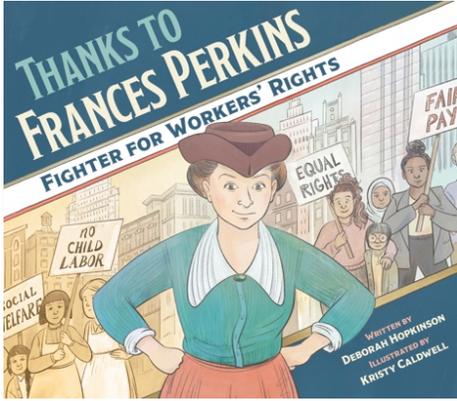




PEACHTREE

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Includes Common Core Standards Correlations



Thanks to Frances Perkins: Fighter for Workers' Rights

Written by Deborah Hopkinson | Illustrated by Kristy Caldwell

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ABOUT THE BOOK

After Frances Perkins witnessed the Triangle Waist Factory fire in 1911, she was forever changed. While some activists pressed factory owners for change, Frances decided to work to bring about new laws that would force employers to treat people better and make workplaces safer. When she became Secretary of Labor in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration—the first woman cabinet member—Frances had the opportunity to make real her bold vision of a country where no one was left out. As a result of the Social Security program that she created, we have built a society where we help one another.

Deborah Hopkinson's energetic text and Kristy Caldwell's appealing illustrations introduce readers to a fascinating woman who has changed many American lives. Back matter features more information about Frances Perkins, Social Security, and resources for economic education.

THEMES

Workers' Rights | Social Security | Biography
Economics | Reformers | Social Reform

BEFORE YOU READ

- What rights and benefits do workers have today? Have we always had those rights? Where did they come from and why?
- What was a worker's life like in 1880?
- Find Boston on a map.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Frances's father believed in education. An illustration in the book shows him with Frances learning the alphabet. Was it common for fathers to help educate their children in 1880?
- Frances's mother taught her it was important to help neighbors in need. Why is this important? What are some of the needs our neighbors have today?
- Frances's grandmother told her that whenever a door of opportunity opened Frances should go through it. What is a door of opportunity? Why should Frances go through all of them? What would she learn from these opportunities?
- How did Frances's parents' and grandmother's guidance cause her to trust in both her heart and her mind? Is it more important to trust your heart or your mind? Or are they equal? Explain your answer.
- At a time when few women went to college Frances earned a master's degree. What is a master's degree and what does this tell us about Frances?
- In the early twentieth century, some immigrant families lived in tenements. What is a tenement? How is it different from an apartment? Would you want to live in one? Explain your answer. Why do you think immigrants lived in tenements?
- Men, women, and children toiled in sweatshops. What is a sweatshop? What's the difference between a sweatshop and a regular workplace?
- Why did the bosses and factory owners hold all the power? Who gave them this power?

- Workers had few rights or benefits. What's the difference between a right and a benefit?
- In the Triangle Waist Factory fire 146 workers died because they were locked in. Could this happen today? Explain your answer. Why does it take a tragedy to get some laws changed? What tragedies have happened recently that are leading people to talk about changing laws in America?
- Frances attended a memorial gathering for the workers who died in the fire. Why do people have memorials? If you spoke at a memorial for someone who had died in a workplace fire what would you say and why?
- Rose wanted workers to unite in the fight for better conditions. What would keep workers from uniting? Would you have the courage to unite? Explain. What conditions would you demand be changed and why?
- Frances decided to join the fight for justice. What is justice and why does it need to be fought for?
- Frances wanted to make new laws. Why did she decide to approach change in this way? Are there other ways to encourage employers to treat employees better?
- Frances started her reform project by learning all she could. Why is it important to learn as much as you can about a project before you begin? What problems come from not researching first? Are there advantages to starting first and researching later?
- Why did Frances feel the need to make surprise visits to the factories, sweatshops, and laundries? Why did Frances take important lawmakers with her on these visits? Have you heard the saying "A picture is worth a thousand words"? What does this mean?
- Frances's heart was stirred by tragedy but she also used her mind. On page 14, Frances described herself as having a mind that "inquires, penetrates, goes to the bottom of things, puts two and two together and comes to some logical conclusions that have authority." How is it beneficial to have this sort of mind?
- Why did men in the halls of government listen to Frances even though she was often the only woman?
- Frances learned to persuade and compromise and never gave up. She listened to people and recruited them to help her. Why are persuasion and compromise important skills? Why was it important for Frances to involve other people in her efforts?
- In 1912, Frances helped pass laws to limit the work week to fifty-four hours for women and children under eighteen. Today, many full-time employees work forty hours a week and children under age sixteen are limited to where and how long they can work. How did Frances's efforts contribute to these standards?
- Frances helped women who sat for long hours on stools to get chairs with backs. Can you think of a similar physical issue in today's workplaces? How would you go about getting it changed?
- As a result of changes in their laws, the state of New York became a model for the nation. What does it mean to be a model?
- If you wanted to change laws in your area today how would you identify a good model? How would that model influence your actions?
- As a result of some of the changes Frances fought to bring about, Americans became more aware of the importance of social responsibility and the welfare of others. What is social responsibility? Should we be responsible for the welfare of others? In what ways? Why or why not? What happens in society if we don't consider the welfare of others?
- Frances never gave up. She was determined. How long does it take to get a law passed? How long does it take to bring about social change?
- Frances ran New York's labor office. What is the purpose of a labor office?
- In 1932 our country was in the Great Depression. What is a financial depression? What happens to people during a depression? How does a country get out of a depression?
- What does the Secretary of Labor do? What challenges do they face?
- Frances became the first woman in American history to serve in a president's cabinet. What is a presidential cabinet? What does this tell you about President Roosevelt? What does this tell you about Frances Perkins. If you were Frances how would you feel about being chosen for such a position?
- Whenever Frances had an idea she scribbled it on a slip of paper and put it in a drawer for the future. Do you keep track of your ideas? If so, how? Does an idea have to be great to be worth saving?
- Frances wanted a minimum wage for workers, unemployment insurance, and security for the sick, those unable to work or too old, or families if a

parent died. These are some of the elements of the program now called Social Security. What are some of the other elements of Social Security? What are the reasons for each of them to exist?

- Roosevelt told Frances that she had to figure out how to execute her social security program. Is it enough to have an idea or do you have to find a way to make it reality? Why?
- Today universal healthcare is in the news. Some people believe everyone should have access to it, but it is expensive and complicated. How would you solve this challenge? How would you execute your plan, and how would you pay for it?
- Frances had to move from New York to Washington D.C. Would you be willing to move to make your idea a reality? What other sacrifices would you make?
- How did Frances's ideas make things better in her time? In our time? What we do today affects the future. What do you want to do with your life that might change the lives of people in the future?
- Frances made changes little by little, step by step. Is this the best way to make changes?
- Why is it important to use your heart and mind? What happens if you use just one or the other?
- Once, Frances locked committee members in her house until they finished their work. Is this a reasonable thing to do? Would you do it?
- Most people don't know about Frances Perkins. Why do you think this is?
- The Social Security Act was enacted during the Great Depression. How does this time compare to what is happening now in our country? Which problems are the same? Which are different?

WORDS TO DEFINE:

Simple interest
Compound interest
Inflation
Social Security
Savings account
Pension

ACTIVITIES

- Make a list of neighborhood needs. Choose one to help with as a class or an individual project.
- Pick a current issue. Have students take sides, debate, propose solutions, and arrive at a compromise.

- Pick an aspect from our social security and research how another country handles it. Is one approach better? Why?

RESOURCES

Rose Schneiderman speech on the Shirtwaist Factory Fire:
<https://jwa.org/media/excerpt-from-rose-schneidermans-april-2-1911-speech>

OSHA
This site explains what jobs minors may not do and the rules concerning minors. You will need to scroll down.
<https://www.oshaeducationcenter.com/articles/child-labor-laws/>

Frances Perkins Quotes:
https://www.azquotes.com/author/11527-Frances_Perkins

How a bill becomes a law:
<https://kids-clerk.house.gov/grade-school/lesson.html?intID=17>

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

The activities in this guide directly address the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY: RI.4.1; RI.4.2; RI.4.3; RI.4.4; RI.4.5; RI.4.6; RI.4.7; RI.4.8; RI.4.9; RI.4.10; RI.5.1; RI.5.2; RI.5.3; RI.5.4; RI.5.5; RI.5.6; RI.5.7; RI.5.8; RI.5.9; RI.5.10

REVIEWS

“The lively text presents Perkins’ life and times, while emphasizing her significant contributions to society. Created using pleasant, subdued colors, the well-composed digital illustrations bring past eras into focus and show Perkins’ determined work on behalf of others. An informative picture-book biography of a notable American.”

—*Booklist*

“Engaging...
An informative portrait of an activist and advocate whose accomplishments are still evident today.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Hopkinson grew up in Lowell, Massachusetts, where the Lowell mill girls led some of the nation's first organized efforts to improve the lives of ordinary working people. She is the award-winning author of nonfiction and historical fiction for young readers, including *Carter Reads the Newspaper*, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, and *Keep On! The Story of Matthew Henson, Co-discoverer of the North Pole*. She lives in Oregon. Follow her on Twitter @deborahhopkinson

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kristy Caldwell has illustrated several books for kids, including *Flowers for Sarajevo* and *Away with Words: The Daring Story of Isabella Bird*. She lives in New York with her partner, theater director Kelly O'Donnell, and often passes by the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory site. Kristy has a lot of years until she receives her first Social Security check but when she does, she will definitely thank Frances.

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Peachtree Teacher's Guide
prepared by Gail Shipley

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READERS THEATER

Narrator 1
Narrator 3
Narrator 5

Narrator 2
Narrator 4
Narrator 6

Narrator 1: Frances was born in 1880 in Boston. Her father believed in education.

Narrator 2: Her mother taught her to help neighbors in need.

Narrator 3: And her wise grandmother said that whenever a door of opportunity opened, Frances should go through.

Narrator 4: Perhaps that's why Frances grew up trusting in both her heart and her mind.

Narrator 5: At a time when few women went to college, Frances earned a master's degree.

Narrator 6: She went to work in New York City where immigrant families lived in crowded, ramshackle tenements.

Narrator 1: Men,

Narrator 2: women,

Narrator 3: and even children

Narrator 4: toiled

Narrator 5: day after day,

Narrator 6: from dawn to dark,

Narrator 1: in dirty,

Narrator 2: unsafe factories called sweatshops.

Narrator 3: Bosses and factory owners held all the power.

Narrator 4: Workers had few rights or benefits.

Narrator 5: On Saturday, March 25, 1911, Frances witnessed a terrible tragedy.

Narrator 6: While having tea with a friend in Washington Square, Frances heard fire whistles and shouts.

Narrator 1: She rushed outside. She saw flames pouring from high up in the Triangle Waist Company building where young women sewed white blouses called shirtwaists.

Narrator 2: When the fire broke out, the workers were trapped by locked doors.

Narrator 3: Some made it onto window ledges,

Narrator 4: but the firemen's nets weren't strong enough to catch those who jumped or fell.

Narrator 5: One hundred and forty-six people,

Narrator 6: mostly teenage girls,

Narrator 1: perished in a tragedy that shocked the nation.

Narrator 2: A week later,

Narrator 3: still heartbroken and stunned,

Narrator 4: Frances went to a memorial gathering where young labor activist Rose Schneiderman spoke.

Narrator 5: Rose declared that the time had come for change.

Narrator 6: Too much blood has been spilled. Rose urged workers to unite in the fight for better conditions.

Narrator 1: Frances was so moved by Rose's words, she decided to join the fight for justice too.

Narrator 2: She wanted to help make new laws,

Narrator 3: to force factory owners and employers to treat people better

Narrator 4: and make workplaces safer.

Narrator 5: Did Frances succeed?

Narrator 6: Was she able to make life better for people everywhere?

Narrator 1: To find out if one person can make a difference, read *Thanks To Frances Perkins: Fighter For Workers' Rights*.