The Industrial Revolution (1750–1914): (I) Technology and progress

Links with our times

It is said that today we are living through a technological revolution that has dramatically changed the way we communicate and process information. The telephone was invented in 1872 and remained largely unchanged until the arrival of mobile phone technology in the 1980s. Since the late 1990s the development of smartphone technology, touch screens, and the ability to capture and transmit images has revolutionised the way we communicate with one another.

For most of you these changes may not seem very revolutionary. But your parents and grandparents used old-style landline telephones most of their lives. To them, the modern mobile phone and its huge variety of applications represents a communications revolution that has taken less than twenty years to occur.

What do we mean when we speak of the Industrial Revolution?

What is a revolution? Most historians think of a revolution as a time of very rapid change. Historical change usually takes

Note to teachers and students: The Depth Study The Industrial Revolution (1750–1914) is covered over two chapters because of the wide range and complexity of the curriculum content. This will make it easier for students to study this fascinating topic. Teachers should select the material from both chapters that best meets the needs of their students, rather than attempting to cover all the content from both chapters.
place through a series of small steps that can be easily understood by people living through the time. Every now and then change speeds up and, within a generation or less, old ways of doing things disappear. These old methods are superseded by completely new and unfamiliar ones that have not been used before.

To the people of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the changes that took place in manufacturing, transport, agriculture, trade and living conditions were every bit as revolutionary as the technological changes that are happening all around us today.

**Big questions**

As you work through this chapter, look for information that will help you to answer these questions:

1. In what ways did developments in agriculture during the eighteenth century contribute to the Industrial Revolution?
2. What major technological innovations contributed to the progress of the Industrial Revolution?
3. In what ways was Britain in 1850 dramatically different from Britain in 1750?
4. Why did the Industrial Revolution begin in Britain, rather than in any other country?

**Starter questions**

1. What do you think are the main differences between industrial and agricultural societies?
2. From what you know of different countries around the world, list those you would consider to be industrialised and those you would consider to be primarily agricultural.
3. Aside from communications, what other examples of rapid change can we see in the world today?
4. What do we mean by progress? Is progress always a positive thing?