

# Working in an Industrial World

What was it like to work in an industrial setting? Before the “**Industrial Revolution**” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, people worked out of their homes or on small farms. With changes in technology and economic philosophy, people started working in factories, especially once growing urban populations demanded more food, clothing and household goods. In factories or on larger farms, labor became more specialized—people worked on

only one small part of a larger project. In factories, people no longer worked according to their own schedule, completing tasks only when necessary for their own family’s survival. Instead, men, women and children were assigned work times and completed tasks according to the manufacturer’s schedule. Workers were expected to produce as many products as the industry in which they worked required. Factory workers received wages that often failed to meet basic

living expenses, such as food, clothing and housing. Often, people worked long hours in cramped and dirty factories with few breaks.

Although we can not duplicate the conditions of large nineteenth-century factories in your classroom, today you will complete tasks and discuss questions designed to help you understand what it must have been like to be a factory worker during the nineteenth century in England.

## YOUR FACTORY EXPERIENCE

It is the end of the work week (Saturday—your only day off is Sunday). You work for Maxwell Cruel Industries manufacturing children’s toys. Today, you are going to design and manufacture a new toy soldier that will probably be purchased for middle class children (your children will probably never have such a luxury—even though they help manufacture the toys).

1. First, you must decide upon a new design. Each member of your group will compete for the chance to design this new toy. Draw the best toy soldier you possibly can.
2. Second, as a group, vote on which toy soldier you like best. This will become your prototype. You will manufacture this toy soldier.
3. Appoint one member of your group as the assembly-line manager. The manager has a few important responsibilities.
  - A. The manager creates the **assembly line**. He (this person must be male) breaks down the work involved in manufacturing the toy soldier. Each person is in charge of drawing only ONE aspect of the toy (the head, the body, the weapons, the hat, etc.). Your teacher will help oversee setting up your assembly line.

- B. The manager is in charge of making sure the assembly line meets the production quota.
- C. The manager is in charge of keeping work moving quickly and accurately and he will try to solve any slow-downs in production.
4. Production. The factory manager (your teacher) will assign you each roles as specific types of workers. Work does not start until the factory manager gives the go ahead. Once the whistle blows, you have five minutes to create 50 toy soldiers. Work quickly, but accurately, or your pay can be docked. You must produce toy soldiers that look just like the original.
- At the end of the five minutes the factory manager will evaluate your work and let you know whether or not you will receive your full pay.
5. Your pay is according to the following pay schedule:

**Wages per week of work**

Male head of household: **15 shillings**

Female, married: **9 shillings**

Female, single (over age 16): **10 shillings**

Male, single (over age 16, but living at home): **15 shillings**

Child over 11\*: **5 shillings**

Child under 11\*: **3 shillings**

Factory Manager: **Makes an additional 1 shilling per week**

*\*Children will only work for 3 minutes. If you are assigned the role of a child under 11, you must keep one hand behind your back the whole time you are working.*

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## Glossary of Terms

**Industrial Revolution:** Radical social and economic changes brought about when extensive mechanization of production resulted in a shift from home manufacturing to factory production.

**Assembly Line:** A line of factory workers and equipment on which the product being assembled passes from operation to operation until completed.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*For each question, have one member of your group record your answers.*

1. Describe your factory experience.

- List three ways working as a part of the assembly line was different from working alone.

1.

2.

3.

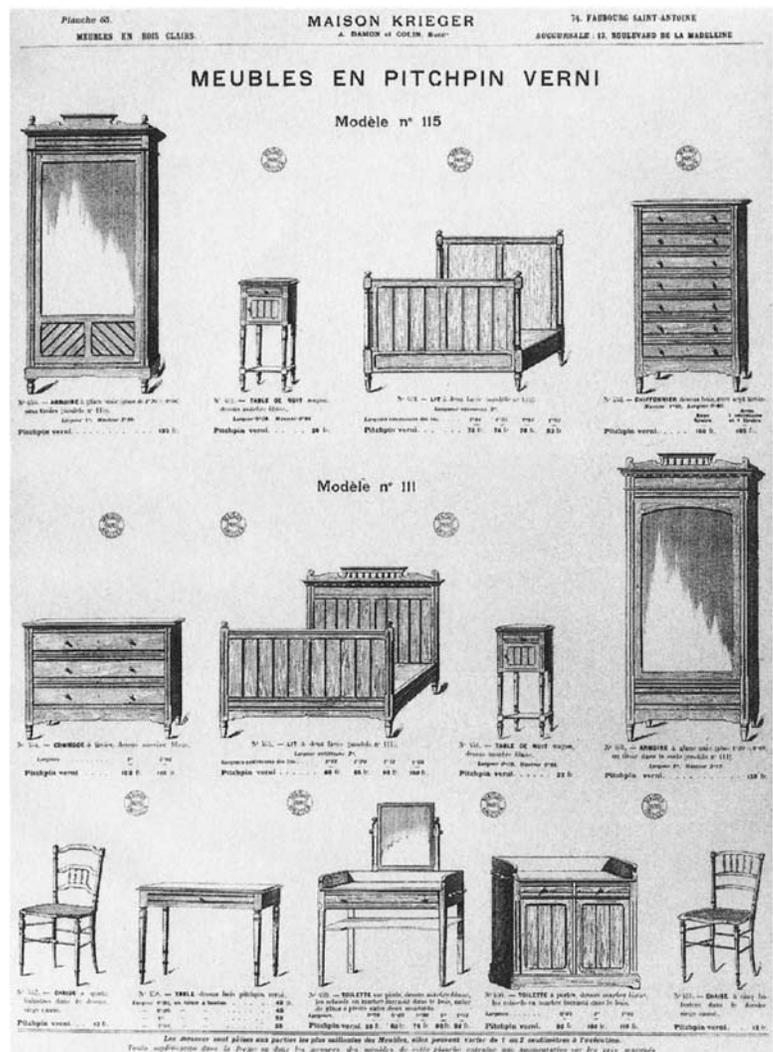
- What did you like about the factory experience? What did you not like?
  
- Compare the toy soldier produced by just one person with those produced on the assembly line. In what ways do they differ, if at all?
  
- Why are they different?

2. Look at the pictures of furniture (**IMAGES 1 and 2**) on the next page. Can you tell which one was produced by just one craftsman and which was produced on an assembly line? Explain the reasons for your choice.



**Image 1. Louis XVI Cabinet by Guillaume Benneman.**

J. Paul Getty Museum.



**Image 2. Bedroom Furniture from Maison Krieger.**

From Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power*.

3. Each of you were paid different salaries depending on your age and gender. List three reasons why you think workers were paid different amounts. You might consider these questions: Did you notice differences in the work of each person? In the cases where there was not a difference in the quality or amount of work, why were men and women paid different wages?

Reasons:

1.

2.

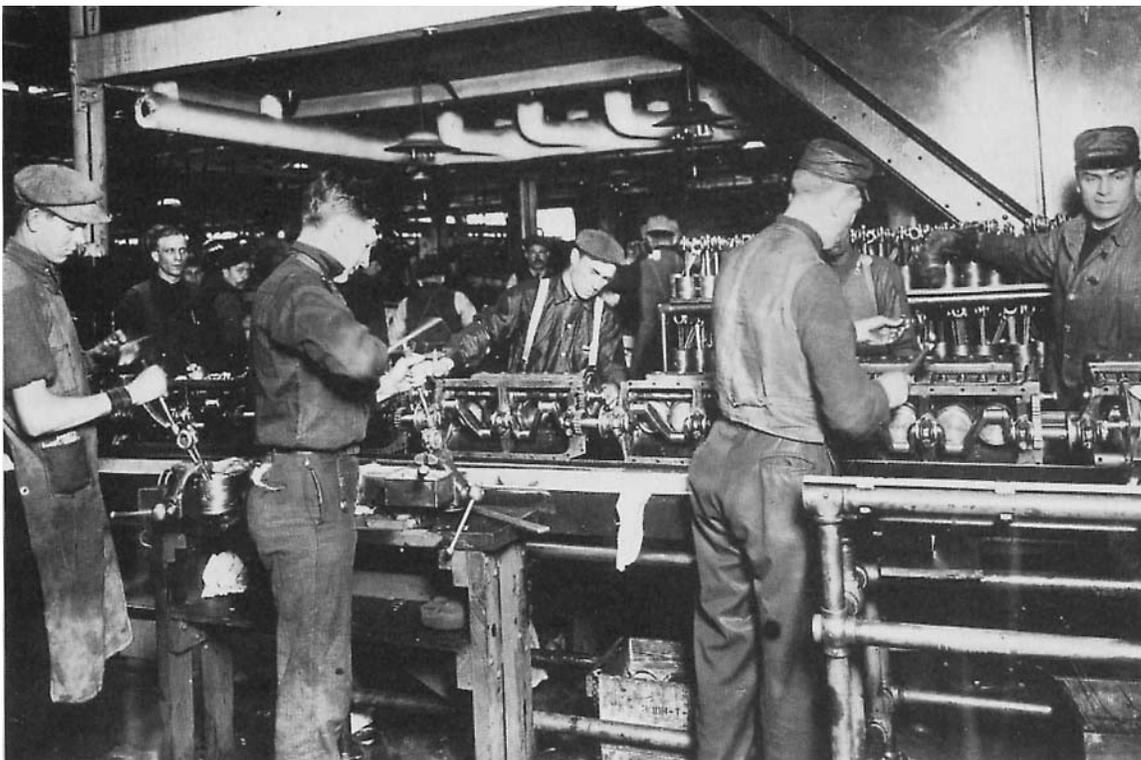
3.

4. Look at the pictures of men and women working in factories (**IMAGES 3 and 4**).
- Do men and women work in the same types of jobs? How are they different or similar?
  
  - Who has the easier tasks—men or women? Can you tell?



**Image 3. Weaving room of a German Textile Factory.**

Stiftung Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftarchiv, Cologne.



**Image 4. Installing Pistons in Engines at the Ford Plant.**

From Mary Beth Norton et. al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*. Page 510.

## POST-ACTIVITY ASSIGNMENT:

Take a look at the workforce and pay scale from the Courtauld silk mill built in England in 1825.

### Historical Background

Samuel Courtauld built a silk mill in 1825 in Halstead, Essex (South East England). Before the Industrial Revolution, Halstead was an agricultural community with a cottage industry producing woolen cloth. In Halstead unemployment among depressed farming households and former wool workers forced people to find work outside the home. Because their labor was cheap, women more than men were recruited into the textile factories that sprang up all over Britain in the 19th century. This is a chart of the Courtauld workforce, including job titles and pay scale, in 1860. The wages are in British shillings.

Number	Weekly Wages	MALES
1	1000 pounds per year	Mill Manager (also got 3% of the profit)
26	15-32 shillings	Overseers and clerks
6	17-25 shillings	Mechanics and engine drivers
3	14-21 shillings	Carpenters and blacksmiths
1	15 shillings	Lodgekeeper
16	14-15 shillings	Power loom machinery attendants and steamers
18	10-15 shillings	Mill machinery attendants and loom cleaners
5	5-12 shillings	Spindle cleaners, bobbin stampers and packers, messengers, sweepers
-	7-10 shillings	Watchmen
-	5-10 shillings	Coachmen, grooms and van driver
38	2-4 shillings	Winders
<b>114</b>		<b>Total Males</b>
Number	Weekly Wages	FEMALES
4	10-11 shillings	Gauze examiners
4	9-10 shillings	Female assistant overseers
16	7-10 shillings	Warpers
9	7-10 shillings	Twisters
4	6-9 shillings	Wasters
589	5-8 shillings	Weavers
2	6-7 shillings	Plugwinders
83	4-6 shillings	Drawers and doublers
188	2-4 shillings	Winders
<b>899</b>		<b>Total Females</b>
<b>1013</b>		<b>TOTAL WORKFORCE</b>

Source: [www.spartacus.uk.edu](http://www.spartacus.uk.edu)

1. The table is broken into two sections. One shows the number of workers and weekly wages of male workers and the other shows the same for female workers.
  - Even though you may be unfamiliar with some of these terms, what type of work, in general, do men do and what type of work do women do?

Work done by men	Work done by women

- Which group has more supervisor jobs?
- Which group seems to work more with machines?
- Which group works more with the silk?
- How many male workers are there? \_\_\_\_\_. Determine the percentage of males who make up the workforce (use the following formula: total males/total workforce)\_\_\_\_\_.
- How many female workers are there? \_\_\_\_\_. Determine the percentage of females who make up the workforce? (use the following formula: total females/total workforce)\_\_\_\_\_.

- What is significant about these percentages?
- What is the highest paid male position?
- What is the highest paid female position?
- Why do you think women had fewer supervisory positions and were paid less than men?

2. Below, list some of the reasons why Samuel Courtauld (the man who owned this factory) would have paid women less than men.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.