



Back to the Salt Mines

The Industrial Revolution was a period of great innovation and change. Inventors designed new machines that revolutionized the production of goods and manufacturing. With the increase in factories, new jobs were born, and the number of workers needed increased, bringing more women and children into the workforce than ever before.

Factory jobs were repetitive, specific, and required little training. In cloth factories, giant looms were powered by steam engines. The factories were loud, dark, and damp. Children as young as eight years old, being smaller and nimbler, were used to collect fibers that fell under the machines. This work was dangerous, since the movement of the machines was unpredictable, meaning that limbs could get caught in moving parts. Working at a factory for 12 hours a day meant that few children could afford the possibility to improve their future prospects since they could not go to school.

Many children nowadays face similar challenges. Nearly 60 percent of the global workforce, adults and minors, work in the informal sector, meaning they lack workplace protection. More than 20 percent of young people worldwide are neither employed nor studying, meaning they have reduced opportunities for the future. Young women are twice as likely as men to be in this position. Despite the advances that societies have made, the well-being of young people needs to be addressed to support the human rights of everyone, especially those in marginalized situations.

DO

Cardboard Loom



In this Maker, you will create a loom. Before factories began mass-producing cloth and clothes, most were made at home. Children would aid their parents, learning a trade and essential skills, and it was much safer than factory work. Although nowadays we are used to buying clothes at stores, making fabric at home with a homemade loom is possible.

1. Cut a rectangle of cardboard approximately 40 cm X 25 cm. Cut two strips of cardboard 25 cm X 3 cm wide and glue them to either end of the larger cardboard, leaving 2 cm along the edge. Let dry.
2. Make slits along both shorter edges of the larger cardboard 1 cm apart.
3. Tape a piece of string to the back of the loom. Bring it forward through the top slit and then down through the corresponding bottom slit. Bring the string along the back of the loom and down through the top second slit. Continue until the loom is fully and strung tightly. Tape the end of the string to the back.
4. Weave different fabrics and materials over and under the strings until the strings are full of fabric.
5. To remove your weaving, cut the strings, leaving approximately 3 cm on the ends. Tie the neighboring knots so that the material doesn't fall off. If desired, make a hanging by tying the strings to a stick.

01 Present!

Once your Maker is done, name and label your weavings. Hang them in the classroom like an art gallery. Alternatively, create an online gallery display to share with family and friends.

02 Discuss!

- › How do you think children felt about working to help their families?
- › How do you think children felt about working in factories?

03 Get Informed!

Create a video tutorial of how to make the loom and your weavings. Share it with younger students to teach them how to make their own.

04 Take It on the Road!

Research the use of child labor in your country. Create an exhibition or blog to share your findings with your community.

