

Summary: The Rise of Big Business

A Time of Invention

In the late 1800s, inventions changed people's lives. They could do more work in less time. E. Remington and Sons made the first typewriter. It saved office workers time. Elijah McCoy invented the oil cup. It dripped oil on machine parts. This helped the parts run longer. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. People in different places could talk to each other. Thomas Edison invented light bulbs. Electric lights kept streets bright at night. Factories and shops could stay open longer.

Big Business

New machines and technologies helped businesses grow. Andrew Carnegie used a new invention to start his steel company. John D. Rockefeller started Standard Oil. The company became a corporation. It bought small companies. This got rid of competition. Standard Oil became a monopoly. It owned 90 percent of America's oil. No competition meant consumers had fewer choices. Monopolies could provide poor service or charge higher prices. After making large fortunes, Carnegie and Rockefeller gave millions of dollars to schools, libraries, churches, and hospitals.

Workers' Lives Change

Factories hired many people to run machines. Factory work was boring and dangerous. Workers did the same thing for ten or twelve hours a day. They often worked in unsafe conditions. Factory workers did not make much money. Some families needed more money to survive. They sent their children to work.

Factory workers formed labor unions. They had more power as a group. They wanted businesses to change. Unions wanted safer work. They wanted an eight-hour day and better pay. They did not want children to work. Unions used strikes. Businesses fought back. Some strikers were hurt or killed, but labor unions kept fighting for their rights.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

corporation *noun*, a business in which many people own shares, or parts, of the business.

competition *noun*, occurs when more than one business sells the same goods or service to customers.

monopoly *noun*, a company that has no competition.

labor union *noun*, an organization of workers that tries to improve pay and working conditions for its members.

strike *noun*, when workers refuse to work in order to force business owners to make changes

After You Read

REVIEW In what ways did inventions of the late 1800s save time? Underline the sentences that tell how inventions helped people.

REVIEW What is a monopoly? Circle the sentences that tell what no competition meant for consumers.

REVIEW Why did workers form labor unions? Highlight changes the unions wanted.