

# Listening to the past essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

For this essay I have chosen the short story done by Ann Egglely as my primary source document. It is located at the end of chapter twenty-two under the heading of " Listening to the Past" on pages 754 to 755. My focus within this essay will be to demonstrate the working life lived by Ann Egglely according to the average working life lived by a female during the early eighteen hundreds. Presenting a comparison as well as a difference between both Ann and the average daily working life of a female.

Providing the difficulties of the working class at this point, as well as the struggles to survive and the measures to which some of these people went through in order to stay alive. I will also provide the general opinion of the males at that time concerning the idea of the females working moving coal wagons under- ground such as Ann. My final point will discuss the Factory Act passed in 1883 which changed the lives for all of these people by improving the working conditions. This text provides a short summary of the working life and the working conditions for Ann working during the early eighteen hundreds.

Ann is only Eighteen years old and had been working moving coal wagons underground for eleven years already. She is uneducated, and does not know how to read, does not know her letters enabling her to even spell her own name. She had never gone to a church or chapel because there was no church or chapel closer than a mile of where she had lived. She had never heard of Christ or of what a prayer was. She began work at around four, four thirty in the morning and did not finish until four sometimes five that evening.

Her job required her to move coal wagons “ stripped to the waist and harnessed to the wagon with belt and chain, this underground work “ hurrying” coal from the face of the seam to the mine shaft”. She wore trousers and her shifts in the pit and great big shoes clinkered and nailed. Fortunately in her pit the girls never worked naked and the men never insulted them. The food conditions were very limited as explained by Ann stating that there wasn’t always enough to eat, but they did get a good supper. One thing that must be made clear is that the era of the Industrial Revolution witnessed major changes in the sexual division of labor.

In the case of Ann I came across many differences and similarities among her lifestyle and that of the average female during this time period. These similarities include that Ann like most children were employed very young to keep the family together. Which is true because if Ann was not working then her father would not be able to support her and she would be on her own. The second similarity was that ‘ the presence of the whole family meant that children and adults worked the same long hours”. Clearly stated by Ann when she said that her and her father worked constantly twelve hours.

The final similarity was the growth of factories and mines brought unheard-of opportunities for boys and girls to mix on the job, free of familial supervision. The main differences among Ann and the average females was that the man during this time emerged as the family’s primary wage earner, while the women found only limited job opportunities. This was different in Ann’s case because Ann and her father both worked in the pits dragging coal, resulting in the same pay and both making the same amount of money.

Another difference is that the women were expected to concentrate on unpaid housework, childcare, and craft work at home. Which was as well different in Ann's case because she unlike most women There were many general opinions from the males on the idea of women working in the coal mines. Although, most disagreeing with the fact that woman should have to work. The middle-class men leading the inquiry often failed to appreciate the physical effort of the girls and women who dragged with belt and chain the unwheeled carts of coal along the narrow underground passages.

One man went as far to say, " I consider it a scandal for girls to work in the pits. Till they are 12 or 14 they may work very well but after that it's an abomination... The work of the pit does not hurt them, it is the effect on their morals that I complain of, and after 14 they should not be allowed to go.... After that age it is dreadful". The other opinion came from men like Ann's father who stated that it was it was both a shame and a disgrace for girls to work as they do.

After much complaint concerning the idea of children going to work at such a young age and working so many hours something was finally done about it. It was called the Factory Act of 1833 and it was the first major accomplishment towards better working conditions and a better economy. " It limited the factory workday for children between nine and thirteen to eight hours and that of adolescents between fourteen and eighteen to twelve hours, although the act made no effort to regulate the hours of work for children at home or in small businesses.

The law also prohibited the factory employment of children under nine; they were to be enrolled in the elementary schools that factory owners were required to establish". This cause brought about the next act that changed and modified our society for the better. This was The Mines Act of 1842 which prohibited underground work for all woman as well as boys under ten. This short story teaches us a lot about the times of the early eighteenth century. Providing us with a great ideal picture of the pain and suffering which took place. It gave me a different perspective on the working conditions of this time in history.

Showing the troubles that a girl like Ann had to go through in order to stay alive. I could not even imagine doing what Ann had accomplished, by the age eighteen years old at the time this document was noted she had been already working moving coal wagons for eleven years. Since she was seven years old Ann also worked long hour shifts sometimes enabling her to get something to eat. In my opinion men and especially women who went to work in the pits trying to earn a living and modernize our society go down in my history books as being heroes.