


The Victorians

Learning Objective:

To find out what the Industrial Revolution was and how it affected Britain.

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What do you already
know about the Industrial
Revolution?

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Until the Industrial Revolution, most people in Britain lived in rural locations and earned a living through the land. However, during the Victorian era, the Industrial Revolution radically changed the way people lived. When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, only around 20% of the population lived in towns and cities. By the time of her death in 1901, more than three quarters of the population lived in urban areas.

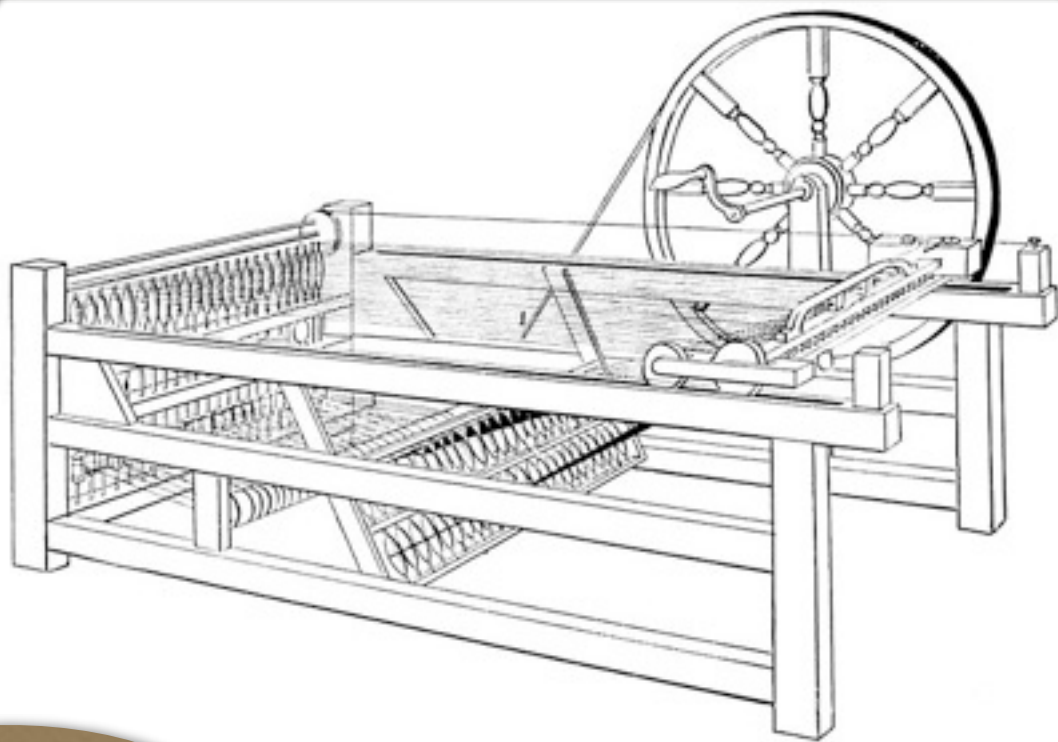


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Why did so many people move from the country to the towns?

During the 18th and 19th centuries lots of machines were being invented that could do the work of manual labourers which left many people in rural areas out of work. They went to the towns in search of work in the many factories that were now being built around the country.



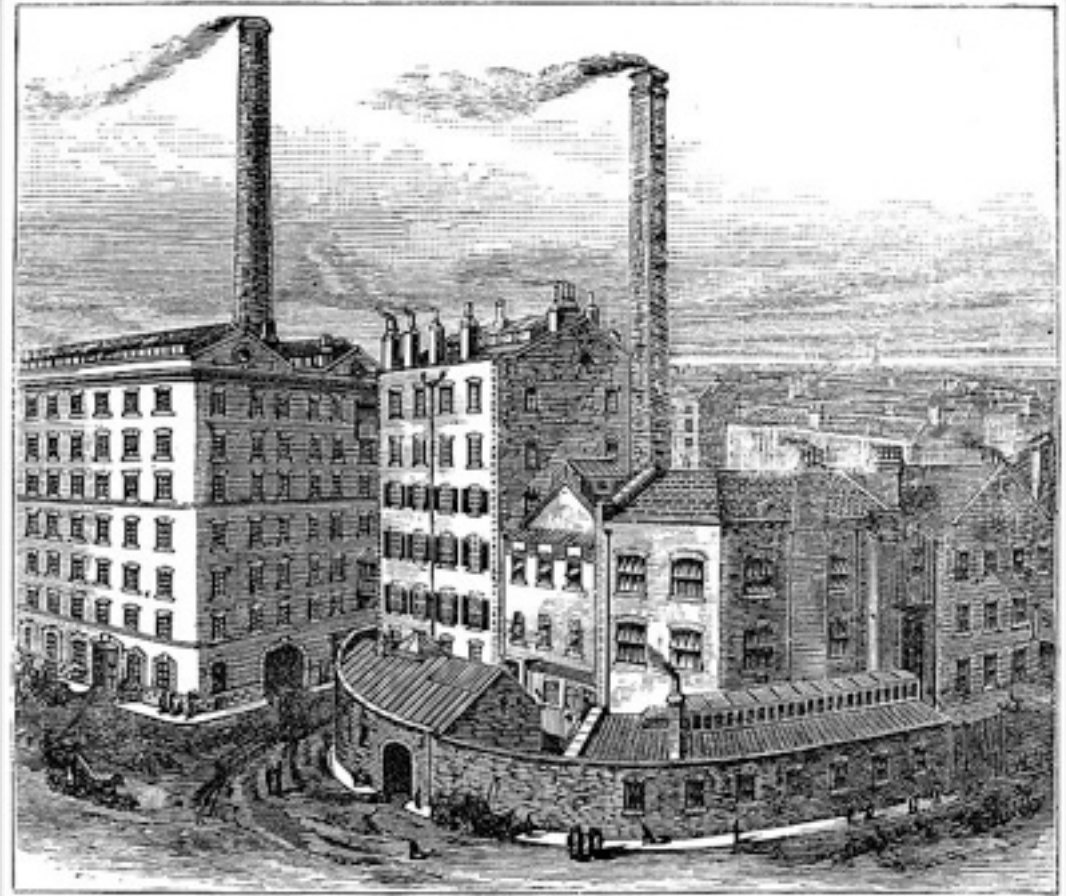
This machine is called a Spinning Jenny. It enabled yarn to be produced much more quickly than with a single spinning wheel. They were used in textile mills.

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The age of steam

The development of steam engines was one of the most important factors in the Industrial Revolution. Steam engines had been used before Queen Victoria's rule but during her reign bigger and more powerful engines were developed that were used to run whole factories. This meant that factories were able to produce manufactured goods more quickly than anywhere else in the world, making Britain the leaders in world trade.



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The increase in the number of steam engines meant that more coal needed to be mined to keep up with demand. In 1837, around 9 million tonnes of coal were mined a year. By 1901, 198 million tonnes were mined. Although lots of jobs were created due to the increase in demand, mining was a very dangerous and difficult job and around 1000 miners died each year.

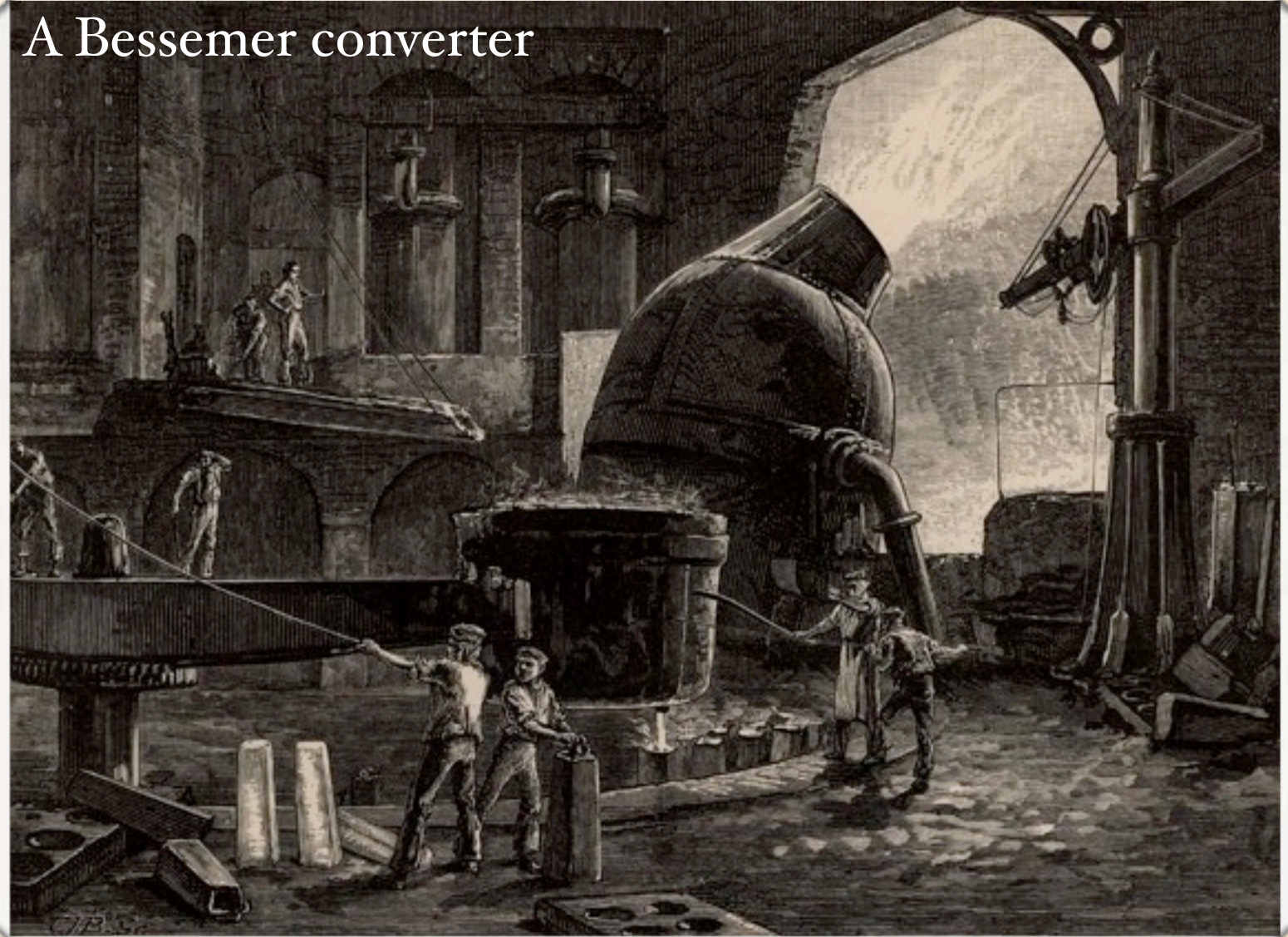


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Another important development was a new method of converting iron into steel invented by Henry Bessemer in 1855. This new process meant that steel could be produced

A Bessemer converter

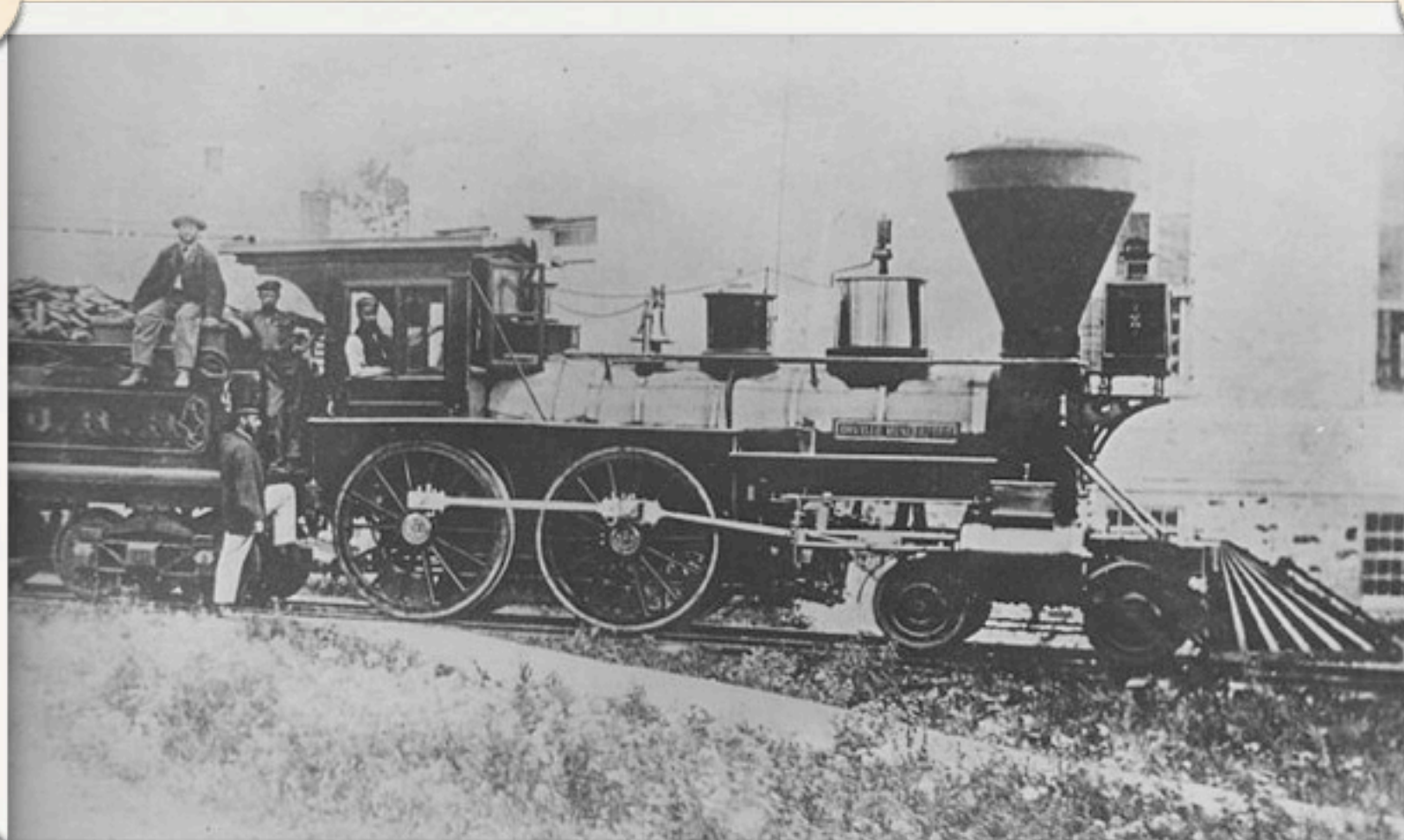


quickly, cheaply and in bulk. Steel is much lighter but much stronger than iron which meant that ships, bridges, machinery and buildings could be made bigger and more quickly than before.

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All of these new industries that were being developed were helped by the invention of the steam locomotive. During the Victorian era, steel tracks for trains were laid across the country making it easier than ever before to travel. This meant goods and raw materials could be

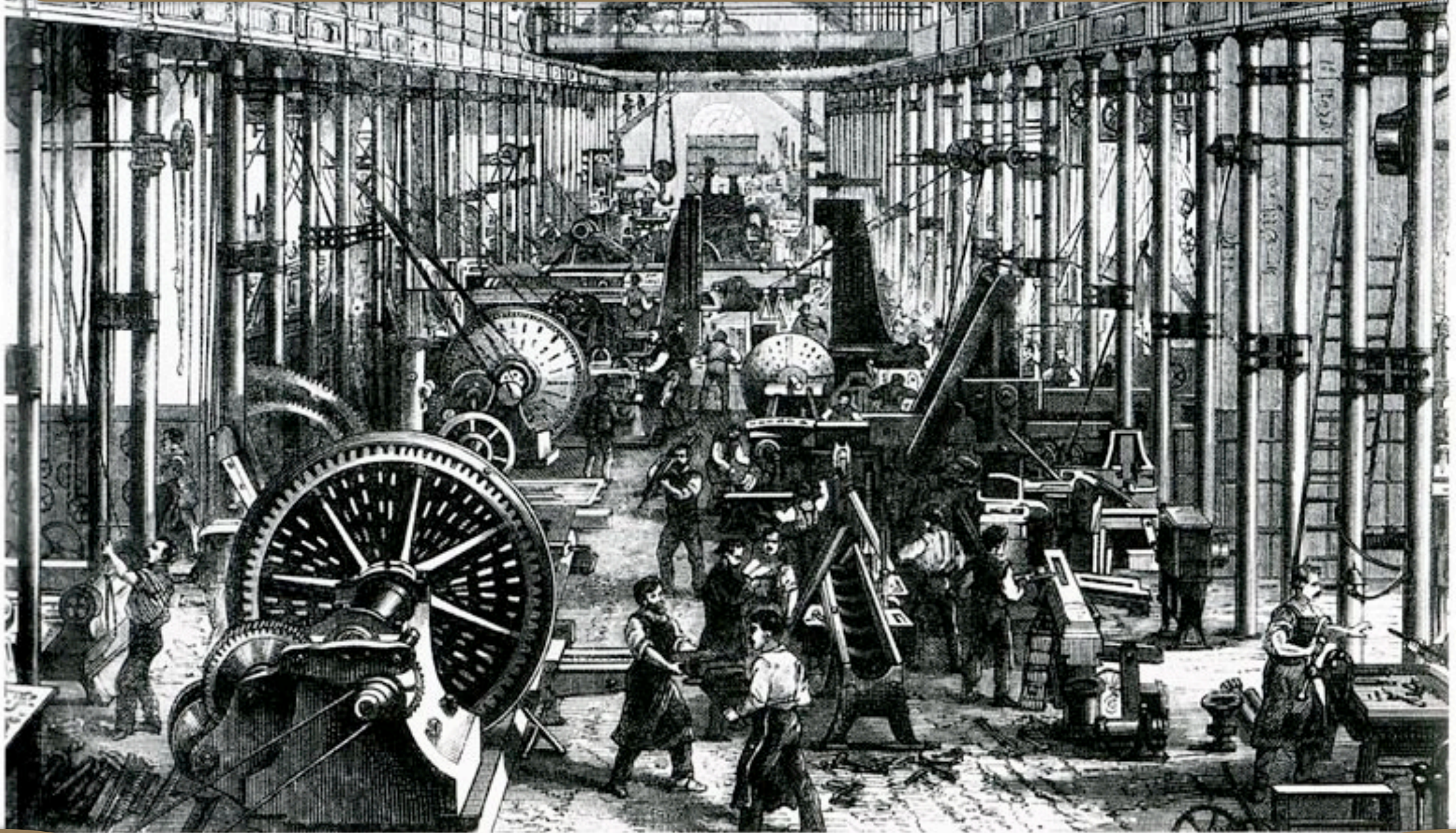


transported quickly, making manufactured goods available to more people and allowing factories to get the materials they needed.

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What affect do you think the Industrial Revolution had on the people of Britain and their day-to-day lives?



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The sudden growth of jobs in industrial areas meant that city living was often crowded. There were not enough houses in towns and cities to accommodate all the new workers who arrived. Factory

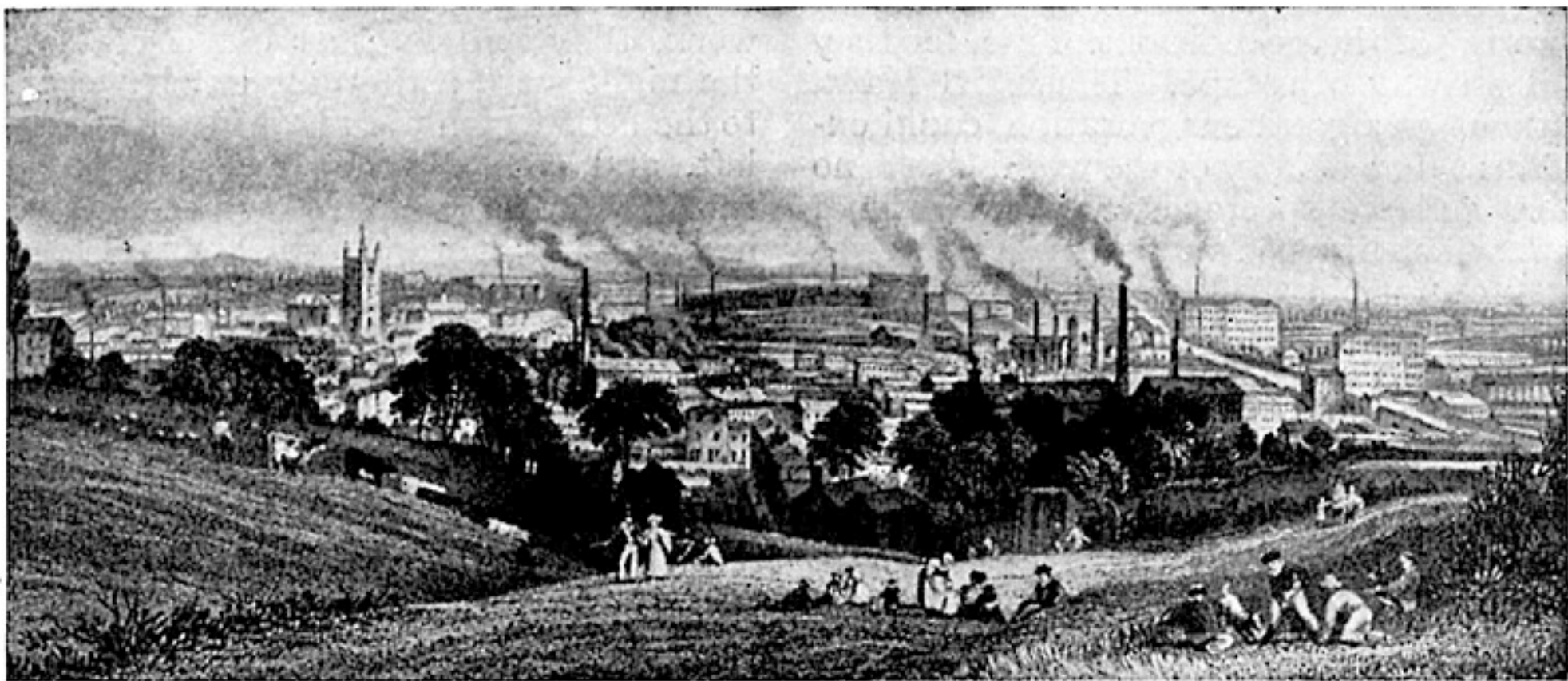
owners sometimes built new blocks of houses for their workers but they were built quickly and were usually of a poor quality. Families often had to share houses. It was not uncommon for there to be 12 people in a house with just 4 rooms. People rarely had enough to live on so crimes like theft increased.



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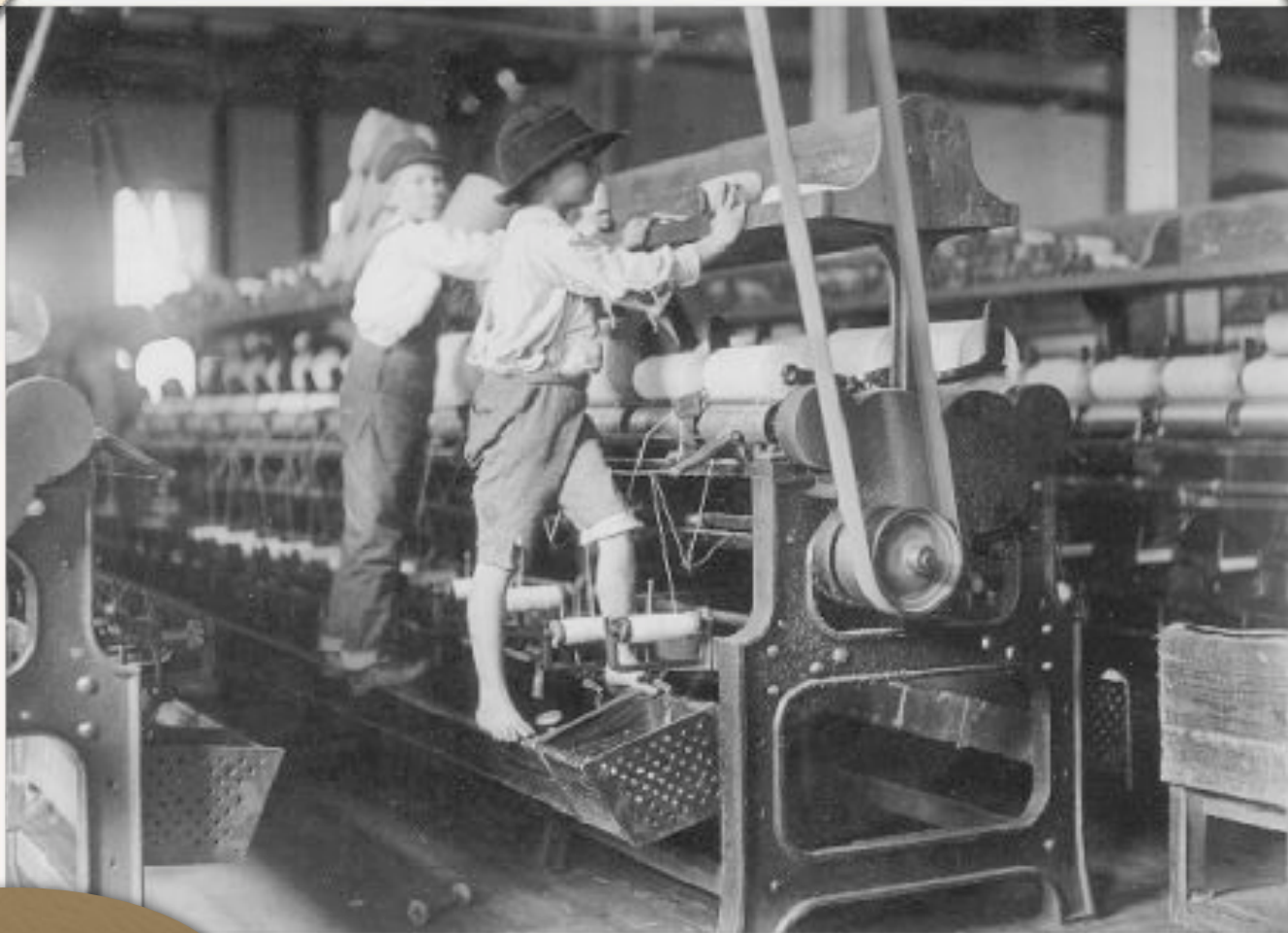
Pollution was also a big problem for those living in the city. Black smoke poured out of the chimneys of the factories and there was often rubbish lying on the pavements. This cramped and dirty conditions of city living provided the perfect conditions for germs and diseases, such as cholera, to spread.



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The increase in factory and mining jobs meant that children could work to earn money for their families too. Whilst this helped families financially, the jobs they had to do were often very difficult and dangerous. They worked long hours in bad conditions with little pay. Lots of children died in accidents or were badly injured.



Can you think of any other disadvantages to children working in factories all day?

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What do you think the positive and negative effects of the Industrial Revolution were?

Positive Effects

Negative Effects

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