

TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR **TROUBLE AT LACHINE MILL**

Trouble at Lachine Mill describes the factory life – “the dark satanic mills” – of Canada in the nineteenth century. By the 1870s, the year the book is set, the country was rapidly industrializing. Working conditions in the mills were terrible. Children as young as ten were working twelve hour days at hard physical labour. The novel describes the hardships that Meg and Jamie faced as they worked in a Montreal shirt factory.

These are some ideas for stimulating classroom discussion and student projects based on the novel.

THE NOVEL

- Describe in your own words the working conditions at Lachine Mill.
- Jamie is fined 25 cents because he was resting on the job. Are workers fined for misbehaviour in factories today?
- Jamie’s punishment in the “black hole” is a test of his fibre, but it also leads to a crisis. Explain that crisis.
- The strikers in *Trouble at Lachine Mill* try to shut down the factory. Why did they use that tactic?

CANADIAN HISTORY

- Why did the early factories in Canada locate in cities like Hamilton, Toronto and Montreal?
- The factories in Montreal in the nineteenth century were located along the Lachine Canal. Why do industries locate along transportation facilities?
- The book describes Montreal as a city of great wealth and great poverty. Today do Canadian cities have extremes of income?
- Trade unions, organizations of workers, had little success in Canada 150 years ago. Are they any more successful today?

GEOGRAPHY

- Why was the location of Montreal important in its growth as an industrial city?
- Research why the Lachine Canal was built.
- Montreal and Toronto are both ports, but Montreal’s port handles far more cargo than Toronto. Why?
- What are the major languages in Montreal? Why does language reflect a city’s history and culture?

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Draw a picture of Jamie in the “black hole.”
- Describe the life of wealthy children in Montreal in the nineteenth century and the lives of poor children.
- Make a list of all of the problems faced by the strikers in the book. Do you think it was worth facing these risks to make gains in working conditions and wages?
- Explain why foremen and bosses were so authoritarian in nineteenth century factories.