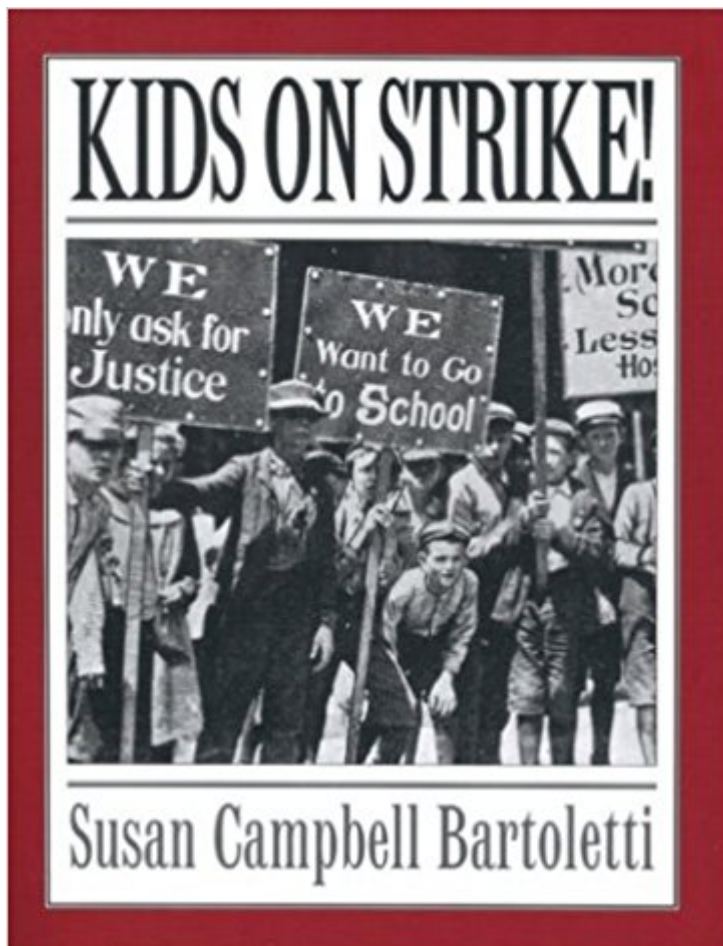


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## Kids On Strike!



## Synopsis

By the early 1900s, nearly two million children were working in the United States. From the coal mines of Pennsylvania to the cotton mills of New England, children worked long hours every day under stunningly inhumane conditions. After years and years of oppression, children began to organize and make demands for better wages, fairer housing costs, and safer working environments. Some strikes led by young people were successful; some were not. Some strike stories are shocking, some are heartbreaking, and many are inspiring – but all are a testimony to the strength of mind and spirit of the children who helped build American industry.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Covering more historical ground than in her lauded photo-essay *Growing Up in Coal Country*, Bartoletti highlights the roles that children and young adults played in American labor strikes during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Bartoletti has a gift for collecting stories with telling details; her dense but highly readable prose brings individual children and the struggles in which they engaged vividly to life. Drawing from a broad expanse of resources (personal interviews, newspaper and magazine articles, primary and secondary book accounts), she spins the stories of 11-year-old Harriet Hanson, who joined striking workers in the Lowell, Mass., mills of the 1830s; 16-year-old Pauline Newman, a leader of the 1907 New York City rent protests and nicknamed "The New Joan

Grade 5-8-This well-researched and well-illustrated account creates a vivid portrait of the working conditions of many American children in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Chapters are devoted to the Lowell, MA, textile-factory girls who worked 13-hour days as well as New York City's "newsies," who sold papers for Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. The strikers included are not only those who protested unfair work conditions, but they also highlight individuals like Pauline Newman, who, at 16, organized residents to protest their high rents during the New York City rent strike of 1907. Another chapter includes Mother Jones's famous march from Philadelphia to Oyster Bay, Long Island, to meet with President Teddy Roosevelt. Like the Pied Piper, she led striking children, and others, in an effort to reform labor laws so that youngsters would no longer work under inhumane and unsafe conditions. Chapter notes and a time line of federal child-labor laws are appended. Many black-and-white photos of both children at work and on strike help to make their plight real and personalize their stories. A fine resource for research as well as a very readable book. Carol Fazioli, The Brearley School, New York City Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I had this book as a kid and it was very informative & easy to read. Short chapters, lots of pictures, and a very story-oriented angle of history; each chapter focuses at least in part on a specific leader, which lends the whole thing a readability that not all children's history books have. All in all a good book about children's history written on a child's reading level. As an adult, it's still good. The pictures are wonderful. It appears to have good sources, so, despite the simplification of events (to make it comprehensible/interesting for children), I trust that the information is verifiable. If you have kids who like history or are by turns fascinated and horrified by child labor (as I was), this book is great.

This is a book about the travails of boys and girls in the labor force in America. It starts in the 1800's with the early beginnings of the American industrial revolution. We begin this harrowing journey in Lowell, Massachusetts in the Textile mills. Lowell was the first large-scale industrial center designed for the purpose. I imagine that my hometown of Lawrence, Mass was the next. I know that neither of them was the first textile manufacturing community but they were the first communities "planned" specifically for that purpose. We follow child laborers from the textile mills, to the streets as Messengers, Bootblacks, and Newsies; then as rent strikers and coal miners and breaker boys and

into the garment industry and then back to Lawrence and the "Bread and Roses Strike of 1912." We touch on black children picking cotton and hit briefly on the migrant kids in the fields and the orchards. It is pretty rugged stuff but certainly not as rugged as it must have been for those poor children living through this period of American history. Sadly much of this history has been put aside in the United States. It seems that talking about working people and their hardships in America is un-American - even Communist. This book points out the part that children have played in the construction of the middle class in America. It is a very interesting perspective. And it tells a story that can't be denied or trivialized. This stuff all happened and it happened to children. It is a sad story. It is another sad story in a long line of American tragedies. Near the end of this book the author places "A Timeline of Federal Child Labor Laws." This Timeline is also interesting. I will synopsise it here because it makes a huge point that deserves emphasis and repeating: In 1916 and 1919 the first child labor laws were passed and signed into law by Woodrow Wilson. Fourteen is decided upon as the minimum age for a child to work in an industry and not more than eight hours in any one day. Children who work in the street trades or in agriculture are exempted and not protected under this legislation: In 1918 and 1922 these minimal provisions for the protection of children were declared to be unconstitutional. In 1924 an amendment to protect children in the workplace is proposed. It is rejected and not ratified. In 1929 and 1933 children are being used in place of adults in American industries at cheaper wages. The National Child Labor Committee lobbies the government with the suggestion that a minimum working age for children will keep kids in school and make jobs available for adults. The author does not say whether this tactic was successful or not, but I imagine that it was not. In April and May 1933 there was a series of children's strikes in Pennsylvania. (I have no doubt that there were similar strikes elsewhere also.) In May 1933 these striking children win pay increases and minimum wage laws - for children. In 1935 these pay increase and minimum wage laws for children are declared unconstitutional. In 1938 The Fair Labor Standards Act prohibits the employment of children under fourteen and under sixteen while school is in session. This law has other minimum wage provisions and hazardous work considerations. The author does not say that these laws have been declared unconstitutional as of yet - but I have no doubt that someone out there is working on it. You can bet on that. It may even be that these laws have already been "adjusted." The Supreme Court has a rather interesting history. It supported injustice when it came to slavery; it supported injustice when it came to Native Americans; it supported injustice when it came to children in the labor force; it supported injustice when it came to adults in the work place; it supported injustice in regard to contract rights; it supported injustice in regard to the rights of women; it supported injustice when it came to the rights

of states; it supports injustice in its established Military; it supported injustice in establishing the voting franchise - it seems that the only time it supports justice is when it is dealing with an issue that the court of public opinion demands justice. It does seem to me that over the decades it has been more important what the American people think than what the Supreme Court thinks. If the vast majority of the American people think opposite to the Supreme Court you can be sure that the Supreme Court will change its mind. Richard Edward Noble - The Hobo Philosopher - Author of: "America on Strike" A Survey of Labor Strikes in America

My daughter loved this book

This is a wonderful book! Lots of pictures, that are sometimes heartbreaking, and a lot of information that you would not learn in school. It's actually meant to be a Young Adult book but it is so well written you won't even notice.

I selected this book as part of a reading unit on youth and the workforce. This book gives great background on the various kid and adult led movements. Very accessible. My social studies team members liked it.

Exactly as promised. Thanks!

The book was okay but it reads on perhaps a 5th grade level. I think it would be a good book for elementary students. Was hoping for more in-depth study on child labor in the earlier years before the labor laws were enacted protecting children.

My seven-year-old daughter is reading this book now. This morning, she said to me, "Daddy, I'm so glad you got me this book from the library. But there's one thing I don't like: those companies were so mean! And why? Because of money, that's why! But those people aren't any better than other people are. It's just the way the black people used to be treated, it wasn't fair. People should be treated nicely, not just the rich people, that's what I think." So if you want to nurture a sense of social justice (and maybe a little social rebellion) in your child, this seems to be a good book. I can't wait to read it when she's done.

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