Cotton on the Move

Trace how new tools and routes changed the path from farm to shop.

6-12.US1.20 "Explain the changes in manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, and communication during the First Industrial Revolution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one change in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and communication. Circle an effect of each change so you can explain what it meant for people or goods.

From Cotton Field to Cloth Shop

1 In the early 1800s, a bale of cotton could begin its trip to a cloth shop on a southern farm. Before cotton gins became common, workers removed seeds from cotton by hand, a slow task. The cotton gin separated seeds much faster, so growers could process more cotton. As demand for cotton rose, plantation owners expanded cotton fields and forced more enslaved people to grow and pick the crop. The machine did not pick cotton or make this labor less cruel. Many northern mills bought the cotton to turn its fibers into thread and cloth.

2 Earlier, many families spun thread and wove cloth at home or in small workshops. In the early 1800s, water-powered mills brought spinning and weaving machines together in large buildings. Workers tended machines that could make cloth faster than hand tools. A mill could sell bolts of cloth to shops, where tailors might sew the cloth into shirts. Factory work also meant long hours under rules set by mill owners. Moving the cotton and cloth was changing, too. Canals and steamboats carried heavy loads along waterways, while growing railroad lines moved goods over land to places waterways could not reach.

3 Transport still took time, even when boats and trains moved more goods than a wagon. A merchant ordering cloth once had to wait for a letter carried by a person, sometimes on the same route as the goods. By the 1840s, the electric telegraph let an operator send a coded message over wires in minutes between connected towns. A shopkeeper could ask a mill whether cloth was ready before sending a wagon to collect it. The telegraph did not carry the cloth itself. Together, faster production, new routes, and quicker news changed how goods reached buyers, but these changes did not benefit every worker equally.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the cotton gin change the work of preparing cotton, and what happened as demand for cotton rose?

2. How did making cloth in a water-powered mill differ from making it at home or in a small workshop?

3. How did canals, steamboats, and railroads change the movement of cotton or cloth?

4. How did the telegraph change a shopkeeper's ability to plan an order, compared with sending a letter?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you run a cloth shop in a town linked by a canal and telegraph wires. Write 5 or 6 sentences explaining how new cloth could reach your shop from a mill, tracing the cotton back to a farm. Show how at least three changes from the passage work together, and include one human cost.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.US1.20

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one change in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and communication. Circle an effect of each change so you can explain what it meant for people or goods. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the cotton gin change the work of preparing cotton, and what happened as demand for cotton rose?	**The gin removed seeds much faster than workers could by hand. As demand rose, plantation owners expanded fields and forced more enslaved people to grow and pick cotton.**
2	How did making cloth in a water-powered mill differ from making it at home or in a small workshop?	**Mills brought spinning and weaving machines together in large buildings, where workers could make cloth faster than with hand tools.**
3	How did canals, steamboats, and railroads change the movement of cotton or cloth?	**Canals and steamboats carried heavy loads along waterways. Railroads moved goods over land to places waterways could not reach, and boats and trains carried more goods than a wagon.**
4	How did the telegraph change a shopkeeper's ability to plan an order, compared with sending a letter?	**A telegraph message could reach a connected town in minutes, so a shopkeeper could check whether cloth was ready without waiting for a carried letter.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I need more cotton cloth for my shop, so I will send a telegraph message to a mill to ask when its next order is ready. The mill uses machines to spin and weave cotton into cloth faster than workers using hand tools could. Its cotton comes from southern farms, where the gin speeds seed removal but enslaved people are still forced to grow and pick the crop. When the cloth is ready, a canal boat can carry heavy bolts toward my town. A wagon can take them from the canal to my shop. Faster messages help me plan the delivery, but they cannot move the cloth.

Accept other passage-supported routes and connections among at least three areas of change. The human cost may be forced labor on cotton farms or long hours under mill owners' rules.