



Factory Life During the Industrial Revolution Explained

KS4 HISTORY

Ages 10-14 ⌚ 4 min read

What Was the Industrial Revolution?

The **Industrial Revolution** began in **Britain** around **1760** and changed how things were made forever. Instead of craftspeople making things slowly by hand, factories used powerful machines to produce goods much faster. Thousands of workers left farms and villages to find jobs in these new **factories**, especially in cities like **Manchester** and **Leeds**.

Long Hours and Low Pay

Factory workers, including children as young as **5 years old**, worked incredibly long days. A typical shift lasted **12 to 16 hours**, six days a week. Many workers earned very little money—barely enough to buy food and pay rent. There were no rules about how many hours people could work, and no one received holidays or sick pay.

Think of it like being at school from 6 in the morning until 8 at night, every single day, with only Sundays off—and doing that every week of the year.

Dangerous Conditions

Factory conditions were terrifying. Machines had no safety guards, so workers regularly lost fingers, hands, or arms. There was little fresh air, and cotton dust filled the lungs of textile workers, causing serious lung diseases. Factories were cramped, noisy, and hot in summer, freezing in winter.

Accidents happened constantly. If someone was injured, they simply lost their job—there was no **compensation** or medical help provided by the factory owner. Many workers became ill from **poisoning** caused by chemicals used in manufacturing.

Think of it like working in a room with broken toys and sharp bits everywhere, with the lights too bright, and no one caring if you get hurt.

Child Labour

Children were preferred workers because they had small fingers for delicate work and were paid even less than adults. They worked alongside adults in the same dangerous conditions. Many never went to school and grew up without education or a childhood.

Why Did People Accept These Conditions?

Workers had no choice. They needed money to survive, and there were no other jobs available. There were no **trade unions** or government protection. Gradually, people began to protest and demand change. By the **late 1800s**, laws were passed limiting working hours and protecting children, but only after decades of suffering.