

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: *THE GOOD*

The Industrial Revolution refers to the time in history when people began to change how they produced goods. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, most people made everything, or at least most everything by hand. The problem with this was that things took a long time, which made them scarce, and therefore also expensive to purchase. Once man began to invent machines that could do the same work, but in much less time, it enabled mass-production, which also made the supply of goods available to purchase go up, and the price go down.



Agrarian societies tend to rely on animals and hand-made items, rather than machines, cars, and trains.

Not all revolutions are created equal

The first thing that is important to understand about the Industrial Revolution is that it happens at different points in different countries. The first country to have an industrial revolution was Great Britain in the 1700's. The British industrial revolution lasted until the mid-1800's. America, however, didn't really start their industrial revolution until the 1800's, and really finished closer to 1900. There are some countries in the world that still have not

had an industrial revolution at all, while some are just now going through it. We call countries that have finished their industrial revolution a developed country, or industrialized country. Countries currently undergoing an industrial revolution are called developing, and countries that have not had one at all are called 3rd world countries, or undeveloped.

This obviously brings up the question of why. If it is a good thing, why would some countries not have an industrial revolution? Well, it isn't simply a matter of sitting down and deciding to do it. As a matter of fact, it is more a reaction to certain conditions within a country than a decision at all. The following are the stages that most industrialized countries follow:

1. Advances in farming techniques make it possible for people to move to large cities, because each farmer can support more people
2. Natural resources are discovered within the country which can be used to mass-produce goods
3. Technology is invented by people to use machines in order to turn those resources into a mass-produced good that people in other countries want to buy (exports)
4. Factories are built using those machines
5. People move from the countryside to the cities to work in the factories (urbanization)

If a country does not have these conditions, or is unable to meet these requirements, then many times they are not able to industrialize.

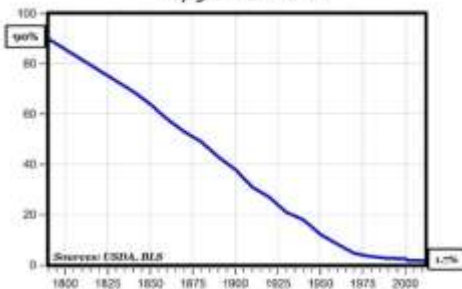


Steel was a major invention during the Industrial Revolution. Steel is much lighter than iron, and therefore, is much better to build with. Steel allowed cities to build higher buildings, and skyscrapers were invented.

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The biggest positive impact on industrialized societies was the fact that people were no longer forced to be

**Farm Jobs, % of Total U.S. Jobs
1790 to 2011**



subsistence farmers. These farmers were people who were only able to grow enough food to feed themselves, their family, and have enough left over to sell that they could buy materials so their farm could run. In undeveloped countries, with agrarian-based societies, well over half of their population are subsistence farmers. What is especially important about this is that none of these people can do anything except grow food. They cannot be inventors, teachers, factory workers, miners, college professors, computer programmers, or anything else, because they have to provide food for their families.

Once technology enables one farmer to support multiple families, those people no longer have to grow food because they can simply buy it from the farmer. This frees them to move to a city, and take a job doing something else. As people move, they begin to make new goods in factories that everyone can buy. In America today, less than 2 out of every 100 people who work are farmers. This frees the other 98 people to do other jobs, and make other things that we all need, use and enjoy.

New Technologies

Some of the major advances during the British and American Industrial Revolutions of the 19th century would change forever the way that those countries worked. One of the inventions with the biggest impacts was the railroad. Steam engine locomotives (trains) enabled people to move goods faster, further, and less expensively than before.

Another major invention was the telegraph. In 1837, Samuel Morse invented a way to send a message through a copper wire. At this time in history, the only way to get messages to other places was to send a letter. The long communication time had quite a few negative consequences. For example, when the United States signed a peace treaty with Great Britain to end



The telegraph machine works by sending a series of electrical signals through a wire, which are heard as long as short beeps. These beeps are a code, called Morse Code.

the War of 1812, it took over 3 weeks to get the message to

New Orleans. Since it took so long to get the message, the armies there had actually fought a battle after the war was over, because they hadn't received the letter telling them that a treaty was signed yet. The telegraph messages travel at the speed of light, allowing people to communicate with people thousands of miles away in seconds, rather than weeks. This technology would lay the groundwork for telephones and eventually cellular phones.

Finally, during the 19th century, electricity was invented. People have known for centuries that electricity exists, but it wasn't until Thomas Edison invented his light bulb that people figured out how to use electricity in their homes. It is very hard to imagine today what life would be like if we didn't have electricity. What is hard to believe, is that we've only been using it for 150 years.

Reading Comprehension

1. Why have some countries not industrialized?
2. What do we call countries that have not had an industrial revolution?
3. Why is farmers being able to grow bigger crops so important for a country to become industrialized?

Write about it.

Did the telegraph (communication), railroad (transportation) or electricity (innovation) have a greater impact on our modern world? Explain your answer.