

The Industrial Revolution in the UK (according to Steven Kreis)

Main change: shift from a traditional, pre-modern, agrarian society to that of an industrial economy based on capitalist methods, principles and practices

Main factors:

- political: personal liberty, just laws, property rights, peace
- moral: industriousness (Lat. *industria* = effort, diligence)
- physical

Pre-history of the Industrial Revolution:

- Protestant work ethic (cf. Max Weber's theory)
- Francis Bacon thought that science could be used to solve practical problems → modern technology ('Knowledge is power.')
- Enlightenment idea of progress
- agricultural revolution (science-based farming)
- free labour market (no remains of feudalism, no dependency of the peasants on their landlords)
- increased spending power of ordinary British people (rise on demand)
- increasing population meant an increasing market
- effective central bank → new enterprises could be credit-financed
- (internal) free-market
- worker surplus (because of enclosures)

General changes:

- new technologies: cotton-spinning jenny, water frame, power loom, steam engine, puddling furnace, etc.
- new forms of energy: fossil fuels such as coal
- new raw materials: cotton, sugar cane, rubber
- nature was subdued by knowledge and physical means
- substitution of human effort by mechanicalisation: rapid, regular, precise, tireless production becomes possible
- development of the factory system: many machines and many workers gathered in one place → longer and more disciplined working hours
- 'commodification' of man
- 'cash nexus' (Thomas Carlyle) said to be the only binding element for people

→ mutually reinforcing advances in various branches of industry

General results:

- increase in productivity → increase of the gross domestic product
- increase in workforce
- concentration of the workforce in factories and (new) industrial cities
- increased standard of living (?)
- all of society was affected
- global consequences: exploitation of non-European countries (colonies) and development of non-European markets (e.g. China)
- Britain was the 'workshop of the world' from 1750 to about the 1880s (it had reached the 'takeoff into self-sustained growth')

Extracts from :

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture17a.html>