

The Factory Girl's Last Day

Developed at a project poetry workshop in 1996 by Jill Baker and Pat McGovern from Willowfield School in Waltham Forest and they drew all but one of the pictures. We have used this activity in English and History when looking at evidence about the conditions in mills at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sadler was an MP and a reformer and the ballad is written to persuade. The project holds other activities about factory conditions and the industrial revolution.

Teachers notes.

The picture cards are in verse order so you need to cut them up and maybe laminate them if you intend you use them with several groups.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/factorygirl.pdf>

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

Supporting a cooperative network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to develop and disseminate accessible interactive teaching materials in all subject areas and for all ages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies that promote talk across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We want to encourage you to change them and adapt them to your classroom and students. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project posts online many activities in all subject areas. An online newsletter is also updated regularly.

*These activities are influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in non selective classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening.

*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in mother tongue and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work more effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

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Work in pairs

1. Look at the picture cards. Arrange them into an order that you think makes sense.
2. Look at the prose caption cards. Try to match each caption card to the picture that you think it describes. Does the order of your pictures still make sense now that you have added the caption cards? If necessary rearrange your picture cards so that the order makes sense.
3. The pictures and caption cards tell a story. Work together to write your version of the story.

You may have a chance to tell your version to another pair or to the class.

4. Now look at the verse cards. Match the verse cards to the picture and caption cards. Does the order still make sense? Rearrange them so that the order makes sense.
5. Take a copy of the complete poem. Work together to discuss the questions and write down some responses.

Compare the order of the ballad with the order of Michael Thomas Sadler's poem. Make a note of the differences if there are any. What reasons can you come up with to explain the differences. Look at the last two verses in particular.

Look at the story you wrote. Try to redraft your story so that the events are in the same order as the poem.

The poem was written around 1820. List all the clues you can find that show that it was written at this time.

There are several words that may seem strange or old fashioned. Draw a chart like the one below and write these words in the left hand column. Try to find out the modern meanings and write them in the right hand column.

Strange/old fashioned word	Modern word or phrase with same meaning

6. Take your copy of Information on Ballads. Read the information with your partner. The Factory Girl's :Last Day is a ballad. Discuss these questions and make detailed notes.

In what way does the poem follow the pattern of ballads?

Why is the ballad form appropriate for the Factory Girl's Last Day?

Is there a point to the poem? Try to complete this sentence: Michael Sadler Thomas wrote this poem to show.....

Class Production

At some point towards the end of this activity, your teacher will ask you to work in larger groups.

Your group will be given a verse of ballad, and will be asked to improvise a short piece of drama to show what happens in the verse.

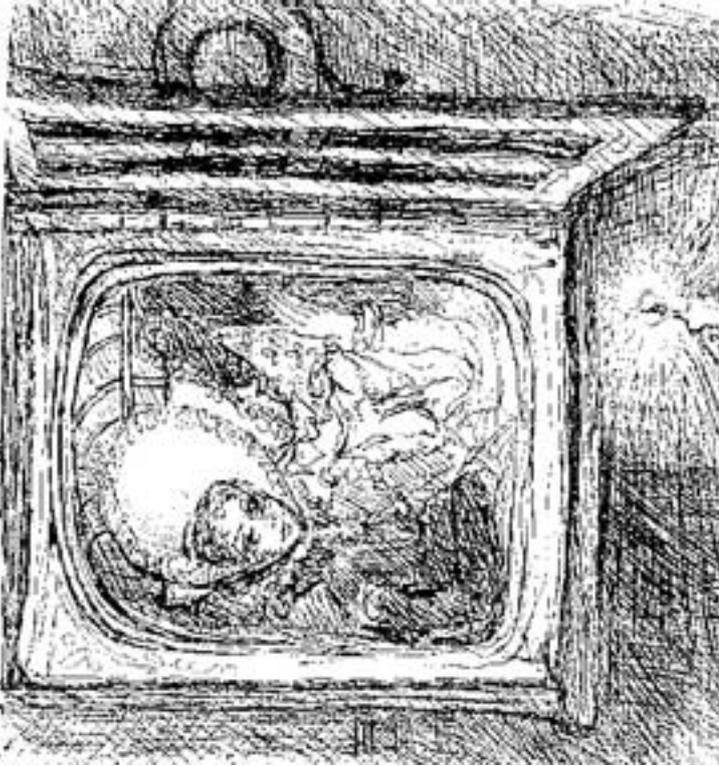
One person should be the narrator and read the verse while the rest of the group perform.

When each group has prepared their verse, the whole class can perform the ballad in turn.

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The Factory Girl's Last Day

All night with tortured feeling,
He watched his speechless child;
While close beside her kneeling,
She knew him not nor smiled.
Again the factory's ringing
Her last perceptions tried;
When from her straw-bed springing,
"Tis time!" she shrieked, and died!

Alas! What hours of horror
Made up her latest day;
In toil, and pain, and sorrow,
They slowly passed away;
It seemed as she grew weaker,
The threads the oftener broke,
The rapid wheels ran quicker,
And heavier fell the stroke.

That night a chariot passed her,
While on the ground she lay;
The daughters of her master
An evening visit pay:
Their tender hearts were sighing
As negro wrongs were told, -
While the white slave lay dying,
Who earned their father's gold!

"Father, I'm up, but weary,
I scarce can reach the door,
And long the way and dreary, -
Oh carry me once more!
To help us we've no mother;
And you have no employ;
They killed my little brother, -
Like him I'll work and die.

Her wasted form seemed nothing, -
The load was at his heart;
The sufferer he kept soothing
Till at the mill they part.
The overlooker met her,
As to her frame she crept,
And with his thong he beat her,
And cursed her as she wept.

'Twas on a winter's morning,
The weather's wet and wild,
Three hours before the dawning
The father roused his child;
Her daily morsel bringing,
The darksome room he paced,
And cried, "The bell is ringing,
My hapless darling haste!"

At last, the engine ceasing,
The captives homeward rushed;
She thought her strength increasing-
'Twas hope her spirits flushed:
She left, but oft she tarried,
She fell and rose no more,
Till, by her comrades carried,
She reached her father's door.

The sun had long descended
But night brought no response;
Her day began and ended
As cruel tyrants chose.
At length a little neighbour
Her halfpenny she paid
To take her last hour's labour,
While by her frame she laid.

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On her way to her weaving loom, she is met by her boss. He beats her and curses her for crying.

Time passes slowly. The child grows weaker, but works on in pain and sadness.

Long after sunset she has to continue to work. Finally, she has to pay a friend to do her last hour of work. She lies down beside her loom.

While she lay on the ground a carriage went past. The daughters of the factory owner were inside. They were going to a meeting on the abolition of slavery.

The child gets out of bed but she is too tired to walk. She asks her father to carry her to the mill.

It is a dark winter morning. A father wakes up his child three hours before sunrise. The factory bell is ringing.

All night long the dying child is watched over by her father until she dies.

On the way home the child collapses and lies still. Her fellow workers carry her to her father.

Information on ballads

Ballads are poems that tell a story. Early ballads were not written down, but passed from memory to memory. They changed a bit as they moved. More recently ballads have been written, but are still meant to be told or sung. They have told stories that are concerned with famous events, violent happenings and political and social protest. They are still being made, circulated and sung.

Ballads make regular use of rhyme. The most common pattern for a ballad rhyme scheme is ABCB.

<i>Tell us a story, Grandad,</i>	<i>A</i>		
<i>The bunny rabbits implored</i>	<i>B</i>		
<i>About the block of concrete</i>	<i>C</i>	Grandad is rhyme	<i>A</i>
<i>Out of which you clawed</i>	<i>B</i>	Implored and clawed is rhyme	<i>B</i>
		concrete is rhyme	<i>C</i>

Ballads also make regular use of rhythm. There are regular beats or stresses in each line. The most common pattern in a ballad is a rhythm of 4:3:4:3 to a verse of four lines - four beats in line 1, three beats in line 2 etc. In the example below the beats are marked by the syllables in bold. Try reading the verse aloud.

The **king** was **sick**. His **cheek** was **red**

And his **eye** was **keen** and **bright**

He **ate** and **drank** with a **kingly** **zest**

And **peacefully** **snored** at **night**

Information on ballads adapted generously from *Writing Poems* by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark.

Examples taken from *Rabbit in Mixer Survives* by Roger McGough in *Waving at Trains* and from *The Enchanted Shirt* by John Hay.