

Sample: Age of Revolution II (1800-1865)

Unlike other curricula which depend on certain books, *TruthQuest History* commentary brings depth to any reading. Our topic-specific booklists simply show the rich possibilities! Relax; choose from whatever is available.

(*Starred books were in-print at the time of this writing.)

9É Industrial Revolution

Yes, the Industrial Revolution is rightfully titled. It *did* turn life upside down, both in Europe and in America. Its unparalleled productivity and efficiency allowed the poor to purchase necessities only dreamed of by their ancestors! Railways and canals linked farms with cities, boosting trade and communication! The cities were growing at a frenzied pace, since countryfolk were pouring in to work for cash in the new factories. (This urban growth was more rapid in Europe, where there was less economic freedom, and thus less prosperity. American men resisted working in factories, so U.S. workers were usually single women, poor children, and, later, immigrants.) Whole new communities, such as Lowell, Massachusetts, were built as factory towns.

Are you grasping what a big deal this was?! Society (American and European) was moving from being only rural and agrarian (agricultural) to being industrial and urban! For example, New York City's population grew from 60,000 in 1800 to almost 1,000,000 by 1860!²² As cities swelled, more political power shifted there since representative government is based on population. Spiritual, cultural, and relational roots weakened when people left their family farms, rural communities, local stores, small-scale workshops, and familiar little churches. It was easy for inappropriate ideas of *progress* to puff up the industrial leaders. Here are some comments made by two men who saw the changes come to America:

*We are no longer to remain plain and simple republics of farmers.*²³

*There are certain causes which have acted with peculiar energy in our generation, and which have improved the condition of the mass of society with a degree of rapidity heretofore altogether unknown....Who is so familiarized to the sight even now, as to look without wonder and amazement on a long train of cars, full of passengers and merchandise, drawn along our valleys, and the sides of our mountains themselves with a rapidity that holds competition [with] the winds? (Daniel Webster)*²⁴

²² Douglas T. Miller, *Then was the Future* (New York: Knopf, 1973) x.

²³ Miller 1.

²⁴ Miller 2-3.



Imagine, if you'd previously done everything by hand, as had been done for millennia, how much you'd be amazed and energized by all these powerful tools and the prosperity they generated! Americans, especially, were busy dreaming, risking, inventing, pioneering, and achieving, for their efforts would pay off, thanks to free enterprise. What a new thing this was! For previous centuries, people had been locked into a rigid class structure, where greater work usually only yielded benefit only to one's feudal lord!

ThinkWrite 3: "Moolah!"

What does God say about wealth? Don't stop when you've found a few Bible verses that support your pre-conceived notions! Instead, look for the full counsel of God!

Yes, prosperity! That meant it was decision time...and each individual's spiritual foundation determined the decisions made. Earlier history has shown us that mankind's tendency is to use his power and wealth to make a 'kingdom' for himself. Would the newly rich (*nouveau riche*, as the French said it) in America and Europe make the same mistake, or would they be accountable to God with their money and priorities, showing a correct *Big Belief #1*? Would they use their wealth to bless others, showing a correct *Big Belief #2*? Remember, God doesn't disdain wealth; in fact, He often is free to dispense it when His principles are obeyed! He *does*, however, demand it be used Biblically and unselfishly. It was another *big* fork in the road. (Begin *ThinkWrite 3*.)

The Industrial Revolution affected various nations differently. The distinctive American response can be seen in the contemporary comment below:

*This state of incessant excitement gives to the American an air of busy inquietude...which, in fact, constitutes their principle happiness.*²⁵

That observation has got to make us Americans smile...or grimace, for we still seem to be characterized by a love of busyness! Unfortunately, we're known by a couple other traits as well: a focus on material things (*materialism*) and being self-made (which hints at an overly independent attitude). These characteristics were so much a part of the 1800s, that we find the term *self-made* to have been coined by an American leader (Henry Clay) in 1832!

*The idea of rising "from rags to riches" was common. President [Andrew] Jackson, having started as an orphan and being clearly self-made, was a fitting symbol for the age.*²⁶

A foreign traveler made this comment:

²⁵ Miller 20.

²⁶ Miller 4.

*Americans boast of their skill in money making; and it is the only standard of dignity, and nobility, and worth.*²⁷

Hmm. *Self-made man*. The “rags to riches” dream eventually became so idealized in America—and to some degree in the other industrialized nations too—that many who lived merely comfortable lives somehow felt they’d failed!²⁸ Let’s think about that for a second. It *is* Biblical to care for your family without unnecessarily relying on others, but being “captain of one’s own ship” is taking it too far...though many did just that. Why? Well, for many, they felt it was the next step in their evolutionary progress! In other words, they felt completely responsible for their own success. (How many times did the Israelites do the same thing?!) This silently nudged God off the throne (*Big Belief #1*), and a spiritual hardening, over-independence, arrogance, and materialism thus became widespread. Of course, *Big Belief #2* changed also. So you see an increasingly insensitive use of others in the drive for financial success, especially when the potential for profit created by the Industrial Revolution was so great!

Yes, too many employers cared little for their employees’ safety, dignity, wages, and health, as you’ll soon see. Women and children worked long and hard in factories. Immigrants on big engineering jobs were pushed like poor animals. Especially in Europe—where conditions were worse because virtually all land was owned by a few aristocrats and there was thus little opportunity for others to advance—the plentiful supply of desperate workers put little pressure on employers to improve. Amazingly, in spite of all that, the new industrial workers were seldom “worse off than in the previous agrarian situation.”²⁹ That fact gives us a good look at fallen human nature: the powerful tend to take advantage of those less powerful. At least, the Industrial Revolution offered opportunity to more people, especially those who were hard-working innovators. There were some who knew God’s principles for the workplace; would they speak out? What would happen?

Good question! Especially because it allows me to hit my favorite point! Actually, I’ll have Francis Schaeffer—the great Christian historian and philosopher—explain it to you!

*The churches could have changed things in that day if they had spoken with clarity and courage. The central reason the church should have spoken clearly and courageously on these issues is that the Bible commands it. Had the church been faithful to the Bible’s teaching about the compassionate use of wealth, it would not later have lost so many of the workers. And if it had spoken clearly against the use of wealth as a weapon in a kind of “survival of the fittest,” in all probability this concept as it came into secularized science [later with Darwin and others] would not have been so automatically accepted.*³⁰

²⁷ Miller 4.

²⁸ Miller 23.

²⁹ Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1976) 116.

³⁰ Schaeffer 117.

You see, some really nasty ideas were floating around at the time. The first said that the world was too populated and that hard times would eliminate the weak. Indeed, some human thinkers considered this elimination a necessary step in the flow of *progress!* Worse yet, this played right into another bad idea—*utilitarianism*—which said situations should be measured only by the usefulness (utility) of their outcomes. That gave the hard-hearted factory owners (thought not all were hard-hearted) a chance to say their harshness was useful since it eliminated those who couldn't progress *and* made for more useful profits!

Wow! The believing church—the Body of Christ—needed to fire back some truth, for God strongly emphasizes the worth of each individual and the need for employers and employees to be kind and humble! The amazing thing is that many of the problematic factory owners

ThinkWrite 4:

“What does the Big Boss say about being a boss?”

What does the Bible say to employers...*and* employees too? (Isn't it neat that God cares about people's jobs?!)

were actually churchgoers who should have been hearing that message! But too many churches had chosen humanistic, natural religion, remember? They bought into the humanist lie that people should remake the world with their *own* ideas for society and business, and they dispensed that

É Self-government

untruth in many a Sunday sermon. They should instead have been exhorting their listeners with

God's already-established truth and encouraging them to self-government—the personal *decision* to abide by Biblical wisdom! (Begin *ThinkWrite 4* now.)

I think there was another reason the harsh factory owners were not convicted, and we alluded to it earlier: conditions for the poor weren't any worse than they'd always been. Therefore, too few saw the problem! It's no excuse, though, to say “it's always been this way!” What matters is how God says it *ought* to be! Pursuing that higher goal moves a society toward the richness and security of God's great principles! So, the question for us is this: are we blindly ignoring problems to which we've become accustomed? Are we even taking time out of our busy lives to notice problems and seek His solutions? Let's ponder one of my theme verses for *TruthQuest History*:

The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence (Eph. 1:22-23, The Message).

The church is called to leadership in this world, and cannot wriggle out of its God-given place of authority. If the church itself is utilitarian and materialistic, it will lead the world to be likewise. You needn't be a rocket scientist to realize that if many new industrialists weren't being self-governing, and if the church wasn't preaching God's standards and speaking out for the exploited, a terrible void developed. Humanists were able to vilify Christianity, embarrass the church, and, significantly, claim leadership instead. Of course, humanists (by definition) oppose the Bible's clear teaching on mankind's sin nature and on his spiritual nature; they also refute the superiority of God's principles. Thus, their humanistic “solutions” are merely legal,

political, and/or economic, and do not yield the deep and permanent change which comes only with the embracing of spiritual truth and renewal.

Want an example? Then watch, for the spiritual-social problems which flourished during the Industrial Revolution received a humanistic response in most of the western nations. Humanists looked to government—not Biblical truth—to control the evil actions of various people, so you will find a mass of government regulations and the resultant economic snafu. And, to this day, you will all-too-often find a deep bitterness between *labor* and *management*, as folks separated into adversarial factions and looked to massed human power to solve their problems. Of course, whenever we reject God's power, we must marshal our own, such as it is...which means that the longer we reject His solutions, the more complicated our problems become, and by now the situation is quite sticky. Just remember that God's way would have instead brought cooperation, freedom, and prosperity.

Don't forget! Most secular books on this topic, such as you'll find at your library and as I've had to list here, will be steeped in the humanistic, politically correct view that Big Business is made entirely of evil moneygrubbers, while all workers are abused paragons of humanity. It is a virtually Marxist view, as you'll later see, but you know that people of *all* strata need the Lord to act rightly and lovingly!

That said, I'm happy to report that some folks *did* make enormous sacrifices on behalf of the downtrodden! Some of these reformers (we'll meet them later) acted out of Biblical principles; some did not. Oh how I wish I could have told you the whole church had led the charge!

- **Story of the World: Volume 3*, by Susan Wise Bauer, Ch. 31 Gr. 3-6
This chapter focuses on the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and then shows how it spread to the United States.
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- **Kids During the Industrial Revolution*, by Lisa Wroble Gr. 2-4
- **Life in a New England Mill Town*, by Sally Isaacs (Picture the Past) Gr. 2-4
- **Working in the First Factories*, by Patrice Coupry Gr. 3-8
- **Early American Industrial Revolution*, by Katie Bagley (Let Freedom Ring) Gr. 3-8
- **Industrial Revolution*, by Mary Collins (Cornerstones) Gr. 4-8
This seems to be in the new Cornerstones II series which is for older students.
- **Mill*, by David Macaulay Gr. 4-10
A don't-miss book! See the inner workings of a mill with fantastic drawings!
- Factories*, by Leonard Everett Fisher (Nineteenth Century America) Gr. 4-12
- **Industrial Revolution*, by John Clare (Living History) Gr. 4-12
I love this series because it features costumed reenactors showing real life.
- **Industrial Revolution*, by Andrew Langley (See Through History) Gr. 4-12

- **Industrial America*, by Kitty Shea (We the People) Gr. 5-12
- The Story of Britain*, by R.J. Unstead, pp. 281-287 Gr. 5-12
Use especially if you've been following English history in this book throughout previous *TruthQuest History* guides.
- Then Was the Future*, by Douglas Miller, Ch. 1-4 (Living History Library) Gr. 8-12
Real letters, documents, etc.
- **History through the Eyes of Faith*, by Ronald Wells Gr. 9-12
- Mechanical Age: Industrial Revolution in England*, by Celia Bland (World Hist) Gr. 9-12
This book covers the scientific/engineering aspects, as well as the social and religious; I've not seen it and not aware of its viewpoint on these important matters.
- **Industrial Revolution*, by Sara Wooten (People at the Center of...) Unknown
- **Industrial Revolution Almanac*, by James & Elizabeth Outman Unknown

Fiction/Historical Fiction

- **Bobbin Girl*, by Emily McCully Gr. 2-5
Picture book; worker sees labor unions develop in Lowell, Massachusetts.
- Whistle for the Crossing*, by Marguerite de Angeli Gr. 2-7
This is a nice story set on the early trains.
- **So Far From Home: Diary of an Irish Mill Girl*, by Barry Denenberg (Dear Am.) Gr. 3-8
I'm mentioning this fictional diary *not* because I'm recommending it, but precisely because I'm not! Since many families enjoy this series, I thought you'd want to be warned that this volume is particularly depressing, humanistic, and empty.
- The Glorious Conspiracy*, by Joanne Williamson Gr. 5-12
Good author tells story of the Early Republic and Industrial Revolution.
- The Engine and the Gun*, by James Barbary Gr. 8-12
Good, fact-based novel; a young man tries to get industrial knowledge into America to help the American Revolution. This was also cited in our previous guide, but because it captures the excitement of the Industrial Revolution—a topic we didn't have time to discuss then—I'm also including it here.
- Pat and the Iron Horse*, by Polly Angell Gr. 8-12
I've not seen this story of a poor Irish immigrant who works hard on the Erie Railroad.