

# Industrialization

*The Development of the Industrial  
United States (1870–1900)*



A changing economy

Big business

Labor

## Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

**Icons:** For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the labor movement during industrialization and be able to answer these key questions:

- What were working conditions like?
- Why did the labor movement organize and what did it do?
- How successful was the labor movement?

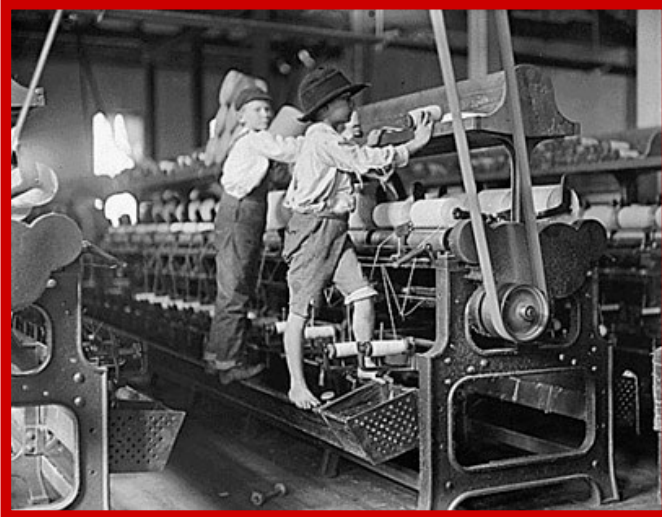




# Working conditions



By 1900, about two-thirds of the population earned wages. Previously, bosses and employees worked together closely, but during industrialization, bosses became unapproachable.



Working conditions were often terrible. Machinery was dangerous and injuries occurred often. Twelve hour days and six day weeks were common, with no vacations or compensation for injuries. Employees had effectively no rights.

Wages were generally low due to the availability of labor. Women and children often had to work in order for a family to make enough money to survive and they were paid even less.

Why did people put up with these conditions?



In response to terrible working conditions and wages, workers began to form **unions** to fight for their rights. They fought for:

- better pay
- shorter hours
- safer working conditions.



One of the tactics used by unions was **strikes**, where the workers refused to work. Union officials then tried to make a deal with the owner. If the owner made concessions, the laborers came back to work. However, owners often did not like giving up any control and were able to defeat the unions.



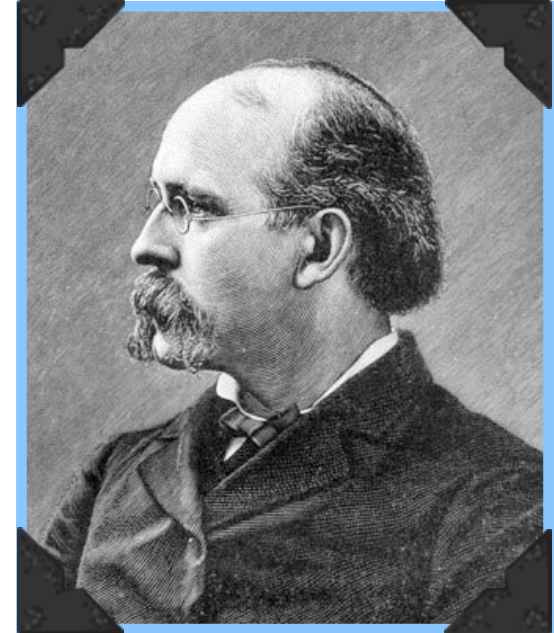
What tactics do you think were used to defeat unions?





Small groups of skilled workers had formed unions for many decades, but the first national labor organization was the **National Labor Union (NLU)** in 1866.

The NLU was fairly unsuccessful due to its tactics for advancing its agenda, but it paved the way for other groups, such as the **Knights of Labor**. They were open to all workers, including the unskilled, women and blacks. These groups were often excluded.



The Knights supported equal pay for men and women and an eight-hour workday. Membership grew until 1886, but it declined sharply afterwards following a series of failed strikes.



As the labor movement grew, it diversified into **craft unions** and **industrial unions**.

Two of the best known were the **American Federation of Labor (AFL)** and the **American Railroad Union (ARU)**.

Drag each statement to the correct place, depending on which union it refers to.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



How did divisions within the labor movement affect it?



During this period of industrialization,  
labor unions and workers often went on  
strike over pay and conditions.

Press the buttons to find out about  
some of the most important strikes.

Press **start** to begin.

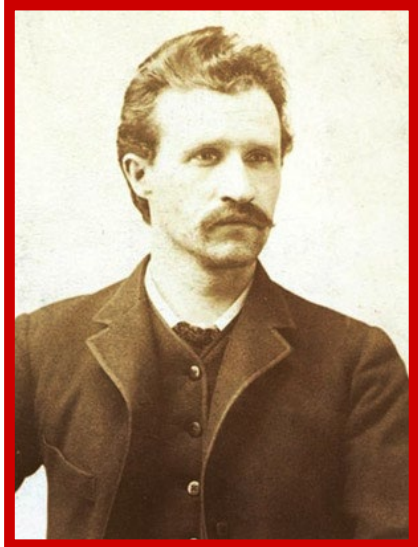
start







Following the Haymarket affair, public opinion began to turn against unions and the labor movement. Eight men were convicted in connection with the bomb and four were hanged. One of these was August Spies, who gave the following address to the court:



“I believe with Paine, Jefferson, and many other great thinkers, that the state of castes and classes, this barbaric form of social organization, with its legalized plunder and murder, is doomed to die, and make room for a free society.”

How was Spies’s language meant to influence the jury? Why did public opinion change after Haymarket?



# The effects of industrialization



During industrialization, new technologies made it possible for machines and factories to churn out goods at a faster pace.

A new elite sprang out of this transitional period. Businessmen were able to exert control over the market and earned huge amounts of money. At the same time, many workers had little power over their low wages and terrible working and living conditions. Big business controlled the labor movement.



Overall, do you think that industrialization was a good thing? Why or why not? Was it necessary?



Industrialization is a complex issue with multiple viewpoints about it possible. Read these students' opinions on the industrial era and decide how much you agree with them. You should justify your answers.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Test your understanding of industrialization by recapping key terms and important people using this glossary. Press on the tabs and then each term to see a definition.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**

