

**Students in the seventh grade got the task of putting themselves in other people's shoes. Here are some examples of what it is like to be an orphan working child:**

#### Pablo's story

My name is Pablo. I am 14 years old. My parents left me on the side of the road when I was only 2 years old. Some people found me and raised me. I treat them as my real parents and I love them the same way I would love my real parents. I still don't know why they left me but I would like to know.

Now I live in an old and destroyed house. I am aware that my family is poor so I got a job even though I'm only 14 years old. I work at a circus. I clean the tent after a show. It's not a great job but the money I get is enough to buy lunch for my family for a week. My father works at a toy factory all day and when he comes home he goes to sleep. He wakes up at 6 a.m. and it all starts all over again. My mother doesn't have a job but she helps other people with chores around the neighborhood. She doesn't get paid much. So that's my life story.

I would do anything to have a normal life.

Ivan Petrinec, 7<sup>th</sup> grade

#### Roni's story

My name is Roni. I don't have parents, or have I?!

Actually, I don't know what life with parents looks like. I really want to have parents, but I don't know how. I live in small house. We don't have a door and one of the windows is broken and the wind goes in and out of our house. It's cold.

I work in a factory. It's really hard. The salary is small considering how long and hard I work. I work from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. In my free time I must help other kids who don't have parents just like me. The boss is strict. I want go out of the factory and find some family and live happily.

Dora Matečić, 7<sup>th</sup> grade

### One woman's story

A few years ago when I was 5 and on the street, a man came and took me away from my parents. He took me to a shoe and clothes factory. I worked day and night for 2 dollars. I didn't have a house and I didn't have any money because I was too young to have pay-check. But I wasn't too little for day and night job, with not even one rest break. I was very hungry and sad but luckily, I had friends who also worked with me.

One day I tried to run away, but my boss caught me and I was grounded for life. Few months later I tried running away again but he caught me again.

When I turned 18 I ran away and I took some of my adult friends with me and we decided that we would call the police and take them to factory, so that they could see who was working there in those conditions.

Now, after many years we're all free and happy. I have a house, husband and children. I also go to night school. Now I'm the happiest woman in the world because I forgot my past and I can focus on my present and future.

Marija Štingl, 7th grade

### A strong woman's story

At this day I was born 18 years ago. My mum left me when I was 9 years old. We lived in a tiny house. It was big like someone's room. My father died.

I also have a little sister. She is now 14 years old. I started working when I was 10 years old. I cleaned the house of some rich family. I took my sister to school every day, then cleaned up the dishes until about 7 o'clock. My sister had problems at school. I was very tired.

Then one day my mother came back. My sister was happy but I was angry. She took all my money and then disappeared again. I decided to move out. I was 16 then. I met a really good boy. He loved me and my sister. But then I found out he was a criminal. We broke up. and he kidnapped my sister. One night when I was outside I saw her and him. He had a gun. My sister almost killed me because she took the gun and then shot at me.

I am at hospital now. For more than a year ago I am in a deep sleep. My mother is with me but she is in despair. Now my father showed up. He gave me his hand. He took me to a better place. I saw my mother in a future: she is rich and happy. My sister is getting married for a criminal. They're a big family now. I hug my father and thank him for taking me to a better place.

Antonela Horvatin, 7<sup>th</sup> grade