

Station 1

From Country to Town- As the number of factories grew people from the countryside began to move into the towns looking for better paid work. The wages of a farm worker were very low and there were less jobs working on farms because of the invention and use of new machines such as threshers. Also thousands of new workers were needed to work machines in mills and foundries and the factory owners built houses for them. Cities filled to overflowing and London was particularly bad. At the start of the 19th Century about 1/5 of Britain's population lived there, but by 1851 half the population of the country had set up home in London. London, like most cities, was not prepared for this great increase in people. People crowded into already crowded houses. Rooms were rented to whole families or perhaps several families. If there were no rooms to rent, people stayed in lodging houses.

Housing- 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 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.



Station 2

Table I Population of some cities in England in the Industrial Revolution

Cities	1801	1841
Manchester	35,000	353,000
Leeds	53,000	153,000
Birmingham	23,000	183,000
Sheffield	46,000	111,000

Source: Korn (1953, p. 67)

councils to clean up the streets. One of the first cities to become a healthier place was Birmingham. Proper sewers and drains were built. Land owners had to build houses to a set standard. Streets were paved and lighting was put up.

Over time slums were knocked down and new houses built. However, these changes did not take place overnight. When slums were knocked down in 1875 the poor people had little choice but to move to another slum, making that one worse. Few could afford new housing.

Child Labour

Many factory workers were children. They worked long hours and were often treated badly by the supervisors or overseers. Sometimes the children started work as young as four or five years old. A young child could not earn much, but even a few pence would be enough to buy food.



Coal Mines

The coal mines were dangerous places where roofs sometimes caved in, explosions happened and workers got all sorts of injuries. There were very few safety rules. Cutting and moving coal which machines do nowadays was done by men, women and children.

The younger children often worked as "*trappers*" who worked trap doors. They sat in a hole hollowed out for them and held a string which was fastened to the door. When they heard the coal wagons coming they had to open the door by pulling a string. This job was one of the easiest down the mine but it was very lonely and the place where they sat was usually damp and draughty.

Older children might be employed as "*coal bearers*" carrying loads of coal on their backs in big baskets.

The Mines Act was passed by the Government in 1842 forbidding the employment of women and girls and all boys under the age of teen down

mines. Later it became illegal for a boy under 12 to work down a mine.

Pollution

Chimneys, bridges and factory smoke blocked out most of the light in the towns. A layer of dirty smoke often covered the streets like a blanket. This came from the factories that used steam to power their machines. The steam was made by burning coal to heat water. Burning coal produces a lot of dirty, black smoke.

Improvements

Gradually, improvements for the poor were made. In 1848, Parliament passed laws that allowed city

Station 3

Street Children

Hordes of dirty, ragged children roamed the streets with no regular money and no home to go to. The children of the streets were often orphans with no-one to care for them. They stole or picked pockets to buy food and slept in outhouses or doorways. Charles Dickens wrote about these children in his book "Oliver Twist". Some street children did jobs to earn money. They could work as crossing-sweepers, sweeping a way through the mud and horse dung of the main paths to make way for ladies and gentlemen. Others sold lace, flowers, matches or muffins etc. out in the streets.

Country Children

Poor families who lived in the countryside were also forced to send their children out to work. Seven and eight year olds could work as bird scarers, out in the fields from four in the morning until seven at night. Older ones worked in gangs as casual labourers.

Changes for the better

it took time for the government to decide that working children ought to be protected by laws as many people did not see anything wrong with the idea of children earning their keep. They also believed that people should be left alone to help themselves and not expect others to protect or keep them. They felt children had a right to send their children out to work. People such as Lord Shaftesbury and Sir Robert Peel worked hard to persuade the public that it was wrong for children to suffer health problems and to miss out on schooling due to work.

Chimney Sweeps

Although in 1832 the use of boys for sweeping chimneys was forbidden by law, boys continued to be forced through the narrow winding passages of chimneys in large houses. When they first started at between five and ten years old, children suffered many cuts, grazes and bruises on their knees, elbows and thighs however after months of suffering their skin became hardened.

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Mills

While thousands of children worked down the mine, thousands of others worked in the cotton mills. The mill owners often took in orphans to their workhouses; they lived at the mill and were worked as hard as possible. They spent most of their working hours at the machines with little time for fresh air or exercise. Even part of Sunday was spent cleaning machines. There were some serious accidents, some children were scalped when their hair was caught in the machine, hands were crushed and some children were killed when they went to sleep and fell into the machine.

Factories and Brick Works

Children often worked long and grueling hours in factories and had to carry out some hazardous jobs. In match factories children were employed to dip matches into a chemical called phosphorous. This phosphorous could cause their teeth to rot and some died from the effect of breathing it into their lungs.

Station 4



Directions: Take a minute to look at the above picture and political cartoon. On your station sheet, write down what you think each one means. Some things to consider are the time period, what the people are thinking, and what it may represent, etc.