

A Revolutionary Time

Try It — The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain

The Industrial Revolution began in Great Britain for several reasons. It had the necessary resources of a large population of workers; an abundance of natural resources, such as large iron ore deposits, to build the new machines; and water and coal to fuel the new machines. Rivers and harbors provided transportation for the goods manufactured. Additionally, Great Britain's economy was stable and expanding, capital was available for investment in new inventions and the expansion of business.

However, new inventions were the cause of the Industrial Revolution. Great Britain already had a cloth industry that provided cloth to much of the world. Cloth merchants boosted their profits by speeding up the production process with new inventions such as the flying shuttle, which could weave cloth faster, and the spinning jenny, which sped up the process of spinning thread. Later, waterpower was applied to these machines, which further sped up the manufacturing process. The water-powered machines, spinning mule and power loom could more quickly produce cloth with a consistent quality. Wealthy textile merchants began to set up these machines in large buildings called factories. Because of the need for water to power the machines, they built them near rivers and streams. Within a few years, Eli Whitney in the United States invented the cotton gin, which resulted in a faster way of cleaning cotton, which in turn provided an increased supply of raw cotton needed for the textile factories.