

Industrial revolution and social changes essay sample

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Between 1760 and 1860, technological progress, education, and an increasing capital stock transformed England into the workshop of the world. The industrial revolution, as the transformation came to be called, caused a sustained rise in real income per person in England and, as its effects spread, the rest of the Western world. Historians agree that the industrial revolution was one of the most important events in history, marking the rapid transition to the modern age, but they disagree about various aspects of the event.

Of all the disagreements, the oldest one is over how the industrial revolution affected ordinary people, usually called the working classes. One group, the pessimists, argues that the living standards of ordinary people fell. Another group, the optimists, believes that living standards rose. A lot of people thinks that the industrial revolution was a disaster for the working classes. It led to a rise in the standard of living. Real income per person grew at only about 0.3 percent per year, growth at such a slow rate made a deterioration in the lot of the working classes possible.

Moreover, if we add the effects of unemployment, pollution, urban crowding, child labor, and other social ills, the modest rise in average income could well have been accompanied by a fall in the standard of living of the working classes. the industrial revolution was a big step in the economics of the world, that change all the thoughts that we already had to start a new way of economy, where workers had new rights, there was a different organization in the job, the payment was different and it changed all the way of life.

Workers conditions:

The worker's houses were usually near to the factories so that people could walk to work. They were built really quickly and cheaply. The houses were cheap, most had between 2-4 rooms - one or two rooms downstairs, and one or two rooms upstairs. Victorian families were big with 4 or 5 children. There was no running water or toilet. A whole street would have to share an outdoor pump and a couple of outside toilets. Most houses in the North of England were "back to backs" (built in double rows) with no windows at the front, no backyards and a sewer down the middle of the street.

The houses were built crammed close together, with very narrow streets between them. Most of the houses were crowded with five or more people possibly crammed into a single room. Even the cellars were full. Most of the new towns were dirty and unhealthy. The household rubbish was thrown out into the streets. Housing conditions like these were a perfect breeding grounds for diseases. More than 31,000 people died during an outbreak of cholera in 1832 and lots more were killed by typhus, smallpox and dysentery. The situation in factories was just as awful.

The factory inspectors found that children worked twelve hour days, generally with only a one hour break. If the factory or mill was busy, they might work up to eighteen hours a day. The conditions were every bit as bad as in the mines, and some reports told of children spending their entire working lives doubled up under machinery in cotton mills. They were often permanently disabled as a result.

Causes: The vast majority of the country's population lives in the countryside, completely isolated or in small communities. The debate about the start of the Industrial Revolution also concerns the massive lead that Great Britain had over other countries. Some have stressed the importance of natural or financial resources that Britain received from its many overseas colonies or that profits from the British slave trade between Africa and the Caribbean helped fuel industrial investment. It has been pointed out, however, that slave trade and West Indian plantations provided only 5% of the British national income during the years of the Industrial Revolution.

Even though slavery accounted for minimal economic profits in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, Caribbean-based demand accounted for 12% of England's industrial output. Alternatively, the greater liberalisation of trade from a large merchant base may have allowed Britain to produce and use emerging scientific and technological developments more effectively than countries with stronger monarchies, particularly China and Russia.

Britain emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as the only European nation not ravaged by financial plunder and economic collapse, and possessing the only merchant fleet of any useful size (European merchant fleets having been destroyed during the war by the Royal Navy). Britain's extensive exporting cottage industries also ensured markets were already available for many early forms of manufactured goods. The conflict resulted in most British warfare being conducted overseas, reducing the devastating effects of territorial conquest that affected much of Europe.

This was further aided by Britain's geographical position—an island separated from the rest of mainland Europe. Another theory is that Britain was able to succeed in the Industrial Revolution due to the availability of key resources it possessed. It had a dense population for its small geographical size. Enclosure of common land and the related agricultural revolution made a supply of this labour readily available. There was also a local coincidence of natural resources in the North of England, the English Midlands, South Wales and the Scottish Lowlands.

Local supplies of coal, iron, lead, copper, tin, limestone and water power, resulted in excellent conditions for the development and expansion of industry. Also, the damp, mild weather conditions of the North West of England provided ideal conditions for the spinning of cotton, providing a natural starting point for the birth of the textiles industry. The stable political situation in Britain from around 1688, and British society's greater receptiveness to change (compared with other European countries) can also be said to be factors favouring the Industrial Revolution.

In large part due to the Enclosure movement, the peasantry was destroyed as a significant source of resistance to industrialisation, and the landed upper classes developed commercial interests that made them pioneers in removing obstacles to the growth of capitalism. Why England was the country that began the industrial revolution? From 7th century and continuing throughout the 18th century, England witnessed an agricultural revolution. English (and Dutch) farmers were the most productive farmers of

the century and were continually adopting new methods of farming and experimenting with new types of vegetables and grains.

They also learned a great deal about manure and other fertilizers. In other words, many English farmers were treating farming as a science, and all this interest eventually resulted in greater yields. Was the English farmer more enterprising than his French counterpart? Perhaps, but not by virtue of intelligence alone. English society was far more open than French — there were no labor obligations to the lord. The English farmer could move about his locale or the country to sell his goods while the French farmer was bound by direct and indirect taxes, tariffs or other kinds of restrictions.

In 1700, 80% of the population of England earned its income from the land. A century later, that figure had dropped to 40%. The result of these developments taken together was a period of high productivity and low food prices. And this, in turn, meant that the typical English family did not have to spend almost everything it earned on bread (as was the case in France before 1789), and instead could purchase manufactured goods. There are other assets that helped make England the “ first industrial nation. Unlike France, England had an effective central bank and well-developed credit market.

The English government allowed the domestic economy to function with few restrictions and encouraged both technological change and a free market. England also had a labor surplus which, thanks to the enclosure movement, meant that there was an adequate supply of workers for the burgeoning

factory system. England's agricultural revolution came as a result of increased attention to fertilizers, the adoption of new crops and farming technologies, and the enclosure movement.

Jethro Tull(1674-1741) invented a horse-drawn hoe as well as a mechanical seeder which allowed seeds to be planted in orderly rows. A contemporary of Tull, Charles " Turnip" Townshend(1674-1738), stressed the value of turnips and other field crops in a rotation system of planting rather than letting the land lay fallow. Thomas William Coke (1752-1842) suggested the utilization of field grasses and new fertilizers as well as greater attention to estate management. In general, the spread of industry across England was sporadic. In other words, not every region of England was industrialized at the same time.

In some areas, the factory system spread quickly, in others not at all. Such a development also applies to the steam engine — one would think that once steam engines made their appearance that each and every factory would have one. But this is clearly not the case. The spread of industry, or machinery, or steam power, or the factory system itself was erratic. I imagine the reason why we assume that industrialization was a quick process is that we live in an age of rising expectations — we expect change to occur rapidly and almost without our direction.

Consequences: The Industrial Revolution, as it know called by historians, changed the ways by how the world produced its goods. It also changed our societies from a mainly agricultural society to one that in which industry and

manufacturing was in control. The industrial revolution first got its start in Great Britain, during the 18th century, which at the time was the most powerful empire on the planet. So, it was inevitable that the country with the most wealth would lead in this revolution.

After its adoption in England, other countries such as Germany, the United States and France joined in this revolution. During this time there were also many new technological advancements, socioeconomic and cultural problems that arose. On the technology front, the biggest advancements were in steam power. New fuels such as coal and petroleum, were incorporated into new steam engines. This revolutionized many industries including textiles and manufacturing. Also, a new communication medium was invented called the telegraph.

This made communicating across the ocean much faster. But, along with this great leap in technology, there was an overall downfall in the socioeconomic and cultural situation of the people. Growth of cities were one of the major consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Many people were driven to the cities to look for work, in turn they ended living in the cities that could not support them. With the new industrial age, a new quantitative and materialistic view of the world took place.

This caused the need for people to consume as much as they could. This still happens today. Living on small wages that required small children to work in factories for long days. Also, during this time much international strife was occurring at this time. The American Revolution was occurring in the beginning

part of the Industrial Revolution. The French Revolution was in the process at the turn of the 19th century. This was a great time, but resulted in newly found democratic rights that spread through Europe and North America.