography.”

All these books are available somewhere in the system

A note on Grade Levels

Video policy

Note on the organization of the booklist – and strange call numbers