

Summary: The Machine Age

A Time of Invention

In the late 1800s, inventions changed people's lives. They could do more work in less time. E. Remington & 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 developed 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 almost 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.

Workers formed the American Federation of Labor. They had more power as a group. They wanted businesses to change. Unions wanted safer work conditions. They wanted shorter workdays 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 tries to sell the same goods or service

monopoly *noun*, a company that has no competition

American Federation of Labor (AFL) *noun*, an organization of workers originally headed by Samuel Gompers that tried 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.