

The Industrial Revolution

An Introduction to the Industrial Revolution

From about 1750 to around 1830, a revolution started in England and spread to other parts of the world. The revolution had nothing to do with war or **revolting**¹ against an unjust ruler. Instead, it was a revolution of ideas and industry. The invention of machines instantly changed the way people made goods. It also changed the way people lived and thought. This time of rapid change is known as the Industrial Revolution.

Before the Industrial Revolution, most items people needed were made by hand. Things like clothes, dishes or furniture, were handcrafted one by one. This took a lot of time and skill. Most craftsmen worked out of their homes. Many lived in the countryside. Towards the end of the 18th century all of this began to change. Machines took the place of skilled labor done by craftsmen. Factories were created to bring together machines and the workers needed to operate them.

One of the most important machines invented during the Industrial Revolution was the steam engine. This machine used steam to power its work. Steam was cheap and much more powerful than horses. It revolutionized transportation and industry. Steam engine trains made it possible to ship products quickly across the country. Machines powered by steam also made goods quickly. All this reduced the price of products. It became cheaper for people to buy the things they needed to live.

But industrialization also had a negative side. Large factories sprung up in cities. Many people left their farms and rural homes to work in the factories. This movement from the countryside to the cities is called *urbanization*. Industrial cities grew very quickly. In some cases, the population more than doubled. They often didn't have homes for all the new people. Some workers crowded into little

¹ **Revolting** – fighting

shacks near the factories. The **quarters**¹ were cramped and unsanitary. Diseases spread easily from one person to another.

Workers suffered in other ways, too. Skilled craftsmen who lost their jobs to machines weren't always able to find a new factory job. When they did, they worked long hours and weren't paid well. Women and children were even paid less. They worked up to 14 hours a day, six days a week for pennies a day. There was barely ever time to rest. Factory machines never stopped running. Often, the machines were unsafe. Many workers were crippled and desperately poor. As time went by, however, workers organized into **unions**.² They fought back and forced their employers to improve working conditions and pay.

The Industrial Revolution was a major turning point in history. As it spread to other areas of the world, life in the countryside was replaced by life in new industrial cities. As industry grew and more goods were produced, people's standard of living improved. Today, workers earn more and live longer than before the revolution. But industrialization also caused new problems. Factories have polluted the air, land, and water. Most industrialized nations will face these challenges for years to come.

¹ **Quarters** – rooms where people live

² **Unions** – organized groups of workers who try to improve working conditions

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. All of the following are examples of a revolution *except for*
 - a. a war revolting against a ruler.
 - b. rapid changes in industry.
 - c. voting for the U.S. president.
 - d. the American Revolutionary War.

2. How did people make clothes, dishes and furniture before the Industrial Revolution?
 - a. They made them in factories.
 - b. These items were made by hand, one by one.
 - c. Machines were used to create them.
 - d. There weren't any clothes, dishes, or furniture before the Industrial Revolution.

3. Which of the following was a change that occurred because of the Industrial Revolution?
 - a. People moved from the countryside to the city.
 - b. The health of factory workers improved.
 - c. More goods were created by hand.
 - d. Goods became more expensive.

4. Which of the following is the main idea of the passage?
 - a. Factory workers worked long hours and weren't paid well.
 - b. Large factories sprung up in cities.
 - c. Many people lived in the countryside
 - d. The invention of machines changed people's way of life.

5. The invention of the steam engine caused all of the following effects *except*
 - a. goods were produced more quickly.
 - b. the price of products was reduced.
 - c. goods were shipped more quickly.
 - d. skilled craftsmen created more products.

6. How might factory conditions have prevented workers from taking steps to improve their lives?

7. Why were unions successful in the fight for workers' rights?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

After the Industrial Revolution, goods were produced mainly by machines _____ of by hand.

- a. instead
- b. because
- c. with
- d. rather

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Towards the end of the 18th century, machines began to take the place of skilled labor in England and throughout the world.

What? machines

(did) What? _____

When? _____

Where? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** pollute: to ruin water, air, or a place, with harmful substances.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 680

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: This passage is an introduction to the Industrial Revolution. The author discusses the changes during the time period as well as the negative effects of industrialization on workers and craftsmen.

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6. How might factory conditions have prevented workers from taking steps to improve their lives?

Suggested answer: Factory workers were kept so busy, they didn't have time to organize and fight back. Many, especially children, wouldn't be able to go to school to learn how to read. Others might be too tired, sick, or poor to spend time on anything other than getting food on the table.

7. Why were unions successful in the fight for workers' rights?

Suggested answer: Unions were probably successful because they involved many people. If only one person complained or tried to change the system, it would be very hard to be successful, but with everyone combined, they could be much more powerful.

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- d. rather

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Towards the end of the 18th century, machines began to take the place of skilled labor in England and throughout the world.

What? machines

(did) What? **began to take the place of skilled labor**

When? **towards the end of the 18th century**

Where? **in England and throughout the world**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** pollute: to ruin water, air, or a place, with harmful substances.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.