

Public Health and living conditions

Britain's towns and cities experienced a public health crisis in the first half of the 19th century. In poorer areas, there was a lack of clean water, poorly built and overcrowded housing, and no proper sewers. Deadly diseases such as tuberculosis and typhus were common. There were outbreaks of cholera in 1831 and 1848, and thousands of people were killed. The government had a laissez-faire attitude which was where the government believed it was not their role to get involved in the lives of people, and the rich didn't want to pay more tax as they believed the poor were "lazy drunks."



INTRODUCTION

The years 1750 to 1900 was a time of great change in Britain; our towns and cities grew rapidly as did the population, there was a revolution in medicine, transport, invention, design and politics. Some of the world's most famous people lived in this era. Historians always like to give labels to different periods of time. This era is called the "Industrial Revolution" because it was such a time of great **CHANGE**. What caused such change?

Causes of the Industrial Revolution:

1. Population rise- In this time period the population rose massively from about 11 million to about 40 million. All these people needed clothes, food and work so many factories were built.
2. New entrepreneurs (business people)- Lots of entrepreneurs took risks in this era. Many bought raw materials such as clay and turned them into goods to sell. Many new businesses and factories were created.
3. Coal and Iron- Britain had many valuable raw materials such as coal and iron. By 1850 Britain produced 2/3 of the worlds coal and half of the worlds iron and half of the world cotton cloth.
4. New inventions- Some of the world's greatest inventors lived in Britain and they made incredible machines that did things faster and better than before.

Coal Mines

Coal mines could go hundreds of feet into the ground. Once a coal seam was found, the miners dug horizontally. However, underground the miners faced very real and great dangers. Flooding was a real problem in mines. Explosive gas (called fire damp) would be found the deeper the miners got. One spark from a digging miner's pickaxe or candle could be disastrous. Poisonous gas was also found underground pit. Collapses were common; the sheer weight of the ground above a worked coal seam was colossal and mines were only held up by wooden beams called props.



Transport

Moving around the country changed too—a group called the "Turnpike Trust" improved Britain's roads which made them smoother and flatter which damaged items less. Canals were built to carry supplies around the country to and from factories which reduced the need for horse and carriage. Factories were built on canals in order to transport more goods. After the invention of the steam engine, locomotive trains were developed which completely changed the landscape and production of Britain- turning them in to the leading nation for manufacturing.

Factories

The new factories built in this era were like magnets for people. Thousands of people moved from the countryside to towns and cities for work. After the invention of the steam engine, steam powered factories started to appear all over Britain and towns such as Manchester grew. Britain became the "workshop of the world". Conditions were brutal and the workers were treated poorly:

- Low wages – a typical wage for male workers was about 15 shillings (75p) a week, but women and children were paid much lower wages, with women earning 7 shillings (35p) and children 3 shillings (15p).
- Long working hours – normal shifts were recorded as 12 to 14 hours a day.
- Fierce systems of fines – fines were imposed for things like talking or whistling.
- Deformities and major accidents for children due to the long hours they worked.

