

Summary: The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution Begins

The Industrial Revolution began with textile machines. These machines turned cotton into yarn. In 1793, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, a machine that cleaned cotton quickly. Cotton became America's biggest export. Then the government hired Whitney to make thousands of guns. At that time guns were made by hand. Whitney thought of a way to make them quickly and cheaply. He used interchangeable parts and mass production. Soon factories began using his ideas. The nation's productivity increased.

Machines Bring Change

Entrepreneurs used machines to change how people worked. Francis Lowell built a mill that turned cotton into cloth. Soon other factories opened. New inventions, like reapers and steel plows, made farm work easier and faster. Before the Industrial Revolution, people worked on farms or in workshops. Now many people worked in factories.

Changes in Transportation

In the 1800s, dirt roads could not be used in bad weather. The government built a paved road from Maryland to Ohio. People built towns and opened businesses to sell goods. Robert Fulton invented a steamboat that could travel without wind or currents. Soon there were many steamboats. In 1825, the Erie Canal opened. This canal made it easier to ship goods between Lake Erie and the Hudson River. Many canals were built. Rivers and canals became the fastest and cheapest way to ship goods.

Steam locomotive trains were even faster than steamboats. Trips that took 32 hours by steamboat took only 10 hours by train. Soon the United States had thousands of miles of railroad track. Factories and farmers sent their goods faster to places all over the country.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

textile *noun*, cloth or fabric

interchangeable parts

noun, parts made by a machine to be exactly the same size and shape

mass production *noun*, making many products at once

productivity *noun*, the amount of goods and services made by a worker in a certain amount of time

entrepreneur *noun*, a person who takes risks to start a new business



After You Read

REVIEW What did Whitney do to manufacture guns more quickly and cheaply? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW In what ways did the workday change for many people during the Industrial Revolution?

Underline two sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW Why were steam locomotives better than other forms of transportation? Underline 3 sentences that give reasons why.