Cloth and Change

Trace who benefited from Lowell's growing mills and who faced costs.

6-9.WH.3.4 "Analyze the impact of economic growth on society."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how cloth production grew. Circle three effects of that growth on different groups, then write B for benefit or C for cost beside each one.

When Lowell's Mills Grew

1 In the 1820s, textile mills opened beside the Merrimack River in Lowell, Massachusetts. Water from the river turned machines that spun cotton into thread and wove it into cloth. As more cloth was sold, mill owners built more mills and hired more workers. Many young women came from New England farms to earn cash wages. Some sent money home, while others saved for clothes or education. Growth in cloth production brought jobs to Lowell, but earning wages also meant leaving farm life and following a factory schedule.

2 Mill work gave many women a chance to earn their own money, but a job did not mean freedom over every part of life. Workers often spent more than twelve hours a day in noisy rooms filled with machines. Many lived in company boardinghouses that set rules for their behavior. The mills also relied on cotton grown in the South, often by enslaved people who were not paid for their work. More cloth meant greater demand for cotton, so slaveholders could profit while enslaved workers faced continued forced labor.

3 As Lowell grew, shops and boardinghouses opened to serve workers. Builders and storekeepers could earn money because the mills drew people to town. Yet crowded housing and waste placed pressure on the growing town. Mill owners gained from cloth sales, while workers had to weigh their wages against long hours and strict boardinghouse rules. In the 1830s and 1840s, some mill women protested wage cuts and work conditions. Their protests show that growth did not settle how the new wealth and hardships would be shared.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the growing mills change both a young farm woman's opportunities and her daily life?

2. How did making more cloth affect slaveholders and enslaved workers differently?

3. Name one way mill growth helped people elsewhere in Lowell and one problem it created for the town. Explain each connection.

4. Why did some mill women protest while Lowell's economy was growing? What does this show about economic growth?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a bicycle factory opens in a small town and sells far more bikes each year. In five sentences, predict two benefits and two costs for at least two groups, explain how higher production causes them, and suggest one way to reduce a cost while keeping jobs.

ANSWER KEY

Cloth and Change

GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.3.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how cloth production grew. Circle three effects of that growth on different groups, then write B for benefit or C for cost beside each one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the growing mills change both a young farm woman's opportunities and her daily life?	**Mill wages gave her money to send home or save, but she had to follow a factory schedule, work long hours, and possibly live under boardinghouse rules.**
2	How did making more cloth affect slaveholders and enslaved workers differently?	**More cloth increased demand for cotton, which could bring slaveholders more profit. Enslaved workers remained unpaid and faced forced labor.**
3	Name one way mill growth helped people elsewhere in Lowell and one problem it created for the town. Explain each connection.	**The mills drew workers to Lowell, creating business for builders and storekeepers. The growing population also put pressure on the town through crowded housing and waste.**
4	Why did some mill women protest while Lowell's economy was growing? What does this show about economic growth?	**They protested wage cuts and work conditions. Growth brought wealth to mill owners, but workers did not share equally in its benefits.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As bike sales rise, the factory may hire more workers, giving local families new income. A nearby cafe may gain customers when those workers buy lunch. More delivery trucks might make streets noisy for neighbors, while increased traffic could delay other drivers. The town could limit truck deliveries to daytime hours. This would reduce nighttime noise while letting the factory ship bikes and keep jobs.

Accept other passage-supported effects in Part 2. For Part 3, look for plausible cause-and-effect links, two benefits, two costs, at least two affected groups, and an action that preserves jobs.