

Impact of the Industrial Revolution
AP World History
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The impacts of the Industrial Revolution include, but are not limited to, the “fossil fuels revolution,” the specialization of labor, the establishment of transnational businesses, the rise of imperialism, the development of export economies, mining exploitation, the rapid increase in technology, changing family dynamics, the passage of worker reforms, and the rise of new ideologies such as socialism, Marxist socialism, and capitalism.

Fossil Fuels Revolution

Rapid industrialization led to a need to fuel the machines of the Industrial Revolution. Railroads and steamships in particular needed a cheap fuel, and one was found in fossil fuels such as coal and oil. The steam engine and steam locomotive evidently had major consequences on European society. Positive and negative effects are apparent, as these major technological breakthroughs transformed European society. Even today, many aspects of society and economics are present due to the profound impact these inventions had, which is why they are such big turning points in history. The railroad rapidly spread and sped transportation. The steam locomotive provided quicker transportation and more jobs, which in turn brought people into cities and drastically changed the job outlook. By 1861, only 2.4% of London's population were employed in agriculture, while 49.4% were in the manufacturing or transportation business. Evidently, the invention of the steam locomotive was a major turning point in history as it transformed society from largely rural and agricultural into urban and industrial, very much like today. In these new industries people started working by the hour and were paid by the hour, as opposed to working sunrise to sunset. And, since many products became cheaper, people had extra money to use for leisure activities such as going on vacation.

Specialization of labor

Many people began to farm less and became more specialized in their labor due to the rise of industry. Machines made it easier to farm and easier to farm on a large scale, which required fewer farmers. Many people ended up seeking work in the factories where they became workers with a specific job, rather than work as a farmer who had to know a good bit about all subjects in order to keep his farm running smoothly.

Transnational businesses

With the Industrial Revolution came a new kind of company, the “transnational.” Transnationals were companies that had a physical presence in more than one country. Often this was needed because resources that the particular country needed were only available elsewhere. Rather than buy the resources from local producers, the companies simply acquired land and harvested the resources themselves. Unfortunately transnationals were often abusive and imperialistic toward local populations.

Export economies

These were colonies that often specialized in a single natural resource such as cotton, rubber, palm oil, sugar, wheat, and guano. The need for raw materials by mother countries led to imperialism and export economies. The focus on one product also often led to the decline of

agriculture in some agriculturally based countries. One good example of this problem was in India. India was forced to grow cotton for British textile (cloth) mills, rather than being allowed to grow crops such as wheat, which could feed their large population. The use of export economies in other parts of the world also led to massive exploitation of workers and the environment. Rubber was harvested in the Belgian Congo, palm oil for soaps in West Africa, and guano in Peru are all good examples of export based economies.

Mining exploitation

The need for specialized metals for industry led to mining exploitation of countries and workers within those countries. For example, the Spanish used Mexican forced labor in copper and silver mines and the British used forced labor in South Africa to mine gold and diamonds. In both countries, workers were treated terribly and the countries themselves had no say in decisions made.

“Second Industrial Revolution”

Industrialization also led to a rapid increase in technology such as steel production, chemicals, electricity, medicine, engineering, transportation, and communication such as telegraphs. This late 19th century change in technology is sometimes called the “Second Industrial Revolution.”

Changing family dynamics

Women began working in textile mills instead of in the home, which had a huge impact on raising children. Often children were left alone or came to work in the factories with their families.

Worker reforms

Industrial workers began to ask for workplace reforms and reforms in society due to their contributions to industry and the poor living conditions that industrialization caused. Most workers lived in housing that was poorly built, worked an average of fourteen hours a day for six days a week, worked in dangerous places such as textile mills, and resented the new middle class due to the privileges and wealth that the middle class had that they did not. Add into the equation that there were far more workers than middle or upper class citizens and the situation became obviously problematic. Governments began to worry about a working class revolt and decided to pass a series of reforms to avoid a revolt. Governments in Europe began paying for worker retirements, paid for healthcare, gave voting rights to workers, and began the first public schools.

Rise of capitalism, socialism, and Marxist Socialism

Despite the positives of industrialization, most people realized there were problems such as low wages, poor living conditions, and poor working conditions. While there were many proposed solutions to these problems, three main approaches emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries, capitalism, socialism, and Marxist socialism.

Capitalism was developed in the late 1700's by a Scottish professor named Adam Smith. Although capitalist ideas were around centuries before Smith, he fully developed the idea into an economic model. Smith believed in capitalism (also called liberalism) which describes a society where all businesses and industries are privately owned. A person's economic goal in life is to

acquire wealth and make a profit. Many people argued that governments should step in and require businesses to have a minimum wage, limit work hours, require adequate housing, and fix prices so everyone could afford products. Smith believed that government should leave businesses alone, and that, if left alone, businesses would eventually build better and cheaper products. He believed that businesses would compete for customers and would build better and cheaper products as a result.

Socialism is an economic system where businesses and industries are owned by the government or partially controlled by the government. Socialists believe that government can control businesses and industries in order to keep prices low, control working conditions, and ensure everyone has an equal opportunity. In an extreme form of socialism, utopian socialism, there is no private property and everyone shares with one another. Money and government do not exist in a utopian socialist society. Needless to say, utopian socialism was never tried on a large scale and even its model societies failed fairly quickly.

While some socialists liked the idea of utopian socialism, they also admitted that it was not practical for society. Humans naturally want to own things and giving up those possessions is difficult. Two socialists in the mid-1800's, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, believed utopian socialism could work if people were taught that sharing would benefit all. They believed that the workers would eventually revolt against the disparities in society. When that happened, Marx and Engels encouraged workers to form a government that was dedicated to convincing people that socialism could work. They believed that the workers would have to forcefully take away the material possessions of the middle and upper classes. Marx and Engels believed that after a few generations people would think it natural to share with others. At that point, government could dissolve and a utopian state that they called "communism" would exist. Communism was a state under which everyone naturally shared with one another. Of course a number of 20th century countries adopted Marxist Socialism, often called "communism," but none of those countries ever made it past the point where workers controlled the government. Workers in Russia, North Korea, Vietnam, China, and Cuba all seized control of the government, but were unable to convince people to give up their possessions, and, more problematic, were unable to let go of power once they had it. Communists would seize power and then keep it. Marx is sometimes known as the "Father of Communism" because of the two books he wrote on the subject with Engels... the *Communist Manifesto*, written in 1848, and *Das Kapital*, written in 1867.