

Threads of Change

Trace why New England textile mills grew and how they changed workers' lives.

SS.8.A.4.7 "Explain the causes, course, and consequences (e.g., industrial growth, subsequent effect on children and women) of New England's textile industry."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two causes that helped textile mills begin, number three changes that show how the industry grew, and circle two consequences for workers. Your marks will help you trace cause, course, and consequence.

New England's Textile Mills

- ① During the early 1800s, New England had fast rivers that could turn waterwheels. Investors used their money to build mills beside these rivers, and merchants could ship cloth through nearby ports. The War of 1812 interrupted trade with Britain, so Americans wanted more cloth made at home. Cotton grown in the South supplied the mills. These advantages helped textile production grow first in places such as Lowell, Massachusetts, where companies built large factories and planned mill towns.
- ② At first, many mills relied on waterpower and groups of workers performing separate tasks. In the 1830s and 1840s, companies brought spinning, weaving, and finishing together in large factories. Machines increased the amount of thread and cloth one worker could help produce. Factory owners hired young women, often from farm families, to operate machines. These "mill girls" lived in company boardinghouses, followed strict rules, and worked long hours. As railroads expanded and steam power became more common, textile firms could move materials and goods more easily and build beyond river sites.
- ③ Industrial growth changed family and community life. Wages gave some young women cash income and experience living away from home, but mill owners controlled housing and schedules. Children also worked in many textile mills because they could be paid less and were thought able to tend machines. Long shifts, noise, dust, and injuries harmed workers' health and limited schooling. Workers protested wage cuts and harsh conditions, including the Lowell women's strikes of 1834 and 1836. Over time, reformers pushed for shorter hours, child-labor limits, and safer workplaces, though protections developed slowly and differed by state.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Identify two conditions that helped New England's textile industry begin or grow. Explain how each condition helped.

2 How did the organization and technology of textile production change as the industry grew?

3 Describe one effect of mill work on young women and one effect on children.

4 What conditions led workers and reformers to seek changes, and what changes did they seek?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences that explain New England's textile industry. In sentence 1, give a cause of growth. In sentence 2, describe a change in production or transportation. In sentence 3, explain a consequence for women or children and a response to that consequence.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two causes that helped textile mills begin, number three changes that show how the industry grew, and circle two consequences for workers. Your marks will help you trace cause, course, and consequence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify two conditions that helped New England's textile industry begin or grow. Explain how each condition helped.	Answers may include fast rivers for waterpower, investment money for mills, nearby ports for shipping, interrupted British trade during the War of 1812, or cotton from the South. Each condition supplied power, money, transportation, demand, or raw material.
2	How did the organization and technology of textile production change as the industry grew?	Mills moved from separate groups doing tasks to large factories that combined spinning, weaving, and finishing. Machines raised production, and railroads and steam power made transportation easier and allowed firms to build beyond river sites.
3	Describe one effect of mill work on young women and one effect on children.	Young women could earn wages and live away from home, but faced company rules and long hours. Children worked for low pay and faced long shifts, dangerous conditions, health problems, and less schooling.
4	What conditions led workers and reformers to seek changes, and what changes did they seek?	Wage cuts, harsh conditions, long shifts, noise, dust, and injuries led to protests and reform efforts. Reformers sought shorter hours, child-labor limits, and safer workplaces.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

New England's rivers, investment, southern cotton, and interrupted British trade encouraged textile mills. Companies gathered spinning, weaving, and finishing in factories, where machines and later railroads and steam power expanded production. Growth gave women wages but strict schedules, brought children into dangerous long-hour work, and led workers and reformers to demand changes.

Accept any accurate causes, developments, and consequences stated in the passage. For the open response, check for a clear cause, a production or transportation change, and an accurate worker consequence paired with a reform response.