

GRADE 9 | 2024

The Industrial Revolution and Its Impact

Social Sciences: History

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1. What was the Industrial Revolution?

The Industrial Revolution began in Britain around 1760 and spread across Europe and North America. It was a shift from hand production to machine manufacturing.

2. Key Inventions and Developments

- Steam engine (James Watt, 1769): powered factories and trains
- Spinning jenny and power loom: mechanised textile production
- Steam locomotive and railways: faster transport of goods and people
- Iron and steel production: enabled construction of machines and buildings

3. Social Effects of Industrialisation

Urbanisation

Factories attracted workers to cities. Cities grew rapidly but were often overcrowded and unsanitary.

Working Conditions

- Long hours (12-16 hours a day)
- Dangerous machinery
- Child labour was common
- Low wages, no sick leave or holidays
- Workers had no rights

Rise of the Working Class and Trade Unions

Workers organised into trade unions to fight for better wages and conditions. Eventually, governments introduced laws to protect workers.

4. Impact on South Africa

The discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1886) in South Africa triggered rapid industrialisation and immigration.

- The mining industry grew rapidly, attracting British investment
- Railways were built to transport minerals
- African land was seized to force Africans to work in mines
- The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) was partly about control of the goldfields