

Henrietta's story

A young girl named Henrietta lived in a small town in Lancashire, England, during the 1850s. She was 12 years old and had to start working to help her family. Henrietta's father had passed away and her mother struggled to provide for her and her three younger siblings. When a job opportunity at the local textile mill came up, Henrietta took it without hesitation.

Henrietta got her job through a neighbour, Mrs. Thompson, who worked at the mill and knew the manager. Mrs. Thompson told Henrietta's mother that the mill was looking for young workers to help with the machines. Even though Henrietta was scared, she wanted to help her family.

The mill was a huge, noisy place filled with the constant clatter of looms and spinning machines. Henrietta's job was to clean the machines and replace the bobbins of thread. It was tiring work and the hours were long. She had to be at the mill by 6 a.m and she did not finish until 8 p.m, with only short breaks for meals. The mill was dusty and poorly lit and the loud noise made it hard to hear anything else.

One day, while she was cleaning the machines, Henrietta's sleeve got caught in a moving part. She tried to pull away but the machine was too strong. She screamed for help but the noise of the mill drowned her out. Finally, a supervisor saw her and stopped the machine. Henrietta's arm was badly injured and she was taken to the town doctor.

Henrietta's injury meant she could not work for several weeks. Her family struggled even more during this time but Henrietta was determined to return to the mill as soon as she could. When she finally went back, she was more careful and made sure to always keep her sleeves rolled up and her hair tied back tightly.

Despite the hardships, Henrietta remained hopeful. She dreamed of a day when she could go to school and learn to read and write. For now, though, she had to work in the mill and help her family as best she could.