

Summary: The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution Begins

In the early 1700s, Americans made many items by hand. By the late 1700s, people started using machines to make more goods. New transportation moved people and goods faster than before. These changes in work methods and transportation are called the Industrial Revolution.

In the early 1800s, an entrepreneur named Francis Cabot Lowell built a textile mill near Boston. It was the first mill to turn raw cotton into finished cloth. The new machines made cloth quickly. More textile factories opened. Soon, New England became a center of the textile industry.

In 1793, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin. This machine cleaned cotton faster than people could. Then, Whitney made 10,000 guns for the U.S. army. He used interchangeable parts and mass production to make the guns quickly and cheaply. The country's productivity increased as these methods were used to make goods.

Changes in Transportation

In the early 1800s, most roads were dirt paths. Travel was slow. In 1833, the National Road opened. It connected Maryland with Ohio. It was wide and paved with stones. The National Road became the busiest road in the country.

Many people used boats to ship goods. Boats moved by wind or water currents. Travel by boat was also slow. In 1807, Robert Fulton invented the steamboat. Steam gave boats the power to travel against currents.

People used canals to travel and send goods between towns. In 1825, the Erie Canal was finished. It connected the Hudson River to Lake Erie. Now, western farmers and business owners could ship goods to New York quickly.

Travel on land improved too. Steam trains were fast. They were faster than steamboats. Steam trains could run in ice and snow. By 1850, there were thousands of miles of railroad track in the nation.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

textile *noun*, cloth or fabric

entrepreneur *noun*, someone who takes risks to start new businesses

interchangeable parts *noun*, parts made by a machine to be exactly the same so that any of them can fit into another product with the same design

mass production *noun*, making many products at once

productivity *noun*, the amount of goods produced in a certain amount of time by a person, machine, or group



After You Read

REVIEW Why was Whitney able to manufacture guns quickly and cheaply? Highlight the sentence that tells how Whitney manufactured guns.

REVIEW Why were steam locomotives better than other forms of transportation? Were steam trains fast or slow? When did they work? Underline the sentences that tell you the answers.