Threads of Change

Tracing change and continuity in British cotton work

6-12.HT2.2 "Analyze change and continuity in historical eras."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how cotton work changed from about 1750 to 1830. Circle two details that show what stayed the same.

From Homes to Cotton Mills

1 Around 1750, much of Britain's cotton cloth began in homes and small workshops. Merchants brought raw cotton to workers, who spun fibers into yarn by hand. Other workers used handlooms to weave the yarn into cloth. A household might share tasks, and women and children often took part. Workers could set some of their own hours, though merchants and buyers still shaped how much work was available and what it paid. Making enough yarn for the looms was slow. When inventors built machines that could spin many threads at once, they opened the door to a different way of working.

2 By about 1830, many British cotton workers spent their days in mills rather than at home. Waterwheels or steam engines powered machines that spun yarn, and power looms wove cloth in growing numbers. A mill owner set work hours, and workers had to keep pace with the machines. Women and children still worked in cotton production, often beside men. Families continued to rely on income from making cloth, but the workplace and control of the workday had changed. Mills could produce cloth faster, and their output helped supply buyers far beyond the towns where the mills stood.

3 This shift did not happen everywhere at once. Handloom weavers were still working in Britain in 1830, even as mills spread. Some could no longer earn as much because factory cloth competed with theirs. The change also had uneven effects: mill jobs offered wages, but long hours and dangerous machines brought risks. Across both periods, people turned cotton into cloth for sale, and families depended on that work. Yet a worker's day might move from a home where tasks could be paused to a mill where a clock and machines set the pace. Looking at both dates shows change alongside continuity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the workplace and pace of cotton work change between about 1750 and 1830?

2. What stayed the same about who did cotton work and why families did it?

3. What detail shows that the move to mills was not complete by 1830? Explain what had changed and what continued.

4. How could mills change a handloom weaver's income even though the purpose of cotton work stayed the same?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 95 word museum label about one family's cotton work across two generations, around 1750 and 1830. Use passage details to explain two changes, one continuity, and a likely effect on daily life; make clear which part is your inference.

ANSWER KEY

Threads of Change

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.HT2.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how cotton work changed from about 1750 to 1830. Circle two details that show what stayed the same. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the workplace and pace of cotton work change between about 1750 and 1830?	**Work moved from homes and small workshops toward mills. Home workers could set some of their hours, while mill owners set hours and machines set the pace.**
2	What stayed the same about who did cotton work and why families did it?	**Women and children worked in cotton production in both periods, and families continued to depend on the income.**
3	What detail shows that the move to mills was not complete by 1830? Explain what had changed and what continued.	**Mills had spread, but handloom weavers were still working in Britain in 1830. Factory production had grown while hand weaving continued.**
4	How could mills change a handloom weaver's income even though the purpose of cotton work stayed the same?	**Factory cloth competed with handwoven cloth, so some handloom weavers earned less. Both kinds of workers still made cloth for sale.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Around 1750, one family might spin cotton at home and weave it on a handloom. By 1830, the next generation might work in a mill, where powered machines made cloth faster and an owner set the hours. Their workplace and control over time changed, but family members still depended on cotton work for income. A fixed mill shift might leave them less choice about when to eat together. That last detail is an inference, since the passage does not describe any particular family's meals.

Accept other passage-supported changes and continuities. For the museum label, look for a plausible daily-life inference that the student distinguishes from stated facts.