



Reading Guide for “Old Time Factory Life in New England”

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Reading Guide for “Old Time Factory Life in New England”

This article was printed in the *New England Magazine* in 1898. In the article, the author remembers his life in a factory in New England prior to 1860. What you are reading are excerpts from the article and not the whole article. The whole article is available if you want to read it after reading the abbreviated one.

Part One: Before Reading

☞ Prior to reading the article answer the following questions.

1. Can you take what the author is describing at face value? Why or why not?
2. Who do you think would work in a factory in New England prior to the Civil War?
3. How long do you think the workdays were during this time?
4. Where do you think the workers lived during this time? What were these places like?
5. Were the factory workers generally happy during this time? Why or why not?
6. What type of factory do you think the author is discussing?
7. In what ways do you think factory life then was different from now?

Part Two: During Reading

☞ As you are reading the article keep the following questions in mind.

☞ Highlight the parts that influence your answers.

☞ When you are finished reading the article answer the following questions.

☞ Use line numbers in the article to indicate the section that influenced your answer.

1. What did you find to be the most unusual aspect of the article?
2. What did you find to be the most interesting aspect of the article?
3. What did you find to be the most depressing aspect of the article?
4. Would you want to live during the times described in the article? Why or why not?

Part Three: After Reading

The following are the Part One questions.

☞ Look at your original answers and then indicate how the original answers compare with what you know from having read the article.

1. Can you take what the author is describing at face value? Why or why not?
2. Who do you think would work in a factory in New England prior to the Civil War?
3. How long do you think the workdays were during this time?
4. Where do you think the workers lived during this time?
5. Were the factory workers generally happy during this time?
6. What type of factory do you think the author is discussing?
7. In what ways do you think factory life then was different from now?



Reading Guide for *Old Time Factory Life in New England* **Answer Key**

This article was printed in the New England Magazine in 1898. In the article, the author remembers his life in a factory in New England prior to 1860. What you are reading are excerpts from the article and not the whole article. The whole article is available if you want to read it after reading the abbreviated one.

Part One: Before Reading

☞ Prior to reading the article answer the following questions.

1. Can you take what the author is describing at face value? Why or why not?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.
2. Who do you think would work in a factory in New England prior to the Civil War?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.
3. How long do you think the workdays were during this time?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.
4. Where do you think the workers lived during this time?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.
5. Were the factory workers generally happy during this time?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.
6. What type of factory do you think the author is discussing?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.
7. In what ways do you think factory life then was different from now?
Answers will vary in this section. Check for complete answers.

Part Two: During Reading

☞ As you are reading the article keep the following questions in mind.

☞ Highlight the parts that influence your answers.

☞ When you are finished reading the article answer the following questions.

☞ Use line numbers in the article to indicate the section that influenced your answer.

1. What did you find to be the most unusual aspect of the article?
This calls for an opinion. Check for complete answers.
2. What did you find to be the most interesting aspect of the article?
This calls for an opinion. Check for complete answers.
3. What did you find to be the most depressing aspect of the article?
This calls for an opinion. Check for complete answers.
4. Would you want to live during the times described in the article? Why or why not?
This calls for an opinion. Check for complete answers.

Part Three: After Reading

The following are the Part One questions.

☞ Look at your original answers and then indicate how the original answers compare with what you know from having read the article.

1. Can you take what the author is describing at face value? Why or why not?

Possible answers might include:

Yes. Even though he is writing about something that happened in his childhood his memory seems to be good enough to be accurate. He relates many specific details and descriptions as if he can clearly recall what had happened. Even though he might have not remembered everything and made some things up, the overall impression seems to be accurate.

No. When someone is trying to remember something from that far in the past it is difficult for the memories to be completely accurate. He probably made up some of the things that he described. This fact makes it difficult to completely believe what he has described.

2. Who do you think would work in a factory in New England prior to the Civil War?

Most workers were natives of the region.

Men:

- Older men did not come from farms but were old time settlers or came from other manufacturing towns.
- Boys came from the village. Farm boys were not smart enough and were needed on the farm.

Women:

- Girls came from farms where they were not as needed as much as boys.

3. How long do you think the workdays were during this time?

10 to 13 hours

4. Where do you think the workers lived during this time? What were these places like?

Most lived in tenement houses in the factory village or town that was owned by the company. These places were usually two stories and housed many people. The family that rented the house lived downstairs. They then rented to others. The girls and occasionally a married couple lived on the second floor. The boys and older men lived in the attic rooms.

5. Were the factory workers generally happy during this time? Why or why not?

The writer's recollection was that people worked really hard but were basically happy. They had some leisure time and seemed to fill it with fun activities, like going to the library, reading, and going to the circus.

6. What type of factory do you think the author is discussing?

It was probably a textile mill.

7. In what ways do you think factory life then was different from now?

Then:

- Longer hours and workweeks
- More women workers
- Children worked then but don't now
- Worse working conditions
- Lived in tenements rather than owned houses