

The Lowell Mill Girls and America's First Factories

Lesson Question

Did the opportunities that America's first factories provided for young women outweigh the hardships they experienced there?

Lesson Task

After reading primary and secondary source documents that discuss both the hardships and opportunities provided by employment in textile mills, students take a position on whether or not working in textile factories was worth it for young women. In a five-paragraph argumentative essay, students defend their position using evidence from the documents.

NAEP Era: 4. Revolution and Reform (1801 to 1861)

Focal Skill: Writing a historical argument

Number of Documents: 4

Number of Days: 5–6

Common Core Standards

- CC reading standard (primary): RHSS.6–8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary & secondary sources
- CC reading standard (secondary): RHSS.6–8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a text
- CC writing standard: WHSS.6-8.1 Write argumentative texts

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[Suggested time: 2–4 sessions]

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[Suggested time: 1/2 session]

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- Purpose
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 - Re-engage students in historical inquiry
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[Suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

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OVERVIEW

[Suggested time: 5 minutes]

Content Objectives

Students will understand the opportunities and hardships of working in the mills.

Opportunities: Higher wages than domestic work; able to spend and save; can live and socialize with other young women

Hardships: Long hours and little rest; unhealthy conditions; monotonous tasks

Historical Thinking Objectives

- Corroboration
- Through Their Eyes

Skill Objectives

- Writing and structuring a historical argument
- Supporting a position with claims rooted in historical documents

Instructional Sequence

Before you begin the lesson, you should share a brief agenda with students:

HOOK	Together, we will look at and discuss two different personal perspectives on working in the textile mills.
CONTEXT	We'll then review some background context about New England women leaving farms to seek work in mill towns, like Lowell.
DOCUMENTS	On your own, you will read two primary and two secondary source documents to look for claims each author makes about the opportunities working in the mills provided for young women, and what was hard about the work.
CONNECT	We'll discuss how the documents connect to the Context and the lesson question.
WRITE	You'll write a five-paragraph argument essay in response to the lesson question.

Lesson Background

When America's first factories were built in New England in the 1820s and 1830s, in places like Lowell, Massachusetts, many of the workers were young women recruited from the surrounding countryside. Since colonial times, these women had played a vital role in an agricultural-based economy in which they produced essential household goods, such as clothing, helped with crops, and managed domestic tasks. It was a hard life with few luxuries, but Yankee families were proud people who saw themselves as embodiments of the "republican" ideals of the American Revolution—independence, community, equality and democracy. Women, however, enjoyed fewer rights and opportunities than their male

counterparts; they could not vote, rarely owned property, received less education than men, and were controlled by fathers and husbands.

By the 1830s, the world of the New England farm had rapidly changed. Better roads and canals were built, followed by the railroad. Farmers could now cheaply transport crops to regional markets, where they could also buy household goods. A new “cash economy” spread. The new textile mills of Lowell, considered by many to be an “Industrial Miracle,” symbolized the growing vitality of American commerce in this era. Wealthy Boston merchants invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in factories that mechanized each stage of cloth production, from spinning yarn to weaving cloth. Despite some economic benefits, the “Market Revolution” undermined the independent Yankee farmer. Farmers grew more vulnerable to ups and downs in the market. Population growth and worn-out soil added to their problems. Now, when hard times hit, a young woman might be considered an extra mouth to feed. Some young women began looking for new ways to support themselves before they married. Women began to see factory work as a short-term economic solution. Women also hoped that factory work would give them cultural and social opportunities, as well as the chance to save money for marriage. Although early wages for the young, unmarried Yankee women who came to Lowell’s mills were lower than for those of male laborers, they were better than wages that were otherwise available to women. Some young women also saw factory work as a chance for some independence.

Work in the mills, never easy, grew harder over time. In the 1820s, the average Lowell operative worked twelve hours a day, six days a week, with only a handful of brief holidays. Still, the companies needed to provide tolerable working and living conditions if they were to induce women to stay at work for several years. But increasing competition in the textile industry cut profits, and by the 1830s, operatives found wages cut, boardinghouse rents raised, and/or workloads increased. Women circulated petitions, and twice, in 1834 and again, in 1836, took action to resist these changes.

Student Background Knowledge

- The northern economy in the early 1800s was based on small family farms and local markets.
- Beginning in the 1820s and 1830s, the northern economy experienced rapid change due to the construction of new roads, canals, and railroads.

THE HOOK

[Suggested time: 10 minutes]

Two Views of Factory Work

Purpose

To set up the central lesson inquiry.

- Students cannot answer the lesson question from the information on this slide, so investigation of these two women’s perspectives sets up the need for students to learn more.

Sarah Rice and Lucy Larcom



“...You surely cannot blame me for leaving the factory so long as I realized it was killing me to work in it. I went to the factory because I expected to earn much more than I can at housework. To be sure I might if I had my health.”

—Sarah Rice, 1845

“I found that I enjoyed even the familiar, unremitting clatter of the mill. I liked to feel the people around me, even those whom I did not know. I felt that I belonged to the world, that there was something for me to do in it. It might be very little, but still it would be my own work.”

—Lucy Larcom, 1889



Process

- **Read** the slide title and the women's quotes with students.
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question: What do we learn about factory work from Sarah Rice? From Lucy Larcom?
- Initially, students can simply look for evidence of what working in mills was like, such as:
 - The work was hard ("killing me")
 - Women expected to earn more in a factory than they did doing hired housework
 - It caused at least one woman ill health
 - It was noisy
 - There were lots of women working together
 - At least one woman felt a sense of pride and belonging through her work in a mill
- The question also asks students to **compare** two different women's personal and individual experiences. Students will notice that Rice had a negative experience, while Larcom describes a much more positive experience. **Ask** students:
 - How were these women's experiences different from each other? Why do you think? [Their answers will be speculative, but that is OK at this stage.]
 - What can we learn from reading firsthand accounts like this?
- Finally, **ask** students what questions these two quotes raises for them. Questions might include:
 - Why did these women have such different experiences?
 - Where exactly did they work and what kind of work were they doing?
 - How do we know whether working in mills was a good thing or a bad thing for most women?
- The idea here is to help surface the lesson question: **Did the opportunities America's first factories provided for young women outweigh the hardships they experienced there?**
 - Explain that historians examine lots of firsthand accounts when they do their research. To make sense of those accounts and to understand bigger trends and patterns, they have to look at other sources of information to understand the context in which the words were written.
- **Tell** students that they will develop their own position on this question after reading primary and secondary sources to inform their thinking.
- **Ask:** What more would you need to know to be able to take a position on this question that you could support with more than personal opinion?
- After students discuss this question, **transition** to the Context slides.

TRANSITION TO CONTEXT-SETTING

Transition students to the Context slides by letting them know that they are now going to learn more about why young women began leaving New England farms to work in textile mills.

Context slides are intended to serve as a support for a relatively quick “interactive lecture” with students. The goal is to provide essential background information and engage students’ prior knowledge and thinking.

While you can certainly slow the process down according to your students’ needs, Context is not intended to be a “deep dive” into slide images. Documents in the Context slides serve the role of illustrating content, sparking quick observations and reactions, and making abstract ideas more concrete.

CONTEXT

[Suggested time: 25 minutes— to be completed in the first session]

Context Overview

The purpose of these slides is to provide the background information that students need in order to understand whether working in the Lowell mills was a good opportunity for young farm women.

The five Context slides focus on these ideas:

Young Women’s Work on the Family Farm—New England farming families were self-sufficient

Young Women’s Life on the Family Farm —But women lacked independence; they were isolated and controlled by their fathers/husbands

A Changing Economy—Infrastructure improvements led to cash-based markets

New England’s First Factories—Textile mill towns were bustling, with factories, boardinghouses, churches and more

From Farm to Factory—Young women earned wages, and received room and board

Slide 1: YOUNG WOMEN’S WORK ON THE FAMILY FARM

Purpose

To give students a sense of a farm woman’s workload.

- Women’s work was labor intensive and often physically demanding. While their work often varied by season, there was a lot of repetition in the tasks they completed.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide text with students.

Women’s Roles on the Farm



On the farm, women

- * helped plant and harvest crops
- * churned butter, made cheese, baked bread, preserved food for winter storage
- * spun yarn
- * sewed clothes
- * made household goods such as candles and soap
- * traded things they made with neighbors, lessening their need to rely on cash



- **Identify** the work the woman in the slide image is doing.
 - Spinning wool into yarn
- **Explore** with students the two **Think About It** questions:
 - What would have been hard about this kind of work? What would have been satisfying about this kind of work?
- First, discuss the *challenges* associated with the tasks listed on the slide. **Ask** questions such as:
 - What does that mean?
 - How do you think women at this time did that? What tools did they have? What didn't they have?
 - How long do you think that might take? Would that be difficult work? Why or why not?
- Next, **explore** what might have been *satisfying* about this work. For example,
 - Being self-sufficient
 - Taking satisfaction in certain kinds of tasks

Slide 2: YOUNG WOMEN'S LIFE ON THE FAMILY FARM

Purpose

To give students a general sense of what life was like for farm women.

To establish a point of comparison between life on the farm and life in a town/city.

- In a mill town, women gained a certain amount of economic and social independence, but lost some of the security of a close-knit, self-sustaining community.

Farm Women's Lives in the Early 1800s



- * Women could not vote
- * Women rarely owned land or other property
- * Women's actions were controlled by fathers and husbands
- * Farm families often lived far from neighbors or towns
- * Farm families had close relationships and economic independence

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide text with students.
- **Ask:** What do you notice about the image of the farm?
 - In particular, that it's not surrounded by other homes or businesses.
- **Ask** students to look at the bulleted list while they discuss the **Think About It** questions: What would have been hard about this kind of life? What would have been satisfying about this kind of life?
 - Students may want to answer this question from their own modern day perspective, but remind them to think about it from the perspective of a woman living in the early 1800s.

Slide 3: A CHANGING ECONOMY

Purpose

To give students a sense of the changing economy of the 1820s, so that they can understand the women's economic reasons for moving from family farms to the textile mills.

Suggested Process

- **Read** through the slide text with students.
- **Ask** students how the image connects with the text.
 - The image shows one of the canals that allowed crops and goods to be brought to regional markets.
- **Discuss** the slide content and the **Think About It** question: How would these changes have impacted people living on family farms?
- **Provide** additional context.
 - New transportation and markets led to the spread of a “cash economy.”
 - Despite some economic benefits, the “Market Revolution” hurt the independent Yankee farmer.
 - Farmers grew more vulnerable to ups and downs in the market. Population growth and worn-out soil added to their problems.
 - When hard times hit, a young unmarried woman might be considered an extra mouth to feed.

Better Roads and Canals Changed Farming



Boats moving goods on the Erie Canal

- * Farmers could cheaply transport crops to regional markets and sell them for cash
- * As more and more farmers sold their crops at regional markets, competition increased
- * Prices were constantly changing, making it difficult for farmers to earn a profit
- * Household goods once made at home became available to buy from stores and traveling salesmen

Slide 4: NEW ENGLAND'S FIRST FACTORIES

Purpose

To help students think about the ways in which women's lives changed when they moved from farms to urban, industrial settings.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide text with students.
- **Provide** additional background information on the growth of textile mills.
 - The textile mills, considered by many to be an “Industrial Miracle,” symbolized the growing vitality of American commerce in this era.
 - Wealthy Boston merchants invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in factories that mechanized each stage of cloth production, from spinning yarn to weaving cloth.
- **Ask:** How is this image different from the image of the farm?
 - Tightly packed factories and dorms

East View of Lowell, Mass



- **Ask:** What other kinds of buildings are probably in this town?
 - Churches, schools, markets, etc.
- **Discuss** the **Think About It** question: How would life have been different in a town like Lowell compared to living on a farm?
 - **Prompt** students to think about both positive and negative differences.

Slide 5: FROM FARM TO FACTORY

Purpose

To provide background information on the kinds of workers mill owners hired.

Process

- **Read** the slide text with students.
- **Ask** students to observe the image and compare it to that of the woman spinning wool alone at home.
 - **Ask:** “What differences do you observe between the two images?”
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question: What kind of workers were factory owners looking for?
 - Emphasize with students that factory owners were looking to make as much in profit as they could. Since few men were looking for factory jobs at this time, owners looked to young women, and even girls, who they could hire more cheaply than men.
 - Room and board was essential since most of these women were living far away from home.

Type of Workers Mill Owners Wanted



Mill owners wanted girls who were

- * age 15 or older
- * “smart, active, and healthy”
- * of good character

The mill owners promised girls

- * wages from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per week, depending on experience (the average was \$2.00-\$2.25 per week)
- * a place to live and two meals a day (known as “board”)

Slide 6: REVIEW CONTEXT: LOWELL MILL GIRLS

Purpose

To summarize the essential information from the Context that students will need to understand why women went to work in the Lowell mills and how that experience differed from their lives on farms.

- Students will draw on their notes from Context in their essays.

Process

- **Look** at the image on this slide.
- **Remind** students that they will need some of the information they’ve just learned or reviewed to answer the lesson question. They will now spend a few moments to *review and take some notes*.

Context Review



- Guide students in remembering the most important information to answer the two **Take Notes on Context** questions:
 - What was work and life like for women on farms?
 - Why might a young woman leave a farm to go work in Lowell?
- If necessary, click back to past slides to jog students' memories.
- Allow students to **discuss** their answers at table groups or with a partner, but each student should **record** his/her own notes.

TRANSITION TO DOCUMENTS

After reviewing the Context slides say to students: The context information we just discussed will help you to better understand the information in the four documents you are about to read. The Context and the Documents will help you to answer the lesson question: **"Did the opportunities that America's first factories provided for young women outweigh the hardships they experienced there?"**

DOCUMENTS

[Suggested time: 2–4 sessions]

Documents: Overview

Students read and compare two primary and two secondary source documents to understand the opportunities and challenges of working in New England textile mills in the 1820s and 1830s.

Opportunities for Young Women in the Lowell Mills (Secondary)

Focus: Opportunities

Big Idea: Millwork offered higher wages than other women's work, enabling women to save for marriage. Mill towns also offered women more cultural experiences than rural settings.

Mary Stiles Paul Writes Home from Lowell (Primary)

Focus: Both opportunities and challenges

Big Idea: At first, Paul appreciated the higher wages, being valued by her employer, and the good living conditions. Over time, however, the difficulty of the work became hard to endure.

Women at Work (Secondary)

Focus: Challenges

Big Idea: Mill owners controlled the pace of production and set long hours, while giving few days off.

Sarah Bagley Describes Working Conditions in the Lowell Mills (Primary)

Focus: Challenges

Big Idea: Poor conditions damaged women's health and long hours made cultural experiences difficult to take advantage of. Shorter work hours could solve both problems.

The central reading skill is to cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

A secondary reading skill is to determine the “Big Idea” of primary and secondary sources.

Note: Students can work on these documents independently while you circulate and support their work. (See PD Doc on supporting students during document work.)

Document 1: OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN THE LOWELL MILLS

Purpose

To help students uncover the opportunities working in mills offered women, according to a historian.

Suggested Strategy—Teacher Guided Reading

- *Zoom In* recommends that you read the first document of a set with the whole class.
- In argumentation lessons, students have to articulate claims that authors make. We anticipate that this will be a complex task for many students and that teacher modeling of how to do this with at least one document will support them with deeper reading across the documents.
- You can use the discussion questions for each document to support deep reading skills as you model with the whole class.
- Should you choose to have students read the document independently, the discussion should occur after students have read and answered questions.
- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.** Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Secondary Source, Mary Blewett



Document 1: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.



Purpose

Check for and deepen students’

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Idea”—i.e., claims Blewett makes about living and working in Lowell

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Gather Evidence and Big Idea questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class’s needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.

- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students’ responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - What is one claim Blewett makes about living and working in Lowell?
 - What is the strongest evidence from the document to support your thinking?
- Identify student responses that reflect understanding of the Big Idea, and good use of supporting evidence, and those that reflect confusion or misunderstanding.
- Select and project a range of student responses to the summary questions. You can choose model responses as well as responses that need development as a way to spark student discussion. (See the PD document and video on “Discussion Phase 1: Formative Assessment of Student Comprehension of Individual Documents” for more support on using students’ responses to analyze their reading strengths and needs.)

Discuss the Source It Questions

Flag with students that this is a secondary document written by a historian.

Ask students: How might a source like this be different from the personal perspectives we looked at in the beginning of this lesson?

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask: “What position does Blewett take on whether or not working in factories was a good opportunity for young women?”

Then, **ask** the students to share the quotes they gathered about the opportunities for young women that Blewett describes.

Focus on key quotes, such as:

- As textile operatives [young women] earned higher wages than in any other women’s occupation.
- An operative’s job...was easily learned.
- After several years, each mill girl would return home with savings in her pocket to become a bride.
- A Lowell girl might attend public lectures, and on Sundays investigate the various churches.
- On evenings after work, she could...sample the cultural activities of the new city, including lectures...theatrical performances and musical concerts.

Follow-up questions you could **ask** include:

- What opportunities did you notice? Why did you highlight this quote?
- Is there more or less of the text you should include? Why?
- Did anyone find a different place in the text that discussed opportunities for women?
- How would this have been different for a woman accustomed to working on a farm?

Prompt students to describe the quotes *in their own words*.

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the text to claims Blewett is making.

Blewett presents reasons about why working in the mills was a good opportunity for women. Blewett's specific claims in support of this include:

- Women could earn higher wages working in the mills than at any other job.
- Working in the textile mills was a good opportunity because a woman could, in a short period of time, earn enough money to get married.
 - While there was not an official dowry practice at this time, women wanted to have some money saved to bring into the marriage. This often made it possible for them to wed a man of a “higher class.”
- Living in urban areas such as Lowell was a good opportunity because women could have a range of cultural experiences in religion, politics, and the arts.

Anticipate these difficulties that students will have getting to the Big Idea:

- In their responses students may focus on smaller details and have a harder time articulating these as larger claims (for example: *Blewett claims that working in the textile mills was a good opportunity because it was a short experience*).
- Or, conversely, they may articulate their ideas quite generally, without staying connected enough to the document details (for example: *Blewett claims that working in the textile mills was a good opportunity for women*).

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate Blewett's claims*:

- Why did Blewett include those details? How do these details connect? How can we take that smaller detail and connect it to a bigger idea?
- How does that detail connect to an example of an opportunity?
- Imagine Blewett was in a debate with someone who thought factory work was a terrible experience. What claims would she make to support her position?
- Did anyone see a different claim? Why? What evidence do you see in the document for that claim?
- OK, we have several ideas here about possible claims this document is making. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the document? What makes this evidence stronger?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, but to push them to engage in a **rich text-based discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document. Students will only have written about one claim, so it is important to help them see the range of claims Blewett makes.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated document claims.

Document 2: MARY STILES PAUL WRITES HOME FROM LOWELL

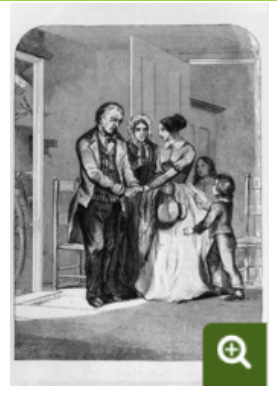
Purpose

To help students uncover the opportunities and challenges in mill work, according to a mill worker.

Suggested Process

- If your class had difficulty with the first document, consider reading this document as a whole group, and again modeling reading strategies. Use some of the discussion questions below while reading.
- If students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate. Then, the discussion will occur after reading.
- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.** Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Primary, Mary Paul



Document 2: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.



Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the "Big Idea," i.e., claims Mary Paul makes about living and working in Lowell

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the "Big Idea" question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the "Big Idea" question:
 - What is one claim Mary Paul made about working in the mills?
 - What is the strongest evidence from the document to support your thinking?

Discuss the Source It Questions

Ask: What type of document is this? Who created it, and when?

- These are first person letters written by a woman who worked in the Lowell mills. She was writing home (she came from the rural state of Vermont).
- They were written over a three-year period of time.
- The first letter was written before she got to Lowell.

Ask: Who was the audience for the letters, and what purpose did they serve?

- Mary Stiles Paul was writing to her father to keep in touch and *inform* him about the work she was doing.

You might **tell** students that she worked at a range of jobs until the age of 27, when she married.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

Help students to notice which details from the document indicate the ways in which Paul's attitude about working in Lowell changed over time. It is important for students to notice that her feelings change, as these feelings connect to the claims she makes about factory work.

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask students to share the quotes they highlighted for the first **Gathering Evidence** question: In what ways was working in the mills worth it for Mary Stiles Paul?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- I could earn more to begin with than I could anywhere about here.
- I am in need of clothes which I cannot get if I stay about here.
- I get along very well with my work. I can doff as fast as any girl in our room.
- I think that the factory is the best place for me...
- The overseer tells me that he never had a girl get along better than I do, and that he will do the best he can by me.
- I have a very good boarding place, have enough to eat, and that which is good enough.
- I shall try hard...for there is no other work that I can do.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- What were the positive aspects of working in a mill for Paul? Did anyone find a different place in the text that discussed what was good for Paul about working in mills? What did her boss think of her? How might that have made her feel?
- Why did you highlight this quote?
- Is there more or less of the text you should include in this quote?
- How would you explain this in your own words?

Ask students to share the quotes they highlighted for the second **Gathering Evidence** question: Was working in the mills ever difficult for Mary Stiles Paul?

Focus on key quotes in the final letter:

- It is very hard indeed and sometimes I think I shall not be able to endure it.
- I never worked so hard in my life but perhaps I shall get used to it.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- How does she describe her negative feelings about working in the mills?
- Why did you highlight this quote?
- How would you explain this in your own words?

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the text to claims Paul made. One complexity of this text is that Paul's claims changed over time.

- In her *early letters* she claimed:
 - Working in the textile mills was a good opportunity because she could earn more money than she could elsewhere.
 - Working in the textile mills was a good opportunity because she was valued by her employer and had good living conditions.
- In her *last letter*, Paul's claims about factory work became more nuanced and less rosy. One way to articulate a later claim is:
 - Working in the textile mills was a good opportunity because she had no other opportunities.
- Finally, it is possible to articulate a *negative claim* about factory work from this document:
 - Working in the textile mills was so difficult as to be barely endurable.

Anticipate these challenges students may have in clearly articulating Paul's claims:

- It will likely be easier for students to pull out some of the positive claims that Paul makes. We anticipate that students will have more difficulty articulating her more nuanced or negative claims.
- It will be important to raise the range of claims she makes as well as to think about why and how her experience changed over time.

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate Paul's claims*:

- Why did Paul include those details? How do these details connect? How can we take that smaller detail and connect it to a bigger idea?
- How does that detail connect to an example of an opportunity?
- Did anyone see a different claim? Why? What evidence do you see in the document for that claim?
- We have several ideas here about possible claims this document is making. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the document? What makes this evidence stronger?
- Are all of Paul's claims positive? Do her claims change over time? Why do you think that is?
- In the end, what position do you think Paul would take on whether the opportunity factory work presented outweighed the hardships? How can you support your thinking using her words?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, but to help them to **engage in a rich discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document. Students will only have written about one claim, so it is important to help them see the range of claims Paul made.

Discuss the Think About It Question

Ask the **Think About It** question: Why do you think Paul might have changed mill jobs so frequently?

- Through reading the headnote and the letters, students should pick up on the fact that Paul changed jobs several times. Let students hypothesize about why and what that fact might reveal about Paul’s personality or experiences.

Additional Information about Mary Paul:

In fact, Mary Paul lived on her own for 12 years after leaving her father’s house and before marrying. She worked a variety of jobs in domestic service, at Lowell, and as a seamstress. She even lived in a utopian community for a year. She seemed to be somewhat restless and interested in chasing economic opportunity. She did not follow the trajectory Blewett outlines of working for a few years and then settling down quickly into marriage. This can be an important opportunity to highlight the differences between general historical trends and the experiences of individuals, which don’t always conform to those trends.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated document claims.

Document 3: WOMEN AT WORK

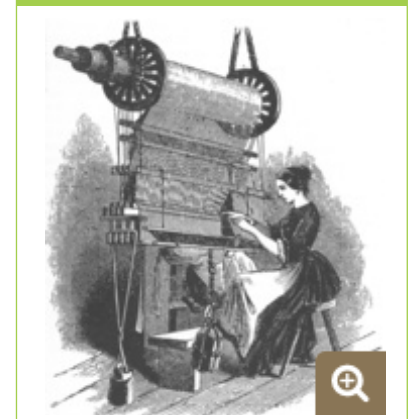
Purpose

To help students uncover the challenges women faced working in mills, according to a historian.

Suggested Process

- As students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.** Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Secondary, Thomas Dublin



Document 3: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.



Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the "Big Idea," i.e., claims Dublin makes about living and working in Lowell

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, and Big Idea questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the "Big Idea" question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the "Big Idea" question:
 - What is one claim Dublin makes about working in mills?
 - What is the strongest evidence from the document to support your thinking?

Discuss the Source It Questions

Flag with students that this is another secondary document written by a historian.

Tell students that even historians have different perspectives on historical events and conditions. It is worthwhile having students discuss whether or not Dublin shares Blewett's perspective.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

The idea behind these questions is to help students to see that both farm and mill work were hard labor for women. Though farm life provided women less control over their social world, it did provide them slightly more control over the hour-to-hour pacing of their days.

- Farm work itself could be repetitive, but it may help students to prompt them to think about the differences between repeating a variety of challenging farm jobs vs. repeating the same exact movements or procedures in the context of a factory.

Other differences not in the text that students may mention include:

- Working indoors all day vs. working in and out-of-doors
- Unlike factory work, farm work varied by season

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

To begin, **ask**: How is what Dublin is writing different from Blewett? Is he focusing on the opportunities here? If not, what is he writing about?

- Dublin focuses on the challenges.

Then, **ask** students to share the quotes they highlighted for the **Gathering Evidence** question: What was hard about working in the mills for young women?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- Employees worked an average of 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, 309 days a year.
- Only three regular holidays provided breaks in the normal work routine.
- The work was hard, and most workers had difficulty keeping up at first.
- In the mills, women did one task over and over again. The pace and the hours of work were now determined by factory owners.
- Women never held any supervisory positions...[so] they never received the higher status and pay of supervisors.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- What challenges did Dublin write about? Why did you highlight this quote? How would you explain this in your own words?
- Did anyone find a different place in the text that discussed what was hard about millwork?
- Was it just the nature of the work itself that was hard? What about the opportunities women had compared to men?

Prompt students to articulate these quotes *in their own words*.

Discuss the Big Idea questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the text to claims Dublin is making. Dublin's claims include:

- Working in the Lowell mills was hard because women worked long hours with few breaks and almost no vacations.
- Working in the Lowell mills was hard because the work was repetitive and women had no control over their pace and schedule.
- Working in the Lowell mills was hard because women were not treated equally to men and could not become supervisors.

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Ideas*:

- Why did Dublin include those details? How do these details connect? How can we take that smaller detail and connect it to a bigger idea?
- How does that detail connect to an example of how the work was hard?
- Imagine Dublin was in a debate with someone who thought factory work was a wonderful opportunity with no downsides. What claims would he make to argue against this position?

- Did anyone see a different claim? Why? What evidence do you see in the document for that claim?
- OK, we have several ideas here about possible claims this document is making. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the document? What makes this evidence stronger?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, but to help them to **engage in a rich discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document. Students will only have written about one claim, so it is important to help them see the range of claims Dublin made.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated document claims.

Document 4: SARAH BAGLEY DESCRIBES WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE LOWELL MILLS

Purpose

To help students uncover the challenges women faced working in mills, according to a mill worker.

To help students understand how female mill workers protested working conditions, and what remedy they suggested.

- In the 1830s, female workers petitioned the Massachusetts state legislature for a 10-hour workday.

Suggested Process

- As students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.** Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Document 4: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students’

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Idea,” i.e., claims Bagley makes about living and working in Lowell

Primary, Sarah Bagley



Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - What was one claim Bagley made about working in mills for young women?
 - What is the strongest evidence from the document to support your thinking?

Discuss the Source It Questions

Some sourcing issues to flag with students are:

- This is testimony that was provided in the context of a petition. Students may need support in understanding what a petition is as well as what is meant by testimony in this context.
- Its purpose was to *persuade* and the audience was Massachusetts lawmakers.
- While not a first person narrative, it is a primary source document and it might be worth exploring with students what makes this a primary source document.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

Students will have to use the headnote and text itself to answer the first Read Closely question about the actions Sarah Bagley and other mill workers took to improve their working conditions.

- They filed a petition for a 10-hour work day.
- The women predicted the benefits of a 10-hour work day would be to:
 - Improve the health of the workers (more time for meals)
 - Improve their minds (through more time for cultural activities)
- The women were savvy and made the argument that better health would, in the long run, be financially beneficial to the mills because the girls would be able to produce more work.
- It will be important to focus on this aspect of the text in preparation for helping students see that Bagley made claims both about:
 - The difficulties of working in mills
 - And about the benefits of a shorter work day

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask students to share the quotes they highlighted for the **Gathering Evidence** question: What did Sarah Bagley say was hard about working in the mills?

Focus on these key quotes:

- She worked in the mill three years before her health began to fail...Last year she was out of the mill a third of the time.
- She thinks the health of the operatives is not so good as the health of females who do house-work or millinery business.
- The chief evil, so far as health is concerned, is the shortness of time allowed for meals.
- The next evil is the length of time employed—not giving them time to cultivate their minds.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- What were the challenges Bagley testified about? Why did you highlight this quote? How would you explain this in your own words?
- Did anyone find a different place in the text that discussed what was hard about working in mills?
- Was it just the nature of the work itself that was hard? What else was hard? What did these women feel they were entitled to?

Prompt students to describe the quotes *in their own words*.

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the text to claims Bagley made about how working in mills was hard for women. These include:

- The work damaged women's health (particularly the limited time to eat meals).
- Women didn't have time to develop their minds through educational and cultural opportunities.

In addition, Bagley made claims about the benefits of a shorter workday:

- Shorter work hours would make women more productive because their health would improve.
- Shorter work hours would improve women's intellectual, moral and religious habits.

It will be important to help students see that Bagley made two kinds of claims.

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate Bagley's claims*:

- Why did Bagley include those details? How do these details connect? How can we take that smaller detail and connect it to a bigger idea?
- How does that detail connect to a larger claim?
- Did anyone see a different claim? Why? What evidence do you see in the document for that claim?
- OK, we have several ideas here about possible claims this document is making. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the document? What makes this evidence stronger?
- What different kinds of claims did Bagley make? How did these claims support the petitioners' goals?
- How do the different kinds of claims connect to each other?

As always, the idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, but to push them to **engage in a rich text-based discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document. Students will only have written about one claim, so it is important to help them see the range of claims Bagley made.

Discuss the Think About It Question

You may want to spend some time helping students to think about what it meant for these mostly young and not formally educated women (who did not even have the vote) to be politically active. Creating a petition and giving testimony to the state government was a bold step for these women to take.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated document claims.

CONNECT

[Suggested time: ½ session]

Purpose

Before students write in response to a historical question, they need opportunities to talk. They need to clarify their understanding of the documents and how they connect with the larger context and the question they are answering. Your job as a *Zoom In* teacher is to create these discourse opportunities.

Cross-Document Discussion

In this discussion the main goal is to help students to synthesize their learning across documents and connect back to the Context and the larger historical question under investigation. This supports the historical thinking skills of corroboration and contextualization.

Three major moves should happen here:

- Re-engage students in the historical inquiry
- Support students in comparing big ideas and details across documents
- Support students in articulating their own thinking

A) Re-engage students in the historical inquiry

Begin by reminding students of the lesson question and the larger historical context. Do an initial informal assessment of what “big picture” students have walked away with. **Say** to students:

- So who thinks they can summarize some of the main claims about whether or not the opportunity to work in mills outweighed the hardships for women?
- Let’s think back to the Context. How did this debate connect back to what was happening at the time?

In turn-and-talk or table groups, have students **discuss** these questions:

- How were the lives of young women living on farms changing at this time?
- What was causing this change?
- Why might a woman living on a farm have even wanted to move to a city like Lowell?
- **Prompt** groups to look at the Context slides and their notes. Let groups discuss and then share their responses.

Connect back to the Hook. **Say** to students:

- We have to think about this question of whether the opportunity to work on a mill outweighed the hardships in the context of what choices and opportunities women had and how women's lives were changing, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.
- Let's think back to those quotes we read at the very beginning.
 - You may want to revisit the Hook slide with students.
- Each student will have his/her own experiences and perspectives. **Say:** Imagine you were considering moving to a mill town. Would you go? Why or why not? Now that you know more about life and work in Lowell, who would be more persuasive to you, Sarah or Lucy?
- Let's look at the range of claims you've identified from the documents you read to help you answer this question.

The purpose of this initial phase is to prime students' thinking and to give you an initial assessment of their general level of understanding. You do not need to spend a long time on these questions because you will dig in deeper in the next phases.

B) Support students in comparing big ideas and details across documents

Display the Connect Tab.

Tell students:

- Let's look across these four documents at the claims you've identified.

The Connect tab will display the key discussion questions:

- What claims did people make about working in Lowell being a good opportunity?
- What claims did people make about what was hard about working in the mills?
- Which claims are more persuasive to you, and why?

Connect will also display a t-chart labeled "Millwork was a good opportunity" and "Millwork was hard, unhealthy work" that displays student notes on the Big Idea question, and their supporting evidence. You can choose one student's work to project to guide the discussion, or you can project notes you've "starred" while using the Teacher Dashboard to review students' Big Idea notes.

A t-chart with an example of student work is shown on the next page.

CONNECT	
Millwork was a good opportunity	Millwork was hard, unhealthy work
Opportunities for Young Women... Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millwork provided women a good opportunity to save money for marriage. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millwork paid women more than any other occupation. 	Sarah Bagley Describes Working Conditions Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The hours at mills were too long and made workers sick. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls didn't have enough time to eat each day, and this was unhealthy.
Mary Stiles Paul Writes Home from Lowell Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millwork was the best work available to women. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They could earn more than in any other job, and it gave them a good place to live. 	Women at Work Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millwork was harder than farm work. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factory owners set the pace and hours, and the women did the same task over and over again.

Prompt students to look at the “Connect” graphic and key discussion questions. Again, we recommend using turn-and-talk or table group structures to have students engage in these questions with their peers.

Follow-up questions you could **ask** to deepen and extend thinking include:

- How did [Blewett] support her claim? How did [Bagley] support her claim?
- How did they come to different conclusions about working in mills?
- Why do you think individual women's experiences varied?
- What do you think the general trends were?

Give students time to **edit** their responses in *Zoom In* based on class discussion.

C) Support students in articulating their own thinking

Finally, be sure to allow students time to speak with each other about their own thinking and larger concepts. This can happen at any stage of the discussion, through turn-and-talks or small-group discussion. Questions to **ask** to support this kind of thinking include:

- What's important here? Anything surprising?
- Did your thinking change over time? How?
- How do we make sense of these different claims as historians?
- Do we have consensus as a class about how to answer this question? Why or why not?

WRITING

[Suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

In this five-paragraph argument essay, students must take a position on whether work in the mills contained more opportunities or hardships for young women. The focal writing skill is for students to cite evidence from the documents in support of their position. Students must also address the counterclaim, and in the conclusion, convince their audience why their position is the better one.

Teacher's Roles During Writing

As students are writing, support them in these key ways according to their needs:

- Circulate and observe students' progress through the template or outline. Take some notes to help you think about mini-lessons in writing you may want to teach to the whole class.
- Conference individually with students on their writing. Support their development through asking probing questions:
 - You seem stuck; where might you find that information?
 - If you don't remember what that quote means, where can you go?
 - Tell me why you introduced that evidence that way? What more do you think the reader might want to know?
 - Can you tell out-loud what the Big Idea is here? OK, how could you put that into writing?
- If you see patterns, pull together small groups of students for mini-lessons, or to review instructions.
- Support students in being peer editors.
- Help students move on to polished writing.

Preparing Students to Write

Tell students that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing. Remind them they will be writing a five-paragraph argument essay. The key elements of historical essay writing you'll help them with are:

- Citing evidence in support of a position
- Addressing a counterclaim
- Persuading the audience of their position in the conclusion

Project the Essay Outline View. Use this to review the writing prompt and preview the essay structure with students. Review explicitly each part of the essay and the role it serves in developing an answer to the historical question. Making these elements of the essay explicit for students will help them to develop the skills to construct essays more independently down the road.

Essay Outline View

Prompt: Did the opportunities America's first factories provided for young women outweigh the hardships they experienced there?

Paragraph-by-paragraph guidance: In your essay you must have the following sections:

- **An introduction in which you introduce the question and take a position**
 - State the topic of your essay.
 - Provide a historical context.
 - Write a thesis statement.
- **A first body paragraph in which you address one claim that supports your position**
 - Provide a topic sentence(s).
 - Provide 1-2 details from your documents to support this claim.
 - > Introduce your sources.
 - > Provide evidence from each document you cite.
 - > Explain how this evidence connects to the reason you are providing.
- **A second body paragraph in which you address a second claim that supports your position**
 - Provide a topic sentence(s).
 - Provide 1-2 details from your documents to support this claim.
 - > Introduce your sources.
 - > Provide evidence from each document you cite.
 - > Explain how this evidence connects to the reason you are providing.
- **A third body paragraph in which you write about one counterclaim**
 - Provide a topic sentence(s).
 - Provide 1-2 details from your documents that show evidence for this counterclaim.
 - > Introduce your sources.
 - > Provide evidence from each document you cite.
 - > Connect each quote to the counterclaim.
- **A conclusion in which you convince your audience that your position is best**
 - Restate the debate.
 - Summarize your claims.
 - Present any concluding ideas that you think will persuade your audience.

Setting the Level of Writing Support

Using the Teacher Dashboard, you can set the level of students' writing support. (Note: do this before they begin drafting their essays, or essay writing will be lost.) *Zoom In* offers two levels of writing support. High Support (the default) gives all students sentence-level tips, optional sentence-starters, and guidance in selecting and using evidence. As students show progress as historical writers—especially in using evidence from documents to support their ideas—teachers can set writing support for individual students to Low Support. The system will provide these students with paragraph-level tips only, meaning students will shape and support their essays substantially on their own.

Preparing Students to Write with Low Supports

If most of your students are writing with Low Supports (meaning with outline only, rather than the detailed Writing Template), you may wish to give them more up-front preparation to write their historical essays. The following outline may help.

Overview

- Let students know that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing.
- Remind them that they will be arguing whether or not working in the Lowell Mills provided a good opportunity for young women.
- Their final product will be a five-paragraph argument essay.

Introduction

- Remember, what is the purpose of your essay? Right, you are going to take a position on whether the opportunity to work in a mill outweighed the hardships for young women.
- What do the various pieces of this essay need to be? [Review the overarching structure of the paragraphs.]
- What's going to go into this introduction?
- How will you start this essay?
- What background information will you need to provide to support your argument?
- What is the thesis statement in an essay like this? Right, you have to take a position. You'll need to support this position in body paragraphs one and two.
- Strong arguments also acknowledge and refute the other perspective. You'll do that in body paragraph three and in the conclusion.

Body Paragraphs 1 and 2

- OK, now that we have a sense of what needs to go into the introduction, let's think about the first two body paragraphs.
- How did the authors we read support their perspective on working in the Lowell mills? Right, they made claims about either what was hard, what opportunities existed, or in some cases both!
- You will also need to identify two claims that you want to use to support your position.
- For each claim you will need to find supporting evidence in the documents and explain how that evidence connects to the claim.
 - Connecting evidence back to the larger historical ideas is typically the hardest move for students to make, and may be worth spending some time discussing and/or modeling.
- If two authors made the same (or a similar) claim you can certainly use more than one piece of evidence in your body paragraph.

Body Paragraph 3

- Remember, every debate has claims and counterclaims. To make a strong argument you can't ignore the counterclaims.
- In this paragraph you'll choose just one counterclaim to address. It is OK here to simply acknowledge one way in which the other side supports their position (using evidence from a document of course!).
- Again, if more than one author makes the same counterclaim, you can use more than one document.

Conclusion

- Finally, the conclusion is the place in your essay where you will restate the main question under investigation, summarize your main points, and convince your audience that you have made the strongest argument.

Sample Student Essay

In the 1820s and 1830s industrialization came to New England and people began to build factories to produce textiles. Most men had other jobs, so the owners of these factories wanted to hire young girls to work in them. The young girls they hired mostly came from farms. On farms, girls had very little freedom and they had to do many difficult jobs. Factory jobs provided an opportunity for girls to move to towns where they could work in the mills and live in dorms. Even though life working in the mills was hard for girls, I think the opportunity to leave farms outweighed this.

One reason the opportunity outweighed the hardships was that girls had a chance to earn more money than they could have anywhere else. According to historian Mary Blewett, "each mill girl would return home with savings to be a bride." This means that girls could earn money that they could help use to pay for getting married. Some of the girls who worked in the mills made the same claim. A mill girl named Mary Paul wrote, "I could earn more to begin with than I can anywhere about here. I am in need of clothes which I cannot get if I stay here." This means that girls wanted to be able to earn money to spend on themselves, something they could not do when they worked on the farm.

Another reason the opportunity outweighed the hardships was that girls could have new social experiences by moving from farms to mill towns. According to historian Mary Blewett, "a Lowell girl might attend public lectures, and on Sundays investigate the various churches." This means that girls could learn new things that they couldn't when they were living on a farm.

Some people say that the opportunity to work in mills did not outweigh the hardships. One reason was that the work girls did was long and hard. According to historian Thomas Dublin, "employees worked an average of 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, 309 days a year." This means that the workers had to work almost all of the time. Some of the girls who worked in the mills said the same thing. A mill girl named Sarah Bagley testified that, "the next evil is the length of time employed—not giving them enough time to cultivate their minds." This means that girls had to work all the time and did not have enough free time.

While some of aspects of millwork were very hard for the workers, others were very rewarding. The chance to earn money and to learn new things and meet new people made the experience worth it. Even though the girls had to work long hours and the work was hard, it was their choice to do the work and it was better than staying on the farm.

Assessing Student Writing with the Essay Rubric

For information on assessing student writing, see these documents:

- “*Zoom In* Essay Rubric” (PDF)
- “Tracking Students' Progress and Assessing Student Work” (PDF)