

# Did the lives of ordinary people get better during the industrial period?

## Key dates:

1760	According to many historians, this is the rough date when the 'Industrial Revolution' began.
1769	Richard Arkwright patented the spinning frame, a machine which reduced the cost of cotton spinning. This meant that was officially recognised for having invented this important machine.
1837	Queen Victoria came to the throne. She has a big impact on many areas of life in Britain.
1851	The Great Exhibition celebrated new inventions of the period. Visiting the exhibition in Hyde Park was a popular way of spending leisure time.
1853	The first music hall opened in London.
1858	The 'Great Stink'. This was caused by a poor sewage system, and led to outbreaks of cholera in London.

## Key terms:

<b>Industrial Revolution</b>	The shift from producing things by hand to mass factory production. This saw a shift in living styles, too, as people relied less on the land and instead moved to big cities.
<b>Rural</b>	Relating to the countryside. Before the Industrial Revolution, most people lived in these areas.
<b>Urban</b>	Relating to a town or city.
<b>Economy</b>	A system of making and trading things. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the economy expanded significantly.
<b>Factory</b>	A building or group of buildings where goods were made by machine.
<b>Mill</b>	A building used to grind grain into flour, and the name of a factory.
<b>Mine</b>	The area underground from which things like coal are removed. A large amount of coal was needed to fuel the Industrial Revolution.
<b>Working classes</b>	People who do low-paid jobs - during this period, these included factory workers and domestic servants.
<b>Cholera</b>	An infectious disease which is often caught through infected water. Outbreaks of cholera were common in dirty, overcrowded cities.
<b>Music hall</b>	A form of entertainment popular during this period.

'The majority of the working class had to endure almost a century of hard work with little or no advance. They did not share in any of the benefits of the economic transformation [the Industrial Revolution] they had helped to create.'

Economic historian Charles Feinstein, 'Pessimism Perpetuated' (1998).

## Evidence that ordinary people's lives got better during this period:

The Industrial Revolution brought new **work opportunities** for people who had previously lived in the countryside.

There was a transformation in **medical knowledge**, and by the end of the period surgery was much less painful and dangerous.

Opportunities for **leisure time** increased during the period: the music hall became a cheap form of amusement, and the Great Exhibition was visited by thousands.

## Evidence that ordinary people's lives got worse during this period:

**Working conditions** in the new industrial towns and cities were terrible. The pay was low, and the work was hard and dangerous.

Many people left their homes in the countryside and moved to the new industrial centres, which were **overcrowded and full of disease**.

**Child labour** was common, and despite campaigns to improve working conditions for children, many were still forced to work in dangerous conditions for low pay.