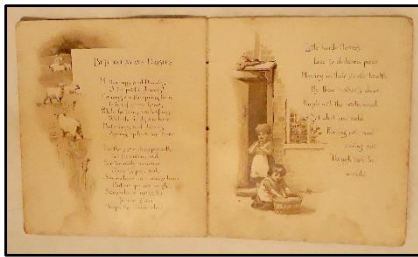


Profile of a working child from Norfolk Street

Arthur, 12, worked as an errand boy and Joan, 9, assisted her sister (Laura, 26) as a dressmaker. They lived at 170 Norfolk Street in 1871. They had an older brother Thomas, 15, who was a milkman's boy. Another brother, Henry, 17, was a coat dealer and William, 23, was a carman (horse and cart driver). Their father, William, 48, was a Van driver and their mother Susan, 43, didn't work but often took in sewing and laundry to make extra money from home which she could do whilst she did the household chores such as washing, cooking and cleaning for her family and looked after the youngest children. Arthur and Joan also had 3 younger siblings: Anna, 7, Elizabeth, 4, and Joseph, 2.



Up until 1870, school was not free and was not compulsory. There were Ragged schools set up by churches or charities which were free and taught children from very poor families to read, write and do basic maths sums. They were called Ragged schools because the poor children turned up in rags, as their parents would not have had enough money to buy new clothes. Arthur and Joan went to one such Ragged school around the corner for a few years before their parents needed them to work and earn money to contribute to the food and other basic necessities of the household.



Arthur and Joan would have gone to church on a Sunday. Some churches in the time before school was free and compulsory, would have Sunday Schools which gave lessons to children who came to church on a Sunday in reading, writing and religion.

Children were given jobs because they were cheap to employ and were small, so they could get into tight spaces in factories and do dangerous jobs working with machinery. Children like Arthur and Joan would have been expected to work as hard and as long as adults and therefore, did not have had much time to play as they would have worked long hours, probably 6 days a week.

Before 1870, education was a luxury which only the wealthy and middle class could afford. Working-class families often couldn't afford to pay for food and clothes for their children if they weren't earning any money.