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 Joan

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Industrial Revolution

The Middle Ages involved a feudal system that revolved around agricultural settlements. The production of goods, manufacturing (industry) of clothing for instance, was generally small scale and largely done by hand. The path into the modern era involved the transition to mass production using machine power.

Great Britain

The first industrial revolution spans from approximately 1750 to 1840 in Great Britain. It quickly started to spread to other nations during that period. These early developments led to further steps as well as new industrial revolutions in various countries across the world. Industrialization has continued to develop in various countries and continues even today. For example, Japan did not modernize until the late 1800's and China followed a hundred years later.

Technological Advancements

The ability to produce things in high quantities in a quick fashion (mass production) required machine power. The invention and improvements of the steam engine by people like the Scottish inventor James Watt was central here. And, improvements in iron making was also very important, including the Bessemer process, providing an inexpensive means to mass produce steel cheaply.

Technological advances allowed Great Britain to exploit existing raw materials such as cotton, providing a chance to lead the way in the industrial revolution. The spinning jenny, for example, provided the ability of one worker to spin multiple spools of yarn. Steam power and improvements in iron making led to more powerful machines, allowing not only more production but production more efficiently.

Technology also was involved in other areas that were important in the industrial revolution. This included communication over long distances (telegraph), improvements in transportation (railroads) and lighting (gas and electric). This also led to new problems, including pollution and dangerous machinery.



Steam engine



Factory System

Technological changes also led to changes in the use of labor (workers).

The mass production of goods no longer made it as practical to have separate workers largely in home workshops. Larger factories were set up, additional machinery requiring more space and sources of power. A "factory system" developed in which products were made by large groups of workers working machinery, overseen by supervisors. Workers had to follow a more organized, regimented schedule. Often women and children were used as well.

Labor Struggle

Some, such as Adam Smith, promoted an economic philosophy of "free enterprise" with limited government control of industry. Smith's work *Wealth of Nations* advanced this idea. It involved the use of capitalism, an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production.

Workers also demanded their needs be recognized. Luddites, for example, were a group that opposed the British textile industry because it endangered the livelihood of those who produced by hand what now was mass produced by machines. Workers formed organizations (labor unions) to protect their interests.

A "class struggle," a social and political conflict between different groups appeared to be growing between workers and those who controlled the means of production. Demands for change grew in England, France and elsewhere. Karl Marx (*Communist Manifesto*) was a German philosopher and journalist who addressed this matter and argued the community itself should control the means of production.

A middle path of government regulation developed instead though his ideas would influence 20th Century history in Russia and elsewhere.

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