

# The Industrial Revolution

## An Introduction



The Industrial Revolution changed agriculture. Above, a young man, pre-1700, harvests a crop with an ancient tool.



Before the Industrial Revolution almost everything was made by hand. Here a shoemaker works with his young apprentice.

### What was the "Industrial Revolution"?

The Industrial Revolution is considered to be one of the most important periods in human history. However, it did not take place over a short period of time. The developments and inventions that occurred gradually over many decades.

The first stage of the Industrial Revolution began slightly earlier than two other events that shook the world: the American Revolution that began in 1776 and the French Revolution that began in 1791. These revolutions were *political* in nature whereas the Industrial Revolution was *economic*. All of these events changed people's lives.

If we look at the meaning of the words "industrial" and "revolution" we will have a better understanding of why the period is referred to as the "Industrial Revolution". *Industrial* refers to the creation of goods and *revolution* means a sudden and important change in human history.

### Life in the Twenty-First Century

The way we live now in the western world is a direct result of the changes that took place in the 18th and 19th centuries. Just think about the modern construction of a building in our time. What are some of the things that have changed in house-building since the end of the 1700's? Some of the areas of change (and most would say, improvement!) include: framing in cast iron (allowing for taller and stronger buildings), making nails and planing wood by machine rather than by hand, manufacturing insulation material, making and installing panes of glass, as well as roofing material. All of these things are done quickly and uniformly using methods developed since 1800.



### ✓ THE PROS AND CONS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION ✗

On the lines below list three advantages that industrialization has brought us and three disadvantages:

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### The Origins of the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution began in England. In the 1700's England was one of several European world powers who had colonized different regions around the world. Despite the loss of the Thirteen Colonies that would become the United States, Britain (made up of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) would forge ahead as a world power mostly due to industrial innovation and its large empire. The first changes in the mid 1700's came in the textile, or cloth-producing, industries. England had had a textile industry for hundreds of years, mainly centered around wool. Cloth weaving was done by hand, on simple looms owned by individual families. Men, women and children toiled on the looms from sunrise to sunset just to make ends meet. New inventions by several men made a huge change in the textile industry, and in peoples' lives.



*England, where the Industrial Revolution began in the 1700's*

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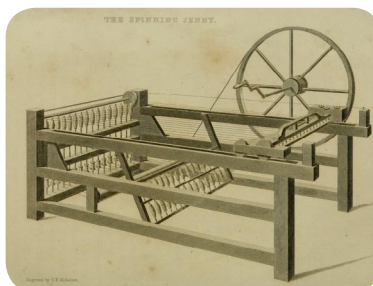
### Textile innovators and their inventions



JOHN KAY

(1704-about 1780)

The son of a farmer, John Kay invented the flying shuttle, which took a lot of the work out of weaving cloth by hand. The innovation meant that thread could be moved on the loom by pulling a cord. Only one weaver was then needed on the loom and cloth could be woven much more efficiently.



JAMES HARGREAVES

(1721-1778)

A poor and uneducated weaver, James Hargreaves designed a machine that could spin many threads at once, unlike the old-fashioned spinning wheel. He named the machine the spinning jenny, after his daughter. Hargreaves was attacked by spinners who feared his machine would put them out of work. For his own safety, he moved to a different part of England.



RICHARD ARKWRIGHT

(1732-1792)

Richard Arkwright, the son of a tailor, became a successful businessman as a barber and wig maker. He associated with many spinners and weavers through his wig making. He decided to dedicate himself to improving their machinery, and building textile mills and factories. Arkwright is considered the founder of the factory system.

Understanding the Text: The Industrial Revolution, An Introduction Pages 1 and 2

Answer the questions below after reading pages 1 and 2.

1. How does the author compare the Industrial Revolution to the American and French Revolutions?

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2. In reference to question #1 above, do you think one type of revolution is more important than the other? Explain.

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3. Give your own example of how constructing buildings has changed in the past two hundred years.

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4. Where and when did the Industrial Revolution begin? How did it affect the power of that nation?

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5. After reading "The Origins of the Industrial Revolution" explain how you think the Industrial Revolution might have affected the ordinary people where it originated?

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6. What happened to James Hargreaves that he decided to move to another part of England? How would you compare this situation to what is happening in our time?

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7. What was the most interesting fact you learned from reading pages 1 and 2? Explain why.

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