

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution took place in Britain from the late 1700s to the late 1800s. It is named the Industrial Revolution because it saw people in Britain moving away from farming and agriculture and towards industrial factory work.

What Was Life like before the Industrial Revolution?



Before the Industrial Revolution, many people in Britain lived on farms; they would raise their own livestock and grow their own food.

The fastest way to get anywhere was in a horse-drawn cart and only a small amount of people lived in large towns.

In addition to this, crafts, such as making pots and cloth, were completed within people's homes.

What Made the Industrial Revolution So Successful?

Because the Industrial Revolution marked a period in history in which lots of things changed, historians find it difficult to name one specific moment which started the revolution. Instead, several factors led to Britain's rapid change.

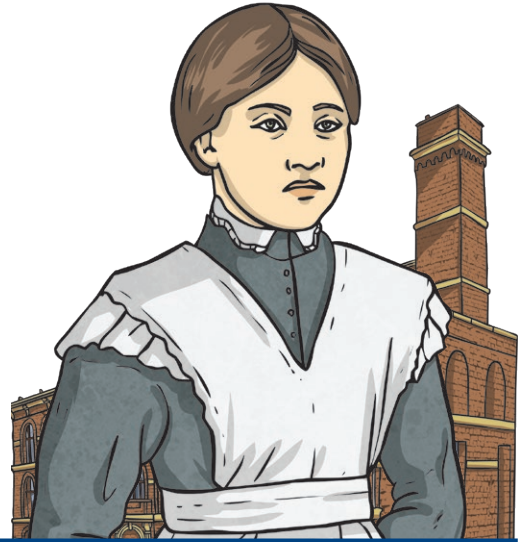
Firstly, several key inventions led to many tasks suddenly becoming much easier. For example, James Watt perfected the design of the steam engine – a machine engine which used coal as a fuel – to make it more efficient. Before the steam engine, machines had to rely on water power; this meant that they could only be built in towns near water. As a result of the steam engine's invention, factories could be built all over the country.

People started to develop canals, railways and roads. With new, faster steam trains and more transport links, it was a lot easier and faster to move around the country. By 1880, a trip from London to Manchester, which would have taken four days in 1700, took only four hours! This also meant that goods, such as textiles and coal, could be transported across the country quicker than ever before.

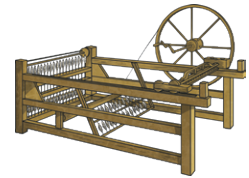


Important Inventions

Alongside the steam engine, there were a number of other key inventions during the Industrial Revolution. In 1764, the spinning jenny was invented: it was a machine that made it much quicker to weave cotton into cloth (compared to a person completing the task by hand). In 1863, the first route on the London Underground was built and, by 1885, Karl Benz had invented the first motorised car.



There is still much debate as to how the spinning jenny gained its name. Some people think that the word 'jenny' sounds a bit like the word 'engine'. Others think that Jenny might have been the name of the inventor's wife or daughter.



What Was Life like during the Industrial Revolution?

Everyday life in Britain changed dramatically during the Industrial Revolution. Before the introduction of the steam engine, most goods were made by hand. However, the introduction of steam power made it possible to invent machines which were much faster at working than people could be. As a result, large factories were built to house giant machines and people moved from working at home to working long shifts in dirty, noisy and dangerous conditions.

During this time, there were fewer laws to protect children; this meant that children as young as five years old would be sent to work. People were no longer living in small rural communities; the majority lived in large, industrialised towns. These towns were often overcrowded and were filled with pollution from nearby factories. To accommodate the growing population, houses were constructed quickly and with cheap materials; many were built without running water or proper sanitation.





Rights for Child Workers

Young children who worked in factories were often subjected to terrible and dangerous conditions. To combat this, the government introduced a Factory Act in 1833 which made it compulsory for every child working within a factory to receive two hours of schooling each day. The act also stated that children under the age of nine were not allowed to work in factories and that all children were forbidden from working at night. Although children were receiving an education, children between the ages of nine and thirteen were still allowed to work up to nine hours per day.

By the late 1800s, revolutionary inventions had helped Britain to become an industrialised country. Soon, the invention of the telephone and the introduction of a widespread sewer system would lead Britain into a new era of technological revolution.