

NCSS notable trade book lesson plan

Social Studies
Research and
Practice

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Seeker of Truth: Kailash Satyarthi's Fight to End Child Labor

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Little Bee Books

New York, NY,

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Book recommended for grades 1-5, Lesson recommended for grades 3-5

Book summary

As a child, Kailash Satyarthi heard a story about a hummingbird that extinguished a forest fire. This story of a small bird taking small steps to eventually accomplish something big stuck with Kailash and inspired his later work as an activist. Throughout his life, Kailash has fought to bring justice to marginalized people and is especially well-known for his efforts to stop child labor in his home country of India as well as globally. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for his activism.

NCSS themes

- (4) Individual development and identity
- (5) Individuals, groups, and institutions
- (6) Power, authority, and governance
- (10) Civic ideals and practices

C3 framework standards

D2.Civ.6.3–5. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

D2.Civ.14.3–5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

D2.Eco.3.3–5. Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services.

Materials

- (1) *Seeker of Truth* ([Venkat and Da Silva Pereira, 2024](#))
- (2) 8–10 printed color photos depicting child laborers (see [Appendix 1](#))
- (3) Easel with large sheets of paper
- (4) Poster paper (one for each small group of 3–5 students)
- (5) Markers
- (6) Index cards (one stack of 12–15 cards for each small group of 3–5 students)



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- (7) One copy of *Child Labor* ([Britannica Kids, 2025](#)) per student

Big ideas

- (1) Child labor denies children of freedom and opportunities, including education.
- (2) Child labor is a global issue both historically and in contemporary times.
- (3) People can engage in activism to challenge unfairness and make positive social changes.

Objectives

- (1) **Exploration:** Students will be able to explain examples and non-examples of “child labor” and name reasons why children have been (and are) compelled to work.
- (2) **Development:** Students will be able to analyze the ways child workers are impacted by engaging in child labor.
- (3) **Expansion:** Students will be able to identify, explain, and justify actions they can take to prevent child labor.

A note to the teacher before beginning the lesson

Before the Exploration phase, create a classroom gallery walk by printing a selection of 8–10 photos depicting child labor. (See [Appendix 1](#) for photos that may be selected.) Display these photos throughout the classroom where they are visible to students. When selecting photos to display for the gallery walk, make sure to select both historical and contemporary images depicting child labor from a variety of locations to ensure that students understand that child labor continues to be a worldwide problem. Make sure the photos chosen are developmentally appropriate for students.

Before the Exploration phase, draw a Frayer model organizer ([Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d.](#)) on a sheet of easel paper. The Frayer model will be filled in with input from students during the lesson. See [Appendix 2](#) for an example of a completed Frayer model.

At several points in this lesson, students will work in small groups. While the teacher should exercise professional judgment when determining groups, the teacher is encouraged to consider grouping students purposefully to maximize learning, foster cooperation and collaboration among peers, and capitalize on the strengths that individual students can bring to a group.

Exploration

Estimated time to complete: 35–40 min (varies based on class discussion time)

Objective: Students will be able to explain examples and non-examples of child labor and name reasons why children have been (and are) compelled to work.

C3 standard: *D2.Eco.3.3–5*. Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services.

Assessment method: Student observation.

- (1) Divide the class into small groups of 3–5 students. Assign each small group to stand in front of a gallery walk photo. Explain that each small group will spend about two minutes viewing and discussing their photo. Ask students to discuss: *What do you notice about the photo? Who is in the photo? What is the person doing? Where, when, and why do you think this photo was taken?* These questions may be posted on the board to remind students of what they should discuss. Optional: Students may individually take notes to record the main ideas of their group’s discussion during this step (as well as during steps 2 and 3), or the group may designate a notetaker who will record main ideas on the group’s behalf.
- (2) After about two minutes, tell each group to move to the next photo (moving clockwise around the classroom). Ask them to discuss the same questions as before, but this time, they should also consider what they think the first and second photo have in common. (Time spent viewing/discussing each photo may be adjusted if students need more/less time.)
- (3) Repeat step 2 at least two more times so students can view and discuss four of the photos within their small groups. (It is not necessary for each small group to view and discuss every photo.)
- (4) Following the gallery walk, gather the class together for a whole group discussion. Debrief with students about what they noticed about the photos in the gallery walk. If students do not identify that the photos are of children who appear to have jobs, ask guiding questions to steer them to this understanding. Questions to ask during this step could include:
 - What do the photos have in common? What are some differences that you noticed between the photos?
 - Do any of the photos remind you of something you have seen or heard of before?
 - You noticed that the photos all show children like you. What details do you see in the photos, such as what the children are wearing or holding in their hands? What clues do these details give you about what the children were doing when their photos were taken?
 - What expressions do you see on the children’s faces? What do these expressions tell you about what the children were thinking or feeling when the photos were taken?
- (5) Complete the Frayer model organizer about the term “child labor” with input from students. (See [Appendix 2](#).) Define the term in student-friendly language, discuss characteristics based on what students observed from the gallery walk photos, and discuss examples and non-examples of child labor.
- (6) Explain that some countries have outlawed child labor, but the [United Nations \(2025\)](#) estimates that 160 million children, or about one in ten children worldwide, are still involved in child labor. Inform students that some of the clothes they wear may have been made by child laborers, or the fruits and vegetables they eat may have been harvested by children. Ask students to turn and talk with a partner about why they think children are compelled to work. Then, call on students to share what they discussed with their partner. When summarizing the discussion, make sure to note that children often must work because their families need money to meet basic needs, and although parents love their children and want the best for them, the family’s survival sometimes depends on the children’s income.

Assessment: Students participate in small group and whole class discussions throughout this lesson. Students should be informally assessed on their participation in these discussions and whether their responses are reasonable based on what they could observe from the gallery walk photos. If the teacher opts to assign a participation grade, several factors may be considered when determining a student's grade: asking relevant questions or making meaningful contributions, staying on-task, engaging respectfully with peers, demonstrating active listening (e.g. looking at the speaker), and encouraging peers to share in partner/small group settings.

Development

Estimated time to complete: 50–60 min (varies based on class discussion time and time needed to complete the open sort activity in step 5)

Objective: Students will be able to analyze the ways child workers are impacted by engaging in child labor.

C3 standards: *D2.Eco.3.3–5*. Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services; *D2.Civ.6.3–5*. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

Assessment method: Student observation.

- (1) Ask students, “How do you think your life would be different if you were a child laborer instead of a student at our school? What are some things you do now that you would not be able to do?” Instruct students to turn and talk with a partner or their table group (depending on the classroom seating configuration). After several minutes of talk time, call on students to share their ideas with the whole class.
- (2) Introduce *Seeker of Truth* (Venkat and da Silva Pereira, 2024) to the students. Discuss the Before Reading question (see Appendix 3). Read the book aloud, pausing to ask and discuss the During Reading questions with students. When the book is finished, discuss the After Reading questions. While discussing the second After Reading question (“Kailash rescued many children who were forced into child labor. What are some of the ways these children were hurt by being forced to work?”), list students’ responses on easel paper.
- (3) Tell students they will learn some additional ways that children are affected by working as child laborers. Display the article *Child Labor* (Britannica Kids, 2025; see References for the URL) so that all students can see it and/or distribute printed copies. Read the article aloud. Tell students to give a “thumbs up” when they hear information about how child labor can impact children. For example, students should give a “thumbs up” when the article states that children do work that is “physically demanding or dangerous.” When students give a thumbs up, ask them what information they heard, and add it to the easel paper list from step 2.
- (4) As a class, watch one or two of World Vision Canada’s short YouTube videos featuring real stories of child labor (see Appendix 4 for URLs). After watching a video, the teacher should think aloud about the ways the child’s life is impacted by child labor and list one or two ideas on the easel paper. Then, invite students to share their observations and ideas. For example, after watching *A Life of Child Labor: Pharady’s Story* (see World Vision Canada, 2010 in Appendix 4), students might note that Pharady may not achieve her dream of becoming a teacher because she cannot attend school. Record students’ ideas on the easel paper.
- (5) Divide the class into small groups of 3–5 students. Hand each group a stack of index cards. Instruct each group to transcribe the ideas listed on the easel paper onto their index cards (one idea per index card). Once the index cards are prepared, ask groups to

sort their index cards into categories that make sense to them, explaining that there are no right or wrong ways to categorize the cards as long as students can give an explanation. There are multiple ways the cards can be sorted, but some categories could include *education, safety, play/friends, or rights*.

- (6) After giving students enough time to categorize their cards, call on groups to name their categories, which ideas they sorted in these categories, and explain how and why they created these categories. As groups share, point out the similarities and differences between the ways students grouped their cards.

Assessment: In steps 2, 3, and 4, students are asked to name ways that children can be impacted by working as laborers. The teacher should assess whether students' responses are reasonable and based on facts learned from *Seeker of Truth* (Venkat and da Silva Pereira, 2024), *Child Labor* (Britannica Kids, 2025), and the YouTube videos. Responses could include, but are not limited to, not being able to attend school, not learning how to read, not being able to play or have fun, not being able to make friends, being separated from parents, getting hurt at work, etc. During step 5, students engage in an open sort and are asked to categorize the ways children are impacted by child labor into categories. Any categories that children create, and any ways they sort their index cards, should be accepted as long as students can support their thinking with a logical explanation.

Expansion

Estimated time to complete: 50–60 min (varies based on the amount of time students need to compose their essays)

Objective: Students will be able to identify, explain, and justify actions they can take to prevent child labor.

C3 standard: D2.Civ.6.3–5. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families; D2.Civ.14.3–5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

Assessment method: Student observation, short essay (see Appendix 5 for rubric)

- (1) Remind students that in *Seeker of Truth* (Venkat and da Silva Pereira, 2024), Kailash Satyarthi was like the hummingbird who put out the forest fire. Step by step, action by action, he helped bring global attention to the problems of child labor and encouraged governments to pass laws against it. Ask students to turn and talk with a partner about what actions Kailash took to fight against child labor and other injustices. Responses may include raising money to help children go to school, removing children from forced labor and giving them safe places to live, and organizing marches against child labor. List their responses on a sheet of easel paper.
- (2) Divide the class into small groups of 3–5 students. Give each group a sheet of poster paper and markers. Instruct students to brainstorm ways that they can help end child labor, which continues to affect millions of children globally. How can students be like the hummingbird whose story inspired Kailash? Give students time to brainstorm ideas and list them on their poster paper. Their ideas will vary, but possibilities could include boycotting companies who use child labor, writing to lawmakers about the impacts of child labor, creating videos or ads to tell people about how child labor can endanger young people, raising funds for organizations that stop child labor, etc.
- (3) Allow groups to take turns sharing their posters with the class. Prompt students to explain how they think their ideas can help put an end to child labor. When all groups have shared, display students' posters at the front of the classroom where they are visible to all students.

- (4) Ask students to think about the ideas shared on the posters. Tell them to select one idea for taking action against child labor that they want to try. Students will write brief essays (1–2 paragraphs) explaining the idea they selected and why. Collect students' essays. (The essay prompt and a rubric are shown in [Appendix 5](#).)

Assessment: During steps 2 and 3, students will name ideas for what they can do to help stop child labor or bring attention to this global issue. All reasonable ideas should be accepted, but if it is unclear how a student's idea relates to preventing child labor, the teacher can probe by asking for an explanation. At the end of the lesson, students write short essays about one way that they want to help stop child labor. Students' essays should be evaluated according to the rubric in [Appendix 5](#).

Assessment

The following are assessments from the lesson that align to standards and objectives:

- (1) *Exploration:* Students' verbal answers to discussion prompts.
- (2) *Development:* Students' verbal answers to discussion prompts; students' verbal explanations for the open sort activity.
- (3) *Expansion:* Students' verbal answers to discussion prompts; students' small group poster presentations; students' independently written short essays. (See [Appendix 5](#) for a rubric.)

Suggested extension activities

- (1) Students implement the idea they chose for their essay during the Expansion phase of the lesson (e.g. writing to a lawmaker, creating a public service announcement calling to end child labor).
- (2) Choose a company and research its policies and practices about using child labor.
- (3) Ask students to choose the image they found most compelling from the gallery walk in the Exploration phase of the lesson. Students provide a written or verbal explanation of their choice.
- (4) Students reread *Seeker of Truth* ([Venkat and da Silva Pereira, 2024](#)) and generate their own open-ended questions to discuss in small peer groups.
- (5) Students research child labor laws in countries around the world and compare/contrast them. Alternatively, students could research the child labor laws in their own state and compare/contrast them to laws of other states or countries.
- (6) Students search for and read recent stories about child labor in student-friendly news sources like *Time for Kids*.
- (7) Read additional books about child labor from the National Council of Social Studies Notable Tradebooks list such as *Malala, A Brave Girl from Pakistan/Iqbal, A Brave Boy from Pakistan: Two Stories of Bravery* ([Winter, 2014](#)) and *The Carpet Boy's Gift* ([Shea and Morin, 2003](#)). Identify and discuss additional knowledge gained about child labor.
- (8) Investigate the social and economic conditions that compel families to send their children to work in different countries.

Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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