Changing Work, Changing Towns

How changes in business reshape jobs and communities

9-12.US2.42 "Describe some effects of key changes on United States society and labor. These may include: • Outsourcing • Robotic automation • Income disparities • Shift toward a service-based economy"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each change in how work is done, then circle its effects on workers or the community. Draw an arrow from each underlined change to one effect it causes.

What Happens When Work Changes?

1 Imagine a town where a company makes washing machines. In the 1980s, its own workers built the control panels. Years later, the company signs a contract with a separate company overseas to build those panels instead. This is outsourcing because an outside company now performs work the washing machine maker once did itself. Some local panel builders lose their jobs, while the maker may pay less for parts. Lower costs can help it compete and may lower prices, but the savings do not guarantee new jobs for the workers who were laid off.

2 At that same factory, robotic arms later take over repetitive welding. They can make steady welds and reduce some injuries, but fewer people may be needed for that task. Other jobs open for technicians who program, inspect, and repair the machines. Those jobs often require training that former welders may not have. Meanwhile, across the country, more workers find jobs providing services rather than making goods. A hotel, for example, needs desk staff and cleaners, while an accounting firm needs people who manage records. Service jobs vary widely in pay and training requirements.

3 These shifts do not affect every household equally. A technician with specialized training may earn more than a worker who takes a lower-paid cleaning job after leaving manufacturing. That difference can widen income disparities, the gaps between what people earn. When many former factory workers earn less, nearby shops may have fewer customers. A growing hotel can bring new customers, yet its jobs may not replace the wages of lost factory work. Training programs can help some workers move into new roles, but they take time and do not guarantee the same pay.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could outsourcing control-panel work affect both the washing machine company and its local workers?

2. What are two different effects robotic welding could have on factory workers?

3. How does the shift toward service work change the kinds of jobs available, and why might it not replace lost factory wages?

4. How could a factory worker taking a lower-paid job affect income disparities and nearby shops?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town whose food processor contracts an out-of-town company to manage its payroll while a new medical clinic hires local staff. In five sentences, explain possible effects on two kinds of workers and local income differences, then propose one specific action the town could take.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.US2.42

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each change in how work is done, then circle its effects on workers or the community. Draw an arrow from each underlined change to one effect it causes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could outsourcing control-panel work affect both the washing machine company and its local workers?	**The company may pay less for parts, while some local panel builders lose their jobs.**
2	What are two different effects robotic welding could have on factory workers?	**Fewer welders may be needed, while technician jobs may open for people with the required training.**
3	How does the shift toward service work change the kinds of jobs available, and why might it not replace lost factory wages?	**It creates jobs such as hotel and accounting work, but service jobs vary in pay and may pay less than lost factory jobs.**
4	How could a factory worker taking a lower-paid job affect income disparities and nearby shops?	**The pay gap between that worker and higher-paid workers could widen, and the worker may have less to spend at nearby shops.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The food processor may no longer need its own payroll clerks because an out-of-town company will do that work. Some clerks could lose their jobs or need to find new roles. The clinic could offer local jobs to nurses and receptionists. Income differences might grow if the new jobs pay more than the work available to displaced clerks. The town could offer training in medical office software to help interested clerks apply for clinic jobs.

Accept other plausible effects when students connect a specific change to its effect on workers or the community. For Part 3, the proposed action should address a need created by the changes.