



### **Empires of Industry**

The *Empires of Industry* series explores the cornerstones of America's economic might that established the United States as a world leader. Each of the one hour programs in this remarkable series focuses on an industry which played a unique role in America's rise to world economic dominance. The stories of changing fortunes in the Steel, Coal, Brewing, Ship Building and Textile industries reveal much about our country's past and present.

#### **Curriculum Links:**

*Empires of Industry* would be useful for classes on American History, History of Science and Technology, Economics and American Culture. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

#### **Textiles: Birth of an American Industry**

*Textiles: Birth of An American Industry* tells the story of America's first large-scale automated industry. The textile industry began in England and was transported to the Northeastern U.S. in the late 18th century. Viewers will learn how the waterpower of the Northeast helped fuel an explosion of new mills, providing material goods to help the new nation expand economically. This one hour episode traces the rise of Lowell, Massachusetts-- America's first industrial city, and explores the every day life of workers in the mills. Experts examine the migration of textile production to the Southern U.S. after the Civil War and discuss changes in the industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rare photos, archival footage, and news accounts capture the dramatic General Strike of 1934. Finally, historians discuss the ways technology and international competition have shaped the industry and continue to affect textile production today.

#### **Vocabulary:**

Using a dictionary, textbook, or online source such as History.com, ask students to define the following words before or after watching this program. Students can also write down their own lists of words to define as they watch.

- [agrarian](#)
- [diversify](#)
- [embargo](#)
- [embryonic](#)
- [hierarchy](#)
- [lacerated](#)
- [meager](#)
- [meticulous](#)
- [obsolete](#)
- [quell](#)
- [regimented](#)
- [tedious](#)
- [utopia](#)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Textile production is considered one of the earliest American industries. What were some of the reasons textile production thrived in cities like Lowell, Massachusetts?
2. Prior to the Industrial Revolution in America, America was an agrarian society. What is an agrarian society? How does it differ from an industrialized society?
3. What was the role of English immigrant Samuel Slater in starting America's Industrial Revolution?
4. The term revolution usually implies an armed conflict or a tremendous change in a society. Why is the process of industrial growth in America called a revolution?
5. How did factory owners use child labor? How does the presence of child labor in the 18th and 19th centuries reflect the general attitude toward childhood during that period? How has the perception of childhood changed over the past two centuries?
6. The Lowell Mills were famous throughout the world for their output and production capacity. How did the Lowell Mills surpass Samuel Slater's mill in Pawtucket? Why were the Lowell Mills so successful economically?
7. Women and young girls comprised the majority of the workers at the Lowell Mills. Why were female workers preferred by the mills?
8. How did the factory bell at the Lowell Mills control and dominate the lives of the Lowell Mills workers?
9. Why did the textile industry shift to the Southern U.S. after the Civil War?
10. How have advances in technology during the 20th century changed the textile industry?

**Extended Activities:**

1. Create a paper similar to the Lowell Offering describing the major industry in your area. Like the original, your paper can include poems and essays written by the workers about their work experiences and their experiences of life in the Lowell Mills town.
2. Imagine that you are a young worker at the Lowell Mills. Create a journal or a diary for a week's time that records your activities, thoughts, and anything else you would like to include about your life in the mills and the mill town.

**Websites:**

**The Center for Lowell History/University of Massachusetts**

<http://library.uml.edu/clh/>

**The Tsongas Industrial History Center**

<http://www.uml.edu/Tsongas/>

**The Lowell National Historical Park**

<http://www.nps.gov/lowe/index.htm>

**The Slater Mill**

<http://www.slatermill.org/>