

Mother Jones:

Marching with the Mill Children

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Group Website

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Despite Mary Harris Jones' influential steps towards establishing child labor laws, she seems to be a forgotten hero. We initially stumbled across her name while doing a research paper on Irish immigrants. Neither of us had ever read about her in history books and our teachers did not recognize her name either. We were inspired by Mother Jones' underdog story because despite losing her family and business, being arrested on multiple occasions, and receiving many death threats, she never strayed from her beliefs. Even though Jones was placed in situations where many people would have given up, she fought on and continued to "raise hell."

When starting our research, we began by reading Mother Jones' autobiography which allowed us to have an inside look at her accomplishments and beliefs. Upon reading her section on the March of the Mill Children, we felt compelled to narrow our topic down to her fight to end child labor. The next step of our research process was looking through Library of Congress photograph collections of children working in textile mills. Another topic mentioned in her autobiography was biased newspapers, so we sought out sources that verified her stance. In order to assess her accomplishments, we researched how the historical context of the Industrial Revolution and child labor laws corresponded to her efforts.

The website category was an ideal fit for our topic. It allowed us to give a visual representation of the horrors behind child labor. The pictures of Mother Jones show her as a conservative grandmotherly figure, though this persona contrasts to her tough personality. One of the most compelling things about this topic is that she was an unlikely hero, and being able to show her picture allowed us to showcase that point to the readers. Weebly also allowed us to work independently at our own homes while at the same time collaborating with each other.

Mother Jones fit the Taking a Stand theme in a unique way. She was Irish, female, elderly, and poor — four things which were major disadvantages in the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. Mother Jones stayed true to her convictions and did not let these setbacks stop her from taking a stand. She recognized that corrupt legislators and newspapers would not listen to a poor, elderly Irishwoman and that the media was biased towards wealthy corporations, so she took matters into her own hands by going undercover to investigate child labor. Jones touched the lives of many and played a key role in raising awareness about the horrors of child labor as she marched nearly 100 miles with hundreds of children to the doorstep of President Roosevelt's home. She took a stand about an issue that the media originally refused to cover, using her unconventional methods to inform the public and pressure the government to take action.