

# Working Conditions in Industrial Factories

As the population grew, there were changes in the countryside, so people began to move to certain areas where there was work – particularly, after about 1800 to areas where there were coalfields, with factories being built nearby and towns growing around them. Living and working conditions were poor.

## **In factories:**

- \* People worked very long hours when demand was high – as much as 16 / 18 hours a day, seven days a week.
- \* Wages were low – men might earn around 15 shillings (less than a pound) a week, women 7 to 10 shillings (30 – 50 pence), children 3 shillings (15 pence). It was mostly women and children who worked in early factories because the work was not physically demanding and they could be paid less. Many men were working at home on the loom which was not superseded by factory machinery until after 1800.
- \* General conditions were at best uncomfortable – the atmosphere in many factories was hot and damp (in mills this was encouraged to help the spun cotton hold together), stuffy, noisy and full of steam, fumes and dust.
- \* Machinery was dangerous and accidents common. Sanitation was limited and yet as many as 500 or more could be working in one factory.
- \* Discipline was strict in the poor conditions in order to keep control and to maximize profits – EXAMPLE: workers were fined if late or for ‘wasting-time’ (talking, using the lavatory other than when told, etc), sometimes they were beaten.

## Hazardous Duty - Factory Work During the Industrial Revolution

By Sharon Fabian

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Working in the factories of the Industrial Revolution was hazardous. The factory workers faced safety hazards, health hazards, and cruel treatment.

Factory machines were the latest technology, and factory owners were anxious to get their machines up and running. Safety was not a major concern. Dangerous parts of machines were not screened off. Machines were not equipped with features to make them shut off in case of an accident.

Machine operators in textile mills, many of them young women, often had to reach over and around operating machinery as they did their job. Children hired as scavengers had to crawl under the machines to retrieve loose bits of cotton. Slightly older children hired as piecers had to step up onto the machines to tie loose threads back together. Injuries to these workers were frequent. In mill towns, many workers could be seen who had lost an arm or a leg to the machinery.

Workers in the factories developed medical problems, too. The pollution and dust that were constantly in the air led to the illness known as mill fever. It was a dreaded disease, and it took many lives.

Factory work caused physical deformities which especially affected children since their bones were still forming. The constant stooping under machines wore out the arches of the children's feet. Many found that after a few years of factory work, their arches simply gave way.

Ankle injuries were also common. Factory workers - men, women, and children - were on their feet all day long, for as long as fifteen hours. This constant standing led to many ankle injuries.

Workers' knees also gave out after a number of years in the factory. Once a person's knees could no longer support his weight, the knees began to turn inward leading to the injury known as knock-knees.

As a result of these illnesses, many workers in their thirties and even younger found that they were no longer able to keep up with their work. They were forced to give up their jobs and had little chance of finding new work. Workers who were injured in accidents on the job were simply fired.

Another hazard faced by factory workers, particularly children, was cruel treatment. Overseers found that children got sleepy by the middle of the afternoon. The children needed rest and were too tired to stay on their feet and stay alert. In order to keep them working beyond their limit, some overseers beat the children.

Workers of all ages suffered from fatigue. The thirteen to fifteen hour day, the constant standing, and the six day work week were hard on everyone.

Men, women, and children who worked in the factories faced some or all of these hazards. The factory workers who fared the worst were the ones least able to defend themselves - the factory children. As these young people walked to their jobs each morning, they showed their courage. During their long days of tedious work, they must have daydreamed about a better future.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Hazardous Duty - Factory Work During the Industrial Revolution

### Questions

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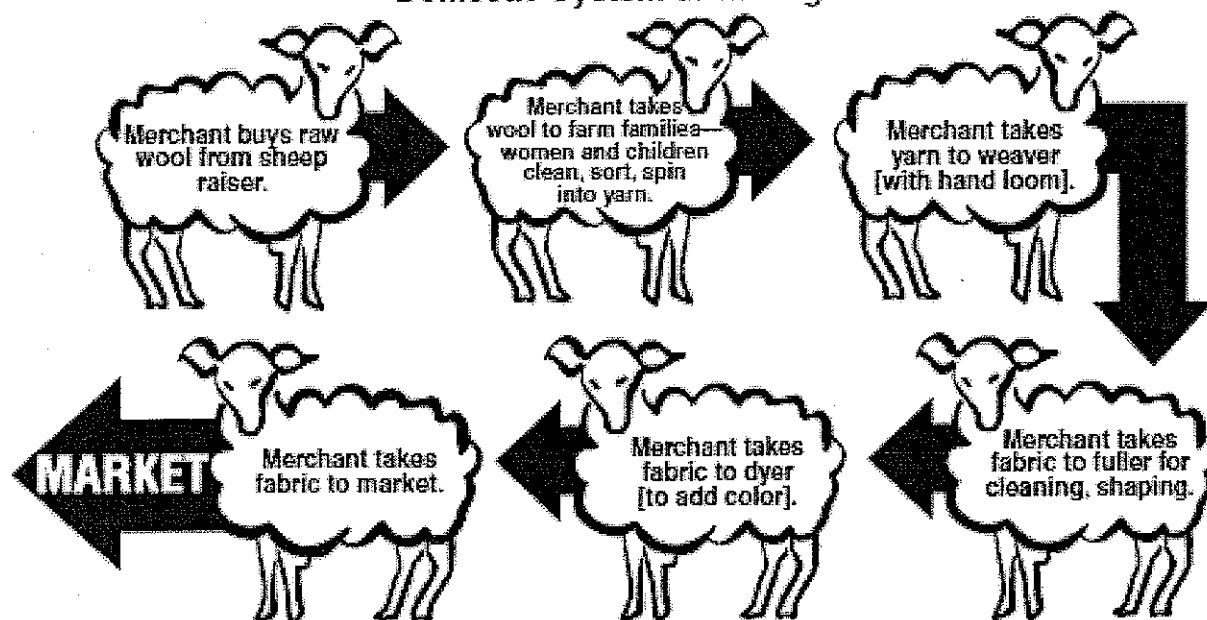
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Hazards faced by the factory workers included all of the following EXCEPT \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. safety hazards  
B. illnesses  
C. radiation  
D. cruel treatment
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The workers described in this article worked in \_\_\_\_\_ factories.  
A. pottery  
B. textile  
C. automobile  
D. steel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The illness caused by the dust in the air was known as \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. mill fever  
B. dust allergy  
C. mill dust  
D. factory fever
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The young children who worked as scavengers often suffered \_\_\_\_\_ injuries.  
A. foot  
B. hand  
C. knee  
D. elbow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Knock-knees were caused by constant \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. lifting  
B. changing positions  
C. standing  
D. running
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. From the information in this article, you can infer that most factory workers continued to work in the factories until they retired at the age of sixty-five.  
A. true  
B. false
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Children were most likely to get beaten by the overseer in the afternoon because that was the time when they became restless and playful.  
A. false  
B. true
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The word *fatigue* means \_\_\_\_\_.  
A. injury  
B. weakness  
C. tiredness  
D. boredom

# Industrial Revolution

## Document Based Questions

### Document 1

#### Domestic System of Making Cloth

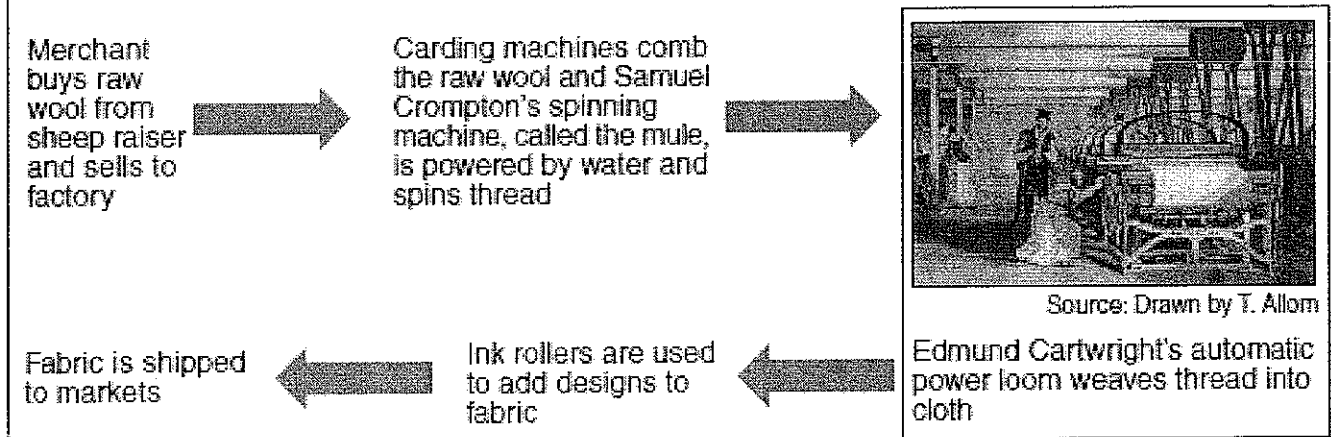


Source: Farah and Karls, *World History: The Human Experience*, Section Focus Transparencies, Glencoe McGraw-Hill (adapted)

Based on this chart, how is cloth produced in the domestic system? [1]

### Document 2

#### Use of Inventions in the Factory System



Source: Drawn by T. Allom

Based on this chart, how is cloth produced in the factory system? [1]

### Document 3

#### Industrial Revolution

... The first phase of the industrial revolution made traditional society obsolete [no longer useful] because it was incompatible with the basic requirements of an industrial economy. Among these requirements was the commercialization of agriculture. Land had to be treated as a commodity that could be bought and sold in order to produce enough food to feed a growing urban population and to make some rural labor redundant [excessive] so that people would move to the cities to work in the new factories. Traditional societies varied widely across the globe but everywhere they were based on the land and nowhere was land simply a commodity. It was, instead, the basis of a complicated network of obligations and privileges, a social structure binding owner to field worker, lord to peasant. It was these traditional institutions, these social worlds, that the industrial revolution threatened and that it ultimately swept away. .

Source: Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that Conquered the World*, Public Affairs

According to Michael Mandelbaum, what is **one** change that resulted from the Industrial Revolution? [1]

### Document 4

... I have frequently visited many of the Cotton Factories in this neighbourhood, with friends who came from a distance; on coming out, it has always been a general reflection, that the children were very great sufferers, and seemed sickly and unhealthy; being obliged to work such long hours under such unfavourable circumstances. As I dedicate an hour or two every morning to giving advice to the poor, I have a great many opportunities of witnessing the bad effects of such confinement on the health of children; frequently the parents say their children were stout and healthy, until they were sent out, and confined so close and long in the Factory; but now they had become delicate and sickly. . . .

Source: Robert Agnew, M.D., "Observations on the State of the Children in Cotton Mills," Manchester, March 23, 1818

According to Dr. Agnew, what is **one** impact the Industrial Revolution had on children? [1]

### Document 5

In this excerpt, Friedrich Engel's discussion with a middle-class gentleman shows the attitude of the middle class about the living conditions of the factory workers.

... One day I walked with one of these middle-class gentlemen into Manchester. I spoke to him about the disgraceful unhealthy slums and drew his attention to the disgusting condition of that part of the town in which the factory workers lived. I declared that I had never seen so badly built a town in my life. He listened patiently and at the corner of the street at which we parted company he remarked: "And yet there is a great deal of money made here. Good morning, Sir."....

Source: Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Stanford University Press (adapted)

According to Friedrich Engels, what is **one** result of the Industrial Revolution on the living conditions of factory workers? [1]

## Document 6

. . . Steam-engines furnish the means not only of their support but of their multiplication. They create a vast demand for fuel; and, while they lend their powerful arms to drain the pits and to raise the coals, they call into employment multitudes of miners, engineers, ship-builders, and sailors, and cause the construction of canals and railways: and, while they enable these rich fields of industry to be cultivated to the utmost, they leave thousands of fine arable fields free for the production of food to man, which must have been otherwise allotted to the food of horses. Steam-engines moreover, by the cheapness and steadiness of their action, fabricate [produce] cheap goods, and procure [acquire] in their exchange a liberal supply of the necessities and comforts of life, produced in foreign lands. . . .

Source: Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures: or, an Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain*, A. M. Kelley

According to this document, what are **two** ways that steam engines helped the economy in Great Britain? [2]

## Document 7

. . . Every great town has one or more slum areas into which the working classes are packed. Sometimes, of course, poverty is to be found hidden away in alleys close to the stately homes of the wealthy. Generally, however, the workers are segregated in separate districts where they struggle through life as best they can out of sight of the more fortunate classes of society. The slums of the English towns have much in common—the worst houses in a town being found in the worst districts. They are generally unplanned wildernesses of one- or two-storied terrace houses built of brick. Wherever possible these have cellars which are also used as dwellings. These little houses of three or four rooms and a kitchen are called cottages, and throughout England, except for some parts of London, are where the working classes normally live. The streets themselves are usually unpaved and full of holes. They are filthy and strewn with animal and vegetable refuse. Since they have neither gutters nor drains the refuse accumulates in stagnant, stinking puddles. Ventilation in the slums is inadequate owing to the hopelessly unplanned nature of these areas. A great many people live huddled together in a very small area, and so it is easy to imagine the nature of the air in these workers' quarters. However, in fine weather the streets are used for the drying of washing and clothes lines are stretched across the streets from house to house and wet garments are hung out on them. . .

Source: Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, eds., Stanford University Press

According to the document, what did Friedrich Engels state were **two** characteristics of working class living conditions in England? [2]

### Document 8

Edwin Chadwick presented a report to Parliament as secretary to a commission that investigated sanitary conditions and means of improving them.

*... First, as to the extent and operation of the evils which are the subject of the inquiry: ...*  
That the formation of all habits of cleanliness is obstructed by defective supplies of water.  
That the annual loss of life from filth and bad ventilation are greater than the loss from death or wounds in any wars in which the country has been engaged in modern times.

That of the 43,000 cases of widowhood, and 112,000 cases of destitute orphanage relieved from the poor's rates in England and Wales alone, it appears that the greatest proportion of deaths of the heads of families occurred from the above specified and other removable causes; that their ages were under 45 years; that is to say, 13 years below the natural probabilities of life as shown by the experience of the whole population of Sweden. ...

Source: Edwin Chadwick, Report on an Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, W. Clowes and Sons, 1842

Based on this document, state **one** negative effect of industrialization on the workers of Great Britain. [1]

### Document 9

- ... 1. Consolidation of the working class by means of a tight, solid, and indissoluble [indivisible] Union.
2. Representation of the working class before the nation through a defender chosen and paid by the Workers' Union, so that the working class's need to exist and the other classes' need to accept it become evident.
3. Recognition of one's hands as legitimate property. (In France 25,000,000 proletarians have their hands as their only asset.)
4. Recognition of the legitimacy of the right to work for all men and women.
5. Recognition of the legitimacy of the right to moral, intellectual, and vocational education for all boys and girls.
6. Examination of the possibility of labor organizing in the current social state [social conditions].
7. Construction of Workers' Union palaces [buildings] in every department, in which working-class children would receive intellectual and vocational instruction, and to which the infirm and elderly as well as workers injured on the job would be admitted.
8. Recognition of the urgent necessity of giving moral, intellectual, and vocational education to the women of the masses so that they can become the moral agents for the men of the masses.
9. Recognition in principle of equal rights for men and women as the sole [only] means of unifying humankind. ...

Source: Flora Tristan, The Workers' Union, University of Illinois Press (adapted)

Based on this document, state **two** changes in society that Flora Tristan believed were needed for the working class. [2]