

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870)

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, in the South of England, in 1812. Two years later his family moved to London. When his father was arrested for debts the boy went to work in a factory. He was nine years old. A year later his father left prison and Charles was sent back to school.

Dickens's secret ambition was to write stories.

Success came with the publication of the **Pickwick Papers** (1836). His next novel was **Oliver Twist** (1838). It was followed by many others like **A Christmas Carol** (1843) and **David Copperfield** (1849). With this novel, based on his own life experiences, Dickens reached the height of his fame.

He died in 1870 and was buried at Westminster Abbey in Poets' Corner.

He is generally considered one of the greatest English novelists and he was the most important writer of the Victorian Age. He described the social conditions of his time, especially of children and poor people. He was very popular in his day and after.



THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

From 1760 to 1850 inventions in the textile industry and enormous industrial changes led to extensive industrialization. This was the era of the **Industrial Revolution**, when production began to be made in factories instead of in the home. The Industrial Revolution took place in Britain because Britain was rich in coal, which provided energy for the factories, and could count on cheap raw materials coming from its colonies.

Many people left the countryside and went to live and work in the new large cities. The workers were paid very little and lived in terrible conditions, but the factory owners made a lot of money and became very rich. They used the cheap raw materials brought from the colonies.

Life in the city was very difficult for poor people; they worked long hours for very low pay. Women and children worked, too.

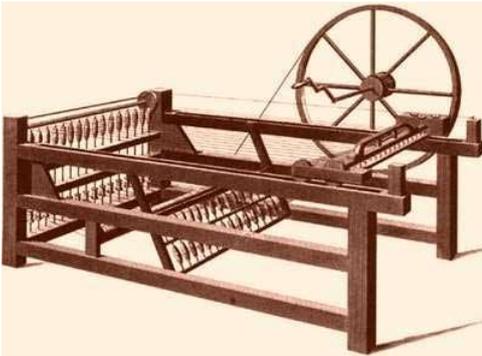
But there were also great social changes. A new social class of industrial workers was created.

Social reforms took place; in 1842 it became illegal for boys under ten, women and all girls to work underground in mines. Primary education became compulsory in 1876.

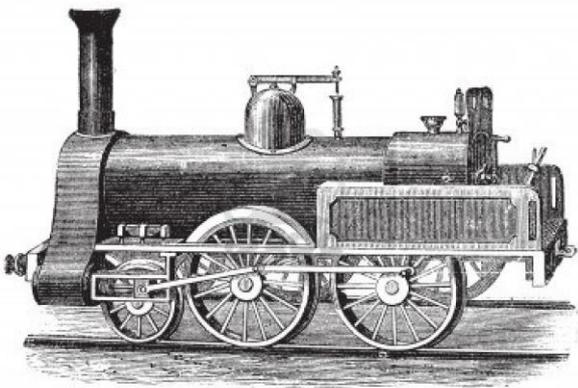


Britain was the first country to change from an agricultural economy to one founded on a factory system. Scholars call this great change the Industrial Revolution. From Britain the Industrial Revolution spread to many countries in the world.

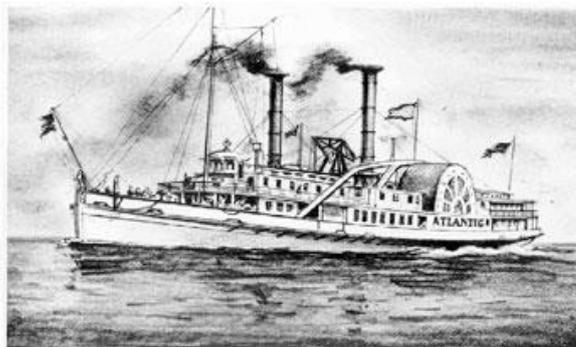
The Industrial Revolution began with the mechanization of the textile industry; many machines were invented for the spinning of cotton. Steam engines were first invented by Thomas Newcomen in 1705. In 1769, James Watt, a Scottish engineer, invented the first steam engine that provided the power for the others. Steam power was used to automate factory equipment such as spinning machines. In the next century, steam engines powered not only factories but also locomotives and steam boats. By the 1830s there were steam railways in England and in the United States, and steamships crossed the Atlantic Ocean regularly.



In about 1765, James Hargraves made a wooden spinning machine that could spin many threads simultaneously.



Coal burns in a firebox, it produces hot gases. These gases heat water in a boiler to produce steam. When the steam reaches high pressure, it is fed into cylinders. The steam expands and forces back and forth pistons, which turn the locomotive's wheels.



During Queen Victoria's reign new forms of energy such as electricity were used. New materials, such as iron and steel, were employed in industry and building.