



## Life in the North

As  
You  
Read

### Explore These Questions

- What conditions caused northern workers to organize?
- Why did many Europeans move to the United States in the mid-1800s?
- What was life like for African Americans in the North?

### Define

- artisan
- trade union
- strike
- famine
- nativist
- discrimination

### Identify

- Sarah Bagley
- Know-Nothing party
- Henry Boyd
- Macon Allen
- John Russworm

### SETTING the Scene

Alzina Parsons never forgot her thirteenth birthday. The day began as usual, with work in the local spinning mill. Suddenly, Alzina cried out. She had caught her hand in the spinning machine, badly mangling her fingers. The foreman summoned the factory doctor. He cut off one of the injured fingers and sent the girl back to work.

In the early 1800s, such an incident probably would not have happened. Factory work was hard, but mill owners treated workers like human beings. By the 1840s, however, there was an oversupply of workers. Many factory owners now treated workers like machines.

### Factory Conditions Worsen

Factories of the 1840s and 1850s were very different from the mills of the early 1800s. The factories were larger, and they used steam-powered machines. More laborers worked longer hours for lower wages. Workers lived in dark, dingy houses in the shadow of the factory.

### Families in factories

As the need for workers increased, entire families labored in factories. In some cases, a family agreed to work for one year. If even one family member broke the contract, the entire family might be fired.

The factory day began when a whistle sounded at 4 A.M. Father, mother, and children dressed in the dark and headed off to work. At 7:30 A.M. and at noon, the whistle sounded again to announce breakfast and lunch breaks. The workday did not end until 7:30 P.M., when a final whistle sent the workers home.

### Hazards at work

During their long day, factory workers faced discomfort and danger. Few factories had windows or heating systems. In summer, the heat and humidity inside the factory were stifling. In winter, the extreme cold chilled workers' bones and contributed to frequent sickness.

Factory machines had no safety devices, and accidents were common. Owners ignored the hazards. There were no laws regulating factory conditions. Injured workers often lost their jobs.

In 1855, a visitor to a textile mill in Fall River, Massachusetts, asked the manager of the mill how he treated his workers. In his reply, the manager was harsh but honest. He described his feelings about the workers.

“ I regard people just as I regard my machinery. So long as they can do my work for what I choose to pay them, I keep them, getting out of them all I can. ”

## Workers Join Together

Poor working conditions and low wages led workers to organize. The first to do so were **artisans**. Artisans are workers who have learned a trade, such as carpentry or shoemaking.

### Trade unions and strikes

In the 1820s and 1830s, artisans in each trade united to form **trade unions**. The unions called for a shorter workday, higher wages, and better working conditions. Sometimes, unions went on strike to gain their demands. In a **strike**, union workers refuse to do their jobs.

At the time, strikes were illegal in many parts of the United States. Strikers faced fines or jail sentences. Employers often fired strike leaders.

### Progress for artisans

Slowly, however, workers made progress. In 1840, President Van Buren approved a 10-hour workday for government employees. Other workers pressed their demands until they won the same hours as government

workers. Workers celebrated another victory in 1842 when a Massachusetts court declared that they had the right to strike.

Artisans won better pay because factory owners needed their skills. Unskilled workers, however, were unable to bargain for better wages. Unskilled workers held jobs that required little or no training. Because these workers were easy to replace, employers did not listen to their demands.

## Women Workers Organize

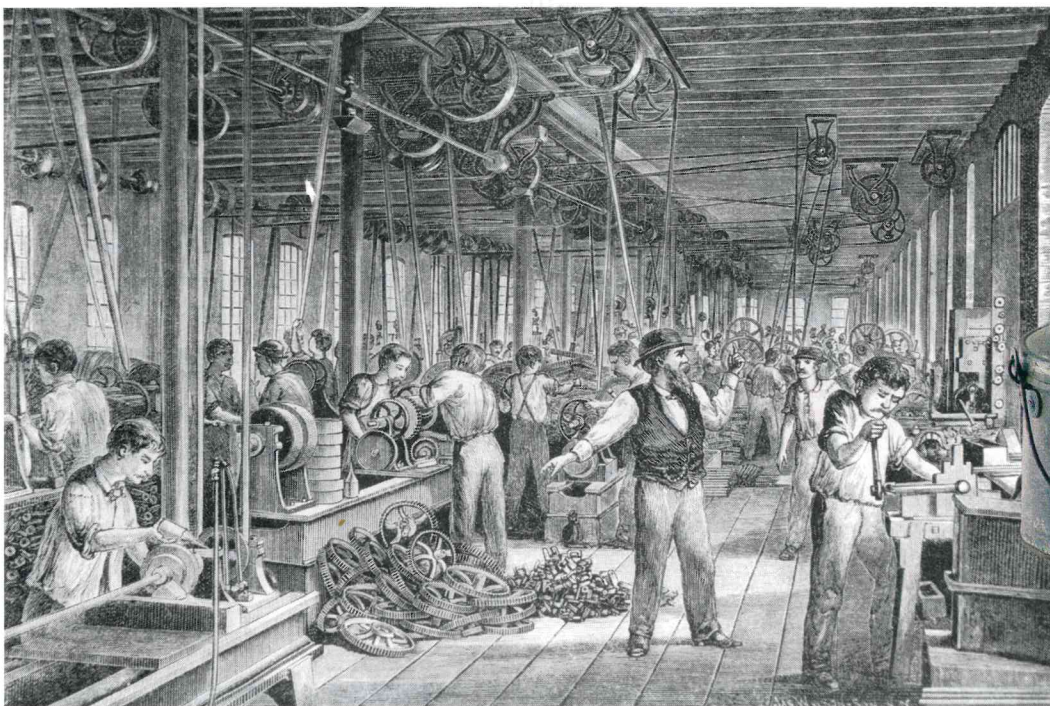
The success of trade unions encouraged other workers to organize. Workers in New England textile mills especially were eager to protest cuts in wages and unfair work rules. Many of these workers were women.

Women workers faced special problems. First, they had always earned less money than men did. Second, most union leaders did not want women in their ranks. Like many people at the time, they believed that women should not work outside the home. In fact, the goal of many unions was to raise men's wages so that their wives could leave their factory jobs.



### Working in a Factory

Factory employees faced crowded and dangerous working conditions. Many were injured on the job. The workers in this scene are making McCormick reapers. ★ What kinds of accidents could occur in a factory such as this?



▼ A worker's lunch pail



# Skills FOR LIFE

Critical  
Thinking

Managing  
Information

Communication

Maps, Charts,  
and Graphs

## Teaching Others

### How Will I Use This Skill?

You already use it. You may teach others how to do school work, how to make something, how to play a sport, or how to use a computer program. In the future, you may teach job skills to co-workers. If you become a parent, you will teach your child. We are all teachers.

### LEARN the Skill

You can teach others by following these four steps:

- 1 Make sure you know the material you will teach.
- 2 Prepare a teaching plan that is interesting, informative, and at the proper level of difficulty.
- 3 Present your lesson. Encourage your students to participate and to ask questions.
- 4 Check that your students have learned the material and reteach if necessary.

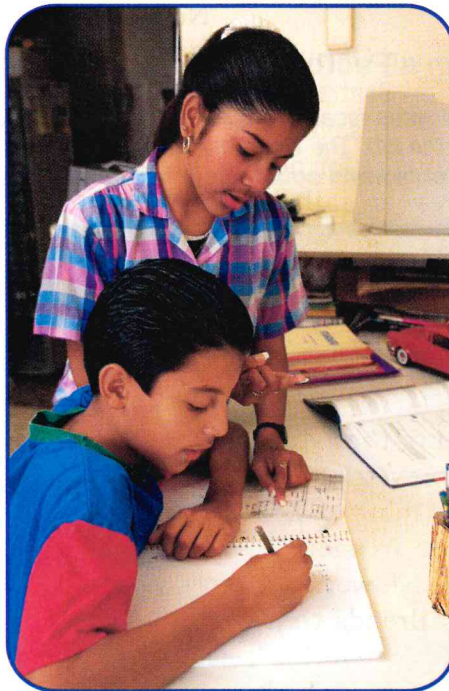
### PRACTICE the Skill

Using the steps above, teach some classmates about the immigrants who came to the United States in the mid-1800s.

- 1 Study and take notes on the material in this section under the heading Millions of New Americans.

- 2 Prepare the teaching plan that you will use for your lesson. You might make an outline or chart or write a skit. You might use additional books or videotapes.

- 3 Present your lesson. Keep your students involved! Ask interesting questions and encourage your students to participate.
- 4 Provide a quiz or activity to check for student understanding. If your students did not learn the lesson well enough, use a different method and try again.



*Teaching and learning*

### APPLY the Skill

You can apply this skill by volunteering to tutor a classmate or younger student who is having difficulty with reading, mathematics, or another school subject. You might also teach a friend about a hobby or game that interests you.

Despite these problems, women workers organized. They staged several strikes at Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 1830s. In the 1840s, **Sarah Bagley** organized the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association. The group petitioned the state legislature for a 10-hour workday.

## Millions of New Americans

By the late 1840s, many factory workers in the North were immigrants. An immigrant is a person who enters a new country in order to settle there. In the 1840s and 1850s, about 4 million immigrants arrived in the United States.

### From Ireland and Germany

In the 1840s, a disease destroyed the potato crop across Europe. The loss of the crop caused a **famine**, or severe food shortage, especially in Ireland. Between 1845 and 1860, over 1.5 million Irish fled to the United States.

Most Irish immigrants were too poor to buy farmland. They settled in the cities where their ships landed. In New York and Boston, thousands of Irish crowded into poor neighborhoods.

In the 1850s, nearly one million German immigrants arrived in the United States. In 1848, revolutions had broken out in several parts of Germany. The rebels fought for democratic reforms. When the revolts failed, thousands had to flee.

Many other German immigrants came to the United States simply to make a better life for themselves.

### Enriching the nation

Immigrants supplied much of the labor that helped the nation's economy to grow. Many Irish immigrants worked in northern factories because they did not have enough money to buy farmland. Other Irish workers helped build the canals and railroads that were crisscrossing the nation.

Immigrants from Germany often had enough money to move west and buy good farmland. Many of them were artisans and merchants. Towns of the Midwest often had German grocers, butchers, and bakers.

## A Reaction Against Immigrants

Not everyone welcomed the flood of immigrants. One group of Americans, called **nativists**, wanted to preserve the country for native-born, white citizens. Using the slogan "Americans must rule America," they called for laws to limit immigration. They also wanted to keep immigrants from voting until they had lived in the United States for 21 years. At the time, newcomers could vote after only 5 years in the country.

Some nativists protested that newcomers "stole" jobs from native-born Americans by working for lower pay. Others blamed immigrants for crime in the growing cities. Still others mistrusted Irish and German newcomers because many of them were Catholics. Until the 1840s, the majority of immigrants from Europe were Protestants.

In the 1850s, nativists formed a new political party. It was known as the **Know-Nothing party** because members answered, "I know nothing," when asked about the party. Many meetings and rituals of the party were kept secret. In 1856, the Know-Nothing candidate for President won 21 percent of the popular vote. Soon after, however, the party died out. Still, many Americans continued to blame the nation's problems on immigrants.

## African Americans in the North

During the nation's early years, slavery was legal in the North. By the early 1800s, however, all the northern states had outlawed slavery. As a result, thousands of free African Americans lived in the North.

### Denied equal rights

Free African Americans in the North faced discrimination. **Discrimination** is a policy or an attitude that denies equal rights to certain groups of people. As one writer pointed out, African Americans were denied "the ballot-box, the jury box, the halls of the legislature, the army, the public lands, the school, and the church."



## Biography John Jones

In the 1840s, John Jones ran a profitable tailoring business in Chicago. He helped runaway slaves and opposed Illinois laws that discriminated against African Americans. In the 1870s, he would help to integrate Chicago's public schools.

★ What obstacles did Jones probably have to overcome?

Even skilled African Americans had trouble finding good jobs. One black carpenter was turned away by every furniture maker in Cincinnati. At last, a shop owner hired him. However, when he entered the shop, the other carpenters dropped their tools. Either he must leave or they would, they declared. Similar experiences occurred throughout the North.

### Some success

Despite the obstacles in their way, some African Americans achieved notable success in business. William Whipper grew wealthy as the owner of a lumber yard in Pennsylvania. He devoted much of his time and money to help bring an end to slavery. **Henry Boyd** operated a profitable furniture company in Cincinnati.

African Americans made strides in other areas as well. Henry Blair invented a corn planter and a cotton seed planter. In 1845, **Macon Allen** became the first African American licensed to practice law in the United States. After graduating from Bowdoin College in Maine, **John Russworm** became one of the editors of *Freedom's Journal*, the first African American newspaper.

## ★ Section 2 Review ★

### Recall

1. **Identify** (a) Sarah Bagley, (b) Know-Nothing party, (c) Henry Boyd, (d) Macon Allen, (e) John Russworm.
2. **Define** (a) artisan, (b) trade union, (c) strike, (d) famine, (e) nativist, (f) discrimination.

### Comprehension

3. How did working conditions in factories worsen in the 1840s and 1850s?
4. In the mid-1800s, why did so many immigrants to the United States come from Ireland and Germany?

5. How did discrimination affect free African Americans in the North?

### Critical Thinking and Writing

6. **Making Inferences** Who do you think were the strongest supporters of laws that made strikes illegal? Explain.
7. **Recognizing Points of View** Make a graphic organizer that identifies the reasons for the nativist point of view.



**Activity Writing a Petition** You are a female mill worker of the 1840s. You are unhappy about the harsh working conditions in the mills. Write a petition to the state legislature listing your complaints and asking for better working conditions.