

# The Industrial Revolution:

## Diary of a Child Worker



Harriet lived in Britain during a time called the Industrial Revolution. As a young child, she lived on a small farm in the countryside. When factory jobs became more popular, Harriet moved with her family to a large town. As Harriet wrote this diary, they all worked in a busy and noisy factory.

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1832**



Dear Diary,

Today is my 9<sup>th</sup> birthday. Last night, I wished with all my might that I wouldn't have to work today. Unfortunately, my wish didn't come true. Mum says that the factory owners don't care about birthdays. She was right.

Although I made it in time for work, Growler (I don't know his real name) still held the whip up and waved it in my face as I walked past. When Frank came in late, I could see from the red marks on his legs that he hadn't been so lucky.

When I got home, Mum told me that she had saved my wages from last week to get us some meat scraps from the butcher. Scraps beat gruel any day!

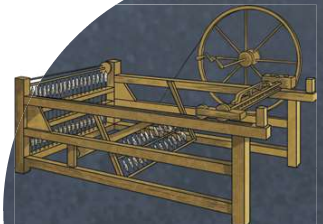
**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1832**



Dear Diary,

I need to grow taller. The clothes I have to wear every day are far too big for me and I'm constantly tripping over them. Not only that but I can't reach the top of the machines. Today, the thread at the top snapped and I had to climb on top to tie the loose pieces together. Obviously, the machine was still going and I was so scared about falling in.

There are lots of kids around here who are missing a finger or two and I don't intend on being one of them.



**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1832**



Dear Diary,

It was so hot today that I thought I was going to melt. I spent 12 hours on my hands and knees underneath the machines clearing jams and cotton fluff. I saw several people looking unwell in the stifling heat and I wasn't surprised.

The smell was horrific too. It was the sort of smell that you can taste for hours after you've left. It's not like any of us have running water in our houses either so it will likely still be there tomorrow. Yuck.

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1832**



Dear Diary,

I got beaten today. After walking to work in the snow, my hands were numb and stiff. This meant that, at the beginning of my shift, I was struggling to tie the thread together. Growler saw this and said that I wasn't working hard enough. It's not fair.

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 1833**



Dear Diary,

I'm sorry that I haven't written to you for a while. I'm just so tired all of the time. I wish I didn't have to work.

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 1833**



Dear Diary,

Recently, the newspaper has been writing about a man called Mr Sadler. He's written lots of letters to the government about how horrible it is for children to be working in factories and he says that things need to improve. I don't know what Mr Sadler can do but it's given us all a much-needed boost. For the first time, I think that I can see my future getting better.

# Questions

1. How does the news about Mr Sadler make Harriet feel? Tick one.

- ☐ worried
- ☐ nervous
- ☐ powerful
- ☐ hopeful

2. Who earnt the money for the meat scraps? Tick one.

- ☐ Harriet's mother
- ☐ Harriet's father
- ☐ Harriet
- ☐ the factory owner

3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they occurred.

- ☐ Harriet is beaten by Growler.
- ☐ Frank is beaten by Growler.
- ☐ Harriet wishes that she was taller.
- ☐ Harriet spends 12 hours clearing jams.

4. Draw four lines to match each date to how Harriet was feeling on that day.

Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 1832	●	●	Harriet is concerned for her safety.
Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 1832	●	●	Harriet sees lots of people looking ill.
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> August 1832	●	●	Harriet doesn't eat gruel for dinner.
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> February 1833	●	●	Harriet feels positive about her future.

5. What date is Harriet's birthday?

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6. Look at the diary entry dated **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1832**.  
Find and copy one word which means 'very hot'.

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7. How do you think that the man with the whip earned the nickname Growler?  
Explain your answer.

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8. Compare the working conditions on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August** and **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**.  
How were the two days different?

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# Answers

1. How does the news about Mr Sadler make Harriet feel? Tick one.

- ☐ worried
- ☐ nervous
- ☐ powerful
- ☒ **hopeful**

2. Who earnt the money for the meat scraps? Tick one.

- ☐ Harriet's mother
- ☐ Harriet's father
- ☒ **Harriet**
- ☐ the factory owner

3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they occurred.

- 4** Harriet is beaten by Growler.
- 1** Frank is beaten by Growler.
- 2** Harriet wishes that she was taller.
- 3** Harriet spends 12 hours clearing jams.

4. Draw four lines to match each date to how Harriet was feeling on that day.

Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 1832	Harriet is concerned for her safety.
Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 1832	Harriet sees lots of people looking ill.
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> August 1832	Harriet doesn't eat gruel for dinner.
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> February 1833	Harriet feels positive about her future.

5. What date is Harriet's birthday?

**Harriet's birthday is on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May.**

6. Look at the diary entry dated **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1832**.

Find and copy one word which means 'very hot'.

**stifling**

7. How do you think that the man with the whip earned the nickname Growler?

Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses provided that a sensible explanation is given, such as: I think that Growler earned his nickname because he is scary and looks like a growling dog when the children walk past in the morning.**

8. Compare the working conditions on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August** and **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**.

How were the two days different?

**Pupils' own responses provided that a sensible comparison is made between the two days, such as: On the 14<sup>th</sup> August, it was so hot that Harriet felt as though she was melting. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December, it was the opposite because it was so cold that Harriet couldn't move her hands.**