



University of  
Pittsburgh

Global Studies Center

University Center for International Studies

## Global Labor DBQ

Prompt:

**Consider the topic of labor across various eras and spaces and within certain historical flashpoints. How has labor evolved? Where have successes and failures emerged and what challenges remain?**

### DOCUMENT 1 The Code of Hammurabi

Source: <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp>

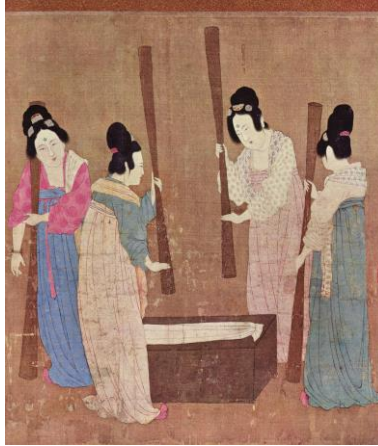
117. If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and sell himself, his wife, his son, and daughter for money or give them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free.

Questions:

1. Conduct some brief research about the Code of Hammurabi. When and where was it written and by whom? What was its purpose?
2. Considering this information, who were the most vulnerable individuals in the society for which it was written? How is this expressed in the passage above?

### DOCUMENT 2 Court ladies pounding silk from a painting (捣练图) by Emperor Huizong.jpg

Source: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=153058>



Question:

1. What does the description of the painting and the image itself suggest about the subjects, despite their labor?

Document 3 “The Meaning of Fourth of July for the Negro” by Frederick Douglass

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html>

“Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and ciphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!”

Questions:

1. How would you describe the tone of Douglass's writing?
2. What is the range of labor that Douglass describes doing?
3. What is the main idea of Douglass's argument?

DOCUMENT 4 Fredrikke Palmer illustration on Child Labor in *Women's Journal*, 1916

Source: <https://spartacus-educational.com/USAWpalmer.htm>



Questions:

1. What do the spider and the web in this illustration symbolize? What message does the illustration convey?
2. Conduct some research on the political movements happening in the United States in 1916. Which movements would this illustration have supported? Which era of U.S. History would this illustration criticize?

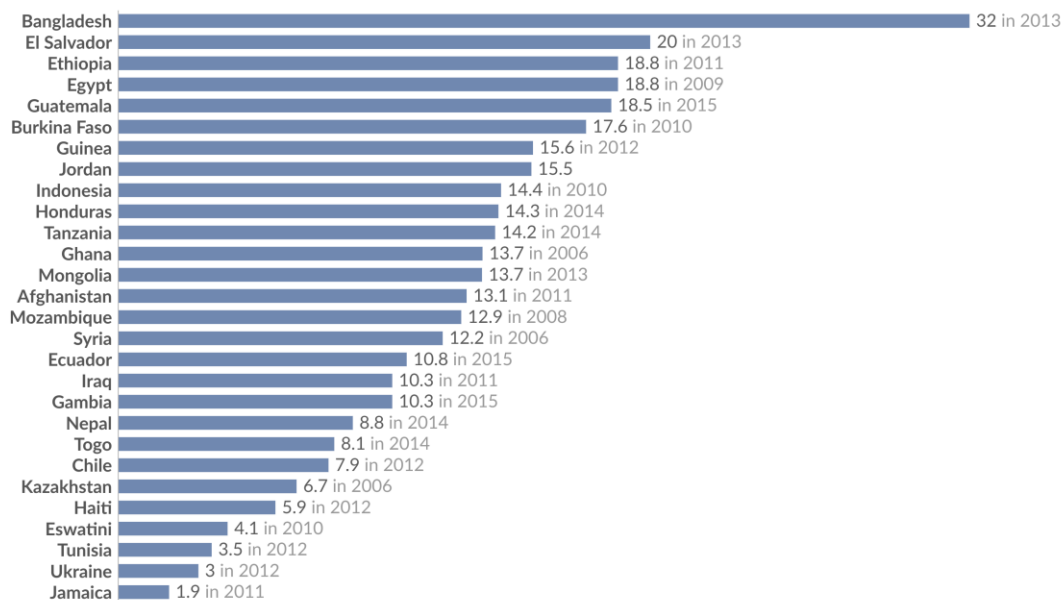
## DOCUMENT 5 Average weekly working hours of children

Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/child-labor>

### Average weekly working hours of children



Average weekly working hours for children ages 7-14 who are involved in an economic activity for at least one hour in the reference week of the corresponding survey (irrespective of school attendance).



Data source: Multiple sources compiled by World Bank (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/child-labor | CC BY

### Questions:

1. Choose one of the countries cited in the chart and \*conduct some research as to why this country might allow child labor. Which industries are employing child labor?
2. What are some countries that are not on this list? \*Conduct some research as to why these countries are not included here.

\*This research might include statistics such as GDP of country, average household income, average number of years of education, infant mortality, etc.

## DOCUMENT 6 The 1911 Triangle Factory Fire

Source:

[https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/newspapersMagazines/nyt\\_032611.html](https://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/newspapersMagazines/nyt_032611.html)

## **141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire; Trapped High Up in Washington Place Building; Street Strewn with Bodies; Piles of Dead Inside**

New York Times, March 26, 1911, p. 1.

“Three stories of a ten-floor building at the corner of Greene Street and Washington Place were burned yesterday, and while the fire was going on 141 young men and women at least 125 of them mere girls were burned to death or killed by jumping to the pavement below.

The building was fireproof. It shows now hardly any signs of the disaster that overtook it. The walls are as good as ever so are the floors, nothing is the worse for the fire except the furniture and 141 of the 600 men and girls that were employed in its upper three stories.

Most of the victims were suffocated or burned to death within the building, but some who fought their way to the windows and leaped met death as surely, but perhaps more quickly, on the pavements below.”

Questions:

1. Beyond the fire itself, what might have trapped the men and women in the Waist Factory Fire?
2. What does this suggest about safety regulations and labor rights in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the U.S.?
3. Conduct some research to learn what changes transpired in U.S. safety regulation and labor rights legislation as a result?

DOCUMENT 7 Triangle Shirt Waist Company Fire, 1911

Source: CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=78992814>



Question:

1. What is the main idea of the illustration?
2. What does each side of the image represent?
3. Based on the image's main idea, come up with a title for the illustration.

#### DOCUMENT 8 Rana Plaza factory complex disaster in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2013

Source: <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/rana-plaza-the-survivors-stories/>

“Rupaly worked as a machinist in the New Wave Style factory on the sixth floor of the Rana Plaza building. The day before, cracks had appeared on the walls, and the workers who arrived on the morning of 24 April 2013 refused to go in. The supervisors insisted that the situation wasn’t at all serious. ‘They said that should problems occur, we’d face them together’, Rupaly recalls. The manager of the factory also threatened to pay wages only for those who came to work as normal. Under pressure, she agreed to go in with the others.

They had only worked for a short while, when Rupaly felt that the floor beneath her feet started to sink. She recalls having tried to run, but the walls surrounding her collapsed. Everything was rumbling, and eventually she fell. The next thing she remembers is that she couldn’t move, and there were two bodies lying right next to her. She realised that there were living people nearby, yet she couldn’t see a thing. 15 hours later, she was saved from the ruins.”

**DOCUMENT 9** Rana Plaza factory complex disaster in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2013

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/world/asia/report-on-bangladesh-building-collapse-finds-widespread-blame.html>



**Questions:**

1. According to the passage, why would workers feel pressured to work in the factory despite the hazards it posed?
2. What do the passage and image above suggest about safety regulations and labor rights in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in Bangladesh?
3. Conduct some research to learn what changes, if any, have transpired regarding safety regulations and labor rights legislation in Bangladesh as a result.

**DOCUMENT 10** World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, International Cartoon Competition, First Place by Artist Gargalo Vasco

Source: <https://www.cartooningforpeace.org/en/evenements/discover-the-winning-cartoons-of-the-competition-organized-by-the-international-labour-organization-and-human-resources-without-borders-in-partnership-with-cartooning-for-peace/>



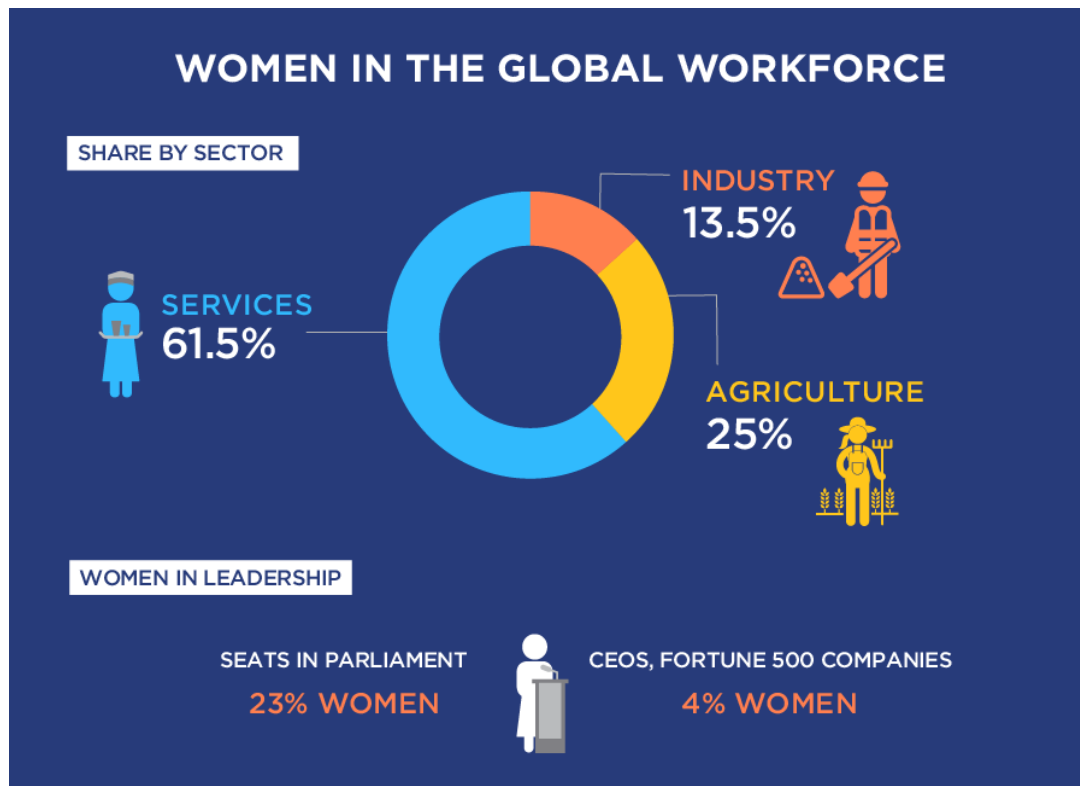
Questions:

1. What is the main idea of the cartoon? What does each element of the illustration represent or symbolize?
2. Suggest a title for the cartoon based on its main idea.

DOCUMENT 11 Women in the Global Workforce, 2016

Source:

<https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/infographic/changingworldofwork/en/index.html>



Questions:

1. Which are the main sectors women represent in the global workforce in 2016? Why might this be the case?
2. In which sector are women least represented? What might be some of the reasons for this? What might be some of the outcomes of this?

### DOCUMENT 12 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Source: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Everyone%2C%20without%20any%20discrimination%2C%20has,other%20means%20of%20social%20protection.>

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Questions:

1. What is the purpose of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
2. Choose one of the rights listed above and discuss why it is important.